

Foot

Paul Giovanopoulos

Volunteer:

Date:

Grade Level: 4th

Artist: Paul Giovanopoulos

Print/Sculpture: Foot

Art Vocabulary: color; Pop Art; serial imagery



I. The Artist

Paul Giovanopoulos was born in Kastoria, Greece on November 12, 1939. He didn't even think about art at all until he was about sixteen and he and his family moved from Greece to America. He suddenly found himself in an English speaking country and all he knew was Greek! At school, he found the only way he could communicate was to approach his schoolwork visually whenever he could. So he made maps, charts, posters, illustrations, whatever he could to convey his meaning. This was his introduction to art, and as he got better and better at it, he enjoyed it more and never stopped.

Giovanopoulos studied at New York University and then attended The School of Visual Arts in New York. He became a U.S. citizen in 1961 at age 22. After school, he won a fellowship to work and study abroad for several years and then subsequently taught art at the School of Visual Arts, his alma mater, and at other schools in New York. In addition to teaching, Giovanopoulos was an illustrator and a fine artist. His artwork can be defined as a complex study of simple objects. (See next 3 pages for examples of his artwork.)

He starts with a carefully composed repetitive grid of panels as the base of a painting. (Who else did this? **Andy Warhol** with his Pop Art, such as his Campbell's Soup cans.) This repetitive grid of panels can be referred to as **serial imagery**, which means recurrence of a unique theme. He then interprets each panel, transforming the object within through the use of designs related to nature, history, famous people, and also a lot of geometric designs and patterns.

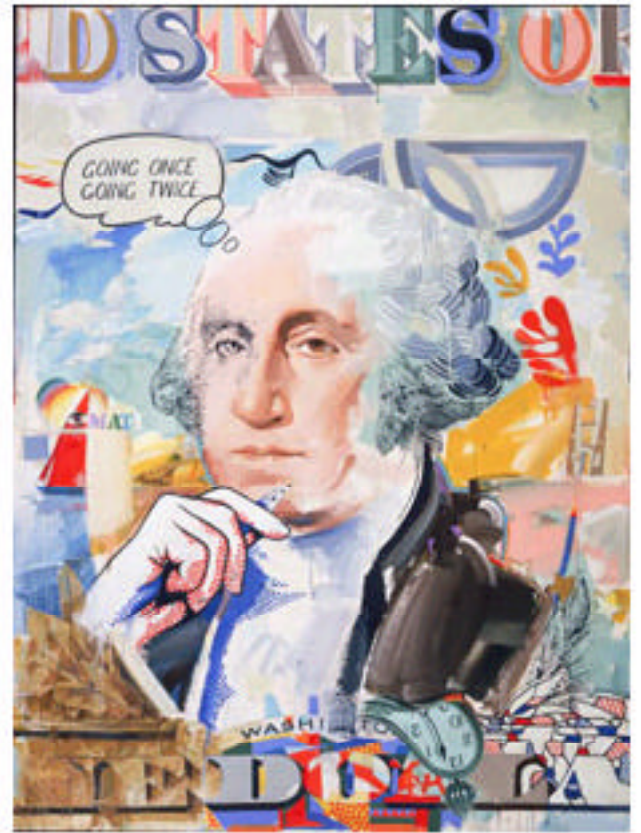
Giovanopoulos has also gone on to create large single image paintings using similar techniques. His work sometimes borders on chaotic but his skill and inventiveness bring it a certain cohesiveness.

Giovanopoulos currently works and lives in New York with his wife who is from Flossmoor, Illinois, and their two children, a son who is a senior in high school and a daughter who is a freshman.

II. Composition of Picture.

Imagine that you live in the year 2543. By now, people from Earth have colonized the inner planet of Mars, robots do most domestic tasks and human beings can concentrate on learning about space and having fun. This picture was dug out of an archeological site yesterday. It has been buried for several

Examples of Paul Giovanopoulos Work



PAUL GIOVANOPOULOS







hundreds of years. What does it tell us about the people who made it? Does it reveal anything about their way of life? Their natural environment? Their concerns?

Let's start with the materials the picture is made up of:

- ◆ Wood frame. Handmade? Why not? Machine-made then.
- ◆ Glass panel. Handmade? No! We in the year 2543 know that pieces of glass started appearing in the part of the world where we found the picture in the 1880s. Glass was already popular in Europe long before it appeared on the American continent. The first glass which was made on the American continent was uneven in thickness, not perfectly smooth, with bubbles of air in it sometimes. The piece of glass used to cover the picture is perfectly smooth and therefore had to be made by machine, not earlier than in the 1900s. Also Americans only started using glass to cover their pictures in the 1900s.
- ◆ Paper. Handmade? No! We know that papermills were first invented in Europe in the 1300s. On the American continent, paper appeared only in the 1800s. A lab analysis will make it possible to date the paper used here more accurately.
- ◆ Typography or print on the paper. Machine-made again. It took a long time before Americans found a way of reproducing colors with machines. This work is not an original with paint directly applied to it, but a color print of an original. Not until the 20th century was this process perfected. An analysis of the materials used for the picture helps us date the picture: We know the reproduction could not have been produced before the 20th century.

