



Leo Valledor
(1936-1989)

Teacher Packet
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Table of Contents	Page
Introduction and Useful Vocabulary	3
Lesson 1: Putting Together the Puzzle: Leo Valledor’s Shaped Canvases	4
Lesson 2: A “vibration I can see”: Jazz in Leo Valledor’s Art	7
Lesson 3: “Color affects space”: Leo Valledor, Race, and Reception	10
Lesson 4: “When you look at it from an angle”: Perceiving Leo Valledor’s Art	15
Lesson 5: What Leo Valledor’s Titles Tell Us	17
Sources cited in Lessons	23
Additional Resources	23

Cover image of Leo Valledor courtesy of WikiArt.org’s *Visual Art Encyclopedia*, which provides Fair Use images of artists and their works.

Introduction:

Born in San Francisco in 1936, Leo Valledor was a Filipino American artist who was known for his shaped canvases, in which he experimented with what he called “the spatial aspects of color” (Valledor, L. n.d.). Losing both of his parents by the time he was 12, Valledor grew up in the Fillmore District and saw jazz and Beat poetry as powerful influences. In 1955, after studying for two years at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), he held his first solo show at the legendary Six Gallery. Valledor spent the 1960s in New York, where he co-founded the pivotal Park Place Gallery Group and developed his artistic voice, moving away from the Abstract Expressionism of his early work. In geometric paintings that came to be part of the “hard-edge” movement, Valledor used the shaped canvas to manipulate what the viewer saw, in both the positive and negative spaces. Valledor returned to San Francisco in 1968, where he maintained a relatively low-profile as an artist and teacher until his death in 1989. His contribution to the arts has only recently been fully appreciated; he is now recognized as a maverick of Minimalism.

Useful Vocabulary:

Abstract Expressionism: A description generally applied to aspects of modern American painting in the late 1940s and early 1950s which were concerned both with the various forms of abstraction (non-representation) and with psychic self-expression.

Fourth Dimension: The term “fourth dimension”, although technically defined using mathematical computation, generally refers to the infinite relationship between time and space, a primary artistic concern during the early 20th century. Rejecting the traditions of one-point perspective, artists began incorporating elements of multiple perspectives in their work, essentially departing from their own three-dimensional reality and creating a world of endless possibilities.

Hard-edge painting: A type of abstract painting in which forms, although not necessarily geometrical, have sharp contours and are executed in flat colors.

Minimal Art: A type of abstract art, particularly sculpture, which is characterized by simplicity of form and a deliberate lack of expressive content. Its aim is a concentration on the pure qualities of color, form, space, and materials without the distractions of ‘composition’.

Positive and negative space: Positive space refers to the subject or areas of interest in an artwork, such as a person's face or figure in a portrait, the objects in a still life painting, or the trees in a landscape painting. Negative space is the background or the area that surrounds the subject of the work.

Shaped canvases: A term first widely used to describe the unconventional (non-rectangular) shapes of the paintings on canvas exhibited by the American artist Frank Stella at the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, in 1960. Many other contemporary painters have since produced shaped canvases which, like Stella's, remain flat and two-dimensional, as opposed to three-dimensional.

Definition Sources:

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms, 2nd ed., 2010.

The Fourth Dimension. Levis Fine Art. <https://www.levisfineart.com/exhibitions/the-fourth-dimension>
“Positive and Negative Space.” whitney.org. <https://whitney.org/education/forteachers/activities/115>

Lesson 1. Putting Together the Puzzle: Leo Valledor's Shaped Canvases

Grade Levels: K-12. The wording of the instructions and reflection questions can be adjusted for younger/older students.

Lesson Duration: Two 50-minute class sessions (can be shortened for younger students)

Objective: To understand the choices that go into creating Leo Valledor's shaped canvas paintings.

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

K.VA:Cr1.1. Engage in exploration and imaginative play with various arts materials.

1.VA:Cr2.1. Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.

2.VA:Cr3. Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork.

3.VA:Re7.1. Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.

