



Jeanne Leighton-Lundberg Clarke, *Triflora* (1981)

ARTIST BIO

A vibrant woman with a sharp intellect and lively sense of humor, Jeanne Leighton-Lundberg Clarke was known as a lover of art, fashion, music, literature, philosophy, and architecture. Her colorful and busy paintings of every-day scenes reflect her intense love for life’s abundance. Clarke’s education and work experience was extensive. While attending the Art Institute of Chicago, she also applied her artistic skill at an advertising agency. After starting a family, she continued to pursue her passion for drawing, sculpting, painting, and design at Yale University. Nearly thirty years later, at the age of forty-nine, Clarke and her family moved from the East coast to Provo, Utah, where she enrolled at Brigham Young University, earning both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in Fine Arts. Dedicating the rest of her life to sharing her love for the arts, Clarke enjoyed a twenty-year career of teaching art both at Brigham Young University and the University of Utah.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

During Clarke’s education, artistic trends favored abstract, minimalist modes of depiction. For her, however, minimalism was simply ill-equipped to capture the cluttered, messy nature of life. Clarke therefore created a style of painting that better mirrored her own busy life, and termed it “Maximalism.” Every square inch of her joyous domestic scenes is packed with intricate patterns, shapes, and vibrant colors.

ARTWORK

A large, rectangular table is set with an abundance of fruits and flowers. The table, floor tiles, vases, dishes, and even the dresses of the figures are brightly patterned, forcing the viewer’s eye to remain on the move, constantly discovering more and more delightful details. Beyond the intricate patterns and bright colors, a multi-generational domestic scene unfolds on the canvas, seen from an unsettlingly steep birds-eye viewing angle. A grandmother and granddaughter are seated together, while another woman – presumably the child’s mother – looks fondly at the pair from the upper-right corner. The women enjoy the literal and symbolic fruits of their labors in this quiet, but joyful celebration of life.

INTRODUCTION

This brightly colored, pattern-filled painting is typical of Jeanne Leighton-Lundberg Clarke’s Maximalist style. She was influenced by modern artists, such as Edouard Manet, Pablo Picasso, and Andy Warhol.

CONTINUE THE STORY

Clarke used numerous patterns in *Triflora*. A pattern emerges when lines, shapes, and colors are repeated. Both subtle and obvious patterns are useful tools in engaging a viewer’s attention. Look around the room you are in right now. What patterns can you discover? Throughout history, distinct patterns have been used in various cultures, nations, and traditions. Consider these patterns from different parts of the world.



SCOTLAND



NATIVE AMERICAN | NAVAJO



MEXICO



ZIMBABWE



JAPAN



INDIA

Each pattern bears cultural meaning. For example, in Zimbabwe certain patterns are worn for special holidays and to communicate age and social status. Scottish tartan patterns represent both the region and family of the wearer. The Japanese pattern depicts the mountainous landscape unique to Japan. As you look at *Triflora*, imagine what each pattern in the image could represent?

ACTIVITY #1: I-SPY

Materials: Paper and writing utensils (optional)

Subject Areas: Visual Arts

Duration: 10 minutes

See what your students can find in this painting with this I-Spy list:

- How many different kinds of fruit can you see? Can you name them?
- How many people can you find?
- How many different patterns do you see?

UTAH STATE VISUAL ARTS LEARNING STANDARDS

Lesson plans may easily be adapted for each grade level. Please use the plans as a guide and source for ideas, but feel free to adjust the activity based on the needs of your class.

Strand: Respond (V.R)

Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this lesson may include student participation in group discussion or thoughtfulness of written interpretive answers. The activity “I-Spy” can be used to evaluate critical thinking skills and ability to observe small details. The “Zentangles” activity can serve to assess student craftsmanship, thoughtfulness, as well understanding of Maximalism.

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- 1 Define Maximalism and the role it plays in Jeanne Leighton-Lundberg Clarke’s work
- 2 Demonstrate understanding of patterns in cultures and civilizations around the world

LOOK AND DISCUSS

Close your eyes and count to ten. Now open your eyes, look at this painting and write down the first thing you see. Why do you think your eyes were drawn to that spot?

When you first look at this painting, how do you feel? Overwhelmed? Confused? Excited? What do you see that makes you feel that way?

The artist often painted subjects that represented her daily life. Based on this painting, what do you think her life was like?

The artist included a lot of detail, multiple patterns, and many different colors.

- This all-inclusive, busy style is termed “Maximalism.” The artist created this style in reaction to Minimalism, a 1960s artistic style characterized by extreme simplicity of line, color, and shape.
- While a minimalist would say: “less is more,” Clarke would exclaim: “the more the better!”
- Would you consider yourself more of a Maximalist or a Minimalist – both in art and life in general?

What might *Triflora*, the title of this painting, mean?

- Latin: Three Flowers
- Why do you think the artist chose this title?
- What are the main elements of art and principles of design the artist used in this painting?
 - 1 Elements of art include shape, color, line, and texture.
 - 2 Principles of design include balance, contrast, repetition, and emphasis.

ACTIVITY #2: ZENTANGLES

Materials: Paper, thin black Sharpie, colored pencils or markers (optional)

Subject Areas: Visual Arts

Duration: 30 minutes

Clarke included a variety of patterns in her paintings. How many patterns do you see in *Triflora*? On a piece of paper, have students trace their hand with a pencil (they can later outline this with a black Sharpie). Students will fill in the outline of their hand with different patterns. Patterns that merge together are called Zentangles. Share student work once completed.

Optional: Students may color their Zentangles using colored pencils or markers.

UTAH STATE VISUAL ARTS LEARNING STANDARDS

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Please use the plans as a guide and source for ideas, but feel free to adjust the activity based on the needs of your class.

Strand: Respond (V.R)

Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator.

Strand: Create (V.CR)

Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation.

