



# art & man

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# Gauguin

WORKING WITH COLOR

 SCHOLASTIC





COVER: Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). *Woman with Mango*, 1892. 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Baltimore Museum of Art, Cone Collection.

**art&  
man**®

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# The Savage

*"I am a savage. And my paintings have a primitive, savage quality."*

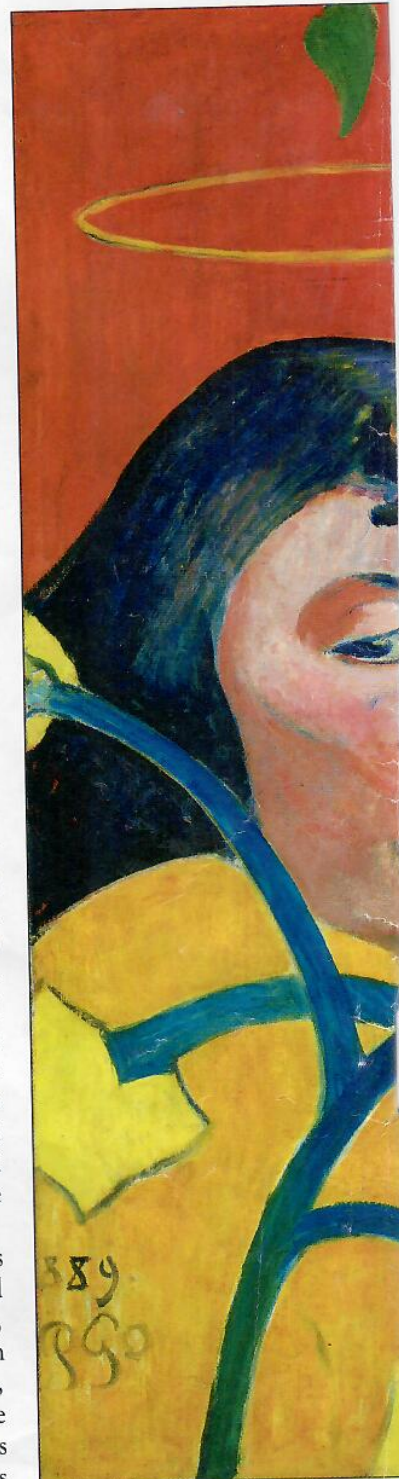
— PAUL GAUGUIN

Have you ever felt like running away to a tropical island in the south seas, with palm trees, sunshine and cool, blue water? Do you think you would ever really do it? Nineteenth-century French artist Paul Gauguin [Go-GAN] did. He left his job, his family, and his friends and went to Tahiti [Tuh-HEE-tee: an island in the middle

of the Pacific ocean] in order to paint. Why do you think Gauguin went there? What did he expect to find? Was his trip a success?

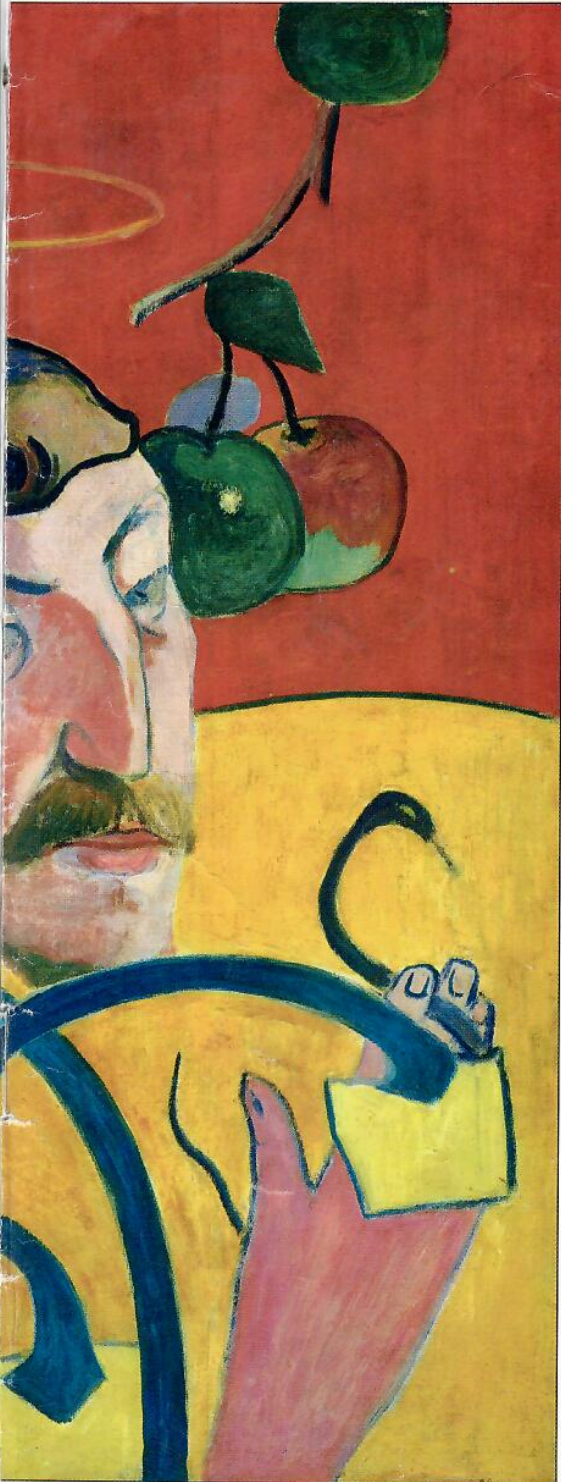
Paul Gauguin was born in Paris in 1848. He came from a very unconventional family and had an unsettled childhood. A year after Gauguin's birth, his father, a journalist who opposed the French government, had to leave the country. He took his family to Peru, where his wife had relatives. But during the voyage, he suddenly died, and young Paul and his mother continued on alone. They lived in Peru until 1855, then they returned to France. At 17, Gauguin joined the navy, traveled around the world for six years, then left to go to Paris. He had no job, no training, and no idea what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.

