



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR GRADES 9–12

LEARN ABOUT

**MEDIA AND
ADVERTISING**
through the art of
MARGARET WATKINS

ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 1



**RESOURCE
OVERVIEW**

PAGE 2



**WHO WAS
MARGARET WATKINS?**

PAGE 3



**TIMELINE OF
HISTORICAL EVENTS
& ARTIST'S LIFE**

PAGE 4



**LEARNING
ACTIVITIES**

PAGE 10



**CULMINATING
TASK**

PAGE 13



**HOW MARGARET
WATKINS MADE ART:
STYLE & TECHNIQUE**

PAGE 14



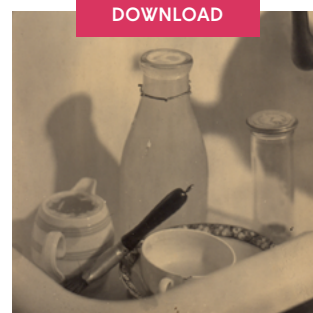
**ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES**

READ ONLINE



**MARGARET WATKINS:
LIFE & WORK BY
MARY O'CONNOR**

DOWNLOAD



**MARGARET
WATKINS
IMAGE FILE**

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

This teacher resource guide has been designed to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book [Margaret Watkins: Life & Work](#) by Mary O'Connor. The artworks within this guide and images required for the learning activities and culminating task can be found in the [Margaret Watkins Image File](#) provided.

Margaret Watkins (1884–1969) was one of the most successful advertising photographers in the history of Canadian photography. An early pioneer of the genre, Watkins's journey to the profession took her from her hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, to New York City, where she perfected the art of the ad in highly creative images that captured the look and feel of the modern world. Taking some of Watkins's best-known still-life, portrait, and product photographs as a starting point, the learning activities in this resource guide students through a creative understanding of how aesthetics and subject matter can be used to communicate, influence, and resonate in visual advertisements. The learning culminates with students creating their own ads inspired by the functional yet striking beauty of Watkins's style.

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 9–12 Visual Arts
- Grades 9–12 Media Arts
- Grades 9–12 Photography
- Grades 9–12 Media Studies

Themes

- Advertising
- Media literacy
- Photography
- Graphic design
- Women in photography



Fig 1. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Still Life with Mirrors and Windows, NYC]*, 1927. Watkins experimented with angles and geometry in works like this one.

Teaching Exercises

The exercises in this guide explore the theme of “Media and Advertising” as represented through the art of Margaret Watkins.

- Learning Activity #1: Elevating the Everyday ([page 4](#))
- Learning Activity #2: The Art of the Ad ([page 7](#))
- Culminating Task: The Human Form in Advertising ([page 10](#))

A Note on Using This Guide

In the activities included in this guide, students are asked to examine a variety of media, print, and digital advertisements. It is important to ensure that students verify any information when researching online, and that they think about the intended audience while examining images. Students should engage in critical discussion and look for any bias seen in the images. When preparing for the learning activities, considering diverse representation in advertising is encouraged. Educators should exercise caution to ensure that students are not being exposed to inappropriate images or content for their age and stage. Lastly, teachers should be aware that the online art book *Margaret Watkins: Life & Work* does include subject matter centred on the nude in photography.

WHO WAS MARGARET WATKINS?



Fig 2. Portrait of Margaret Watkins by Alice Boughton, c.1919.

Margaret Watkins was born in 1884 in Hamilton, Ontario, to a Scottish-Irish family who owned a large department store and instilled in her a passion for the arts from her earliest days. As a child, Watkins played four hours of piano daily and published poetry in local newspapers. In 1908, she moved to the United States to pursue her independence and a career as an artist. She quickly discovered a talent for photography, and in 1914 she took a six-week course at the Clarence H. White School of Photography in Maine.

Watkins relocated to New York City in 1915, taking a great leap forward in her career. Alongside her work at the studio of photographer Alice Boughton, Watkins's signature style began to take shape in her own Greenwich Village apartment. Intimate photographs of everyday objects, such as *Still Life – Shower Hose*, 1919, would in a few short years yield opportunities for publication, exhibition, and prize-winning.

In 1921, a full-page feature in *Vanity Fair* compared Watkins's work to that of Pablo Picasso for its modern approach to composition. Meanwhile, she immersed herself in the social world of art, gaining connections and honing her portraiture skills on subjects including composer Sergei Rachmaninov and painter Kenneth Hayes Miller.

