

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS WITH MAGINEL WRIGHT BARNEY

GRADE: 3-7

TIME: One 70-minute session

This lesson introduces students to the art of Maginel Wright Barney, Frank Lloyd Wright's sister. This lesson explores her background and her use of various nature-inspired elements and mediums, such as bright colors, organic shapes, lines and texture. For this activity, students will focus on two specific mediums: yarn painting and felt collage. They will create their own art piece using one of the two mediums, exploring how their chosen medium (either yarn or felt), and included elements (colors, shapes, lines, texture) can be used to tell their own story.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

[Canva Slides](#) (PDF version attached to this lesson)

Maginel Wright Barney Biography (Appendix A)

Printed instruction sheets for yarn painting and felt collage (Appendix B)

Brainstorm Board Worksheet (Appendix C)

Pencils

Yarn

Felt

Scissors

Cardboard bases

Glue

Popsicle Sticks

1. Students will verbally describe what mediums and elements are present in various illustrations by Maginel Wright Enright.
2. Students will apply their knowledge of elements and mediums to create their own unique art piece.
3. Students will evaluate their own artwork and that of their peers through the use of conversation starters.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Who was Maginel Wright Barney?
2. What is the difference between an art element and art medium?
3. How can we use art elements and mediums to tell our own story?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Introduce students to Maginel Wright Barney by discussing her background, career accomplishments and how her art connects to nature. Emphasize how her art styles changed over time, specifically her use of yarn in needlework and painting. (Tip: Utilize Appendix A to begin your research on Maginel and her career.)
 - **Canva Slides:** https://www.canva.com/design/DAGxSO8vkBs/sThrztMh9LI5auKbU8sXkA/view?utm_content=DAGxSO8vkBs&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniquelinks&utlId=h49584f6610
- Define key concepts such as elements and mediums. Ask students to consider other examples of elements and mediums not listed on the slide.
- Discuss how elements can be seen in nature as well as used in art to tell a story. Discuss how all three elements can be seen in a single flower.
 - ◇ Students can do this by coloring in the petals, creating texture in the center of the flower and making organic shapes or lines in the petals, center, leaves, and stem.
- Discuss how an artist can recreate the elements seen in nature through the use of different mediums.

ENGAGE

- Explore a variety of art pieces created by Maginel and have students identify and discuss what mediums were used to create each piece and what art elements stand out the most.
- Challenge students to think about how Maginel connected her artwork to nature and how these features can be used to tell a story to the viewer.
- Introduce yarn painting and felt collage to students showing examples and reviewing in depth instructions.
 - ◇ Tip: use these Youtube Videos as instructional content.
 - Yarn Art: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOsHf4--SA>
 - Felt Art: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-6QCJpZrBl>
- Provide students with the brainstorm board sheet, review expectations and then direct students to work independently.

DESIGN

- Instruct students to use either instruction slide (Appendix B) to help them in the creation process. Remind them to sketch out their favorite design from their brainstorm board (Appendix C) directly onto their cardboard base **BEFORE** gluing.
 - ◇ Tip: Print the instructional sheets for yarn painting and felt collage ahead of time so students can have access to their own individual copy.
- Encourage students to take their time and glue only one piece of yarn or felt at a time for accuracy.
- Have students consider how their art piece is connected to nature while also telling a story. If needed, have students look back to their brainstorm board as a reminder.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Instruct students to share in pairs or small groups and present their art piece by answering these questions:
 - What medium did you choose?
 - What elements stand out the most? Why did you choose these for your creation?

LESSON PROCEDURE

(continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- **Encourage students to engage in the TAG mnemonic to guide discussion.**
 - Tell the artist something you like about the design.
 - Ask the artist a question about their work.
 - Give a suggestion for the artist.
- **Provide students with sentence starters if necessary for differentiation**
 - **Sentence Starters:**
 - I chose this color/texture/shape because...
 - The story I am trying to tell through this art piece is...

BIOGRAPHY OF MAGINEL WRIGHT BARNEY



General Information

- Maginel Wright (later Enright, then Barney) was the youngest sister of Frank Lloyd Wright and talented artist, particularly known for her work in children's illustration.
- Maginel grew up in Wisconsin and later in Illinois, where her mother moved her and her sister to be closer to her brother Frank in Oak Park, though she returned to Wisconsin for her senior year of high school at the Hillside Home School run by her aunts. She then attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, specializing in illustration. Maginel quickly found work and had an immensely successful career, illustrating over 60 children's books in addition to other projects, often illustrations and cover art for magazines.
- Later, Maginel would frequently spend summers at Taliesin (Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin studio) with her daughter, Elizabeth Enright, who would grow up to be an author and illustrator of children's books. Maginel created "yarn paintings" inspired by the driftless landscape surrounding Taliesin. Her memoir, "The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses," was published in 1965, a year before her death.

