

Visual Learning and Hands-On Activities



Kathy Hildebrandt
Captured Memories - Spidey Senses, 2015
Acrylic on board
Collection of the artist

CONTENTS:

- What is Visual Learning?	Page 38
- Elements of Composition Tour	Pages 39-45
- Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt	Pages 46-47
- Exhibition Related Art Projects	Pages 48-59

What is Visual Learning?

All art has many sides to it. The artist makes the works for people to experience. They in turn can make discoveries about both the work and the artist that help them learn and give them pleasure for a long time.

How we look at an object determines what we come to know about it. We remember information about an object far better when we are able to see (and handle) objects rather than by only reading about them. This investigation through observation (looking) is very important to understanding how objects fit into our world in the past and in the present and will help viewers reach a **considered response** to what they see. The following is a six-step method to looking at, and understanding, a work of art.

STEP 1: INITIAL, INTUITIVE RESPONSE The first 'gut level' response to a visual presentation. What do you see and what do you think of it?

STEP 2: DESCRIPTION Naming facts - a visual inventory of the elements of design.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What colours do you see? What shapes are most noticeable?

What objects are most apparent? Describe the lines in the work.

STEP 3: ANALYSIS Exploring how the parts relate to each other.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What proportions can you see? eg. What percentage of the work is background? Foreground? Land? Sky? Why are there these differences? What effect do these differences create?

What parts seem closest to you? Farthest away? How does the artist give this impression?

STEP 4: INTERPRETATION Exploring what the work might mean or be about

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

How does this work make you feel? Why?

What word would best describe the mood of this work?

What is this painting/photograph/sculpture about?

Is the artist trying to tell a story? What might be the story in this work?

STEP 5: INFORMATION Looking beyond the work for information that may further understanding.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What is the artist's name? When did he/she live?

What art style and medium does the artist use?

What artist's work is this artist interested in?

What art was being made at the same time as this artist was working?

What was happening in history at the time this artist was working?

What social/political/economic/cultural issues is this artist interested in?

STEP 6: PERSONALIZATION What do I think about this work? (Reaching a considered response).

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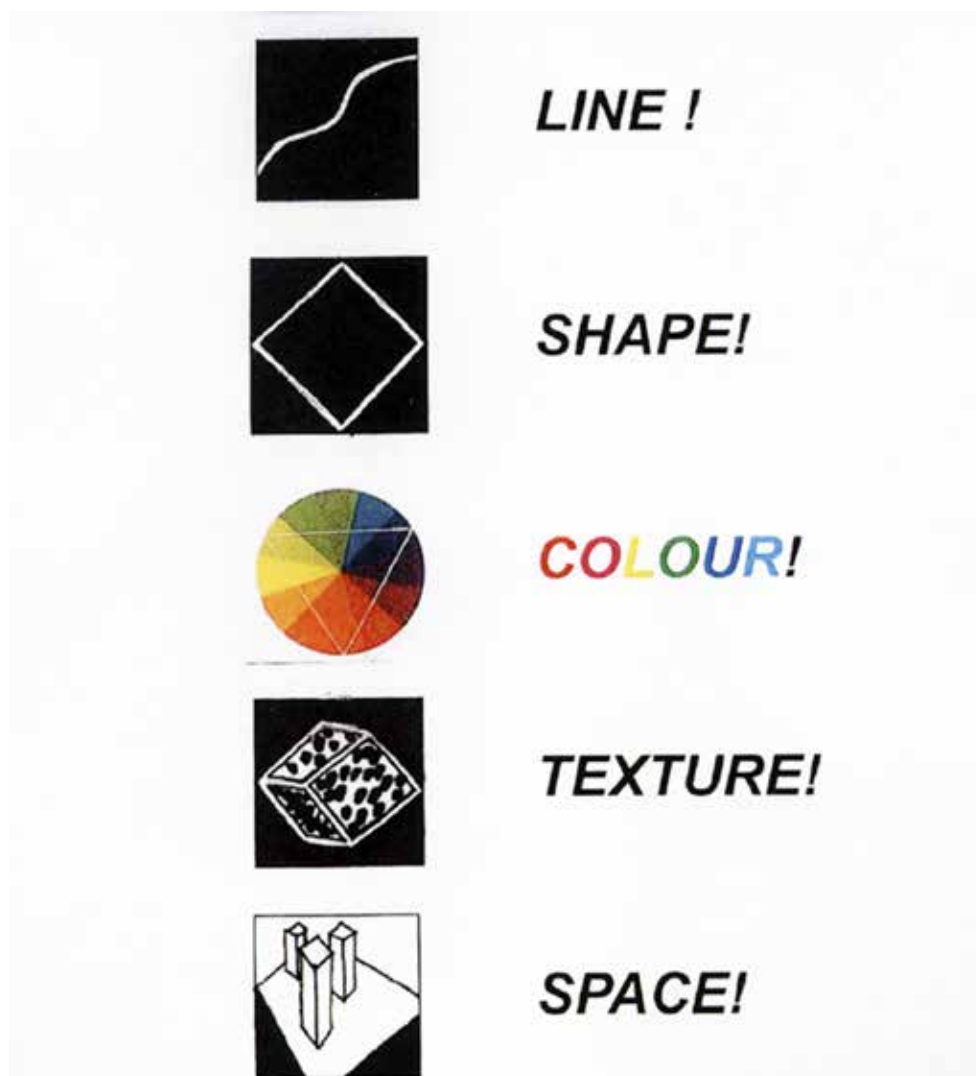
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Elements of Design Tour

