

20-A Cityscape I, 1963

Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993)



10-A Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993), *Cityscape I*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 60 ¼ x 50 ½ in. (153.04 x 128.27 cm.). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Purchased with funds from Trustees and friends in memory of Hector Escobosa, Brayton Wilbur, and J. D. Zellerbach. © Estate of Richard Diebenkorn.

The Art

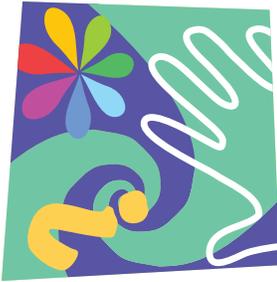
This painting is a landscape influenced by the northern part of California. It is divided into colorful rectangles and stripes. Houses with bits of bright color run along a strip of road that divides the two sides of the painting. The left side is based on a real location and the houses represent man's influence on nature. The right side is an invented, or made up, landscape showing natural, undeveloped land that man has not yet built on.

The Artist

Richard Diebenkorn grew up in California and spent most of his life and a great part of his career on the West Coast. The flat patterns he saw from an airplane when he flew over the deserts of New Mexico also influenced his art. Diebenkorn was known as an abstract artist. Some of his paintings, like this one, showed recognizable objects, but he also made paintings with shapes and colors that do not resemble anything in the natural world.

The Historical Perspective

Abstract art became popular among artists, including Diebenkorn, after World War II. Diebenkorn admired European artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Paul Cezanne, and American artists like Edward Hopper. As he developed his art, many different artists influenced his work. However, his paintings are mostly a reflection of his own life and spirit. Diebenkorn moved back and forth between different types of art rather than sticking with just one kind. The subjects of his art ranged from soldiers to his wife to landscapes of the West.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at this painting—the images, background, and colors used. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ What do you see in this painting?
- ✓ Can you find some shapes in this painting? How about different lines—straight, curved, zigzag?
- ✓ What can you find on the left side of the painting? Is it different from the right side? How is it different?

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- Have you made a painting? Who is an artist? Are you an artist?
- Why do you think the artist made this painting?
- Can you pretend to be a bird flying in the sky and look down on us playing outside? What do you think the bird can see? How about a squirrel in a tree and a rabbit on the ground?
- If you had a choice, on which side of the painting would you rather live? Why?
- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this painting?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

abstract	lot
aerial	nature
contrast	rooftops
depth	shade
emerald	shadow
fields	strokes
landscape	view



Books

C is for City by Nikki Grime and Pat Cummings

(Wordsong/Boyd's Mills Press, 2002)

Rhyming text that begins with each letter of the alphabet describes life in a city.

City Patterns by Nathan Olson (Capstone Press, 2007)

Photographs of objects and scenes found in a city teach readers to recognize patterns.

Do Skyscrapers Touch the Sky? by Time-Life Books Editors

(Time-Life for Children, 1994)

Twenty-two simple questions, accompanied by illustrations, introduce readers to city life.

It's my City! A Singing Map by April Pulley Sayre (Greenwillow Books, 2001)

A young girl creates a rhyming song that describes the city in which she lives.

The Construction Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta (Charlesbridge, 2006)

Pieces of construction equipment that begin with each letter of the alphabet are described in this book.

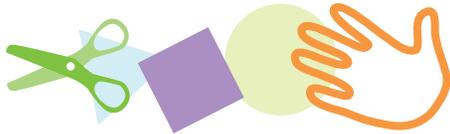


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ sing the song “Inch by Inch” while waiting in long lines or while driving.
- ✓ create a map of their neighborhood, including places they visit frequently.
- ✓ take art materials to a “landscape” and draw what they see.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Children can walk around their neighborhood, playground, and school/center and engage in a class project on representing the images they see on paper or using other medium. Develop a map of the areas they’ve seen.
- ✓ Children could take pictures of the same area, such as the playground, from different heights (for example, on the ground, on top of playground equipment, from inside the building through a window) and compare the similarities and differences in the pictures.
- ✓ Children could make their own pictures using different media (paint, crayons, chalk, collage materials) to show their vision of a store, park, lake, building, airport, etc., and then take a photo. Put the two pictures on a large piece of paper to show a child’s vision and the photo. Have children explain their art—why they created it the way they did.
- ✓ Let the class put on a play based on a storybook. Is the class’s version exactly the same as the book version? How are they alike and how are they different?
- ✓ Compare this landscape with one or two other landscapes available in the *Picturing America* series. Contrast the different perspectives of the artists, the different media used, and the different results.
- ✓ Promote children’s experimentation with a variety of different writing tools and materials, including crayons, paints, colored pencils, markers, and the computer. How do differences in the tools impact their own artworks?
- ✓ Discuss perspective. Do things look the same when we look down at the top of them or look up and see the bottom? If we go far away, compared to when we are closer? If we go to the right side and look back, or if we go to the left side and look back? If we were to go way up, and looked down from a tall building, compared to looking down from the top of the ladder on the slide?

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children’s learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children’s learning related to the “A Head Start on Picturing America” artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.