

GREAT ART IDEAS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS: INSPIRED BY THE MEMPHIS DESIGN GROUP

YEAR 4–6

OVERVIEW

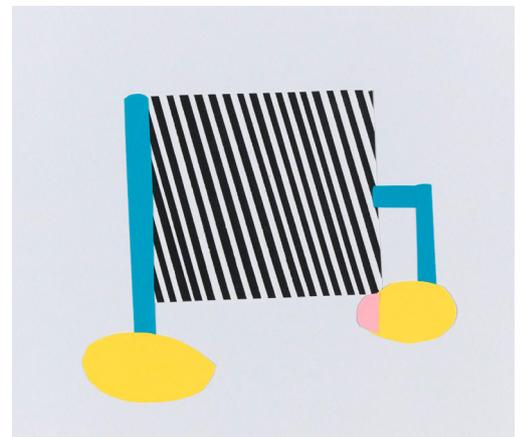
In this project students will explore the role of modernity in design by examining works by the Memphis design group. They will develop their fine motor skills and understanding of shape and measurement by planning and creating a geometric three-dimensional design which reimagines an everyday object.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify and describe how geometric shapes can be used to express a concept or theme.
- Analyse how colour, pattern and shape interact and enhance our understanding of the artist's intention.
- Plan, refine and create a three-dimensional furniture design inspired by works from the Memphis design group.

STUDENT EXAMPLES



RELATED ARTWORKS



Ettore Sottsass (designer)
Memphis, Milan (manufacturer and retailer)
Carlton room divider 1981
wood, thermosetting laminate, metal, plastic
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the National
Gallery Women's Association, 1985



Matteo Thun (designer)
Memphis, Milan (retailer)
Alessio Sarri Ceramiche, Florence (manufacturer)
Pelicanus Bellicosus teapot 1982
earthenware
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased from Admission Funds, 1991
© Matteo Thun



Matteo Thun (designer)
Memphis, Milan (retailer)
Alessio Sarri Ceramiche, Florence (manufacturer)
Larus marinus teapot 1982
earthenware
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased from Admission Funds, 1991
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DISCUSS

Ettore Sottsass was an Italian architect who established the Memphis design group in 1981 in Milan. The Memphis design group rejected traditional approaches to design and challenged ideas of what was popular or in style at the time. They created furniture and other everyday objects that used unusual forms and shapes in their structure and functionality. Geometric forms and prints, block pop-art colours, use of laminate and a feeling of fun and quirkiness were typically found in the designs. Memphis soon developed a global cult following, and celebrities such as fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld and musician David Bowie acquired hundreds of pieces for their own collections.

Look at the related works and use the following discussion prompts to explore use of geometric shapes and colour with your class:

- What do you notice about these designs? Are these objects functional? *Can you see the figure hidden in Carlton Room Divider, 1981?*
- The works use geometric forms and shapes in unexpected ways. Why do you think the designer chose to use these shapes? How does the shape of the object impact its function? *Consider the use of diagonal lines instead of traditional horizontal and vertical ones.*
- Why did the artist choose these colours? What effect do they create?
- Do you think the works are furniture, sculpture or art? How can you tell if something is a piece of art, an everyday functional object or both?
- Which mathematical skills might you need to design objects like these?
- If you could reinvent an everyday object or piece of furniture from your house which would you choose? Explain why.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- A variety of coloured and geometric patterned paper
- Scissors
- Blank white A4 paper
- Sticky tape
- Glue

CREATE

Students design and construct their own furniture piece inspired by the Memphis design group in the following steps:

1. Sketch ideas for a piece of furniture or a household object. *Use geometric shapes in fun and interesting ways.*
2. Consider which components you will create with block colours and which will use patterns.
3. Refine the design and draw a final two-dimensional version of your design. *You can use crayons and paper or digital tools to render your design.*
4. Construct a three-dimensional model of your design using coloured paper, patterns and sticky tape.
Note: If the design contains geometric forms students might like to construct their design from a two-dimensional net.

PRESENT & REFLECT

Students can show their design to the class and display them on shelves or other surfaces.

- Which object or piece of furniture did you choose to reimagine for your design?
- What artistic choices did you make when creating your design?
- How does your design use shape and colour to convey meaning?
- What changes might you make to improve your work?

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