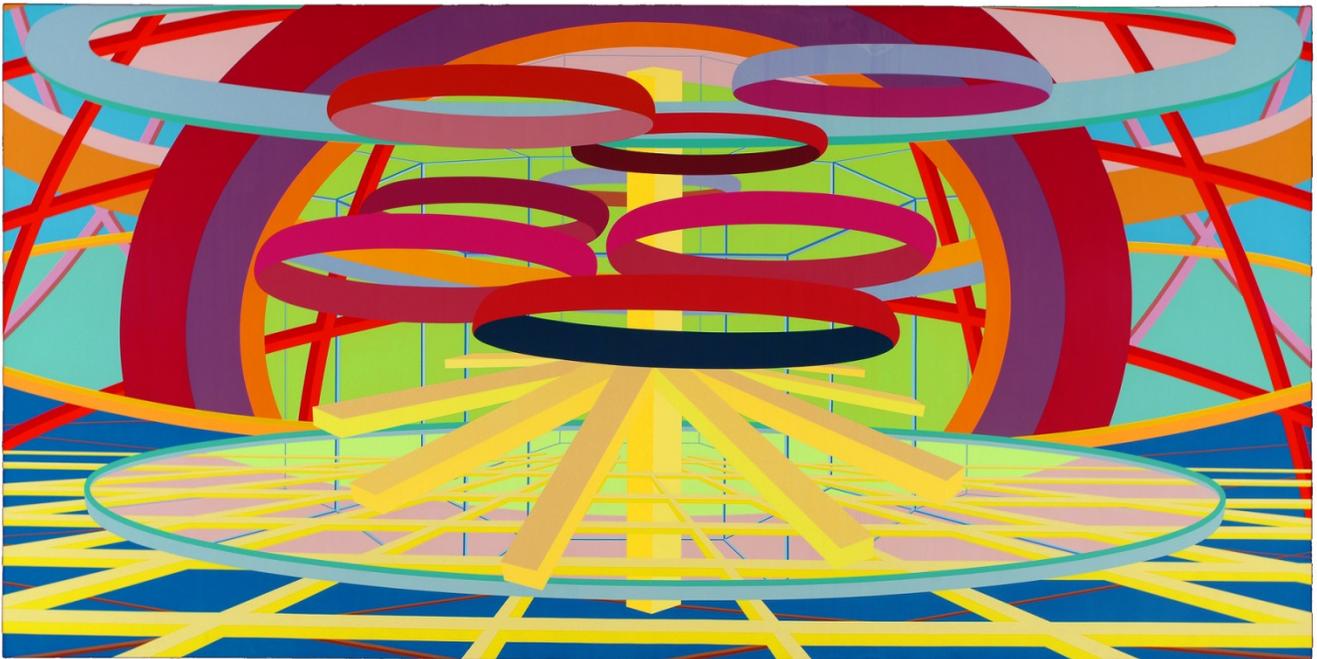


# Contemporary Art Collection

## Teacher's Curriculum Guide



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*Rome II, 1982*  
Al Held



DELAWARE ART MUSEUM



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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How to Use These Materials.....	3
A Brief History.....	4
Abstract Expressionism.....	5
Color, Signs, & Geometry.....	6
New Materials.....	7
Curriculum Connections.....	8
Glossary.....	10
Appendix.....	11
• I Am For An Art, Claes Oldenburg	
• Autoportrait Templates	
• Autobiography vs. Self-Portrait	
Image Credits.....	17
Works Consulted.....	18

## **NOTICE:**

Several works of art in the Delaware Art Museum’s collection contain partial or full nudity. While we maintain the artistic integrity of these pieces and do not encourage censorship we have marked these pieces in an effort to provide educators with pertinent information. You will see a green inverted triangle ( ▼ ) next to any works that contain partial or full nudity, or mature content. This packet is intended for educators; please preview all materials before distributing to your class.

# HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

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These materials are designed to provide teachers with an overview of the artists and their work in this collection. This information can be used before and/or after a visit to the Delaware Art Museum, or as a substitute for teachers and schools that are unable to visit. Teachers should adapt these materials according to the grade level and ability of their students.

## GOALS FOR LEARNING

History	Language	Art
Consequences of WWII on life in mid-century America	New vocabulary relating to Contemporary art	Rise of advertising art in 1960s
Prominent American artists and writers and their mutual influence.	Corresponding poetry and writing.	Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Pop Art Movement
Mid Century Pop Culture	Collaborative nature of art and writing	Perceive and interpret visual elements and clues
Race and gender politics	Influence of rhetoric in advertising.	Narrative in art

## LOOKING AT ART WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Museums are among the best places for teaching people how to look carefully and to learn from looking. These skills, obviously critical to understanding art, are also important for experiencing the everyday world. Frequently referred to as "visual literacy", these skills are seldom taught, despite their usefulness.

There are many ways to approach looking at art. All of them are appropriate at different times. With young people, it is important to discover what catches their attention and try to pursue that interest. At other times, it might be useful to point out things you have noticed. In so doing, you help young people expand on their experiences and their capacities to think, analyze, and understand.

Identifying and talking about recognizable subject matter is a frequent beginning point. Inherent or imagined stories are too. Abstract issues can also be observed and discussed; for example, even quite young children can suggest meanings for colors and see the implied energy in a line or brushstroke.

Background information and biographies of artists have less relevance to younger children, although they are almost always of interest to older people. Instead, one can accomplish more by helping young children concentrate on and appreciate the images at hand. An excellent use of time in the Museum, therefore, is for adults and children to point out things to each other, and share their thoughts and feelings about what they might mean. You can, of course, make mental notes of things you might like to ask the artist if he or she were there, but emphasize what you can see and think about, instead of fretting about what you do not know. The process of discovering information in paintings can be fun and serious, in part because there are few rights and wrongs.

