

# Helen Lucas

## Biography of the Artist

Helen Lucas was born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan in 1931. Her parents had emigrated from Greece. When she was six weeks old, her family moved to Saskatoon to operate the Ritz Hotel. Helen was not encouraged to paint. Art was not considered important by her family. Helen persisted. At the age of 17, after her father died, she convinced her mother to let her attend the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. Her childhood and her strict, traditional upbringing had an enormous impact on her art. Today, Helen lives in Bibury, near Toronto.

## The Art Style of Helen Lucas

The art of Helen Lucas is bright, bold, and often of large-scale flowers. She paints what flowers mean to her and does so with an amazing use of colour. She paints her pieces on raw canvas, not gessoed or prepared in any way. (Gesso is a type of paint that raw canvas is treated with before adding coloured pigment.) Helen Lucas uses a staining process. Using acrylic paint she waters down the paint and stains the canvas resulting in little or no texture. This transparency in the paint makes her work unique.

# Art Lesson / Helen Lucas 1 / Chine-colle, Composition, and Colour

*In this lesson, the use of colour is emphasized by creating work with the Chine-colle technique as a guide. Helen Lucas DOES NOT create prints, however this lesson focuses on her choices of colour and composition. Students use a printmaking technique called Chine-colle.*

## Student objectives

- Students will be inspired by the life and art of Helen Lucas.
- Students will create an art piece using the technique of chine-colle.
- Students will learn about the different types of compositions; balanced, rule of thirds and extreme placement of subject.
- Students will learn the terms symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.
- Students will learn about colour and the effective use of colour.

## Materials

Photocopy the *Helen Lucas Artist Study and Chine-colle* Instruction chart, enlarging to 11"x17". Display on the wall for the students to see.

You will also need:

- Pencils
- Flowers and images of prairie wild flowers
- Coloured tissue paper
- Styrofoam meat trays– Unisource Product #072154 (931-8004) Saskatoon, SK
- Printmaking rollers
- Printmaking ink – black, white, silver/gold (optional)
- White tag paper
- Blank newsprint
- White glue and water mixture
- Paintbrushes

## Web Links

For examples of the latest works of Helen Lucas:

[www.helenlucas.com](http://www.helenlucas.com).

For more information on the elements of composition:

<http://www.goshen.edu/art/ed/Compose.htm#principles>

## Procedure

Have students view some of the work of Helen Lucas on the Internet. See Web Links. Emphasize the balance of colour, the composition, and the various shapes of the flowers in her work. Review the *John Perret Art Lesson* on composition.

### Day 1

Bring real flowers to school: plan the unit for the 1<sup>st</sup> week back to school and you will have a wide variety of flowers when you ask the students to bring them. Display images of prairie wildflowers. Florists discard the flowers they don't sell. They are in good enough condition for this project. Contact a local florist and ask them about their old flowers.

Students sketch the various shapes of flowers.

### Day 2

Explain to students the technique of Chine-colle.

Chine-collé is a technique in printmaking where the image is transferred to a surface that is bonded to a heavier support in the printing process. Printing on a much more delicate surface is possible, such as rice paper or linen, which pulls finer details off the plate. During printing, a glue is applied to the back of the paper (a paste made of rice flour and water being traditional), and then the heavier support (typically, the heavy printmaking paper) is placed on top. In the pressure of the press, the lighter surface is glued to the support simultaneously with the image printing on it.

Adhere tissue paper to the white tag paper using a watered down glue solution and brushes. Be sure that the tissue paper lays flat and smooth. Cover most of the paper with coloured tissue. Emphasize that the tissue must be very flat. The process is: glue on paper, then tissue, glue overtop. Ask students to repeat this many times "Glue, tissue, glue, repeat."

### Day 3

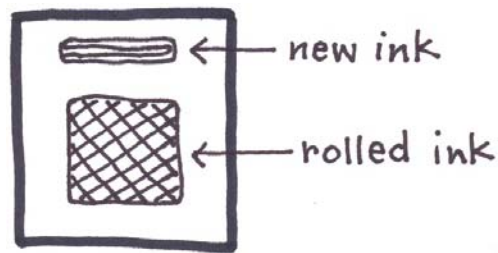
1. Students draw their favourite flowers from their sketches onto the Styrofoam tray (bottom). If you order the product listed in this resource, the inside area of the tray is smooth. The sketches can be transferred by placing the newsprint over the Styrofoam tray, taping it and tracing over the lines. Drag a pencil on the lines and a small dent will appear on the foam when the paper is removed.

