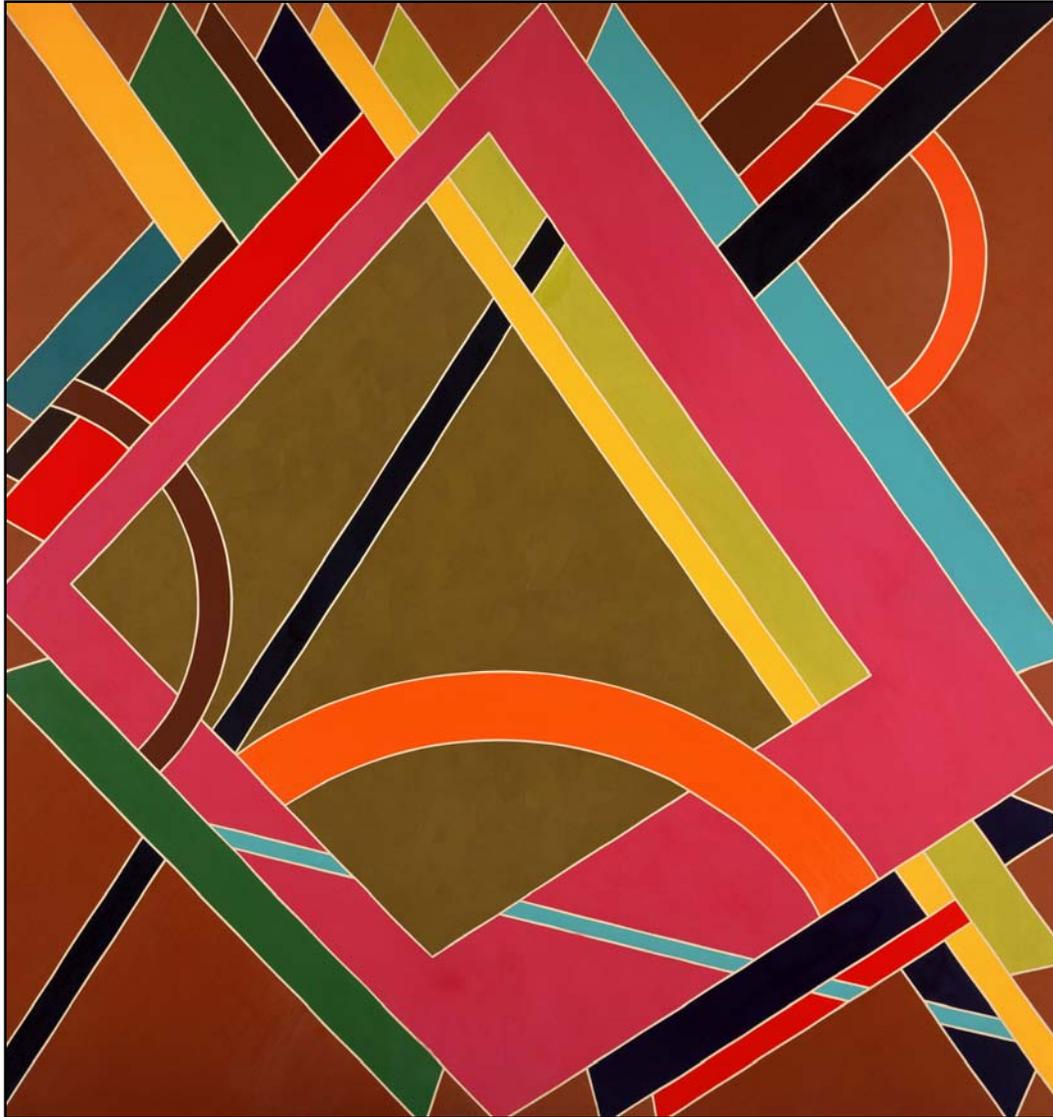


# Line! Shape! Color!



William T. Williams, *Sweets Crane*.

## A Pre-visit Guide to the Empire State Plaza Art Collection

New York State Office of General Services  
Curatorial/Tour Services  
29<sup>th</sup> Floor, Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12242  
518.473.7521

## A Note to Teachers

Line, shape and color are the most basic elements of art and design. This pre-visit guide introduces students into looking for and analyzing these elements in art. It will provide a stepping-stone for young children to learn more advance art concepts. During their visit to the Empire State Plaza Art Collection, they will progress towards the concept of abstraction and what it means for a work of art to be objective or non-objective. Further attention will be paid to texture and emotional expression in both painting and sculptural forms. This knowledge will be put to use by an art activity at the end of the program.

