QUICK ACTIVITY

Can you name five women artists?
Why focus on female artists?

- Throughout history, female artists have often been underrepresented. It’s not that there were fewer women artists, but many people ignored the work of women.
- Now, art historians are rethinking the role women have played throughout art history! This lesson highlights a few women artists from the modern and contemporary periods.

*Do you recognize any of the works below?*
Have you heard of Frida Kahlo before? How would you describe her paintings?

- Born July 6, 1907 in Coyoacán, Mexico City, Mexico
- Known for her self-portraits about her life, and her use of bold, vibrant colors
- Associated with the Surrealist art movement in Mexico and the United States.
- Died July 13, 1954 in Coyoacán, Mexico City, Mexico
- Frida extended her life in Mexico into her art.
Frida was famous for her self-portraits.

What do you see in these works?

Frida said: “I paint self-portraits because I am the person I know best. I paint my own reality. The only thing I know is that I paint because I need to and I paint whatever passes through my head without any consideration.”
Frida’s paintings were a biography of her life.

- Self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird, 1940
  This painting was not realistic, but used symbols to express her feelings. *How do you think Frida felt here?*

- The Two Fridas, 1939
  This is Frida’s most famous painting, and it was made after she got divorced from the painter Diego Rivera. *How do you think Frida felt here?*

- Self-portrait in a velvet dress, 1926
  This is Frida’s first self-portrait. *How is this different than her other works?*
Draw a mini self-portrait with your favorite animal!
Helen Frankenthaler
- Born in 1928 in New York City
- She is an American abstract expressionist painter known for her large, color field paintings that she began exhibiting in the 1950s.
- She died in 2011 in Connecticut.
- Her paintings are important for her large-scale, abstract paintings with their vivid colors!

The Bay, 1963

Color field painting is a type of abstract painting that covers large parts of the canvas with single colors, sometimes with varying shades or hues, within organic, intersecting shapes to explore new kinds of art!
Helen Frankenthaler

What do you see in this painting? How is it different than her other work, *The Bay*?

This work is held in the collection of the AD&A Museum at UC Santa Barbara!

*What Red Lines Can Do, 1970*
Yoko Ono

- Born in 1933, in Tokyo, Japan
- She is a multimedia artist, singer, and activist
- Ono worked in conceptual and performance art

Ceramic shard and napkin signed by Yoko Ono
Do you know what performance art is?

Performance art is when the artist’s actions are the work of art. It can involve objects, places, and sometimes other people. It is not meant to last like other types of art are, but it is meant to make people think about the world differently!

Wish Tree, 1981

In this performance work, the audience helps make the work. Ono asks people to write a wish and tie it to the tree!
What wish would you put under the tree?
FUN FACT: Did you know Yoko was married to John Lennon from the Beatles?
Yayoi Kusama

- Born on March 22 1929 (age 92) in Matsumoto, Nagano, Japan
- Avant-garde artist working in performance and other mixed media.
- Went on to study Nihonga painting at the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts in 1948
- Moved to the US in 1956 to explore more art opportunities.
Avant-garde literally means against the grain. Here, avant-garde art refers to art that is different, or stands in contrast to the most prominent or popular art styles from the time.

Why do you think this self-portrait might be considered different, or against the grain?

Self portrait, 2010
Kusama’s Polka Dots

When Kusama started to make art, she first made a lot of abstract forms on paper. Then, she started to cover surfaces with polka dots in all different colors, which is what she became known for! Sometimes she would cover her canvases with dots, but other times, she covered whole rooms in dots! These were called infinity nets.

Pumpkin, c. 1994

Net-No. 2 Yellow, 1960.

Click the image to play the video!
Infinity Rooms

Let's Survive Forever, 2017

Kusama is also famous for turning the delusion-inducing experience of her infinity nets into rooms, which can delude the viewer with its illusion of endless, infinite space.
This is what an infinity room made of mirrors is like!

You can see one in Los Angeles at the Broad Museum.

Click the image to play the video!
Polka Dot Craft

Kusama was known for covering things in her polka dots, or infinity nets, including everyday objects, like flowers or pumpkins!

- Recreate Kusama’s flowers or pumpkins!
- First draw the outline of the object.
- Fill the shapes in with polka dots and colors!
- If you want, you can add a pattern in the background

Flowers, 1996
Still Life, 1996
Amy Sherald

- She was born in 1973 in Georgia
- She is an American painter who creates portraits that depict people as they are
- They are realistic portraits, meaning that she is not trying to change how people look.
- She is known for painting in greyscale to challenge questions about skin color.

They Call Me redbone, But I’d Rather Be Strawberry Shortcake
2009

The Make Believer (Monet’s Garden)
2016
Do you recognize who this person is that Amy Sherald painted a picture of?
It’s our former First Lady, Michelle Obama! It’s her official portrait she commissioned, or asked Amy to make for her in 2018. It will be displayed in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.
Of the artists you saw today, who is your favorite, and why?
Craft

Draw a portrait of a woman you admire using one of the art styles we saw today, like Kusama’s polka dots, Frankenthaler’s vibrant colors, or Sherald’s patterned clothing! If you want, you can make it in the form of a card to share with the person you admire!

- Fold a blank piece of paper in half to create a card
- Open the paper, and on one side, draw the portrait
- Leave the other side blank to write a note.

Write a note here!

Draw a picture here!