*From the Museum of Modern Art's A Brief Guide for Looking at Art*

# A BRIEF HISTORY...

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© Estate of Louise Nevelson / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY



*Rain Forest Column  
XX, 1962-1964*  
Louise Nevelson,

During the 1910's through the 1940s in America, artists drew inspiration from the European modernist trends they had encountered through immigrants coming to America to flee the madness of the first and second world wars. Those influences included depictions of rapid advances in industry and the construction of a work of art. Modernist art includes the exploration of abstract forms, with Cubism, and the role of the subconscious mind, with Surrealism. From these developments, Abstract Expressionism emerged as the first uniquely American art movement and its focus on an abstract style—in both painting and sculpture—imbued with emotional content is exemplified in the art of Robert Motherwell and Mark Tobey.

Abstract Expressionism came to be rejected in the decades following the 1950s by artists such as Louise Nevelson and Al Held who turned from the emotional content to minimal and non-objective art. As American art moves forward to the present, the struggles and fissures of American society begin to resonate and reproduce in art. Western culture is in flux at mid-century, and contemporary art reflects this with nontraditional materials and new art forms. Artists like Grace Hartigan, Elizabeth Talford Scott, and Robert Colescott engage with gender roles, racial and ethnic oppression, social politics, and the search for self-identity. Above all, modern and contemporary art remains focused on the expressive self and

concentrates on connecting on a personal level with those that view it. These personal responses can range from disgust to nostalgia or deep love to fear, but in each instance the artist's job is to create space in which open communication

about the world can happen.

In the collection on view at the Delaware Art Museum it is possible to trace the history of Contemporary art through the decades. Abstract Expressionism borne of impressionist and European abstract roots moves into experimentation with new and industrial materials. Once the 1960's are in full swing, advertising and public art takes shape with the Pop Art movement which resonates with current-day artists like Deborah Butterfield, whose metal horse *Riot* is reminiscent of the junk art sculpture of the 1950s. Each of these moments in time can be studied in greater depth, with the Museum collection as an access point.



*Riot, 1990*  
Deborah Butterfield  
© Deborah Butterfield. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

# ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

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Abstract Expressionism has its roots in various sources, all of which stem from artists seeking ways to ground themselves and their art by establishing humanity, beauty, and emotion in the chaotic world around them. This movement was one of the first major movements in America based on abstraction and was developed largely by refugee artists who came to the United States in the pre-World War II years. Like most modern art, the artists of this movement looked at their work as a “path to the future” (Gardner 1032).



*Geography of Phantasy*, 1948

Mark Tobey

© Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY

Abstract Expressionists sought to have their work interpreted by the viewer in a personal and emotional way, discarding any thought that was structured or expected. Mark Tobey’s work (above) embodies this idea of personal reflection and self-translation. Largely influenced by the Bahai’i World Faith, his work plays on the flatness of his forms with the depth created by the layered brushwork and intricate lines. The viewer is invited to move and pause with the paint and discover personal meaning through prolonged attention.



*Still Life—Fruit Bowl*, 1941

Hans Hoffman

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Hans Hoffman (left), an early voice in the movement, studied early in his career in Paris and was engaged with Cubism and Fauvism, which were beginning to gain traction at the time. His time in Europe familiarized him with painters of these movements and also led him to draw upon his early respect of impressionist masters such as Paul Cézanne and Georges Seurat due to their ability to capture light in their work. Both the elements of Cubism and Fauvism as well as the Impressionist attention to representing color are apparent in his work. Like Tobey, his work reflects the attention to creating spatially flat forms while infusing the canvas with depth from another source—translucent and layered color in the case of *Still Life—Fruit Bowl*.

Robert Motherwell, one of the central figures of Abstract Expressionism, drew inspiration from European Modernists like Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, and Joan Miró but also incorporated literary inspiration into his work like French Symbolist poetry. Known for his wide swaths of color and gestural paint application Motherwell typifies the emotional relationship painters of this movement sought to portray (Evans 117).



*Je T'aime No. VIII (Mallarmé's Swan:*

*Homage)*, 1957

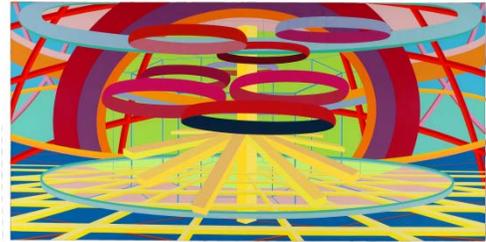
Robert Motherwell

© Robert Motherwell Estate. Licensed

by VAGA, New York, NY

# COLOR, SIGNS, & GEOMETRY

In the 1960s America entered a new phase in art making—Pop Art. This movement drew inspiration from the advertising of the time which was filled with flashy, persuasive messages bombarding Americans and seeking to turn them into consumers of the ‘good life.’ Pop Art came to the forefront of art culture in the 1960s and was declared to be on the decline by the mid-seventies. Artists like Al Held show clear influences of the time with his early work morphing out of Abstract Expressionism into the hard-edge painting that he is best known for today. While his forms focus heavily on portraying a flat and minimal space, the combination of this with complex grids and bold colors plays with the viewer’s eye, and leads to an



*Rome II*, 1982

Al Held

© Estate of Al Held. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



*Decade: Autoportrait 1964, 1971*

Robert Indiana

© Morgan Art Foundation/ Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY.

illusion of infinitely deep space on a flat surface. This contradiction fascinated Held and is the most notable and enduring aspect of his work.