Watkins's rise to prominence in the art world coincided with the advertising industry's shift away from illustration and towards photography. A 1923 solo show at the Art Center introduced Watkins to advertising art directors, who found her alluring, **abstract** photographs of objects well suited to the new world of print ads. Watkins began to photograph for commercial clients such as Macy's and J.W. Thompson, and between 1920 and 1925 her prize-winning work appeared in 21 group exhibitions in New York, British Columbia, California, Japan, and Java.

In 1928, Watkins departed on a planned three-month European vacation, which turned into a new stage of life as she became the caregiver of three elderly aunts in Glasgow. Despite her responsibilities, for a time she was inspired by Glasgow's industrial landscapes and experimented with urban photography. By the mid-1930s, however, she could no longer afford photographic supplies, and her health declined with recurring pneumonia. Separated from artists and institutions who could promote her work, she rarely exhibited. She died in Glasgow in 1969, at the age of 85.

With her masterful and avant-garde way of capturing everyday life, Watkins is today recognized as a revolutionary **modernist** photographer and a trailblazer in advertising photography.



Fig 3. "Photography Comes into the Kitchen," *Vanity Fair* 17, no. 2, October 1921. This magazine feature was a benchmark in public exposure for Watkins.



Fig 4. Margaret Watkins, *Ellipse & Triangle*, 1924–28. This image shows Watkins's geometric patterns in a commercial context: a glassware advertisement for Macy's department store.



Fig 5. Margaret Watkins, *Still Life – Shower Hose*, 1919. Here, Watkins builds a hypnotic spiral composition out of an ordinary shower hose.

NATIONAL & WORLD EVENTS



Fig 6. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, 1827. This is considered to be the first permanent photographic image.



Fig 7. Eastman Kodak Company, "Take a Kodak with you," date unknown. This style of illustrated advertisement was highly popular before the 1920s.



Fig 8. Ethel M'Clellan Plummer, Cover of *Vanity Fair*, June 1914. In its original run from 1913 to 1936, this magazine published literature and art criticism.

French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce makes the first permanent photographic image. **1826**

1884

The Eastman Kodak Company releases the Kodak camera (invented by George Eastman), the first portable film device. **1888**

Vanity Fair, a trendsetting magazine in the arts throughout the 1920s, is founded. **1913**

The First World War breaks out in Europe. **1914**

Most women are granted the right to vote in Canada; the U.S. does the same in 1920. **1918**

Ontario-born politician Agnes Macphail is the first woman elected to the Canadian House of Commons. **1921**

1923

The Great Depression derails the world economy for a decade. **1928**

1929

The first colour transparency film, Kodachrome, is introduced and used primarily for commercial photography. **1935**

1969

MARGARET WATKINS'S LIFE

Margaret Watkins is born in Hamilton, Ontario.

Watkins takes a six-week photography course in Maine, an influential milestone in her development as a photographer.

After moving to New York City, Watkins begins working at the studio of famed photographer Alice Boughton.

Watkins's work is featured and praised in a full-page spread of the popular publication *Vanity Fair*.

A solo show at the Art Center drives Watkins's work into high demand with advertising firms.

Watkins moves to Glasgow, where she experiments with urban photography.

Watkins dies in Glasgow at the age of 85.



Fig 9. From left: Photograph of an unidentified person and Meta G. Watkins (Margaret Watkins).

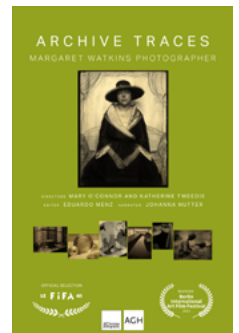


Fig 10. Poster for the film *Archive Traces: Margaret Watkins Photographer*, poster design by Sarah Dinnick, film directed by Mary O'Connor and Katherine Tweedie, 2022.

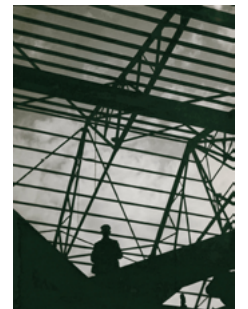


Fig 11. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Construction, Glasgow]*, 1928–38. Watkins used the beams and towers of Glasgow's industrial buildings as patterns in her photographs.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #1 ELEVATING THE EVERYDAY

One of Margaret Watkins's most significant contributions to the history of photography in Canada was her skilful ability to elevate scenes from the world around her—kitchen sinks; household objects; domestic interiors—into aesthetically stunning images. In this way, Watkins took the genre of **still life** and transformed it into a visual language that was well-suited to the modern world and the industrious rise of advertising in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this activity, students will examine how, through formal elements such as pattern, tone, and composition, images of seemingly mundane objects can influence how people think about the products used in their everyday lives.

