

Geometric Abstraction Still Life

Create a colorful abstract drawing of still life objects.

draw from the
COLLECTION
... at home!

Supplies:

- pencil
- colored pencils
- paper
- eraser
- still life objects



Anne Tabachnick (American, 1933–1995), *Indoor-Outdoor Still Life*, 1966, Acrylic on canvas. Museum purchase. 1966.38

Step 1

Gather several still life objects (ex: fruit, bottles, flowers, books, etc.) to draw from. Pick a variety of shapes and colors, (we recommend at least 5-7 objects). Place objects close together on a table or flat surface and have at least 2 objects placed in front of the others.

Helpful hint: for best results, use objects that are different heights and contrast each other in shape and color (ex: geometric vs. organic, red vs. green, etc.).

Note: no still life objects? Substitute these with a photo or painting of a still life to draw from instead.



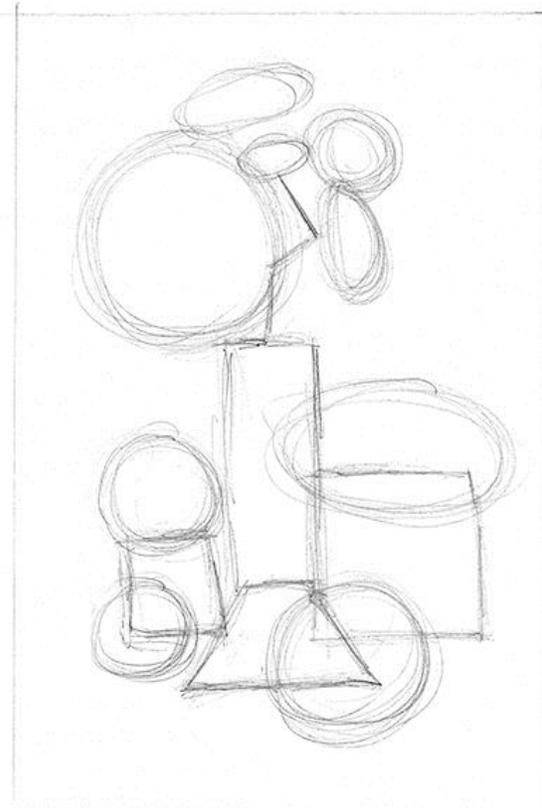
Step 2

Draw the basic forms of all the still life objects using only geometric shapes and lines that most closely resemble each element (ex: circle for apple, rectangle for bottle, etc.). Draw lightly and allow shapes to overlap each other.



Helpful hint: objects may be partially obscured behind others. Estimate the shapes of any hidden areas as best as possible to keep lines continuous rather than broken.

Note: for best results, draw objects as large as possible to fill the paper and balance the dynamic negative space in the composition.



Step 3

Drawing lightly, select a few of the objects to further refine so they best resemble their outer contours. Erase or keep any remnants of the former basic geometric shapes as desired.

Note: if a more abstract style is desired, skip this step and proceed to step 5.

Helpful hint: leave some parts of the objects unrefined.

Helpful hint: for best abstraction effect, do not erase all areas where object shapes overlap each other.

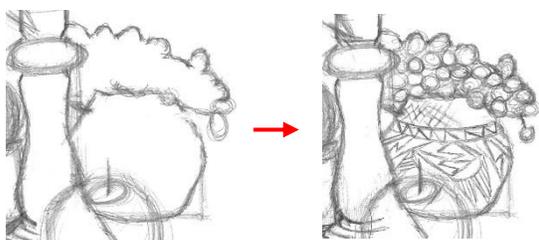
Helpful hint: select the objects with the most unique outer contours to refine.



Step 4

Select a few objects to draw the internal defining details of (ex: ovals for flower petals, squares for designs on vase, etc.). Draw lightly. Refine details to best resemble their corresponding elements (ex: from squares to the specific shape designs in vase, etc.). Erase any remnants of the former shapes as desired.

Helpful hint: experiment with the level of detail for each object. Leave some objects with no internal details and some objects with just a few or all details added.



Step 5

Take a moment to look at all the shapes of your drawing. If desired, experiment with exaggerating shapes for an even more abstract look (ex: stretch out shapes to make them longer, sharpen the rounded shape of a flower petal to make it more triangular and pointed). Begin lightly adding color to your drawing using colored pencils.

Note: colors can be true to life of the original objects or any of your choice.

Helpful hint: add color to your background so still life objects stand out. For the best color pop, use a background color that is the opposite of the object it is nearest to (ex: red background for a green apple). Outline shapes with black for even more abstraction and contrasting effects.



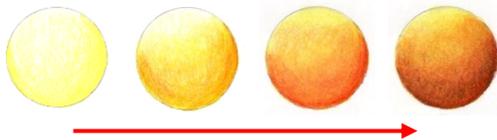
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Step 6

Add more value, texture, and color to the drawing as desired. Erase to make corrections as needed. Add extra shapes and colors to your drawing where desired. Experiment and have fun!

Helpful hint: not all areas have to be colored in. Feel free to leave areas white or add value without a colored pencil.

Helpful hint: for richer hues, layer colors on top of one another (ex: yellow over blue to create green, add white to lighten colors, black to darken, etc.). Firmly press with colored pencils to fully fill all areas of the paper.



Extra Challenge

Draw another abstract still life with the same objects, but from a different point of view. Zoom much closer in to draw parts of objects for a more abstracted drawing, or draw the same objects but in a different arrangement using colors opposite of your first artwork.

Resources

[Learn color pencil blending techniques](#)

[Learn more about how to arrange a still life](#)

[See more of Anne Tabachnick's artworks](#)

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Questions about or ideas for Draw from the Collection? Email edu@daytonart.org