The following pages provide definitions and examples of the elements of art that are used by artists in the artworks found in the exhibition. The elements of art (or design) are components of a work of art that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art.

The following tour isolates the five elements of design and discusses them by focusing on how each element works in a specific work of art found in the exhibition. Please note, however, that in actually constructing a work of art an artist generally uses more than one element.

The tour is structured so that the teacher/venue coordinator is the tour guide or leader. Questions to guide inquiry are written in bold. Possible answers are written in regular type.



Elements of Composition

Objectives:

Through an examination of selected works in the exhibition students will:

- a) learn what the elements of design are
- b) learn how the elements are used in art work
- c) apply their knowledge to other works in the exhibition

Methodology:

1. Before viewing the exhibition, discuss with students what artists do and what materials artists use to create their works.

*artists create works which explore the world around them; express their thoughts and feelings about the world and issues that they feel are important. Traditionally, artists used such materials as paint, rock, clay or metal (for sculpture) and a host of drawing materials such as ink, conté, charcoal, pastels or pencil crayons. Today, the range of materials has expanded to include everything from garbage to raw meat. In other words, just about anything can be used to create art.

2. In the above discussion, introduce the theme of elements of design – the “tools” artists use before using paint, pencils, paper etc.

*line, shape, colour, texture, space – for example: Before a person can draw a house, what do they have to use? Answer: lines

3. In the exhibition focus on the following works as they relate to the elements of design:

Elements of Composition continued

LINE: An element of art that is used to define shape, contours and outlines. It is also used to suggest mass and volume.

See: *Plant/Water/Glass/Stone, Nature of Reality Suite 1*, by Lori Lukasewich



What types of lines are there? How can you describe a line? What are some of the characteristics of a line?

Width: thick, thin, tapering, uneven

Length: long, short, continuous, broken

Feeling: sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth

Focus: sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy

Direction: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag

Now, describe the lines you see in these images. Follow the lines in the air with your finger. What quality do the lines have? Are they graceful or jagged?

The artist has used a variety of lines: vertical/horizontal; curving; diagonal; jagged lines . Some are thick while some are thin.

What direction do lines appear to be going? How are the lines similar and different from each other? What feeling do the lines have and how do they contribute to the meaning of the image?

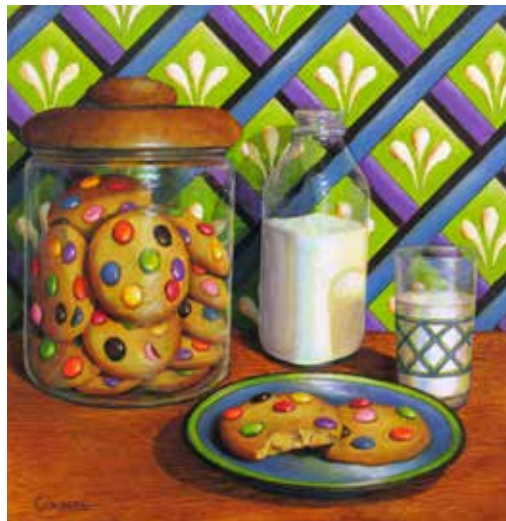
Diagonal and vertical lines make up shadows in the image. Diagonal lines move from the center of the image to the right side of the composition and from the far left to the right. These lines move the viewer's eye around the composition. A straight horizontal line divides the composition into foreground and background areas and also creates the base for the plant vase. Curving lines create the vase and its reflection and because they are different that the geometric lines, focus attention on the vase and the leaves. Jagged lines create the leaves of the plant and also point in different directions, again directing the eye around the composition.

The use of all these different types of lines creates a great deal of energy in the work.

Elements of Composition continued

SHAPE: When a line crosses itself or intersects with another line to enclose a space it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional. It has height and width but no depth.