This resource kit is an advanced tool written for kindergarten through 2nd grade students. Some of the concepts and activities may be too difficult for younger children. Use your judgment to determine what is right for your students. You may copy and pass out the pages individually, or use them as group or class activities. Thank you for preparing your students for their visit.

# Introduction

Lines, shapes and colors are important building blocks for creating art.

For example, a straight line is just a line.



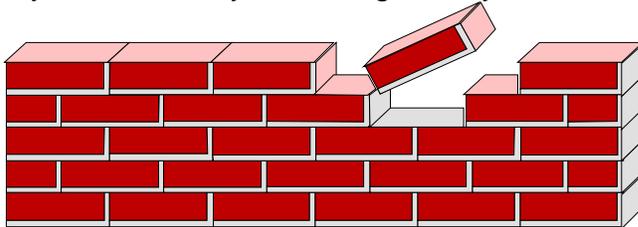
But, four lines arranged just so can make a rectangle.



If you color that rectangle red, you've made a brick.



If you draw many bricks together, you've made a wall.



Many walls together can make a house.



By using lines, shapes and colors, you can make just about anything.

# Lines

Lines don't always have to be straight.

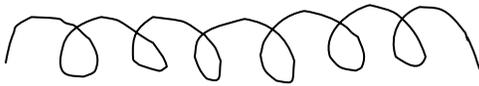
They can bend,



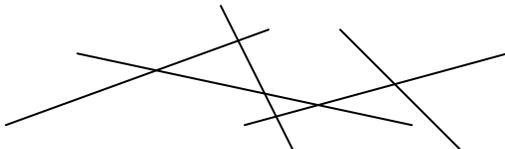
buckle,



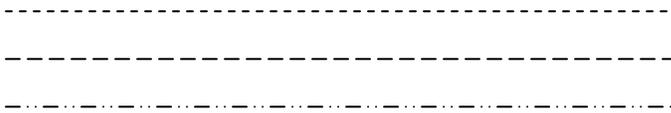
or loop around and around.



Lines can also intersect,



be dotted,



or be thick or thin.

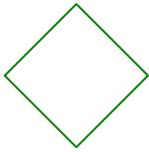


The next time you look at a painting, notice the lines and what they are doing. You can tell a lot about a work of art by just following its lines.

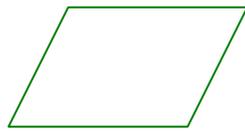
# Shapes

Shapes come in all types and sizes. Artists use two different kinds of shapes called **geometric** and **biomorphic**. The most popular type of shape, and one that we are most familiar with are geometric shapes. Some common geometric shapes are squares, rectangles, triangles and circles. Can you think of any unusual geometric shapes?

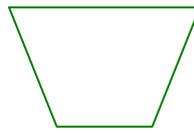
How about...



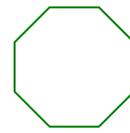
a diamond,



parallelogram,

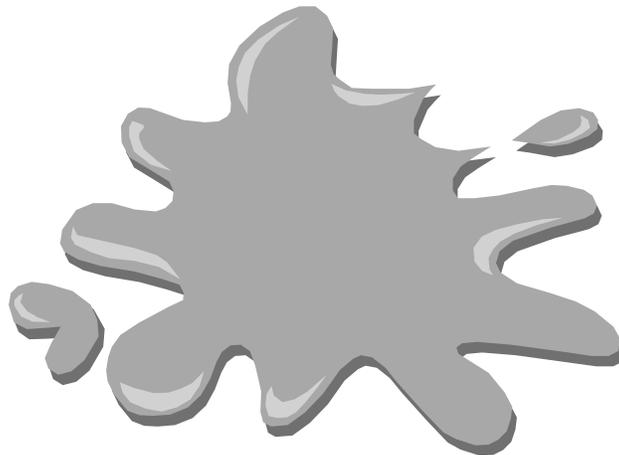


trapezoid,

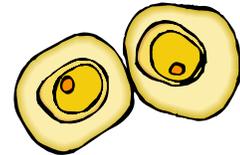
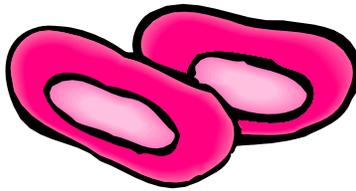
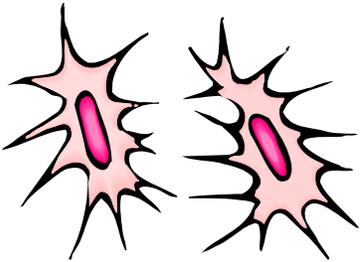
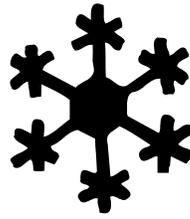


or an octagon.