Robert Indiana’s geometric series of “autoportraits” (a combination of ‘autobiography’ and ‘self-portrait’) is an example of the way advertising influenced art during the Pop Art movement. As the 1960s came to a close the Pop Art movement also began to change and decline. This led Indiana to create his autoportraits as a homage to each year of the waning decade. Each of the ten square canvas works represented one year in the decade of 1960. Each work incorporates flat color, stencils, and several geometric shapes—each having its own meaning.

For instance, the ‘4’ stands for the year it represents,

the ‘71’ the year it was painted, and Coenties Slip is the name of the low-rent district Indiana lived in briefly during this time. Indiana was largely inspired by his childhood in the Mid-West and commercial advertising.

Larry Holmes’ work is an example of the art being created during the Pattern and Decoration movement that was taking place simultaneously. Holmes is a local artist who spent much of his career (1973-2004) teaching at the University of Delaware. He is known for his intricate constructed works such as *High Watermark on the Teepees*, which is constructed



*High Watermark on the Teepees*, 1973

Larry Holmes

© Larry Holmes

with a waved plywood support covered with canvas. Holmes uses geometric shapes, bright colors, and combination techniques to create depth from flat color, similar to Held.

# NEW MATERIALS



*Putney Winter Heart 8 (Skier)*, 1971-1972  
 Jim Dine  
 © Jim Dine / Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
 New York, NY.

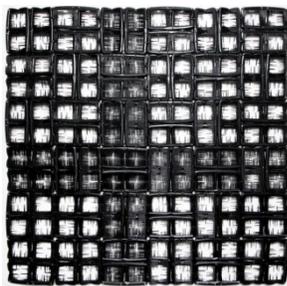
As American artists began experimenting with new ideas, along with it came new materials. Traditional methods of paint to canvas were expanded by the artists of the new century by adding found objects and incorporating sculptural elements. Jim Dine’s work is representative of this exploration in Pop Art. Dine has a fascination with hearts and often incorporates them into his work. Hearts evoke certain meanings of love, togetherness, memory, and emotion which work well within these types of pieces that Dine refers to as “symbolic self-portraits” (Evans 123). Dine’s *Putney Winter Heart 8*, chronicles his move to Putney Vermont and the studio he built and worked in while living there. This type of art uses a technique called assemblage, a process of creating three-dimensional work by attaching various found objects. Like the literature being composed in conjunction with the Pop-Art

movement, this piece is a random application of colors and touch-points that are meant to create emotion and connection in and with the viewers. Poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were hallmark writers of the Beat Generation—the writing movement that took place at the same time as Pop Art. Much like George Segal (below) Dine was influenced by contemporaries like artist and writer Claes Oldenburg and composer John Cage. Pop Art was born through and sustained by the creations of these artists and several others.



*Swan Motel*, 1999  
 George Segal  
 © George Segal Foundation.  
 Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Both Dine and Segal were involved early on in happenings, art-events that centered on audience participation and mutual collaboration and creation, which influenced their careers. Experimentations in the way the audience experienced art led to developments in his work—particularly in materials as with this



*Black Cross Worn Thin II*, 2012  
 Sonya Clark  
 © Sonya Clark, 2013. Courtesy  
 Snyderman Works Gallery,  
 Philadelphia, PA.

piece *Swan Motel*. Much like an art happening, *Swan Motel* invites the audience to take part in the viewing of this piece physically by breaking the barrier between art and audience. This effect is achieved through a life-size model placed outside of the canvas.

The experimentation with traditional and new materials persists throughout contemporary art. As is true of Segal’s and Dine’s work, alternative materials are not solely chosen for aesthetic purposes, but also for the emotional elements attached or the symbolic place they occupy in our society. Clark’s piece (left) is an example of this. Composed entirely of small black hair combs, the work is one of a series that relates the broken teeth of the combs to race politics. Interestingly, each comb has the word “unbreakable” engraved on its face—a mark of the brand name.

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

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This information can be taught before and/or after a visit to a museum. Please adapt the information and activities to the grade level, ability, and learning styles of your students. Teachers may find some of them more suitable than others for meeting specific classroom goals. These materials may be reproduced for educational purposes.

## ALL LEVELS

**Visual Thinking Strategies:** Sometimes artwork is off-putting, sometimes it looks complicated, and sometimes it looks like a child could have made it. In order to break down students' pre-conceptions or misconceptions use the screencast tutorial on VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to help you and your students feel confident about discussing new art, or discussing art at all! This is especially helpful for use in non-art classrooms.

**Visual Analysis:** Using works of art from E-Museum, have students discuss the basic elements of art. Examining the artist's use of line, color, shape, space, light, and texture encourages students to look beyond the image itself to the ways in which it was painted.

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL

**Autoportraits:** Have students cut out the shapes in the appendix from colorful paper and layer them on top of one another to create their own version of an autoportrait. Encourage them to see what happens when they move the shapes around, layer them in different orders or experiment with different colors.

**I Am For An Art:** Have your students learn the power of simile and metaphor through Claes Oldenburg's manifesto about art. After the initial explanation and reading show them images from E-Museum of non-objective contemporary art and ask them to come up with similes and metaphors that help make sense of the lines and colors and what they might represent.

**Abstract Expressionism:** A lot of adults have a hard time seeing Abstract Expressionist paintings as "real" works of art, but a lot of times children are good at understanding the way color can tell a story. Ask your students to paint a picture about themselves using lines, spots, swishes, and splashes. Have them explain the meaning of their painting to the class. Couple this by showing them images of Abstract Expressionist pieces from e-Museum or the corresponding slideshow.

**New Materials:** Have your class look at Jim Dine's heart and talk about the ways he uses objects to create a "scrapbook" about a special place in his life. Ask your students to bring in some objects so that they can also make a heart portrait about a special place in their life. Make sure there are discussions about how objects can represent memories or ideas.