See: *Mommy Made Cookies* by Carmen Gonzalez



What kind of shapes can you think of?

Geometric: circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. We see them in architecture and manufactured items.

Organic shapes: a leaf, seashell, flower. We see them in nature with characteristics that are freeflowing, informal and irregular.

Static shapes: shapes that appear stable and resting.

Dynamic shapes: Shapes that appear moving and active.

What shapes do you see in this image? What shapes are positive and negative?

The viewer sees both organic shapes and geometric shapes in this work. The shapes are repeated providing a sense of unity in the work and tying all the elements together. Geometric shapes of circles, squares/diamonds and rectangles are repeated linking one area/object to others that are the same/similar. Organic shapes are seen in the patterning in the background.

What quality do the shapes have? Does the quality of the shapes contribute to the meaning or story suggested in the work?

The repetition of shapes and design elements (example: the pattern on the glass is repeated in the background) pulls the viewer's eye into the composition and creates a dynamic and stable composition.

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Elements and Principles of Design Tour

COLOUR: Colour comes from light that is reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: Hue, or its name (red, blue, etc.) Value: (how light or dark the colour is) and Intensity (how bright or dull the colour is)

See: *Popcorn and Peanut Blend*
by Carmen Gonzalez



What are primary colours? Do you see any? Point to them in the drawing. What secondary colours do you see?

Colour is made of primary colours, red, blue and yellow. Secondary colours are created from primary colours and include green, orange and purple. We see primaries - red, yellow and blue - and the secondary colours of green and orange. We also see tints and tones of these various colours (example: bright yellow in the candy M & M's and light yellow in the popcorn).

Where is your eye directed to first? Why? Are there any colours that stand out more than others?

The viewer's eye jumps throughout the foreground of the composition between the bright M & M pieces of candy. Some of these bright pieces of candy are juxtaposed with lighter colours and this pulls the eye back into the composition and larger areas of these light colours.

What are complementary colours? How have they been used to draw attention?

Complementary colours are those across from each other on the colour wheel and are placed next to each other to create the most contrast. In this work warm colours (red, orange and yellow) are often placed next to or near cool colours (blue and green) and so the eye bounces between and from warm to cool and throughout the composition and back into space.

Elements of Composition continued

TEXTURE: Texture is the surface quality of an object that can be seen or felt. Texture can also be implied on a two-dimensional surface.

See: *Old Toys for Old Boys*
by Kathy Hildebrandt



Kathy Hildebrandt
Old Toys for Old Boys, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

What is texture? How do you describe how something feels? What are the two kinds of texture you can think of in artwork?

Texture can be real, like the actual texture of an object. Texture can be rough, smooth, hard, soft, glossy, etc. Texture can also be implied. This happens when a two-dimensional piece of art is made to look like a certain texture.

Allow your eyes to “feel” the different areas within the work and explain the textures.

The artist has used implied texture in this work. The artist has made it appear that paint is flaking off the blocks and top and, due to their colour, makes them appear to be made of wood. This treatment of these objects makes them appear to be both solid and rough to the touch. Meanwhile, the artist has created a reflective/glossy appearance on the yo-yo, the truck, the marble and the batman figurine. This treatment makes these objects appear smoother to the touch.

Why might the artist have created the work in this way?

Answers will vary. The various textures implied in objects give both the appearance of age and the material composition (ie: metal, wood) of these objects.

Elements of Composition continued

SPACE: The area between and around objects. It can also refer to the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

See: *Shell/Ceramic, Nature of Reality Suite 1* by Lori Lukasewich

What is space? What dimensions does it have?

Space includes the background, middleground and foreground. It can refer to the distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. It may have two dimensions (length and width) or three dimensions including height or depth.



What do you see in this work? What is closest to you? Farthest away?

The viewer sees a seashell on a base and shadows.

Space can be positive or negative. What would you say is the positive space in this work? What is the negative space and why?

The seashell and its base would be positive while the background shadows are negative.

How has the artist created a sense of space?

The artist uses colour and placement to create a sense of space in this work. Alternating areas and tonal changes in grey/white pull the viewer's eye back into space and to the sea shell. The colour of the shell, meanwhile, contrasts the dominant grey/white of the composition and so pulls the viewer's eye directly to the center of the work. The pink of the shell, meanwhile, is subtly reflected in the background, pulling the eye back and to the left side of the work. The centering of the shell in the middle of the picture plane also directs attention and creates space.

Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt

Grades 1-6

In teaching art, game-playing can enhance learning. If students are engaged in learning, through a variety of methods, then it goes beyond game-playing. Through game-playing we are trying to get students to use higher-order thinking skills by getting them to be active participants in learning. *Blooms's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, which follows, is as applicable to teaching art as any other discipline.