Big Idea

Intentional observation

Learning Goals

1. I can use my critical thinking and creative skills to analyze a piece of artwork and make specific observations.
2. I can use proper terminology when discussing the art I see.
3. I can use artwork to build understanding and inspire questions about the world around me.
4. I can explain how advertisements were made with an intended purpose and for an intended audience.
5. I can explain the overt and implied messages that are seen in visual works.
6. I can discuss the strengths and challenges of whether or not images achieve their intended purpose.

Materials

- Margaret Watkins [biographical information sheet](#)
- [Margaret Watkins Image File](#)
- [Margaret Watkins: Life & Work](#) by Mary O'Connor
- Sketchbooks
- Pencils, erasers

Process

1. Introduce students to Margaret Watkins using the biographical information sheet.
2. Project the following works by Margaret Watkins for the class to see:
 - *The Kitchen Sink*, 1919
 - *Domestic Symphony*, 1919
 - *Design – Angles*, 1919

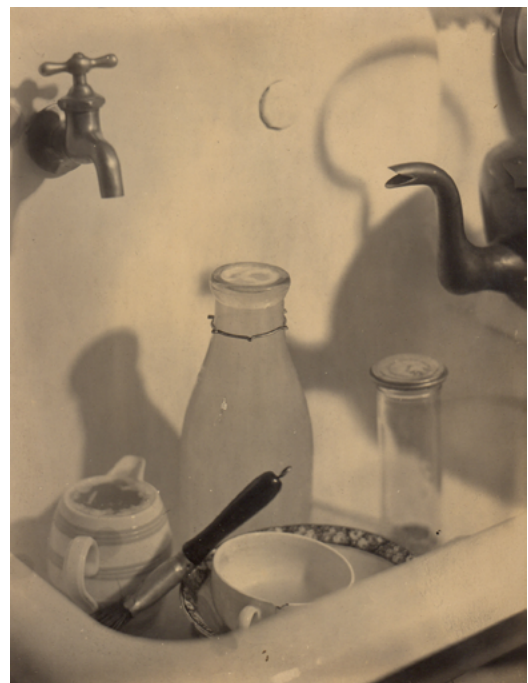


Fig 12. Margaret Watkins, *The Kitchen Sink*, 1919. One of Watkins's most famous works, this photo of her own sink is framed around a milk bottle and chipped crockery.

Learning Activity #1 continued

3. As you show each work, engage in a class discussion, using the following guiding questions:

- What do you see?
- Is there a focal point in this photograph? What makes you say that?
- How does Margaret Watkins use visual elements such as line, space, shape, and form to create interest in these images?
- How are light and shadow at play in these photographs? Describe what you see.
- What message do you think the artist is trying to communicate with these photographs?
- Do these photographs match any prior understanding you might have of what art can be, or what advertising can be? Why or why not?

4. Appoint a student reader, and have them read aloud the following passage about *The Kitchen Sink* from the [Key Works](#) section of Mary O'Connor's book *Margaret Watkins: Life & Work*:

In response to a critic who complained that the photograph suffered from “containing too many objects of equal interest,” Watkins noted, “Evidently the poor duffer knows nothing of Modern art—abstractions, pattern rhythm etc. The ‘objects’ are not supposed to have any interest in themselves—merely contributing to the design.” Here is Watkins arguing that The Kitchen Sink is pure abstraction. Nevertheless, it is precisely the shocking combination of “essential form” and material reality that is her gift.

- Ask students to reflect on the following question: How has this quotation from Watkins changed your perspective or initial response to the works projected in class?

5. In small groups or individually, students should read the full Key Works entries for the works entitled *The Kitchen Sink* and *Domestic Symphony*.

6. Once students have completed the readings, ask them to form small groups of two to three. Students should revisit the guiding questions in Step 3 and compare their initial thoughts and reactions to these photographs through further discussion.



Fig 13. Margaret Watkins, *Domestic Symphony*, 1919. This photo balances curving patterns of eggs and a sink against a large patch of shadow, creating visual contrast.



Fig 14. Margaret Watkins, *Design – Angles*, 1919. This photograph appeared in *Vanity Fair*'s 1921 feature on Watkins.

Learning Activity #1 continued

7. Next, introduce Watkins's work in advertising through referring back to the biographical handout, with an emphasis on her use of photography. Discuss the following:

- How does the elevation of everyday objects relate to concepts that are important to advertising and selling products?
- Tone, emotion, and personal connection are important in selecting advertising images. What feelings or emotions are created by works such as *The Kitchen Sink*? What sort of audience or product might these images be most suited to advertising?
- How does emotion and connection change how we perceive or choose to buy products? Can you think of some examples from your own personal experience?

