



ART BRIDGES: Lesson Plans for Enrichment, Growth and Healing

Oil Pastel Cats Inspired by Laurel Burch

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Cheryl Trowbridge
www.teachkidsart.net**

Objectives:

The participants will:

1. Use the art elements of color, form, line pattern and negative and positive space to create art
2. Manipulate art materials to create art

Audiences:

This lesson could be adapted for use by any age group. In addition, the inspirational story of Laurel Burch brings a very positive message to the activity and its participants.



What's not to love about these whimsical, colorful cats inspired by San Francisco artist, Laurel Burch? This fun project can be adapted to most any age group--the examples here were done by my 4th graders.

My students always enjoy learning about the lives of famous artists, and the story of prolific artist Laurel Burch (1945–2007) really inspired them! Her highly stylized artwork can be found on products from clothing to jewelry to dishes, but her *strength of character* is what really captured my students' attention.

- Laurel Burch is a great example of how a **positive attitude** can get you through all kinds of adversity.
- She was **resourceful**.... As a self-taught artist and single mom in her 20's, she started a business in her home selling her paintings and jewelry made from metal found in junk yards.
- She **knew how to persevere**.... She suffered her entire life from the painful, bone disease, *osteoporosis*. This caused her bones to be so brittle that she endured over *100 fractures* in her lifetime, yet she rarely stopped working.
- She **thought of others** more than herself... Even though her life was hard, she was more focused on those around her than on herself, and she became known for her generous donations to charities.

Laurel Burch was only 61 when she died, but her legacy lives on through her art and her many contributions to charitable causes. She viewed her disease as a “gift”, believing that you could make something beautiful from any situation and refusing to accept any other way of thinking. Laurel Burch is inspirational far beyond her artwork!

Supplies/Materials:

- 12” x 18” black construction paper
- Oil pastels, broken in half, with paper removed from one of the halves
- Examples of “cat paintings” by Laurel Burch, displayed for inspiration (visit <http://laurelburch.com/ArtGallery/index.html>)

Class Instructions:

1. Use a white oil pastel to lightly draw a border about 1” from each edge of your paper.
2. Continuing with your white oil pastel, use simple lines and shapes to make a rough outline of a cat or cats. Include simple patterns on the cat, background, and border. There’s no need to draw with pencil first, as any mistakes can be easily covered up later on.
3. Now use the *side* of your oil pastels (the halves with paper removed) to apply the first layer of color on your design. (Oil pastels give the best results when you layer them, *completely covering your paper*, so don’t skip this step!)



4. For the next layer (or layers), hold your oil pastel as you would a crayon, pressing hard to get the most intense colors. It can be fun to color “every which way” to add a lively “brush stroke” effect.
5. Be sure to hold your oil pastels close to the tip... they’re very soft and will break easily, especially once the paper is removed!

6. Take care to layer colors that blend well together and avoid layering complements (colors across from each other on the color wheel, like red and green). A scrap of black paper is handy for testing possible combinations. (*Hint: Applying white on top of any color will make it brighter!*)
7. Now play “hide the black paper” and keep working until your entire paper is covered with at least two layers of color.
8. The final step is to *outline* by simply tracing over your original drawing... we usually use black for this, but sometimes a white outline can look great, too!



To see this lesson in its entirety, visit <http://www.teachkidsart.net/oil-pastel-cats-inspired-by-laurel-burch/> .

*Special thanks to **Cheryl Trowbridge** for sharing a wealth of information and resources and ideas on her excellent website www.teachkidsart.net ! Cheryl has her art education credentials and has been teaching art to kids for over 20 years. She is inspired by watching children of all ages discover their ability to be creative. Her passion is to make successful art lessons accessible to help share the joy of art with all the kids in our lives. Visit Cheryl's on-line store <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Teach-Kids-Art> to purchase a variety of resources for helping kids create art.*

If you have used this activity, we'd love to hear from you! Please send questions or comments through our website www.hildegardcenter.org .

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