1. *knowledge*: recall of facts
2. *comprehension*: participation in a discussion
3. *application*: applying abstract information in practical situations
4. *analysis*: separating an entity into its parts
5. *synthesis*: creating a new whole from many parts, as in developing a complex work of art
6. *evaluation*: making judgements on criteria

A scavenger hunt based on art works is a fun and engaging way to get students of any age to really look at the art works and begin to discern what the artist(s) is/are doing in the works. **The simple template provided, however, would be most suitable for grade 1-3 students.**

Instruction:

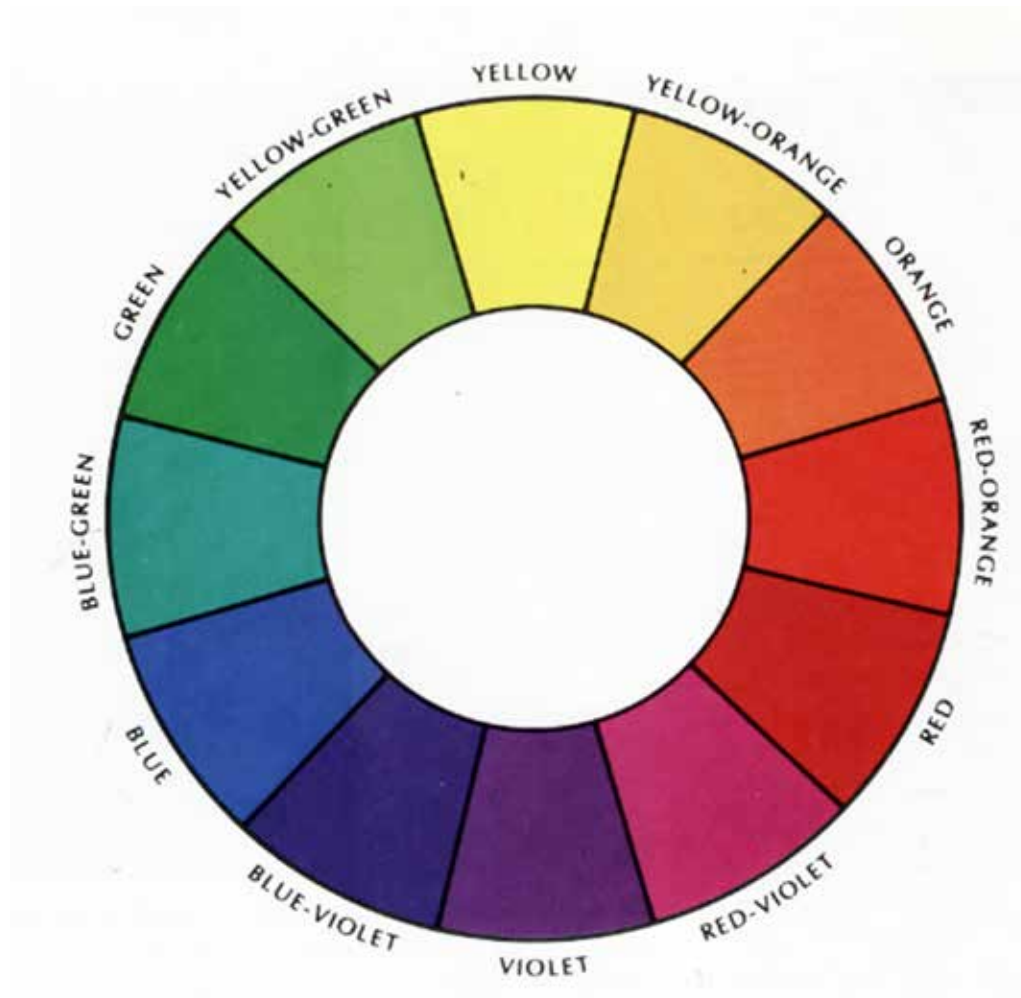
Using the exhibition works provided, give students a list of things they should search for that are in the particular works of art. The students could work with a partner or in teams. Include a blank for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created. Following the hunt, gather students together in the exhibition area and check the answers and discuss the particular works in more detail.

Sample List:

Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
someone wearing a hat			
a specific animal			
landscape			
a bright red object			
a night scene			
a house			

*This activity was adapted from *A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher* by Helen D. Hume.

Experiments in Colour - Grades 3-9



When artists create a composition, they plan their colour combinations very carefully. Colour can serve many functions in a work of art. It can be used to create the illusion of space; it can be used to provide focus and emphasis; it can be used to create movement; and it can be used to create a certain mood. In the works in the exhibition the artists use colour to serve all of these functions. In the following project students will examine the use of colour relationships to create the illusion of space and mood within a painting.

