

The Shape of Chicago



In 1968, Chicago design legend John Massey created these banners for the lightpoles on Michigan Avenue. Using only red, blue, and green and triangles, circles, Xs, and rectangles, Massey created abstract pictures of things he loved about Chicago – the lake, the parks, buildings, etc. In this activity, you will use the same shapes and colors to create abstract images of things you love about your city!

Learning objectives

- Represent objects and ideas in an abstract way
- Use color to communicate
- Develop fine motor skills

Materials needed

- Paper
- 3 pens/markers/crayons of different colors
- Printouts of shapes and grid
- Tape or glue
- Scissors

Design encourages people to feel specific ways, or think about ideas from a particular perspective. In 1968, these banners tried to make Michigan Avenue more beautiful and to encourage Chicagoans to feel proud of their city and appreciate the things that make it unique. This project is particularly interesting because Massey used such a limited number of colors and shapes. How can you combine three colors and three shapes to make something beautiful that celebrates your city?

— **Step 1: Decide what you want to celebrate.**

What is something you love about where you live? Is it a building? A restaurant? Your school? A park? A mountain? A forest? Pick one or two things to design.

— **Step 2: Decide what shapes and colors to use**

Think about the thing you love. Is it made of circles, triangles, or squares? If not, how can you use those shapes to make an image that feels like that thing. It is unlikely your design will look exactly like the thing you are thinking about, and that's okay, even better! What are the three colors that would best represent it, or encourage others to love it as much as you do?

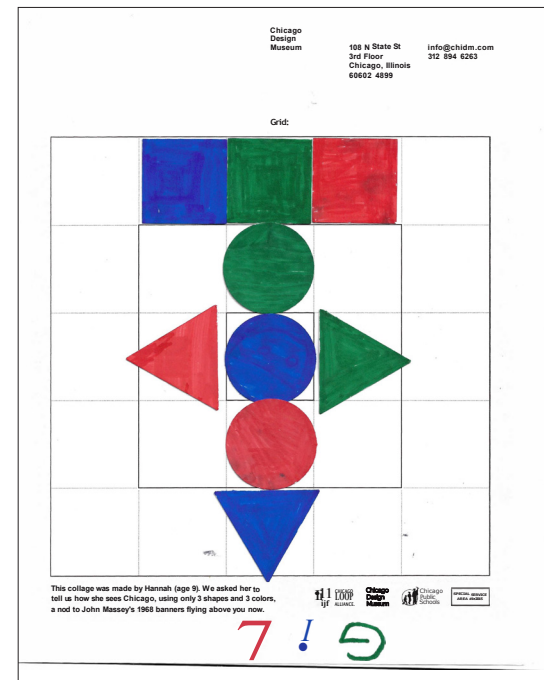
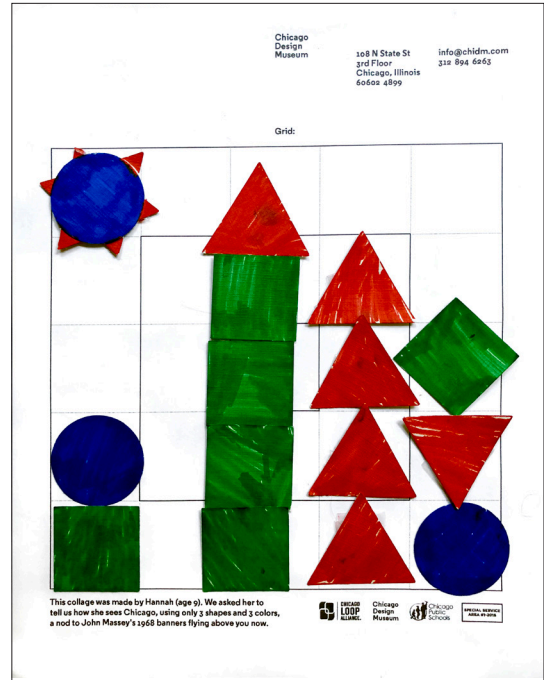
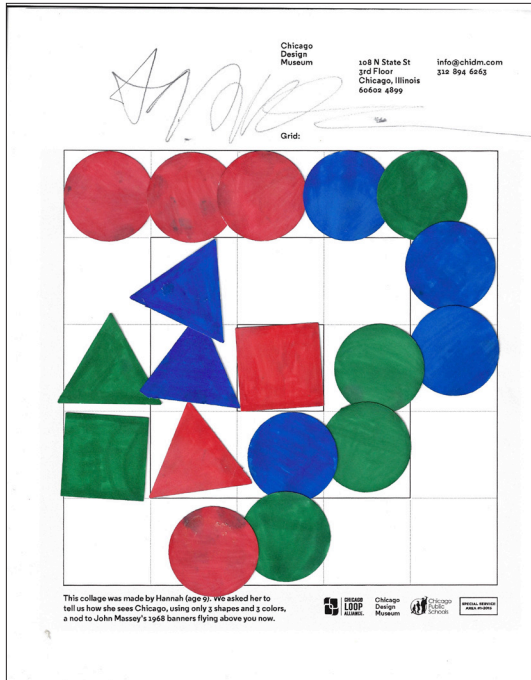
— **Step 3: Use the printouts to design**

Using the printouts of the shapes and the grid, design the thing you love. Experiment with a few different options, and see which one you think is the most effective. Test it on your family, take pictures and send to friends, maybe video chat with others and see what they think! Designers often do experiments and tests like this to see if their design is saying what they want it to say, or if they need to make changes.