The other kind of shape used by artists is called biomorphic. Biomorph shapes are found in nature. They are random and sometimes one of a kind. Biomorph shapes don't have any special names like geometric shapes. If someone spit out a piece of gum on the sidewalk, and many people stepped on it, eventually it flattens on the pavement. The shape it makes doesn't have a name. That blob of flattened gum is a biomorph shape.



What other examples of biomorph shapes can you think of?  
The next page is filled with different types of biomorph shapes.



Bone Cell

Red Blood Cell

Cartilage cells



# Color

There are two different types of colors, **primary colors** and **secondary colors**.

A primary color is a color that cannot be made by mixing any other colors together. There are three primary colors:

**RED**      **YELLOW**      **BLUE**

A secondary color is a color you get from mixing two primary colors. There are three secondary colors:

**ORANGE**      **PURPLE**      **GREEN**

**RED** + **YELLOW** = **ORANGE**

**BLUE** + **RED** = **PURPLE**

**YELLOW** + **BLUE** = **GREEN**

By adding white to any color, you create a **tint**. Adding white to red makes the color pink.

**RED** + **WHITE** = **PINK**

By adding black to any color, you create a **shade**. Adding black to red makes the color brown.

**RED** + **BLACK** = **BROWN**

Just think of all the colors you can make!



Color is very important in art. Some artists think that colors can make you feel certain emotions and feelings. For example, how does the color blue make you feel? How about the color yellow?

# Learning to Look & Looking to Learn

Let's explore some of the different ways artists use line, shape, and color in their work. Look at the following slides with your teacher, and answer the questions about each work in the space provided.

## Image 1

Ludwig Sander  
*Pawnee II*, 1968  
Oil on canvas

Some artists don't like to paint pictures of people, places or things. They may only like to use line, shape and color. What does this painting remind you of?

Are the lines curved or straight?

---

Do the lines intersect or cross over one another?

---

What color are the lines?

---

Are the shapes geometric or biomorphic?

---

What two geometric shapes did the artist use?

---

What two primary colors did the artist use?

---

What secondary color did the artist use?

---

What two primary colors combine to create that secondary color?

---

**Image 2**

Helen Frankenthaler

*Capri*, 1967

Acrylic on canvas

The artist did not paint lines between the shapes and colors. The shapes are painted very carefully so that the colors don't mix. Where the colors meet creates an edge that works like a line.

Are the shapes geometric or biomorphic?

---

What are the primary colors the artist used?

---

Do the primary colors look like the artist added a little white to make a tint, or a little black to make a shade?

---

What does this painting remind you of?

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How are the lines, shapes and colors in *Capri* different from *Pawnee II*? How are they similar?

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**Image 3**

Alexander Calder

*Four at Forty-five*, 1966

Polychromed sheet metal

This is **sculpture**. Sculpture is a work of art that is not flat like a painting. Sculpture can be made from many different materials like stone, clay, or metal. This sculpture is a **mobile** made from metal wires and flat metal sheets. A mobile is a sculpture that is made of objects attached to wire and hung from the ceiling. Mobiles move around in the air. The metal wires make the lines that hold the shapes.

Are the shapes geometric or biomorphic?

---

What types of objects do these shapes remind you of?

---

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Does the artist use primary or secondary colors?

---

Have you ever seen a work of art that moves? Alexander Calder made mobiles because he felt art should move and change so that it doesn't get boring to look at. When you were a baby, did you have a mobile? Why do babies have mobiles in their cribs?

**Image 4**

Al Held

*Rothko's Canvas*, 1969-70

Acrylic on canvas

This painting is a good example of how some artists choose not to use any color at all. This painting is extremely long, ninety feet! Your classroom isn't that long. In this painting, the artist used only shapes and lines.

Are the shapes geometric or biomorphic?