8. If time permits, ask students to document their responses and share their perspectives through a large in-class discussion centred on the elements of art at play in Watkins's photographs, her selection of subject matter, and how her images might be used in advertising contexts. Guiding questions might include: What new learnings occurred from the assigned reading? How might we be inspired by Watkins's use of everyday objects in our own appreciation and understanding of images we see around us?



Fig 15. Margaret Watkins, *Still Life – Circles*, 1919. Using ordinary kitchen dishes, this photo creates a composition of circles that resembles abstract painting.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #2 THE ART OF THE AD

Margaret Watkins was instrumental in developing a photographic language for advertising, producing works for publications such as the *Economist* and *Vogue* that featured everyday objects—from mirrors and nail polish to soap and sanitary pads. In her art and her writings, Watkins stressed that an appealing visual was necessary for selling a product to a consumer. In this activity, students will apply their learning about product photography to the production of advertising images. Students will examine an ad created by Watkins and consider how composition creates an emotional response and effective advertising. Students will also compare and contrast Watkins's photography to ads from today, identifying similarities and differences over the past century.

Big Idea

Product photography

Learning Goals

1. I can use my critical thinking and creative skills to analyze a piece of artwork.
2. I can work collaboratively with my peers.
3. I can interpret media texts and explain how a work has been created to suit an intended audience and purpose.
4. I can create an advertisement of an everyday object inspired by Margaret Watkins's approach.
5. I can use digital photography, and the elements of art and principles of design, to communicate meaning.

Materials

- Margaret Watkins [biographical information sheet](#)
- [Margaret Watkins Image File](#)
- [Margaret Watkins: Life & Work](#) by Mary O'Connor
- Digital camera / method for sharing and printing images
- Method for projecting or displaying images

Process

1. Project the following images for students to familiarize themselves with Watkins's work in product advertising:
 - *Study for an 'Ad' [Woodbury's Soap], 1924*
 - *Untitled [Perfume atomizer Advertisement], 1924–28*
 - *Untitled [Lamp, study for Macy's advertisement], 1925–27*
 - *Untitled [Johnson & Johnson Modess sanitary napkin ad], 1924–28*

Engage in a class discussion using the following guiding questions:

- What are the objects on display?
- How is the main object positioned?
- How is the product portrayed?
- How is the scene set to draw your attention and eye?
- Where do you look first and why?
- What is the emotional message of the scene and the setting?
- Do you think this ad is effective?



Fig 16. Advertisement for Woodbury's Soap, "the first time you use it," in the *New York Times*, April 13, 1924. This advertisement features a photo by Watkins that emphasizes the soap's visual appeal using contrasting shapes.

Learning Activity #2 continued

2. Together as a class, read the [Key Works](#) entry on *Study for an 'Ad' [Woodbury's Soap]*, 1924. Ask students: What new learning or insights do you have after reading this passage?

3. Next, task students with choosing an everyday object(s) from home, and to create a print ad campaign for a magazine using their object. Students should imagine that they have been hired by a company that manufactures their chosen everyday object. Task students with creating a photograph for an advertisement that will be published in several different magazine titles. Be sure to explain to students that their print ad cannot have people present for this particular campaign. Have them draft a plan for the design of their ad by answering the following questions:



Fig 17. Margaret Watkins, *Study for an 'Ad' [Woodbury's Soap]*, 1924. Designed to be used in an advertisement, this photo nevertheless resembles Watkins's domestic still life photos.

- How might you be inspired by Watkins's approach when photographing everyday objects?
- How can you make an everyday object persuasive, seductive, or compelling?
- How can you use the elements of art to draw the audience towards your photograph?
- What techniques can you use to captivate the viewer into wanting the product in the image?



Fig 18. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Perfume atomizer Advertisement]*, 1924–28. This image's circular structure complements the off-kilter shape of the perfume bottle.



Fig 19. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Lamp, study for Macy's advertisement]*, 1925–27. The rays of light cutting across this photo play against the lampshade's vertical folds.



Fig 20. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Johnson & Johnson Modess sanitary napkin ad]*, 1924–28. Here, Watkins entices using only the product's box, as was customary for sanitary napkin ads of the era.

Learning Activity #2 continued

4. Provide time and space for students to compose their scene and to take photographs.
5. Once photographs are complete, engage the class in an interactive gallery walk to provide critical feedback. Have students reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of each photograph. Ask students to share their vision for the final print media campaign. Students should discuss their intended audience and the particular purpose of their photograph (composition, conventions, techniques, and how elements of art and principles of design are used).



