

 SCHOLASTIC

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AMEDEO MODIGLIANI
WORKING WITH SHAPE

SCHOLASTIC
ART



COVER Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920). *Self Portrait*, 1919. Oil on canvas. 39 1/2 x 25 1/2 in. Museu de Arte, São Paulo, Brazil. Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic Inc., 1895-1982

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SHAPES INTO PORTRAITS

"I want a short but intense life."

—Amedeo Modigliani



▲ Modigliani in his early 20s.

© HIP/Art Resource

► The long face, outlined shapes, and sunken eyes of this early portrait hints at the unique painting style Modigliani would later make famous.

Portrait of Maude Abrantes, 1907. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Ruben and Edith Hecht Museum, Haifa, Israel.



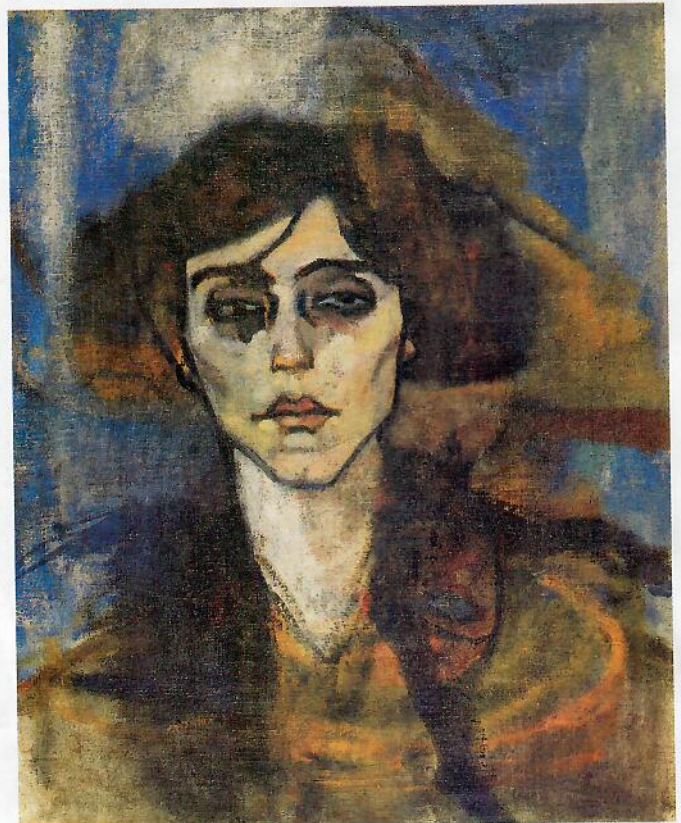
▲ The simplified shapes Modigliani created in his sculptures influenced his painting style.

Head of a Woman, 1910/1911. Limestone. 25 3/4 x 7 1/2 x 9 3/4 in. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Chester Dale Collection

Text by Suzanne Bilyeu.

Paris around the turn of the 20th century was an exciting place for a young artist. Painters, sculptors, and writers gathered in cafés to discuss art and ideas. A Spanish artist named Pablo Picasso (see page 4) was at the center of a group who would soon develop a revolutionary style called Cubism. It was into this world that Amedeo Modigliani (Ah-meh-DAY-o Moh-dih-lih-AH-nee) arrived in 1906. He would spend most of his life in Paris, getting to know Picasso, Diego Rivera (see page 5), and other famous artists. He would immerse himself in art and overindulge in the party atmosphere of Parisian nightlife.

Not long after Modigliani arrived in Paris, he painted this portrait (below) in a somewhat realistic style. The shading, modeling, and brushwork all give an illusion of deep space. Several years later, Modigliani painted the portrait on the right. Does it appear to have been done by the same artist?



This work is based on **simplified, stylized, elongated shapes and large, flat areas of color**. The early portrait's dark, haunting eyes have become blank slits. Small features are set in an elongated oval face.

Modigliani was born in a small Italian town in 1884, the youngest of four children. His father was a businessman, his mother ran a school. As a child, Modigliani was frequently ill and spent long periods in bed reading and drawing. His mother gave him an excellent education and in his early teens, he began his formal training in art.

In 1902, Modigliani left for the large city of Florence, where he studied figure drawing. The works he saw by the Impressionists and other French artists prompted him to go to Paris. There the artist enjoyed playing the role of the freewheeling artist. He abused drugs and alcohol, gaining a reputation for rowdy behavior and stormy relationships with women. His misadventures earned him the nickname "Modi"—based on the French for "cursed."

Throughout his career, Modigliani concentrated on portraits and figures. He painted friends, girlfriends, people he met in bars and cafés. Sometimes he would peddle these paintings to pay for meals. He was determined to develop his own style, refusing to join any particular art movement. Unfortunately, Modi was indeed cursed. Always in poor health, he developed tuberculosis. Even as art dealers began to take an interest in Modigliani's work, his alcoholism worsened and he could often be found wandering the streets of Paris. He died in 1920, at the age of 35.



▲ **This subject avoids the viewer's gaze. Her face seems to resemble an African mask, and her vacant eyes make her appear aloof or indifferent. Her figure is made up of ovals, cylinders, and other simple shapes.**

Woman with a Fan (Lunia Czechowska), 1919. Oil on canvas, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

HUMAN STILL LIVES



“What I seek is not the real or the unreal, but rather the mystery of the instinctive in the human face.” —Amedeo Modigliani

◀ **Loose brushstrokes and curving shapes express artist Pablo Picasso’s dynamic personality.**

Portrait of Picasso, 1915. Oil on paper laid on card. Private collection. Photo: © Christie's Images Ltd.

For a while, Modigliani tried to realize his dream of becoming a sculptor. He carved directly in stone, which he often stole from building sites because materials were so expensive. Most of Modigliani’s sculptures, (see the work on page 2) created between 1910 and 1914, consisted of idol-like heads inspired by African and Asian

art. During these years, Modigliani also experimented with two-dimensional art forms—drawings, watercolor and oil sketches related to his sculptural work. By 1914, the artist’s poor health made it difficult for him to do the hard physical labor of sculpting in stone, and the outbreak of World War I (1914–1918) made materials scarce.

Modigliani began to focus entirely on painting, and nearly all of his paintings were portraits. These works are different from traditional portraits intended to document the way a person actually looks. For Modigliani, portrait subjects were like interesting objects in a still life. Most subjects do not gaze directly at the viewer, but instead seem to look inward.

