Letting the

“IT WAS A FANTASTIC TIME TO LIVE; A WHOLE NEW STYLE IN EVERYTHING—MUSIC, CLOTHES, AND ART.”
—PETER MAX

In February 1964, four young lads from Liverpool, England called the Beatles appeared on American TV. Suddenly the youth of America were swept into “Beatlemania.” Guys started to grow their hair long and girls wore their skirts short. A young artist named Peter Max created colorful images that reflected this emerging youth culture. His gravity-defying art of Cosmic Runners and Flower Jumpers, leaping across star-studded galaxies, and Indian sages levitating in front of Himalayan peaks captured “The Age of Aquarius.” Almost overnight his art was everywhere—on posters, calendars, clocks, scarves, neckties, and stationery.

Peter Max’s childhood was filled with travel and adventure. He was born in Berlin in 1937 and at the age of 1, embarked with his mother and father on an ocean liner to Shanghai, China. There, Peter’s father ran a successful department store and the family lived in a pagoda house in a neighborhood of many cultures. Peter’s first drawings were done with the calligraphy brushes used by his Chinese
nanny. But he soon became fascinated with the American comic books which he purchased from a street merchant, and he started to copy their drawing styles.

When Peter was 10, his family took a trip to Tibet (a small, mountainous country near China). After returning to Shanghai, they journeyed by ship to Israel, stopping in South Africa, India, and Italy. In Israel, Peter studied art with a Viennese painter. He also developed a passion for space, and attended astronomy classes.

When Peter was 16, he traveled with his family to Paris, then on to New York City. There, he attended the Art Student's League in Manhattan and studied realism. After opening his first studio, his keen eye and graphic talents were soon discovered, and he won numerous awards for record albums and book jackets. His realism evolved into the highly original graphic style seen in Top Cat (below, left).

Beginning with a blob of wet black ink, Max folded the paper to create a face-like mirror image. Flopping and repeating the same side of the face, and placing photos in the negative spaces gives the figure a mysterious, sinister quality. Elements with dual meanings such as the cats' faces and the bow tie/butterfly add to the surreal—or dreamlike—effect.

Not only does the work on the right capture the nonstop intensity of the 1960s, it also reflects Max's childhood in Asia. It resembles a Japanese fan expanded to form a full circle, but the images are taken from fashion magazines. The repeating, overlapping, kaleidoscopic photo collage elements swirl around in an endless circle, while blindingly intense (bright) Day-Glo colors dominate the background.

△ Symmetrical (the same on both sides) designs such as this one, were inspired by patterns made by a kaleidoscope. This is a tube containing loose bits of glass whose images seem multiplied by being reflected in mirrors.
Creating

"I was painting and drawing, and there was this amazing phenomenon going on. My style just seemed to take hold..."
—Peter Max

In the 1960s, this peace symbol was displayed by people opposed to the Vietnam War. Here, Peter Max used bright primary colors to create his own optimistic version, filled with doves and flower children.


During Max's "Cosmic Art" period, he used stylized lettering and organic, plantlike forms.

he 1960s were a time of social and political upheaval. African-Americans were involved in a struggle for civil rights, and the United States was fighting an increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. Some young people alienated from conventional society became “hippies” or “flower children.” They often wore long hair, colorful “love beads,” peace symbols, and unusual clothing.

Peter Max, like many people of his generation, became interested in meditation, yoga, and Eastern spirituality. This was reflected in his work. He also created art for human and animal rights, ecology, and a natural, organic lifestyle. Max upheld the values of the “new age” before it began. He was an artist who had also become a pop-culture icon.

In Love (left), Max contrasts the letters’ flat, cool, dark colors (blue and green) with the graduated, warm, transparent yellows, oranges, and pinks of the background. Peter Max and other 1960s artists were influenced by another radical art style from the past—Art Nouveau, popular in the 1890s (see Scholastic Art, Sept/Oct 2004). These stylized letters and organic shapes suggest Art Nouveau imagery.