Fig 21. Margaret Watkins, *The Tea Cup* [advertisement for Cutex], 1924. This advertisement for nail treatment doesn't feature the product at all, but rather subtly directs the eye towards the subject's hands.



Fig 22. Cutex advertisement "The Well Groomed Woman's Manicure," in *Ladies' Home Journal* 42, issue 2, February 1925. This advertisement featuring Watkins's cropped photo was included in a popular women's magazine.

CULMINATING TASK

THE HUMAN FORM IN ADVERTISING

At the height of her career, Margaret Watkins received many significant portrait commissions and produced a striking self-portrait to promote herself as a professional artist. As with her advertising work, with her portraits Watkins sought to aestheticize the everyday, highlighting the lives and personalities of her sitters. In this activity, students will study portraits by Watkins and consider the emotional impact of the use of the human form in advertising. Students will then apply their understanding through the composition of their own promotional photographs, using classmates as models to create emotion and context for their products.

Big Idea

People in advertising

Learning Goals

1. I can use my critical thinking and creative skills to analyze a piece of artwork.
2. I can use the elements and principles of design to communicate a message.
3. I can explain my artistic choices and the symbolism used in my work.
4. I can use proper terminology when discussing the art I see.
5. I can talk about my work and the work of my peers using proper visual arts terminology.
6. I can interpret media texts and explain how a work has been created to suit an intended audience and purpose.

Success Criteria

To be added to, reduced, or changed in collaboration with students.

1. Written work is thoughtful, clear, and edited.
2. Composition: You demonstrate a thorough understanding of how to express emotion through portraiture.
3. Materials/tools (pencil crayons, pastels, collage, etc.): Artwork is created with care. You work slowly and submit your best work.
4. Artist statement and documentation of creative process show specific decisions made with reference to personal design decisions and photography skills learned in class.

Materials

- Margaret Watkins [biographical information sheet](#)
- [Margaret Watkins Image File](#)
- [Margaret Watkins: Life & Work](#) by Mary O'Connor
- Sketchbook and/or canvas, paper
- Digital or film cameras

Process

1. Start with a class discussion using the following guiding questions:

- What is a portrait?
 - What is a self-portrait?
 - Why do portraits exist?
 - What kinds of portraits have we seen before?
- Do you have examples in your home?



Fig 23. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Self-Portrait]*, 1931. This self-portrait, featuring a barely visible Watkins, was taken in Paris using a car lamp's reflection.

Culminating Task continued

2. Project the image *Self-Portrait*, 1923, by Margaret Watkins and engage in a class discussion using the following guiding questions:

- What stands out to you in this work? Does any particular part of this portrait grab your attention? If yes, why?
- How do you think Margaret Watkins was feeling when she made this work? What makes you say that?
- What has the artist chosen to include in the image? What significance do you think that has for the subject? What makes you say that?
- Are the proportions accurate or exaggerated in this work? What makes you say that?
- Look at the pose and the expression on the subject's face. What might this tell you about her character?
- What does the subject's posture/stance tell us?
- What message do you think this self-portrait communicates? What makes you say that?



Fig 24. Margaret Watkins, *Self-Portrait*, 1923. Watkins offered this work to a newspaper to accompany an article on her work.

3. As an activity extension, project the following portraits by Watkins:

- *Verna Skelton*, 1923
- *Portrait of Ezra Winter*, 1924
- *Katherine at Home*, c.1925

Lead students in a compare and contrast exercise, considering the differences between the artist's self-portrait and the portraits of those within her social circle. Make use of relevant prompts from Step 2 to help guide the discussion.



Fig 25. Margaret Watkins, *Verna Skelton*, 1923. This portrait playfully features a friend that Watkins had during her time in New York.

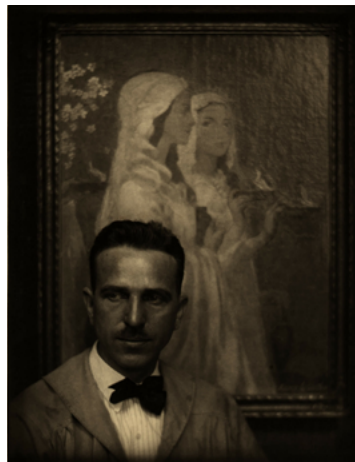


Fig 26. Margaret Watkins, *Portrait of Ezra Winter*, 1924. Watkins took this photo of the American muralist and painter in front of one of his works.



Fig 27. Margaret Watkins, *Katherine at Home*, c.1925. The subject of this portrait is Katherine Dreier, a suffragette, painter and patron of the arts from New York.

