

Learning Through Your Mind's Eye

Art Attack 2013 October 26, 2013
Workshop delivered by Vaughn Gillson

The way we recognize and understand our surroundings shares qualities of core features of art. Basic shapes, grouping, value and movement – the stimuli we use to make sense of our environment – are also launching points for visual art activities and for critical thinking that takes place in both seeing and organizing creative work.

This workshop approaches art from an oblique angle, looking at the mental constructs that may be used to apply elements and principles. In the process of finding associations among dissimilar things and orchestrating multiple aspects of art, skills in organization, coordination, analysis and integration are inconspicuously employed.

Main objectives:

1. Distinguish associations among like and unlike things
2. Analyze relationships between parts and the whole
3. Construct context and evaluate its role in creating meaning

Learning activities are concerned with:

1. Basic shapes and their key characteristics
2. The role of basic shapes as foundations for complex images
3. Ways that elementary forms lay ground work for integration, unity and clarity
4. Opportunities to more fully explore art principles through limited means
5. Design relationships using tools such as contrast

Activity 1: Explore simple shapes and motif variations

- Create 6-10 variations based on each core shape. Variations should gradually become more complex.

During this activity you will:

1. Identify key characteristics of core shapes
2. Examine how basic features are foundations for association, diversity and filtering

RELATED CONCEPTS

Association, Classification, Context, Define, Generalization, Grouping, Modification, Organization, Sequence, Variation

1. Identify key characteristics of core shapes

RELATED CONCEPTS

Notes

- List the key features of core shapes
- How are features of each shape unique?
- Do the characteristic features of each shape have emotional attributes?

Ambiguity, Comparison, Context, Extremity, Direction, Gradation, Hierarchy, Reference point, Repetition

Key concepts: **Generalization**, Association, Context, Sequence, Organization, Sort, Group, Reference Point, Ambiguous

30 minutes

START Activity #1:
total time 30 minutes

2. Examine how basic features are foundations for association, diversity and filtering

- Describe the group through the variations of its members
- List ways to vary the shapes that are common to all three
- List ways to vary the shapes that are unique to each one
- How do variations change your definition of core shapes
- Judge the amount of deviation or variation from a simple shape that is possible without losing original shape
- Observe where shapes move from ambiguous to clearly recognizable
- Choose a reference point between a range of variations (this could be between 2 different core shapes)
- Compare other shapes from your reference point
- Suggest another way the variations could be sorted
- What would a scale of variations look like and could you identify the extremes
- How can organizational tools such as gradation, that can be

Generalizing lays the ground work for flexible thinking that helps us make associations, create context, and broaden understanding. When generalizing about basic shapes you want to pick out their key features. Start to play with variations of these features and create a sequence of shapes that may be re-organized, sorted, grouped. This sets up a foundation for comparing, establishing reference points and frameworks that will be used later for planning and design.

ASK FOR KEY SHAPE CHARACTERISTICS (PHYSICAL – ROUND, POINTY) (STATE – STABLE, FLOATING, TIPPING) (EMOTIONAL – SOUND&SOLID, DYNAMIC, SOFT)

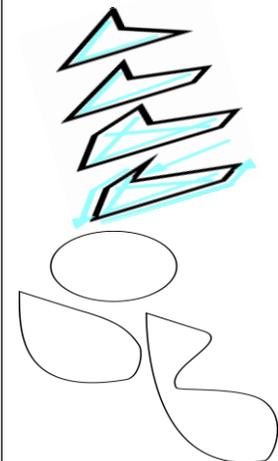
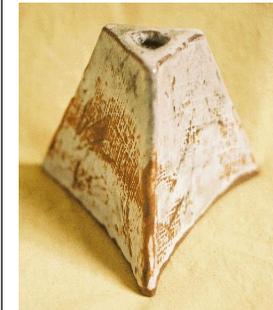
The context or whole group of shapes affects the definition by enlarging or tightening the description. A shape may look very different within a group of variations from the way it looks in isolation and qualities such a ambiguity are relative, depending on what is adjacent. Ambiguity can also be useful in taking on whatever the surroundings impose on it, similar to neutral colours such as grey or beige.