Peace Sign (opposite page, far left) incorporates a shape that became the universal symbol of protest against the Vietnam War. In this design, Max uses bright, flat primary colors—red, blue, and yellow. White doves—also representing peace—fly in and out of the heavy black outlines, while stylized flower children run the opposite way.

The poster shown on the cover was created in 1968 at the peak of what Max has called his “Cosmic Art” period. This work contains the artist’s most popular themes: rays, stars, clouds, planets. The bottom half of the composition is a reflection—or mirror image—of the background at the top. The negative white shape forming the face is the composition’s focal point. Stars, repeated in varying scales, appear to radiate out from the center. The organic (curved) shapes of the clouds, the human profile, and the planets contrast with the geometric stars and rays. Max has created a shimmering effect by using complementary color pairs (red and green; blue and orange; yellow and purple) that create a vibrating effect when placed next to each other.

A stylized sun shining on a colorful new century is the subject of the poster (above, right) created for the millennium year 2000. In this work, radiating lines of related, warm, graduated color suggest the glow of a rising sun.

Peter Max’s work was so popular at the time that he was in constant demand. Seventy-two companies manufactured products with his designs and sold hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of merchandise—from General Electric clocks to Burlington socks. Max had become to the art world what the Beatles were to music. His art appeared in museums, on magazine covers, and on TV. And, like the Beatles, he had a vintage Rolls-Royce, but covered with his decals.

In 1970, Max decided to withdraw from the public eye, and went into seclusion to do what he loved most—to paint. He developed a more painterly style, noted for spontaneous, expressionistic brushstrokes.
A Colorful

"PEOPLE THOUGHT I DISAPPEARED WHEN THE SIXTIES ENDED"

A one-man show called "The World of Peter Max" opened at the M.H. De Young Museum in San Francisco in 1970. The exhibit toured 46 U.S. cities over the next two years. Max had achieved just about everything a person could hope for: His work was in high demand, and it had made him a millionaire. But in 1971, he decided to pull back from the commercial scene. Max later recalled, "While I had great success, I realized I no longer wanted to align my images with products."

Max closed his business and embarked on a "creative retreat" to pursue painting. The retreat, intended to last six months, went on for the next 18 years. Max experimented with different styles, including abstract art, and returned to more traditional subject matter. His color palette became softer. Occasionally, Max would emerge from his retreat to accept commissions for posters and special projects—such as designing the first 10-cent postage stamp. In the 1980s, he created art to raise money for restoring the Statue of Liberty.

Max opened an enormous studio in Manhattan in the late 1980s. Some of his more recent art combines painted elements with imagery from some of his earlier works. The artist also uses a wide variety of printing techniques, such as lithography (the image is drawn on a stone or other flat surface and printed) and serigraphy (silk screen), to create his designs.

Year 2250 (near right) is intended to celebrate both the past and the future. This brilliantly colored work reflects Max's interests in Eastern spirituality and astronomy. Spaceships hover over ancient pyramids, while Zen boats glide on the water. The artist has used ultra high-intensity Day-Glo colors, so saturated (bright) that the complementary pairs can leave afterimages. He uses a series of broken lines to define the image rather than the heavy comic-book outlines that characterize his earlier works.

Ship with Pyramid (opposite page, top) is a lithographic print. On a yellow background, the artist used red and orange crayons to sketch a stylized boat, a pyramid,
 Actually, I just painted all the time.” —Peter Max

mountains, and flying saucers. The related colors (red, yellow, and orange) create a warm, calm, sun-drenched scene in which the present, past, and future seem to merge.

In both Astrological Astroland (pages 8-9) created in 1968, and the Grammy poster (below), done 26 years later, Max uses some of the same imagery—spaceships, comets, profiles. Both works are filled with color tints (light values), all of the same intensity, so the objects seem to blend together. But the highly complex, interlocking images in the earlier work create a kind of cosmic explosion. They frame the composition's focal point, the black negative space encircling the globe in the center. The geometric grid pattern in the Grammy poster anchors the later work, stabilizing and tying the various elements together. The secondary color tints (greens, oranges, purples) pop against the black background. In the midst of the “cosmic” imagery is a stylized gramophone—the antique record-player that symbolizes the Grammy Awards.