4.VA:Re7.1. Compare responses to a work of art before and after working in similar media.

Materials:

- White construction paper (the larger the better)
- Colored construction paper (at least three different colors)
- Coloring implements (pencils, pens, or crayons)
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Protractor
- Optional for Grades K-5: geometric magnetic tiles
- Optional for Grades 6 and above: math compass



Skeedo, 1965, by Leo Valledor (American, 1936-1989). Acrylic on canvas. Collection SFMOMA
Accessions Committee Fund and purchase, by exchange, through fractional gifts of Elaine McKeon and
Shirley Ross Davis and, by exchange, through a gift of Forrest Engelhart. © Estate of Leo Valledor



Juxtapo, 1986, by Leo Valledor (American, 1936-1989). Acrylic on canvas (two panels). David Richard Gallery, New York. Copyright © Leo Valledor Estate.



The Impossible Dream, 1981, by Leo Valledor (American, 1936-1989). Acrylic on canvas (three separate canvases). David Richard Gallery, New York. Copyright © Leo Valledor Estate.

Directions to give to the students (either orally or on paper):

Along with changing the shape of the canvas, Valledor also used color to play with the spaces within and around each canvas. As he said in an [interview with David Bourdan](#), “I was interested in each part [of a painting] as a jigsaw puzzle” (Bourdan 2012, 21). Let’s explore the decisions that might have gone into creating his puzzle-like artworks.

Part I.

1. Choose one of Valledor paintings provided above or research another painting [here](#).
2. Recreate: Using one piece of color paper for each shape, recreate the painting by cutting the pieces of paper to match the shapes.
3. Exhibit: Lay out your folded pieces in the same positions as in Valledor’s original.
4. Compare: Rearrange the shapes you created in new positions.
5. Consider: (Older students can journal-write on these questions.)
 - a. Does your reorganized “painting” feel different than Valledor’s original piece?
 - i. If it does, why might that be?
 - ii. Does it have to do with the arrangement of colors or the placement of shapes, or both?
 - b. How does the background, the negative space, change?
 - c. Are there configurations of the shapes you like better than how Valledor placed them? If so, why do you like these “paintings” better?

Part II.

1. On a piece of white construction paper, use the ruler and protractor (and optional math compass) to create the outline for a unique shape that takes up most of the space on the paper.

2. Cut this shape out and discard the extra scraps of construction paper.
3. Place your cut-out on your table and think about the smaller geometrical shapes you can create within this “shaped canvas.” (Optional: Younger students can use geometric magnetic tiles to arrange shapes on their canvas.)
4. Draw your chosen smaller shapes on your canvas, again using the ruler and protractor (and optional math compass).
5. Color each geometrical shape a different color.
6. Reflect: When you’ve finished, consider how the shape of the canvas affected your creation process: did you feel limited or inspired in creating your “painting”? Why?
7. Discuss:
 Now that you’ve made some of the same kinds of decisions that Valledor had to make to create his paintings, share:
 - a. What factors helped you to make those decisions? What mattered most to you, when choosing how to shape your canvas and where to place certain colors and lines?
 - b. What do you now understand about how Valledor put his puzzle-like paintings together?

Possible Extension for Grades K-5:

1. Identify the different colors and shapes you see in Valledor’s paintings. Some of the shapes are regular (circle, square, triangle, etc.), while others are irregular. What words could you use to describe the irregular shapes?

Possible Extensions for Grades 6 and above:

1. Choose a Valledor painting and write a paper analyzing how he used the shaped canvas and the placement of color and lines to create a certain effect.
2. Watch this discussion of how the David Richard Gallery in New York decided to hang Valledor’s *The Impossible Dream* (from 19:10-21:45 in [this video](#)). Their placement of the canvases is different from the one depicted in the image above. Why did they make this decision? How does their installation change your experience of the painting? The video also shows just how large Valledor’s paintings are—how does seeing their size relative to the speakers affect your understanding of these paintings?
3. Create a project with your math class that examines the geometry in Valledor’s art. How might you break down his paintings into their geometric components (lines, shapes, angles, arcs, points, dimension, etc.)? Does understanding the math in his paintings deepen or diminish your appreciation of his work?

