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The Robert McLaughlin Gallery



# Still Life

Lesson Plan for Grade 1-3



John Martin, Still Life, after 1940, watercolour and ink on paper, Gift of Alexandra Luke, 1967.

# What is a Still Life?

Imagine creating art that captures the essence of life's everyday things - a beautiful painting of a vase of flowers or a bowl of fruit. This is what we call a still life.

**fruit or  
other  
food**

**flowers  
and vases**

**glasses and  
bottles**

**dishes**

**household  
objects**

## Why do artists make still life?

- Challenge yourself with a new skill or material.
- Study the play between light and shadow.
- Transform ordinary objects into extraordinary works of art.
- Experiment with composition to create captivating arrangements.
- Find joy in even the smallest things in life.
- Take a deep breath and focus on the beauty around you.



Aleen Aked, Still Life, no date, oil on canvas. Gift of the estate of Aleen Aked.

# Angle and Perspective

Artists can create still life images that are either realistic or abstract. They can manipulate the angle and perspective to follow or defy the rules.

**Side View**

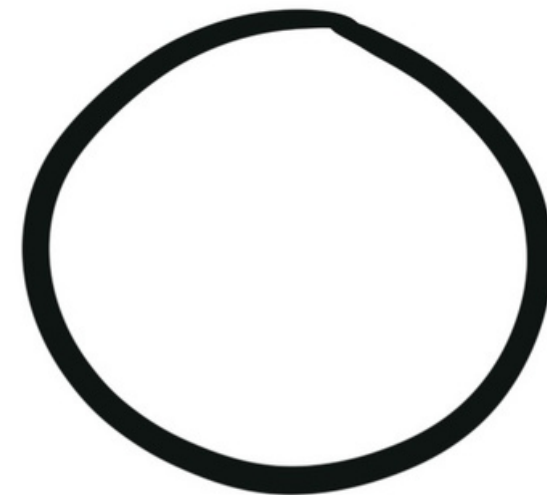
**Bird's eye view**

**3/4 view**

**Cup**



**Plate**



# Barry Smylie

- Can you identify the objects in sight?
- Which one is closest to us? And which one is farthest from us?
- At what angle do we see these objects from?
- In which room of the house might you spot these objects?



Barry Smylie, Lunch at the Snow's, 1986, lithograph on paper, Gift of the artist, 1991.

Who Was  
He?



# Ray Mead

- 1 He was born in England and part of a group called the Painters 11.
- 2 Spent time as a fighter pilot in WW2.
- 3 During a period when Canadian art was heavily focused on landscapes, he aimed to break free from that tradition by exploring other subjects.

# Ray Mead

Let's take a closer look at this scene and ponder a few questions:

- What objects are within our sight?
- From which angle are we gazing at the table?
- From which angle are we viewing the objects?
- Does this still life seem realistic to you?



Ray Mead, Still Life, 1950, oil. Donated by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1988, gift of M. F. Feheley.

# Ray Mead

Let's take a closer look at this scene and ponder a few questions:

- What objects are within our sight?
- From which angle are we gazing at the table?
- From which angle are we viewing the objects?
- Does this still life seem realistic to you?



Ray Mead, *Bottles in the Evening*, 1950, oil, charcoal and graphite on canvas, Donated by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1988; gift of M. F. Feheley.



# Hortense Gordon

- 1 She was Canadian and part of the group called the Painters 11.
- 2 Very involved in her community.
- 3 Spent time both as a student of art and a teacher of art.

**What objects do you see in her artwork?**



Hortense Gordon, Abstract Still Life with Bottle, 1948, oil, graphite and charcoal on masonite,  
Gift of the heirs of the Hortense Gordon estate, 1970

# Hortense Gordon

Take a peek at the objects before you.

What are these objects?

What kind of work do you imagine the owner of these objects does?

How do these objects stand apart from other still lifes we've explored?



Hortense Gordon, Rope, Cork and Seaweed, 1947, oil on canvas board, Gift of the heirs of the Hortense Gordon estate, 1972

# Art Activity : Still Life



## Materials Needed

Pencil

Eraser

Thick Black Marker

Markers/Colour Pencils

1 sheet coloured paper

1/3 sheet coloured paper

1 sheet white paper

scissors

gluestick

# Words to explore...

## **Background**

In a picture, the background is the area behind or surrounding the subject and is the farthest from the viewer.

