

FNAR 118 - 2D Design

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Project 1: Squares of Communication

Notes on this project:

“Squares of Communication” is the very first project I assign to my beginning 2D Design students. This project has evolved and been adapted throughout the years, and originally based on a 2D design project by Kelly Leslie from the University of Arizona. I have adapted this project so that it not only introduces the basic principles of gestalt and basic hand skills, but it also serves as a collaborative / class building exercise.

To start the project, we discuss a handout on object relationships. For homework over the weekend, students are asked to begin reading the introductory chapters of their textbook, (*Launching the Imagination 2D*, by Mary Stewart), and then sketch 9 designs for each of the 6 words given to them on the project handout.

The rules are: a) The design elements must be derived from a square. This can be loosely interpreted, but basically I do not allow curves. b) The designs should be non-objective and non-pictorial. I often change the words from semester to semester for variety. Some of the alternate words I like to use are: slow, static, serene, flowing, and limp. I also add words if I need larger groups based on my class size.

During the second class we have a “mini crit” where we go around the room and discuss everyone’s sketches. This is the point where I like to talk about pushing beyond the “easy answer” since many people arrive at the same design solution. I also do demos on the basic skills they need for this project – x-acto knife safety, flush mounting, how to make precise measurements and cuts, and the wonders of their rubber cement pick-up tool. For homework, they are to refine their best sketch for each design and ink them onto a worksheet I provide that has a 3-inch box for each word given.

The third class day, I divide them up into groups of either 3 or 4. As a group they are to discuss their designs and select the best that represents each word. Then each student executes 2 of the designs (using cut black Artagain paper only) in the 6 x 6 inch design box on the 8.5 x 11 inch worksheet I provide. They present their designs as a group in critique. I make sure to ask them how and why they made their group decisions.

This has been a great first project for my class because it emphasizes the process of refining a design and making decisions at each step of the project. It also introduces them to their classmates. Since this is the first studio course many of them take, presenting as a group for the first critique takes some of the pressure off of them individually.

The following page is the project sheet that I give to my students.

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Prof. Kristin Skees

Project 1: Squares of Communication

The Objectives

- To explore object relationships (see gestalt handout)
- To explore the use of illusory space, figure / ground relationship, and basic design principles.
- To understand the power of composition in communication

The Process

Utilizing the design principles listed below, use black squares to create a design that expresses the meaning of the following words:

ORDER
INCREASE
BOLD
CONGESTED
TENSION
PLAYFUL

For Homework: Use pencil and black markers to create your (9) preliminary studies for each word at about 1.5" inches square (half-size).

In Class we will transfer your best design for each word to the worksheet with 3 inch boxes. You will turn this in along with the rest of your project on Crit day.

In groups of 3-4, you will further refine, edit, and collaborate to come up with a final design for each word.

Each person will execute 2 of the group designs using cut black paper on the larger 6 inch box worksheets which you will first flush mount to 8.5 x 11" Bristol board. Use rubber cement to paste black paper to the template. Do NOT use white glue.

Pay close attention your craftsmanship!

Design Principles

Contrast
Size
Direction
Position
Detachment
Union
Touching

Overlapping
Knockout/Interpenetration
Subtraction
Intersection
Coinciding