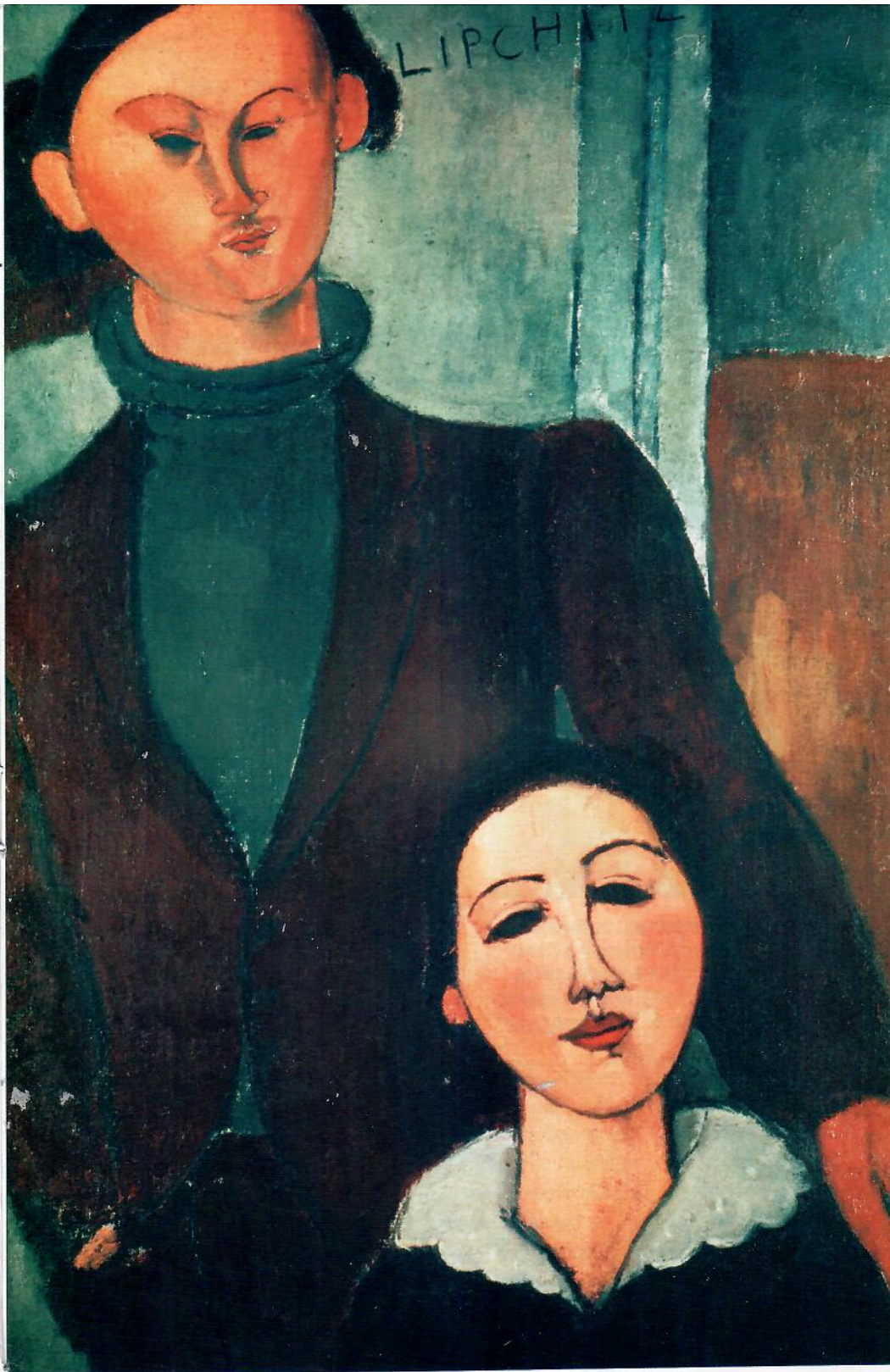
In his portrait of Diego Rivera (far right), Modigliani portrays a Mexican artist known for his vast public murals based on social and political themes. Modigliani focuses on Rivera’s large, round face and full lips. The rest of the figure is less clearly defined. The painter has suggested Rivera’s large body with scrawly lines and dark, swirling brushstrokes.

In the sketch made for a portrait of Pablo

◀ **The long face and sharp features of French poet Max Jacob suggest the author’s mournful and sarcastic writings.**

Portrait of Max Jacob, 1916. Oil on canvas. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany. Photo: © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.





◀ The shapes in Modigliani's painting of French sculptor Jacques Lipchitz echo the large, dark, abstracted figures that Lipchitz created.

Jacques and Berthe Lipchitz, 1917. Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago. Photo: © Francis G. Mayer/Corbis



▲ Diego Rivera's huge, sweeping murals based on simplified, organic forms are reflected in Modigliani's portrait of the Mexican artist.

Portrait of Diego Rivera, 1914. Oil on cardboard. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, Germany. Photo: © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

Jacob—a French poet, writer, and painter who belonged to a circle that included Picasso and other experimental artists. In his portrait of Jacob (below far left), Modigliani creates a sculptural effect by dividing the elongated face into **angular, geometric forms**. Jacob's long, **triangular** nose resembles the flat planes found in a carved African mask. The artist has **cropped** the image, cutting off the top of

Picasso (top left), Modigliani has captured the unpredictable nature of the man who was later to become the most celebrated artist of the 20th century. Modigliani's **impulsive brushstrokes** symbolize Picasso's ever-changing art styles. The **focal point** of the work and its most visible facial feature, the artist's dark, penetrating eyes, stare straight out at the viewer.

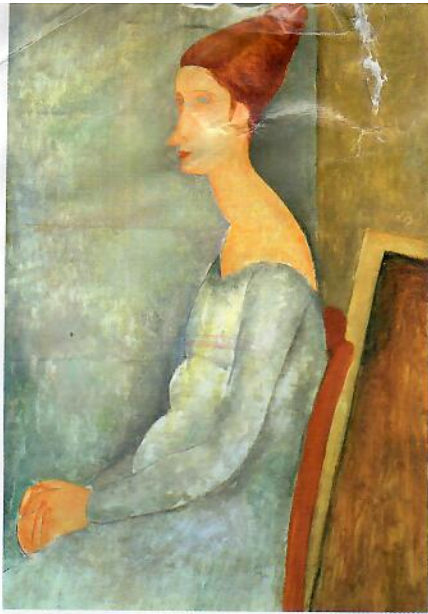
Among Modigliani's closest friends in Paris was Max

Jacob's hat. One of the figure's eyes has been crosshatched; the other is an empty area of gray.