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What different types of geometric shapes can you name?

---

---

What does this painting remind you of?

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What would *Rothko's Canvas* look like if the artist decided to use color? We can't ask the artist to change it for us, but you can try coloring it on your own. On the next page is a copy of *Rothko's Canvas*. Use crayons or markers to color in the shapes. How does color change this work of art?

# Activity 1

Practice drawing lines. On top of each box is a description of a line. Draw the line that best fits the description. In the first box, you are going to draw 2 lines.

1. Straight and thin, straight and thick.



2. Bending



3. Looping



4. Buckling

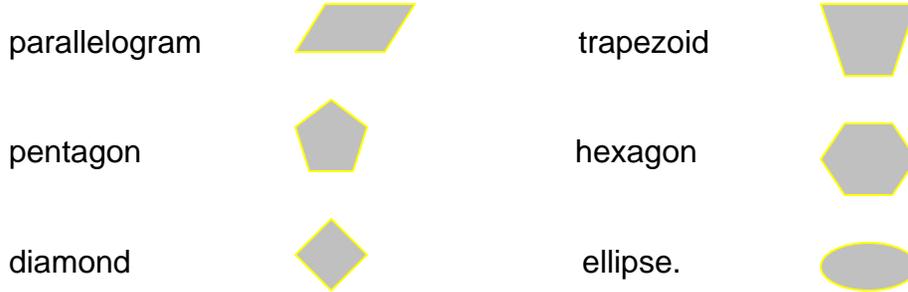


5. Now be creative and draw a combination of many different lines.



## Activity 2

**A.** Look through some magazines at home. Find five pictures of objects that are made of geometric shapes. Remember, geometric shapes are shapes like squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles. And, there are many other different types of unusual geometric shapes like the ones below:



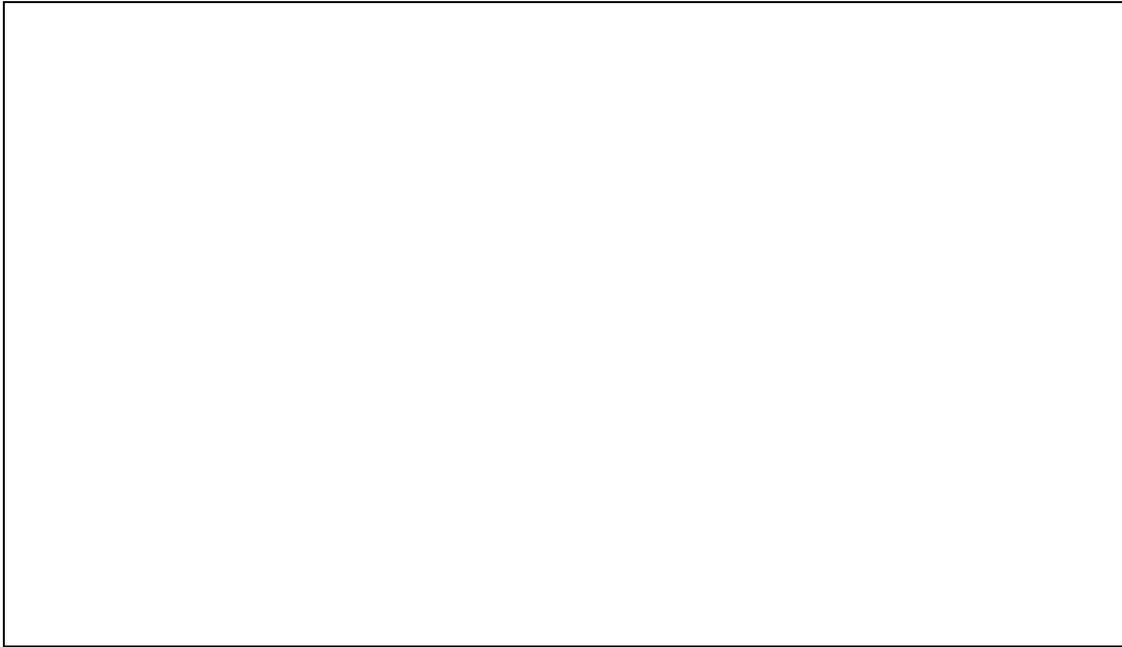
**B.** Now, try to find five pictures of objects that are made of biomorphic shapes. Remember, biomorphic shapes are odd shapes usually found in nature.