Later Career and New Ventures:

New York Relocation:

- In 1910, the family moved to New York City, where both Maginel and Walter, her first husband and fellow artist, set up studios. Elizabeth often served as a model for Maginel's illustrations, sparking Elizabeth's interest in art at a young age.
- Maginel was an inspiration for her daughter as she recounts, "...Almost always there would be an aboriginal stripe of paint or ink across her cheek, and her whole attitude as she applied the brush—then leaned away from the picture and bent her head from side to side, narrowing her eyes at it, then leaned forward again—was the attitude of an artist at work; alone, concentrated, for the moment wholly self-sufficient." - Quote by Elizabeth Enright.

Depression-Era Challenges:

- The Great Depression and changing illustration styles reduced Maginel's commissions. Due to this, her illustration style was greatly transformed, as evidenced by the 1932 cover of *Woman's Home Companion*, showing a Rainbow Fleet of boats. She eventually adapted by creating "longue point" needlework and custom embroidered items, which became popular. To do so, she substituted stitches of yarn for strokes of paint. Eventually, she created her own line of embroidered, silk-lined jackets and slippers.

APPENDIX A

(continued)

Transition to Needlework:

- Maginel's new artistic focus involved bold colors and larger compositional elements in her needlework pieces. These were exhibited in galleries and sold through prestigious outlets.
- In his introduction to Maginel's 1940 exhibition brochure, Austin Strong described his old friend's newest works, "With strong, sure strokes she makes us see nature alive and breathing through brooding hills, wild skies, and the upturned earth of plowed land. She makes us feel the heat rising from the freshly cut wheat fields. Maginel Wright Barney has caught a living rainbow and somehow woven it into patterns for our delight." In this quote, Strong is describing Maginel's foray into long point needlework. In these works she was inspired by her time spent in Wisconsin.

Nantucket Inspirations

- Illustrations of Local Landmarks: Maginel's work included depictions of Nantucket's notable buildings, such as Auld Lang Syne and the Jethro Coffin House. Her illustrations also featured local churches and scenes from the island's unique landscape.
- Connection to Frank: Maginel's use of diagonal slashes to convey the intensity of the spring rainstorm is reminiscent of Japanese woodblock prints, particularly the work of Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858). Hiroshige was a favorite artist of Frank Lloyd Wright's, who over several decades acquired, sold, and exhibited hundreds of Japanese prints and gave his sister those displayed on the walls of her New York and Nantucket homes.

Information Source and Quotes:

<https://nha.org/research/nantucket-history/history-topics/nantucket-in-the-art-of-maginel-wright/>



Frank Lloyd Wright's family outside of his Home in Oak Park, IL, c. 1890

FELT COLLAGE & YARN PAINTING PRINTOUT

FELT COLLAGE



Materials:

- Felt
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Cardboard base
- Glue
- Brainstorm board

Step 1: Write your name on the back of the cardboard base

Step 2: Using your brainstorm board: Sketch out your favorite design on the cardboard

Step 3: Cut out felt pieces to your desired size

Step 4: Carefully outline your design with glue and cover with felt, one piece at a time

Step 5: Once finished, place creation on the drying table

YARN PAINTING



Materials:

- Yarn
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Cardboard base
- Glue
- Popsicle stick (to move yarn into place)
- Brainstorm board

Step 1: Write your name on the back of the cardboard base

Step 2: Using your brainstorm board: Sketch out your favorite design on the cardboard

Step 3: Carefully outline your design with glue and cover with yarn, one strand at a time

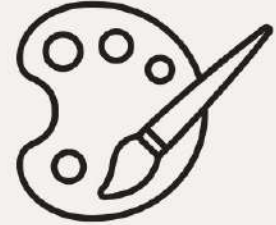
Step 4: To keep yarn strands close together, use the popsicle stick to gently push them

Step 5: Once finished, place creation on the drying table

Name _____

Brainstorm Board

What colors describe your personality?



Name 3 hobbies or interests

Where is your favorite place to relax?

Describe one of your favorite memories. How did it make you feel?

What **elements** of art that we discussed interest you the most?