Lesson 2. A “vibration I can see”: Jazz in Leo Valledor’s Art

Grade Levels: 6-12

Duration: Two 50-minute class periods, with homework in between.

Objective: To understand how Leo Valledor drew inspiration from jazz music.

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

6.VA:Re7.2. Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Prof.VA:Re8. Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

7.VA:Cn11. Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

Prof.VA:Cn11. Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

MU: Cn10.0.E.HSI. Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

W.6-8.7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

Materials:

- Devices with internet access (or color printouts of art images and downloads of jazz pieces for student research)
- Journals or sheets of paper for note-taking and reflection
- Pen/pencil

Procedure:

1. **Introduce the lesson;** here is a possible opening (5 min.):

Growing up in the Fillmore district in the 1940s and ‘50s, Leo Valledor was immersed in the “epicenter of jazz on the West Coast, and its soundtrack provided a respite.... This early immersion in jazz would shape his obsession with the kinship between music and color, as he referred to ‘harmonic ideas’ as the basis for his visual explorations” (Abad 2019). As a young artist, Valledor “had ideas for record jacket designs and things connected with music” (L. Valledor quoted by Bourdan 2012, 22-23), and his first exhibition was called *Compositions: Jazzus Series*. A musician himself (he played the saxophone), Valledor created artworks that were carefully constructed yet had the unpredictable, improvisational qualities of free jazz. In this lesson, we’ll learn how certain jazz artists inspired Valledor’s paintings.

2. **Give background** on Free Jazz (15 min.):

- Ask students what they already know about jazz—does anyone play in a jazz band? Do they listen to jazz? What associations come to mind when they think about jazz?
- To give a basic overview of Free Jazz, the jazz that was popular during Valledor's youth, use talking points from <https://www.jazzinamerica.org/LessonPlan/5/7/234>

3. **Project and read out loud** the following quote from Valledor:

That's an idea I have about the complimentary colors, and the rest is intuitive. I mix the colors the way I want to see it. But it has to do with the complimentary color of [a] warm color vs. a cool color because it is the only way you can create this kind of vibration which I can see between the colors. It's like placing two certain notes of sound together and you get a tone. (L. Valledor quoted by Bourdan 2012, 22)

Ask students what connections they see between this quote and the tenets of free jazz (10 min.)

4. **Divide students into 5 groups**, with each group getting one of the painting/musician pairs below. In their groups, have students first look at their assigned painting and jot down what they notice about it—colors, shapes, lines, associations that come to mind. Then have students listen to their provided music piece while looking at their assigned painting a second time. Again, students should jot down what they notice—can they make any connections between the painting and the music? (15 minutes)
- Whose Blues*, 1958
<https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/2010.200/>
 Lennie Niehaus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cULEMr90Qkg>
 - Echo (For John Coltrane)*, 1967
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/leo-valledor/echo-1967>
 See also: <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/leo-valledor-his-painting-echo-john-coltrane-14262>
 John Coltrane: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsBbM5PIAHk>
 - Milespace*, 1980
<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/leo-valledor-milespace>
 Miles Davis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoPL7BExSQU>
 - The Bridge (to Sonny Rollins)*, 1981
<https://www.art-agenda.com/features/278728/pio-abad-s-kiss-the-hand-you-cannot-bite>
 Sonny Rollins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlq5w-NogWA>
 - Work of Art (to the Jazz Messengers)*, 1981
<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/59541>
 Art Blakeley and the Jazz Messengers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKOoxgl_xfQ

5. Assign Homework (5 minutes):

Have students draw from their class-notes to journal-write on the following questions:

- Critic Peter Frank says that Valledor’s paintings “seek a musical feel” (Frank 2012, 4). Do you agree with this statement with regard to your assigned painting? Why or why not?
- In your painting, do you see any examples of how Valledor used a “warm color vs. a cool color” to create a “kind of vibration which [you] can see between the colors. It’s like placing two certain notes of sound together and you get a tone”? If so, where?
- How does listening to the related jazz piece help you to see the painting differently?
- Do you feel Valledor successfully captured the feel of the music that inspired him?