2. The flower needs to be an outline, not a solid flower. To achieve this, draw double lines around the edges of the petals. The insides of the petals are pushed down. (Anything pushed down will show the colour of the paper that is behind it).
3. The negative space round the flower also needs to be pushed down or cut off using an Exacta-knife. When drawing lines on the Styrofoam always drag the pencil DO NOT push it. Pushing will snag the Styrofoam.
4. Students create a test print on a piece of newsprint. The newsprint and the Styrofoam are displayed when complete.
5. Put the paint onto a rolling surface. Roll the roller over the ink. Ink the Styrofoam tray (flower) in two directions, so that the ink covers well.
6. Place the Styrofoam tray on the paper, ink side down. Press down; the ink will stick to the paper.
7. Flip the paper over and rub evenly on the back. Turn paper over and carefully remove the Styrofoam tray.
8. Students then apply the ink to the tissue paper background prepared the day before.
9. Students decide on their composition, selecting from the displayed examples from the group. They can start with their own flowers and then add the flowers of the group's to the composition as needed. Review the compositional rules. See the *John Perret Art Lesson*.
10. It is best if the composition has an odd number of flowers rather than an even number (great math link- display odd numbers on the chalk board). Use one colour of ink for all flower prints, as the composition is more cohesive this way.
11. Students will create a collaborative bouquet. The selecting of classmates flowers and the creation of the collaborative bouquet was great fun for the students.
12. Title each piece.
13. If displaying the artwork for parents or the rest of the school, include the Instruction Chart. Your viewers will be interested in the process.
14. Some tips on creating good prints using a roller
  - a. Floor tiles make excellent rolling trays. Be sure to use the correct amount of ink; too much fills the cracks, too little tears the

Styrofoam. The correct amount of ink sounds like wet tires on pavement.

- b. Place new ink on the Styrofoam tray well above where the roller is moving. Bring in new ink only as needed.

### Diagram



- c. Be sure that the roller rotates fully on the tray to have even distribution of ink, like rolling the paint on a wall, you want even distribution.
- d. Take a little ink when needed on the roller and then move roller to center of tray.

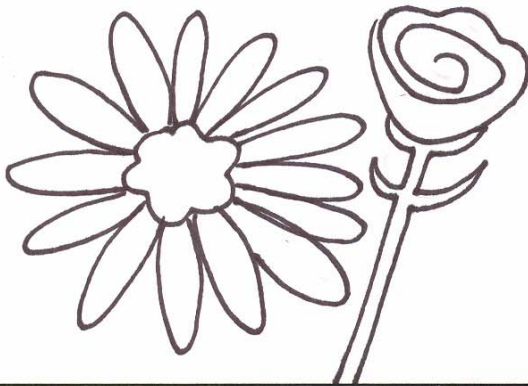
### Adaptation for Middle Years

Older students can create more than one Styrofoam piece. Emphasis is placed on the repetition of shape and placement of shape based on compositional ideas.



Helen Lucas Artist Study 1 / Chine-colle

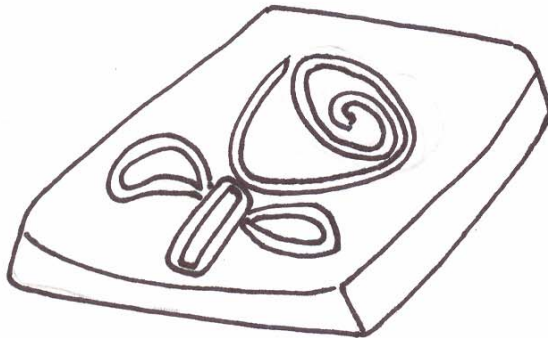
1. Practice drawing different flowers. Focus on their shapes.



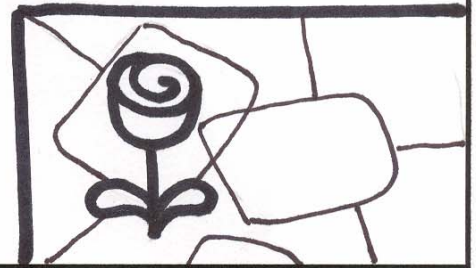
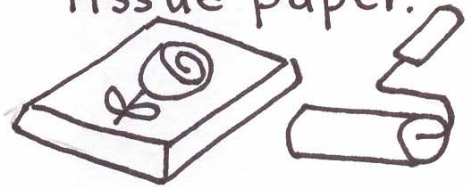
2. Cut up coloured tissue paper. Spread glue on white tag paper. Spread more glue on top.



