

An abstract painting by Dove O'Keeffe, featuring bold, curved shapes in white, yellow, green, and red, set against a dark background. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive.

**DOVE O'KEEFFE**

*Gallery Guide for Families*

**THE  
CLARK**

# Abstract Art

In the early 1900s artists began to think about making art in a variety of new and different ways. Some artists started exploring shapes, colors, and textures for their own sake, and were less concerned with making pictures that looked like “real” people or things. Instead, they tried to capture and present the essence of a thing, both seen and unseen. *Works of art that were not representations of real things were called “abstractions.”*

Look at this photograph of the moon. The moon is circular, textured, and shines in the night sky, reflecting sunlight onto the Earth. Now look at Arthur Dove’s painting *Moon* from 1935, and see how the artist has used colors, light, and shadows to make *a painting ABOUT the moon, rather than a picture OF it.*



*The Moon* (Photo courtesy of the National Optical Astronomy Observatory/Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy/National Science Foundation)



*Moon*, 1935, by Arthur Dove (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth; Courtesy of and copyright The Estate of Arthur Dove/Courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc.)

**The real moon is connected to the Earth by an invisible force called gravity. How has Arthur Dove suggested this connection?**

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# City Scenes

As you go into the next part of the exhibition, look for the paintings, ***Silver Tanks and Moon*** by Arthur Dove and ***City Night*** by Georgia O'Keeffe.

What are the similarities between these two paintings? \_\_\_\_\_

How does each artist make you feel like you are looking up at something very tall? Which of the buildings seems taller?

\_\_\_\_\_

Look at where Georgia O'Keeffe has put the moon in her painting. How does the position of the moon affect the way the buildings look?

\_\_\_\_\_

Now, look at Georgia O'Keeffe's ***New York with Moon***. In addition to the moon there are several sources of light in this picture. Take a minute to look for them.

Make note of three: 1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

What time of day (or night) do you think it is in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What makes you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

This painting has many more colors than the other two pictures that you looked at. How does the artist's use of more color change the feel of the picture? \_\_\_\_\_

# What do you see?

Take some time to look at the paintings in the next couple of rooms and try the activity suggested on this page before you read any of the wall texts. These paintings are all very different from each other and may be different from the kind of pictures that you are used to looking at. *Spend a few minutes with each one to let your eyes (and your brain) "tune in."*

**Now, choose two paintings to focus on.**

**What does each of them bring to mind?**

Painting 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Painting 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you see that makes you think of this?**

Painting 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Painting 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Ask the person you came with what he or she sees. Did you see the same things?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you like the paintings you chose? Why / Why not?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Now look at the titles of the paintings you chose. Does knowing the titles change the way you look at and understand each painting?**

\_\_\_\_\_

# Music and Color

In the last section of this gallery you will see some pictures that are related to music and sound. Like many modern artists, Arthur Dove and Georgia O'Keeffe were inspired by music's ability to express human feelings without words. They enjoyed listening to different types of music and trying to capture the different sounds in their paintings.

Look at the paintings in this part of the exhibition and make a mental note of the kind of sounds each of them makes you think of. Think about things like "volume," "melody," and "tempo."

Write the titles of the pictures that best illustrate some of these sounds:

Notes going up or down a scale \_\_\_\_\_

A loud boom \_\_\_\_\_

A cacophony (mixture of many sounds) of different instruments \_\_\_\_\_

Something happy \_\_\_\_\_

Now, see if you can assign feelings or experiences to visual images that are in these pictures. For example:

Dark shaded area = Sitting in deep thought      Soft fuzzy edges = \_\_\_\_\_      Squiggly lines = \_\_\_\_\_

Concentric circles = \_\_\_\_\_      Asymmetrical black x's = \_\_\_\_\_

# Abstraction of Nature (Gallery D)

Go into the last gallery of this exhibition and look for the painting *A Piece of Wood II* by Georgia O'Keeffe.

How would you describe this painting to somebody who cannot see it?

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How does the title of this painting help you to understand what the picture is about?

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What do you see in the center of this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think this color and shape represent? \_\_\_\_\_

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How is this painting ABOUT a piece of wood rather than a picture OF a piece of wood?

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*A Piece of Wood II*, 1942, by Georgia O'Keeffe  
(The Shey Collection. Through the Harn Museum,  
Gainesville, Florida [Courtesy the Alexandre Gallery,  
New York; © 2009 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists  
Rights Society (ARS), New York])

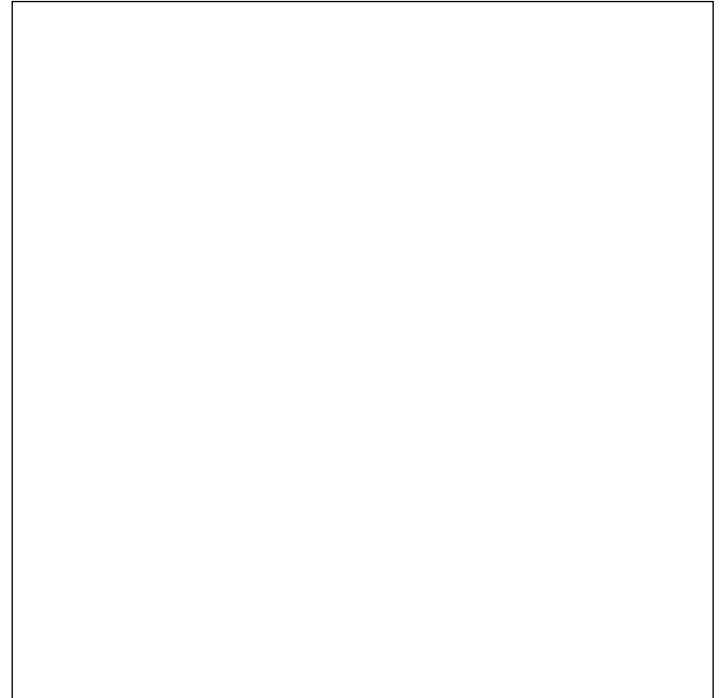
# Draw your own abstraction

If you have time when you leave the exhibition today, you can stop at the Information Desk to pick up some colored pencils or crayons. Choose an object (inside or outside), person, memory, or even an idea to use as a subject. Now, think about what you have learned about abstract art:

- Artists don't always have to make things look real
- Colors, shapes, and lines can be symbols for other things
- Artists often care about all the senses and feelings, not just how things look

Keeping these ideas in mind, make your own abstract picture in the space to the right.

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