**Lines, Lines, Lines:** Have your class look at Al Held's Rome II. Discuss how a flat space can look like a deep space just by adding shapes and lines. Ask students to try and "make space" by adding lines and shapes to a flat piece of paper. This could pair well with discussion about shapes, geometric shapes, or different types of lines.

## SECONDARY LEVEL

**Autoportraits:** Have students use templates in the appendix to trace their own version of an Indiana autoportrait. Discuss the differences between autobiographies and portraits, what the two have in common and what their differences are using the compare/contrast chart in the appendix. Are there other art forms that have a relationship to a literary genre or device? Have the students color in their autoportrait and add numbers and words of significant places or people in their lives. Share with the class and us—upload photos of your class autoportraits via social media (Facebook: Delaware Art Museum, Twitter: @DelArtMuseum, Instagram: DelArt, #MyDelART).

**Portraits of Beauty:** Contemporary art does much to discuss personal issues—including beauty. Using E-Museum or the corresponding photo presentation, show your students Robert Colescott's *Big Bathers, Another Judgement* (  ) and Sonya Clark's comb piece and discuss. Colescott was engaging with the same ideas about beauty as Clark, but Colescott's piece was made 28 years earlier, and he was engaging with a conversation that took place decades earlier as well. How can we understand the way that the conversation about race and beauty persists through the decades? What does that tell us about the discussion and location of Beauty in the African American experience? Do you see this conversation coming to an end anytime soon or do you imagine artists will continue to wrestle with it?

**Happenings:** Stage an art "happening" in your classroom while also learning about advertising and the Pop Art movement. Ask students to cut out pieces of advertising from magazines and newspapers and take turns pasting them on a large sheet of butcher/kraft paper at the front of the room. Fill the paper. Afterwards, reflect on the messages that are revealed through combining all of these messages into one piece of art. What does it say? Does it say something about us? America? Women? Men? Education? This discussion can pair well with a unit on ethos, logos, and pathos, a discussion of the Toulmin model of argument, or rhetorical triangle.

**I Am For An Art:** Have your students learn the power of simile and metaphor through Claes Oldenburg's manifesto about art (non-excerpted versions available on the web). After the initial explanation and reading show them images from E-Museum of non-objective contemporary art and ask them to come up with similes and metaphors that help make sense of the lines and colors and what they might represent. To make this more difficult, ask students to write an entire paper without the use of simile or metaphor, or conversely, ask them to use as many as they possibly can. Follow with a discussion on appropriate use of these literary conventions.

# GLOSSARY

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**Abstract Expressionism:** Movement which began in the 1940's post World War II in America. This style has an emphasis on spontaneous creation and depicting the subconscious, typically in a non-objective way.

**Assemblage:** A three-dimensional composition made of various materials such as found objects, paper, wood, and cloth.

**Beat Generation:** Movement in writing that took place in America in the 1950s that heavily influenced American culture. The writing was anti-materialistic, body-centric, and experimental. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs were notable Beat writers.

**Cubism:** Style of visual art in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century created by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris represented by cubed sections and lines. The style challenged traditional painting by experimenting with perspective and form in an effort to see the world in a new way.

**Fauvism:** Movement in the early twentieth century originating in France. This avant-garde movement emphasized loose painterly qualities, spontaneous movements, and bright unmixed colors.

**Hard-Edge:** Twentieth century movement in painting in which shapes have crisp and clearly defined borders.

**Impressionism:** A movement originating in France in the 1860s where painters attempted to portray subjects in a candid fashion. Work was characterized by visible brushstrokes, everyday scenes, and with attention to natural light.

**Modernism:** A movement that stemmed from the rapid development of industry and city centers. This way of thinking believed that the traditional modes of art, literature, religion, etc. were ill-suited for the newly changed society. They desired, as Ezra Pound put it, to "Make it new!"

**Non-Objective Art:** Having no discernible reference to the external appearance of the physical world.

**Pop Art:** Short for popular art, this movement originated in England and came to America in the 1960s in which artists drew inspiration from the abundance of advertising and marketing images broadcast on billboards, television screens, comics, and magazine pages.

**Surrealism:** A movement that developed out of the Dada movement in the 1920s. Surrealism emphasized dream-like realities and contradictory elements.

**Symbolism:** A movement in poetry at the end of the nineteenth-century in Europe. These poets were concerned with evoking emotion over describing it and they valued fluidity in writing—similar to free verse.

# I AM FOR AN ART

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## Lines excerpted from “I Am for an Art” by Claes Oldenburg

I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

I am for all art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself.

I am for the art that a kid licks, after peeling away the wrapper.

I am for art that flaps like a flag, or helps blow noses like a handkerchief.

I am for art covered with bandages. I am for art that limps and rolls and runs and jumps.

I am for art you can sit on. I am for art you can pick your nose with or stub your toes on.

I am for the art of conversation between the sidewalk and a blind man’s metal stick.