Gauguin got a job as a stockbroker's clerk. In a few years, he became a successful partner in a brokerage firm and in 1873, married a young Danish woman. Gauguin began collecting art, took painting lessons, and in 1879 was invited to exhibit with the Impressionists, a group of French painters who were challenging traditional ideas





# from Peru: Paul Gauguin



about art. The Impressionists wanted to capture the effects of sunlight and were among the first to use bright colors in their work. Gauguin quickly became dissatisfied with Impressionism saying, "They look for answers with the eye, not in the mysterious depths of the soul."

In 1882, several French banks collapsed and many stockbrokers were out of work. Gauguin resigned from his job, intending to make a living from his art. He was not financially successful and, two years later, the artist, his wife, and five children moved into her family's house in Denmark. This arrangement didn't work out, so Gauguin left. He traveled to the Caribbean, then went to Brittany, a remote region in northern France. In Brittany, Gauguin began to be able to translate his inner feelings into revealing, brightly colored visual images such as the self-portrait on the left.

The artist said, "I feel something, but I can't express it yet." He would express exactly what he felt in 1891 when he left for the Pacific island of Tahiti. He spent two years there, returned briefly to France, then "The savage from Peru," as the artist called himself, left Europe for good to spend the rest of his life in the South Pacific. He painted his greatest masterpieces during the next eight years and died in 1903. In this issue, you'll see examples of Gauguin's colorful work and learn more about his decision to leave the world he knew in order to "find himself" as an artist. You'll meet other artists who use color to produce memorable images, and finally you'll work with color to create your own work of art.



In the 1864 self-portrait above, French artist Edgar Degas [day-GA] has painted himself in a very realistic way.

Edgar Degas (1834-1917). *Self-Portrait* (detail), 1863. Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon.

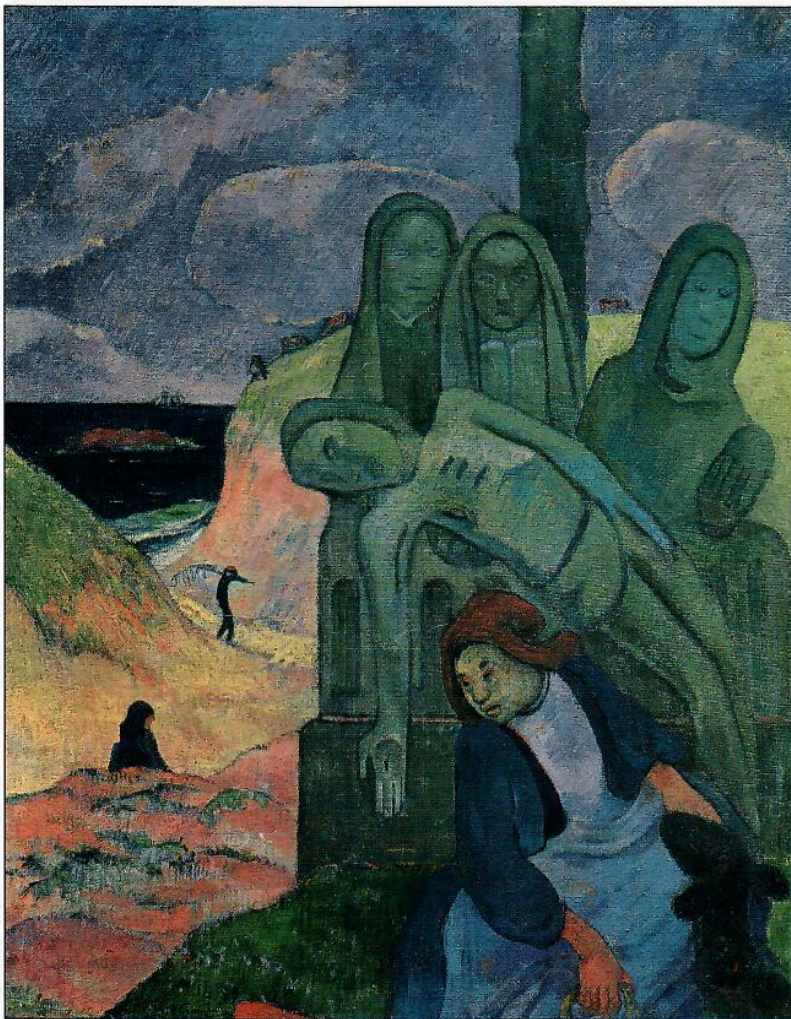
Twenty-five years later in 1889, Paul Gauguin painted the self-portrait on the left. Gauguin has painted his *feelings*, not his appearance. He sees himself as the devil holding the forces of evil: a serpent and the apples of temptation.

*Self-Portrait*, 1889. 31¼" x 20¼". National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection.



# Images of the Spirit

Brittany is a rocky, windswept region on the northwestern coast of France. Something in the harsh countryside and simple lives of the people drew Paul Gauguin there in 1886. He had left his job five years



Why do the figures in the foreground of the painting above look so strange? Which

people are real, which are sculptures, and how can you tell the difference?

The Green Christ, 1889. Musée-royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

before and he had been struggling to make a living as an artist ever since. He had intended to become a successful painter, and now he was separated from his family, was deeply in debt, and had hardly sold anything. Surrounded by the churches and stone sculptures of the crucified Christ which could be found in nearly every Breton town, crossroad, and field, Gauguin began painting religious pictures. Always searching for “a way to create images no longer based on ‘reality’ but on my own inner vision,” the artist must have identified with Christ’s suffering, since he used his own features for those of Christ. In this ancient land of simple, elemental truths Gauguin began to do his first truly original paintings — depicting not just the objects he saw in front of him, but his own thoughts and feelings.

Perhaps influenced by the flat, colorful stained-glass windows found in Breton churches, Gauguin began using **broad areas of bright colors**. He used “unrealistic” colors to express his own emotions. He said, “I want to find the passionate equivalent of a sensation as expressed in pure color. I think colors have an emotional power which can convey a mood to the viewer. Some tones are tranquil, some console you, some excite you into doing something bold.” His **flat, simplified, brightly colored shapes** were surrounded by **heavy black lines**. In many works, he achieved an emotional **tension** by using pairs of **complementary colors** (see the workshop on page 14). Gauguin was also interested in the new ideas of other artists of the times — Paul Cézanne’s [Say-





When you look at the painting on the left, what do you think Gauguin meant when he said, "Colors are found in the tubes of paint, not in nature."?

