

Project: Venetian Carnival Masks
Elements: Form, Color, Value and Texture
Principles: Pattern, Emphasis and Unity
Artists to Remember:
Resources: *Arts and Antiques Magazine* February 1994
<http://www.anymask.com/historyofmask.html>
<http://www.maskartists.com/>
George Segal
<http://www.segalfoundation.org/bio.shtml>
Collage Artists
<http://courses.washington.edu/hypertext/cgi-bin/12.228.185.206/html/collage/collage.html>

Types of Venetian Masks:



Bauta is one of the most popular masks in Venice. It was also used for not only for carnival parties but for public affairs as well.



Colombina is a half face mask and was worn mostly by women; however, now is considered unisex.

Volto is the most used mask. It covers the whole face and can be worn with all kinds of dresses.



Jolly or **Joker** mask is made by adding to a full face or half face horns in different colors



Definition of a mask:

Webster's definition:

Main Entry: ¹**mask**

Pronunciation: 'mask

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle French *masque*, from Old Italian *maschera*

1 a (1) : a cover or partial cover for the face used for disguise (2) : a person wearing a mask : **MASKER** **b** (1) : a figure of a head worn on the stage in antiquity to identify the character and project the voice (2) : a grotesque false face worn at carnivals or in rituals **c** : an often grotesque carved head or face used as an ornament (as on a keystone) **d** : a sculptured face or a copy of a face made by means of a mold

2 a : something that serves to conceal or disguise : **PRETENSE**, **CLOAK** <aware of the *masks*, facades and defenses people erect to protect themselves -- Kenneth Keniston> **b** :

something that conceals from view **c** : a translucent or opaque screen to cover part of the sensitive surface in taking or printing a photograph **d** : a pattern of opaque material used to shield selected areas of a surface (as of a semiconductor) in deposition or etching (as in producing an integrated circuit)

History of the Venetian Mask:

“Mask is a form of disguise. It is an object that is frequently worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person and by its own features to establish another being. This essential characteristic of hiding and revealing personalities or moods is common to all masks. As cultural objects they have been used throughout the world in all periods since the Stone Age and have been as varied in appearance as in their use and symbolism.”

Latin word for mask is “*persona*” which means in Modern Italian “person.” “And person also designates the attitude we assume every day in our interactions with others.

Venetian masks have a long history of protecting their wearer's identity during promiscuous or decadent activities. Made for centuries in Venice, these distinctive masks were formed from papier-mâché and wildly decorated with fur, fabric, gems, or ribbons. Eventually, Venetian masks re-emerged as the emblem of Carnival, a pageant and street fair celebrating hedonism.

Venetian masks emerged in a climate of cultural and religious repression during the medieval era in Italy. People donned the colorful masks to free themselves from judging neighbors, all of whom knew each other in such a small city. The gentry' class and peasants alike sought anonymity for promiscuity, gambling, and other indiscretions. Even the clergy were known to dress up to go dancing.

After the 1100s, the masquerade went through periods of being outlawed by the Catholic Church, especially during holy days. Their policy led to eventual acceptance when they declared the months between Christmas and Shrove Tuesday free for Venetian mask-attired decadence. This period evolved into Carnival, the pre-Lent celebration meaning, "remove meat." Although Carnival lost popularity as Venice's cultural production faltered during the Enlightenment, it was officially reintroduced in 1979.

The modern celebration of Carnival has reinvigorated the art and craft of making Venetian masks. The traditional method involves sculpting a form out of clay as a base for the mask. Most masks are made from papier-mâché, a sticky paste made from paper strips and glue. This plaster material is layered over the base, dries, and gets removed to form the basic mask. The fun part comes when the craftsperson paints designs in gold, silver, royal purple, sunny yellow, and other bright colors. Further decorations include sequins, silk ribbons, exotic bird feathers, faux fur, rhinestones, leather, gold charms, glitter, and any other outlandish trinkets.

Recognizable types of Venetian masks continue to dazzle tourists, dancers, and pageant participants during Carnival and year round. The Bauta mask covers the whole face, with a stubborn chin line, no mouth, and lots of gilding. A half-mask with gold and silver stripes and jeweled eyes is called a Columbino that you hold up to your face with an attached stick. Other popular shapes include large, hooked noses, black and white checkered diamonds called a Harlequin pattern, and bright red, pursed lips. Wearing Venetian masks has spread to Halloween masquerade balls and what North and South Americans call Mardi Gras, but they always carry their rich Italian history.

The Project:

1. Review the history of Venetian masks and examine the different styles of Venetian masks.
2. **SKETCHBOOK ASSIGNMENT:**
Divide a sheet of white paper into four squares. Choose one or a few mask styles that appeal to you. Manipulate and personalize the mask designs and color them with colored pencils to reflect a unique mask. Fill each square with your design. Once the mask drawings are complete attach into your sketchbook.
3. Students must write their name on a paper plate and cut several pieces of plaster bandage to prepare for plaster mask making. (1" wide strips cut from two long pieces of plaster bandage = 30-40 strips. Cut half (approximately 15-20) of those strips in half.
4. **Plaster bandage demonstration:** Put on a bandana to remove hair from face, light application of Vaseline especially around the hairline, eyebrow and sideburns for guys. Place moistened bandages on face making certain each bandage "connects" to another bandage to make a well-formed mask. (Several pieces of plaster bandage should be cut prior to mask making.) Approximately 3 layers of bandage need to be applied. As bandage begins to dry it will separate from the face. Ease the mask from the face careful not to pull too hard on delicate hair areas. Move face muscles dramatically to allow mask to release more easily.
5. Once initial mask is made appendages are to be added at this time with poster board (if choosing to make wire appendages they may be added after the painting process – wire may also be painted).
6. On a dried mask apply a fine layer of modeling paste. Apply with your fingers using smooth strokes to create a smooth finish or use a more jagged application for a more rough finish. You may also sand the mask once it has dried if it is not as smooth as you would like.
7. Use a metallic spray paint or a color scheme that clearly shows a Venetian influence. After color application, apply wire or other appendages deemed necessary for your mask.
8. While your mask is in various stages of completion begin and complete a collage background to attach your mask onto for display. There are a variety of collage styles, as will be demonstrated in class. Choose a style that will best enhance your mask. Some collage techniques include adding colored or plain masking tapes with torn strips of magazine in thin strips. Add cut-outs, wooden or paper, sharpies, or other objects that complement your piece. You may also use torn tissue paper and apply a thinned Elmer's glue paste over the paper. If you have any questions about a technique you are uncertain about – please do not hesitate to ask your instructor!
9. Put tiny holes in each side of your mask and on your collage board and attach your mask to the board. Complete project evaluation.