

# Painted Landscape Collage Inspired by Toni Onley

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**TOPICS:** Using washes to paint a landscape; Using colour to create a mood in an artwork; Creating collages with painted paper

**SUBJECT(S):** Visual Arts      **GRADE(S):** 4-7

**UNIT DURATION:** 3 lessons

**OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK:** In this lesson sequence students will learn about the artwork of Toni Onley and will create a painted landscape collage using washes of colour and chalk pastel.

Toni Onley was born in 1928 on the Isle of Man, off the West Coast of Britain. The Onley family emigrated to Canada in 1948 and, after a brief stay in southern Ontario, they settled in Penticton, BC. Toni Onley had an insatiable curiosity to travel across the world in search of line, shape and colour. He explored and painted regions from the West Coast of Canada to the Arctic and from Haida Gwaii to Mexico. Onley obtained a pilot's licence in 1967 and traveled extensively by plane, thereby painting in many relatively inaccessible locations. Toni was killed tragically in 2004 at the age of 75. He had been piloting his LA4 Buccaneer amphibious plane when it crashed into the Fraser River and became submerged.

The following text describes Toni Onley's process of painting from the landscape:

"He will select a form or a big shape in the landscape, often very distant, or many times magnified. This can be a headland, a rock, cloud or a combination of these. After the first shape has been transformed onto the paper, the painting's progress will be as much a result and development of it as the landscape itself. The landscape becomes a source of ideas. He will try to get something of the quality, of the mood of the landscape, but the process now takes over...The painter does not seek to imitate nature in a literal sense, he reacts to it, in a spirit of harmony with it...This response to nature translates itself as a natural moving brush, in harmony with the spirit of the painter as he is affected by the landscape."

(Roger H. Boulet, *Toni Onley: A Silent Thunder*, 1981, pp. 28-29)



Toni Onley, *Red Rock Lake*, 1999, oil on linen, 60 x 72 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Since his first one-man show at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1958, Toni Onley exhibited regularly across Canada, in Great Britain and in the United States. While he is best known for his watercolours and prints, it is his unmistakable style and succinct vision that sets him apart from other artists.

### **BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):**

- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us. (Arts Education 5)
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives. (Arts Education 5)

### **CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):**

- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work

### CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design
- Processes, materials, technologies, tools and techniques to support creative works

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- How can artist make use of colour, shape, and brushstrokes to convey a mood in a landscape painting?

### FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

### MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital image of *Red Rock Lake* by Toni Onley (see end of document for large image)
- digital projector/computer
- pencils
- paper and clipboards for nature walk in Lesson #1
- 1 11.5" x 17.5" sheet of thick white paper per student (sheets of 35" x 23" Accent Vellum can be cut into quarters)
- 2 11.5" x 8.75" sheets of thick white paper per student (1 sheet of 11.5" x 17.5" paper cut in half)
- paper towel
- glue sticks
- large bristle paint brushes (1 per student)
- water cups
- ice cube trays or Styrofoam egg cartons (1 for every 2 students)
- the following colours of tempera paint: diluted blue, diluted purple, diluted black, undiluted black, diluted yellow, diluted red, diluted green, and undiluted green
- chalk pastels in a variety of colours
- masking tape
- scissors

### VOCABULARY:

landscape, wash, horizon line, warm/cool colours, rule of thirds, foreground, background, mood, composition, collage, wet-on-wet painting

### RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Toni Onley bio and images:  
[http://www.elliottlouis.com/dynamic/artists/Toni\\_Onley.asp](http://www.elliottlouis.com/dynamic/artists/Toni_Onley.asp)
- Art terms glossary:  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

### DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Toni Onley and nature walk):

- Display Toni Onley's painting *Red Rock Lake* (see end of document for large image of the painting). Pose the following discussion questions:
  - What do you notice about this environment?
  - What feeling or mood does the painting convey? What features of the painting contribute to this mood?
  - What story might the painting tell?
  - What do you notice about the colours used to depict this place?
  - What do you notice about the colours used under the trees in the centre of the painting?
  - What do you notice about the shapes the artist used to depict this place?
  - Describe the shapes used to depict the islands and trees.
- Share with students information about Toni Onley, his travels, and his creative response to the landscape (see the Overview & Culminating Task section of this document for info about the artist). Have students read the quote about his painting process. Draw students' attention to how the shapes in *Red Rock Lake* are simplified. Ask students:
  - How is Toni Onley's approach to painting the landscape different from showing it in a very realistic way?
  - How do the smooth brush strokes and curving shapes help you to travel through the picture?
  - What do you think Toni Onley's response was to this particular landscape?
- If possible, take students for a walking field trip to a natural area close to your school. Have students sit in silence and notice how they experience the place through their 5 senses. Have students write a 5 senses inventory.
- Have students create pencil sketches of the place, with a focus on the shapes of the trees and the effects of light and shadows through the tree trunks. Encourage students to draw simplified shapes in the environment around them.
- If it's not possible to go on a walk, have students journal about a lake or beach that they have been to, what is special about this place, and how they experienced this place through their 5 senses. Student could create sketches while viewing a projected photograph of an outdoor space.

