

# Odili Donald Odita, *Flow* Abstracted Architecture Multimedia Drawings

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Age Adaptable  
Visual Arts  
2-3 Lessons

## On-Site Lesson Plan

### About the Artist and His Work:

In early October 2007, Odili Donald Odita began a month-long transformation of Kaplan Hall, the lobby of the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid. Odita named the resulting site-specific wall painting FLOW. “Coming into the space, I felt very energized by the design and the architecture,” Odita says. “What I responded to in the space was the energy of being inside and outside at the same time.”

Odita spent several days with his sketchbook, observing the space at different times of day, the shapes and angles of the architecture, the movement of pedestrians and passing cars, and the presence of neighboring buildings. From his initial pencil sketches, Odita’s black and white designs were transferred to the walls using chalk lines to mark out the shapes. He then assigned colors leading to a final palette of 112, a unique color combination for each wall. Realized with his full-time assistant Emily Erb and a crew of ten artists, FLOW gradually emerged through a laborious process of repeated taping and painting, each shard of color receiving multiple layers of standard acrylic house paint.

Odita’s angular bands create vivid abstractions that simultaneously suggest landscapes and African textiles, a reference to his birthplace in Nigeria. What other associations may visitors make as they follow FLOW as it seemingly wraps its way around the lobby’s large walls or dazzles visitors descending to the lower lobby? A young Kindergarten student, observing the installation in progress, said it reminded her of friendship, and when asked what she meant the student said “like a friendship bracelet.” The woven strands of that childhood gift is an immediate, thoughtful comparison with the interweaving shapes that are a visual signature of Odili’s paintings, whether made on canvas or temporarily applied to gallery walls.

<http://contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/flow>

### Objectives (Correlating with National Standards):

- Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

- Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas
- Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks
- Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

**Materials:**

White drawing paper  
Viewfinder  
Pastels  
Watercolor paints  
Water  
Paintbrushes  
Pencil  
Eraser

**Vocabulary:**

Abstraction  
Line  
Color  
Shape  
Pattern  
Rhythm

**Anticipatory Set:**

Discuss *Flow* with students. Ask them to describe the colors, shapes, and lines found within the artwork. What inspired the artist to create this work? Discuss color choice. Is there a connection between the colors chosen and the outer landscape? How do the shapes interact with one another? What emotions does this artwork evoke from the viewer?

**Procedure:**

Encourage students to scour the museum looking for interesting architectural details. Suggest looking in places they would least expect. Show them how to use a viewfinder to create interesting compositions focusing on line, shape, pattern, and rhythm. Through their viewfinder they have a “cropped view” of a specific architectural area. By enlarging and drawing this “cropped view” so that it takes up the entire picture plane, they are creating an abstract composition. Demonstrate for students.

Color may be added to create flat shapes, or depth. To create depth, one would include tints and shades to create highlights and shadows. The lines and shapes discovered through their use of the viewfinder should be dynamic. Their final composition should have rhythm.

Students may apply color to their artworks using watercolor paints or oil pastels. The pastels will be much more vibrant than the watercolors, and will therefore bring new meaning to the artwork than if watercolors had been used. Discuss this with students. Students should also

consider the colors used. Are they using the same colors they saw in their viewfinder? Or have they deviated from the natural color of the architecture?

### **Wrap up**

Have students display their artwork and guess what each artist was looking at through their viewfinder.

Have each artist present their work and ask questions like:

- What were you looking at when you created your artwork?
- Why did you choose this view?
- What colors did you use and why?
- What meaning does your artwork have to you?

### **Assessment:**

See handout of the rubric below.

### **Interdisciplinary Lesson Ideas:**

Math

Students could measure the different angles found in their artworks using a compass.

### **National Content Standards:**

Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions

Content Standard #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

## Abstracted Architecture Handout

For this project, you will create an artwork inspired by Nigerian artist, Odili Donald Odita. In early October 2007, Odili Donald Odita began a month-long transformation of Kaplan Hall, the lobby of the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid. Odita named the resulting site-specific wall painting FLOW. “Coming into the space, I felt very energized by the design and the architecture,” Odita says. “What I responded to in the space was the energy of being inside and outside at the same time.”<sup>1</sup> Today, like Odita, you will be looking at the CAC through a set of artist’s eyes, (or a viewfinder) to create an abstract drawing using artist skills and the building’s dynamic architecture.

### Steps:

- A **viewfinder** will help you zoom in on a specific area that you would like to enlarge and create a composition from. While looking through your viewfinder look for interesting areas of **line, shape, and pattern**. Can you find some **rhythm** in these walls?
- Once you have found an interesting “view,” draw it so it takes up your entire sheet of paper. (Just draw exactly what you see in the viewfinder. For example, if one line runs across the middle of your viewfinder, from end to end, it should also run across the middle of your paper from end to end. It’s the same line, except drawn on much larger scale than what you saw through that small opening!)
- Once you have enlarged this image onto your paper, you will be looking at an abstract drawing! It may no longer look the architecture of the CAC, but a twenty-first century masterpiece!
- **Color** may be added to create flat shapes, or depth. To create depth, one would include tints and shades to create highlights and shadows. You may use watercolors or oil pastels. The pastels will be much more vibrant than the watercolors, but both produce striking results! You may use the natural colors of the architecture or find yourself inspired by colors found within the surrounding space!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/flow>

## Abstract Architecture Rubric Example Project Assessment Form

Complete the following assessment rubric to grade your project.

S= Student Grade T = Teacher Grade	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
Score	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5
The student used a viewfinder to create an abstract composition based on the architectural details of the surrounding space.										
The student enlarged the composition formed within the viewfinder so it occupies their entire piece of paper.										
The student chose a composition with dynamic line, variation in shape, pattern, and rhythm.										
The student showed conscious decision-making when selecting colors for their composition.										
The student remained on task while working, and their final artwork displays excellence in craftsmanship.										

TOTAL        / 50 POINTS

**SCORE EQUIVALENTS:**

- 1 = No effort / attempt**
- 2 = Poor effort**
- 3 = Average effort**
- 4 = Above average effort**
- 5 = Excellent effort**