



Grace Hartigan (American, 1922 - 2008), *Holidays*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 79 x 92 3/4 in. Gift of anonymous donor, 1974. SN939

This painting is by New York City artist Grace Hartigan. At first glance, the painting looks like a jumbled mix of colors and shapes. Take some time to look closely at the painting. As we slow down and observe the painting with patience, the shapes gradually become familiar.

In this painting, there is a bold use of the primary colors (red, blue, and yellow). How do these colors interact to create additional colors? What do you think of when you see the primary colors grouped together?

Grace Hartigan is an abstract artist, meaning she doesn't try to paint things exactly the way they appear in real life. Instead, she uses her imagination, emotion, and memory when she paints, to capture the life

around her. Abstract art doesn't have to look like real life to mean something to you. What are some shapes you can recognize that remind you of real life? How is Hartigan using the juxtaposition, or placement of these shapes to tell a story? What story do you think she is telling?

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Grace Hartigan painted in a style called **Abstract Expressionism**, a style of art that focuses on blending gesture (visible painting strokes) with bold emotional meaning.

Hartigan uses gesture to convey a glimpse of the objects and shapes she associates with holidays. In bold black outlines, we can identify butterflies, hearts, flowers, a telephone, and more! The gestures, shapes and colors Hartigan uses also hold emotional meaning, as this painting might represent a holiday never taken. Hartigan made this painting around the same time her partner was ill, and she was admitted to the hospital herself.

Grace Hartigan was a key figure in the second-generation of Abstract Expressionism who helped to redefine what it means to be an Abstract Expressionist. Other key artists who defined the second-generation of Abstract Expressionism include Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler. Click [here](#) to explore eMuseum, and learn more about all three women.

STANDARDS:

VA.3.C.1.1

VA.2.S.1.3

ACTIVITY

MATERIALS:
BLANK PAPER, WATERCOLOR PAINT, PAINT BRUSHES,
PERMANENT MARKER

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
SIMPLE



IT'S YOUR TURN!

Grace Hartigan captured her memory of holidays with bright colors and bold brush strokes. Think of your favorite holiday and use your memories of that holiday to decide on colors and objects to use in your artwork.

DIRECTIONS

1. Use the permanent marker to create the outline of the shapes and objects relating to your holiday.
2. Allow the marker to dry then use the watercolor to paint over your design. Repeat this process to blend colors and experiment with how watercolors interact. What happens when you add more water? What happens when you sprinkle your paper with salt?



WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE WHAT YOU CREATE!

Click [here](#) to share your masterpiece on our Family Programs Facebook Group!