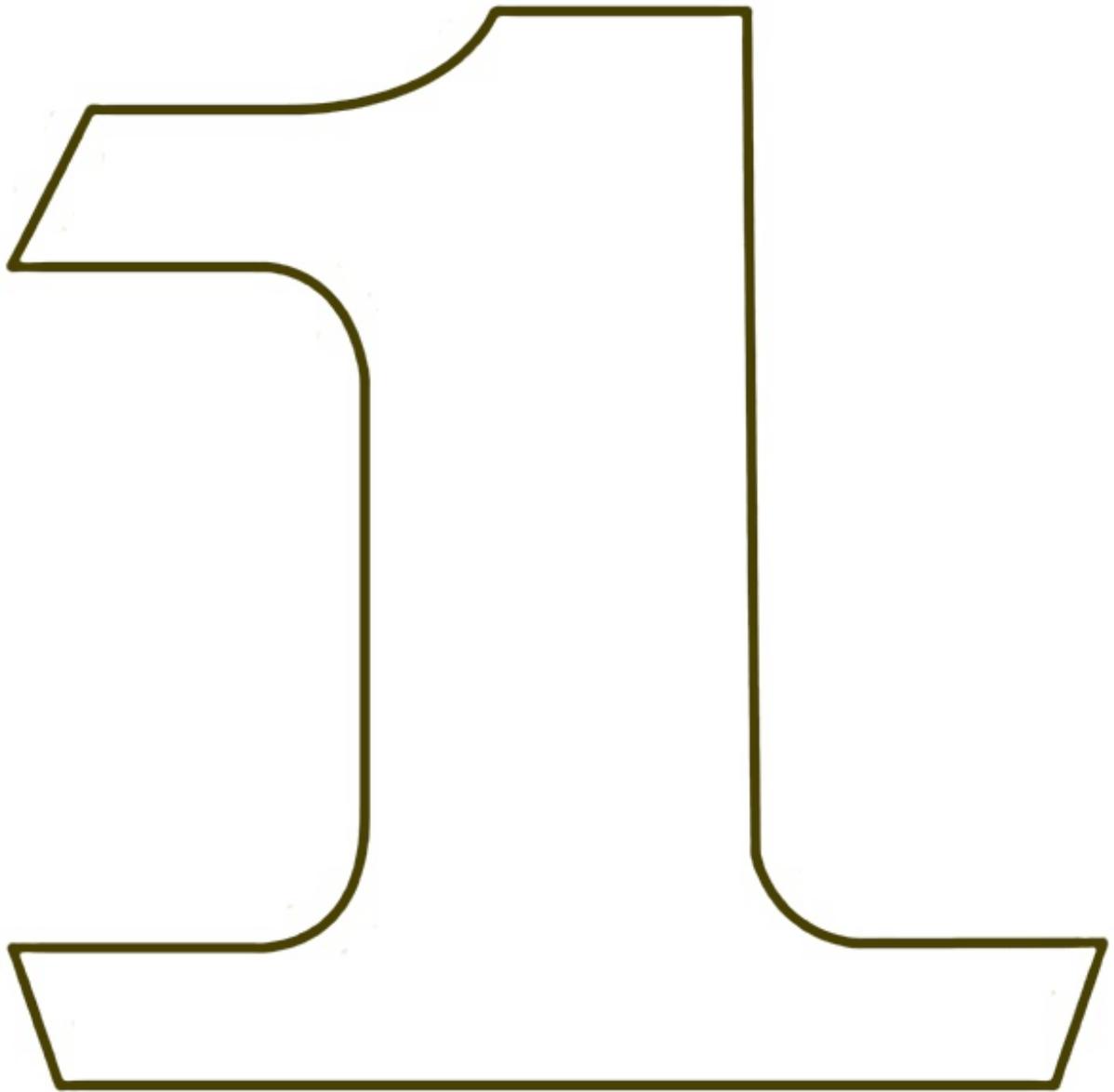
I am for an art that helps old ladies across the street.

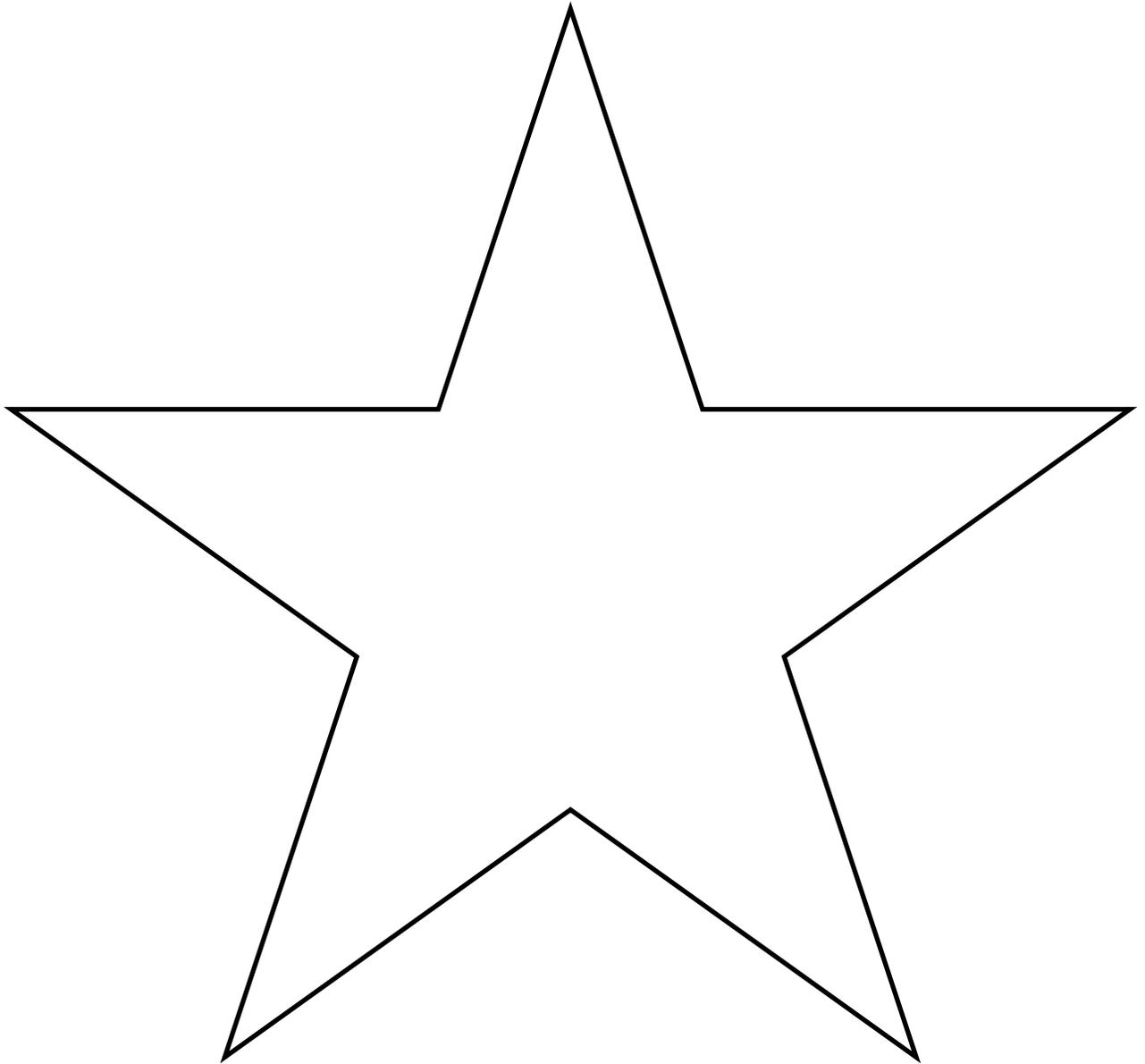
I am for the art that comes up in fogs from sewer holes in winter. I am for the art that splits when you step on a frozen puddle. I am for the worm’s art inside the apple. I am for the art of sweat that develops between crossed legs.