6. Next class period: Share out.

- a. First, have students share their journal-writes in their small groups from the day before. Give these groups time to prepare short 3-minute presentations on their assigned painting/musical piece. In their presentations, they should explain how their painting conveys the feeling of the music they listened to—how does the placement of colors and shapes create a mood? (20 minutes)
- b. Be prepared to project each painting on the screen/board and play a snippet of the paired music.
- c. Each group presents to the class on their painting/music. (25 minutes)

7. Wrap up (5 minutes):

Have individual students volunteer: which painting stood out to them as the most “musical” and why?

Possible Extensions for Grades 9-12:

1. *Whose Blues* was part of Valledor’s “Black and Blue Series,” which also included another painting inspired by Sonny Rollins, [*Sonny’s Side*](#). Compare the Abstract Expressionism of *Sonny’s Side* to the Hard-edge style of *The Bridge (To Sonny Rollins)*. How do they both evoke Rollins’ music?
2. To learn more about the Abstract Expressionists who influenced Valledor’s early work, research the painters Paul Klee, Arshile Gorky, Mark Tobey, and Bradley Walker Tomlin.
3. Valledor also admired the Beat Poets who congregated at the Six Gallery, where he held his first show. Research the Beats and their rebellious, experimental poems. What connections can you make between these poems and Valledor’s art?

Lesson 3: “Color affects space”: Leo Valledor, Race, and Reception

Grade Levels: 6-12, College

Lesson Duration: Two 50-minute class periods, with homework in between.

Objectives: To understand how Valledor’s Filipino American identity shaped his art and his reception by the art community; to learn how to brainstorm substantive interview questions.

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

SL6.1. 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

6.VA:Re7.2. Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

7.VA:Cn11. Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

Prof.VA:Cn11. Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

W.6.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Materials:

- Devices with internet access or printouts of the necessary images and the following articles:

Abad, Pio. “One on One: Pio Abad on Leo Valledor.” *ArtAsiaPacific*. Issue 114. Jul/Aug. 2019.

<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/114/LeoValledor>

Bonn, Maria. “Leo Valledor: Interview about the artist with Carlos Villa of San Francisco Art Institute.”

Rehistoricizing.org. http://rehistoricizing.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Leo-Valledor_Interview.pdf

“History: Seeds of the Community.” Manilatown Heritage Foundation.

<https://manilatown.org/about-us/history/>

(Note: the word “manong” at the start of this article refers to the first-born male of a Filipino family.)

Nakpil, Lisa Guerrero. “Leo Valledor: From fractured past to mastery of Minimalism.” *The Philippine Star*.

17 Feb., 2020. <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/arts-and-culture/2020/02/17/1993624/leo-valledor-fractured-past-mastery-minimalism>

Valledor, Rio Rocket. “Zoot Sutra (song for my father).” *That Good Good*. 19 Jan., 2005.

<http://riogood.blogspot.com/2005/01/zoot-sutra-song-for-my-father.html>

- Printouts of the worksheet “Leo Valledor Timeline”
- Pens/pencils and Post-it notes

Procedure:

1. **Introduce the lesson** (10 min.). As an opening, project the following quote and read it out loud:

Color affects space, the harmony stays the same.... I was working with this kind of form, which is optic, and all I did was take out these... bands... and make a zigzag out of them, just cut them in half, so the two colors would interchange. (L. Valledor quoted in Bourdan 2012, 23)

(Show images of [Current](#) and [For M](#), which employ the zigzag motif)

- Poet Ted Berrigan describes Valledor’s use of color this way:

Leo Valledor magically invokes moods of nature with painting that consists simply of a number of bands of color juxtaposed in a manner that seems intuitively correct. His only ‘trick,’ to zigzag one of the bands, somehow is responsible for all kinds of miracles, conjuring up, in different paintings, sky, a summer afternoon, twilight, blue sea, mist.... (Rinder n.d.)