Today, Peter Max has a studio in New York City, where he creates posters for special events, to raise money for environmental causes, and to promote human and animal rights. In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Max made six posters to celebrate “the spirit of America.” Proceeds from these works went to the September 11 Fund, the Twin Towers Fund, and the Pentagon Survivors Fund.
ASTROLOGICAL ASTROPLANE

by Peter Max

"THAT ERA WAS SO FABULOUS,
SO RICH IN ITS AURA, IN ITS HOPEFULNESS.
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME
WE SAW PLANET EARTH
PHOTOGRAPHED FROM AFAR...
IT WAS EVIDENT THERE ARE NO BORDERS,
THIS IS ONE BIG PARK,
ALL THE DIVISIONS AREN'T IMPORTANT."

—Peter Max
FIGURES IN COLOR

Artists use color in many different ways to create their portraits.

"TO MAKE ART, YOU MUST BECOME A BLUES SINGER—ONLY YOU SING ON THE CANVAS."
—ROMARE BEARDEN

MUSICAL COLORS

If 20th-century African-American artist Romare Bearden had not decided on an artistic career, he might easily have become a musician. He composed several hit songs in the 1950s, and music was always very important in his life and his art.

Best known for his highly inventive photo-collages, Bearden also made sketches like this one (above) while attending jazz performances. The quick, freely painted lines and washes on a brilliant red background suggest the dynamic, spontaneous nature of the sounds being created. The monochromatic (maroon and pink are just different values of one color—red) color scheme gives the work visual unity. And the overlapping, unevenly spaced figures further reflect the way jazz sounds are woven together.
"STARTING TO MAKE A PAINTING IS LIKE STARTING TO TELL A STORY." — ELIZABETH MURRAY

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLORS

At first glance, contemporary American artist Elizabeth Murray's shaped, abstract painting called Brush's Shadow (left) doesn't look anything like the other two works on these pages. But if you look carefully, maybe you can find a blue, snowman-like figure behind an enormous green paintbrush.

Like almost all of Murray's paintings, this work is based on her feelings about personal events, about her family, and her life as an artist. Her related color scheme (blue, green, and purple) joins together three flat, interlocking and overlapping organic (rounded) shapes. The three cool colors are all the same value (lightness and darkness), further linking the artist and her tools. Murray has said, "I think that the brushes changing into bodies in my paintings suggest the importance of art in my life."


"COLOR IN A PICTURE IS LIKE ENTHUSIASM IN LIFE." — VINCENT VAN GOGH

THE COLORS OF FRIENDSHIP

Because of his difficult and unstable nature, 19th-century Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh had very few friends. The woman in this portrait (right) was one of them, and the artist has painted her as one of the stabilizing forces in his life. Her large, green shape is surrounded by complex wallpaper patterns. Her solid form, set off by a bright red background, suggests her role as a supportive and dependable friend in a chaotic world. Her maternal nature is further emphasized by the rope she holds as she rocks her baby's cradle.

For van Gogh, colors had specific emotional meanings. Green was spiritual; red stood for warmth, and yellow represented hope and friendship. This work is dominated by these hues. The thick, swirling shapes and complementary color pairs (red/green; blue/orange) found in the floral wallpaper pattern suggest the energy and power of nature. The figure's red and gold head echoes and repeats the oval shapes in that pattern, visually linking the subject with these natural forces.

Sara Lutenbacher Webne has a passion for creating art that catches viewers’ attention. “I love to play with color and design to see how they affect the way people look at things,” Sara, 19, explains. “The mood certain colors create, the way a viewer looks at the subject can make people feel they’re part of a piece—not just passive observers.”

