

Young Portrait Explorers: Marisol Escobar



Learning Objective: Discover how fun and funky portraiture can be through the artwork of Marisol Escobar, also known as Marisol.

Portrait Discussion:

Spend 30 seconds letting your eyes wander from the top of the photograph to the bottom.

Setting: What do you notice about the space around Marisol? Which objects stand out to you? This is Marisol's **studio** (the place where she created art). She made the sculptures behind her as portraits. How many of them can you count? This photograph is in black and white, but in real life the portraits are very colorful. Which colors do you imagine Marisol might have used? Which colors would you use to style the portraits?

Pose: Marisol poses in the center of the portrait, behind one of her sculptures. Her arm rests casually on top of the figure, and her head is positioned directly above it – right where the figure's head should be! Do you think this is by accident or on purpose? Marisol's art was often funny, but it also communicated deep messages about gender, her society (a group or community), and rules she did not agree with.

Facial Expression: Observe Marisol's expression – she faces forward, her eyebrows slightly raised, and her mouth closed. Do you think she looks happy, sad, or something else? Can you try making the same face?

Materials: Marisol created a kind of sculpture known as **assemblage** (art made by grouping found or unrelated objects). Which shapes, materials, and objects do you notice in the portraits behind her? Can you find wood pieces, plastic, a television set, clothes, jewelry, shoes, and drinking glasses?

Historical Context: *Marisol Escobar, commonly referred to as Marisol, was an American artist, born in France to Venezuelan parents. Her sculptures blended different art forms to create a unique style. She included elements from **pre-Columbian art** (artwork made in the Americas before Columbus arrived in 1492) and the **folk arts** (artwork rooted in community traditions and cultures) of South America. Marisol was also inspired by modern artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol, who also liked to experiment and break the rules. The assemblage behind her, titled *The Party*, was her largest. Marisol often felt alone at parties, so the partygoers she depicts do not interact with – or even acknowledge – one another. How do you feel in a group?*

Related Children's Books:

Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

Collage Workshop for Kids by Shannon Merenstein

Activity: Assemblage Portraits

Materials:

Found objects – that means anything! You can use paper scraps, boxes, food, craft supplies, toys, etc. The entire artwork should be made from objects.

Instructions:

Lay your found objects on a table or floor and see how many faces you can make.

- Which objects make good eyes?

- Which materials look like hair?
 - Do you have materials to create a body? If you have a camera, photograph your portraits from above, then rearrange the found objects into different faces.
- Additional assemblage portrait challenges:
- Food faces – only edible items
 - Nature faces – sticks, rocks, leaves
 - Make faces of your friends or family



Marisol Escobar by Frederick William McDarrah, gelatin silver print, 1966
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Find the portrait on our website, here: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2001.53