Modigliani uses an **asymmetrical composition** in *Jacques and Berthe Lipchitz* (above left), a double portrait of a French sculptor and his wife. Notice that the man's body **frames** the image of the woman. The **curved** figures contrast with the **angular shapes** in the background. And the **overlapping** and **interlocking shapes** serve to join the figures together.

PORTRAITS OF A LADY

“To distort is to correct nature in terms of the artist’s sensibility.”—Amedeo Modigliani



▲ Modigliani’s girlfriend Jeanne was also his favorite model. And the artist used shape to capture different aspects of her personality. Here, the slumped pose and grayish color indicate a passive or depressed mood.

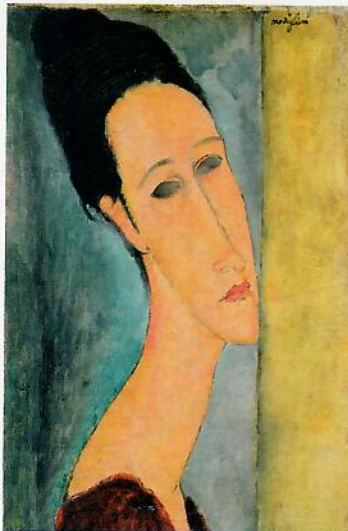
Woman Seated with White Dress and Red Hair, 1918. Oil on canvas. © The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania. Photo: Bridgeman Art Library.

As Modigliani’s style matured, his work took on certain characteristics that would become “trademarks” associated with his name: distorted, elongated figures with mask-like faces; large, flat areas of color; neutral backgrounds; and simple organic (curved) and geometric (angular) shapes. His figures’ almond-shaped eyes are usually narrow, empty slits that reveal little. But the artist gives glimpses into the figure’s personality through subtle cues: an arched eyebrow, a slight tilt of the head, use of warm (reds, yellows, oranges) or cool (greens, blues) colors.

In 1917, Modigliani became romantically involved with a young woman named Jeanne Hébuterne (Jan Eh-boo-TERN). Although the relationship was troubled and often violent, Hébuterne posed for many portraits. Her life ended tragically in 1920. On the day after Modigliani died, Hébuterne leapt to her death from a fifth-floor window.

The works shown here and on pages 8-9 are typical of the artist’s mature style: In each portrait, Hébuterne is shown with a small, pursed mouth and long, exaggerated nose. Her eyes are narrow and blank. Modigliani gives her an elongated face and long, graceful neck. The figures are flat, with little shading or modeling; the backgrounds are darker and filled with textured brushstrokes.

The portrait (top left) shows Hébuterne in profile, or from the side. The S-shaped curve of the figure’s pose can



▲ In this close-up, Jeanne’s head seems almost trapped on the left side of the frame, held in place by a vertical line suggesting a feeling of confinement.

Portrait of Jeanne Hébuterne, 1918. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Art Library.



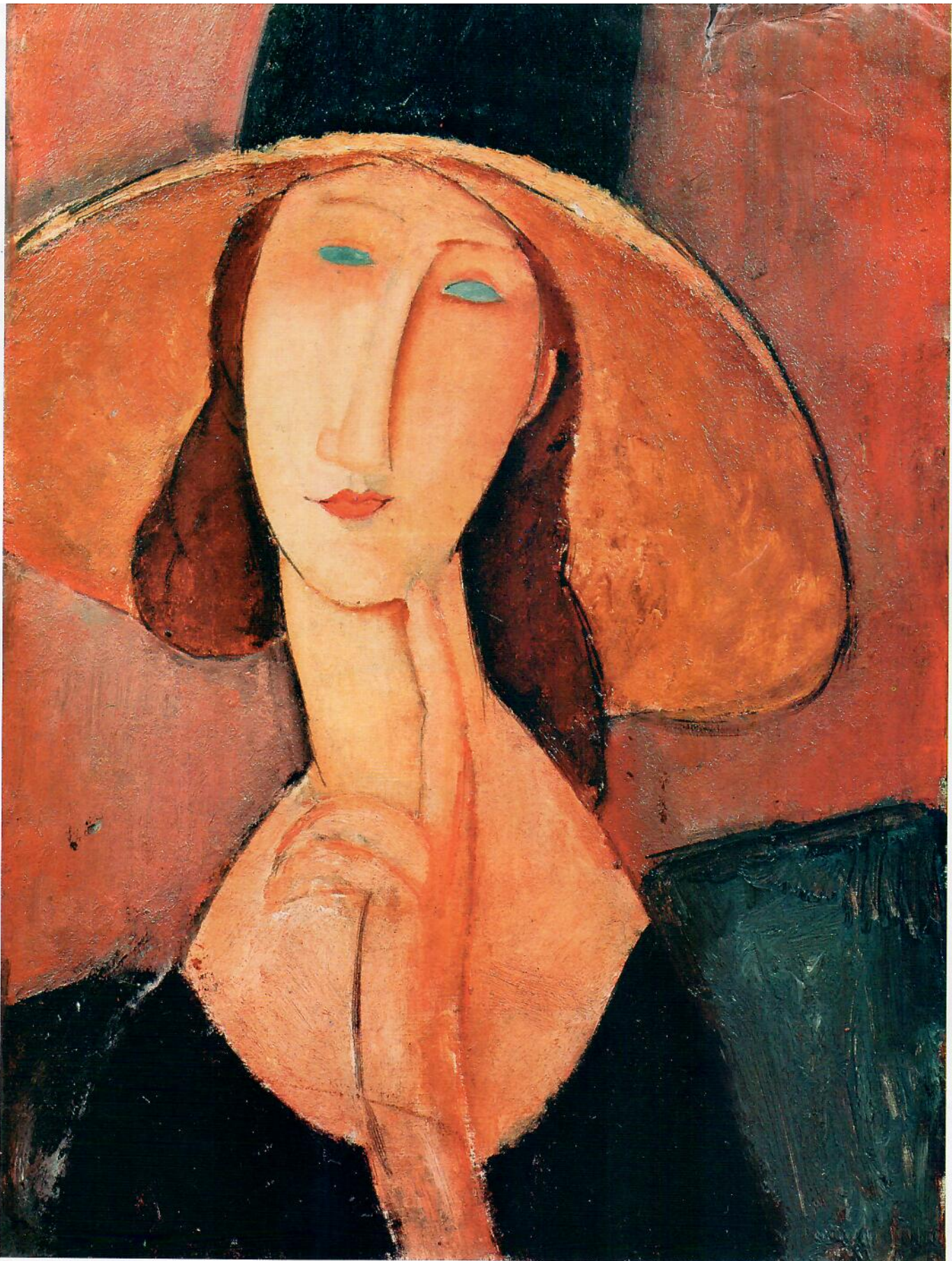
▲ By way of contrast, the active diagonal made by the angle of her elbow, thrust confidently over the chair, depicts Jeanne in a more upbeat mode.

