

# HARMONY SCULPTURE

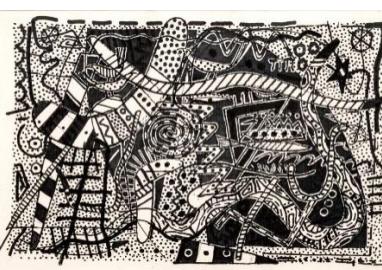
CHARLES MCGEE PAPER RELIEF SCULPTURES

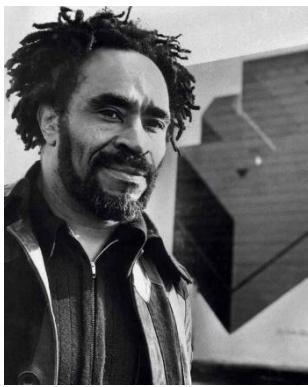


*Rhapsody in Black and White*, 2008

PROJECT BY JENNIFER STENTA

A CUT PAPER RELIEF SCULPTURE OF HAND DRAWN BLACK AND WHITE PATTERNS WITH A FOCUS ON CONTRAST, RHYTHM AND UNITY, IN THE STYLE OF DETROIT-BASED AMERICAN ARTIST CHARLES MCGEE.





**Charles McGee** was a prolific artist, sculptor and educator based in Detroit, Michigan whose career spanned over 7 decades. McGee encouraged peace, balance and harmony through his art and the desire to make the world a better place to live.

He was born in South Carolina in 1924 and moved to Detroit, Michigan at the age of 10 where he attended school for the first time. After serving in the Marine Corps during WWII, he returned to Detroit and attended the Detroit Society for Arts and Crafts where he studied classical painting and realism. His early jobs as a cartographer influenced his later style of bold black straight and wavy lines and his time as a welder gave him the necessary skills for his later sculpture work.

McGee's style evolved over time from realism into impressionist and abstract, but he was always focused on balance and unity in his paintings, assemblages, sculptures and murals. He used opposites (black & white, organic & geometric) to create harmony and equilibrium in his art which exudes his joyful optimism that all mankind can live together. He used repeating patterns to unify the different parts of his assemblages and rhythm to create a sense of movement, flow and harmony.

Charles McGee created many public art installations around Detroit including the 11-story mural titled "Unity"; sculptures in Legacy Park, Central Michigan University, hospitals and museums and the "United We Stand" sculpture at the Wright Museum of which inspired this project.



He was an advocate for the arts and tireless in his commitment to improve the quality of life in Detroit through art. In 1958 he and some fellow artists opened the Contemporary Studio, a visual art institution to showcase and represent young African American artists. Later he founded the Charles McGee School for the Arts, an all-volunteer program that provided free art classes for kids and adults as well as a prison art program.

Charles McGee passed in 2021 at the age of 96, still creating art. Along with his large-scale public works in the city of Detroit, his artwork is in the collections of the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

**"I feel we need to come together as a people. I think that has been and will be my dedication as long as I live."** Charles McGee, 1988



# OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to iconic artist and art advocate Charles McGee and his Sculptures and assemblages. Learn how he incorporated contrast, unity and rhythm to create harmony in his artwork.
- Create a McGee-style black & white relief sculpture using permanent marker to design repeating patterns using contrast and rhythm on drawing paper, cutting it into strips and attaching them to a sheet of black mat board creating a 3D assemblage.



## SUPPLIES / MATERIALS

- 1 sheet 8.5 x 11" 100 lb Heavyweight Cardstock
- 2 Sheets 9 x 12" drawing paper
- 1 Chisel Tip Black Sharpie
- 1 Fine Tip Black Sharpie
- Glue Stick
- Scissors

## VOCABULARY

**Relief:** Sculpture in which forms project from a background, usually mounted on a wall.

**Contrast:** a design principle that uses opposites to create visual interest to highlight elements of the art or draw the eye in. It can be created using color, shape, size, and typography.