*Jacob Wrestling with the Angel; The Vision after the Sermon, 1888. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.*

ZAHN] simple shapes, Vincent Van Gogh's [Van GO] bright, emotional colors, the cropped compositions and unusual viewpoints that marked the new art of photography, and the bold, bright shapes found in Japanese woodcuts.

In both of the paintings on these two pages, Gauguin has transformed what might originally have been an everyday scene into a mysterious, dreamlike image. The painting above is called *The Vision after the Sermon, or Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. A group of women wearing elaborate, white hats (the Church ordered Breton women to cover their heads) have come from church and are thinking of the sermon — based on a biblical story — that they have just heard. Their large, white figures at the bottom of this asymmetrical composition (the elements on one side are very different from those on the other side) are balanced by the big, red area of space and small figures on the top. A diagonal tree trunk separates the passive figures below, with their drooping hats, from the active figures in the upper right-hand corner. The running cow on the left echoes and balances the two wrestling figures, which seem to resemble another four-footed animal. The bright red "unnatu-

ral" color of the background reflects the intensity of this religious vision.

In the painting on page 4 called *Green Christ*, Gauguin used the same sets of complementary colors that he used in the painting above (greens and blues in the foreground; yellows and reds in back). But in *Green Christ*, these colors have a very different effect. Warm colors (red, yellow, orange) seem to advance, so they are usually used to show objects in the foreground. Cool colors (green, blue, purple) appear to recede, so painters usually use them to depict the background. Gauguin has created a strange tension by reversing this traditional way of using color. The cool, dark, blue-green figures in front dominate the warm, light, yellow-pink landscape in back. He has made all of the figures on the right the same size, causing the real woman at the bottom to look as if she is part of the sculpture. In this painting, life and work go on — a woman walks, a man carries a rake, cows graze on top of the dunes, and a boat sails on the sea in the distance. Through his use of color and composition, Gauguin has transformed what might have been just an ordinary landscape into a haunting, mysterious, and exotic vision.

*"When I walk on the earth in Brittany, I hear the timeless, hollow sound I am looking for in my painting."*

— PAUL GAUGUIN



**MASTERPIECE  
OF THE MONTH**

*Preview*

# Search for **P** Paradise

Paris. February 23, 1891

To the Minister of Public Instruction:

I wish to go to the Tahitian Islands to do a series of paintings capturing the character of this country. The official support of the French government would be of great help in my project. — Paul Gauguin, artist.

Around this same time, in order to raise money for his trip, Gauguin held a sale of all his paintings. He then went to Copenhagen to spend a few days with his wife and children. On March 28, Paul Gauguin set sail from the port of Marseilles aboard the steamship *Oceanien*, to begin his new life.

June 1891.

Gauguin wrote to his wife:

"I have arrived at a wonderful place. . . I am amazed at the silence of the tropical nights, the gentle, hospitable ways and great beauty of the people. . . ."

The artist was impressed at first, but later he wrote. "I was soon disgusted. It was Europe all over again, just what I thought I had broken away from. To have traveled so far to find this." So he moved out of the town, rented a bamboo hut, and grew his hair long. Gauguin married a woman, Tehura, who is in many of his paintings.

Gauguin was particularly interested in



painting the human figure, especially the women of Tahiti. Look at the women shown above and those in the painting on the next two pages. Do they look involved with each other — are they talking to, looking at, or even facing each other? And, do the women look very different from each other? Gauguin saw the women of Tahiti as impassive, mysterious, brooding, and sometimes even sinister beings. Gauguin's paintings of people were not individual portraits. The artist was less interested in capturing a likeness than he was in expressing his own feelings through **color** and **composition**. The figures are **stylized** — made up of **simple, outlined shapes**. The shapes and backgrounds are **flattened**; there is very little depth. Each painting, for the most part, is made up of **complementary pairs of colors**. The **complementaries** seen in the cover painting are yellow and purple while the rest of the paintings are made up of **warm red** and **yellow primaries** (see page 14) and **cool green** and **purple secondaries**. Can you

*"I am leaving  
the civilized  
world for  
Tahiti. I want  
to cultivate my  
art in this wild  
and primitive  
place."*

— PAUL GAUGUIN





**Gauguin is best known for his paintings of the women of Tahiti. He wrote, "While I painted, the women's eyes meditated on dark dreams, gazing fixedly at an unfathomable mystery."**

*Tahitian Women on the Beach*, 1891. Dresden Museum. Photo by Gerhard Reinhold.

**Gauguin said, "I want to paint the way I feel about this place and express its haunting and mysterious past."**

*Tahitian Landscape*, 1891. 26 11/16" x 36 3/8". Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

find these combinations in *The Siesta* on pages 8-9? The sun beats down outside (white has been added to create the tints of pink and yellow that sparkle in the upper left-hand corner) while the overlapping figures (done in dark shades of green and purple) stay cool in the shadows of the hut.

Gauguin was happy for a while. But he quickly used up all his money, then became ill and had to go into the hospital. He sold a few works, and friends sent him money but in March 1893, he wrote, "I'm at the end of my tether and worn out. I've stopped eating — just a bit of bread and tea. So I have lost a lot of weight, weakened myself, and wrecked my stomach. I see that I can't stay here much longer."

Gauguin would eventually return to Tahiti and spend his last years there creating some of his greatest paintings, but on June 14, 1893, he sailed for France. "I left the islands two years older and 20 years younger. The 'savages' have given many lessons to the old 'civilized' man in the art of being



happy. When I boarded the ship, I looked back for the last time at Tehura. She was sitting sadly on the stone pier. The flower she had been wearing behind her ear had fallen into her lap and wilted."

