



## Let's Create Shadow Art with Biomorphlic Shapes

A project inspired by the work of William Baziotēs

**BIOMORPHIC** comes for the Greek words *bio* (meaning *life*) and *morphe* (meaning *form*). Biomorphic images are made up of organic shapes and shadows. Although expressed abstractly in art, these forms are found in nature or represent the qualities of a living thing.

### UNDERSTANDING ORGANIC VS. GEOMETRIC SHAPES

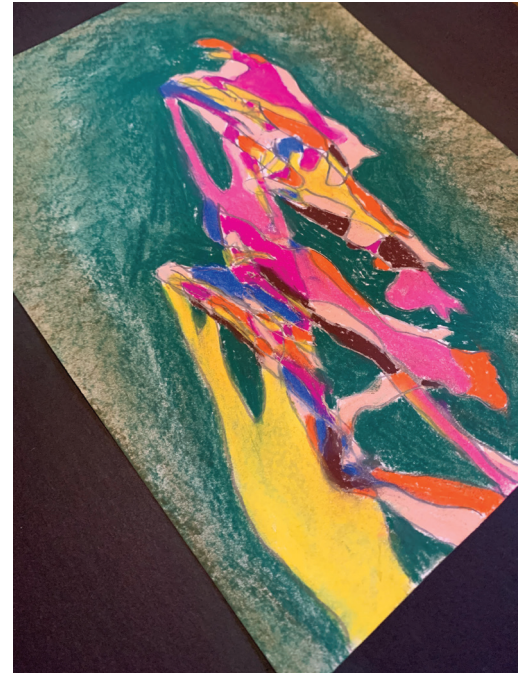
**ORGANIC** forms are soft and irregular, such as the shapes you find in nature. Organics forms represent plants, animals.

**GEOMETRIC** is related to geometry. Geometric forms are made up of hard lines and shapes such as squares, rectangles, triangles, and circles.

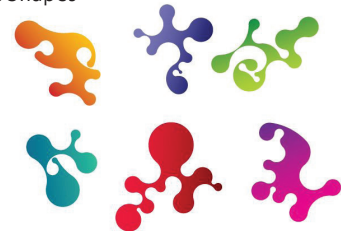
### UNDERSTANDING LIGHT AND SHADOW

**DIRECT LIGHT** refers to any area of a shape or form that directly receives light from a light source.

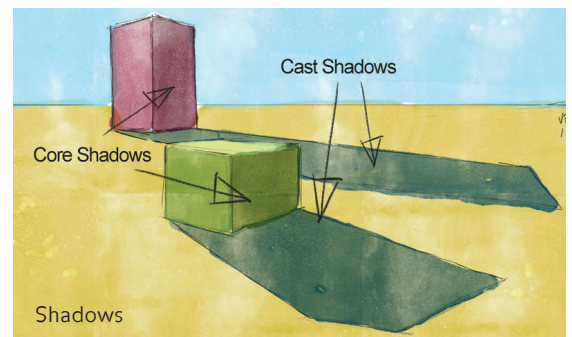
**CAST SHADOW** is the area on the surfaces adjacent to an object where direct light is blocked by a solid form. Its edges are clearly delineated where it is closest to the form, and softer as it stretches away from the form. The shadow is darkest where it is closest to the object. The angle of the light source will determine the scale, or stretch of the shadow in addition to the angle of the viewer.



Organic Shapes



Geometric Shapes







### Activity

Students will use a light source and a combination of organic and geometric objects to cast shadows that can be traced on paper to create biomorphic art. This project is inspired by the surrealism and abstract expressionist work of artist William Baziotes.

### Materials

- Paper (any will do but a heavier paper will be better if you choose to use paint)
- Pencils (regular or colored) or markers to trace
- Paint (water or acrylic), paint brushes, crayons or charcoal to fill in the negative spaces.
- Objects to cast shadows: Be creative! You can use plastic toys or animal figures, a rock or piece of fruit, a plant or flowers that can stand upright.
- A sunny day!



### Step 1: Collect

Gather the objects you want to use to cast shadows then set yourself up in an open, sunny area (indoors or outdoors). Place a piece of paper, cardstock or canvas on a table or ground surface that will remain untouched. Place the figure you have chosen on the center of your paper. Does it cast a shadow? Depending on the time of day that shadow could be a very long extension of your object or very small and centered underneath. If it is morning or evening and the sun is low in the sky the shadow will be long and "stretched." If it is in the middle of the day, the sun will be at its highest point in the sky overhead and the shadow will concentrate below. What does yours look like?



### Step 2: Trace

Now trace the shadow your object is creating. Try not to move or disturb the placement of the object. Take your time. While tracing and be sure to capture any negative spaces as you go.



