

Nature Portrait Activity

Creative Exercise:

If you have ever seen an image where there was not one, like seeing a shape in the clouds, you might be experiencing a surrealist illusion.

This activity harnesses imagination, creativity and resourcefulness to create a clever work of art!



McNay Connection:



[Eric Montoya's Wisteria](#)

Surrealism and Illusions:

Eric Montoya is a surrealist artist that often works with optical illusions. Illusions are characterized by the perception of an image that is different from reality. This can be identified as perceived movement, alternative images or shifts in color. In this work the portrait of a woman appears to form among the wisteria vines being shaped by the leaves, a hummingbird and the clouds in the background. This type of illusion is known as literal illusion, a popular concept amongst surrealist artist. The McNay collection is home to several surrealist works which you can view following this link: [McNay Surrealist Search](#)

Suggested materials:

- Leaves, flowers, sticks
- Camera

Instructions:

Get creative with nature! Collect several leaves of different sizes and shapes. Flowers can make a fun color accent and stems can create sharp lines and outlines. Start by looking at pictures of yourself or others to get an idea of what kind of portrait you would like to make.

1. Start with the eyes. This is a good way to measure the final size of the portrait and make it come to life. Oval shaped leaves and flowers are good match for the eye shape but try adding eyebrows and an iris for added interest.



2. Add as many things as you need and don't be intimidated by complex shapes. You can create most shapes by layering different components.



3. Be creative! Try accessorizing your portraits. Cactus pads make great sunglasses and a pile of leaves can create a big beard.

Portraits can be accomplished with few materials but if possible, take advantage of leaves differences. A flowering vine is all you need! Look around and you might be surprised at what you can see among the leaves.

If you need more inspiration you can follow: [**this video**](#)

