

# STILL LIVES

In a still life, the artist arranges ordinary objects, flowers, or food, into a composition that is pleasing or interesting to him or her—and then paints it.

Sometimes, still lifes explore the effect of light and color, as the Claude Monet painting does at right. Sometimes, still lifes examine shapes, as does the Paul Cezanne painting below it.

Look at the “Sunflowers” painting by Vincent Van Gogh on the cover. What do you notice most about it, style or subject?

Still life compositions give the artist lots of control. You can set up the arrangement just the way you want, and leave it there as long as you need to. After you have looked at the still lifes in this section, try making one of your own

## Make Your Own Still Life

For centuries decorators and artists have used everyday objects such as fruit, dishes, flowers or shells to create pleasing visual combinations. Many artistic techniques can be used in creating still lifes—drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and ceramics, just to name a few.

Some artists have worked for years with the same favorite objects over and over in different arrangements of shapes or colors. Other artists have assigned associations or meanings to the objects, creating social, political, or emotional statements with their paintings or drawings.

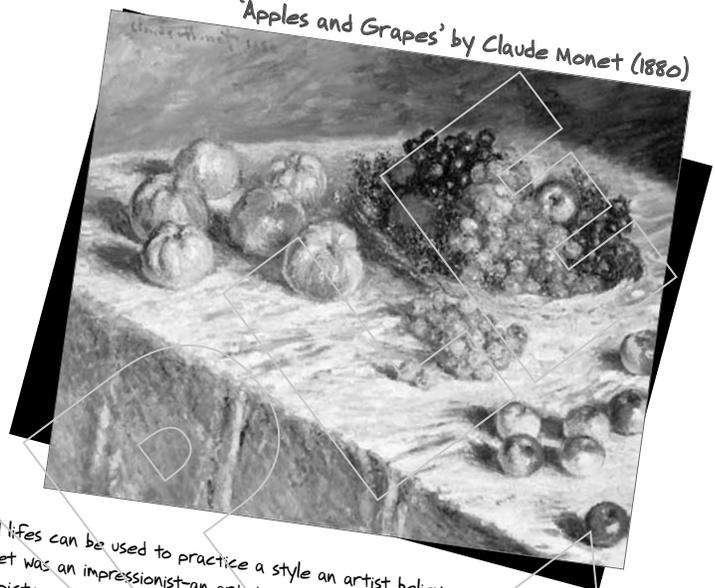
Making a still life is a creative activity that involves decision-making and problem solving. It can be as serious or as zany as your imagination allows. Here are some guidelines to get you started.

1. Decide what kind of still life you are interested in making. As the artist, you must decide if your still life is simply made to please your eye or if you are interested in creating a still life with a message. Consider creating a still life that expresses who you are—a symbolic self-portrait!

2. Select a group of things that you really like. Look around the house and bring together stuff that doesn't always live together—don't forget to ask permission to borrow from your parents!
3. Select objects that have the shapes, textures, and colors that are pleasing to you. Pick a variety of sizes.
4. Figure out where you would like to place the objects. Remember, a still life does not have to be on a table. Select a space where you can leave your arrangement for a while.

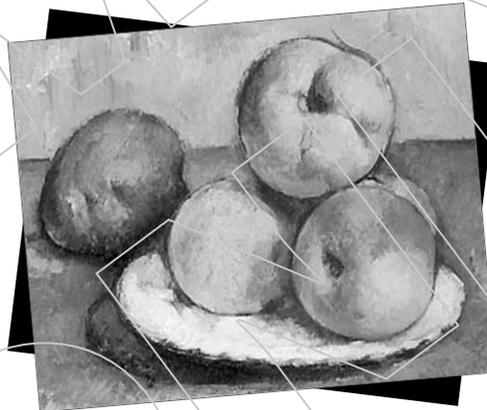
5. Arrange the objects. This part takes time. Find an arrangement that you like but one that also feels balanced.
  - Place light things next to dark and put big objects behind small objects.
  - Use some things to create diagonal lines in your composition—lines created by a crease in fabric or something leaning on its side.
6. Create! Draw, paint, or photograph your efforts. Use the same objects in a different arrangement. Make a realistic version and an abstract version. Remember, you are the artist!