**Unity:** The visually pleasing effect of combining similar or related elements like adjacent colors, similar shapes or textures to create a sense of wholeness and harmony

**Rhythm:** Repeating visual elements like shapes, colors & lines to create a sense of movement

## GRADE LEVEL TIPS

**Grades Pre-k – 2** Focus on very simple patterns...stripes, polka dots, simple shapes.

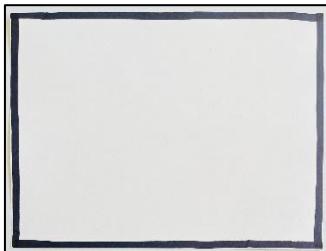
## SHARPIE MARKER TIPS

**Storage** – Between classes store the markers upside down, this keeps the ink in the felt tip rather than pooled at the bottom

**Draw Slowly** – Avoid scribbling or drawing too quickly, drawing slowly allows time for the ink to flow into the felt tip and not dry out

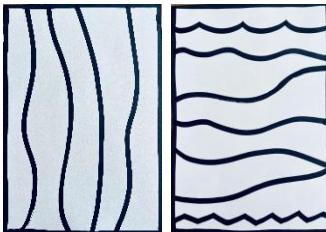
**Rotate Marker** – Rotate marker periodically while using to avoid flattening the tip

## PROJECT STEPS



1. Draw a frame around all 4 sides of both sheets of drawing paper using the broad side of the chisel tip sharpie.

Tip: No need to make perfectly straight lines or use a ruler



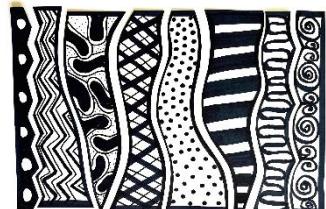
2. Draw 4-5 wavy lines down one sheet of drawing in the Portrait Position using broad tip Sharpie and 5-7 wavy lines down the other sheet of drawing paper in the landscape position.

Tip: Vary the width of the lines to create wide and narrow strips for variety.



3. Draw repeating patterns in each of the strips with both the chisel tip and fine tip sharpies. Use similar shapes and lines throughout for UNITY. Make some strips predominantly white, and others predominantly black for CONTRAST.

Tip: Use a combination of thick and thin lines for interest.



4. Cut through the original wavy lines to create strips of patterned paper

Tip: artists should end up with 10-15 patterned strips.



5. Attach each strip to the black cardstock by placing a dab of glue on each end of the strips and gluing down.

Tip: glue can be placed on the back side of strips or the front side and rolled over for a dome effect. Hold glued ends in place for 10 seconds to ensure they stick to cardstock.

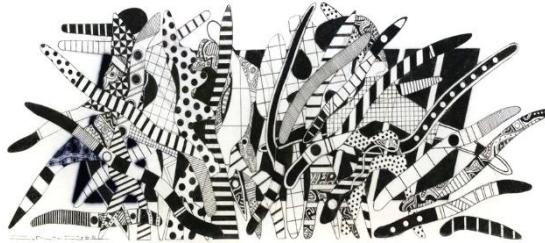


6. Vary the height and placement of each strip and criss cross them through each other for Rhythm and movement.

Tip: No need to use ALL of the strips, use as many as the assemblage needs for a harmonious composition

## COLLABORATIVE ART STEP

Have all students in the class attach their remaining strips to the 16 x 20" Black Foam Core for a Collaborative Art Assemblage to be hung in their classroom.



## RESOURCES

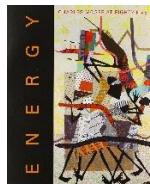
### VIDEOS

Black Artists in History: Charles McGee - <https://youtu.be/8UxvspZAHxM?si=YoW4-EomoWnAGkmd>

Charles McGee, the Artist - <https://youtu.be/CZLnCzO4HY8?si=HYDTosOU7osNDGBI>

Charles McGee | The Legacy of a Master - <https://youtu.be/c43lKRfoTUQ?si=f67APLxs320NDSRN>

### BOOKS



**Energy: Charles McGee at Eighty-Five**

by Julia R. Myers

### STUDENT SAMPLES