Portrait of Jeanne Hébuterne, 1919. Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 3/4 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nate B. Spingold, 1956. Photo: ©1985 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

be found in many of Modigliani’s portraits. The artist has created a triangular composition and uses repeating triangular shapes—including an exaggerated “beehive” hairdo. The curved shapes of the figure contrast with the chair and other angular shapes in the background.

In the portrait (right), Hébuterne’s oversize, stylish hat gives her a dramatic appearance. Her cropped figure nearly fills the frame. Modigliani emphasizes her swanlike neck and exaggerates her long wrist, hand, and fingers. The composition is based on organic, oval shapes and a series of circular movements. The curving brim of Hébuterne’s hat leads the viewer’s eye around the composition.

In *Jeanne Hébuterne* (pages 8-9), the focal point is the figure’s head at the center of what appears to be a red cross-shaped background. Modigliani uses warm colors and dynamic, intersecting, diagonal lines to present his model in a dramatic, active mood.



▲ A large, dramatic hat gives Jeanne the look of a fashion model and emphasizes the circular movement of the composition. Arching eyebrows make the figure appear smug and slightly aloof.

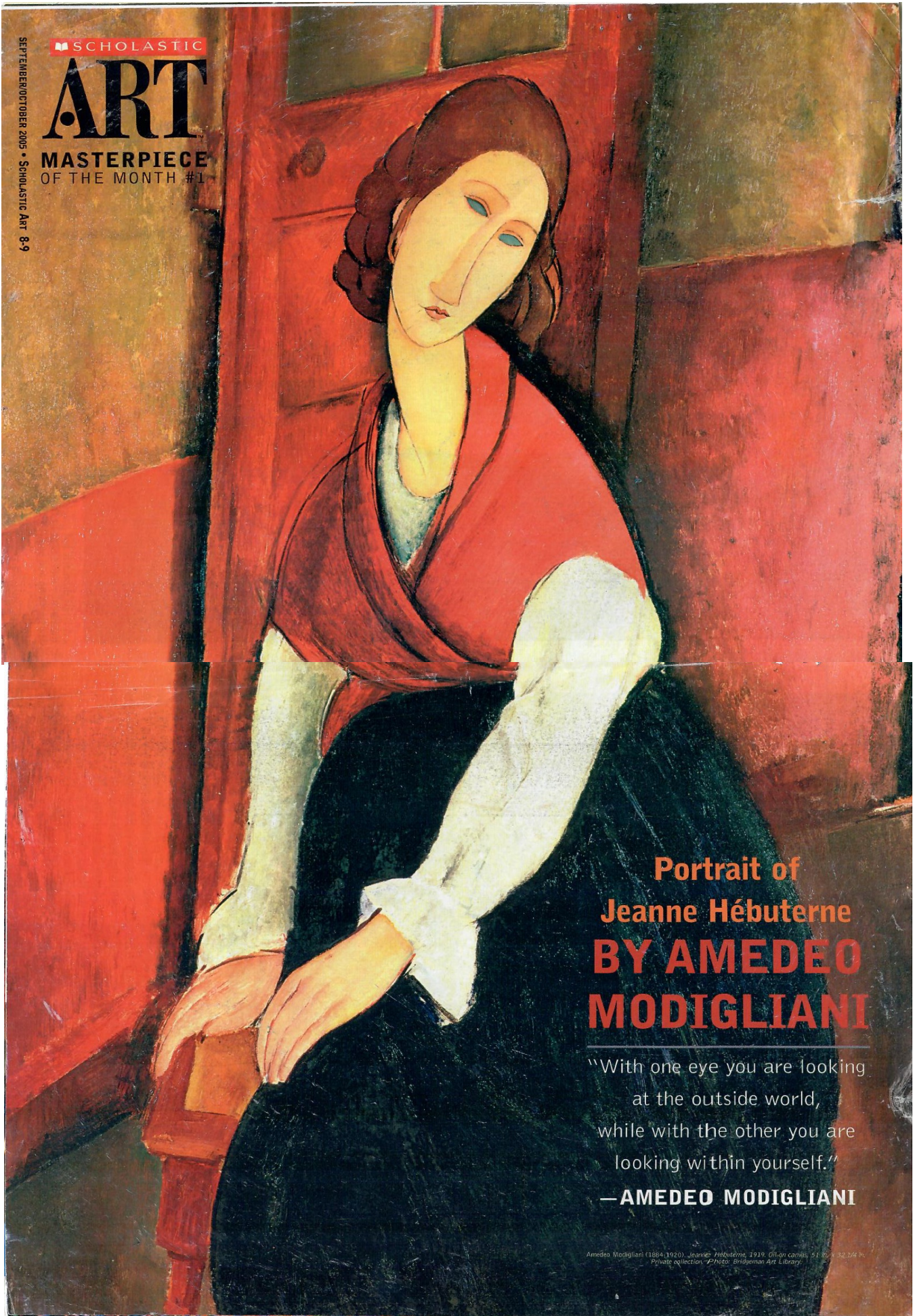
Jeanne Hébuterne in a Large Hat, circa 1918. Oil on canvas, 21 1/2 in. x 15 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

