

YAYOI KUSAMA

THE POLKA - DOT QUEEN

BY ARIANA GAMARRA

THE INSPIRATION

Yayoi Kusama is a renowned Japanese artist and writer. At the age of ten, she began painting by using polka dots, nets as motifs, watercolors, pastels, and oils in her artwork. She tends to use vibrant colors, repetition, and pattern in most of her creations. She was also a pioneer of the pop art, minimalist and feminist art movements.

One of her artworks that I chose for inspiration is called *"Vegetables."* It as an acrylic canvas painting dated 1989. Some of the design elements she used in it include, polka dots, a mosaic pattern, black piping, and vibrant colors.

The element that stands out when looking at the painting are the polka dots used to decorate the vegetables. The sizes of the dots range from really small to larger ones. They mostly are in the same color range as the fill-in colors used on the vegetables, so it does not get that overwhelming. However, for the carrot, which is the biggest shape on the painting, the dots are white. This contrasts with the orange fill-in, so the carrot could be emphasized more than the other vegetables.



Vegetables , 1989

Another element used was a mosaic-netted pattern for the background. This helps the polka-dotted vegetables not get lost in the painting, since their pattern is different from the background. It also helps the artwork seem less like a painting and more like a mosaic creation. This is fitting for the image of the artwork because the vegetables remind one of being in a kitchen with a beautiful backsplash as being part of the background.

Kusama also used black piping around the edges of the vegetables. This helps outline the shapes in the painting to make the structure of the vegetables more obvious. In addition, it prevents the vegetables from camouflaging into the background.

One more element used was vibrant colors. It uses a combination of cool colors, along with a few shades of reds, oranges, and yellows. The vibrant colors help make the painting seem more alive; which helps considering that the objects portrayed are part of nature.

The second piece of inspiration that I chose was a psychedelic garden, one of her works from her *"A Dream I Dreamed"* exhibition. It features a white room with rainbow polka dots and two stainless steel sculptures of giant potted flowers that have polka dots on them, too. As in the last artwork, in this one she as well used vibrant colors. Since she used a white background the polka dots are able to stand out more. In addition, she was able to incorporate the steel sculptures by continuing the polka dot pattern on them. This allows them to be part of the room, but to not be overly noticeable since they almost camouflage into the background.



Psychedelic Garden

THE END RESULT



From these two inspirations, I was able to create my own artwork. I continued with the concept of organic objects from the first piece and made my main focus fruits, which in this case were the oranges. I used a black outline around each item and emphasized certain parts of the oranges and leaves by adding the black outline on them, too. Moreover, for the leaves I placed small dots in them and kept them in the same color tone as the leaves, but used vibrant yellow dots to give the dark leaves a bright color. I as well filled in the orange slices with dots that had a similar color tone as the slices, so the dots were not too distracting. These orange slices contrast with the bigger oranges because for those I filled them in with white dots of different sizes, so they could stand out more.

In respect to the background, I kept the mosaic-netted pattern, but in a slightly lighter blue. I did not want the background to feel empty, so I used the idea of the vibrant polka dots from the second inspiration to fill up the background. However, I placed the dots surrounding the oranges, so that the main objects did not lose their focus. I made the dots in different sizes and used different bright colors, so they could have a psychedelic affect. I even placed some dots inside other dots, so it looked like they were popping out. Overall, the dots helped the design piece have movement.