



LET'S LOOK & LEARN

EXPRESS YOURSELF: COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES



NATIONAL STANDARDS

The activities in this educational resource address the following National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards:

1. Using structures (e.g., organizational principles) and functions of art.
2. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
3. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of [the students'] work and the work of others.

ABOUT THE ART

Teachers: *This curriculum is written as a guide for the adult educator. We encourage you to adapt the material to your students' ages and ability levels.*

Walter Pielh, Jr., is well-known in North Dakota for his Western Americana-theme paintings, some that address the energy of a rodeo. *Breezy music* is one of Pielh's works in a series entitled "sweetheart of the rodeo." The series is dedicated to the "real" sweetheart of the rodeo, the bucking horse. While some artists might paint how a bucking horse and rider look, Pielh, a rodeo participant himself, paints how the eighth-second bronc ride *feels*. In *breezy music*, Pielh uses colorful, explosive lines and gestures to express this feeling, thus sharing the intensity of his experiences with the viewer.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Walter Pielh, Jr., is one of North Dakota's most important artists. The son of a Marlon, N.D., livestock dealer and part-time rodeo producer, Pielh's love of horses and the rodeo began at an early age. Although Pielh grew up with very little art in his home, painting the rodeo became a passion. His artistic spirit led him to explore with rodeo to explore with painting. He spent his time in the rodeo arena, using energetic paint applications and intense color.

After college, Pielh became an art educator to share his love of art with others. He began teaching at Minot State University in 1970. Pielh received his bachelor's degree in art from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., and an M.A. and M.F.A. from the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. Plains Art Museum held Pielh's first major retrospective in 2003.

breezy music:
sweetheart of the rodeo

Walter Pielh, Jr., 1991

Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 36"
Plains Art Museum Permanent Collection



“Any occurrence of explosive energy is usually not well represented by precise edges and color contained within outlines. Much of rodeo is about energy, chaos, and powerful, dynamic, uncontrolled movement.”

~ Walter Pielh, Jr.



Walter Pielh, Jr., riding his first pony, Nancy, circa 1949

MAKING CONNECTIONS

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EXPRESSIVE LINE-UP

The art movement, **Abstract Expressionism**, has greatly influenced Pielh. He is particularly interested in the work of Wilhelm de Kooning, whose paintings blend recognizable images with abstract brushstrokes that give his work a rich surface texture and vibrant energy (see *Woman I*, 1950-52).

Pielh captures the essence of rodeo action with scribbles and gestures that ignore detail. Notice for example, how the cowboy's arms, which are clearly outstretched, are not actually painted or drawn, but merely indicated. Then trace along the lines and you see the almost perfect contour of a hand, a horse's snout, legs with boots, and hooves.

Art Connection

Make a drawing of something in movement. Choose a subject that is moving fast and with a lot of energy, such as your pet at play or a tennis match. Keeping your pencil on the paper and your eyes on the action, make lines and marks that match the movement you see. What kind of lines did you use?

Now choose another subject that has a smooth and graceful movement, for instance a sail boat gliding, a ballerina dancing, or a kite soaring. Describe the lines you used for this second drawing. Compare and contrast the lines you used for the fast and energetic drawing and the smooth and graceful drawing.

LOOKING BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Futurists of Italy also influenced Pielh's artwork. **Futurism** was a dynamic art movement of the early 20th century. The Futurist artists were interested in capturing the essence of movement in time and space. To achieve this, they looked to a new technology—**cinematography**—which portrays movement by presenting several still pictures in rapid succession. The human eye fills in the "gaps" between pictures, much like the blurred areas between the leg movements in Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912.

Art Connection

Holding a pencil between your thumb and forefinger, move it rapidly back and forth. What do you see and how does it compare to the detail on the right? Pielh uses this same technique of repeating forms to animate the horse and rider. Try drawing a picture that depicts movement using this technique.

SEEING RED AND FEELING BLUE

The artists that formed the German art movement, **Der Blaue Reiter**, used color to express feelings and ideas. One of these artists, Wassily Kandinsky, researched the psychological properties of color, noting that color calls forth a "vibration from the soul."

Pielh uses color not only to establish form, but to express emotion and movement. His vibrant colors define the horse and rider and help to set them in motion.

Art Connection

Colors have personalities. In your mind, which color is cool, calm, and collected? Which color has a hot temper? Which is sad? Happy? Quiet and shy? What are your favorite colors and why?

Create a "personality picture" using images and shades of a color that express a particular personality or emotion (for example sad images in shades of blue).

COMPOSING A COMPOSITION

Pielh used an **arched composition** to portray the horse and rider in an airborne leap. Note how the lines of action burst through the top edges of the picture frame, creating the appearance that the horse and rider are exploding off the page.

Art Connection

On three sheets of paper, use colored markers, crayons, oil pastels, or paint to create a composition that expresses the feeling of:

1. soaring through the sky with wings
2. dancing to loud music with a heavy beat
3. sleeping under a tree

How did the compositions of each differ from one another? Why?

COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES

Walter Pielh, Jr. insists on "coloring outside the lines," painting at times with the uninhibited energy of a child. Picasso said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Pielh appears to have solved that problem. He expresses himself with child-like abandon, tempered by the skill and insight he has acquired as a practiced artist.

VISUAL ART PRODUCTION

Think of something you love to do. It could be biking, swimming, playing ball, dancing ballet, or anything that involves movement and emotion. Work large so your whole body is part of the creative process. Use crayons, oil pastels, or a paintbrush to create lines, colors, and a composition that best express how you feel when you are doing what you love.

Write an artist statement that best describes the lines, colors, and composition you used to create your work, and how these art elements relate to your subject. Organize an exhibition of your classroom's artwork to show in your school and/or a location in your community. Include your artist statements as part of the exhibition.

VOCABULARY

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

A movement of non-representational painting that began in New York City during the 1940s and attained international importance. Believing in freedom of expression, the Abstract Expressionist artists often dripped, threw, or poured paint onto large canvases in an effort to show feelings and emotions.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The art or technique of movie photography, involving movement by projection in rapid fashion of many still pictures.

COMPOSITION

In abstract painting, the organization of shapes, lines, and colors within a work of art.

DER BLAUE REITER (THE BLUE RIDER)

A German expressionist art movement, lasting from 1911 to 1914, that sought to discover spiritual truths through art.

Their paintings ranged from pure abstractions to romantic imagery of horses, their special symbol for man's relationship with nature (see Kandinsky's

Lyric (Man on a Horse), 1911).

FUTURISM

An early 20th-century art movement that centered in Italy and emphasized the dynamism, speed, energy, and power of the machine and the vitality and restlessness of modern life.

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Supported by a grant from

The FUND

at the Plains Art Museum Foundation