Culminating Task continued

4. As a class, discuss the connection between portraiture and advertising. Drawing on the framing of products and the analysis of emotional resonance discussed in previous activities, ask students why they think human forms and images of people might be powerful in advertising.
5. Task students with finding print or digital advertising that prominently uses human figures and portraits. Give students time to find and analyze these works before joining again in a class discussion prompted by the following guiding questions:

- How is the human subject and their composition used to convey emotion in your chosen advertisement?
- How is the subject placed in the advertisement, and what is their relation to the product (adjacent to, observing/ admiring, or using)?
- How does the inclusion of the human figure or portrait help to sell the intended use, benefit, or emotion of the product through the advertisement?

6. Following this analysis and sharing, students will embark on a photographic advertising project intended to convey a specific emotion or response to a chosen commercial product. This project integrates their learning about product photography from previous learning activities, as well as their study of the human figure in Watkins's portraits.

Students will choose a product and a human model to photograph, and a specific emotion that they hope to convey through their ad. Have students create a series of sketches showing their planned images and how the composition of their product and model will be used to convey the chosen emotion (for instance: joyful, courageous, empowered, etc.).



Fig 28. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Portrait of Nina B. Price]*, 1925. Price was a publicist who Watkins met through the Zonta Club, a professional women's networking group.

7. Have students work in pairs (acting as photographer and model in turn). Ask each student to stage their partner with their chosen product based on their planned composition and to take a series of photographs that convey the emotion and relation of the model to their chosen product.
8. If time and resources permit, have students digitally enhance their photographs or add branding or copy text to their images to complete their advertisements.
9. Have students create a digital class "look book" including all of their work and an accompanying slogan selling their product. Their entry should include a brief written statement that articulates the strategies of composition and direction that they have employed to convey their chosen emotion.
10. As a presentation extension, have student pairs present their advertisements, slogans, and concept, discussing their decision-making process.

HOW MARGARET WATKINS MADE ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Here are a few of the important artistic concepts that characterize the photography of Margaret Watkins. For more information, see the [Style & Technique chapter](#) of *Margaret Watkins: Life & Work*.

PICTORIALIST PHOTOGRAPHY

Watkins's early career was shaped by Pictorialism, a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic practice that aimed to imitate aspects of painterly technique using the camera. As opposed to simply reproducing an object, Pictorialist photography deliberately utilized composition, soft focus, and the interplay of light and dark in order to emphasize the aesthetic beauty of an image. Watkins's carefully composed photos of ordinary objects were highly influenced by Pictorialism, and she occasionally emulated specific painting styles as well. *In Dutch Girl Reading (Olivette Falls)*, 1918, for instance, Watkins placed her portrait subject in period costume and used stark lighting in order to mimic seventeenth-century Dutch painting.

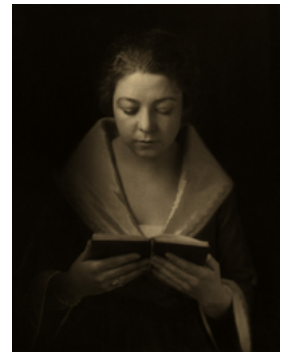


Fig 29. Margaret Watkins, *Dutch Girl Reading [Olivette Falls]*, 1918.

EXPERIMENTAL COMPOSITION

One of Watkins's first instructors in photography was the painter Max Weber, whose [Cubist](#) style depicted objects as fragmented and abstract and emphasized the geometric forms in his work. Accordingly, he taught Watkins that the appeal of a photo should be built upon its contrasting lines, curves, and angles. Whatever her subject, Watkins utilized these modern principles of image composition in a way that was brand new to photography. Her photo *Design – Curves*, 1919, for instance, depicts two plates in a nearly abstract fashion, with their compelling off-balance shapes—two wide curves and a triangular shadow in the middle—emphasized in such a way that it may take the viewer a moment to determine what they're looking at.



Fig 30. Margaret Watkins, *Design – Curves*, 1919.

DOMESTIC STILL LIFE

Watkins's signature images are her still-life photographs of simple domestic objects: soap, dishes, towels, and sinks are framed in detail in works like *Domestic Symphony*, 1919. Taking an intimate and form-first approach to this subject matter, Watkins offered, as author Mary O'Connor suggests, "the gendered space of the kitchen, its familiar objects and food, in a newly visioned vibrancy," capturing mundane, messy everyday existence in a way that managed to give it new life and attention.