Materials:

Colour Wheel Chart
Paper
Paints and brushes
Mixing trays
Water container

Paper towels
Pencils/erasers
Still life items or landscape drawings
Magazines/ photographic references

Experiments in Colour continued



Carmen Gonzalez
Allsorts of Memories, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

Methodology:

1/ Through an examination of the colour wheel provided, discuss with students the concepts of **complementary colours** and **split-complements**.

Questions to guide discussion:

- What is the lightest colour on the colour wheel?
 - yellow
- What is the darkest colour on the colour wheel?
 - violet
- What is the relationship of these two colours? - the colours are **opposite** each other.

Colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel are called **complementary colours**.

- What are the colours next to violet?
 - red-violet and blue-violet

These colours are called **split complements** because they are split, or separated, by the true complement of yellow. Complements can be split one step further to become a **triad**, three colours **equally spaced** on the colour wheel.

Complementary colours can be used to create focus, emphasis, and the illusion of space. Brighter (warm) colours in the colour wheel tend to appear in front of - or come forward on the picture plane - compared to darker (cool) colours.

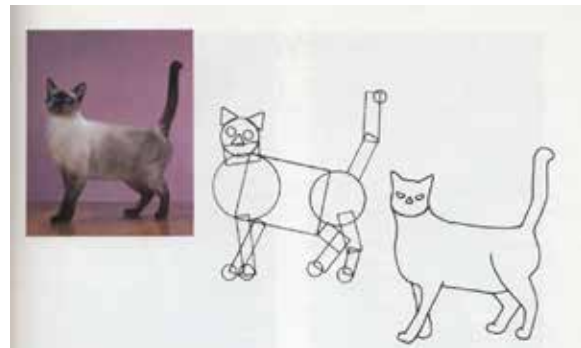
Instructions for Creating Art

- 1/ Distribute paper, pencils and erasers to students
- 2/ Instruct students to make several sketches of ideas for their painting - they may base their work on a still-life arrangement or create a landscape based on magazine or photographic sources
- 3/ Have students choose a sketch they like and then plan their colours by first examining the colour wheel. Students to first choose their **dominant or main colour** and then pick the **split complements or triad** to that colour.
- 4/ Students to use their colour scheme to paint their painting.

Basic Shapes - Grades 3-5



Kathy Hildebrandt
Old Toys for Old Boys, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist



Art in Action, pg. 12

Almost all things are made up of four basic shapes: circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Shapes and variation of shapes - such as oblongs and ovals - create objects. In this lesson students will practice reducing objects to their basic shapes and then filling in the areas with colours 'natural' to the central object and complementary to the background.

Materials:

- drawing paper
- pencil and eraser
- magazines
- paints and brushes
- mixing trays

Instructions:

- 1/ Have students look through magazines for pictures of objects made up of several shapes.

Basic Shapes continued - Grades 3-5

2/ Direct students to choose **one** object and determine the basic shapes which make up that object.

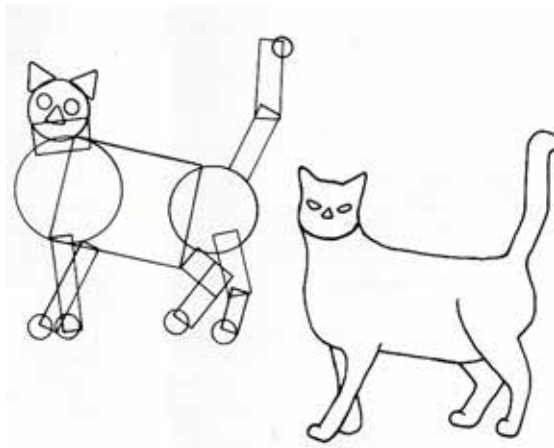
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

4/ Students to simplify their drawing further - removing any overlapping/extraneous lines so that the object is broken into simplified shapes/forms.

5/ Students to decide on colour scheme for work. Review the colour wheel and the concept of complementary colours.

- what is the dominant colour of your object? - use tints/tones of that colour to paint the object, keeping shapes separate through the use of heavy black lines.

- what is the complementary colour of your main object's colouring? - paint the background area the complement of the objects colour.



Art in Action, pg. 12

Extension (for older students)

- when students have completed their first painting have them re-draw the basic shapes of their object again, but this time have them soften the edges, change shapes and add connecting lines where necessary so their drawing resembles the original magazine image.

- have students paint this second work using 'natural' colours for both their object and for the background.

- display both of students' drawings and then discuss.

Discussion/Evaluation:

1/ Which shapes did you use most often in your drawing(s)?

2/ Explain how identifying the basic shapes in your object helped you make the second drawing.

3/ Which of your paintings appeals to you most? Why?