Thumbnails: Use the spaces below to create 3 potential designs

Notes: Use the space below to record any thoughts, feelings, inspiration or other information you think might be helpful as you create your final piece.

MAGINEL WRIGHT BARNEY

An exploration of yarn painting and
textile collage

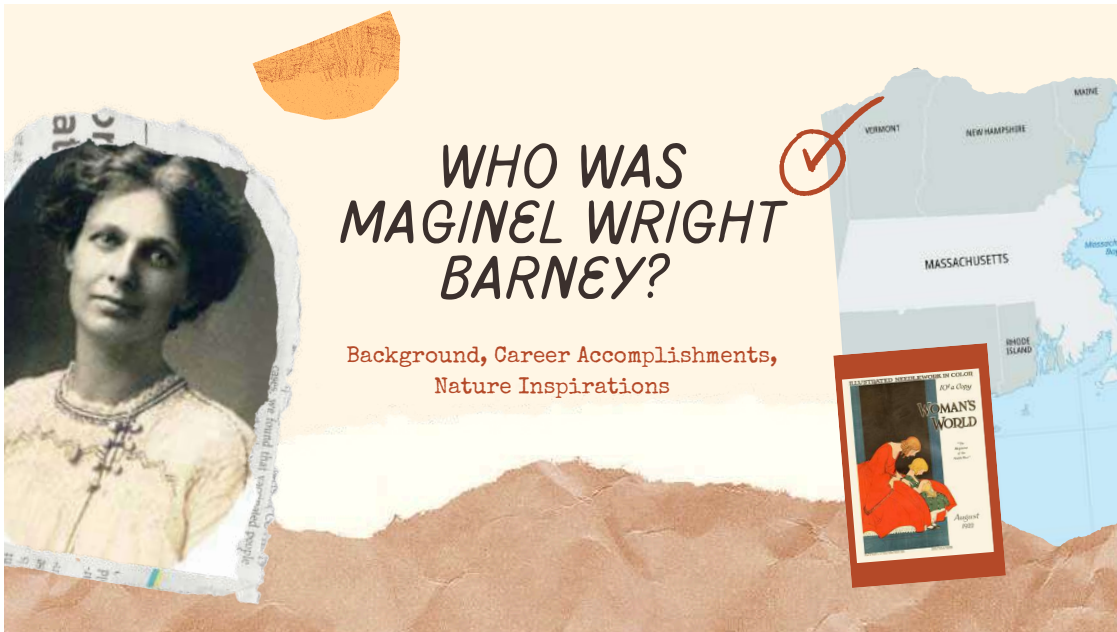
LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Verbally describe what mediums and elements are present in various illustrations by Maginel Wright.
- Apply what they have learned about elements and mediums through the creation of their own unique art piece.
- Evaluate their own artwork and that of their peers, through the use of conversation starters.

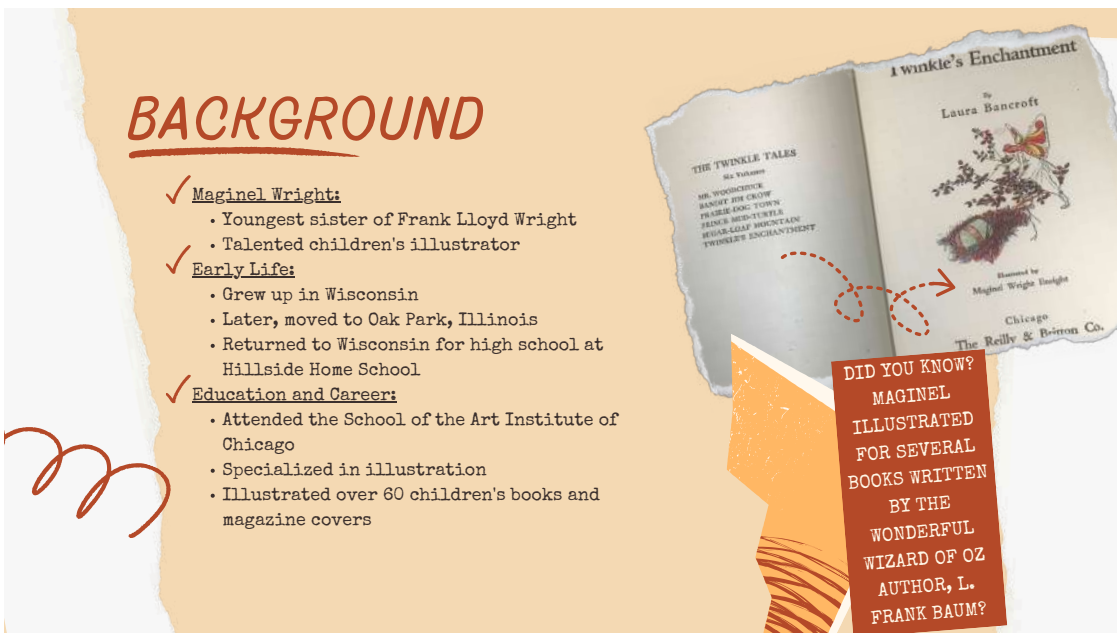
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Who was Maginel Wright?
2. What is the difference between an art element and an art medium?
3. How can we use art elements and mediums to tell our own story?