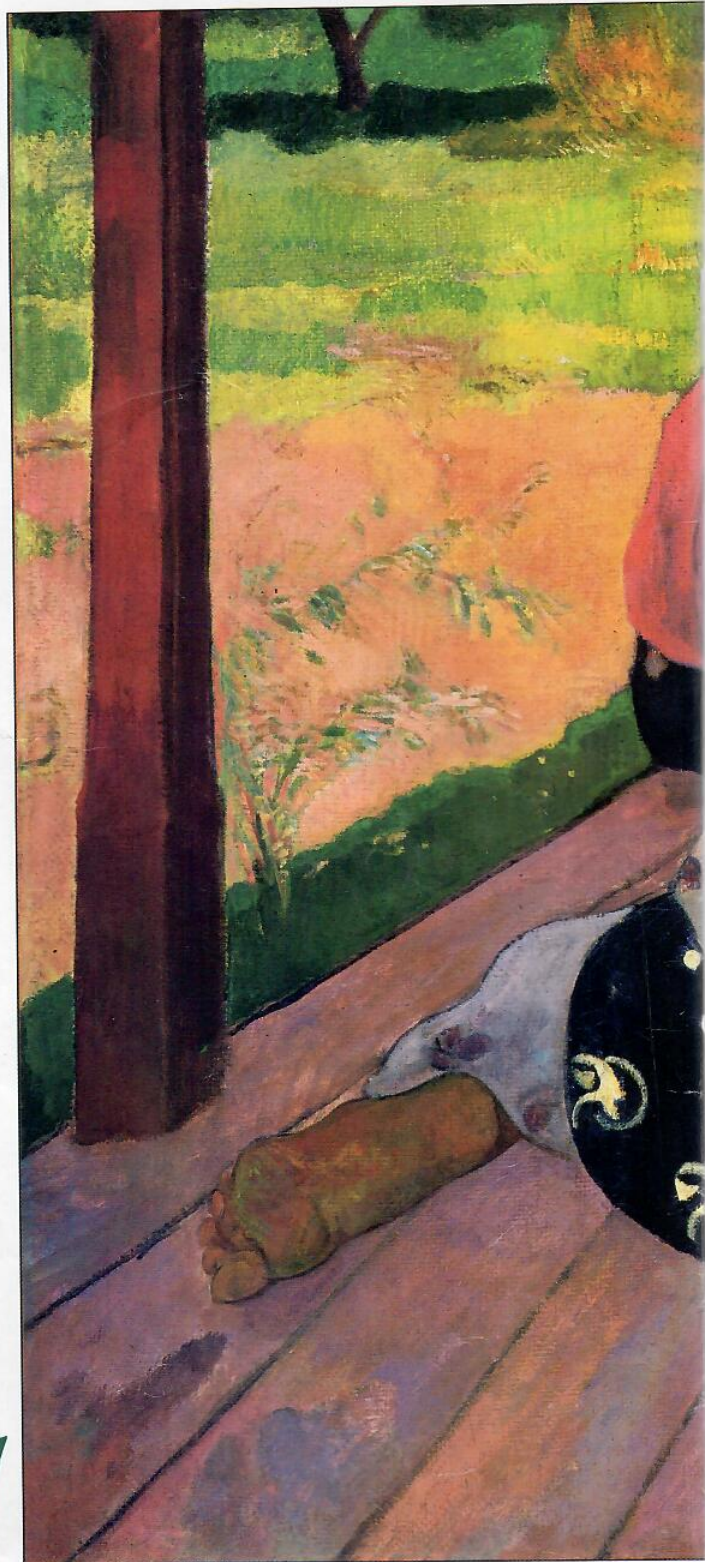


“I understand why these people can spend days sitting still and gazing at the sky. At this moment I feel amazingly at peace. . . . I am no longer conscious of days and hours, of good and evil. This happiness is so strange. I only know that all is good because all is beautiful.”