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SCHOLASTIC

ART

MASTERPIECE
OF THE MONTH #1



Portrait of
Jeanne Hébuterne
**BY AMEDEO
MODIGLIANI**

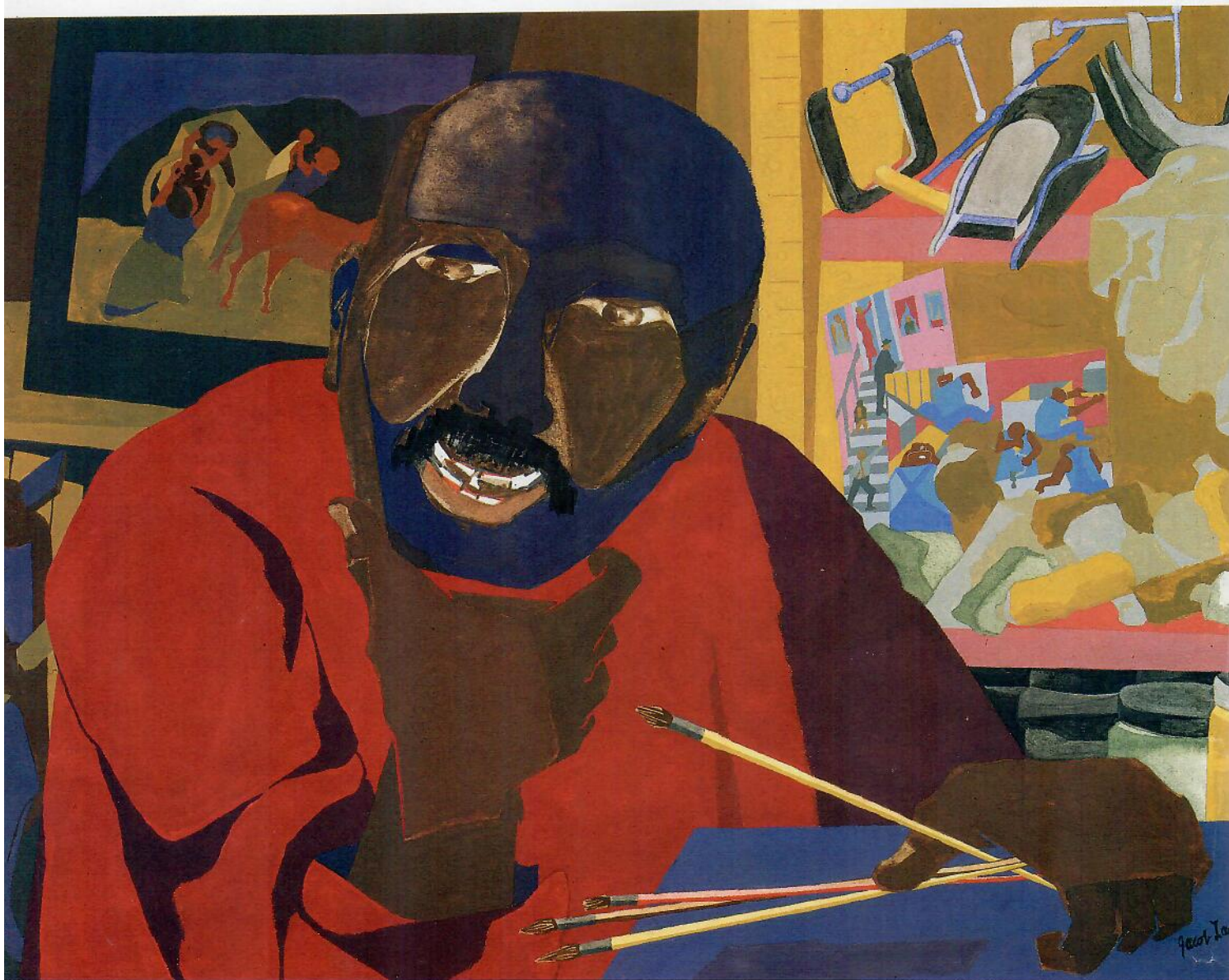
"With one eye you are looking
at the outside world,
while with the other you are
looking within yourself."

—**AMEDEO MODIGLIANI**

Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), Jeanne Hébuterne, 1919, Oil on canvas, 51 in. x 32 3/4 in.
Private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Art Library.

SHAPING THEIR OWN IMAGES

Three painters who have used shape to express who they are.



“WHEN THE SUBJECT IS STRONG, SIMPLICITY IS THE ONLY WAY TO TREAT IT.” —JACOB LAWRENCE

ABSTRACTED SHAPES

African-American history is a major theme in nearly all of 20th-century painter Jacob Lawrence’s works. In this self-portrait, the **large, simple, abstracted shape** of the artist is framed by the **small, interlocking shapes** in the paintings behind him. The **curved shapes** and **cylinders** of the tools and paints he uses to create them appear above and below the paintings on the right. The focal

point of this work, the artist’s smiling mask-like face, is indicated by the **diagonals** in the background on the left and those formed by the brushes he holds. The **pastel tints** (light values) that make up the background set off the **solid, brightly colored shape** of the dominant foreground figure.

▲ Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000). *Self Portrait*, 1977. Gouache on paper, 22 1/8 x 30 in. The National Academy, New York. Courtesy of the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation. © 2005 The Estate of Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

**WORKING NEARLY 400 YEARS AGO,
DUTCH PAINTER JUDITH LEYSTER USED
SHAPE TO DEFINE HER PROFESSION.**

REALISTIC SHAPES

Today we accept this self-portrait by Judith Leyster as a typical example of a self-confident artist working at her easel. But, as one of barely a handful of professional female artists in all of 16th century Holland, Leyster was anything but typical. The artist paints in the representative, highly realistic style of her time. Her **rounded, modeled figure** is set in **deep space**. Her content expression, relaxed pose, and the shape and sweep of her arm express the artist's confidence in her talents. The **diagonal** created by her brush leads the viewer's attention to the painting she is working on. And a **corresponding diagonal** made by the musician's bow brings the eye back to the composition's **focal point**, the face of the artist. Its **oval shape** is echoed and repeated throughout the composition—in her hat and collar, the face in the painting, and in the symbol of her profession, the artist's palette she holds.