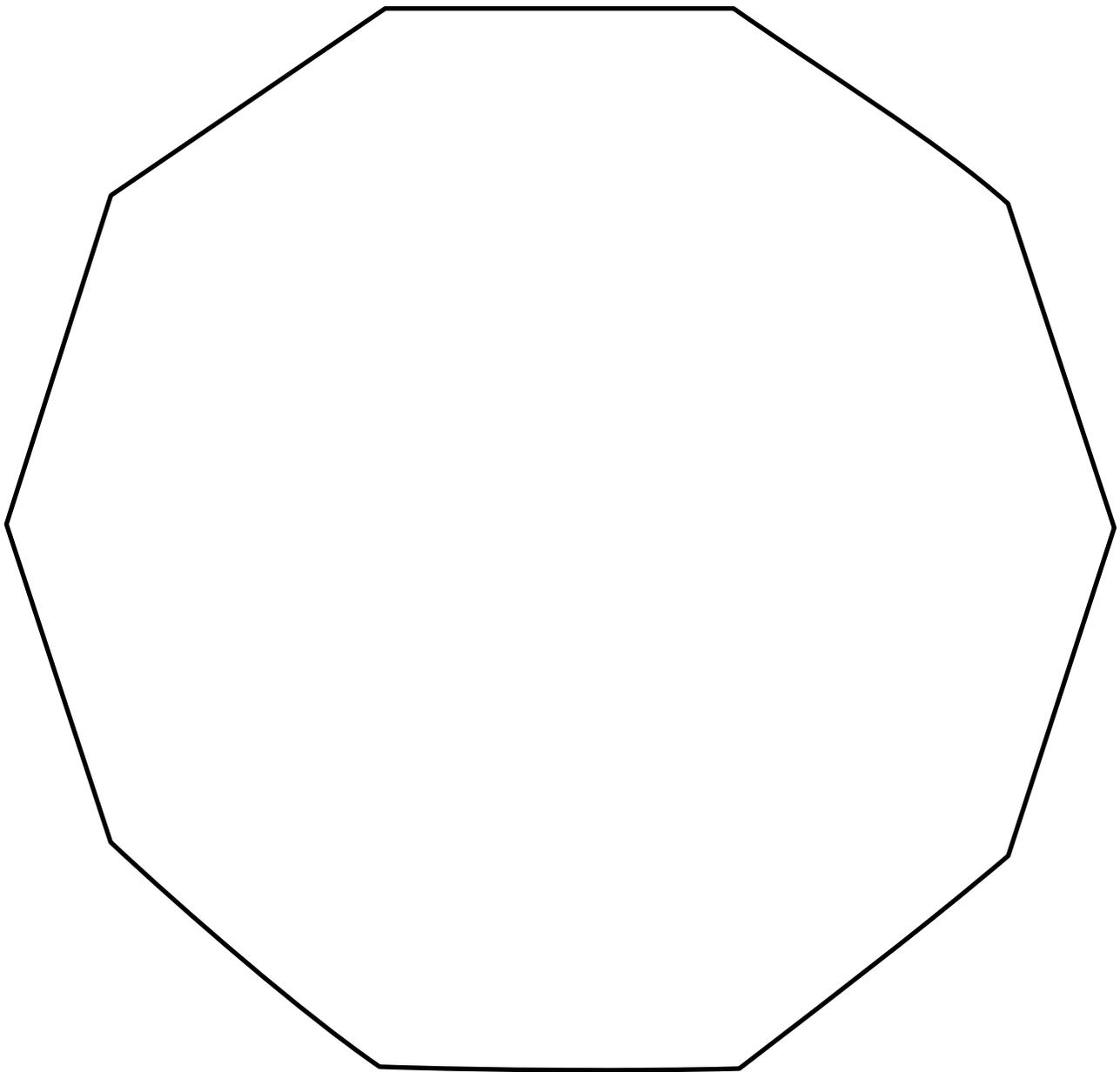
I am for the blinking arts, lighting up the night. I am for art falling, splashing, wiggling, jumping, going on and off.

