

# Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) artist research

- Sonia Delaunay was born in Ukraine to Jewish parents. She was named originally Sonia Illinitchna Stern, but changed this several times during her life. Her family were poor, and she was sent, aged seven, to live with her wealthy uncle and his wife. This enabled Sonia to receive a good education, to travel and to experience art galleries and museums.
- When she was sixteen years old, Delaunay was sent to Germany to study art, and she continued her training in Paris two years later. There she met and married Robert Delaunay, also an artist, and the couple became influential in the art world.
- The Delaunays founded an art movement called Orphism together, which was focused on the use of vibrant abstract colour. Sonia was influenced throughout her life by the vibrant costumes of Ukranian peasant weddings which she remembered from her childhood.
- It was the birth of their son in 1911, that sparked a development in Sonia Delaunay's ideas about art. She created a patchwork quilt for her son and was inspired by the way she could experiment with placing different colours alongside each other and how the appearance and effects changed when fabric was placed by different colours.
- Where Robert was focused mainly on painting, Sonia branched out and produced designs and artworks in many different fields. She created stage sets and costumes, mosaics, fabrics and interiors and set-up her own shop in 1921 which attracted well-known glamorous customers.
- Robert Delaunay died in 1941. Sonia dedicated herself to ensuring his achievements were recognised. It was a difficult time for her as her Jewish heritage made her vulnerable during WW2.
- After the war, Sonia Delaunay's reputation as an artist was built-up again, and she was the subject of an exhibition at a major French museum in 1967.



Photograph of Sonia Delaunay by Lothar Wolleh, Paris, 1978

*"For me there is no gap between my painting and my so-called 'decorative' work. I never considered the 'minor arts' to be artistically frustrating; on the contrary, it was an extension of my art." Sonia Delaunay*

## Task 1

Answer the following questions in **full sentences**.

1. What were the challenges that Sonia Delaunay faced in her life and career?
2. What influenced Sonia Delaunay's ideas about art?
3. What interested Sonia Delaunay about colour? Can you see this in the examples of her work? Explain...
4. What were the different forms that Sonia Delaunay's artwork took?

## Task 2

Look closely at the examples of Sonia Delaunay's artwork. Using this as inspiration create your own three-dimensional composition using coloured paper and glue...

- Use cylindrical objects (such as sellotapes, cups or glue sticks) as a template to draw various sized circular shapes on coloured paper
- Cut these out and try overlapping them in different ways to create a composition
- Glue the coloured circles into place and use a paper-clip to hang your work up

You will need: Coloured papers, scissors, glue stick, paper clips, pencil, various cylindrical objects (or a compass)



Tip: try matching complimentary colours (opposites on the colour wheel) to make the colours zing!



"One who knows how to appreciate color relationships, the influence of one color with another, their contrasts and dissonances, is promised an infinite variety of images."

Sonia Delaunay

Sonia Delaunay, Electric Prisms, 1914



Sonia Delaunay, Rhythm Colour no. 1076, 1939



Sonia Delaunay, Rythme, 1938



Sonia Delaunay, Vogue magazine cover designs



Sonia Delaunay, fabric designs

Sonia Delaunay, Simultané playing cards, 1964



"It was a tradition to represent a dancer frozen in a chosen position, like a snapshot. I broke away from this tradition by superimposing postures, blending light and motion and scrambling the planes."

Sonia Delaunay

# Making the paper collage...

