



Wilhelmina Barns- Graham

Painter

Born: 8 June 1912

Died: 26 January 2004

ARTY FACT!

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham lived in Yorkshire for a little while and taught at Leeds School of Art.

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's life

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (known as Willie) was born in St Andrew's in Scotland.

"I was eight when I knew I wanted to become an artist."

Willie's family were not interested in art and at first they didn't pay much attention to her idea of becoming an artist. As she grew up she still held on to her dream and her father became angry about it. Luckily, Willie's aunt saw that she was talented and talked Willie's father into letting her go to art college.

Although she was often ill, Willie was a very good student. She won a travel scholarship but the Second World War had just started so she could not visit Europe so she went to Cornwall instead.

What makes Wilhelmina Barns-Graham special?

St Ives, in Cornwall was an exciting place to be an artist during the Second World War. Lots of artists had moved there from London and Europe to find a peaceful place to carry on working. Willie soon made friends with them.

After the war, even more artists came, including the poet, David Lewis. Willie and David married and went travelling. They visited Paris and Switzerland. But sadly the marriage did not last and they divorced in 1960. In the same year, Willie inherited her aunt's house near St Andrews. From then on she spent her winters in Scotland and summers in St Ives, drawing or painting every day.

Willie dedicated her life to being an artist. As she grew older her paintings became bolder, brighter and more expressive. She developed her own, unique style and is now thought to be one of Britain's most important abstract painters.

WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

Can you find the painting by Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham on display?

What colours has she used?

Can you see similar colours in other paintings?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Choose a group of paintings.

In a sketchbook draw just one shape from each painting and arrange them in a design.

Add colour to highlight your favourite shapes.