WHO WAS MAGINEL WRIGHT BARNEY?

Background, Career Accomplishments,
Nature Inspirations



BACKGROUND

- ✓ Maginel Wright:
 - Youngest sister of Frank Lloyd Wright
 - Talented children's illustrator
- ✓ Early Life:
 - Grew up in Wisconsin
 - Later, moved to Oak Park, Illinois
 - Returned to Wisconsin for high school at Hillside Home School
- ✓ Education and Career:
 - Attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
 - Specialized in illustration
 - Illustrated over 60 children's books and magazine covers

DID YOU KNOW?
MAGINEL
ILLUSTRATED
FOR SEVERAL
BOOKS WRITTEN
BY THE
WONDERFUL
WIZARD OF OZ
AUTHOR, L.
FRANK BAUM?

CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ New York Relocation (1910):
 - Family moved to New York City
 - Maginel and Walter (husband) set up studios
 - Elizabeth, her daughter modeled for Maginel's illustrations, sparking her interest in art
- ✓ Depression-Era Challenges:
 - The Great Depression reduced Maginel's illustration sales
 - She decided to adapt her art styles based on customer demands by creating "longue point" needlework and custom embroidered items instead of basic illustrations
 - Developed silk-lined felt jackets and slippers sold at America House
 - Used larger elements such as textiles and eventually discovered the use of yarn to create paintings



Auld Lang Syne House: Inspiration for Maginel

CONNECTIONS TO NATURE

- ✓ Nantucket House Purchase:
 - In 1912, Maginel bought a historic house in Nantucket. She portrayed the island's architecture and landscapes in her illustrations, capturing many landmarks before they underwent major changes.
- ✓ Illustrations of Local Landmarks in Nantucket:
 - Depicted Nantucket's notable buildings (e.g., Auld Lang Syne, Jethro Coffin House).
 - Featured local churches and island landscapes.
- ✓ Taliesin Summers:
 - Later in her career, Maginel and her daughter spent summers in Taliesin, where she created "yarn paintings" inspired by the driftless landscape of Spring Green, Wisconsin.





KEY CONCEPTS

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "MEDIUMS" AND "ELEMENTS" IN ART?



MEDIUM

An art medium is the material that artists use to create their artwork. It can be something you draw with, paint with, or sculpt with. For example, crayons, paint, clay, and pencils are all different art mediums. Each medium can be used in different ways to make different kinds of art! Today we will be using yarn and felt.



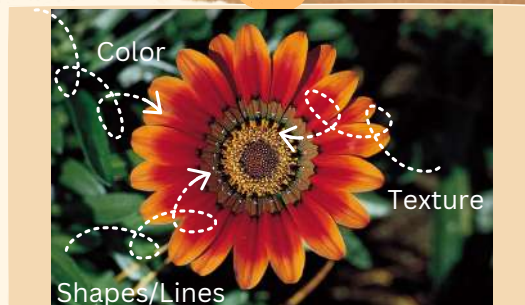
ELEMENT

Art elements are the basic parts or ingredients that artists use to create their artwork. We will be focusing on color, organic lines/shapes and texture.



EXAMPLE: ELEMENTS IN NATURE

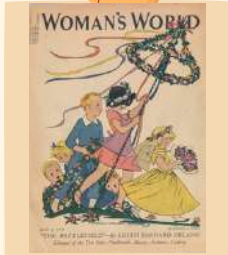
Elements that we commonly see in art can also be seen in nature. Artists can accomplish the same effect using a variety of mediums such as felt for texture, paint for color and yarn for making organic shapes and lines!



ISPY: IDENTIFY

HINT: The art description under each piece might be helpful

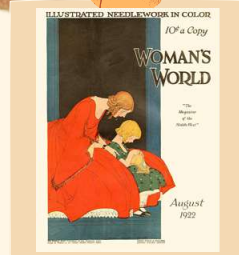
With a partner: For each piece of artwork identify the mediums used and what elements stand out the most in each piece created by Maginel.