- However, NYU professor Melissa Rachleff posits that Valledor’s use of color was not just an aesthetic choice, but a social-political statement as well (at 36:50 in [this video](#)). “Color affects space” in that one’s race determines the social spaces one can enter and move through. As a Filipino American who grew up in a multiracial community, Valledor later had to maneuver through art spaces dominated by white men. By bringing colors together in a way that creates both “interchange” and “harmony,” Valledor may have been sharing a social vision, not just an artistic one.
- Show the image of the Park Place Gallery artists on pp. 4-5 of this issue of *Archives of American Art*: https://issuu.com/knowlie/docs/aaa_journal_51_1-2_653ba9ce46ae92

Ask students: What does Valledor’s placement in the picture suggest about him? (You can also show how [one exhibition](#) used the title *Leo Valledor: The Outsider of Park Place*.)

This lesson will help us understand how Valledor’s Filipino American identity shaped his art and his career. We’ll also think about what Valledor might be able to teach us today.

2. **Divide students into 5 groups.** Give each group one of the articles to read; as they read, they should use the worksheet to guide their notetaking. Within groups, students should share their answers to confirm they’re all coming away with the same information. (20 min.)
3. **Create “jigsaw teams”**—have students regroup into 5 new teams, with each including at least one member from each of the original 5 reading groups. Have students share out

in their new teams what they learned from their reading; with all 5 articles represented in the team, students can help each other complete the worksheet. (20 min.)

4. **Homework:** Have students complete the back side of the worksheet, which asks them to brainstorm questions they would ask Valledor if they could interview him.
- **Recap** (15 min.): Drawing from yesterday’s groupwork, have students volunteer the key social-political factors that shaped Valledor’s identity and his career as an artist. End by reinforcing this point from the Abad article:

An ongoing choreography of omission and retrieval has defined art history. Yet I kept wondering how someone ever-present at such defining moments could be forgotten. Race, inevitably, played a part in this erasure.

- **Activity** (30 min.)
 - a. Have students write each question they brainstormed last night on a Post-it and post it on the board.
 - b. After all of the questions have been posted, read them out loud, and as a group, organize them by topic (examples: race relations, identity, artistic method, New York art community, etc.)
 - c. As a group, decide which questions stand out as the ones that would lead to the richest conversation. Separate these questions from the rest and decide the order to ask them in (how might the questions build upon each other smoothly and logically?).
- **Wrap Up** (5 min.): Are any of our final questions for Valledor ones we could ask artists today? Have things changed much for artists of color—why or why not?

Possible Extension for Grades 11-12, College:

1. To learn more about Valledor’s time growing up in San Francisco, read [the transcript](#) of artist Carlos Villa’s interview with Paul Karlstrom for the Smithsonian Institute’s *Archives of American Art*. Villa was Valledor’s cousin and saw Leo as an important inspiration and mentor. The interview contains vivid anecdotes of the two artists’ upbringings and the various cultural influences that shaped their art.
2. To learn about more about Filipino American artists, explore [Worlds in Collision](#), a website built by Villa that provides biographies, interviews, and other resources.
3. In the panel discussion “[Leo Valledor: Color as Space](#),” Melissa Rachleff invites the audience to compare Valledor’s *A.I.R. (Artist in Residence)* to the Philippine national flag (at 40:08 in the video). Examine the two images linked below:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_Philippines
<http://www.briangrossfineart.com/artists/lvalledor/AIR.html>

Read about the colors and symbolism in the Philippine flag and then wrestle with these questions: Given what you've learned about Valledor from your readings and discussions, what message do you think Valledor is trying to convey by using the same colors and similar shapes as in the flag, but in different sizes and configuration? What does the painting's title suggest?