3. Draw your best flower on a Styrofoam tray. Use double lines.



4. Roll ink on the tray. Press the tray on the tissue paper.



Student Art / Helen Lucas 1 / Chine-colle



*Mary Marciniak, Grade Seven*



*Kirk Wylie, Grade One*



Student Art / Helen Lucas 1 / Chine-colle



*Madison Monks, Grade Seven*



*Patrick Hunchak, Grade Two*

## Art Lesson / Helen Lucas 2 / Painting Large Flowers without a Brush

*In this lesson, younger students will enjoy painting with a tool other than a paintbrush. This is an extremely simple project that allows all young art students to be successful. It is great for small children as it allows them to work on their fine motor skills with a new type of tool.*

### Student Objectives

- Students will be inspired by the life and art of Helen Lucas.
- Students will create an art piece using paint with a non-traditional painting tool.
- Students will be inspired by the life and art of Helen Lucas.
- Students will discover texture in paint.

### Materials

Photocopy the *Helen Lucas Artist Study and Painting Large Flowers Without a Brush* instruction chart found in this resource, enlarging to 11"x17". Display on the wall for the students to see.

You will also need:

Liquid tempera paint of many colours

Small chunks of mat board, cut to sizes 4 cm x 4 cm

Large white drawing paper

Images of flowers

Real flowers

Lots of low sided containers to hold tempera paint

### Web Links

For examples of the latest works of Helen Lucas:

[www.helenlucas.com](http://www.helenlucas.com).

For the elements of composition:

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## Procedure

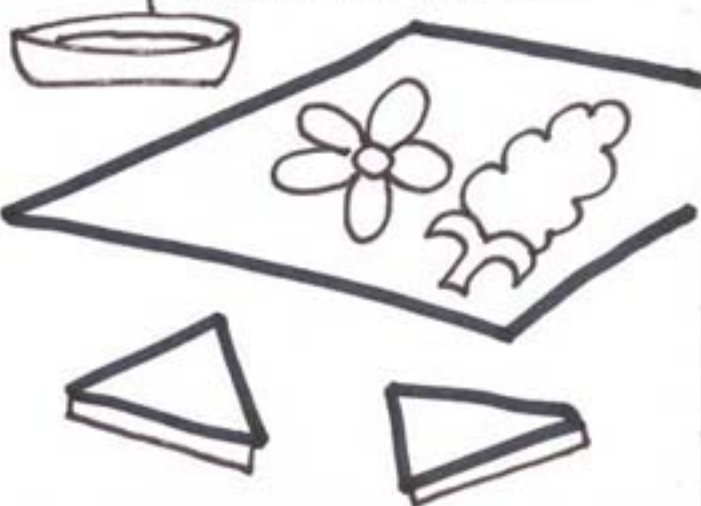
1. To begin the lesson, students practice basic drawing. Students draw the simple outline of the flowers on the paper. Talk about cropping and composition.
2. Encourage students not to place the flowers directly in the middle of the paper and to create interesting negative spaces between the petals and the edge of the paper, negative space being the space that is not the object.
3. Using the mat board chunks as paintbrushes, fill in the areas with paint. Drag the mat board on the paper. Place small yogurt containers in the centre of the table with a different colour in each. This keeps the colours relatively clean.
4. Use the corners of the mat board to create dots and the edges of the cardboard touched down to make thin lines. Drag the boards in various ways to create interesting textures.
5. Fill in the negative space last.
6. Students title their pieces.
7. If displaying the artwork for parents or the rest of the school, include the Instruction Chart. Your viewers will be interested in the process.

1. Draw outlines  
of flowers.



Leave negative  
space!

2. Use a mat  
board chunk  
for a  
paintbrush!



3. Fill in the  
flowers with  
paint.



4. Fill in the  
negative  
space.



Title your work.



Conor GRS

Flower Press  
Flowers Pressed on Paper  
1920-1925



Kate Scott  
Pinks Based Flower  
Temporary Paint on Paper  
Grade 1









Forest  
The Name: Dory  
Medium: Watercolor and Paper  
Grade: 2



