

Ruth Adler Schnee: Modern Designs for Living Activity Guides and Virtual Exhibition Tour

Step 1: Activity Prep and Planning (pages 2-5)

Educator Guide

Our educator guide provides more information on Ruth Adler Schnee, her life and work, and the exhibition at Cranbrook Art Museum.

Your Guide to Patterns

Learn more about pattern-making and what to look for in Ruth Adler Schnee's designs. Answer the questions and start your creative thinking by designing and naming your own patterns!

Step 2: Tour the Virtual Exhibition

Visit the museum's 3D VIRTUAL EXHIBITION TOURS to interact with the exhibition. Click the play button to open the full 3D experience. Use your mouse to navigate through the gallery spaces. Click on the blue circles to learn more about each object.

Step 3: Look at Home with Your Pattern Finder (page 6)

Print and follow the instructions on Your Pattern Finder to discover patterns where you are! (If you don't have a printer, this can be done using an empty picture frame or cutting a rectangle out of the center of a piece of paper or cardboard. Draw the patterns you discover!

Step 4: Make More! (pages 7-8)

Check out our additional artmaking projects based on Ruth's textiles. These can be done at home with materials you have on hand. Share your finished designs with us at #CREATEwithCAM on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter!

Download and print our free coloring pages inspired by Ruth Adler Schnee's textiles at cranbrookartmuseum.org/learn/kids-teens/virtual-kids-art-activities/



Ruth Adler Schnee

Educator Guide

OVERVIEW

This educator guide provides the framework to implement for two lessons adaptable for K-6 grades. Draw inspiration from the works of designer Ruth Adler Schnee from the exhibition Ruth Adler Schnee: Designs for Modern Living shown at Cranbrook Art Museum December 13, 2019 – March 15, 2020.

Included in this guide...

Presentation content with essential information on Ruth Adler Schnee's history, influence and creative process that serve as inspiration for the lessons.

Two adaptable projects for grades K-6 that incorporate art and design principals with varied artmaking techniques.

Activity plans that breakdown project sequencing, material lists, and sample images.

These materials were developed by the education department at Cranbrook Art Museum to support our collaboration with the Detroit Public Schools Community District's Cultural Passport Program.

EXHIBITION

Ruth Adler Schnee: Designs for Modern Living

This exhibition presents the work of textile and interior designer Ruth Adler Schnee, still in active practice at age 96. Ruth created across the fields of textiles, architecture, and interior design that greatly enriched the visual language of mid-century modernism. The exhibition presents the body of textile patterns that Ruth created over the course of her seven-decade career, including the screen-printed fabrics and their later translation into woven textiles.

Ruth Adler Schnee: Designs for Modern Living features examples of Ruth's work, including textiles, architectural and interior designs, and drawings from her early career. Vintage textiles, archival drawings and photography, as well as her ongoing textile collaborations with companies such as Anzea Textiles and Knoll Textiles, come together in an architectural display to illuminate the narrative of how women shaped the direction and reception of modernism in postwar America.

Visit Cranbrook Art Museum online for a virtual tour of this exhibition: cranbrookartmuseum.org



PRESENTATION

Use this information and selected object list to introduce students to the designer Ruth Adler Schnee. Read over the following information before viewing the exhibition online, and incorporate the question prompts during the virtual tour to help students build their observation and interpretation skills.



Who is Ruth Adler Schnee?

Ruth Adler Schnee has many titles to her name; she is an artist, designer, and architect. Ruth was born in 1923 to a German Jewish family in Frankfurt, Germany. Her mother's artistic training and a creative circle of friends sparked an early interest in color, texture, and modern forms.

Ruth and her family later settled in Detroit, Michigan. Ruth studied fashion design and interior architecture. She became one of the first women to receive a degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art. From there, she established a modern design shop in Detroit with her husband Edward Schnee, bringing "good design" to modern homes. Ruth, still creating at 96, designs textiles and the environments that hold them.

QUESTIONS

What is a designer? What makes an artist and designer different?

SHAPE & PATTERN



Ruth Adler Schnee brings her patterned textiles to life with energetic colors and shapes. Ruth uses repeating organic and geometric shapes that reference nature, everyday objects, and memories.

Ruth's whimsical patterns were screen printed onto fabric with the help of her husband Edward Schnee. He would further help with the creative process by providing titles to Ruth's patterns. From Swizzles to Bugs in Booby Traps, Edward's titles added a playfulness to Ruth's patterns.