NEW APPROACHES TO ADVERTISING

In the 1920s, print advertisements were still mostly illustrated, and ad photos or drawings often featured clear, literal depictions of a product in use. Watkins's inherent skill for beautifully framing the simplicity of objects made her particularly well-suited to revolutionize advertising. As she did with household items, Watkins built images around a product by highlighting its unique effects, designed to give the product an unspoken allure. Watkins's study for a Cutex nail treatment product, for instance, featured no polish bottle, but rather a carefully placed string of pearls designed to direct the eye towards its wearer's manicured nails.



Fig 31. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Study for advertisement for Cutex nail polish]*, 1924.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Supplementary Materials Provided by the Art Canada Institute

- The online art book *Margaret Watkins: Life & Work* by Mary O'Connor: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/margaret-watkins/>
- [Margaret Watkins Image File](#) with artworks and images related to this lesson
- “Who Was Margaret Watkins?” biographical information sheet ([page 2](#))
- Timelines of national and world events and Margaret Watkins’s life ([page 3](#))
- “How Margaret Watkins Made Art: Style & Technique” information sheet ([page 13](#))

GLOSSARY

Here is a list of terms that appear in this resource guide and are relevant to the learning activities and culminating task. For a comprehensive list of art-related terms, visit the Art Canada Institute’s ever-growing [Glossary of Canadian Art History](#).

Abstract art

Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art, abstract art uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. It may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely.

Still Life

The still life is an important genre in Western art and includes depictions of both natural and manufactured objects. Often used to emphasize the ephemerality of human life in the *vanitas* and *memento mori* paintings of the seventeenth century, the still life was at the bottom of the hierarchy of styles established by the French Academy.

Modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century across artistic disciplines, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet’s Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Cubism

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, Cubism is defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

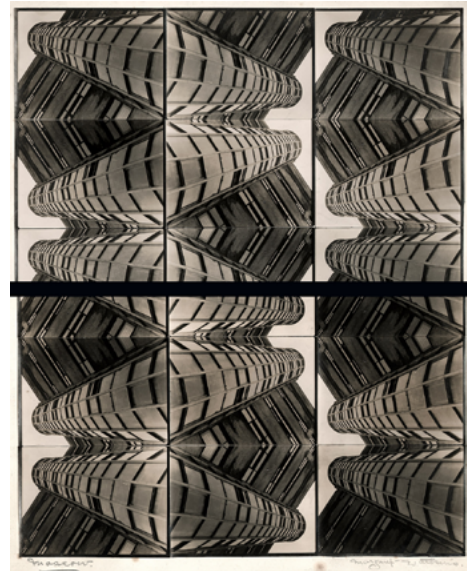


Fig 32. Margaret Watkins, *Moscow*, c.1935. This image of repeating and contrasting lines and circles is built from a single photo of a Moscow apartment building.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The following external resources can be used to augment the learning activities and materials provided by the Art Canada Institute. They are to be used at the teacher's own discretion.

Association for Media Literacy

<https://aml.ca/>

Action 4 Media Education

<https://action4mediaeducation.org/resources/for-educators/>

Bibliothèque et archives nationales de Québec

<https://www.banq.qc.ca/jeunes/>

Media Smarts: Break the Fake

<https://mediasmarts.ca/break-fake>

Twentieth-Century Photography – Art History Teaching Resources

<https://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/twentieth-century-photography/>

Modern Photography – The Art Story

<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/modern-photography/>

Margaret Watkins: Not an Everyday Life – A Conversation with Mary O'Connor

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILk9e4u5Ybo&ab_channel=ArtGalleryofHamilton



Fig 33. Margaret Watkins, *The Negative*, 1919. This image depicts a woman holding a photographic negative, which shows the light captured on film from a photo.

FIGURE LIST

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all copyrighted material. The Art Canada Institute will gladly correct any errors or omissions.

Cover Image: Margaret Watkins, *The Tea Cup [advertisement for Cutex]*, 1924, palladium print, 10.3 x 15.3 cm. Collection of the Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 1. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Still Life with Mirrors and Windows, NYC]*, 1927, gelatin silver print, 15.1 x 20.2 cm. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Helen Kornblum in honor of Roxana Marcoci (70.2020). Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 2. Margaret Watkins, c.1919. Photograph by Alice Boughton. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery.

Fig 3. "Photography Comes into the Kitchen," *Vanity Fair* 17, no. 2, October 1921, The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Margaret Watkins, *A Study in Circles*, 1921 (top centre), Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Kitchen, Still Life]*, 1921 (centre), Margaret Watkins, *Design – Angles*, 1919 (bottom left); Margaret Watkins, *Domestic Symphony*, 1919 (bottom right).