'Apples and Grapes' by Claude Monet (1880)



Still lifes can be used to practice a style an artist believes in. Claude Monet was an impressionist—an artist fascinated by the impression left by light in a picture. Where is the light coming from in this painting? Is it strong or soft? How does it affect the large and small sphere shapes of the different fruits?

'Still Life with Quince, Apples and Pears' by Paul Cezanne (1886)



Paul Cezanne had a different goal than Monet. He was interested in the shapes of things, rather than light. He particularly liked spheres and cones. What are the spheres in the painting? How does he create a cone?

# MOTION

Still lifes are a way for an artist to practice painting shapes and colors. But what about the artist who wants to show things in motion?

Except for the art form of film/movies, and sculptures with flexible parts, art does not move. So how does a painter or sculptor show things in motion?

The painting by Amy Lanz on this page is called "Zorba the Greek: Dance." It is based on a Greek folk dance the artist saw in a movie as a young woman. She was excited by the movement of the dancer, who became more and more excited the longer he danced.

By blurring the paint and the forms together, the artist makes the painting come alive with movement. You can almost feel the body of the dancer moving so fast it can't be caught clearly.

You may have seen this in photos you have taken. Some cameras do not capture movement if it is too fast. The result is a blur. Often we are upset when our photos come out this way. But sometimes the blur can be interesting, if you look at it as art.



In animated Disney films such as "Mulan," movement is created by quickly "flipping" images one after the other. Computers have helped expand animation beyond what human artists could do in the past.

## Step by Step

Animation is a kind of art that creates movement with still pictures. Only each scene contains hundreds or even thousands of pictures. Each one changes the position of the figures just a little to show the next stage of movement. When they are run quickly together in a film projector, the figures look as if they are moving.

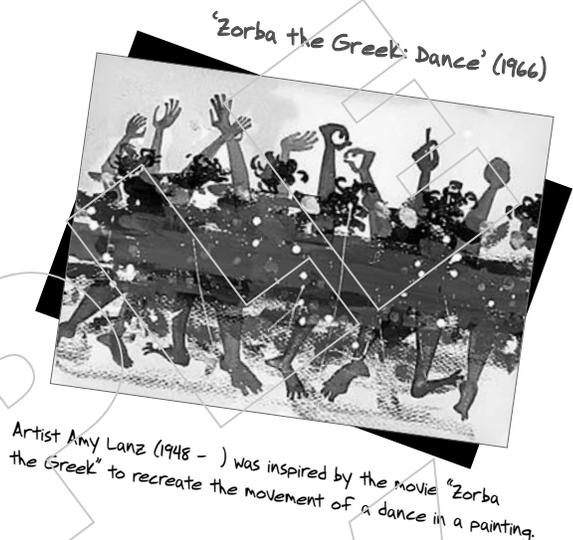
This approach is also used in claymation films. Claymation uses clay sculptures as figures. Each time a figure moves in the story, the clay figure's position is changed. Then the different pictures are run quickly through a film projector.

## Computer Help

In the beginning, animation films required that artists draw or paint every frame of the picture. This made creating these films very slow. Computers now help with the drawing.

## Make a Movie

You can make a movie with a pad of paper that is connected on one end. A small pad is best. You will need to draw a figure



Artist Amy Lanz (1948 - ) was inspired by the movie "Zorba the Greek" to recreate the movement of a dance in a painting.

over and over again making its body shift position. Start with stick figures. Then flip quickly through the pages. You should see your figure "move."

## Art in Motion

Sometimes artists show movement in a painting by doing what animators do—showing figures in different stages of a motion. But they put them all on one canvas, instead of on separate sheets. This leads your eye across the painting, following the movement.

At other times, painters or sculptors can show movement by posing the people or figures in ways that show the tension of movement. Muscles bulge. Sweat breaks out on foreheads. Arms pump. These things also can show movement.

## BRUSH UP ON THE NEWS

1. Look through the photos in the paper today. What photos show movement? The sports section is a good place to start. What in the still photo gives you a feeling of movement. Write out five words that describe this feeling you have.
2. Find a story or ad in the paper that has a photo with it. Is movement part of the story, or ad message? If you could remake the ad or reshoot the photo with a movie camera, what would you do to show movement more effectively?
3. TV is all about movement. Find a show you like from the listings in the paper. Write a paragraph telling how this show would be different if you could only present it using still photography or paintings. What extra things would you have to do to make it interesting to watch?