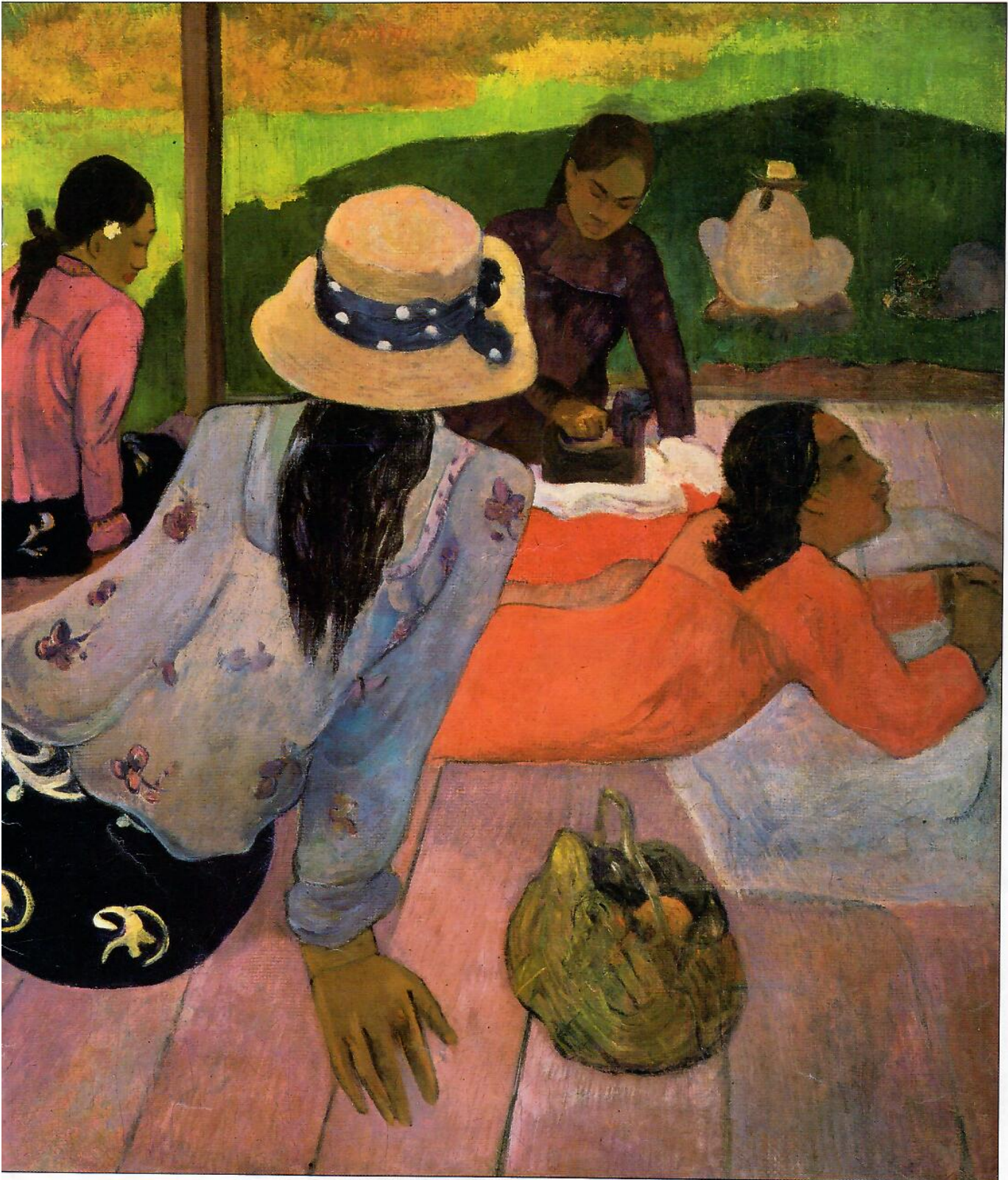
— PAUL GAUGUIN

# The Siesta

by Paul Gauguin







Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). *Siesta*, 1893.  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Collection of  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg.



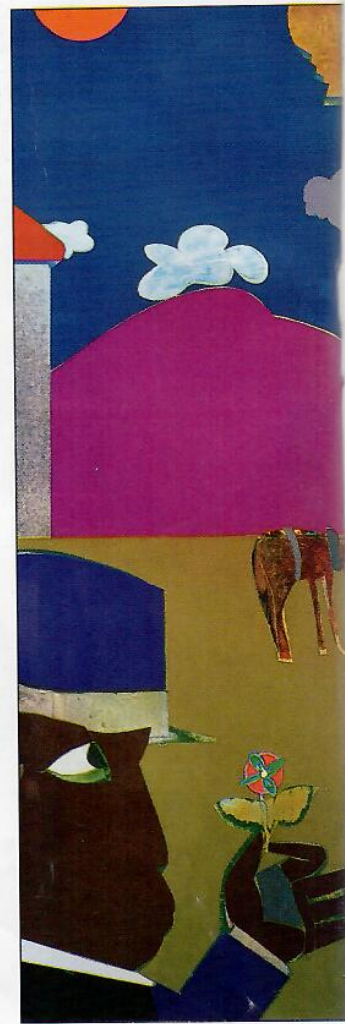
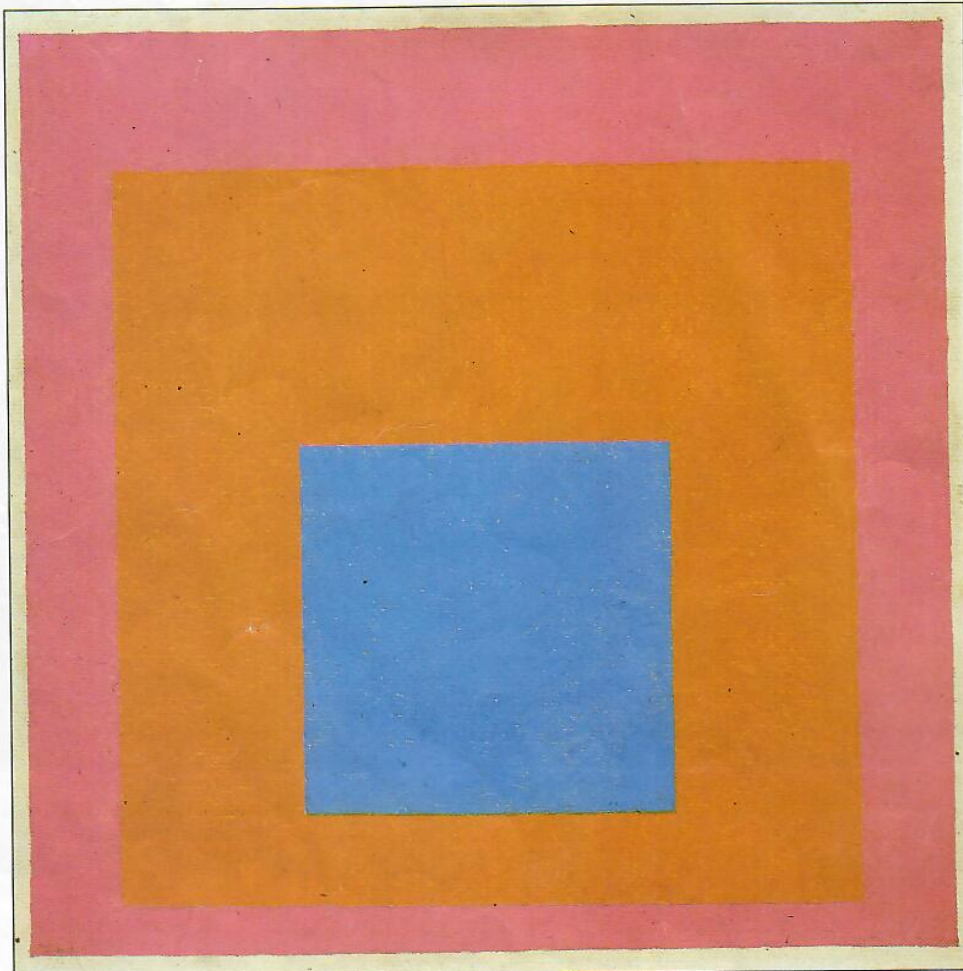
# Pioneers of Color: Like Gauguin before them, these twentieth-century artists discovered new ways of working with color.

## Square Colors

Twentieth-century German-American teacher/artist Joseph Albers wanted to paint the effects various colors have on each other. So, for over 30 years, he only painted squares. The artist did hundreds of paintings of colored squares — the whole series is called “Homage to the Square.” Each painting is made up of three or four squares set

within each other, wider on the top and sides than on the bottom. The color in these paintings is so effective because it is the only major element that changes. In the painting below, the **complementary pair** of colors — orange and blue (see workshop on page 14) are the same **value** (the lightness or darkness of a color). Both colors

are **tints** (white has been added to each). Albers could create optical effects by combining certain colors. For instance, look at the bottom part of the blue square. Does it look like a hole in the canvas? Now look at the top of the painting. Does the blue square appear to float? If you concentrate, maybe you can get the illusion to reverse itself.