4. In February 2020, the León Gallery in Manila ran [an essay contest](#) in which participants wrote about why Valledor, "The Outsider of Park Place," should be celebrated along with "his more famous contemporaries." If you were to enter this contest, what would you write?

Leo Valledor Timeline—What factors shaped his identity and career?

Part I. Read through this chart to see the factors/dates that you should look for in your reading. Then read your assigned article, taking the time to jot down any relevant notes in the appropriate section of the chart. Feel free to share your answers with your groupmates, so you can check each other's answers and reinforce your learning.

Timeline	Political/Social	Cultural	Personal
1920s			
1930s			
1940s			
1950s			
1960s			
1970s			
1980s			

Part II.

Leo Valledor was “largely unheralded” during his career (Abad), and he died at the early of age 53; it is only recently that critics have started to give him his due. As someone who successfully maneuvered through a range of cultural spaces, he would have valuable advice for young artists today; however, very few interviews with him are accessible now. If you could interview Valledor, what questions would you ask? List them below:

Lesson 4. “When you look at it from an angle”: Perceiving Leo Valledor’s Art

Grade Levels: 9-12, College

Duration: One 50-minute class period, plus homework assignment and share-out the next day.

Objective: To understand how Leo Valledor’s visual illusions call into question our perception of reality.

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

5.VA:Re7.1. Compare one's own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others.

Prof.VA:Re7.1. Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.

Materials:

- Devices with Internet access
- Printouts of worksheet, “How Does This Painting Work?”
- Pens/pencils

Procedure:

1. Introduce the lesson; here is a possible opening (20 minutes):

While Valledor’s made extensive use of geometry in his paintings, he did not see his work as “geometric art.” As he asserted in an [interview with David Bourdan](#), his art “uses geometric elements, but... I don’t see it in terms of mathematics, in terms of anything but a visual thing.” Indeed, [critic John Yau](#) argues that Valledor was more interested in “how we see” and not “what we see.” Let’s look more closely at how Valledor plays with perspective in his paintings.

- Project the following quotes on the board:

“The shape [of the canvas] also does a funny thing when you look at it from an angle. A lot of the times you get the illusion of the shape coming out into the room.... The shaped canvas is really a sculptural idea, although I don’t come out in 3-D.” (Bourdan 2012, 22)

“[Valledor] did not believe, as [Donald] Judd claimed, that the shape of the canvas determined what was inside, nor was he content to obediently reiterate painting’s flatness. He wanted to evoke what was beyond sight.... Valledor’s work from the 1960s deliberately establishes a tension between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional through its illusionism, while lines suggested by the contours of the directional shapes point to an unknown space — the reality beyond the painting’s borders.” (Yau 2020)

- Explain that Valledor and his fellow Park Place artists in New York were intrigued by the work of inventor [Buckminster Fuller](#), who theorized about vector geometry and the Fourth Dimension, time-space. Valledor himself said in an interview, (project this quote and read out loud)

By four dimensional color, I mean the notion that it exists within time. And I have this idea about time being part of all these ambiguities that we see in dimensions, like the idea that you read a line two-dimensionally and the difference if... that line were coming straight toward you as a point. I feel the difference in that is time. (Bourdan 2012, 23)

- Next, project Valledor’s painting *Skeedo*:
<https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/2015.401/>
 - Discuss as a group the optical illusion that Valledor creates with this 2-D painting. What doesn’t make sense about this painting? What parts seem to “stick out”? How do the shapes and colors force your eyes to “travel” through this painting and see the illusion? What role does time play in your being able to see the illusion?
2. Divide the students into 5 groups, and give each student a printout of the worksheet, “How Does This Painting Work?” Allow each group to explore the virtual Leo Valledor exhibition at the David Richard Gallery, and choose one painting to look at more closely. Students will then use the worksheet to note their observations. (25 min.)

https://www.davidrichardgallery.com/Exhibit_Detail.cfm?ShowsID=496

see also,

<https://www.galleriesnow.net/shows/leo-valledor-dimensional-space/>

3. Assign homework (5 min.):
Journal write on the following question:

In a Valledor painting, “how you see” is more important than “what you see.” What do you think this means?