ORGANIC SHAPES

Irregular shapes without preset rules or names

GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Shapes that have a name and a set of rules

QUESTIONS

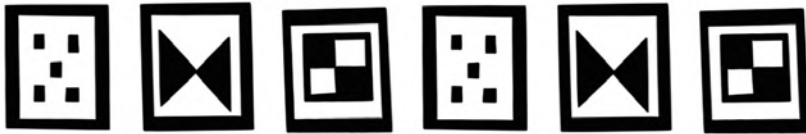
What is an organic shape? What is a geometric shape? Does a name or title change something's meaning?

Ruth Adler Schnee: Designs for Modern Living

Your Guide to Patterns

Cranbrook Art Museum invites you to explore the idea of patterns. What is a pattern? A pattern is something that repeats. A pattern can be made of anything, numbers, letters, shapes, and images. In the patterns, we see designs by Ruth Adler Schnee.

Look at the pattern below. Draw in the missing shape!



Patterns Brought to Life

Ruth creates her playful designs with repeating shapes. Here are two patterns, Wireworks and Rockcandy. In these designs shapes repeat and flow to create a lively pattern. Ruth's creations were inspired by nature, everyday objects, memories, and other artists! Wireworks was inspired by another artist!



What do you think inspired Rockcandy? Why do you think that?

Design Your Own Pattern!

Create a design using shapes you create. What is the name of your pattern?

Ruth said design is all around. She would see ideas for design everywhere! What or who inspires you?



Ruth Adler Schnee: Designs for Modern Living

YOUR PATTERN FINDER

Use the viewfinder to look for the repetition in Ruth's designs.

CUT OUT GRAY BOX.

Hold up your pattern finder and look for patterns around you!

Did you find where the pattern repeats?

Grab a pencil and paper, draw the pattern!

What is a pattern? A pattern is something that repeats. A pattern can be made of anything, numbers, letters, shapes, and images.

Ruth activates her playful textiles with repeating organic and geometric forms. In her designs, shapes repeat, flow, and interact to create lively patterns. The whimsy and thoughtful composition of her patterns entice and excite all viewers! What excites you about Ruth's patterns?

SHAPE STENCILS

Create stencils of organic and geometric shapes to make patterns on paper. Study Ruth's textiles to learn about organic and geometric shapes, complex patterns, layering, and spacing.

VOCABULARY

Organic and Geometric Shapes, Pattern, Stencil

PRINCIPALS

Shapes, Color, Space and Repetition

SEQUENCE

- Who is Ruth Adler Schnee? What is an organic shape? What is a geometric shape? What is a pattern?
- Introduce the project. Define **stencil**. Demonstrate how to create a stencil by cutting shapes into either cardstock or cereal boxes. Have students make both organic and geometric shaped stencils.
- Use crayons, markers or paint to repeat shape stencils to create a pattern on your paper. Introduce the idea of layering stencils.
- Reuse stencils to create multiple patterns and play with different ideas.

MATERIALS

- Cardstock or cereal boxes
- Scissors
- Tape (use to patch stencils if needed)
- Crayons, markers, or paint
- Paper (big enough to print patterns)
- Pencils



LEFT: Stencils are used with crayons.

ABOVE: Stencils are used with paint and a sponge. Before using with stencil, sponge is dipped in paint and dabbed on palette to remove excess paint.

Notice tape on stencils covers the cut from scissors to make the stencils. The same stencils were used to make both sample patterns.

PATTERN STAMPS

Create organic and geometric shaped stamps to print patterns on paper, fabric, or even a pillowcase. Study Ruth's textile designs to learn about simple or complex pattern.

VOCABULARY

Organic and geometric shapes, Pattern, Print

PRINCIPALS

Shapes, Color, Space and Repetition

SEQUENCE

- Who is Ruth Adler Schnee? What is a pattern? What are textiles?
- Introduce the project. Define print. Demonstrate how to cut foam sheets (into organic and geometric shapes. Apply shape to block. Distribute materials. Multiple stamps can be made.
- Distribute paper and ink pads. Play with stamps on paper, text out different ideas.
- Define layers. Demonstrate how new colors will appear when prints are overlapping.
- Use the stamp to print pattern on pillowcase fabric. Set to dry and cover over pillow.

MATERIALS

- Paper, fabric, or even a pillowcase
- Foam Sheets / Scrap Cardboard
- Wood Blocks / Small Box / Scrap Cardboard
- Ink Pads / Markers / Paint
- Paper (for testing patterns)

OPTIONAL

- Safety Plastic Sewing Needles
- Extra Fabric (to create both sides of pillowcase)
- Embroidery thread (multiple colors)



SUBSTITUTIONS: Instead of blocks and foam, use items from around the house. A small box or scrap of cardboard can replace the block. A cardboard shape can be glued or taped to the box to create a stamp!