## **Foreground**

Foreground refers to the area of the picture space closest to the viewer.

## **Overlapping**

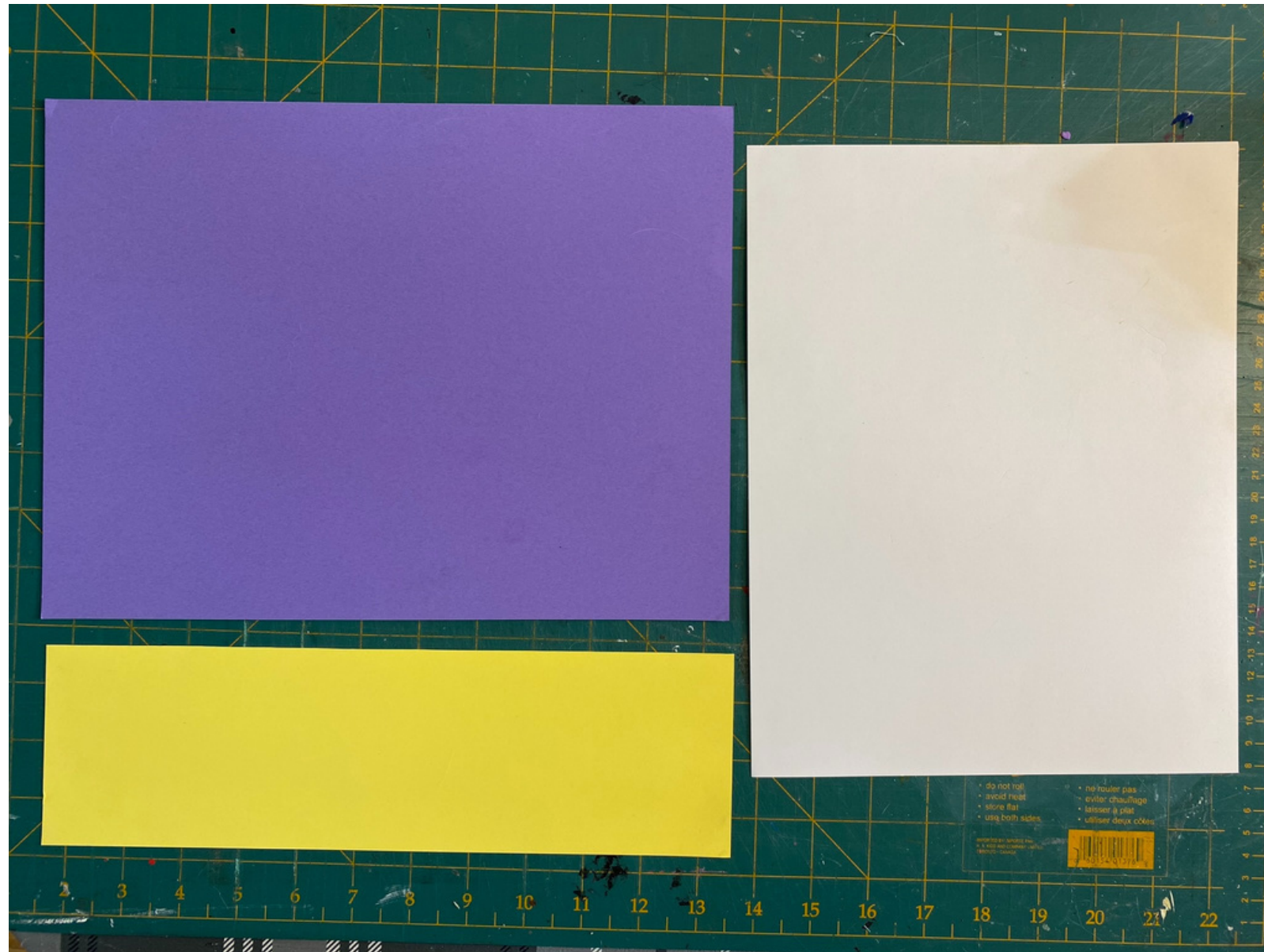
When one shape is in front of another, it creates an illusion of depth called overlapping.