### Step 3: Wait ... Observe ... Trace Again

As the day progresses, the sun moves in the sky and changes the shape and angle of the shadow even though the true form of the shape remains undisturbed. Keep checking to observe how your shadow is moving and changing. What do you notice?

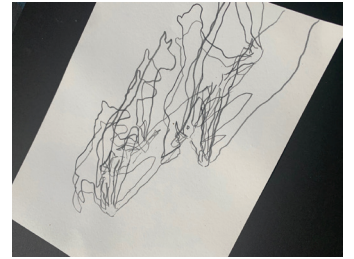


You may want to set a timer for one hour. After the 60 minutes have passed your shadow will be different than the original shape you traced. How has the shadow changed? Is it smaller? Has it stretched across the paper? Has the angle changed?

Another method in shadow tracing would be to change the placement of the shape or figure without letting time pass. By placing your solid form on different parts of the paper you can manipulate the shadows. When using this method, be sure that your shadow tracings overlap one another.



Continue to repeat this process a few times so that your traced shadows show variance and the lines are overlapping.



## UNDERSTANDING OVERLAPPING FORMS

Overlapping in art is the placement of objects or shapes over one another in order to create the illusion of depth.

### Step 4: Choose a Color Palette for the Shadows

Now that your paper is filled with overlapping and intersecting lines created from the shadow tracing, let's incorporate color and definition.

First, choose your color palette. Maybe you want to use all warm color or cool colors. Maybe both. Perhaps all the colors are grey scale. You can use markers and colored pencils for crisp lines, or charcoals or paints for a softer, more blended effect. Using alternating colors or tones, fill in the spaces between the overlapping lines. Everywhere a shape overlaps another...use a different color.



### Step 5: Choose a Color Palette for the Background

Once your color blocks have been filled in, choose a color to shade in the background. If you press harder and then softer you can create an implied shadow on your shapes. Observe how the example in this project worksheet used two color greens.

### Step 6: Dry

That's it ... you now have a beautifully composed artwork!

If you used paint, be sure to allow the paint to dry before hanging your new artwork in your home gallery.

### Step 7: Share

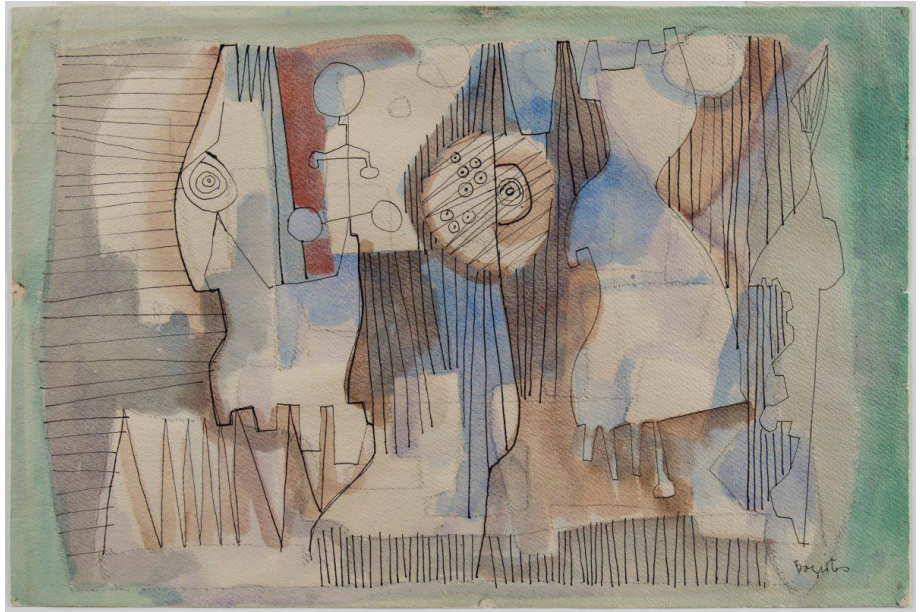
Ask an adult to take a photo of your artwork and share your creations with us on social media at [#NEUtoDoKids!](https://www.instagram.com/NEUtoDoKids/)







William Baziotēs

*Figures in Smoke #2, 1947*

**William Baziotēs** (June 11, 1912 – June 6, 1963) was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. An American painter of Greek descent, he was known for his luminous abstractions and biomorphic forms.

Baziotēs began his formal art training at age 21 at the National Academy of Design in New York City; he remained a resident of New York for the remainder of his life.

Influenced by Surrealism and working just outside the realm of Abstract Expressionism, Baziotēs became involved in the 1940's with emerging artist groups that included Robert Motherwell and Mark Rothko and took inspiration by the talents of pioneers Henri Matisse and Wassily Kandinsky. Baziotēs was also inspired by ancient art and shared a love for Greek Art and sculpture. Those influences can be seen in much of his work.