Painting a Realist Still Life Part 1

PROJECT 3-3 STILL-LIFE

FOR THE TEACHER The still-life communicates information about the culture in which it was done. Dutch still-lives, by such artists as Pieter Claesz Heda, had paintings filled with items that symbolized the fleetingness of life such as a broken glass, a half-eaten loaf of bread, or a clock. William Harnett and John Peto were American painters who specialized in *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) still-life paintings. Contemporary American painters Audrey Flack and Janet Fish continue the tradition of realistic still-lives, and photographer Sandy Skoglund creates sculptural still-lives that she then photographs. Impressionists such as Paul Cezanne and Henri Matisse specialized in interior paintings of flowers and the table set for a meal.

Vocabulary

still-life
trompe l'oeil
intensity
artistic license
viewfinder
depth
overlapping

Preparation Have students collect objects for a huge still-life. This could include mechanical objects, a bicycle, toys, cloth, rope, a hat, skull, rubberized face masks, ladders, a window frame, buckets, stools, etc. The still-life should be arranged, then left untouched until the drawings are finished. If you prefer, you can make individual still-lives around the room for several students to use.

Make viewfinders in proportion to the paper that will be used. Individual slide mounts make ideal viewfinders. Tell students that looking through a viewfinder is similar to taking a photograph, isolating one subject with a single well-composed view. Demonstrate to students that the viewfinder should always be held the same distance from the eye when looking through it, and show them how to place objects on their paper in the same location as they find them in their viewfinder.

Painting a Realist Still Life Part 1 continued

PROJECT 3-3 STILL-LIFE

STUDENT PAGE

Materials

viewfinders (paper or slide mounts)
drawing paper
white chalk
tissues
oil pastels
fluorescent markers
pencils



