



Rewriting the Well-Known World

Exploring Cultures with Story and Creativity
Teaching Writer & Teaching Artist Institute ↻ August 2016

Self-Portraits in Shapes and Text: Getting Inspired by the French Avant-Garde

Objective: To enable students to reflect on and express who they are while learning about avant-garde art.

Materials: an image of *Portrait de Tristan Tzara* by Francis Picabia (attached)
planning sheet (attached)
12” x 18” light colored paper—1 piece per student
colored or patterned paper cut into shapes: circles, triangles, squares, etc.—about 8 pieces per student
markers
glue sticks

Activities:

Perhaps as part of a larger conversation about 20th century avant-garde art, share Picabia’s *Portrait de Tristan Tzara* with students. Discuss the potential for disciplines to overlap—for a story to be told through pictures, for example, or in this case, for a portrait to be created with words and geometric shapes.

Guide students through the planning sheet, which will help them identify characteristics of themselves that can be included in such a self-portrait. Have them choose the eight most important items from their lists.

Lead them in using the colored or patterned shapes to represent these characteristics. On the large colored paper, have them draw a modified arrow, as in Picabia’s portrait, or allow them to choose a shape for the “skeleton” of their self-portrait.

Have them glue the shapes to the paper. The shapes should be connected to the “skeleton” they have drawn.

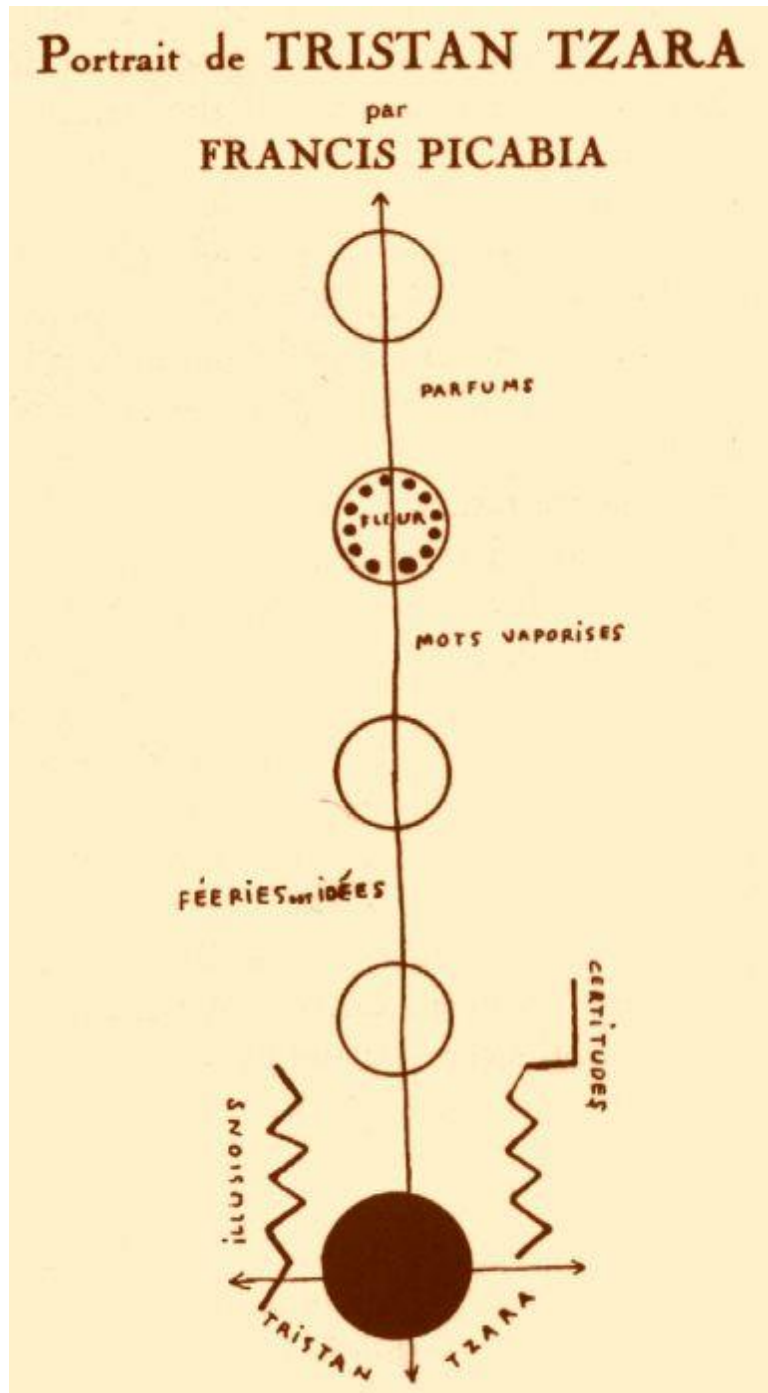
Have them label the shapes with single words or short phrases. Be sure they leave room to title their portraits.

An interesting addition to this project might be the creation of an aspirational portrait—the first one shows who the student is now, the second shows who they would like to become.



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English Translation of the French:

Portrait of TRISTAN TZARA
by
FRANCIS PICABIA

PERFUMES

FLOWER

VAPORIZED WORDS

EXTRAVAGANZAS of IDEAS

CERTITUDES

ILLUSIONS

TRISTAN TZARA



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Planning My **Avant-Garde** Self-Portrait!

3 things I like about myself

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3 things I like to do

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3 objects I like

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3 emotions I often feel

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3 things I want to do or be in the future

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.