A perfect example of Sara’s style is the award-winning portrait she created as a junior at Pope John Paul II High School in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Now a freshman majoring in graphic design at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, Sara hopes to some day use her creative ideas in the advertising world. “I couldn’t live without creating art, I would go crazy,” says Sara. “Nothing allows me to express my feelings and have a relationship with the viewer the way art can.”

How did you first get involved in art?
When I was three, I saw a snake in my grandmother’s garden. I was really afraid of it but she said, “No it’s really beautiful.” She got her easel and sat and painted the snake and I helped her. I loved how art could make even a snake beautiful. I’ve drawn and painted ever since.

What made you do this award-winning piece?
My junior year, a friend of mine was creating portraits using cut out pieces of colored paper. She did one of me, but I didn’t like it. I decided to make my own cut out portrait that looked more like me.

How did you get your idea?
I knew I wanted to use color to create a mood. I also knew that one way to draw the viewer in was to make eye contact with them. I had my stepdad take a bunch of pictures of me. I picked this one because it had strong eye contact and sort of a sullen look to it. I’m usually not like that, but it intrigued me. I knew if I worked in dark colors, the portrait would feel somber. My idea was to play with bright colors, to see if they could have an effect on the viewer and change their perception.

Why did you choose these colors?
Do they say something about you?
I wanted my portrait to feel like summer, my favorite season. I chose pink and blue because I associate those colors with watermelon and the ocean. I ruled out dark colors and pastels because I didn’t want the piece to feel too feminine. Eventually, I chose related colors with the same value and intensity. They worked best together to convey my happy, warm feelings associated with summer.

How did you go about creating this piece?
I selected a picture, then worked with it on a computer program. I used a tool which simplified the picture into nine colors. It changed the features of my face into color splotches, shapes I could cut out and work with. Then I blew the image up to the size I wanted and printed it.

Then what did you do?
I assigned each color on the printout a construction paper color. For example, the burnt orange in the computer version would become pink in my cutout. I rubbed vine charcoal on the back of the printout so I could trace the lines onto the construction paper. I cut out the outlined shapes, then glued them down on black paper. The largest pieces of color went down first. The smaller pieces went down last. It was like putting together

SARA LUTENBACHER WEBNE

"I think I achieved the effect I was after with color. In spite of the somber pose, I don’t think anyone would say this (above right) is a sad, depressing portrait. I think they’d say it’s pretty upbeat. And the only reason it looks that way is because of the colors that I used."
a puzzle. Each piece had to fit perfectly with the next one to create the image I was after. I worked in layers of color, using my computer original as reference. If the black background showed through too much, I re-cut each shape so I could get a better fit.

What came next?
Once everything was layered on, I used colored pencils to trace the lines between the shapes. I used contrasting colors. Between green and blue areas, I drew red or orange lines, so the shapes seemed to pop out more. The contour lines were the last step.

What was the biggest challenge for you in creating this piece?
Cutting the pieces out was hard, but figuring out how to fit them together was the biggest challenge. After I cut them all out, they were lying on the table in a big pile. Placing them perfectly was very difficult.

Were you satisfied when you were done?
Definitely. I'd never made a paper cutout before, so I was very satisfied. The image looked like me. And I think I achieved the effect I was after with color. In spite of the somber pose, I don't think anyone would say that this is a sad, depressing portrait. I think they'd say it's pretty upbeat. And the only reason it looks that way is because of the colors that I used.

How have people responded to your self-portrait?
Most people can't help but look at it. When people realize
The large orange flower in Sydni's horizontal painting links the warm, graduated (yellow, orange, red) background with red's complement, the green background area on the right. The cool (purple, blue, green) linear edges further emphasize the orange flower as the composition's focal point.

In Katelyn's composition, the related colors (red, orange, yellow) in the background are graduated, or blended, from left to right. This causes the purple flower in the foreground to relate to the red background on the left and to complement—or clash with the yellow background on the right.

**SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP**

**CREATING COLOR COMBINATIONS**

Design a color still life that seems to pop off the page

**MATERIALS**
- 18 x 24 in. 30lb. newsprint paper
- 18 x 24 in. 80lb. white sulfite paper
- Drawing boards
- Ebony pencil
- Fine powdered graphite
- Small containers to hold graphite and tempera paint (margarine and yogurt containers)
- Inexpensive hair spray
- Flat or round 1/4 and 1/2 in. brushes
- Liquid tempera paint (primary, secondary, black and white)*
- Plastic wrap to cover palette
- Cray-Pas, 12, 16 or 25 color set
- Variety of plastic and silk flowers, several vases
- White cafeteria napkins

* Cheeck tempera works best. Dick Blick Premium Liquid Tempera was used (good color, opaque, dries quickly). About two pints of each color were required for each class.

As you've seen from the works in this issue, color is one of Peter Max's most important tools. In this workshop, you'll use color to turn an ordinary flower arrangement into a colorful and inventive composition.

The color wheel above will help you select colors. Remember, red, yellow, and blue are primary colors. Orange, green, and purple are secondary (and can be mixed from the primaries). Complementary colors are opposite each other. Analogous or related colors are next to each other. Red, yellow, and orange are warm; green, blue, and purple are cool. Adding white makes a tint; adding black creates a shade.
John's vertical painting features three complementary color pairs. The blue and purple flowers stand out against the orange and yellow background. The green leaves complement the red vase. A flat, blue tint forms a border on the right; a blue shade anchors the bottom.

The background in James's painting consists of related colors (red, orange, yellow) graduating out from a yellow center. The large orange flower that dominates the composition is framed by blue and green shades. Against this complementary background, the flower's yellow edges make it appear to glow.

Eitak's composition is made up of small orange flowers on long green stems. Limiting the palette to three related colors (orange, yellow, green) unifies the work. The light green graduated tint on the right balances the dark green shade at the bottom.

**STEP 1** Set up several still lifes featuring a variety of plastic or silk flowers arranged individually or in vases. To prepare for the color painting, you will use powdered graphite to do several mass gesture drawings. This will show you how to capture a form's broad mass rather than its contour outline. With graphite and fingers, draw several flower compositions on large newsprint. Stand while working and draw using your entire arm, not just your wrist.

**STEP 2** Select the strongest flower composition. Then, on sulfite paper, divide background into three areas. The largest area will be a gradation of two analogous, or related, colors (next to each other on the color wheel). A third color will result when the related colors are blended. Use brushes for gradual blending. The second background area should be a flat, cool color (violet, blue, green) made into a shade by adding black. A third area can be created by making a tint of a color you are already using.

**STEP 3** Use your fingers to paint the flower on the background. Will you use complementary colors, analogous colors, tints, or shades? You might consider beginning with the flower's natural color. For unity, one color should dominate the composition.

**STEP 4** With Cray-Pas, add linear detail and gestures. Definition and detail add life and movement. Use lines as accents; don't outline whole shape. Refer to flowers when drawing lines. Not every edge should be outlined.

**SOME HELPFUL HINTS**

BEGIN your flower composition by using a brush to paint three background areas. The largest will be made up of two related, graduated colors. The other two areas will be flat.

REMEMBER to use your fingers to paint the flowers. Use the side and tip for heavy and light areas of paint. To make a color tint, begin with white and add a tiny bit of color. To make a shade, add a little black to the color.
For more than 40 years, graphic artist Peter Max has been creating his unique images. And one of the most important components of his vision is the element of color.

Here are details of some of the artist's works featured in this issue, and a list of related color qualities, terms, and associations. Next to each word or phrase, write the letter of the image (or images) you feel is most appropriate.

1. High intensity colors
2. Negative space
3. Graduated colors
4. Symbols of peace
5. Outlined shapes
6. Eastern spirituality
7. Repetition

8. Scale variations
9. Cool colors
10. Flower children
11. Warm colors
12. Primary colors
13. Complementary color pairs
14. Negative white shape
15. Saturated colors
16. Astronomy and astrology
17. Secondary colors
18. Radiating lines
19. 1960s protest symbol
20. Flat colors
21. Color tints