## **Perspective**

To create the illusion of a real world space in two dimensional artworks

1

# Choose your paper colours



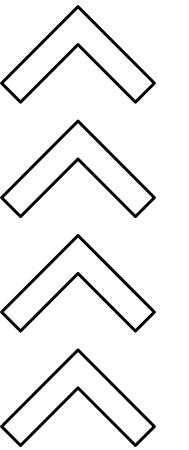
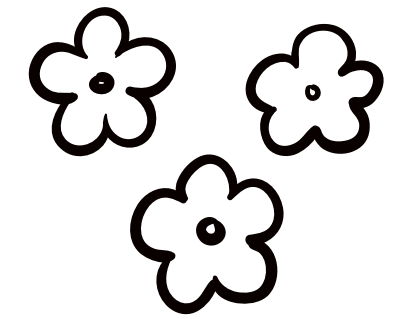
Each student will need a full sheet of coloured paper of their choice, 1/3 sheet of a paper (with the same width as the full sheet) of coloured paper of their choice and 1 sheet of white paper.

Cardstock or construction paper works great!



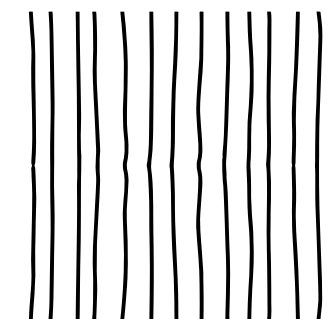
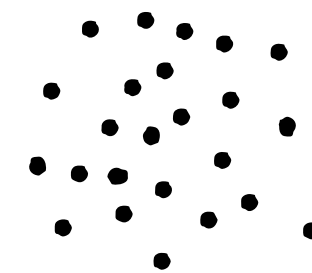
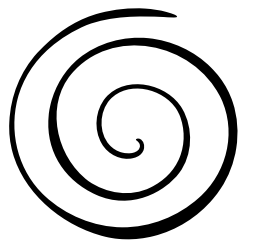
# 2

## Decorate your background



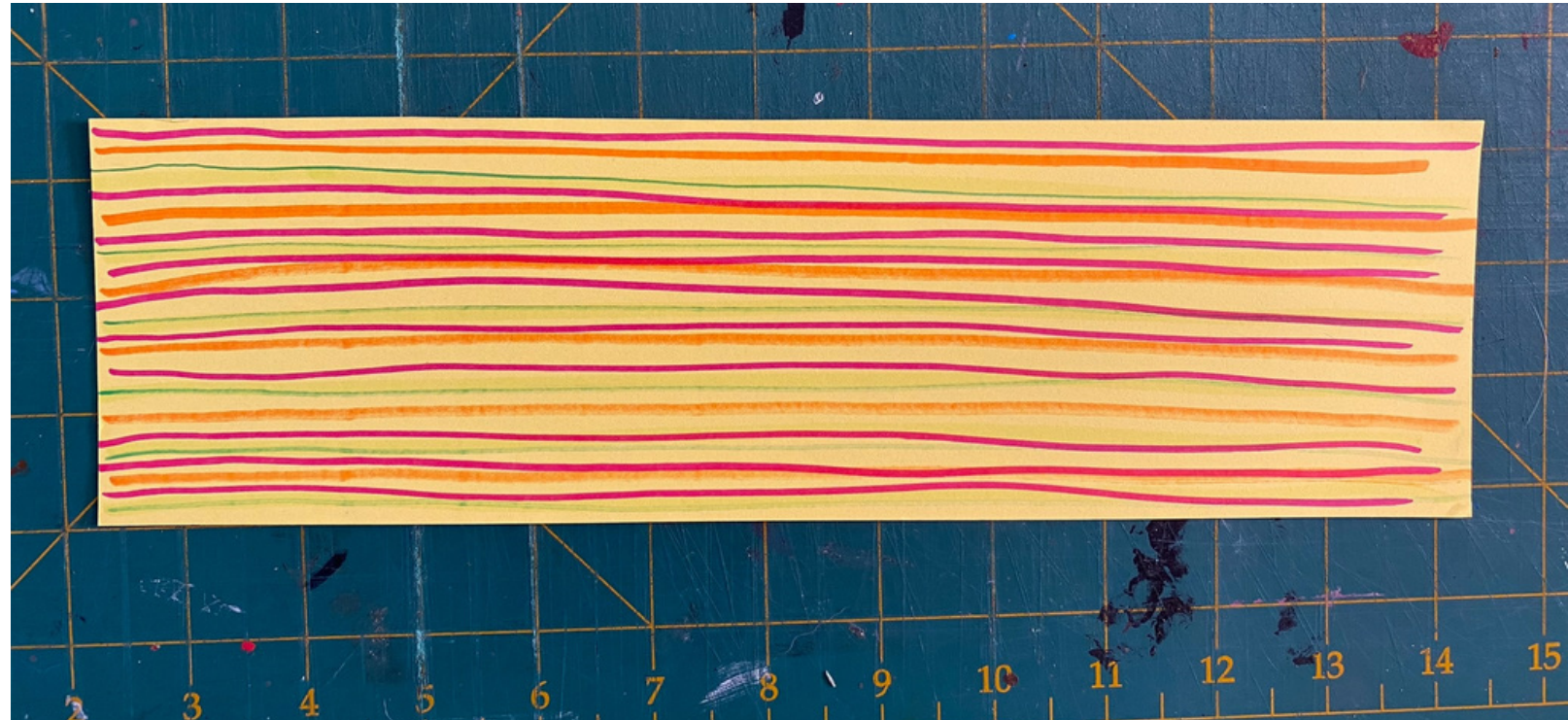
On your full sheet of coloured paper draw a decorative pattern covering the upper 2/3rds (or all) of the page.