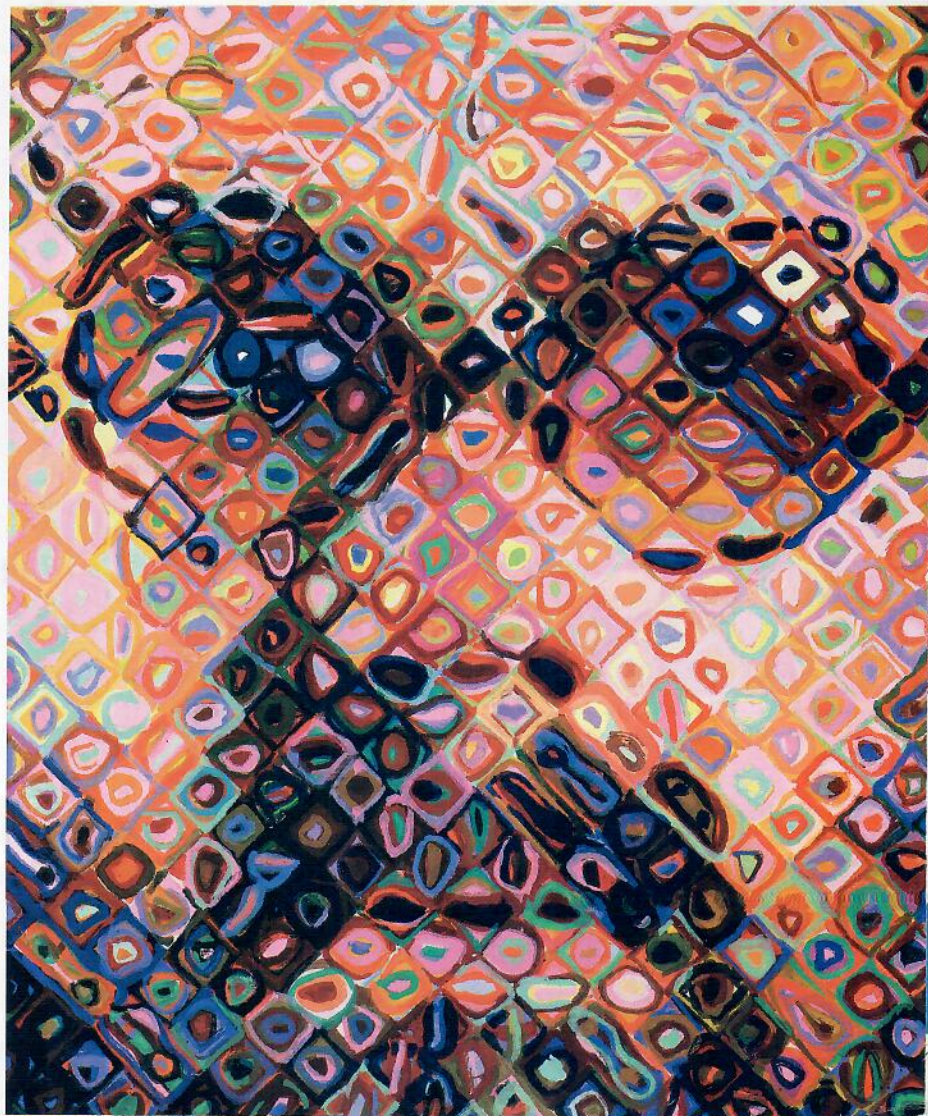
◀ Judith Leyster (1609-1660). *Self-Portrait*, c. 1630. Oil on canvas, 29 3/8 x 25 5/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss.



**“IF YOU PAINT A FACE BIG ENOUGH,
IT’S HARD TO IGNORE.”
— CHUCK CLOSE**

SHAPES WITHIN SHAPES

Contemporary American painter Chuck Close has been creating enormous faces for nearly 40 years. For the past 15 of those years, the artist has been partially paralyzed. So he has learned to paint from a wheelchair with a brush strapped to his arm. Close has always used a **grid pattern** to enlarge the huge faces he bases on small passport-like photos. Shape has become an even more important element in his most recent works, such as the self-portrait (right). In this painting, a **square grid pattern** has been tilted on a **diagonal**, which gives the work a restless feeling. Small **abstract, brightly colored organic shapes** appear within each **geometric diamond-shaped unit**. The entire image is **tightly cropped**, further adding to the sense of anxiety and unrest.



▶ Chuck Close, b. 1940. *Self-Portrait*, 2002. 43 Color hand-printed woodcuts on Nishinouchi paper, 31 x 25 in. Edition of 60. Published by Pace Editions, Inc.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Creating EXPRESSIVE SHA

At first, Padric Gleason didn't like the idea of painting himself. The award-winning portrait pictured on the right was one of the first pieces Padric, 17, ever did. "I was a little nervous," he says. "I really wanted people to know it was me when they looked at my self-portrait, but I wasn't confident I could pull it off."

In order to succeed, Padric—then a junior at Hall-Dale High School in Farmingdale, Maine—decided to keep things simple. He avoided too much detail and worked with large, basic shapes to convey his image and passion for sports. Now a senior, Padric spends most of his free time on the track either race-walking, doing hurdles, relays, or cross-country running. He will probably pursue a degree in medicine or engineering after he graduates, but says he will always have an appreciation for art. "With school and sports, my life is pretty structured," he explains. "When I create art, I love to play around. I feel free."

How did you first get involved in art?

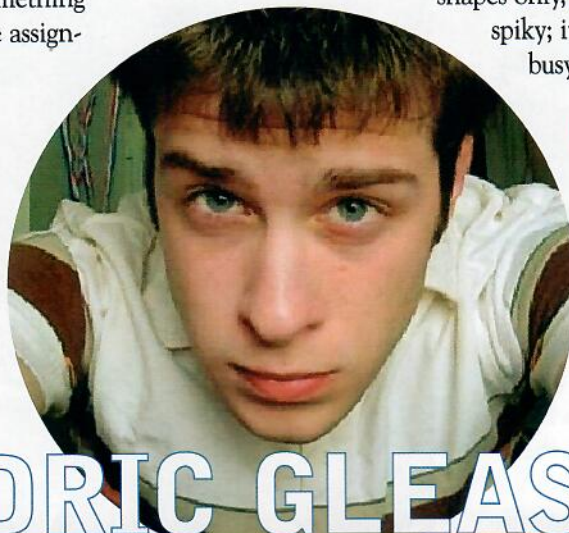
When I was little, I drew on my own. My design class in junior year was the first serious art class I've ever taken.

How did you come to do this art-award-winning piece?

It was an assignment; we had to create a self-portrait using a technique where you turn a sketch into a painting by layering tempera paints. The self-portrait had to show a three-quarter view of your face and tell something about your life. Other than that, the assignment was open-ended.

When you got this assignment, how did you feel?

I was nervous. I'd sketched portraits of other people, but never one of myself. I was particularly scared of the eyes. They're the most telling feature in a self-portrait; I wanted to get them just right.



PADRIC GLEASON

How did you get your idea?

It evolved as I worked. I sketched in my head, then saw a space in the upper left-hand corner. I thought it would look cool to put in a flying soccer ball, since I love soccer. I love music, so I put sheet music and notes going across the middle. But my biggest passion is track. My dream is to compete in the Olympics someday as a race-walker. To represent that, I added a track shape at the bottom. Small olive leaves, like the ones on Olympic athletes' crowns, are repeated in the background.

Why do you enjoy race-walking?

I started when I was 8 and later I joined a Junior Olympics summer track club. It was fun and came naturally to me. I kept doing it and got better and better. Last year, I was the national runner-up in the Junior Olympics.

What were you trying to say with your design?

Since sports is such a big part of my life, I wanted the piece to have lots of energy. To create that energy, I used curved shapes only, no straight edges. Also, my hair is spiky; it looks wind-blown and adds to the busy, energetic design.

How did you go about creating this piece?

