

Art Analysis with Jacques Hurtubise

ARTREACH LESSON PLAN

Developed for Visual Art 7-9



Jacques Hurtubise, *Nizi* (detail), 1971



Art Analysis with Jacques Hurtubise

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia exhibition, *Jacques Hurtubise: Prints from the Collection*, inspires this lesson plan. The lesson is focused on art analysis and will guide students to discuss and reflect on the definition of abstraction through the elements and principles of art and design.

Jacques Hurtubise was best known as a Quebec abstract painter and printmaker. His hard-edged abstraction and bright, geometric patterns have often linked him to other artists working in a similar way; Claude Tousignant, Guido Molinari and Yves Gaucher.

Jacques Hurtubise: Prints from the Collection traces Hurtubise's career from his early graphic abstract paintings of the 1960s and 1970s to the stencil work of his blackout period. Comprising over 30 prints, the exhibition provides an overview of this key figure in Canada's abstract art history.

Developer: Art Historian Anna Richard
Suggested Grade Level: Visual Art 7-9 (can also be adapted for Visual Art 10-12)

RATIONALE

When students first see the artwork of Jacques Hurtubise, their response is often very enthusiastic... “Wow”, “Now that is cool!” The immense energy portrayed in the work seems to transmit directly to the students and has a positive impact on their motivation.

Hurtubise's artwork provides an ideal opportunity to share with students abstract works of art that are vibrant and engaging. Students will begin to understand the practice and development of Abstract Expressionism and discover the layers of meaning and effort involved in this style of art making. *See Appendix A for a definition of abstract art.

Evidence of Learning (Indicators)

- Analyze how the elements of art and principles of design are used in the communication of meaning in works of art
- Compare various media used by artists to create works of art
- Analyze possible meaning of works of art
- Compare ways works of art inform, sustain, and influence culture
- Investigate ways in which works of art are an expression of culture and identity

INTRODUCTION

Analyze

Gather and select appropriate information; Reflect on accuracy, validity, and, importance of the information; communicate findings.

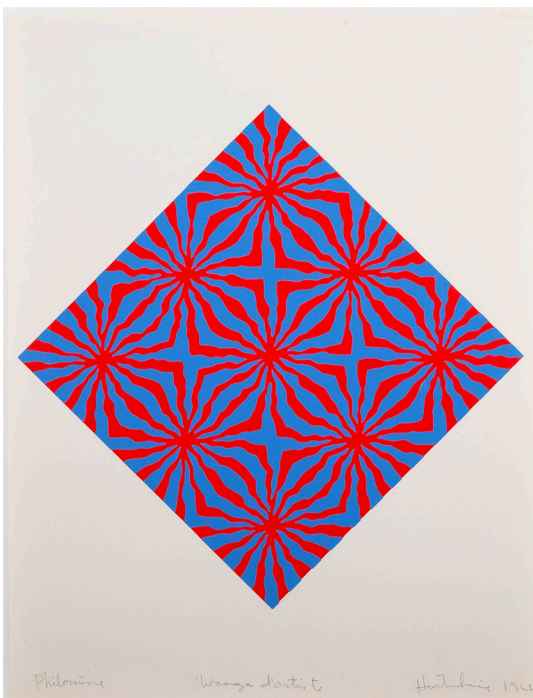
Interpreting and analyzing art can help us to find meaning in artworks. Here are some different kinds of meanings we can look for:

- **Artistic intent**
Did the artist try to communicate something specific? Can you figure it out?
- **Personal meaning**
What does it mean to you? Does it remind you of something? What does it make you feel?
- **Expression and impact**
Who made the artwork? Where? When? Can you see ways that these factors may have influenced the way the artwork looks? If yes, what impact did these factors have?

This lesson provides information and guidance for three different art interpretation methods:

1. Looking closely (observing and describing)
2. Using context (information that we know, or can learn, that is relevant to our understanding)
3. Comparison (comparing to other artworks)

Each approach provides information and additional perspectives.



LESSON RESOURCES

The PDF document of Jacques Hurtubise Artwork Images for this lesson can be shared with the students by projecting it like a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, or colour printed as a handout.

This artwork is named *Philomene*. It was created by Jacques Hurtubise in 1966.

INTERPRETIVE STRATEGY 1: LOOKING CLOSELY

Students can engage with *Philomene* by projecting the image (Page 1 of the Jacques Hurtubise Artwork Images PDF) or by distributing a colour copy handout. See Appendix B for a printable version of the Vocabulary of Art Terms. The Vocabulary could also be shared by SMART Board or written on a whiteboard.