Suggested patterns might be dots, stars, hearts, spirals, flowers, stripes etc....



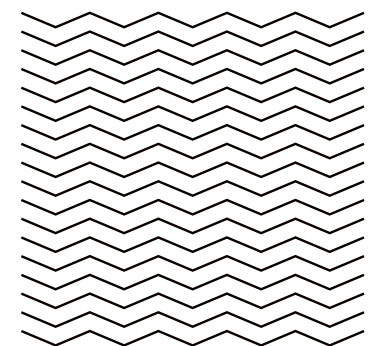
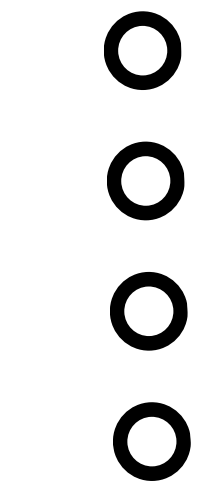
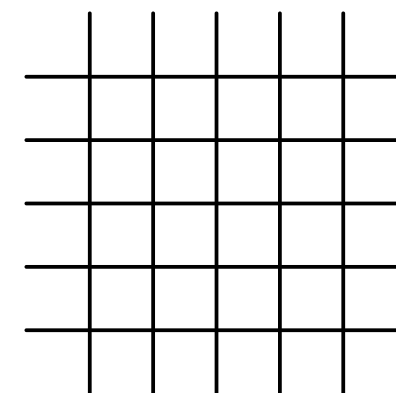
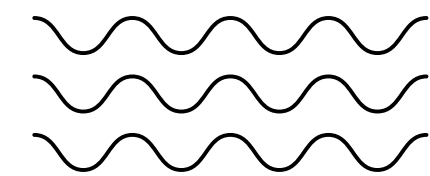
# 3

## Decorate your table



On your 1/3 sheet of coloured paper pick a second pattern different from the one you chose for the background and use it over the entire tablecloth.

Choose a pattern different from your background.



4

## Join your table and background



Use a gluestick or PVA glue to attach your tablecloth over the lower 1/3 of your full sheet (background paper).

Be sure to line up the bottom edges so that they are even.





