

## Educator Workshop: Spotlight Saturday

Saturday, November 3, 2018

### Reading Delfina Flores

#### Curriculum areas

Art, Social Studies

#### Introduction

Diego Rivera (1886–1957) is regarded as one of the most influential Mexican artists of the 20th century. One of the founders of Mexican muralism, he synthesized European Modernism, Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage, and Italian fresco painting. Rivera was born in Guanajuato, and Mexican culture and history were the primary themes of his work. He was a lifelong Marxist and socially committed artist depicting the Mexican peasantry, American workers, and revolutionary figures.

The portrait of Delfina Flores is said to be Marion Koogler McNay's first major art acquisition. Rivera painted Delfina Flores several times as a child and until she was old enough to have her own child. Rivera's arrangement includes near-symmetrical balance, positioning carefully proportioned bands of color throughout the negative space of the painting, repetition of linear patterns, and strategic placement of repeated color to create emphasis on the face of the portrait subject.

#### Objectives

- Look closely at the portrait of Delfina Flores, noting her age, posture, clothing, accessories, and facial features. Then expand looking to the portrait's setting.
- Discuss and analyze compositional structure of the painting, considering what makes it such a unified and interesting work of art.
- Create portraits from personal photos, employing compositional devices noted in Rivera's portrait.

#### Related Artwork

Top Right, Diego Rivera, [Delfina Flores](#), 1927. Oil on canvas. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Bequest of Marion Koogler McNay.

Diego Rivera, [Indian Girl with Coral Necklace](#), 1926. Oil on canvas. Collection of SFMOMA, Albert M. Bender Collection, Albert M. Bender Bequest Fund purchase.

Diego Rivera, [Kneeling Child on Yellow Background](#) (*Mexican Girl-Child*), 1927. Oil and wax on canvas. Collection of SFMOMA, Bequest of Elise S. Haas.

Diego Rivera, [Retrato de Ignacio Sanchez](#), 1927. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Diego Rivera, [My Godfather's Sons Modesto and Jesus Sanchez](#), 1930. Oil on metal. Fomento Cultural Banamex in Mexico City.

#### McNay Art Museum

6000 North New Braunfels  
San Antonio, Texas 78209-0069  
210.805.1768 phone  
www.mcnayart.org



#### Materials

- Personal photo, printed in high contrast on 8.5x11" paper
- Acrylic paints: reds, yellow, blues, white, Payne's Gray
- Access to water and containers for rinsing brushes
- Pencils
- Brushes (2 or three per student, various sizes)
- 11 x 14" stretched canvas, one per artist
- Palette for each student
- Paper towels

#### Discussion

1. Make a visual inventory of everything depicted in this painting. Look closely at Delfina's clothing, accessories, hair, and facial features. What kind of assumption do you make about this girl? What questions do you have about her?
2. Think about what is not depicted. What would the addition of props, architectural details, or furniture tell you about Delfina? What do you think the relationship is between Delfina and the artist?
3. Shift your attention to the compositional devices at work in the painting. Where does the artist direct your eye? Look for the use of complementary colors. What are the ways that the artist unifies the composition?
4. What could be the artist's purpose in painting this young girl?

#### Studio Procedures

1. View printed photo of friend or relative (perhaps a child) on 8.5" x 11" paper.
2. Using pencil, sketch the subject so that it fills most of the picture plane. Possibly eliminate the natural background in photo.
3. Arrange negative space using color bands that repeat colors seen in face, hair, or clothing of subject. Separate background space so that some areas are narrower than others, some are more solid colored, and some include linear texture. Find patterns in the subject's face, hair or clothing to repeat in background colors

For questions about this lesson or information about scheduling a tour, please email [education@mcnayart.org](mailto:education@mcnayart.org) or call 210.805.1768.

Lesson plan prepared by Marguerite Moreau McCarthy, Artist and Educator, [mccarthy.4@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mccarthy.4@sbcglobal.net).

- and textures. Decide on composition (how the objects will fill the picture plane) and draw in with pencil.
- Use paintbrush to mix paint to imitate perceived colors, or invent harmonious colors if using a black and white photo. Repeat colors throughout composition, but slightly modify each color so that as it repeats, it is slightly different as well (use principles of harmony as well as variety). Create balance by adjusting value and temperature of each color as needed (cool, light colors appear to weigh less than dark, warm colors).
  - Use text, if you wish, to label your painting with a small brush, as Diego Rivera did.

**§117.117 Art, Grade 5 (1) Foundations: observation and perception.** The student develops and expands visual literacy skills using critical thinking, imagination, and the senses to observe and explore the world by learning about, understanding, and applying the elements of art, principles of design, and expressive qualities. The student uses what the student sees, knows, and has experienced as sources for examining, understanding, and creating artworks. The student is expected to: (A) develop and communicate ideas drawn from life experiences about self, peers, family, school, or community and from the imagination as sources for original works of art; (B) use appropriate vocabulary when discussing the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value, and the principles of design, including emphasis, repetition/pattern, movement/rhythm, contrast/variety, balance, proportion, and unity; and (C) discuss the elements of art as building blocks and the principles of design as organizers of works of art. **(3) Historical and cultural relevance.** The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture by analyzing artistic styles, historical periods, and a variety of cultures. The student develops global awareness and respect for the traditions and contributions of diverse cultures. The student is expected to: (A) compare the purpose and effectiveness of artworks from various times and places, evaluating the artist's use of media and techniques, expression of emotions, or use of symbols; (B) compare the purpose and effectiveness of artworks created by historic and contemporary men and women, making connections to various cultures.

**§117.302. Art, Level I (2) Creative expression.** The student communicates ideas through original artwork using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills. The student is expected to: (A) use visual solutions to create original artwork by problem solving through direct observation, original sources, experiences, narrations, and imagination; (B) communicate a variety of applications for design solutions; (C) use an understanding of copyright and public domain to appropriate imagery constituting the main focal point of original artwork when working from images rather than direct observation or imagination; (D) create original artwork to communicate thoughts, feelings, ideas, or impressions; (E) collaborate to

create original works of art; and (F) demonstrate effective use of art media and tools in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, fiber art, design, and digital art and media. **(3) Historical and cultural relevance.** The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture by analyzing artistic styles, historical periods, and a variety of cultures. The student develops global awareness and respect for the traditions and contributions of diverse cultures. The student is expected to: (A) compare and contrast historical and contemporary styles while identifying general themes and trends; (B) describe general characteristics in artwork from a variety of cultures, which might also include personal identity and heritage; (C) collaborate on community-based art projects; and (D) compare and contrast career and avocational opportunities in art.

**§113.18. Social Studies, Grade 6 (18) Culture.** The student understands the relationship that exists between the arts and the societies in which they are produced. The student is expected to: (A) explain the relationships that exist between societies and their architecture, art, music, and literature; (B) relate ways in which contemporary expressions of culture have been influenced by the past; (C) describe ways in which contemporary issues influence creative expressions; and (D) identify examples of art, music, and literature that have transcended the boundaries of societies and convey universal themes such as religion, justice, and the passage of time.

#### Sources Worth Consulting

- Principles of Design: [https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building\\_lessons/principles\\_design.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/principles_design.pdf)
- WikiArt on Diego Rivera: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/diego-rivera/>
- The Art Story on Diego Rivera: <https://www.theartstory.org/artist-rivera-diego.htm>