STUDENTS SKETCH VARIATIONS USING PENCIL AND PAPER USING POINTS FROM HANDOUT TO GUIDE THEIR WORK AND REFLECTIONS

Show slides:
KeyCharacteristics 001 – 010 5 minutes

Show slides:
FoundationsComplex 001 – 012 5 minutes

20 minutes



used to define the group		
- How does context determine whether a variation is associated with one shape or another		
- Are there qualities that can be measured and others that require judgment		
- Do feelings associated with simple shapes undergo change with variations		
<p>Activity 2: Re-interpret a design through an arrangement of simple shapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Re-assemble photo-image with simple shapes using collage ➤ Last exercise worked with a progression of simple to complex shapes. Now you will go directly from complex to primary shapes, with attention to the <u>configuration</u> of shapes. 		
<p>During this activity you will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore ways that simplicity and generality are helpful for integration, unity and greater clarity. 2. Take advantage of opportunities provided by limited means 		
<p>1. Explore ways that simplicity and generality may be employed for clarity, integration and unity</p>	<p>RELATED CONCEPTS</p> <p>Notes</p> <p><i>Adaptation, Cohesion, Configuration, Exchange, Interpretation, Limitation, Organization, Representation, Synthesis, Transformation, Unity</i></p>	<p>Show slides : HelpsIntegration 001 – 007</p> <p>HelpsIllumination 001 - 005 5 minutes</p>
- List some key features of the original	Key Concepts: Adaptation, Cohesion, Configuration, Interpretation, Limitation, Representation, Synthesis, Transformation, Unity	
- Which features of the original were considered when choosing simple shapes to represent its parts	Transposing from simple to complex or the reverse demands some interpretation, like translating to another language. You have to look beneath for structure and select key features that should be carried into the new arrangement so that continuity with the original is maintained.	
- How have you used the shapes to reflect their original complexity: use of many small shapes to build up complexity, varied size or orientation	But visual interpretation has differences. Design arrangements are not linear like text. When looking at designs you take in the whole at once and you can learn to appreciate different relationships that exist among the parts and to look at them within the larger context.	40 minutes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the new version allow you to see aspects of the design that the original does not 	<p>You might want to take advantage of the spare lines of simple shapes to eliminate detail and emphasize gesture, design or expression.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you interpreting through emotional or physical resemblance 	<p>STUDENTS START ACTIVITY #2 USING COLLAGE, GLUE, SCISSORS/TORN PAPER ON LIGHT BOARD</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How have you varied the shapes to represent the original 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you using the simple lines of the shapes to highlight features or modifying them for softer forms 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are some ways you could adjust parts of your arrangement to transform it into something new 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you combine parts to create emphasis or strengthen the design 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you used repetition, line or colour to integrate the design 	
<p>2. Manage and make use of opportunities provided by limited means</p>	<p>RELATED CONCEPTS is, Generalize, Limit, Modify, Orientation, Qualify, Restrict, Simplify</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the value of generalizing shapes and using limited means 	<p>Simple shapes will add discipline to an arrangement and through their similarity of family features will force you to come up with other ways to represent the original. Creative options are forced through a narrow channel where more must be done economically with less. The result may lose detail but gain unity and coherence and organization. There's also opportunity to develop or transform the original into something new.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does limiting options encourage you to focus on the whole design 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are some design options available 	<p>BREAK / REFLECTION</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the new whole greater than the sum of the parts 	<p>POINTS FOR REFLECTION Consideration and analysis regarding: Adaptation, Interpretation, Representation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compare the key features of the whole design in the original with your new arrangement 	<p>In adapting the simple shapes to represent the complex original, it helps to look at the structure and form. Perhaps there's a dominant gesture or movement that could be captured. You could also think about how closely you want to represent the original or do you want to develop a different version?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On what aspects can you compare the relationship between parts and the whole in the original 	<p>Principles of interpretation may include understanding the meaning and structure of the original so as to carry over its spirit during interpretation. Appreciation of the structure, form and organization of the source you're</p>



Show slides
AddsUnity 001 – 006
15 minutes

and in your new design (eg. Shape size, quantity)	working from helps you determine how much change or deviations works best by setting a standard that may be more or less adhered to.
- Which version appears more unified	Adapting existing features to take on an altered form or adapting new material to represent an original are part of the learning points of ex. 2 and 3 Cohesion, Configuration, Synthesis, Unity
- What are other examples where less is more	Putting things together builds on learning from examination and analysis. Finding ways to integrate a new model and present a coherent whole involves critical thinking and problem solving.

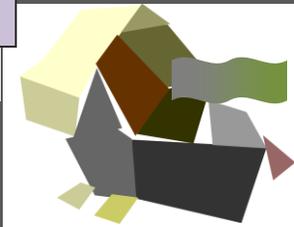
Show slides
LimitedMeans 001 – 004
5 minutes

Activity 3: Examine design organization and relationships

➤ Develop design relationships using tools such as contrast

RELATED CONCEPTS

Complexity, Contrast, Coordination, Focus, Integration, Linkage, Relationship, Simplicity



During this activity you will:
1. Analyze design organization through the relationships and contrast found among simple and complex shapes

Notes

- Does a certain part or area dominate the design	Contrast is one of the tools of comparison. Learning to appreciate different kinds of contrast and then using them to give meaning helps you regard familiar things with new eyes. Contrast and focus are part of the relationship mechanisms that add interest, meaning, and emphasis.
- Is there a pattern through association of shape, colour or size in the design	Contrast may be used with any quality or aspect of a design. A very detailed or complex shape will show up in contrast to simple shapes and likely draw more attention. Contrast and balance form a dance when, for example, you offset the focus of a more intricate shape with a simple shape of stronger colour or one that's larger.
- Are there shapes you can use to create a pattern through colour or size, for example	
- What are some other ways to set up relationships among different parts of the design	An ambiguous shape may be given meaning when it's placed in contrast with one of opposing qualities.
- Compare how shapes appear in their respective contexts in the first and last exercises	Learning how to coordinate several principles of design offers insight in other complex issues. By examining and exploring the interactions of line and shape, for example, you can learn about exploiting the best features for the situation. Coordinating multiple elements offers lessons in how to recognize and apply qualities that work best in a given circumstance. Incorporating another concept such as colour or texture forces you to use the characteristics most favourable to the design. Being able to recognize the effect of new additions and to adjust the other areas as needed are learning points for many areas outside of art and design.
- In recapturing the spirit of the design, compare the effects of different contrast such as changing the orientation, colour or light/dark contrast of shapes	
- What are some other types of contrast that may be used to	Ambiguity may dissolve in a different context. Random events may be given order by creating or manipulating associations.

Show slides:
RelationshipsContrast 001 – 008
5 minutes

attract attention	
- How can contrast or detail affect eye movement, focus or emphasis	
- Are there pairs of elements that may be coordinated to unify the design such as shape and line, or colour and size	
- What are key features of the design as a whole	
- How does the broader context create meaning for the shapes inside (isolate the shape to see the difference)	
- Are there links between prominent key features and contextual meaning	
- How do the design elements affect your feelings about the subjects they represent	
- Is there a correlation between style and subject in visual art that has parallels in other arts	