4. Next Day: Share Out
Have students volunteer their reflections from their journal-writes.
5. Wrap Up:
What do Valledor’s paintings help us to realize about our perception of reality?

Lesson 5: What Leo Valledor's Titles Tell Us

Grade Levels: 9-12

Lesson Duration: One 50-minute class period plus homework assignment, with share-out the next day.

Objective: Examine Valledor's use of titles to understand how language and image work together to create an aesthetic experience.

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

RL.9.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

6.VA:Re7.2. Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

6.VA:Re8. Interpret art by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant contextual information and analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

6.VA:Cn11. Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

W.9.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Materials:

Internet access to <https://www.wikiart.org/en/leo-valledor>

Worksheet: "Leo Valledor: What Titles Tell Us"

Pen/pencil

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity to the students and have students pair up (5 min.); here's a possible opening:

Leo Valledor's son, Rio, once wrote, "[My father's] titles were an artform of their own, alluding to culture... inspiration... music... or just wordplay..." (R. Valledor 2005).

(Write a few of Valledor's titles on the board and then read them out loud)

Solidude

Bluzing

Okasian

Zam

Did these titles make you wonder what the paintings look like? This activity will allow you to think about the power of Valledor's titles: How do they enhance your experience of his paintings?

2. Before showing the students any images of Valledor's artwork, have them work in their pairs to complete Part I of the worksheet "What Titles Tell Us." Allow partners to read the titles out loud and confer over what the titles might mean. (15 min.)
3. Show the students Leo Valledor's WikArt page to match the titles with the artworks. Have the paired students look closely at the paintings for the titles they discussed; then have them discuss the questions in Part II of the worksheet. (25 min.)
4. Assign for homework a 1-2-page reflection in which each student writes on a specific Valledor painting and its title. (5 min.)

Let each student choose which painting they want to write on.

Questions for students to consider in the reflection:

- a. How do the painting and the title work together to create an experience for the viewer? How would you describe that experience? What happens in your mind as you try to understand the painting and title?
 - b. Should a viewer read the title of a painting before looking at the painting closely, or should they first look at the painting and then read the title? Why?
5. Next class period: Share out

In a large-group discussion, have the students share what they discovered from studying Valledor's paintings and titles. Were there any "aha" moments? Do they think a viewer should look at the title before or after looking at a painting? What does Valledor reveal about himself through his titles?

Wrap up Question: What do we now understand about the power of titles? What should an artist think about when deciding on the title for an artwork?

Leo Valledor: What Titles Tell Us

Part I. Read the painting titles below out loud. Then answer the questions in the columns next to each title. (15 min.)

Title	What images come to mind? What shapes, what colors?	What feeling(s) or associations does this title bring up for you?
<i>Last Tangle</i>		
<i>SF Spring (Sweet Rain)</i>		
<i>Sunstrut</i>		
<i>M & Child</i>		
<i>Shapin' Up</i>		
<i>April Fool's Point</i>		

Part II. Look through Leo Valledor’s WikiArt page to match the titles with the paintings.

Discuss in pairs (25 min.):

- How do the paintings compare to what you imagined from just reading and hearing their titles?
 - How do the titles help you to understand the paintings?
 - How do the paintings help you to see the titles in a new light?
- Jot down new ideas you now have about the following paintings:

Title	New ideas/insights
<i>Last Tangle</i>	
<i>SF Spring (Sweet Rain)</i>	
<i>Sunstrut</i>	
<i>M & Child</i>	
<i>Shapin’ Up</i>	
<i>April Fool’s Point</i>	

- Using the WikiArt page, choose a Valledor painting that you haven’t discussed yet. Cover the title with your hand and look at this painting without any guidance from the title.
Theorize: What do you think this painting is about?
Now look at the title: How does knowing the title change your experience of the painting?

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