

Collection Conversations: Hannelore Baron & Yvonne Thomas

Ages: 12+ (Grades 6–12)

Materials needed:

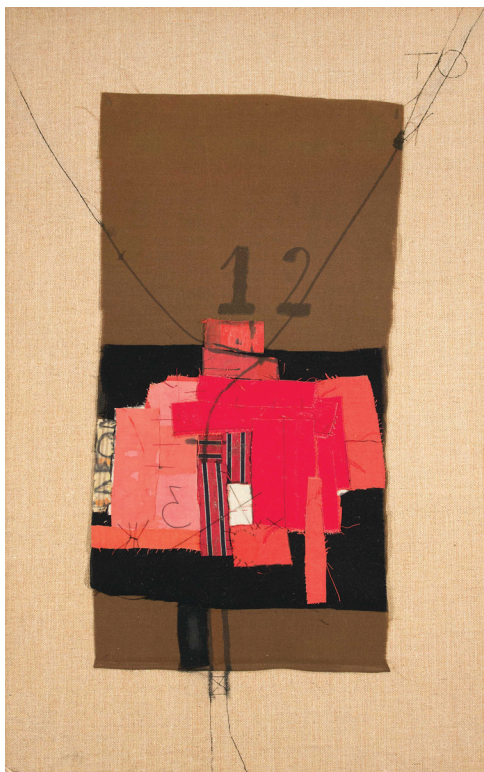
- Pencil and paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Mixed media (paper scraps, fabric, thread)
- Glue and/or tape

Duration: open-ended

Inspiration:

Left: Hannelore Baron (German, 1926–1987). *Flag*, ca. 1972. Mixed-media of cloth collage, pen, and ink. Collection of the Hudson River Museum. Museum Purchase, 1972 (72.41.1). © Hannelore Baron.

Right: Yvonne Thomas (American, b. France, 1913–2009). *Central Rhythm*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Hudson River Museum (INV.0122). © Yvonne Thomas.



Introduction

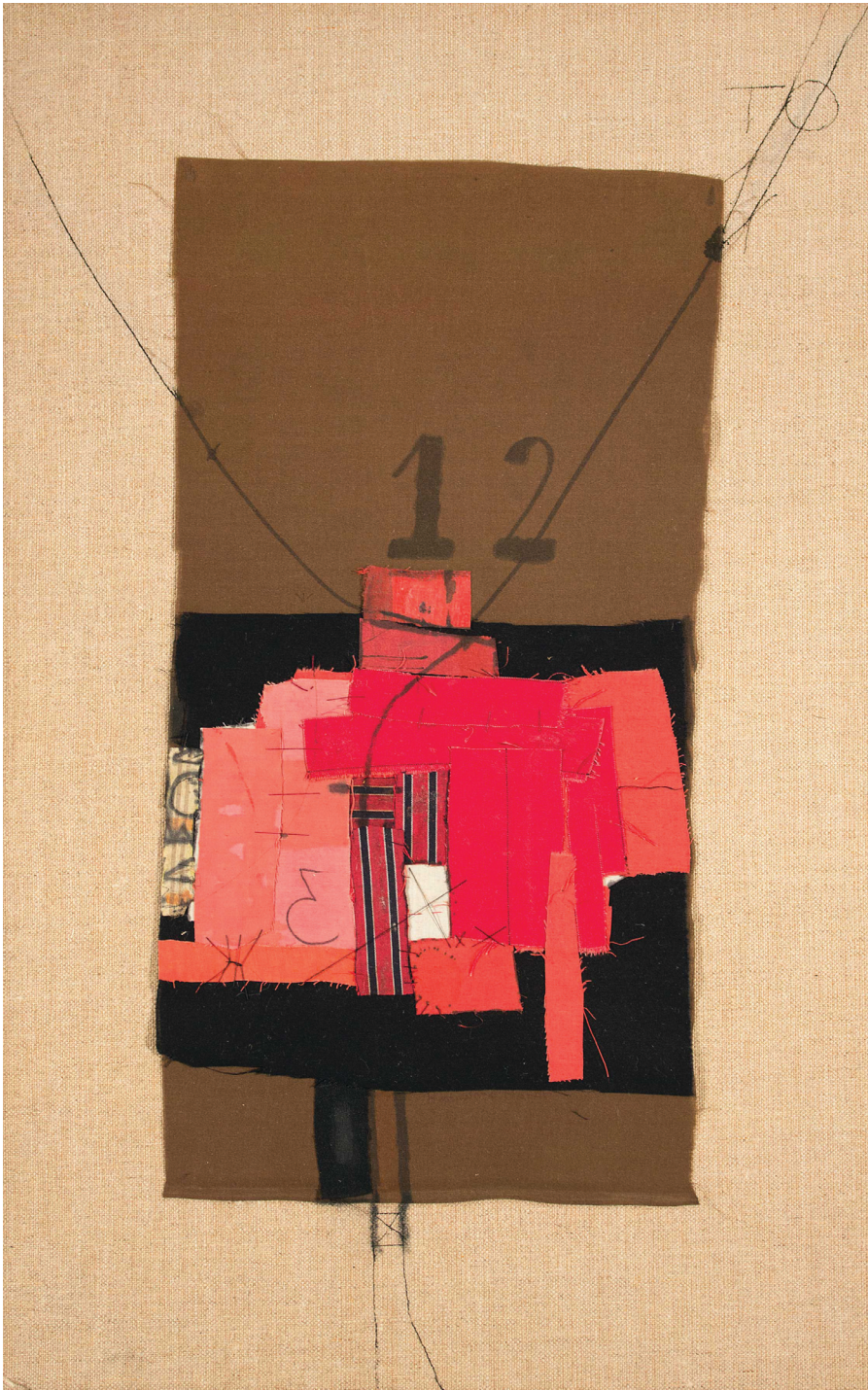
In this new series of teaching resources, we will explore paired works from the permanent collection and imagine the conversations the artists, and the works themselves, might have with one another across time, space, medium, and context. Hannelore Baron and Yvonne Thomas are featured artists in the current exhibition, [Women to the Fore](#), on view through January 3, 2021. Both artists are known for their experimentation in abstraction. Abstract art does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality, but instead uses shapes, colors, forms, and gestural marks to achieve its effect.