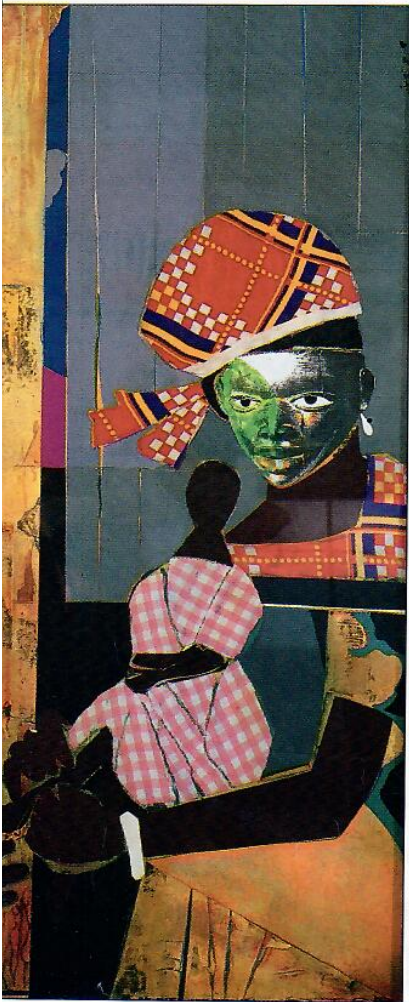


Romare Bearden (1914-1988).  
*Carolina Morning*, 1978.  
(Mecklenburg County). 46 X  
36". Collection Mr. and Mrs.  
Alex Rosenberg, N.Y., N.Y.

**Joseph Albers  
became famous for  
using only one  
kind of  
shape — colored  
squares.**

Josef Albers (1888-1976).  
*Homage to the Square, Early  
Diary*, 1955. 15" x 15".  
Nebraska Art Association,  
Thomas C. Woods Collection.





## The Colors of Memory

American artist Romare Bearden's collages are as atmospheric and poetic as Albers' paintings are precise and disciplined. While Albers carefully worked out his square format on graph paper and varied it only slightly from painting to painting, Bearden's imagery changed each time he added a new element. "You have to begin somewhere," he said, "so you put something down. Then you put something else with it, try something else and so on, and the picture grows. One thing leads to another." Bearden uses color not to imitate nature, but to create a mood and to balance the composition. In *Carolina Morning* (left) he uses dark, subdued shades (black has been added to each color) to give the melancholy feeling of a poor southern farm community. His

use of three related colors — blue, red, and purple — creates an atmosphere of calm while the accents of bright red and green hint at intense feelings, unspoken and just below the surface.

**Deep purples, blues, and reds recreate memories of Romare Bearden's small southern town.**

## Colors for Every Occasion

In Paris during the 1920s and '30s, Russian-born artist Sonia Delaunay designed everything — clothing, furniture, lamps, dishes, hats, rugs, and especially costumes (see figure drawing on the right) — for plays and musicals. And the most important element in Sonia Delaunay's designs was their rich, pure color. The artist did conventional paintings, but she preferred to use the human body as a canvas for her bright fabric designs. She felt that brilliant, vibrant colors were part of life. They shouldn't be imprisoned in

art galleries but worn every day. She made her own dresses of silk, wood, wool, metal, and fur using blindingly bright color combinations. And she loved wearing the unforgettable outfits she designed herself such as her red, yellow, and purple patterned suit, yellow and black shoes, and her sky-blue hat. In the costume on the right, for the 1928 ballet *Carnival in Rio*, the artist has used the three basic primary colors — red, yellow, blue — (see page 14) to create bright, intense, abstract patterns of movement for the stage.

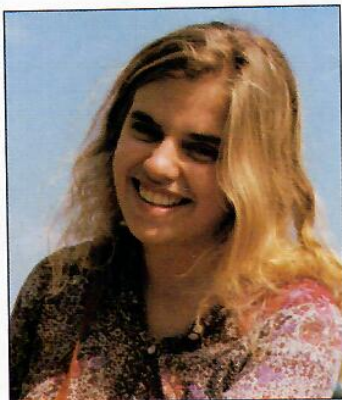


**Bright and unusual clothing became Sonia Delaunay's trademark.**

Sonia Delaunay (1884-1979).  
*Costume for Carnival in Rio*,  
1928.



# Susan Bradley: THE COLORS OF EMOTION



In the powerful self-portrait on the right, 17-year-old Susan Bradley, has given herself a huge hand, painted her face a sickly yellow, and left out one of her shoulders. Why do you think she would want to distort her features in this way? Maybe the title she chose — *Isolation* — is a clue.

Susan created this Scholastic Art Award-winning acrylic portrait when she was a junior at Cumberland Valley High School in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. She has just begun her freshman year at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, and is interested in both art and acting. Susan is considering a career as a fine artist and teacher. In her free time, she enjoys reading, seeing plays, and listening to the Grateful Dead and Sonic Use.



This month's featured artist doesn't just do paintings as you can see from the unusual sculpture above.

## Have you always been interested in art?

Not until I came to Cumberland Valley. Actually, I wanted to take photography, but art was a prerequisite. I really didn't think I had any talent. In middle school I was even told I couldn't draw. But Cumberland Valley has an excellent art program, and my teacher was pretty encouraging. Everyone was treated equally — as if we all had talent. I ended up liking it and took a second year of art.

## Was this painting a class assignment?

It was our weekly homework assignment, due on Friday. So I'd usually get all my other work done so I could work on it Thursday night. I always liked working at home — in my room, by myself.

The assignment was to paint a portrait using distortion. It didn't have to be of yourself. This one developed from the emotion I was feeling.

## What was the feeling? How did you work?

I got my mom's makeup mirror out. It has one side that has a huge close-up mirror, and it blew my face all out of proportion, making it more wide than long — which looked interesting. I thought about how I felt at the time — alone and bored. So I took a pose with my hand over my face. I wanted the hand to overpower the face.

