

IMAGISM-INSPIRED CHARACTER DESIGN

Wolf's Clothing: Imagism from the Collection

The term *Imagism* refers to a movement collectively initiated by a group of artists—known as Imagists—working in and around Chicago in the 1960s and 70s. Their work was often disparate in style and subject but shared common influences, such as comics, advertisements, popular media, and more. This artmaking activity is inspired by the absurd and playful characters created by artist [Gladys Nilsson](#), and the stylistic qualities of works throughout the exhibition.

Before you begin the activity, take a moment to explore the exhibition using the following prompts.

- What do you think the characters in Gladys Nilsson's [Wolf](#) and [Terrible Twinery](#) might be doing, thinking, or feeling? Consider how the line qualities—such as thick, thin, curved, or wavy—contribute to your interpretations.

With a partner, discuss what you saw in both artworks that prompted your responses.

- Imagists often included borders around the perimeter of their artworks. Their subjects would frequently break through or overlap sections of these borders, as if defying the confines of the frame. Look to Nilsson's [Wolf](#) for an example. Can you find other examples throughout the [exhibition](#)?



Gladys Nilsson, *Wolf*, 1971. Acrylic on canvas. 18 ½ x 21 ½ inches. Collection of University Galleries, Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, Illinois State University.

After exploring the exhibition, follow the prompts below to design your own Imagist-inspired character.

Step 1: Write a noun, an adjective, and a verb in the space below.

Adjective (descriptive word) _____

Noun (person, place, or thing) _____

Verb (action word) ending in "ing" _____

Step 2: Sketch a variety of designs for a character based on your three words.

***Optional:** Design multiple characters and arrange them in one composition. See Nilsson's [Wolf](#) and [Terrible Twinery](#).

Step 3: Select your favorite design(s). Using a pencil, draw your character(s) to fill a 4 x 6-inch note card.

- Consider the quality of lines you will use for the outlines of your subject(s)—such as thin, thick, straight, wavy, or erratic. How will this choice suggest the action (verb) that your character is engaged in? How could the line qualities impact how viewers perceive your character's personality or state of mind?

Step 4: Add a border within your drawing.

- Consider how your character(s) might interrupt the border.
- Add a pattern or design within the border. Relate it to your character(s) or the action(s) they are engaged in. Consider also adding patterns within the negative spaces around the figure(s), as seen in Nilsson's *Wolf*.

Step 5: Trace your drawing with a black marker to create bold outlines. Add color to your drawing using markers. Try mimicking the Imagists' use of solid, bold colors like those seen in comics and advertisements.

Step 6: Photograph your work and share it with us on Instagram by tagging us at [#universitygalleriesisu](#).

Wolf's Clothing: Imagism from the Collection is organized by Troy Sherman, Curator at [University Galleries](#). University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.