Instructions for Students

1. Impression

Take a minute to examine the artwork in silence. Now close your eyes - what do you remember most about it? Open your eyes again – what is the first thing you notice? Use your hands to cover up parts of the image and focus on one small area at a time.

2. Articulate

What do you see? Consider the Vocabulary of Art Terms for this artwork (Appendix B). Decide which elements and principles you think the artist used most effectively. Create an elements and principles chart with a short description explaining your choices.

Below is a sample chart produced by Anna Richard: The chart below shows the elements and principles in *Philomene* that stood out to me with a description of each.

Element: COLOUR	Element: LINE	Element: SPACE	Principle: BALANCE	Principle: REPETITION
Contrasting Vibrant	Wavy or undulating (not straight)	Square is rotated 45 degrees	Symmetrical	Shapes are repeated

3. Impact

What effect did Hurtubise achieve by his use of different elements and principles? This question can be approached this in two ways: consider the artist's intention but also your personal response. Option: Try approaching it both ways.

Think about the artist's intention and your personal response:

- Do you think Jacques Hurtubise was trying to create an image of a person, place, or object?
- Does Hurtubise artwork express a feeling or a mood?
- What is your personal response to this artwork?
For example: How does it make you feel? Does it remind you of anything?

Record your answers and use them to compose a sentence about the artist and his work (there is a sample sentence below)

[a] Name of artwork

[b] Name of artist

[c] Elements and principles used (from Vocabulary of Art chart)

[d] Impact

Example: In [a] *Philomene*, [b] *Jacques Hurtubise* uses [c] *contrasting colours, wavy lines, symmetry and repetition* on a canvas rotated *45 degrees* to create [d] a *vibrant, energetic work*.

INTERPRETIVE STRATEGY 2: USING CONTEXT

This strategy looks beyond the artwork itself to interpret it in terms of context (information that we know, or can learn, that is relevant to our understanding). What information can you gather about the artwork and artist? How does knowing this information impact the way you perceive the artwork?

Jacques Hurtubise Biography

*“For me, painting is the expression of an individual...
I just want to be me.” – Jacques Hurtubise*

Jacques Hurtubise was born in Montreal, Quebec in 1939. Hurtubise fell in love with painting and started studying art at Montreal’s Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1956. After finishing art school, he moved to New York for a year and then returned to Montreal in 1961 and married Monique Colangelo, a former Ecole des Beaux-Arts schoolmate. They had a daughter named Nathalie in 1962. Hurtubise created paintings and screenprints over the next several decades and had numerous exhibitions of his art.

In 1980, Hurtubise’s daughter died in a tragic accident. This prompted Jacques and Monique to leave Quebec in their camper van, which had a small art studio, and drive around North America. In 1983, they finally settled in Margaree Harbour, Cape Breton where Jacques continued to work until his death in 2014 at age 75.

“I am very instinctive. Everything is in my head and in my head it is very abstract. It doesn’t come out in explanation. It doesn’t come out in words. It comes out in paint. It’s visual. Instinctive and visual”, Hurtubise noted in 1981. While he identified as an instinctive artist, his work was nonetheless carefully created while giving the impression of dynamic, random or gestural strokes, splashes and blots.

Hurtubise’s controlled “brushstrokes” have often been compared to those of the Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein; they both created works of art that reflect the kind of gesture described above, that of the action painter. Hurtubise painstaking and detail-oriented printmaking process was also reflective of his controlled approach: doodle-like effects were reined-in by grid-like design.

Hurtubise also had a reputation as a “remarkable colourist” and his love of fluorescent colours is also evidenced in his prints, with their saturated colour and contrast. The colour pink appears frequently, from salmon and pastel hues to magenta, throughout his career. Above all else, Jacques Hurtubise’s work is about colour.

“I look at myself through my painting.” – Jacques Hurtubise

EXERCISE

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia has a large collection of Jacques Hurtubise's artwork. [Click this link](#) to access ARGUS, the Gallery's online collection database. Search "Jacques Hurtubise" to view a wide selection of his artwork.

Instructions to Students

Choose an artwork by Jacques Hurtubise and consider what connections you can make between Hurtubise's biography and the artwork you selected.