# 5

## Choose items to draw

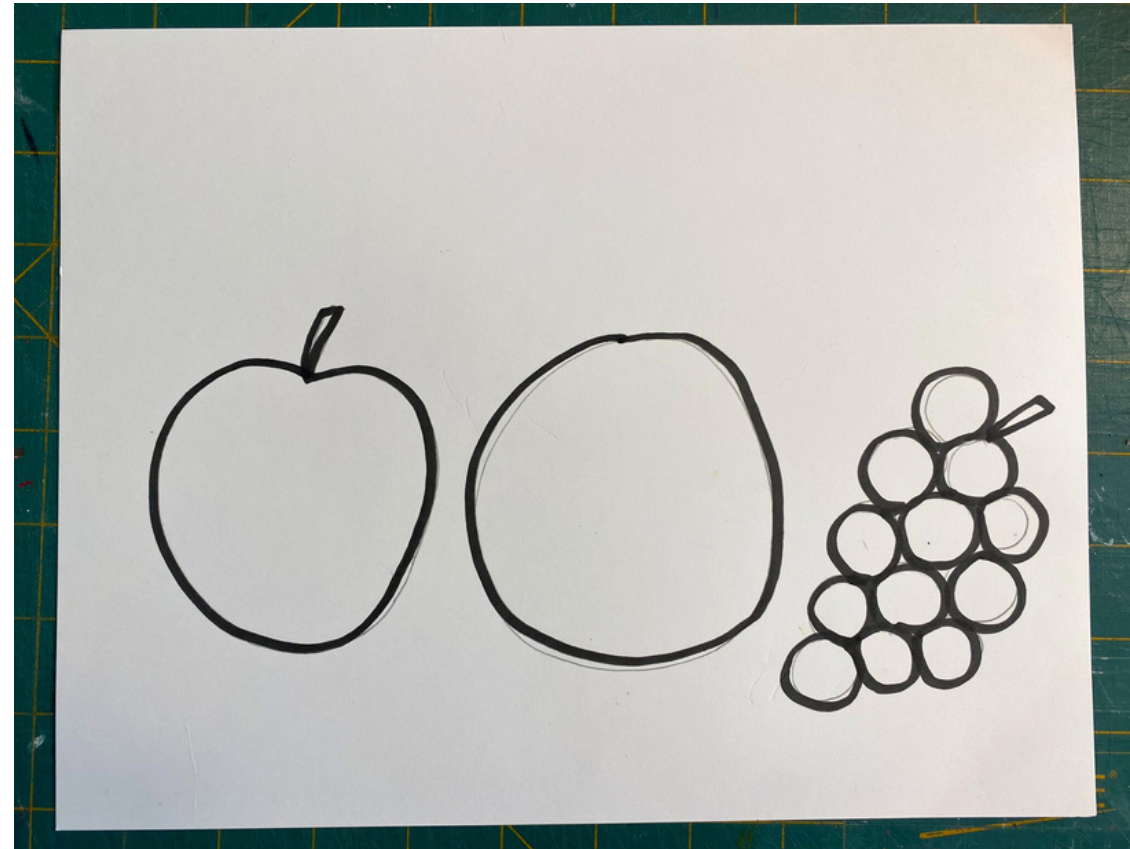


Use a pencil to draw out at least three items of still life. These can include fruit, dishes, toys or other items/objects you have access to.

Place the objects on a table to allow students to view them while they draw each one. You can have the class all draw the same arrangement or allow them to create their own.

6

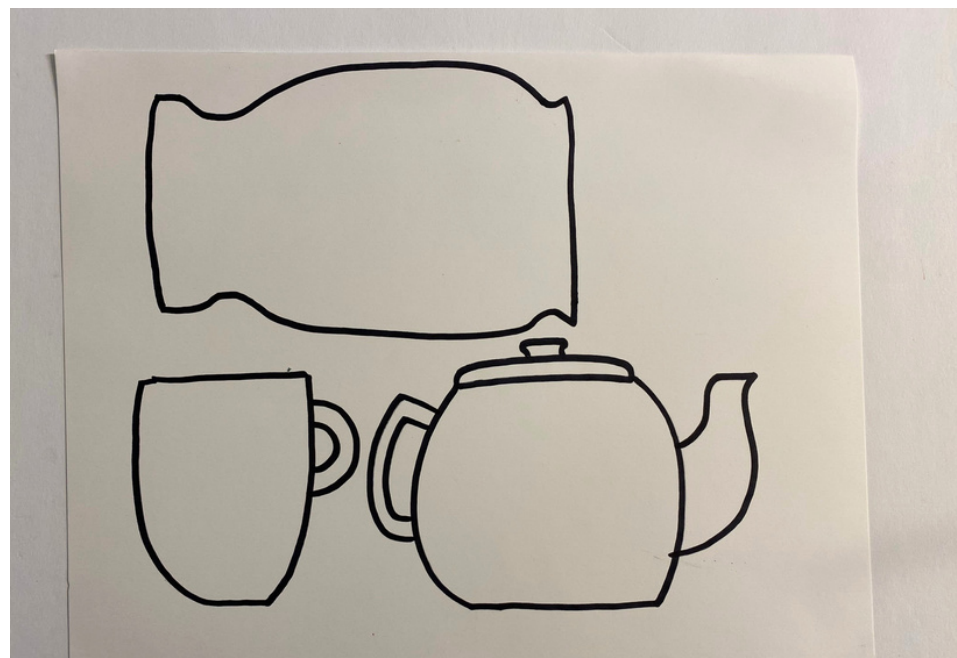
## Draw the items for your table.