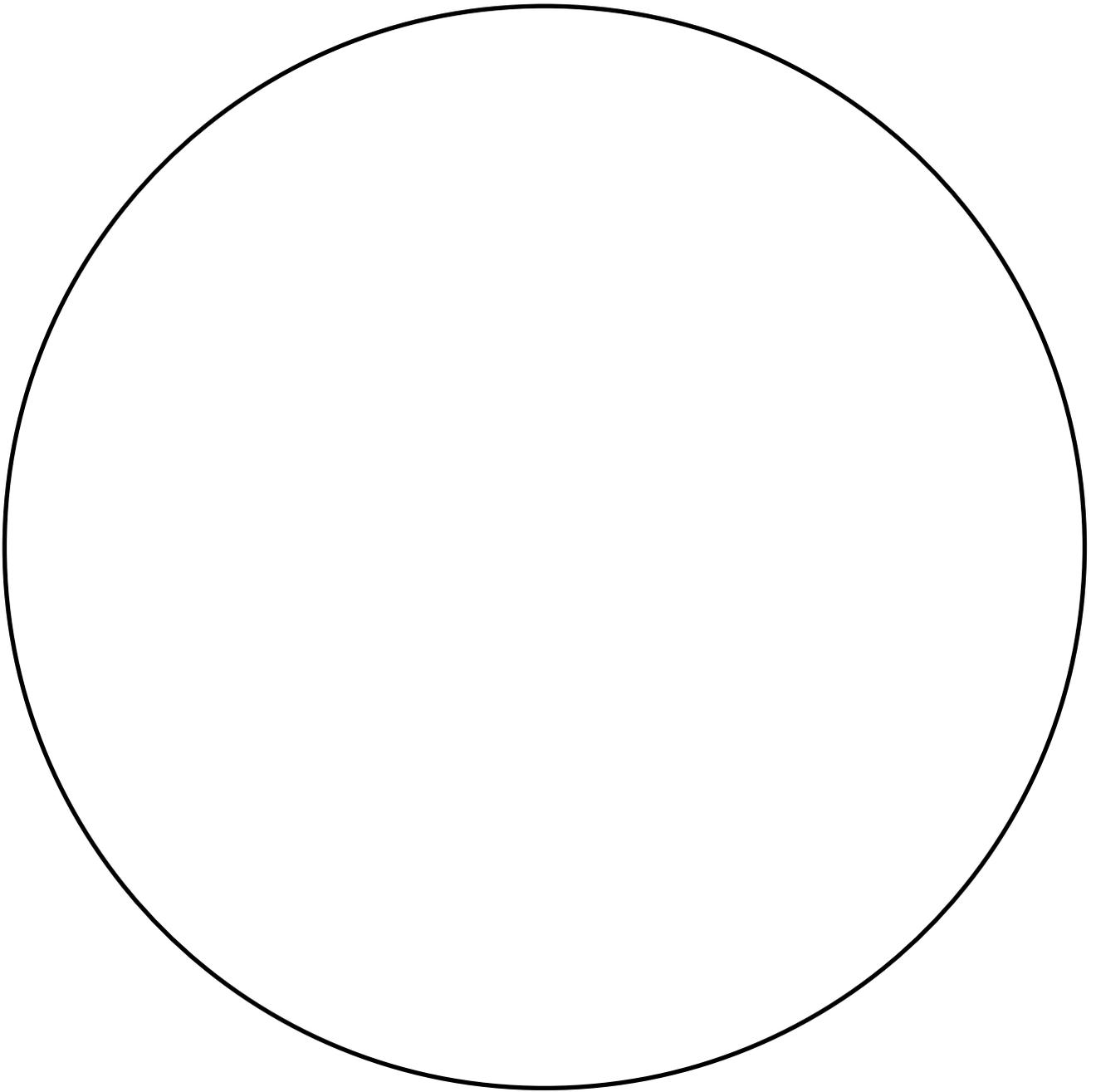
I am for the art of rust and mold. I am for the art of hearts, funeral hearts or sweetheart hearts, full of nougat.

I am for US Government Inspected Art, Grade A art, Regular Price art, Yellow Ripe art, Extra Fancy art, Ready-to-Eat art, Best-for-Less art, Ready-to-Cook art, Fully Cleaned art, Spend Less art, Eat Better art, Ham art, pork art, chicken art, tomato art, banana art, apple art, turkey art, cake art, cookie art...