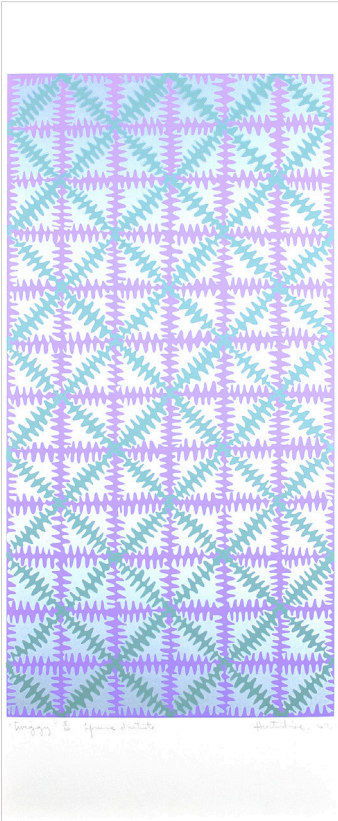
Look at the artwork's title, the year it was made, and think about the elements and principles of art that Hurtubise used.

Use your imagination to put yourself in the artist's shoes to think about why he may have chosen particular colours and what might have inspired him. It is not usually possible to know if you are right without being able to ask the artist, so come up with a hypothesis and provide evidence.



Jacques Hurtubise, *Sun Sun*, 1981

Example: Jacques Hurtubise's artwork, *Sun Sun* was made in 1981 while Hurtubise and his wife were driving around North America after their daughter Nathalie's death. Hurtubise used intensely saturated red and yellow colours reminiscent of the sun. These colours could reflect the intensity of his emotions following the death of his daughter. Remember It is not usually possible to know if you have made a correct assumption without being able to ask the artist.



Jacques Hurtubise, *Twiggy*, 1967

Examine Hurtubise's print, *Twiggy* (1967). Twiggy was the name of a British model who was an icon of 1960s fashion.

[Click here](#) (or conduct your own search online) to see an image of Twiggy.

[Click here](#) (or conduct your own search online) to see an image of 1960s fashion in Montreal.

Compare the artwork, *Twiggy* and the images you have researched, then choose one element or principle of art that is similar in the artwork and in one of your photos.

Example: Twiggy's wardrobe often features a repeating pattern as do many of the dresses in the fashion ad.

Discussion: Do you think this print by Hurtubise captures the look and energy of 1960s fashion?

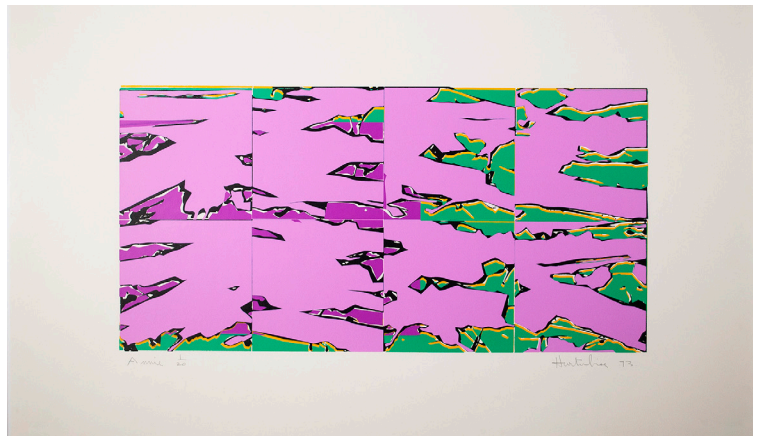
INTERPRETIVE STRATEGY 3: COMPARISON

Comparing artworks by the same artist, or different artists, can provide additional perspectives when interpreting art. The exhibition *Jacques Hurtubise: Prints from the Collection* presents a collection of 31 serigraphs made by Hurtubise between 1966 and 1997. (learn more about serigraphs under Resources)

Comparing artworks by Jacques Hurtubise



Jacques Hurtubise, *Niti*, 1971

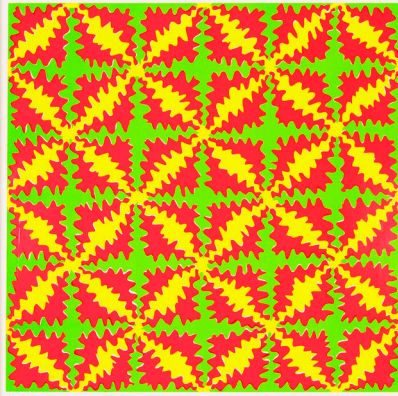


Jacques Hurtubise, *Annie*, 1973

Discussion

Look at two Hurtubise works produced in the 1970s: *Niti* (1971) and *Annie* (1973)

- What colours does Hurtubise use in each of these artworks?
- How are the elements of art organized in each image?
- What are the similarities in each artwork? What is different? How would you describe the change in Hurtubise's work between these two pieces?