Photos by Beth Hoffman



The color of my face looked kind of sick, which I thought fit, because I had that sort of feeling you have in your stomach when you don't know exactly what's wrong, but you know something's not right.

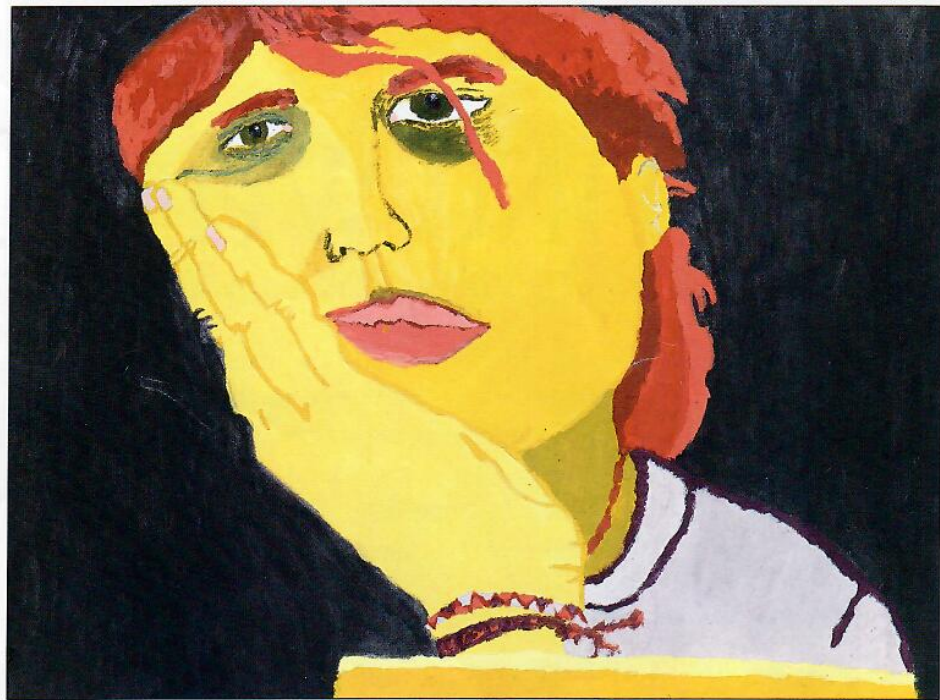
#### How did you begin?

I drew a light sketch, like a contour drawing. Because even though the painting is distorted, I wanted it to be a certain way. I wanted the hand to have detail in it and the details are magnified because the hand is so large. One eye is getting pushed up by the huge hand. I don't know if I planned to leave out one of the shoulders, but I like the way it worked out. It sets the figure off balance. It looks like it's going to fall over because of all the weight on one side.

#### How did you choose the colors?

I particularly like the deep, deep teal blue in the background. It makes me think of the ocean, if you went deep down, really far out. I was also thinking of a painting of fish by Paul Klee [Clay] in which he used this dark blue with bright pink and a greenish yellow. I used the dark teal in the back to make this figure seem more isolated. The yellow is not a pretty yellow, but I really like it, and the orange-red hair seemed to work well. I like split complements [a color, its complement, or opposite, and one of the two colors next to the complement on the color wheel — such as blue with orange and yellow]. They make everything vibrate.

At first I thought it was strange to use bright colors for such a quiet subject. But these colors vibrate like really strong



*These colors vibrate like really strong emotions do. Even feelings of boredom and isolation vibrate within you. Anything you feel in your stomach has to be strong . . .*

emotions do. Even feelings of boredom and isolation vibrate within you. Anything you feel in your stomach has to be strong. If I'd used browns or muted, low-key colors, it would not have shown the strength of the emotion.

That strand of hair falling over the eye — that's the way my hair always is. It gives a feeling of disarray, of being frazzled. It's also a way to hide. You don't have to be seen.

#### Was anything making you feel this way?

It might have been the time I had a fight with my best friend. We have only had one fight, and this could have been it. We fought for a whole week. We didn't even talk to each other. It was really horrible because she's like a sister to me. When I fight with someone who's really close to me, I get a scared feeling inside, because I don't want to

lose them. Yet I'm usually too proud to say it's stupid that we're fighting.

#### Does art help get your feelings out on paper?

Yes, it really does help. And after I finish, I feel this release. All the bad feeling, the frustration, the extra energy is gone. It's great for stress. I guess it's my sort of exercise.

#### How do you get emotion in your work?

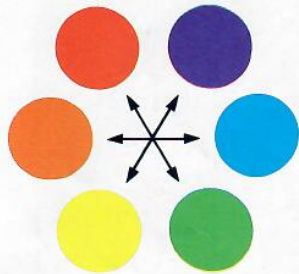
Just be truthful with yourself. Try to confront your emotions and figure them out. And don't do things just because you think that's the way it should be done or it's what the teacher wants. Use the freedom you have in art. You don't get it very often in the things that you do. Think about what you want to express. Because that's what's most important — making sure you like what it is you've done.

*We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules book.*



# CREATING WITH COLOR

*Learn how to use color to express your own emotions.*



In this issue, you read how artist Paul Gauguin felt he had to go to the other side of the world in order to express his own inner vision. On the island of Tahiti, Gauguin used color in a unique way to express emotion. Even though he was in a new, exotic land, Gauguin used traditional subjects — figures, landscapes, still-life objects — to communicate his feelings. In this workshop, you'll create your own emotional statement using elements from Gauguin's visual language: **simple shapes, heavy black lines, and pairs of complementary colors.** The color wheel on the left will help you choose color combinations. **Complementary** colors are *opposite* each other; **related** colors are *next* to each other. Red, yellow, blue are **primary** colors; orange, green, violet are **secondary**. Red, yellow, orange are **warm** colors; green, blue, purple are **cool**. Adding white makes a **tint**; adding black makes a **shade**.

## Materials

- 18" x 24" 80lb. Sulfite paper
- Ebony pencil
- Vinyl eraser
- Drawing board
- Masking tape
- Acrylic (tempera) paint; primary/secondary colors
- Round/flat paint brushes
- Palette (or flat surface) for mixing paint
- Divided container to hold paint
- Toweling
- Water container
- Plastic wrap to cover paint

Prepared by Ned J.Nesti, Jr., Morrison (IL) High School. Photos by Larry Gregory.