## LESSON #2 (painting with washes):

- Explain to students that they will create landscape collages using painted paper and inspired by the colours, brushstrokes, and shapes used by Toni Onley. Explain to students that they will use washes of colour and that wash (watered down paint) is much like watercolour paint.
- Distribute 11.5" x 17.5" sheets of paper (1 per student). If paper is not taped down, sponge or spray desk tops with water just before beginning to paint, as this will help the paper to adhere to the desk and curl less.
- Distribute paper towel, large bristle brushes, and water cups. 2-3 students can share a Styrofoam egg carton or ice cube tray with the following 8 colours: diluted blue, diluted purple, diluted black, undiluted black, diluted yellow, diluted red, diluted green, and undiluted green.
- Before students start to paint, remind them to wash their brushes in the water containers between colours and to wipe their brushes on paper towel before dipping them in a new colour.
- Demonstrate the following painting steps (see Teacher Sample #1):
  1. Use the diluted blue to paint a horizon line across the paper in the bottom one-fifth to one-third of the page.
  2. Fill in the bottom of the page (the water) with blue and purple, experimenting with blending the 2 colours (painting "wet-on-wet") and adding additional water to further dilute the colours. Encourage students to use long sweeping brush strokes, inspired by Toni Onley. Students should avoid spreading the paint into the top half of the paper.
  3. Paint in the sky starting at the top of the page. Begin with diluted black and use water and broad brush strokes to fill the rest of the sky with a wash. The lightest part of the sky should be next to the horizon line (refer to the sky in *Red Rock Lake*). Students should be careful to not allow the sky and water to bleed together. Students can experiment with adding small amounts of diluted purple to the sky.
- Encourage students to use long, sweeping brushstrokes, taking inspiration from Toni Onley. They should avoid painting over the same sections many times, as this will create a 'muddy' effect and will cause the paper to wear away in these sections.
- When students are finished, place wet paintings in drying area.
- Next, distribute 11.5" x 8.75" sheets of paper (1 per student). Have students use the yellow and red paint to create a wash across the entire sheet of paper. Students may experiment with blending the two



Teacher Sample #1 showing painted water and sky.



Teacher Sample #2 showing wash using red and yellow paint.

colours together and adding water to dilute sections (see Teacher Sample #2).

- While the paint is still wet, have students add strokes of black paint, using both the diluted and undiluted black paint. Students may create a variety of line thicknesses and lengths (see Teacher Sample #3).
- When students are finished, place wet paintings in drying area.
- Distribute second sheet of 11.5" x 8.75" paper (1 per student). Have students use the diluted and undiluted green paint to create a wash across the entire sheet of paper. Students may experiment with blending the two together and adding water to further dilute sections.
- After students have covered the entire sheet of paper, have them paint lines across the paper using the undiluted green paint. Students may create a variety of line thicknesses and lengths (see Teacher Sample #4).
- When students are finished, place wet paintings in drying area.

### LESSON #3 (creating collage and adding chalk pastel details):

- Display Toni Onley's painting *Red Rock Lake*. Pose the following discussion questions:
  - Describe the shapes that Toni Onley has used to create the islands in this painting.
  - How can you tell that some islands are closer up and some are further away?



Teacher Sample #3 showing black lines painted over red and yellow wash.



Teacher Sample #4 showing green lines painted over green wash.

- Have students use pencils to draw island shapes on the backs of their two 11.5" x 8.75" pieces of paper from Lesson #2. Have them cut out these shapes and arrange them on and near the horizon line in their painted scene with water and sky. Students should include the red and yellow islands in the foreground and the green islands in the background. The island shapes should be overlapping. Once they have created an arrangement that they like, students can glue



Teacher Sample #5 showing finished collage with chalk pastel details.

them down using glue sticks (see Teacher Sample #5).

- Display Toni Onley's painting *Red Rock Lake*. Pose the following discussion questions:
  - Where in the painting has Toni Onley used the colour pink? (point out that pink is used in the islands as well as in the water)
  - If you blur your eyes, where are the lightest parts of the painting? Where are the darkest parts?
- Explain to students that they will use chalk pastels to add highlights, shadows, and additional details to their paintings (see Teacher Sample #5).
- Demonstrate how to blend the pastel using a small wad of paper towel.

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After Lesson #2 view students' painted paper and pose the following discussion questions: What kinds of effects were you able to create when using wash? How is using wash different from using thick (undiluted) paint?

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After students complete their landscape collages in Lesson #3, display students' finished work and pose the following reflection questions: What do you notice about the colours and brush strokes used in the collages? What kind of mood has been created in these collages?

How has this mood been achieved? What similarities and differences do you notice amongst the various collages?

**EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:**

Connected to their exploration of Toni Onley's painting *Red Rock Lake* students could further their learning about Toni Onley and other Canadian landscape painters. Students could compose poems to accompany their finished collages, reflecting on their experiences in nature.

**AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:**

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Toni Onley, *Red Rock Lake*, 1999, oil on linen, 60 x 72 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.