

# NSU ART MUSEUM FORT LAUDERDALE

## Embracing Childhood Playground Sketches

### At-Home Art Activity

Inspiration for your imagination:  
Esther Phillips - *Jungle Gym* and *Slide*

Esther Phillips was born in Russia in 1902 and immigrated to the United States with her family to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1903. As a child she showed a great interest in art and took studio classes at the Irene Kaufman Settlement, a Jewish educational and community center. One of the focuses of the center was to preserve the student's unique imagination. Phillips's progressive art education, first-hand knowledge of modern art and expressive childlike style (bright colors and flat animated figures) was established even before she enrolled in studio art classes at the Carnegie Institute Department of Fine Arts. After receiving positive reviews and critical local acclaim Phillips with her passion for art moved to New York City's Greenwich Village, where she used her expressive style to capture urban life.



Esther Phillips, *Jungle Gym*, Late 1940's - early 1950's. Private Collection of Renée and Richard Goldman



Esther Phillips, *Slide*, Late 1940's - early 1950's. Private Collection of Renée and Richard Goldman

# Art vocabulary:

**Modern Art** - Artistic work created from the 1860s to 1970s. The term is usually associated with art that incorporates a spirit of experimentation in place of traditional art.

**Oil pastel** - A drawing medium made by mixing pigment with a non-drying oil and wax binder that is then formed into a thick stick shape for use.

**Casein** - A wet painting medium that is made from milk, which dries quickly to a waterproof matte finish. \*Medium sometimes used by Esther, please see above artwork credits.

## Materials:

- Neutral color paper such as grey, brown or tan, \*please note that brown paper bags or cardboard recyclables such as the inside of product packaging works great as a neutral drawing surface
- Playground equipment references, either real or photographic
- Oil pastels or crayons
- Covering for your work surface

## Instructions:

**Step 1** - Always use a protective cover for your work surface. Several layers of newspaper, brown paper or a plastic tablecloth work well. Select a piece of paper or cardboard for your Esther Phillips's style drawing.



**Step 2** – Pick a reference showing playground equipment that you can draw from. It can be a photograph, or you may be outside looking at an actual piece of playground equipment. If no playground references are available, you may wish to draw from a childhood memory or your imagination.



**Step 3** – With your chosen drawing medium, draw simple lines to lightly sketch the structure of your playground equipment as seen in your reference.



**Step 4** - Add some children or people to the lightly drawn structure of the chosen playground equipment. The figures you draw should be simple lines and shapes with little detail as seen in the artist's examples at the beginning of the instructions.



**Step 5** - Finish your drawing by going over the light outlines you previously drew of the playground equipment, so they appear to be in front or behind the people you have added.



## Variations and adaptations:

A variation of this project is to create these fun and expressive childlike playground scenes using chalk outside on a sidewalk or pavement with adult supervision. Don't forget to take photos of your finished masterpiece!

\*If you have any questions about these art activities  
please e-mail Sue at: [sgirardisw@moafl.org](mailto:sgirardisw@moafl.org)  
Now in her garage making art!

**We'd love to see your artwork!**  
**Take a photo and tag @nsuartmuseum**



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Exhibitions and programs at NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale are made possible in part by a challenge grant from the David and Francie Horvitz Family Foundation. Funding is also provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale, Wege Foundation, AutoNation, Community Foundation of Broward, Paddock Family Foundation, Funding Arts Broward, Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs the Florida Council on Arts and the State of Florida. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale is accredited by the American Association of Museums.