Fig 4. Margaret Watkins, *Ellipse & Triangle*, 1924–28, gelatin silver print, 21 x 16.1 cm. Various collections.

Fig 5. Margaret Watkins, *Still Life – Shower Hose*, 1919, gelatin silver print, 21.2 x 15.9 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1984 with the assistance of a grant from the Government of Canada under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act (20628). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 6. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, 1827, heliography, pewter, and bitumen, 16.7 x 20.3 cm. Collection of The Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Courtesy of Wikimedia.

Fig 7. Eastman Kodak Company, "Take a Kodak with you," date unknown, poster advertisement, 69 x 50.8 cm. Collection of the George Eastman Museum, Rochester (2005.001.03.3.093). Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.

Fig 8. Ethel M'Clellan Plummer, Cover of *Vanity Fair*, June 1914.

Fig 9. From left: Photograph of an unidentified person and Meta G. Watkins (Margaret Watkins), date unknown. Photograph by E.H. Price, gelatin silver print, 8.1 x 6.9 cm; with mount: 19.6 x 16 cm, The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 10. Poster for the film *Archive Traces: Margaret Watkins Photographer*, poster design by Sarah Dinnick, film directed by Mary O'Connor and Katherine Tweedie, 2022, 14 min, funded by the Art Gallery of Hamilton and diChroma Photography, Madrid.

Fig 11. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Construction, Glasgow]*, 1928–38, gelatin silver print, 16.8 x 12.2 cm, The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 12. Margaret Watkins, *The Kitchen Sink*, 1919, palladium print, 21.3 x 16.4 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1984 with the assistance of a grant from the Government of Canada under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act (20629). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 13. Margaret Watkins, *Domestic Symphony*, 1919, palladium print, 21.2 x 16.4 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1984 with the assistance of a grant from the Government of Canada under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act (20627). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 14. Margaret Watkins, *Design – Angles*, 1919, gaslight silver chloride print, 20.7 x 15.5 cm. Collection of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth (P1983.41.3). Courtesy of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 15. Margaret Watkins, *Still Life – Circles*, 1919, platinum print, 16.3 x 20.2 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 16. Advertisement for Woodbury's Soap, "the first time you use it," in the *New York Times*, April 13, 1924. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery.

Fig 17. Margaret Watkins, *Study for an 'Ad' [Woodbury's Soap]*, 1924, palladium print, 15.4 x 20.3 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 18. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Perfume atomizer Advertisement]*, 1924–28, gelatin silver print, 16.3 x 15.7 cm. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 19. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Lamp, study for Macy's advertisement]*, 1925–27, gelatin silver print, 24.6 x 19.6 cm. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 20. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Johnson & Johnson Modess sanitary napkin ad]*, 1924–28, gelatin silver print, 12.2 x 9.4 cm. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 21. Margaret Watkins, *The Tea Cup [advertisement for Cutex]*, 1924, palladium print, 10.3 x 15.3 cm. Collection of the Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 22. Cutex advertisement "The Well Groomed Woman's Manicure," in *Ladies' Home Journal* 42, issue 2, February 1925. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 23. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Self-Portrait]*, 1931, gelatin silver print, 7.8 x 10.3 cm. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 24. Margaret Watkins, *Self-Portrait*, 1923, gelatin silver print, 21.4 x 16 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 25. Margaret Watkins, *Verna Skelton*, 1923, palladium print, 21.2 x 16.3 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 26. Margaret Watkins, *Portrait of Ezra Winter*, 1924, platinum print, 21 x 16.2 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

FIGURE LIST

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all copyrighted material. The Art Canada Institute will gladly correct any errors or omissions.

Fig 27. Margaret Watkins, *Katherine at Home*, c.1925, gelatin silver print, 21 x 15 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 28. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Portrait of Nina B. Price]*, 1925, platinum print, 21.4 x 16.5 cm. The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow.

Fig 29. Margaret Watkins, *Dutch Girl Reading [Olivette Falls]*, 1918, palladium print, 20.8 x 16 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 30. Margaret Watkins, *Design – Curves*, 1919, gelatin silver print, 20.7 x 16 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 31. Margaret Watkins, *Untitled [Study for advertisement for Cutex nail polish]*, 1924, palladium print, 21.5 x 16.5 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow (1997.S.a.2). Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 32. Margaret Watkins, *Moscow*, c.1935, gelatin silver prints, 37.9 x 31.2 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.

Fig 33. Margaret Watkins, *The Negative*, 1919, palladium print, 16.5 x 21.5 cm. Collection of The Hidden Lane Gallery, Glasgow. Courtesy of The Hidden Lane Gallery. © Joseph Mulholland, Glasgow.