What's the name at the bottom? If it is the artist's name, what do we learn about him? He had Greek name.

What designs do we see? The same foot imprint repeated from one box to the next and painted over afterwards with different designs. **Are those right or left feet? Are they all absolutely the same?** Some kind of mechanical process was used so that all those feet would be exactly the same. During earlier excavations in this area, we have found similar things. Here is one of them, signed by the name of Andy Warhol. It was found in a school (imagine in those days children had to go to school, a special building away from home, where they learned things through a human teacher. What a primitive system! Today in 2543 each child has a robot assigned to him to answer his questions and solve all his problems.

Humans called the kind of art represented in the **Warhol picture POP ART**. It seems that the picture we found is somewhat similar in style.

What are some of the differences? Each foot is colored differently and decorated differently.

Do you think feet were an important part of the human anatomy for the people who made this picture and/or enjoyed it? Did they all paint their toenails? Or is this foot supposed to stand for something more than the foot itself?

Why are footprints important? Where do we find them?

We have found footprints of dinosaurs imprinted in the bedrocks of rivers; we have found footprints of prehistoric men drawn on cave walls. They are like the signatures of very early men. "I was here," they proclaim. "I want to leave my mark." Is this what Paul Giovanopoulos was trying to do also? To leave us the footprints of his civilization?

What kinds of decorations can be seen on the feet? Each foot has a different subject matter, a different theme.

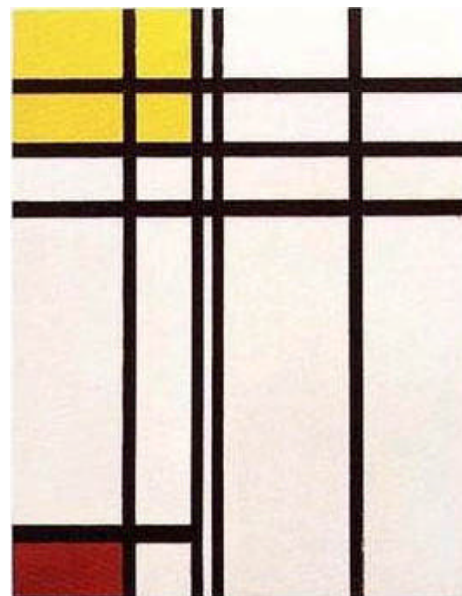
Do you see any designs that relate to nature? Fruit foot, bird foot, flower foot, etc.

Look closely at the fruit foot. Do you notice anything strange on the yellow fruit?

What does it mean? The fruit is not represented as it is picked from the tree (we have seen this kind of representation before in works called still lifes). It is ready for display in a store waiting for potential customers. It is removed from the natural produce. It is a marketable item.

What else do you see? People's faces on toes. **Who are those people?** Politicians, like President Roosevelt of the United States; famous women, such as Mona Lisa: a face which appears in many books and magazines of the 20th century. She must have been very famous. A large oil painting of her was found in the city that used to be Paris, France.

There are also a lot of geometric designs and patterns on the toes. More patterns. The feet are patterns too, so that we have patterns inside patterns here. Have you seen any of these before? (See, **Mondrian's** *Opposition of Lines*, right, for example].



Opposition of Lines by Piet Mondrian

Did we learn a lot about the people who left us their footprints?

III. Artist's Materials or Techniques

1. Repetitive grid of panels: Repetition of image Repetition of theme
2. Decorations. What decorations can be seen on the feet? What are the different designs? From nature, history, important people? Fruit, bird, flower feet, Mona Lisa, Roosevelt What are the color choices? Brilliant or dull? Realistic?
3. Does picture invite close inspection or do you view it as one image?
4. Are there easily recognizable images?

IV. Activity

The children's hands are rolled in paint (decided not to do their feet!) and they will make a grid pattern on paper out of four handprints. They will decorate their hands in the same style as Giovanopoulos.

We are going to mix things up a little bit for Cultural Arts today. We will start our project first. We are going to be making our hand prints using paint. While the paint is drying, we will learn about the artist, Paul Giovanopoulos and explore his print, "Foot." Then we will finish personalizing our hand prints, just as Mr. Giovanopoulos personalized his print.

- ◆ Roll a thin layer of paint on each child's hand. We had 4 colors of paint available. (blue, red, yellow and green) Each student could pick 1 or 2 colors. They each made 4 imprints. We also had a word search and maze for each child to keep them busy while waiting for a turn.

A search on the computer for Mr. Giovanopoulos, it gave me his address and web site. His web site is how I received an answer within 24 hours from his daughter. Here is what she said:

Read email.