Jacques Hurtubise, *Lola*, 1967



Jacques Hurtubise, *Noctule*, 1984

Discussion

Look at two works made 17 years apart: *Lola* (1967) and *Noctule* (1984)

- How does Hurtubise use symmetry and repetition in these artworks?
- How would you describe the lines and the edges of the shapes in each artwork?
- With 17 years more practice, what evolution do you see in Hurtubise's artmaking?

EXERCISE

[Click this link](#) to access ARGUS, the Gallery's online collection database. Choose one artwork from the database and one artwork by Jacques Hurtubise from the Jacques Hurtubise Artwork Images.

1. Use the method outlined in Interpretive Strategy 1 to closely examine the elements and principles used in each artwork you have chosen.
2. Research the artist whose artwork you have chosen from the ARGUS database and compare your findings to what you know about Jacques Hurtubise, in terms of context. When and where did they make their artworks? How does knowing this information impact the way you perceive the works? What connections can you draw between the two artists and their art?
3. Identify and explore the medium (the type of art materials) each artist used: painting, serigraph, photography, sculpture, video, etc. What materials did they use? Why do you think the artists chose the medium they used? Does it allow them to be more expressive or to represent something more realistically?
4. Compare all of your findings for each artist. Consider cultural context, time period, location, and/or art medium. Think about how they each employed colour, line, space, etc.

CONCLUSION

This interpretive resource offers some approaches you can use to understand more about an artwork. Apply these strategies in the classroom and the next time you look at an artwork in the classroom, or visit an art gallery, remember to consider how an artist may have been influenced. What is the impact of their artwork on you as the viewer?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Definition of Serigraph

Serigraph is a term that has been used in the art world since the 1940s to refer to silkscreen prints made by artists, separating them from commercial prints. Socially-minded artists began using the silkscreen method to produce prints of their work in the 20th century because it enabled them to make their artwork easier to access and more affordable. Jacques Hurtubise said “Silk screens are made the way paintings are... I make no distinction between painting and printing, canvas or paper, it’s all the same to me.”

[Click on this link The Met Museum - Screenprinting](#) to learn more about how Serigraphs are made.

Elements and Principles of Art

<http://www.projectarticulate.org/principles.php>

<http://char.txa.cornell.edu/>

http://www.awesomeartists.com/ART/AWESOMEARTISTS_PDFs_ETC/ABCsOfART_BOOKLET_B&W_ElementsAndPrinciplesOfDesign_2015.pdf

Elements of Art

<https://www.incredibleart.org/files/elements.pdf>

[The Getty](#)

[Nova Scotia Curriculum](#)

Principles of Art

[The Getty](#)

[Nova Scotia Curriculum](#)

This resource has been written by Anna Richard to accompany the 2020 Art Gallery of Nova Scotia exhibition, *Jacques Hurtubise: Prints from the Collection*

Anna Richard Biography

Anna Richard is a Halifax-based art historian and art educator. She studied art history at the York University and worked at the Textile Museum of Canada for six years developing exhibitions and public programs. Her writing has been published in *Selvedge* and the Textile Museum of Canada exhibition catalogue *Printed Textiles from Kinnigait Studio*. A symposium she organized alongside curator Lisa Myers (*Manidoominensagemin Toronto: we are beading in Toronto*) was shortlisted for the OAAG Public Program of the Year Award (2019) and the education team she worked on at the Textile Museum received the Ontario Art Educators Association Community Art Educator of the Year Award (2019).

I am an art historian and art educator, and I love to find ways to make art approachable for people inside and outside the gallery. – Anna Richard

APPENDIX

A. Abstract Art

Abstract art is modern art which does not represent images of our everyday world. It has colour, lines and shapes (form), but they are not intended to represent objects or living things. Often the artists were influenced by ideas and philosophies.

Abstract art is found in painting and in sculpture. There are also many works of art which are partly abstract, and partly representational. And there are many artists who work in abstract and other types of modern art.

B. Vocabulary of Art Terms

Vocabulary of Art

Art has a specific vocabulary known as the Elements and Principles of Art. We use this vocabulary to talk about the tools an artist uses to create an artwork. These words can help you describe what you see.

Elements – Visual tools used to create effects	Principles – Used to organize the elements of design in a composition
Line straight, freeform, bold, smooth...	Balance symmetrical, asymmetrical...
Colour warm, cool, harmonious, bright...	Movement fast, slow, meandering...
Shape / Form geometric, organic, 3D...	Repetition of one or more element(s)
Texture rough, spiky, uneven, fuzzy...	Contrast colour, shape, line...
Space dense, open, symmetrical, flat...	Emphasis focal point(s)...
Value light or dark colour, contrast...	Proportion, scale, size number...