



# Visual Art

## Identity Portrait

K-6

Lesson by Elizabeth Sanchez

This lesson may be adjusted to fit whatever timeline you need. It can be the focus for one day, or worked on for an hour a day over a week or more.

### Objectives

Students will be able to understand and express different aspects of their identity. Students can create meaning in their artwork by using colors and shapes to represent their ideas.

### Introduction

Begin by learning about Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), a Russian artist whose radical artwork had a great impact in modern art. Malevich invented a style of art called suprematism, a visual language of simple shapes and colours. He used squares, circles and rectangles and only used a few colours to make his artwork. Suprematism was about seeing and feeling art in a new way. Malevich is considered a modern artist, at the same level as Picasso and Kandinsky, like them, he believed that colors and forms can be used to express the emotion of the artist.



Elizabeth Sanchez, *Pirated*, 2019, oil on board



Cassandra Barney, *Self Portrait*, 2017, oil on board

### Learning Activity

In his book *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Medium in Painting* (1915) Malevich wrote "...Then when the faces painted green and red to a certain extent kill the subject, the colour is more noticeable and colour is that by which a painting lives: which means it is the most important." This statement explains Malevich's use of blue eyebrows, blue moustaches, bright multi-colored landscapes, red heads, hands, feet and bright colourful backgrounds for self portraits. His use of colour certainly holds our attention. (<http://www.lurvemag.com/art-1>)

### Materials

- "Bleeding" tissue paper in bright colors, cut into different sizes and shapes (such as circles, half circles, triangles, rectangles, squares)
- Watercolor paper
- Water and containers
- Watercolor brushes
- Pencils
- Black marker OR black crayon
- Scissors to cut their own shapes (4-6th grade)

### Images from the Museum Permanent Collection

- Cassandra Barney, *Self Portrait*, 2017, oil on board
- Glen Edwards, *Self Portrait*, 1984, watercolor

### Image from SELF Exhibition

- Elizabeth Sanchez, *Pirated*, 2019, oil on board

### Utah Core Standards

Visual Arts:

Strand: CREATE (6.V.CR.)

Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation. (Standards 6.V.CO.1–3,6).

Strand: CONNECT (6.V.CO.)

Students will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context (Standards 6.V.CO.1–2).



### Learning Activity Continued

Discuss the shape and colors found in the following Malevich's paintings:

*Girl with a comb in hair*  
*Woman Torso*  
*Portrait of a Woman*  
*Head of a Peasant*  
*Sportsmen*

Give each of the students a handout (part of this lesson) to help them brainstorm important things about themselves and assign a color to their feelings.

After watching you demonstrate, have students draw a very basic self-portrait. Encourage the use of stylized shapes, simple lines and minimal detail. Kindergarteners can draw directly with their marker or crayon, older students may choose to draw with a pencil first. The idea is not to create a realistic portrait as it is to create a simple line or contour drawing. Place a piece of tissue paper on your drawing and use a paint brush to paint over it with water. Repeat with contrasting colors.

You may wait for the tissue to dry before removing it, or simply take it off as soon as it has had a chance to bleed its color onto the paper.

### Assessment

Students should have used at least four different colors and shapes in his/her portrait. The overall project shows good craftsmanship and utilizes most of the space on the page for their composition.

### Variations (Optional)

Have children cut out their own shapes.

Pre Cut a silhouette in cardstock (head and torso), place the silhouette first on the paper and place the bleeding tissue around it and paint with water to construct the background first, after removing the paper and the silhouette kids can draw on the "face" with pencil, markers and add more geometric shapes with bleeding technique.

### Extension Activity

Talk about how colors and shapes make them feel and the process of giving color a meaning.

Ask questions like:

- Was it difficult?
- What thought process did you use to pick your colors and shapes?
- Is color and shape important in art?
- Did you learn something new about yourself while working on this project?
- Do you think your portraits would look the same if you repeat it again tomorrow? Why?
- What part of this project was the easiest? What was the most frustrating?

### Watercolor Self-portrait Example from Museum Permanent Collection



Glen Edwards, *Self Portrait*, 1986, watercolor



Cassandra Barney, *Self Portrait*, 2017, oil on board



Elizabeth Sanchez, *Pirated*, 2019, oil on board



Kazimir Malevich, *Girl with a Comb in her Hair*, 1933, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Kazimir Malevich, *Woman Torso*, 1932, State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg



Kazimir Malevich, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1915, State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg



Kazimir Malevich, *Head of a Peasant*, 1928, Location unknown



Kazimir Malevich, *Sportsmen*, 1928-32, State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg