

Landmarks Guide For Adolescents



Howardena Pindell

American, born 1943

Autobiography: Circles

2026

Ceramic frit on architectural glass

Subject: Visual storytelling

Activity: Make your own Pindell collage

Materials: Watercolor paper, glue, acrylic paint, paintbrush, hole punch, paint chips, and scissors

Vocabulary: Motif

i Introduction

Circles are a recurring visual **motif** in Howardena Pindell's work. Growing up during segregation, she was first drawn to the shape after seeing red dots on the back of dishes designated for Black customers at restaurants. Later, she incorporated colorful, hole-punched dots into her work, reclaiming the circle as a powerful visual element. Although it is a simple shape, Pindell views it as both visually compelling and historically significant.

? Questions

What shapes, colors, or symbols stand out to you in Pindell's work? What do they remind you of?

How might artists use visual elements—like circles, layers, or patterns—to express experiences, histories, or concepts?

Howardena Pindell, continued



Activity

- Using your acrylic paints, paint an abstract background on your watercolor paper. Let your background dry.
- From your recycled materials (paint chips, old painted paper, magazines, etc.), use hole punchers or scissors to create circles of varying sizes.
- Place the circles over your background and brush paint over them to leave subtle circle shapes. This adds texture and depth.
- Begin gluing the circles onto your background. Start with larger circles and build toward smaller ones. Spread circles across the paper, overlap them, and build movement in your composition.
- Once many circles are glued, you can add more paint layers, again using stencils or a brush to create new circle patterns, or use markers/pen to add lines, dots, or other details to enhance texture and movement.



Vocabulary

Motif – A recurring element—like a shape, color, or pattern—that appears in a work of art.