"May Day"
Watercolor, pencil, and wash.



Felt collage.



Woman's World 1922-08
Illustrated needlework in color.



"Fairy Wishes"
Ink on paper.

ACTIVITY: YARN PAINING & FELT COLLAGE

How can we use art elements and mediums to tell our own story?



YARN PAINTING



Materials:

- Yarn
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Cardboard base
- Glue
- Popsicle stick (to move yarn into place)
- Brainstorm board

Step 1: Write your name on the back of the cardboard base

Step 2: Using your brainstorm board: Sketch out your favorite design on the cardboard

Step 3: Carefully outline your design with glue and cover with yarn, one strand at a time

Step 4: To keep yarn strands close together, use the popsicle stick to gently push them

Step 5: Once finished, place creation on the drying table

FELT COLLAGE



Materials:

- Felt
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Cardboard base
- Glue
- Brainstorm board

Step 1: Write your name on the back of the cardboard base

Step 2: Using your brainstorm board: Sketch out your favorite design on the cardboard


Step 3: Cut out felt pieces to your desired size

Step 4: Carefully outline your design with glue and cover with felt, one piece at a time

Step 5: Once finished, place creation on the drying table

Name _____

Brainstorm Board

What colors describe your personality? _____ 

Name 3 hobbies or interests _____

Where is your favorite place to relax? _____

Describe one of your favorite memories. How did it make you feel? _____

What **elements** of art that we discussed interest you the most? _____

Thumbnails: Use the spaces below to create 3 potential designs

--	--	--

Notes: Use the space below to record any thoughts, feelings, inspiration or other information you think might be helpful as you create your final piece

BRAINSTORM TIME!

- ✓ Complete brainstorm board
- ✓ Have your work checked by a teacher
- ✓ Gather materials and use correct instruction sheet

https://www.canva.com/design/DAG0yC3a7e/1_84k2y8f02revVyo109/edit?utm_content=DAG0yC3a7e&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

SHARE OUT!

Sentence Starters:
I chose this color/texture/shape because...

The story I am trying to tell through this art piece is...

With a partner or small group answer these questions:

1. What medium did you choose? Yarn or felt?
2. What elements stand out the most? Why did you choose these for your creation?
3. What story is your creation trying to tell?

NECESSARY RESOURCES!

Art Tutorials:

Yarn Art:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4kAlhXayw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOsHf4--SA>

Felt Collage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-60CJpZrBJ>

Definitions/Descriptions of Key Concepts:

Medium vs Element:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-medium-in-art-definition-terms-quiz.html>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-are-the-seven-elements-of-art-definition-examples.html#:~:text=The%20seven%20elements%20of%20art%20are%20line%2C%20shape%2C%20space%2C.flat%20area%20of%20enclosed%20space>

Printable's:

Brainstorm Board: https://www.canva.com/design/DAGxSM-hZfA/v0IRUiiYa_Mo0blxmYjBg/edit?utm_content=DAGxSM-hZfA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGxSM-hZfA/v0IRUiiYa_Mo0blxmYjBg/edit?utm_content=DAGxSM-hZfA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGxSM-hZfA/v0IRUiiYa_Mo0blxmYjBg/edit?utm_content=DAGxSM-hZfA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

EXTRA RESOURCES!

Background on Maginel:

<https://nha.org/research/nantucket-history/history-topics/nantucket-in-the-art-of-maginel-wright/>

<https://www.taliesinpreservation.org/historians-corner-march-2020/>

Art Tutorials:

Yarn Art:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4kAlhXayw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOsHf4--SA>

<https://edinyarnfest.com/types-of-yarn-art/>

<https://onelittleproject.com/yarn-art/>

Felt Collage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-60CJpZrBJ>

<https://theartofeducation.edu/2018/02/collage-canvasa-creative-lesson-students/>

Definitions/Descriptions of Key Concepts:

Needlework:

<https://nataliafrankneedlework.com/2021/05/28/petit-point-what-is-it/>

<https://www.britannica.com/art/petit-point>

Medium vs Element:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-medium-in-art-definition-terms-quiz.html>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-are-the-seven-elements-of-art-definition-examples.html#:~:text=The%20seven%20elements%20of%20art%20are%20line%2C%20shape%2C%20space%2C.flat%20area%20of%20enclosed%20space>