LOOKING AT THE ART OF CLYFFORD STILL WITH CHILDREN

The essence of viewing abstract art is immersing yourself in the experience of the art. Clyfford Still wanted people to see his work and experience it for themselves.

**WALK** slowly through the galleries.
**LOOK** closely at what you see.
**ASK** questions.

Cards in this set explore key elements of Clyfford Still’s work like: **scale, color, surface, and environment**.
Use these cards to begin conversations with your children about the works you see.
NOTICE THE SCALE

Scale is an art term used to refer to the size of artworks. Many Abstract Expressionist artists were interested in painting on very large canvases.

Abstract Expressionists wanted to: **ATTRACT** the viewer’s attention into the artwork and **IMMERSE** the viewer in a total experience of their art.

**ASK:**
How is looking at one of Clyfford Still’s large paintings different than looking at a smaller work in the galleries?

How do the large works make you feel?

*AN EXAMPLE OF SCALE IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SIZES OF A TOY CAR AND A REAL CAR*
LOOK AT THE COLORS & SHAPES

ASK:
What colors are in the painting?
What do the colors make you think or feel?
Why do you think Clyfford Still chose the colors he used?

Are there shapes in the painting?
Do they resemble something like a sky, a fire, an electric storm, or something wild from your imagination?

I see orange, red, and yellow shapes...
They remind me of...

IMAGINE that you are an Abstract Expressionist artist making a painting. What colors would you use? Why?
EXAMINE THE SURFACE

Clyfford Still used PALETTE KNIVES to paint with instead of paintbrushes.

Can you imagine the artist painting this canvas? Where do you see marks made by the palette knife?

ASK:
What do you see on the surface of the painting? Can you see marks that show which paint was added first? Second? Which spaces did the artist leave blank? Why? Does the surface remind you of anything - the skin of an animal, the surface of a cave?
FEEL THE ENVIRONMENT

Take a moment to pause in each gallery. Move your eyes over the works in the room, and look closely at individual works.

**ASK:**

How does seeing only Clyfford Still’s work make the gallery feel?

How do the colors and sizes of the artworks make the gallery feel? Big? Small? Full? Quiet, bright, loud?

Why do you think Clyfford Still wanted his artwork to be shown in groups without the work of other artists?

**IMAGINE:**

If you could choose one artwork in the gallery to own, which one would you pick? Why?

If you were an artist, would you want to show your work in galleries all alone, or would you want the work of other artists to be there? Why?