# AUTOBIOGRAPHY VS. PORTRAIT

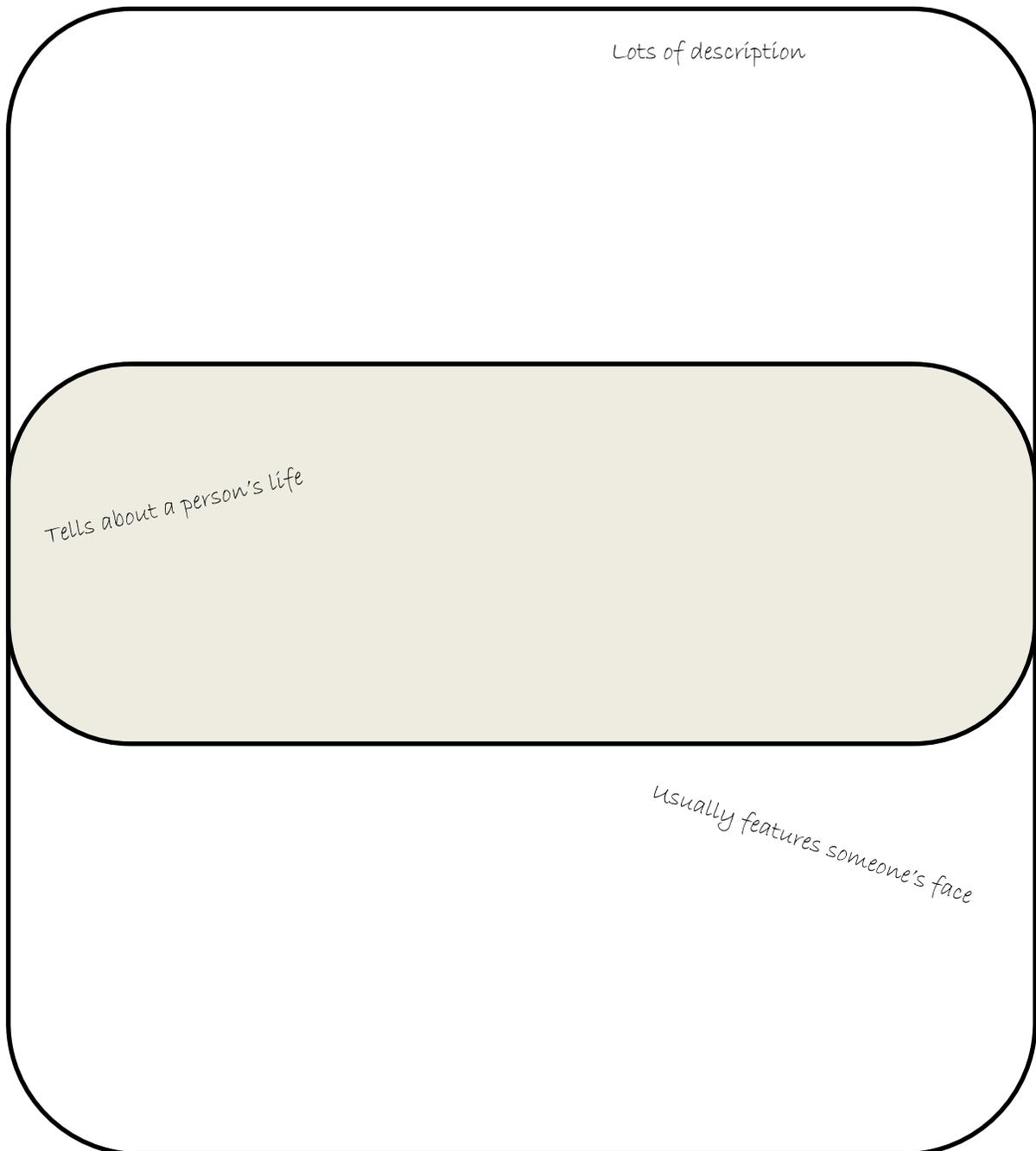
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Use the diagram below to chart the aspects of autobiographies and portraits that combine to make an autoportrait—then work on your very own Robert Indiana autoportrait!

**Top Section:** Qualities of an AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

**Middle Section:** Qualities of BOTH

**Bottom Section:** Qualities of a PORTRAIT.



# IMAGE CREDITS

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## Cover Page:

1. *Rome II*, 1982. Al Held (1928–2005). Acrylic on canvas, 108 x 216 in. Delaware Art Museum, F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 1987. © Estate of Al Held. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

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2. *Riot*, 1990. Deborah Butterfield (b.1949). Steel, 34 x 81 1/2 x 120 in. Delaware Art Museum, F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 1991. © Deborah Butterfield. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

## Page Five:

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2. *Still Life—Fruit Bowl*, 1941. Hans Hofman (1880-1966). Casein on plywood, 34 x 24 in. Delaware Art Museum. Special Purchase Fund, 1971. ©Estate of Hans Hoffman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY.
3. *Je T'aime No. VIII (Mallarme's Swan: Homage)*, 1957. Robert Motherwell (1915–1991). Oil on linen. Delaware Art Museum. F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund and Partial Gift of the Dedalus Foundation, 1998. © Robert Motherwell Estate. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

## Page Six:

1. *Rome II*, 1982. Al Held (1928–2005). Acrylic on canvas, 108 x 216 in. Delaware Art Museum, F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 1987. © Estate of Al Held. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.
2. *Decade: Autoportrait 1964*, 1971. Robert Indiana (b. 1928). Oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in. Delaware Art Museum. Purchased with funds provided by the Friends of Art and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1973. © Morgan Art Foundation/ Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.
3. *High Watermark on the Teepees*, 1973. Larry Holmes (b. 1942). Acrylic on shaped canvas, 72 x 72 x 4 in. Delaware Art Museum. Gift of the artist, 2014. © Larry Holmes.

## Page Seven:

1. *Putney Winter Heart #8 (Skier)*, 1971-1972. Jim Dine (b. 1935). Oil on canvas with shoes, mittens, rocks, glove, shirt, nail, rope, and tin foil collage, 72 x 72 in. Delaware Art Museum. F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 2001. © Jim Dine / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
2. *Swan Motel*, 1999. George Segal (1924-2000). Plaster, wood, Lite-Brite pegs, light bulbs, and sockets, 27 x 96 x 96 in. Delaware Art Museum. F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 2000. © George Segal Foundation. Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.
3. *Black Cross Worn Thin II*, 2012. Sonya Clark (b. 1967). Plastic combs, 30 x 30in. Delaware Art Museum. Acquisition Fund, 2012. © Sonya Clark, 2013. Courtesy Snyderman Works Gallery, Philadelphia, PA.

## WORKS CONSULTED

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Gardner, Helen, Horst De La Croix, Richard G. Tansey, and Diane Kirkpatrick. "The Contemporary World." *Gardner's Art through the Ages*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991. 1032-1049. Print.

"Post-World War II American Art." *Delaware Art Museum: Selected Treasures*. Ed. Shelby Evans. London: Scala, 2004. 115-33. Print.