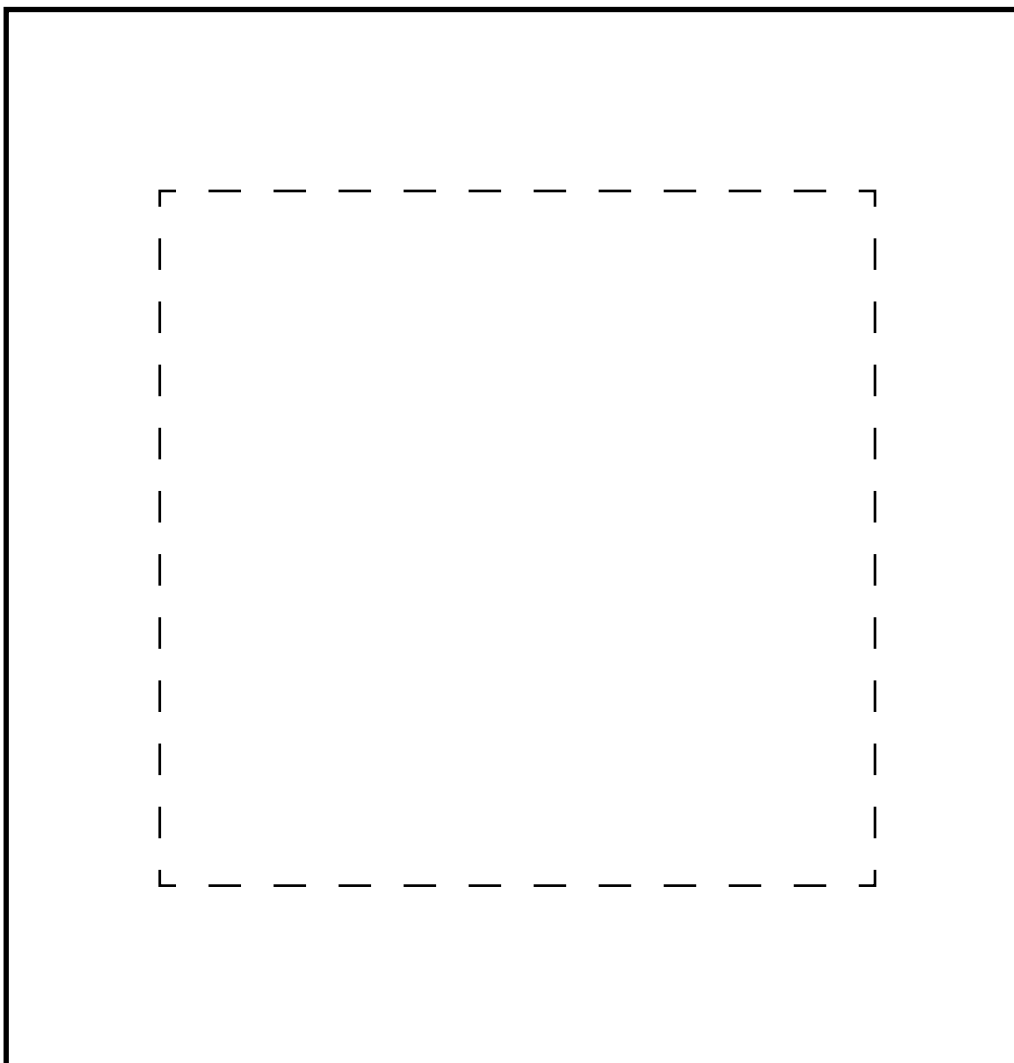
Directions

1. Use the viewfinder as if it were the viewfinder of a camera. You will isolate a particular section of what you see to make a pleasing composition. Remember to hold your arm at the same distance from your body whenever you look through the viewfinder.
2. Notice where an object is in relation to the top, sides, or bottom of the viewfinder. Then, using chalk, draw it in exactly the same place on your drawing paper (you can use the tissue to correct the chalk line if necessary). When you are satisfied that your chalk drawing has sufficiently filled the paper, you are ready to begin applying oil pastels.
3. Do not concern yourself with making true colors. In fact this composition might be more interesting if you were to use, for example, only five colors. Apply color firmly, but allow some paper to show through the crayon.
4. When you have applied sufficient oil pastels, go over them with contrasting colors of fluorescent marker. This is similar to crayon resist with ink, but the markers give an entirely different effect.

Painting a Realist Still Life Part 1 continued

Viewfinder Template

*Cut along the inside dotted line to create a open center area in the form below.



Painting a Realist Still Life Part 2

26 *Painting Focus:* *Realism*

Observing and Thinking Creatively

Much like photographs, the three paintings here show nature, people, and objects that the artists actually saw. This style of art is called realism. The realist artists often painted lively outdoor scenes, landscapes, portraits, and still life arrangements with great accuracy.

Thomas Eakins, one of the greatest American realists, painted natural scenes. His painting of a man in a scull, an oar-powered racing shell, shows Eakins' precise sense of proportion and detail.

Winslow Homer was first a printmaker, but is known for painting landscapes and the sea. He emphasized light and shadow in his work. Notice how the bright, sunny light in *Snap the Whip* adds to the happy mood of the painting. What realistic details did he portray in this scene?

Look closely at *My Gems* by William Harnett, a silver engraver who painted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Notice how precisely he rendered the objects in his still-life arrangement. And what an assortment of objects is on the table! Harnett thought of these objects as his gems. He chose them carefully because he wanted to show people what was important to him. Besides music, what else can you see that Harnett valued? Would any of these objects be your gems?

In this lesson, you will paint a still-life arrangement of your gems. You will discuss your painting with a classmate, increasing both your own and your classmate's awareness of the things you value. You will experiment with arrangement and details in painting your gems in a realistic way.



Thomas Eakins, *Max Schmidt in a Single Scull*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred N. Punnnett Fund and Gift of George D. Pratt, 1934. (34.92)

Painting a Realist Still Life Part 2 continued



Winslow Homer, *Snap the Whip*, The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio



William M. Harnett, *American*, 1848–1892, *My Gems*, 1888. Wood, 18 × 14 inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Avalon Foundation.

Instructions for Creating Art

1. Think about the things that have special meaning or value for you, your "gems." Gather them together, and arrange them on a flat surface. Be conscious of each object's position and experiment with the grouping. Consider the size of each object. What do you want to emphasize? What might be almost hidden? How will you balance the objects?
2. Try using the rule of compensation from lesson 5. The bigger the mass, the more the mass is toward the center. The smaller the mass, the more it is toward the edge. Observe how Harnett arranged the objects in his painting. What do you see first when you look at his picture?
3. Next, sketch your still-life composition. Then mix paint to match the colors of the items you chose. Paint your still-life arrangement of gems to look exactly as you see it.
4. Now choose a classmate and discuss each other's paintings. What do the objects tell about the values and interests of the artists?

Art Materials

Personal objects	Mixing tray
Drawing paper	Container of water
Paints and brushes	Paper towels

Learning Outcomes

1. What is meant by realism in art?
2. Describe how you arranged your still life to reveal which objects are most important to you.
3. Tell which object in your painting appears the most real, and why.

Photorealist painting 9-12

Background:

Photorealism is the genre of painting based on using the camera and photographs to gather information and then, from this information, creating a painting that appears to be very realistic like a photograph. Change and movement must be frozen in time which must then be accurately represented by the artist. Photo realist paintings usually depict commonplace objects or scenery, and sometimes portraits. The imagery is often banal and ordinary, capturing the “everydayness” of American life.