**C.** Make a **collage** of shapes by pasting your pictures to a piece of construction paper or cardboard. A collage is a picture made by gluing flat objects to a flat surface. Try this: Make some lines on your collage by gluing yarn to the surface. Be creative and remember the different types of lines you can make!

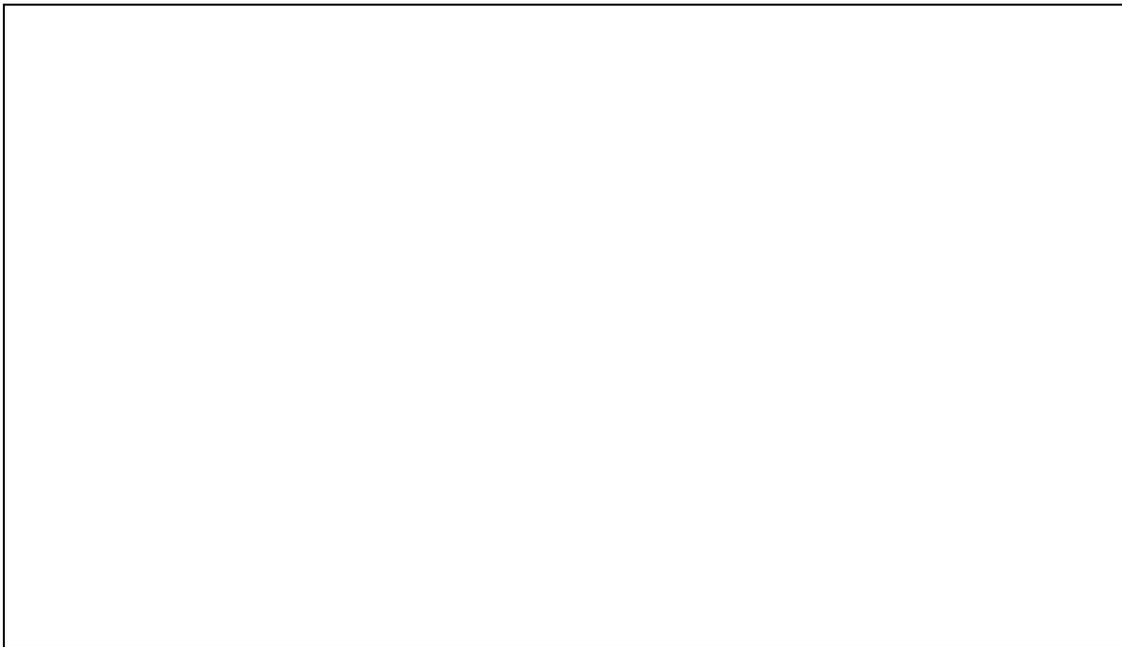
# Activity 3

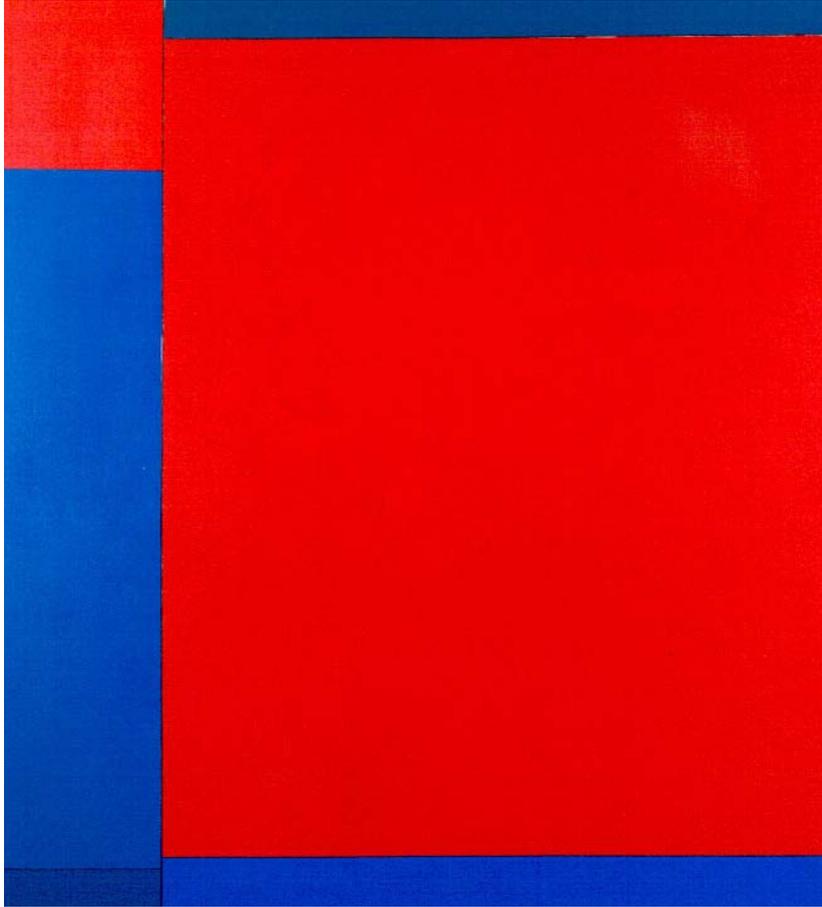
Design a picture in each box below using line, shape and color. Your picture should express the emotion written at the top of each box.