Use a pencil to draw out at least three items of still life. These can include fruit, dishes, toys or other items/objects you have access too.

These do not have to overlap and should be separate from each other.

Trace over each item with a thick black marker and erase pencil lines.



7

# Colour the items for your table.

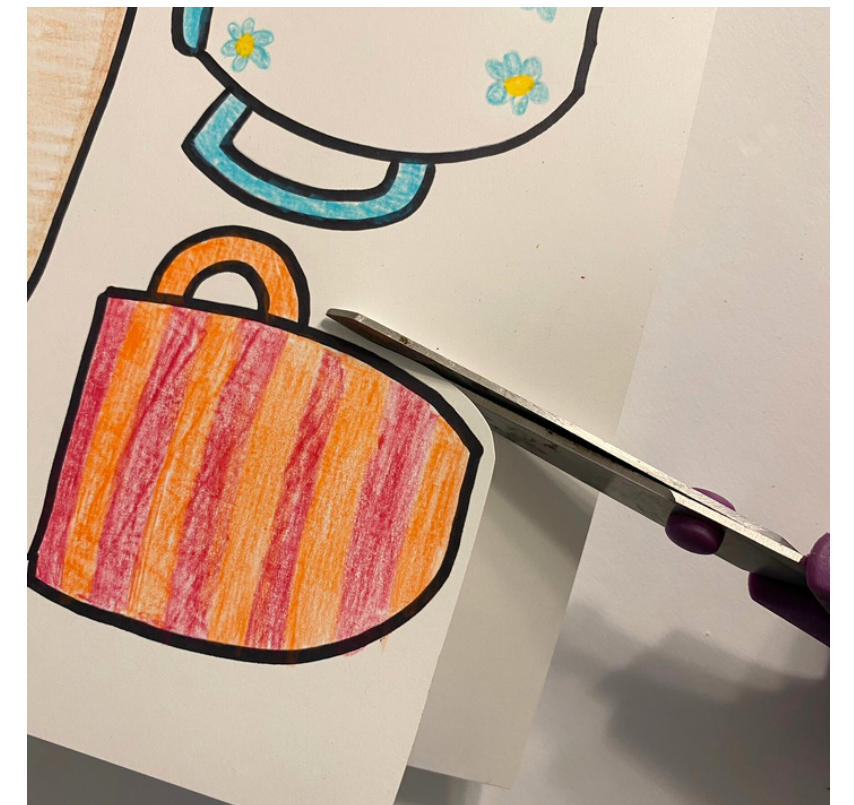
Enhance your still life by using coloured pencils or markers to add a pop of colour to your objects.



8

## Cut out the items for your table

Using scissors cut out each object that you have drawn and coloured. You can leave a white edge around each piece to make it easier to cut out. This also leaves a nice white outline to make the pieces stand out.



# 9

## Arrange your objects

Lay your objects out and play with the layout of the items to make the best composition.

Make sure you have a few of the items overlapping and make sure the base of all of the objects sit somewhere between the bottom of the page and the top line of the table.

Do not place objects on the table line.



**X**



**✓**

# 10

## Glue everything down



To create a still life artwork, arrange the objects in a composition with some overlapping. Once you achieve the desired arrangement, use PVA glue or a gluestick to secure the items in place.



# Optional Art Materials

If you have access to different art materials you can easily adapt the project to include those materials

**Background** Use construction paper squares to create and glue a pattern in the background.

**Objects** Use watercolour paint on watercolour paper, or use soft pastels (chalk) or oil pastels to colour in your objects.

**Rubbings** Use crayons or oil pastels and textured materials to create rubbings on your background or table.



# Bibliography

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ray-mead>

<https://buildingculturallegacies.ca/artist/hortense-gordon/>