Objectives:

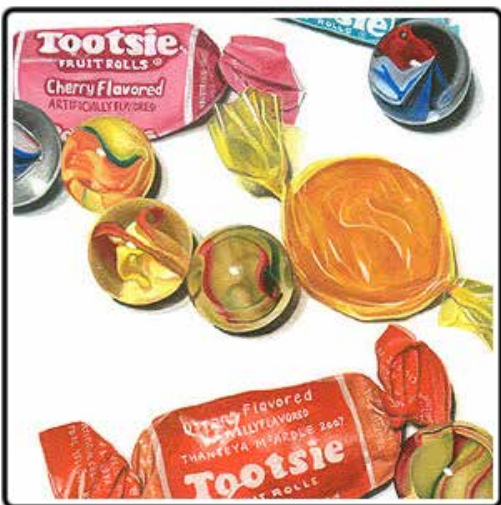
Based on the works in the exhibition *Lure* students will create a photorealist painting using acrylics. Students will use the camera and photograph to gather information.

Students will use a mechanical or semi-mechanical means to transfer the information to the canvas.

Students will challenge their technical ability to make the finished work appear photographic.

Choosing a reference photo:

- For a photorealist painting, you'll need a good reference photo to work from.
- If you're setting up a still life arrangement, take a ton of reference photos of the set-up from many different angles, even angles that are similar but minutely different.
- Photograph objects that interest you because you will be spending a lot of time staring at those objects!
- Whatever photo you choose, make sure it is absolutely crisp and clear. This is important, since your task will be to replicate the photo, and most photorealist paintings have a strong sense of clarity and focus. Although if you want, you can plan to work with an out-of-focus, pixilated or fuzzy image.



Example of photorealism painting using acrylic
<http://www.art-is-fun.com/photorealism.html>

Transfer the image onto the canvas, masonite or wood panel: •There are 3 main methods for transferring your photo:

- projector (slide projector, LCD projector, or overhead projector)
- grid method <<http://www.art-is-fun.com/grid-method.html>>
- transfer paper <<http://www.art-is-fun.com/transfer-paper.html>>

The method you choose will depend upon the following factors:

- the size of your painting
- the equipment you have on hand
- how much time you want to spend transferring the image

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Photorealist painting 9-12 continued

When you transfer the photos, remember to trace all the forms, outlines, lights and shadows. Trace everything. For instance, if the colour of an object gradually turns from light to dark, put in subtle reminders so that you know where the significant changes take place.

Read more: <http://www.art-is-fun.com/how-to-paint-a-large-painting-using-a-small-reference-photo.html#ixzz1HuRzmVAV>

Prepare the surface with gesso:

- Use a thin, flat brush and apply a thin layer of gesso over the entire canvas, making sure that the sketch is still completely visible. This thin layer of gesso will “seal” in the graphite marks, so when the gesso dries, you can begin the process of underpainting without dealing with streaks from the preliminary drawing.
- Make sure that the gesso is not too thick, as you don’t want it so opaque that you can’t easily see your pencil lines! Also make sure that the gesso is not too watery and runny, otherwise the pencil marks will streak too much.

Read more: <http://www.art-is-fun.com/photorealism-painting-techniques.html#ixzz1HuTSpSLn>

Begin the underpainting:

- Now that the painting has been gessoed, you are ready to do the underpainting. To “underpaint” basically means to quickly lay down important visual information in paint.
- Don’t worry about details or getting everything perfect, as you’ll be doing that later. For now just paint in the shadows, highlights, and basic colours.
- One method of working is to identify the different colour areas and work in one colour at a time. Meaning, if there are several objects in the painting that are a similar shade and hue of red, I’ll paint in all those red parts.
- Paint in the shadows first. Never leap in with a pure, strong black, rather start with a raw umber mixed with ivory black.

Next stages:

- Remember there are a full variety of stages that photorealist paintings go through. Some parts will be completely finished, others half-finished, and some only just begun.
- You can see how as you build and layer more colours, the painted objects transform from looking flat and simple to looking 3-dimensional and realistic.
- Continue observing the details in the photo and replicating them on your canvas. This is the time to put in all those in-between colours, highlights and shadows, so that the paint starts to blend and the objects look more 2-dimensional.

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Photorealist painting 9-12 continued

Supplies:

- acrylic paints
- gesso
- canvas, masonite or wood panel
- brushes
- projector or transfer paper
- cameras



The grid method is an inexpensive, low-tech way to reproduce and/or enlarge an image that you want to paint or draw. The grid method can be a fairly time-intensive process, depending on how large and detailed your painting will be. While the process is not as quick as using a projector or transfer paper, it does have the added benefit of helping to improve your drawing and observational skills

Each square is 1 cubic inch.