

We will explore an abstract artwork together by focusing on its lines, colors, and shapes. In **abstract** artwork, the artist may have been inspired by real people or objects, but has changed or simplified them. This activity features a work of art from *Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem*, a special exhibition at the Frye Art Museum.



Alvin Loving. *Variations on a Six Sided Object*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas. 70 × 59 in. The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of Ruth Weisberg and Kelyn Roberts 1983.20. Photo Credit: Marc Bernier. © Estate of Al Loving. Courtesy of the Estate of Al Loving; Garth Greenan Gallery, New York; and American Federation of Arts

GET INSPIRED

Alvin Loving first learned how to paint from his father, a trained artist and educator. Early in his career, while many African American artists focused on the theme of race in their artworks at the time, Loving created abstract works using geometric shapes with bright colors and lines in arrangements of cubes and rectangles. He said, "Abstraction allows my paintings to speak directly to the art. My paintings are feelings and wishes. They are the embodiment of all I am and all that I have experienced."

Learn more about *Variations on a Six Sided Object* on The Studio Museum in Harlem's website: <https://studiomuseum.org/collection-item/variations-six-sided-object>

Take a moment to look closely at this artwork

- When you look at this painting, where do your eyes go first? How do your eyes travel as you look at this painting?
- How might you describe the shapes in this painting? What do you notice about the way the shapes are arranged?
- What types of lines are used in this painting? What do you notice about the way the lines are positioned?
- What colors are used in this painting? What do you notice about the choice of colors and the way they are placed?
- Loving was interested in exploring the tension between flatness and **spatial illusion**, which is the creation of a sense of three dimensions. While this is a two-dimensional painting, what gives this painting the illusion of three dimensions?

MAKE SOME ART

Now it's your turn to create an abstract artwork by focusing on lines, shapes, and colors.

You will need...

- Paper
- Pencil, colored pencils, and/or markers
- Small 3D objects, such as toys, figurines, shells, etc.

Let's get started

1. Start by sketching out a frame on your paper. What might your frame look like? What kinds of lines might you want to use to create your frame?
2. Next, find a 3D object in your home. Take a close look at the object from different angles, including the top and bottom.
3. Consider where you would like to place your object on the paper. Will it be right in the center or in a corner? Will it be straight or off at an angle?
4. Once you've placed your object on your paper, trace the outline of the object with your pencil.
5. After you finish tracing the first side, turn your object so that a different side faces down on the paper and trace it again. Make sure your second outline is somehow connected with the first one. Keep going until you trace the object six times from all different sides. It's okay if all six outlines you trace do not fit on the paper. In fact, it will be interesting if you go off the page or overlap with other outlines.
6. Once you finish the drawing, add colors to the shapes you created as well as the frame and the background. What color combinations might you use?
7. If you'd like to add more detail, consider outlining these shapes. What kinds of lines might you use to outline them? Thick, thin, dashed, or dotted lines?

SHARE YOUR WORK

How did your abstract artwork turn out? You have now created an abstraction of an object. Share your drawing with someone else and see if they can guess the object you used! Don't forget to share it with us on social media using #FryefromHome.

Visit [fryefromhome.blog](https://www.fryefromhome.blog) for more Frye Families activities and inspiration.

Support for this resource is provided in part by Art Bridges. Additional support is provided by the Frye Foundation and Frye Members.



Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem is organized by the American Federation of Arts and The Studio Museum in Harlem. This exhibition is curated by Connie H. Choi, Associate Curator of the Permanent Collection at The Studio Museum in Harlem. The presentation at the Frye Art Museum is coordinated by Amanda Donnan, Chief Curator, with David Strand, Associate Curator.



Major support for *Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem* is provided by Art Bridges. Sponsorship for the national tour provided in part by PURE. Support for the accompanying publication provided by Furthermore: a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund.



Generous support for the installation at the Frye Art Museum is provided by the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, Hotel Sorrento, the Frye Foundation, and the Board of Trustees: Rhoda Altom, Mike Doherty, Gail Goralski, Jan Hendrickson, James Miles, Jennifer Potter, and Stuart Williams. News media sponsorship is provided by The Seattle Times. Broadcast media sponsorship is provided by KCTS 9.

