

# LESSON PLAN

## **AT-HOME ART PROJECT: Contemporary Mapping** **INSTRUCTIONS**



### **INSPIRATION ARTIST:**

**Julie Mehretu (1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)**

Julie Mehretu was born in Ethiopia, raised in East Lansing, Michigan, educated in Rhode Island and Senegal, and has lived off and on in both New York City and Berlin. This exposure to many cultures and many lands greatly influences Mehretu’s work; her life experience is reflected in her visual vocabulary, which is drawn from maps, urban-planning grids, and architectural forms.

Mehretu’s art inspirations are maps. For years, Mehretu has referred to her paintings as “story maps of no location.” Points of departure are architecture and the city, particularly the fast-paced, compressed and densely populated urban environments of the 21st Century. Mehretu’s work is informed by many sources including politics, literature and music and she creates paintings using abstracted images of cities and geographies with layers of lines and mark making that for the artist becomes a way of signifying social issues as well as suggesting a deeper personal meaning.

Julie Mehretu’s large scale paintings and drawings are exhibited in museums, galleries, public spaces, private homes, and large business institutions. Mehretu has achieved mainstream success over the past decades—she won a MacArthur genius grant in 2005 and her work grosses more at auction than most other living female artists.



*Mural* at Goldman Sachs, 2010  
Photograph by Jason Schmidt



*Stadia II*, 2004



*Haka (and Riot)*, 2019

# ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

# LESSON PLAN

## MATERIALS NEEDED FROM HOME:

- Pencil
- Ruler or Straight Edge (Box, Book, etc.)
- Blank White Paper (8.5"x11", 1 Piece)
- Color Paper (Solid Colors or "Recyclable" Paper; newspaper, magazine pages, ads/coupons, scraps of wrapping paper or origami paper, 4-5 Pieces)
- Glue Stick or Glue Bottle
- Colored Pencils, Colored Markers, Colored Sharpies (any can be used or combined)

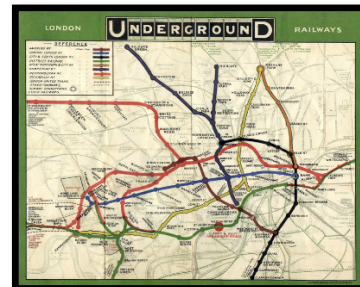
**ART PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be creating a work of art inspired by Julie Mehretu's "story maps of no location" abstract creations. Artists will use their knowledge of maps and think of an imagined location to create their own contemporary mapping work of art in an abstract style. Artwork will be influenced by the layering of map lines, bold shapes, gestural lines, and abstract markings seen in Mehretu's art style.

## PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1. What does Mehretu's art remind you of? What does it make you think of? Why?
2. What would it be like to step inside one of her paintings? What would you feel? What would you hear?
3. What type of location would you want to create and represent through abstract art?
4. How does this location make you feel?

## MAP EXAMPLES:

Maps come in many different styles and have been used throughout history and continue to be used to communicate information in every corner of the world.



## LESSON PLAN

### ART MAKING PROCESS:

#### Step 1:

Before you begin the art making process close your eyes and envision an imaginary location in which none of the “rules” of living on earth apply. It could be a place you have dreamt about, what you think a far off planet might be like, an area that would be fun to visit if you could fly – use your imagination! Stretch your thinking further to envision what a map of this imaginary location would look like using basic lines and shapes. Use adjectives to describe the world you are mapping: crowded, airy, colorful, energetic, peaceful, etc. This will help you focus on the feelings you will be representing in your artwork.

#### Step 2:

Now begin the visual art process: Select a spot anywhere on your white paper and draw a dot with your pencil (FIG. 1). Continuing with your pencil draw lines coming out of this dot extending to the edges of your paper (FIG. 2). NOTE: Having these lines coming out from a central point is how artists create the illusion of perspective and gives the viewer the impression that they can “enter” a work of art. Refer to the feelings your location gave you, use lines that reinforce those feelings- it is your choice as the artist if you want straight lines (using the ruler), or if you want to free-hand draw your lines. You may choose to combine lines to better express the feeling of your place.

#### Step 3:

Use your colored papers, think about creating abstract shapes that represent areas on your map. The shapes could be abstract representations of buildings, states or flood zones, etc. Consider how different shapes can convey different feelings- jagged, sharp edges versus round, smooth edges, large or small shapes, lots of colorful shapes or very few. Draw the shapes onto your paper in pencil (FIG. 3) and then cut out with your scissors.

#### Step 4:

Once you have finished cutting your shapes begin to lay them onto your map. Consider how the placement of your shapes over the lines conveys a feeling. Are shapes crowded together? Are they spaced far apart? Do the shapes cover lots of lines or just a few? After the shapes are placed to achieve the desired feeling, carefully glue the shapes onto the paper (FIG. 4).

#### Step 5:

Using a pencil and/or coloring tools add abstract details to your artwork: small gestural lines or large lines that cross over the colored shapes etc. (FIG. 5).

#### Step 6:

When you are finished adding all the abstract details, take time to look at your work of art and think about your map. If you are happy with the balance and composition of your contemporary map, your artwork is complete!

### POST PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1. What words would you use to describe your work of art?
2. What is the feeling you hope viewers would have of your art piece?
3. What did you learn from creating this work of art?

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## EXAMPLES:



FIG. 1

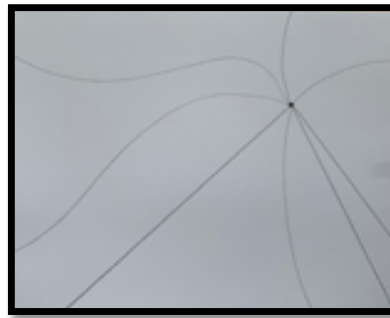


FIG. 2



FIG. 3

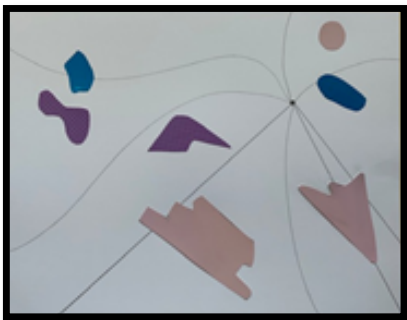


FIG. 4

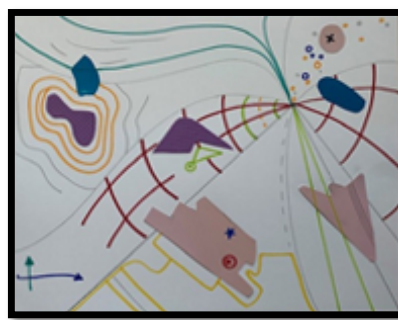


FIG. 5

## SOURCES:

- [https://walkerart.org/collections/artists/julie-mehretu?gclid=CjwKCAjw5vz2BRAtEiwAbcVILyNfi6OdsZRkzRARENuemajYCsQzjJWdjFaiM3s-6AiKBkC7u1QY3RoCTKIQA\\_vD\\_BwE](https://walkerart.org/collections/artists/julie-mehretu?gclid=CjwKCAjw5vz2BRAtEiwAbcVILyNfi6OdsZRkzRARENuemajYCsQzjJWdjFaiM3s-6AiKBkC7u1QY3RoCTKIQA_vD_BwE)
- <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/julie-mehretu-lacma-review-1699149>
- <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/julie-mehretu-politicized-landscapes-short/>
- <https://www.berggruen.com/artists/julie-mehretu>
- <https://www.mariangoodman.com/artists/51-julie-mehretu/>