

Exploring Positive and Negative Space

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty level: Easy

Messy level: Medium



Inspired by the work *The Green Fuse* by American artist Lee Krasner (1908–1984), this activity will lead you in an exploration of positive and negative space using shapes and layers of paint. This work is on view in the exhibition *Three Centuries of American Art – Antiquities, European and American Masterpieces from The Faye S. Sarofim Collection* (June 27–September 6, 2021).

Lee Krasner, *The Green Fuse*, 1968, oil on canvas, Faye S. Sarofim Collection. © 2021 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

This exhibition is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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To view a hi-res image of the work, visit the [MFAH website](#).

Investigate the Work of Art

Lee Krasner created this work of art by building up multiple layers of paint, which in turn created both a depth in the painting as well as interesting shapes. Look closely at this work of art. How many layers of paint do you see?

With its gestural brush strokes and sense of spontaneity, this artwork belongs to the Abstract Expressionism movement. What colors did Krasner use in this artwork? If you could add one color, what would it be and why?

How does this painting make you feel when you look at it? Happy, sad, tired, excited, confused, motivated?

Gather These Materials

- Pieces of scrap cardboard
- Scissors
- Plastic cups
- Paper tape
- Heavyweight paper
- Four colors of paint
- Paintbrushes



Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Lay your paper down and think of an interesting composition.
2. Cut the cardboard into a few shapes, either geometric or organic.
3. Try out a few composition ideas by placing the cardboard in different areas of the paper.
Remember that where the cardboard pieces are placed, that part of the paper will remain white.
4. Once the composition is at a point you like, tape the shapes down to the paper. You can also use the tape to make lines across the paper.
5. With the first color, use a large paintbrush and paint any parts of the paper that you can see. It is fine to paint over the objects too.
6. Repeat this step with two more colors.
7. Lift the cardboard up and see the composition. The paper will have the three colors used in the previous steps to create a positive space as well as the white shapes creating the negative space.
8. Now it is time to add a fourth color. Using a thinner paintbrush, create precise lines for this layer freehand or by tracing different spaces.