

The Lowell School



These pastel portraits were created by third-grade students at the Lowell School in Washington, D.C. This art project was developed by Phillips Mentor Teacher Barbara Mandel who created a cross-disciplinary project inspired by the museum's exhibition *Modigliani: Beyond the Myth*. To better understand portraiture, Mandel instructed her students about Amedeo Modigliani's style, artistic process, and cultural context.

Dressed in clothes from the period, students adopted the poses of Modigliani's sitters, learning experientially about the artist's distinctive style. Using photographs of these poses, students drew themselves and each other to better understand gesture and contour line. Ms. Mandel taught her students the characteristics of Modigliani's style, from elongated features and angular gestures to his subtle layering techniques—achieved here in pastel.



Ms. Mandel observed that her students were greatly invested in the project, which deepened their understanding of Modigliani's work. This "best practices" art teacher, working with colleagues, expanded the lesson beyond the studio with language arts essays describing students' experiences, a Parisian classroom café, and a dance piece based on gestures and poses of the artist's portraits.

Barbara Mandel engaged her 3rd grade students in an intensive study of Modigliani, which culminated in each student creating a Modigliani-inspired self-portrait. She is concluding her 14th year of art teaching at the Lowell School, an independent lower school in Washington, DC. She has an art education certification as well as a Master of Arts in art therapy. Prior to teaching at Lowell, Barbara was an art therapist for 15 years at Graydon Manor, a residential treatment center. She also taught art at Create Expressive Arts Center, where she was the Administrative Assistant. Barbara has received several grants from the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County to provide art therapy to abused women and their children, and she also served briefly as the Managing Editor of "ChildArt" magazine. An avid watercolor painter, Barbara spends her summers painting at art centers such as the Monteverde Studio of the Arts in Costa Rica and Ghost Ranch in New Mexico and exhibits locally.