We worked on a cardboard-like surface called "bogos" paper. I outlined the shapes of my face and the background with thick white chalk and painted the areas between the lines with a layer of

"I thought it would look cool to put in a flying soccer ball, since I love soccer. I love music, so I put sheet music and notes going across the middle. But my biggest passion is track. My dream is to compete in the Olympics someday as a race-walker. To represent that, I added a track shape at the bottom."

PES

tempera. Then I added a couple more layers of lighter, darker, or opposite colors. After the painting dried, I covered it with waterproof India ink. The ink seeps into the chalk lines so they turn black.

What did you do next?

I had to dry the piece with a hair drier within 10 minutes or else the ink wouldn't come off. When the piece was dry, I washed it in a big sink. I sprayed lukewarm water on it to wash the ink and paint layers away, all but the first. I stopped washing when I got the layered, mottled effect I wanted and the only black remaining was in the outlines.

What was the biggest challenge for you?

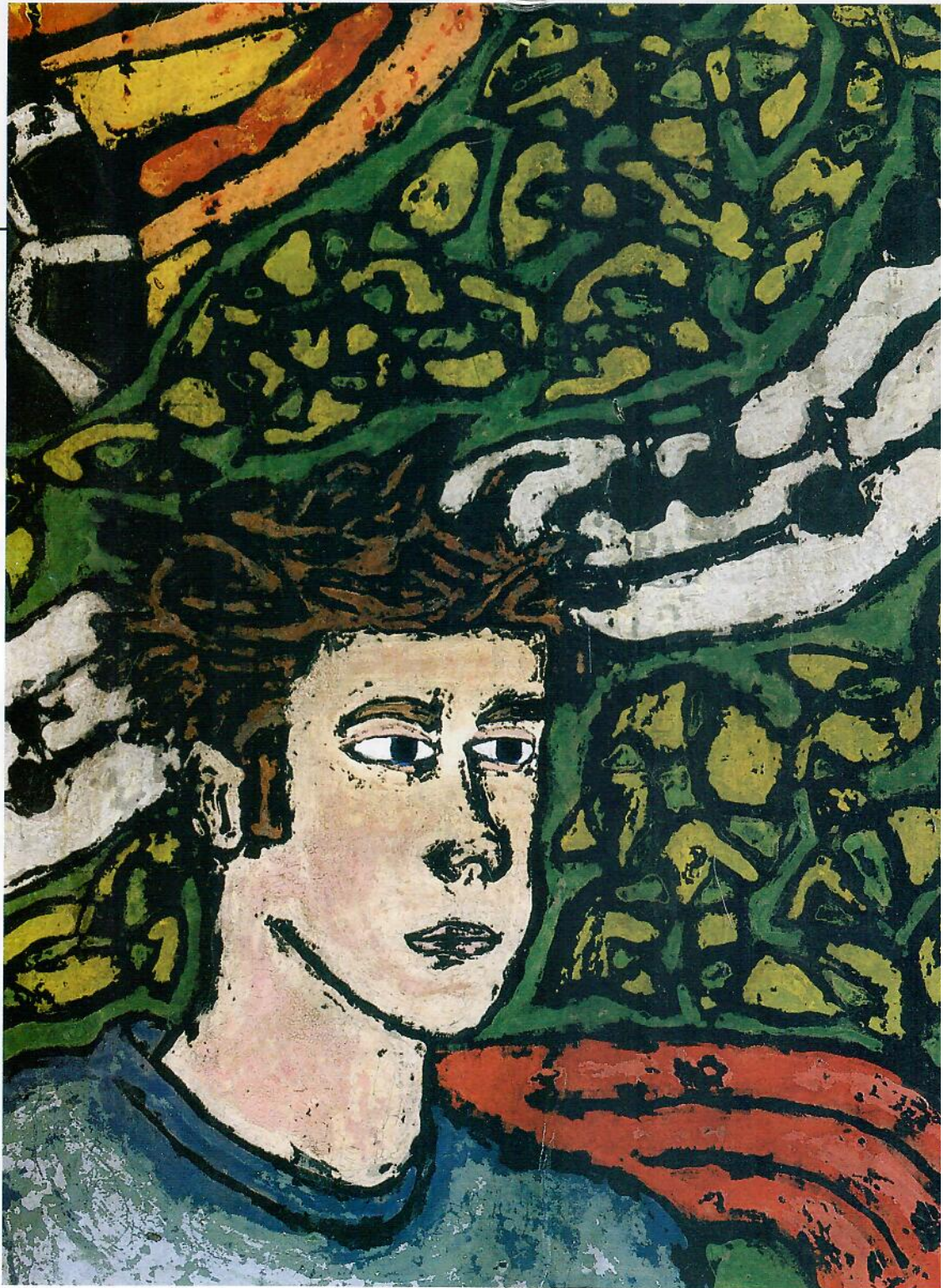
The first layer is the hardest. You have to be careful not to cover the chalk lines with paint or they won't end up black. The leaves took the most time. Adding layers of paint and making sure I didn't cover their chalk outlines got annoying.

Were you satisfied when you were done?

I liked everything but the eyes. The pupils were too big and twirly. They made me look hypnotized or something. So I used tempera paint to correct and reshape them.

What advice do you have for other young artists?

Don't paint what you don't want to paint. Don't do what



you don't want to do. Because if you're doing something you don't care about you're not going to do your best. That applies to anything you do, including art. Be passionate about what you're doing and you'll be successful.

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WILL SEDIG



In his **profile view**, Will has **repeated curved shapes**—the hat, the head, the fan. The **related colors** (red, pink, orange, brown) and the **framing** of her face by the hat and fan present the sitter as calm and self-assured.

MICHELLE BOS



Michelle's **simplified close-up** depicts a pale, mysterious face emerging from a **flat black background**. The **rounded shapes** and brownish tones are brought to life by **complementary** (opposite color) blue eyes.

ANDREW HOLT



In this **frontal view**, Andrew has pulled back to show the figure from the waist up. The shapes are **modeled and shaded**, giving the sitter a life-like quality. This heightens the grotesque effect of the popping, pupil-less eyes.

SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP

PAINTING A FIGURE

Use simple shapes to create a powerful figure painting.

MATERIALS

- 18 x 24 in. 30 lb. Newsprint paper (drawing exercise)
- 18 x 24 in. 80 lb. White sulfite paper
- No. 2 School pencil
- Drawing/painting board
- Vinyl eraser
- Powdered or liquid tempera (primary, secondary, black, and white)*
- Divided palette for paint, cupcake tin (aluminum liners for easy cleanup) or small covered containers (margarine/yogurt)
- Variety of medium/small flat and round brushes
- Water container to rinse brushes
- Plastic wrap or grocery sack to cover palette
- Paper toweling
- Masking tape (to attach painting to board; ID labels)
- Palette for mixing paint (old dinner plate)

* For this assignment, a 50/50 mixture of Blickrylic and Dick Blick Student Tempera was used; good color, economical, dries quickly, does not smear.

