

Teacher's notes: **About the artist**

Randall J Henrie

Artist Randall J Henrie was born in Colorado, USA, in 1966. He still lives and works in Colorado with his wife Kim. He has a dog called Stan, a cat named Pierre and two fish with no names. He likes bicycling, archery, weightlifting, swimming, camping, reading, watching talent shows and learning new things.

Much of Randall's art is created on a computer, but he thinks of himself as a painter, using the computer and modern printing methods as his tools. He tells us more about his life and work...

In his own words

Randall says: 'There wasn't really a point where I started doing art, it is just something I have been doing my entire life. I am also an architect and have designed many buildings, co-authored a children's book, composed and produced a computer music CD and created sculptures. I also like to exercise, cook and listen to music.'

'For me, life is not just about doing one thing or defining myself in one way, but it is a rich fabric of many things that come together to create my experience. In the same way I don't have a favourite place or a favourite artist. The place I am at is my favourite place and the creativity I am experiencing at that moment is my favourite artist.'

'I love exploring how a shape or a series of shapes can organise and support each other, and give context and meaning... For example, the mountain and the valley are not individually definable without each other. The sky and the horizon must create a boundary for each other, for either to be perceived as a definable thing.'

'I am often intrigued how the eye and brain might interpret things, how a circle might become part of a human form, or how one straight line might be part of a barn, a field, a flower, and the sky. I like exploring this concept and these themes run through much of my work. I also like bold shapes and vivid colours.'



Images reproduced courtesy of Randall J Henrie.



Bicycling

Randall J Henrie tells us about his work which is part of a larger sport-themed art project.

Bicycling is the first in a series of works in a large and ambitious project. Sport is one of the ways we really experience life, so Randall's goal is to create 30 paintings that celebrate some of the most popular sports around the world.

Randall says: 'I am most alive when I am riding my bike and feeling the sensation of my body and the world around me, so *Bicycling* became the first painting in the 'Sports, A Celebration of Life' series. I also want to create paintings celebrating life for music, art, literature, science and technology, and other examples of when we are fully experiencing life.

'I believe that one of the most important things we can do is to live our lives fully and experience all that life has to offer, and to share what we have to offer with other people. Perhaps through art, but it could also be music, writing, science, architecture, cooking, teaching, inventing, organising, building, fixing, serving or anything else. I think what I have to offer is art that celebrates and reminds us of human achievements and those moments when we are most alive.'

Shape of things

'In *Bicycling* there is a curvy line that starts on the left, curves over to make a hill, curves up to make the face and helmet, curves down to make the biker's back, and then curves up to make the sky. The different shapes and colours help us see these things. Although not a major theme in *Bicycling*, I also like seeing how many things one line can do. For example, there is a half-circle that makes part of the biker's leg, continues up to make part of the glove, then carries on up to make a small pattern on a distant mountain. Or the straight line that makes the bike's frame, but continues on to the edges to split the painting in half and suggest a horizon or maybe the edge of a field.'

Artists and athletes

'My hope is that this project will in some way bring the world of sports and the world of art together. I do think it can serve in some way to remind us all that there is a lot of good life happening that is worthy of celebrating. I think of it as the antidote to negative news. If you are passionate about the joy of being alive, please join me and help to make this celebration possible. Your encouragement and enthusiasm will help keep me moving forward. Help spread the word that there is simple joy in just being alive.'

A celebration of sport

To find out more about Randall's project and to look at the 30 sports that he is raising funds to complete, go to www.randalljhenrie.com/sports. To support Randall's bid to create his 30 sport and art works, post on the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/SportsCelebrationArt.



Introducing the work

Responding to the painting

Let the children look at the *Bicycling* poster and discuss their initial impressions. Ask: *What do you think of it? Do you like it? What do you like or dislike? What can you see? Do you think the artist likes sport and cycling?* Then ask them to look at the image for three minutes, in silence, trying to notice as many things as they can about it. They need to look really closely at the work to see all the different patterns and colours. Then let them talk about what they can see.

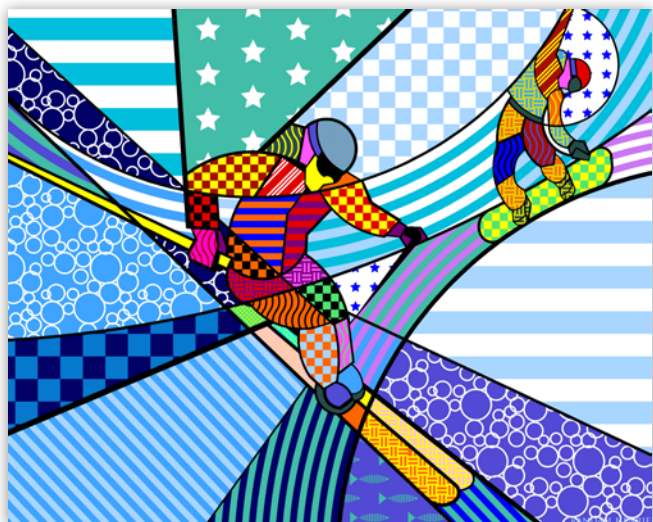
Colour, shape and pattern

The image is a good example of using line, colour and form to create an image that is part abstract, part reality. Ask the children: *What do you notice about the colours, shapes and patterns in the work?* They should mention the black outlines of lines, the bold colours and patterns. Can they work out where the lines start and finish? Use fingers to trace the lines. Ask: *Are any colours and patterns repeated? How many different colours and patterns are used? Are there patterns and colours that are similar but different?* (For instance, the chequerboard pattern in blue and white at the top left is similar to the bottom left in orange and purple.) Gradually tell the children a few things about how and why the artist has created the work. What words would they use to describe the painting? (Use words such as *Bold, bright, vibrant.*)

Exploring other works

Look at the work of other artists that use shape, colour and pattern such as Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. Talk about Paul Klee's concept of taking the line for a walk. (He started with a point, extended this into a line and just let the line do what it wanted until the image suggested something to him.)

Randall says: 'I don't really worry about the traditional way of doing things. For me it is fun to use a bunch of bold, bright, and vibrant shapes and colours and see if I can create something meaningful with them. The contrast of two things that help us understand both things. For example: Would you know what the sky is if it didn't bump into the mountain? Would you know what hot means without cold? Where does one thing start and another begin? I like playing with this in my art.'



Skiing



Rugby

Images reproduced courtesy of Randall J Henrie

Activity ideas

From photography to painting

Let the children create their own sport photo, which they will then 'paint' on paper or screen to create a work in the style of Randall J Henrie. The photo should be simple with a central figure. You could set up a photo booth outside, weather permitting. Bring in some sporting props and let the children choose a sport that makes them feel alive. Have a dressing up box of sports equipment for them to try out.

Ideally set the camera up on a tripod to keep little hands steady. You may need to work in height order for speed, so that you don't have to alter the height of the tripod each time! Let children being photographed stand on a marked central spot. Children could work in pairs, photographing each other, or an adult could take the photos for younger children.

Line work

To create a painting in the style of the artist, children can either use their own sport photo as a reference, or they can work freestyle. First, let them draw their image with thick black lines, either on the computer or on a piece of paper. Tell them not to worry about making it perfect. They should just let the line do whatever it wants to do. Now, take some of the lines and continue them all the way to the edge of the paper. Add more lines or curves until the entire sheet is filled with just black lines and white spaces. Remind them, if necessary, that they shouldn't completely fill the paper with lines. They will need some white space. Display the poster as inspiration.

Blocking in colour

Now, they should choose six or seven colours that they like, no more than that, and start filling in the white spaces with colour. Tell them to try to never use the same colour next to itself. They can use their colours to help show off the shapes that they have drawn. For example, if their drawing has a sky, they should use all light colours on the sky and all the dark colours on the ground. Once they have filled in all the spaces with colour, they can start adding patterns onto each colour. They can use stars, polka-dots, hearts, squiggly lines and their imaginations to fill most of the colours with a fun pattern. That's it!



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