Excited



Sad

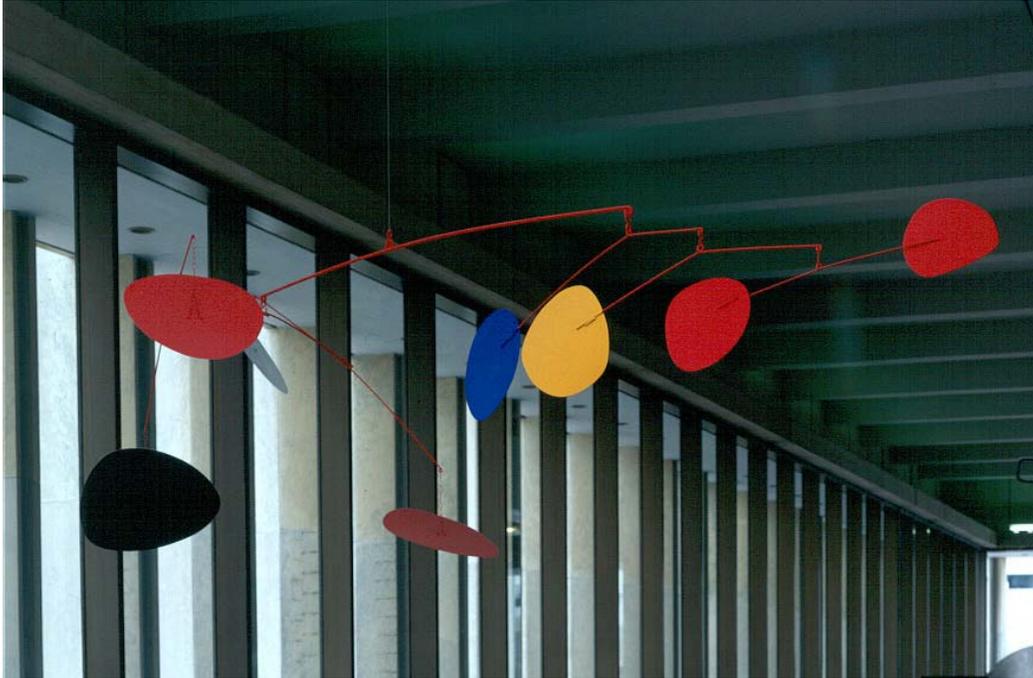




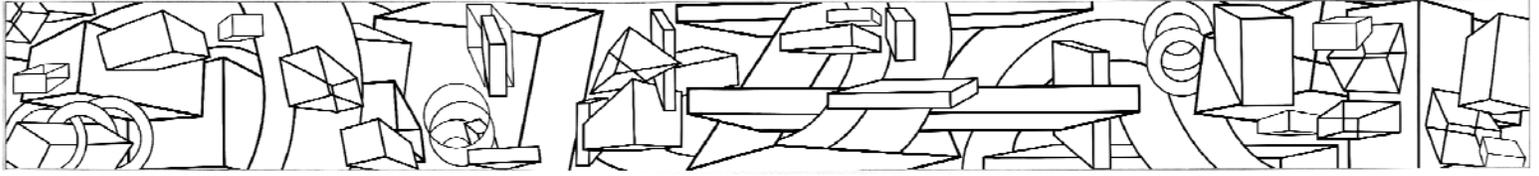
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*Rothko's Canvas*, 1969-70

Acrylic on canvas