Have something you like? Tape or glue your shapes to your grid and hang them in your windows, just like John Massey's banners on Michigan Avenue!

When you're done with your project, take a picture and share it with us too! You can tag us on social media (@designmuseumchi on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) or email us at info@designchicago.org. We're looking forward to seeing your work!

Sample projects

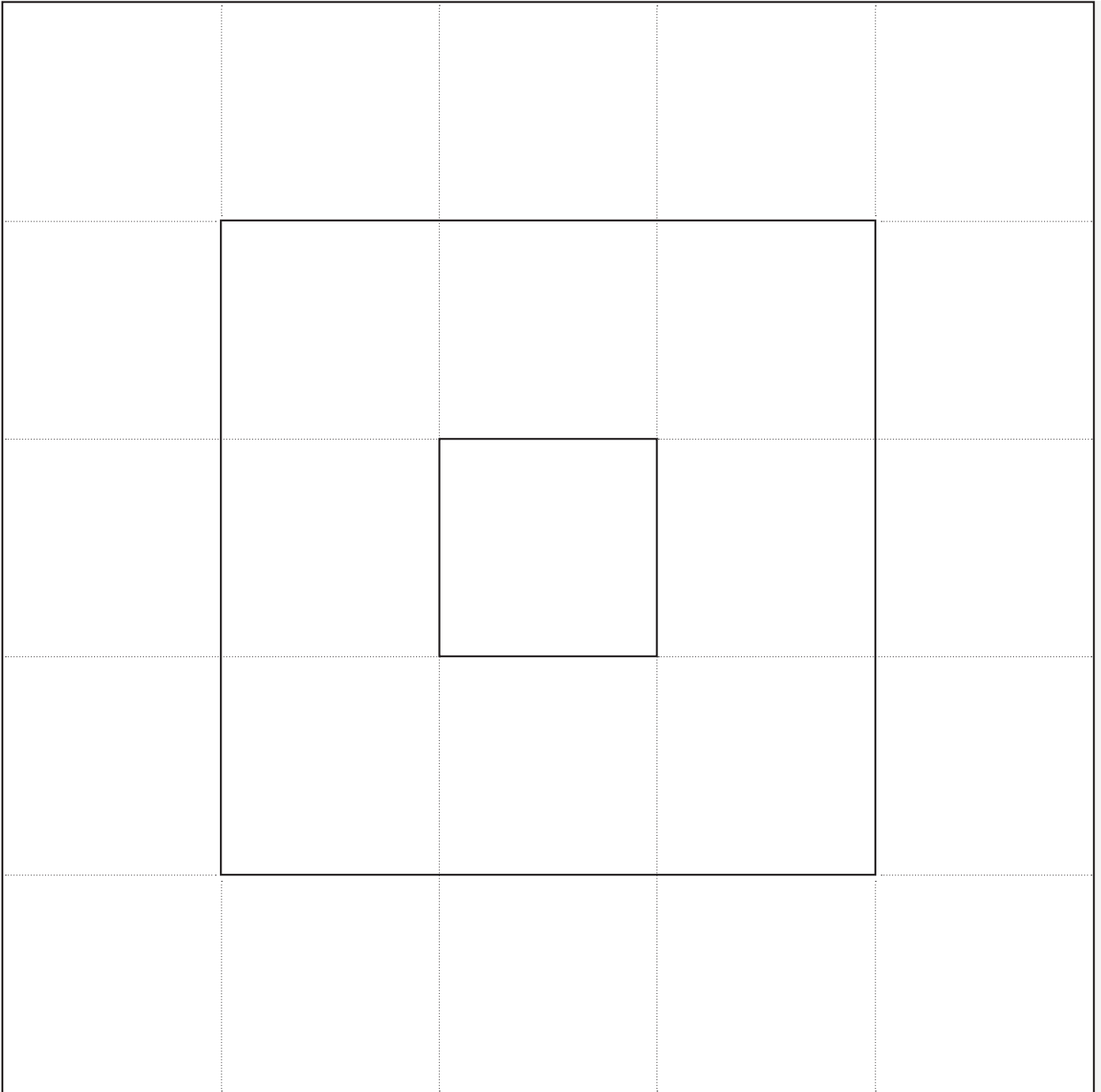


**Design
Museum
of Chicago**

**1917 N Elston Ave
Chicago, Illinois
60642 1219**

**designchicago.org
312 894 6263**

Grid:



What do you love about your city? Use 3 shapes and 3 colors and this grid to design what you love. Then take a picture and share with us on Facebook , Instagram, or Twitter @designmuseumchi using #DesignAtHome. We can't wait!

Design
Museum
of Chicago

1917 N Elston Ave
Chicago, Illinois
60642 1219

designchicago.org
312 894 6263