Where are the **primary colors**, **tints**, and **shades** in this photo?



## Starting Out

Step 1: Set up a still life of densely arranged plant forms. Select an interesting section of the arrangement and do several preliminary drawings. Simplify the forms, flatten the shapes, eliminate parts of the plants to avoid confusion. Contrast various types of plants; emphasize repetition and surface pattern. Create several different compositions and select the one that you feel will work best.

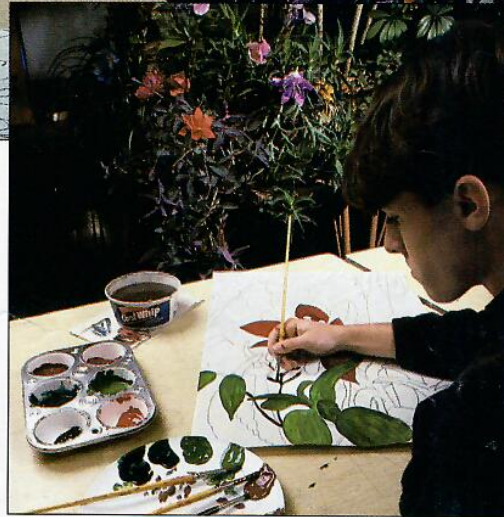


## Step 2

Select three, or at the most four colors. Your choices do not have to reflect the actual colors of the plants. Look at the color wheel; think about the emotion you want to communicate and decide if your colors will be **complementary** (opposite) or **related** (next to each other). Will the colors you select be **warm** or **cool**; **primary** or **secondary**?

## Step 3

Will your forms be **flat** or will they be slightly **rounded**? Will your composition be **balanced**? The **negative spaces** between the plants are as important as the **positive shapes** of the plants themselves. Will you use any **tints** (adding white to a color) or **shades** (adding black)? Will each brushstroke show, or will your forms be smooth and flat?



See how many exotic kinds of plants you can find for your still-life setup.

## Some Solutions

Each of the final paintings shown on the right is based on the same still life, but what different kinds of feelings is each artist communicating? They've all used **bright, intense colors** and **simple, basic shapes**. Which artists have used only **primary** (red, blue, yellow) colors? Which have used **complementary pairs** of colors? Have any used **related colors**? Most of the artists have used **warm** colors. Can you find any **cool** colors? Who has used **tints/shades**? Which of these paintings look very "emotional"? Has the artist communicated his/her emotion through the use of color, the kinds of forms used, or the painting style — smooth, controlled brushstrokes or thick, choppy, slashing strokes?



1



2



3



4

Compare the **shapes**, **colors**, and **patterns** in these paintings with the paintings by Paul Gauguin shown on the cover, pages 6-7, and pages 8-9. In what ways are all these works alike?

Paintings by (1) Brandon Renkes, (2) Lance Wiersema, (3) Chris Johnson, (4) Andy R. Vanosdol.



## Compare these contemporary American artists' use of color with that of Paul Gauguin.



In the work shown above, light colors and tints give a feeling of calm.

Miriam Schapiro (b. 1923). *Children of Paradise*, 1984. 31½" x 47¼". USF Art Galleries.

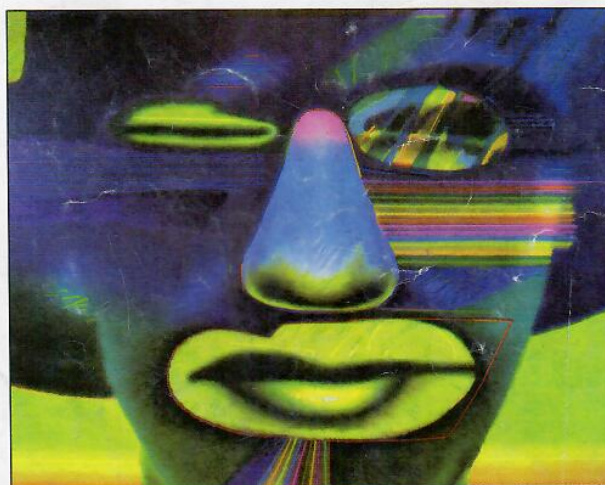
### *The Colors of Life*

What kind of feeling do you get from the collage on the left by contemporary American artist Miriam Schapiro? In *Children of Paradise*, Schapiro combines fabrics representing traditional women's lives — lace, chintz, gingham — with painted abstract forms. The fabric in the center of the composition resembles a patchwork quilt. Schapiro says, "I wanted to . . . connect myself to the unknown women artists who made quilts, who had done the invisible 'women's work' of civilization." Like Paul Gauguin, Schapiro uses color to express emotions. In this work, she creates tension and visual interest with pairs of complementary (opposite) colors: blue-green, red-orange. She contrasts the textures and bright colors of the fabrics with the light colors and tints (white added) of the abstract background. Combined with the fabric shapes she has chosen — hearts, houses, children's clothing — these colors convey a sense of calm, quiet, and a worry-free childhood.

### *Electronic Flashes on Canvas*

When you look at *Frio* (right) by Chicago artist Ed Paschke [PASH-kee], do you almost "hear" it as well? What kind of sound track do you imagine for this painting — a screaming, heavy-metal guitar solo, computer-generated sounds, or perhaps just the steady hum of an electric sign? Paschke draws inspiration for his "high-tech" images from TV, media images, neon signs, and even pinball machines. Compare this work with Paul Gauguin's self-portrait on pages 2-3. In each work, the artist has used distortions of col-

or to create a sense of unease. In *Frio*, Paschke has used bright, intense Day-Glo colors that seem to vibrate and are not easy to look at. This gives the viewer a tense, anxious feeling. The colors the artist uses are related (analogous): blues, greens, purples. The series of bright, neon-like lines creates an illusion of movement and a sensation that this painting may quickly flash by like an image on a TV screen. These lines also draw the viewer's eye to the focal point: the glowing, electric-green mouth. — S.B.



How is color used to give this image a sense of anxiety?

Ed Paschke (b. 1940). *Frio*, 1985. 80" x 100". Phyllis Kind Gallery, N.Y., N.Y.