Modigliani and most of the other painters featured in this issue simplified and stylized the shapes of their figures. To characterize personality and body language, the artists emphasized, elongated, distorted and otherwise altered their subjects' appearance.

In this workshop, you'll work with shape to create a unique and expressive figure painting.

STEP 1 Set up model (possibly wearing interesting hat, clothing). Have model take a few active poses. Do some quick gesture drawings to warm up. There should be no interaction between model and class while working.

STEP 2 Set up an interesting pose that can be held for 10-15 minutes. Then do one or two 20-minute contour drawings to prepare for painting. You may draw from many **points of view**: straight on, from the side, 3/4 view, and close up. Your composition can be **symmetrical** or **asymmetrical**. The background as well as the figure should be part of the composition; both should be broken up into **simple, abstract, shape-like forms**.

Prepared by Ned J. Nestl, Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison Junior High School, Morrison, IL • Assisted by Andrea Beveroth, Art Instructor, Buffalo Elementary, Buffalo, IA; Nicholas R. Bonneur, Art Instructor, Walter Reed Elementary, Chicago, IL; Charles Dubnick, Painter, Glendale Heights, IL; Stuart Roddy, Art Instructor, Morrison High School. • Photos by Larry Gregory and Wade Duerkes, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.

ERICA SANCHEZ



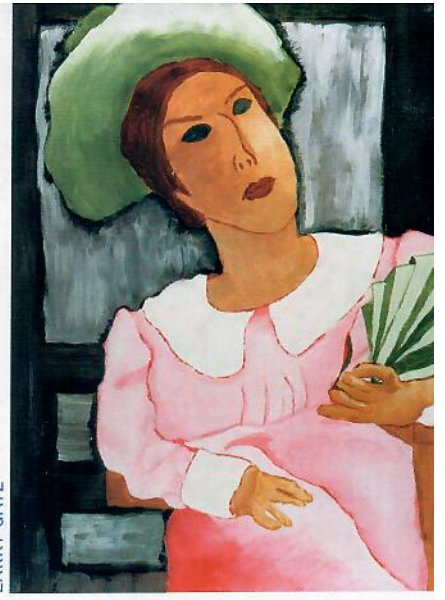
Elongated shapes and complementary colors (yellow/purple) dominate Erica's portrait. On top of the subject's long neck is a white, mask-like face with tiny features. The brown, **textured, angular** background objects add to the portrait's surreal quality.

SPENCER HORN

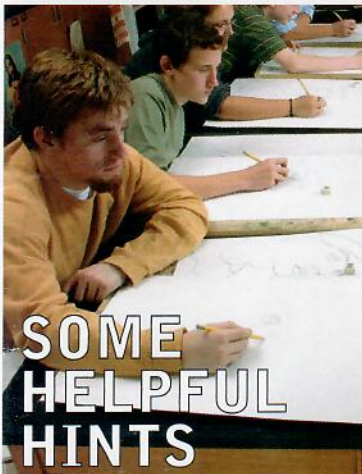


Spencer's **profile close-up** is dominated by **geometric shapes and straight lines**. **Repeated triangular forms** define the model's nose, chin, hair, and fan. The **angular shapes** and bar-like ladder in back create a sinister atmosphere.

LARRY GATZ



Larry has included nearly the full figure in his **three-quarter view** portrait. The **bold outlined shapes, complementary colors** (red and green), and the model's **diagonal, off-center** pose suggest a strong-willed and forceful personality.



SOME HELPFUL HINTS

AS YOU BEGIN: In your contour drawing, try to capture the basic shape of the figure and its relationship to the background.



REMEMBER: Always refer to the model when painting. Paint in stages, beginning with the background.

STEP 3 Choose the strongest contour drawing and transfer to white paper. Simplify shapes, eliminating non-essential details. Use **distortion** and **elongation** where appropriate to capture personality and body language. Avoid excessive exaggeration to prevent a cartoon-like appearance.

STEP 4 Begin painting process by selecting colors. Limit color scheme to two **complementary** (opposite) color pairs (red/green; blue/orange; yellow/purple). Use **tints/shades** (dark/light values) of each. Start with background and larger shapes. Work from light to dark.



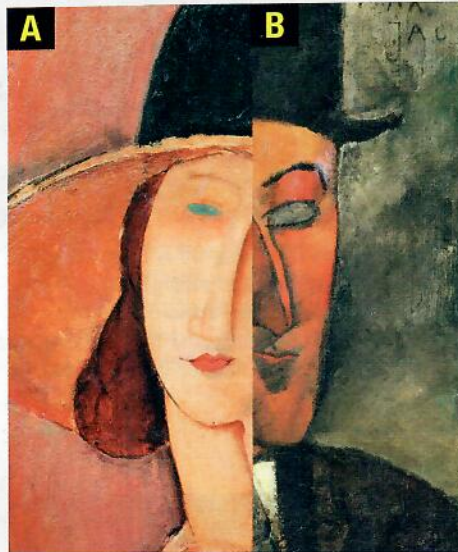
HINT: Mix enough paint to cover the entire area. It is difficult to match a mixed color.

FACIAL SHAPES

How do artists use the element of shape to help create a portrait?

The element of shape plays a great part in determining the success of a portrait. And there are many different ways in which artists can use and manipulate shapes in order to express themselves.

To the right are details from a few of the paintings that appear in the magazine. And below are a list of terms and artists associated with them. Next to each word or phrase write the letter of the image (or images) you feel is most appropriate.



- ___ 1. Amedeo Modigliani
- ___ 2. Grid pattern
- ___ 3. Flat shapes
- ___ 4. Elongation
- ___ 5. Textures/brushstrokes
- ___ 6. Modeled shapes
- ___ 7. Active diagonals

- ___ 8. Shapes within shapes
- ___ 9. Judith Leyster
- ___ 10. Mask-like face
- ___ 11. Bright, related colors
- ___ 12. Angular, geometric forms
- ___ 13. Simplified shapes
- ___ 14. Distortion

- ___ 15. Diamond-shaped unit
- ___ 16. Organic, curved shapes
- ___ 17. Blank, almond-shaped eyes
- ___ 18. Jacob Lawrence
- ___ 19. Slumped, passive pose
- ___ 20. Deep space
- ___ 21. Chuck Close