

ABSTRACT WATERCOLOR PORTRAITS

INTRODUCTION

Watercolor paint is fun and easy to use! In this activity will explore the relationship between form and color by creating abstract self-portraits. First, we will create blind continuous contour drawings to draw the outline of our portraits. Then we will add color using watercolors.

The **challenge** is to draw without looking down at your paper or picking up your pencil!



MATERIALS

- Watercolor paper or regular paper
- Permanent marker or pen
- Watercolor paints and a paintbrush*
- Cup of water
- Handheld mirror or forward-facing camera

*If you don't have watercolors at home, don't worry! There are instructions at the bottom of the lesson for how to make your own watercolors

STEPS

1

Position your mirror or camera close enough so that you can only see from your neck up to the top of your head in the frame.

2

Without picking up your sharpie/pen or looking down at your paper, draw yourself! Study yourself in the mirror and follow the lines that you see. Try to draw all of the details of your face. Remember, your challenge is to not look down until you are done! Your finished portrait will be one continuous line.

3

Once you feel that your drawing is complete, add in color using your watercolors. You can experiment with adding more or less water to make the colors brighter or softer. You can also try using your fingers and see how that is different from working with a brush

4

Paint the background of your portrait. Now you have your very own completed abstract self portrait!

TRY THIS TOO!

For a challenge, grab a partner and draw them in blind continuous contour style in 2 minutes, then 1 minute, then 30 seconds. Which time increment do you like best? Why?

DID YOU KNOW?

The artist **Alexander Calder** is well known for his continuous contour wire sculptures, which include subjects like people, wild animals, and even everyday household objects.

DON'T HAVE WATERCOLORS? NO PROBLEM!

For a quick version, add a few drops of food coloring and use that as your watercolors. If you have a little more time and want to make eco-friendly paint, there are lots of ingredients from the kitchen we can use! Once you get the hang of it, you can experiment and make inks from many different ingredients you find around your home. These inks require using the stove, so make sure to find an adult to help you with this step.

MATERIALS

- The skin of one yellow onion
- Three avocado pits
- One spoon of turmeric or curcumin powder
- One cup of water for each ingredient

STEPS



Yellow: Put one cup of water in a saucepan and add the turmeric powder. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and let it simmer for 3 minutes. Let it cool before painting.

Pink: Put 3 avocado pits and 1 cup of water in a saucepan. Boil the water, then turn down the heat and let simmer for 10 minutes. Let it cool before painting.

Orange: Put the skin of one yellow onion and 1 cup of water in a saucepan, bring to a boil. Let it cool before painting.

Experiment with different materials! You can try coffee, black tea, beets, mint leaves, and other flowers/plants that you find close by.