- What's going on in these works?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

Connect

Hannelore Baron was born in Germany in 1926. As a child, she experienced trauma and displacement during Nazi rule, moving to New York in 1941. As a teen, she studied at the Straubenmuller Textile High School and was mentored by John Heliker, who taught painting at Columbia University. While she never formally studied art after high school, she continued to paint. Baron's affiliation with the National Association of Women Artists provided her with a community to learn from and work with, and she began to experiment with collage, participate in exhibitions, and use mixed media—from cloth to wire to found wood—in her work through the 1950s and 1960s. Baron's work is both personal and political, referencing (or informed by) her early experiences and expressing her residual anxiety and depression in abstract form. *Flag* is an example of the more explicitly political work she was making in the 1970s, in both title and impact.

Yvonne Thomas was born in France in 1913 and immigrated to New York in 1925, where she studied at the Cooper Union and Art Students' League and worked as a fashion illustrator and commercial artist. By the late 1940s, Thomas was creatively connected with the male-dominated and influential community of Abstract Expressionists. In 1948, she was a member of the "Subject of the Artist" experimental school led by [Robert Motherwell](#), Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, William Baziotas, David Hare, and Clyfford Still. After this experience, she continued to have close working and student-mentor relationships with Motherwell and Hans Hoffman. She is known for her paintings that explore the symbolic possibilities of color and form.



Hannelore Baron (German, 1926–1987). *Flag*, ca. 1972. Mixed-media of cloth collage, pen, and ink. Collection of the Hudson River Museum. Museum Purchase, 1972 (72.41.1). © Hannelore Baron.



Yvonne Thomas (American, b. France, 1913–2009). *Central Rhythm*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Hudson River Museum (INV.0122). © Yvonne Thomas.

Think

- Consider each artist's use of [color, line, shape, space, and texture](#). Consider how components of each work contribute to a sense of movement, balance, and harmony.
- What similarities do you notice in the composition of these individual works?
- What differences do you observe?
- How does each work make you feel as you observe it? What emotions does it elicit?
- How does the title of each work connect to how you feel and what you notice when observing it?
- Consider what you now know about the life experiences of Baron and Thomas, how they are similar, and how they are different? How does this information affect or impact your understanding of the works?
- Imagine the artists having a conversation with each other. What do you think they would discuss? What questions would you ask them?

Do

1. As artists working in abstraction, Baron and Thomas processed personal experiences, or explored personal emotions, reactions, and questions through forms that weren't figurative, or as they appear in real life. Consider a memory, an experience, a feeling, or an idea you want to express in an abstract work of your own. Do you want to turn a sound into its visual equivalent? Do you want to turn a room into a color scheme? Do you want to turn the taste of a particular food into a geometric pattern? (See #4, below)
2. To practice, you can use pencil and paper for a [simple abstraction exercise](#). If you were to draw in detail a scene or an event that you want to share, how can you subtract lines and pencil marks from that scene so that only the essence of an outline expresses how it felt to be there at a particular moment in time? Experiment with the thickness of your lines, shading, and scale to further abstract your work.
3. Baron and Thomas both made use of color in their work, though in distinctly different styles. Add color to your pencil drawing or create a new abstraction, and consider how color and tone might evoke a certain emotion or response from a viewer.

4. Experiment with the concept of synesthesia, or the perception of multiple sensory reactions to one single image, sound, or other stimuli. If you want to depict a sound, what color would it be? Are you making a taste into something visual? Do you want it to make someone feel serious or sad? Do you want your abstraction to make someone feel happy? What colors would you use to do so, and why? What happens if you start to experiment by adding different layers to your composition, or by adding contrast so that certain areas stand out?
5. Baron, in particular, is known for her mixed-media work. Take your experiments in abstraction a step further and use materials other than paper, pencil, markers, or crayons to express your idea, emotion, or experience. How can you use different shapes or even three-dimensional forms in a work of mixed media to tell a story or help a viewer have a response?

Reflect

Notice your thoughts and reactions at each step in the process outlined above. Notice your reaction to your finished work. How does it feel to add elements that make a work colorful, or to make it have deeper texture, or even shadows and areas that are highlighted to be more prominent than others? Notice as you create your work how it feels to remove literal elements of a drawing or design piece by piece or how it feels to move around mixed media materials in various compositional combinations until you decide to stop. What drives those decisions by you, the creator?

Share

Take a photo of your work and post it to Instagram using the hashtag #MuseumFromHome, and tag @HudsonRiverMuseum.

Standards

Common Core Learning Standards

English Language Arts

Reading Informational Text:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-8.1

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-8.10

Foundational Reading Skills:

Phonics and Word Recognition: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4-8.3

Fluency: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4-8.4

Writing:

Texts Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-8.1-2

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-8.7-9

Language:

Conventions of Standard English: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4-8.1-2

Knowledge of Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4-8.4-6

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4-8.4-6

Literacy in History and Social Studies

Reading:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1-3

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10

National Core Arts Standards

Creating

Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.

Performing, Presenting, Producing

Anchor Standard #4. Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Responding

Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.