



OGDEN MUSEUM
OF SOUTHERN ART

O- riginal Art Activity:
Secret Code Painting
Inspired by Ida Kohlmeyer



Ida Kohlmeyer, *Signs and Symbols 85-1*, Mixed media on canvas, 1984

Ida Rittenberg Kohlmeyer was an American painter and sculptor who was born in New Orleans in 1912. She attended Newcomb College and earned a Bachelor of Arts in English. After finding her love for creating art, she went on to pursue a master's degree in fine arts. She spent all of her time in the studio and became the Abstract artist we know today.

Create a secret message in your painting by developing a secret code using symbols.

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Supplies

Watercolor paint, Brush, Paper towels, Cup of water, White paper.

Instructions

Step 1: Take a minute to look at the artwork. What do you notice? Kohlmeyer created abstract work that uses simple forms and bright colors. Kohlmeyer developed her own style by creating symbols. What symbols can you find in the artwork?

Step 2: Create your own set of symbols. What form or figures will you use? Symbols can be shapes, objects, letters or numbers. Think of 3-5 symbols to use in your artwork.

Step 3: What will each symbol represent? On a separate piece of paper draw each symbol and write down what each symbol represents. A symbol can represent a letter, word or feeling.

Step 4: What do you want your secret code painting to say? Think of how you will arrange the symbols in your painting to create the meaning. Do you read it left to right, up and down or another way? Write the instructions on how to interpret your code on the separate piece of paper.

Step 5: Once you have come up with your system of symbols, grab a new piece of paper and the rest of the supplies. Find a clean area where you can freely paint.

Step 6: It's time to paint. Grab your paint brush and start creating your secret code. Paint the background a light, solid color then apply your symbols with a darker color. Dip the brush in water, wipe off the excess water on the edge of the cup. Add the water from the brush into the color that you want to use. Remember to wash off your brush when changing colors.

Step 7: Once you are finished, share your work with your family and friends. Can they guess what your secret message is?