Also, in 1993, Mrs. Teune's class wrote to Mr. Giovanopoulos and I'd like to read you that letter. **Read letter.** Point out how old his children would be now.

Subj: re: Paul Giovanopoulos
Date: 2/20/01 12:19:33 PM Central Standard Time
From: jamig@theispot.com (JAMI)
To: LTBTE@aol.com

Dear Linda,

Paul asked me to respond to you on his behalf.

Having immigrated from Greece to America at the age of 16, Paul entered high school in New York City knowing no English at all! His talent for art developed as it became his "language," as it continues to be now, many years later. He graduated high school with honors and was awarded a full scholarship to art school, thanks to the support and help of his art teacher, Sophie Peyser.

Other than that, he would prefer to let his work speak for itself. Enjoy the project... Paul sends his best regards to you and all of the kids!

Jami Giovanopoulos

----- Headers -----
Return-Path: <jamig@theispot.com>
Received: from rly-zb01.mx.aol.com (rly-zb01.mail.aol.com [172.31.41.1]) by air-zb04.mail.aol.com (v77_r1.21) with ESMTP; Tue, 20 Feb 2001 13:19:33 -0500
Received: from smtp-out2.bellatlantic.net (smtp-out2.bellatlantic.net [199.45.40.144]) by rly-zb01.mx.aol.com (v77_r1.21) with ESMTP; Tue, 20 Feb 2001 13:19:22 -0500
Received: from gerry (adsl-151-202-185-48.nyc.adsl.bellatlantic.net [151.202.185.48]) by smtp-out2.bellatlantic.net (8.9.1/8.9.1) with SMTP id NAA02212 for <LTBTE@aol.com>; Tue, 20 Feb 2001 13:19:20 -0500 (EST)
Message-Id: <200102201819.NAA02212@smtp-out2.bellatlantic.net>
Date: Tue, 20 Feb 2001 13:15:47 -0500
From: JAMI <jamig@theispot.com>
Subject: re: Paul Giovanopoulos
To: <LTBTE@aol.com>
Mime-Version: 1.0
Organization: Gerald & Cullen Rapp, Inc.
X-Mailer: GoldMine [4.00.9626]
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"
Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable

Paul Giovanopoulos · 119 Prince st · NYC 10012 · 212-677-5919

January 30th, 1993

Dear Mrs. Teune, Crystal, Andrew, Nicole, Brian, Ruth, Ellen,
Krystyna, Ann Marie, John, Paul, Becky, Jackleen, Sandy, Alison,
Joel, Brad and Richard,

Your letters were a wonderful surprise! My wife read them out loud to the whole family, and our smiles just kept getting wider and wider. My fourth grade son was impressed by the penmanship, and my first grade daughter wants to know when we are going to dip our feet in paint. My wife, who is from Flossmoor, says that this project of yours has once again proven the intelligence of the native mid-westerner.

I didn't start painting or even thinking about art at all until I was about sixteen and my family moved from Greece to America. All of a sudden I was in an English-speaking school, and all I knew was Greek! The only way I could communicate (and pass geography) was to approach my schoolwork visually whenever I could. So I made maps, charts, posters, illustrations, you name it. And I got good at it, and loved it, and never stopped. It makes me feel great to know that what I do is understood and appreciated by kids like you as well as adults who pretend to know everything about art. It means that even after all these years, my visual language is still working, and that is what art is all about.

If all of your paintings are still hanging, I would love to see a photograph of them-- I bet they're really something. In the meantime, I am sending you all cards from my current show, and I will ask my gallery to send along a surprise for your classroom for Valentine's Day.

Thank you all so much for your letters; it means a lot to me that you spent so much time and effort on a project that was inspired by my work.

Your friend,

Paul Giannopoulos

- ◆ Show his picture and other prints.

Let's take a closer look at the print "Foot:" Notice the "grid" format. This is a print which means the object is inked or painted and pressed to paper.

This is an example of "serial imagery" which is repetition of a theme.

Are they right feet or left feet? (All right)

Are they absolutely the same? (Yes, each foot is exactly the same.)

What are the differences? (Each foot is colored and decorated differently.)

What types of decorations are seen on the feet? (Each foot has a different subject or theme.)

Do you see any designs that relate to nature? (Fruit foot, bird foot, flower foot.)

Look at the fruit foot. Do you notice anything strange on the banana? It's a label. What does it mean? This fruit has not just been picked from a tree; it is ready for display in a store waiting for someone to buy it. It is removed from the natural produce and is a marketable item.

What else do you see? (Faces)

Who are these people? (President Roosevelt, Mona Lisa)

Also: flags; geometric shapes; hats; numbers

Do you like this print?

Now, let's finish personalizing our prints. You can personalize them with the markers on your table in any way you choose.....your family, favorite sports teams, or favorite sports, favorite animals, etc. Have fun!

