

Watercolor Principles of Design

Pattern, contrast, balance, rhythm, movement, emphasis and unity — the seven principles of design are the building blocks artists use to construct a work of art. Students who memorize, study and apply these principles will find greater success in just about any project or medium.

This multi-media project links the disciplines of painting and sculpture as students form dimensional paper constructions and paint them with metallic watercolors. The finished pieces incorporate the seven principles of design into sturdy artworks that resemble sculpted metal.

The sculpting material used in this lesson plan, Multimedia Artboard, differs from illustration or watercolor board in content and performance. It is made with paper and thermal-set epoxy resin. It can be soaked in water and altered; then, once dry, it returns to its original stiffness. Virtually any medium adheres to its surface without penetration. This project introduces New Blick Liquid Metallic Watercolors, concentrated color with a high-powered intensity that will find many uses in the classroom.

Grade Levels 6-12

Preparation

1. Preface this project with a discussion of the seven elements of design.
2. Prepare preliminary sketches and mock-up sculptures. Sketch a design on one piece of drawing paper using pencil, then use the second sheet to cut out the pieces. Use the ruler as needed. Turn the sketch over and mock up the sculpture by taping pieces to the page. HINT: sharp curves will not be attainable with the Multimedia Board; it may break once dry. Have students design gentle curves (see example in photo, above).
3. Allow time for students to evaluate their designs according to the seven elements of design.

Process

1. Begin construction of the sculpture by cutting the pieces from the Multimedia Board. Students may disassemble their mock-up to use as a pattern. The paper used to make the mockup was smaller than the Multimedia Board so that students can make their pieces a little bigger than the sketch. This allows for some extra material in case some needs to be trimmed away after it is formed. If sharing water trays to soak pieces, it is a good idea for students to lightly mark a corner of each of their pieces with their initials to identify.
2. Soak the pieces of Multimedia Board in water for 15-30 minutes. Have students form pieces, experimenting with shapes. Secure the formed pieces with wooden clothes pins until they are completely dry — approximately 2-3 hours. Shapes may relax if they are not allowed to dry thoroughly before removing clothes pins.
3. Paint the surface of the sculpture. Acrylic may be used, but anything other than a very light application will weigh down the pieces. New Blick Liquid Metallic Watercolor is lightweight, with fantastic color, and the liquid is easy to distribute throughout the classroom — just squeeze a small amount into a palette well. Apply the paint in layers to create a glaze. Seal with a light coat of Krylon Low Odor spray finish when dry.
4. Glue all pieces together on the base. Allow some to hang freely. The glue gives a translucent effect to the surface. A Sharpie® Ultra Fine marker may be used to add details or to incorporate any of the design principles.
5. Secure the sculpture with glue to the black mounting board. This will keep the sculpture stable and provide a finished presentation.

Variations

- Suspend the sculpture as a mobile with a clear nylon line.
- Tape a piece of string to the back of the piece, allowing a small amount of slack. Hang from the wall as a relief sculpture.
- Use Model Magic or clay as a base.

Copyright © 2006 Dick Blick Art Materials. All rights reserved.



Materials

- Multimedia Artboard, white, size 11" x 14" (13401-1005), one sheet per student
- Blick Liquid Metallic Watercolor, assorted colors (00369-)
- Fiskars® Bent Scissors (57012-1008)
- Blick White Sulphite Drawing Paper, 80-lb, 9" x 12" (10209-1043), two sheets per student
- Blick Economy Graphite Pencils (20302-2009), one per student
- Blick 12" plastic ruler (55424-1012), one per student
- 3M Highland® Transparent Tape (23017-0051), distribute through classroom
- Sharpie® Ultra Fine marker, black (21315-2003)
- Spring Wooden Clothes Pins, package of 24 (60445-1024)
- Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon Flat Wash Brush, 1/4" (05859-4014), one per student
- Rectangular 6-Well Tray (03068-1006), share between two students
- Weldbond® Adhesive, 8-oz (23819-1105)
- Plastic trays for soaking pieces, minimum size 12" x 16"
- Crescent Ultra-Black Mounting Board, 15" x 20" (13016-2005)
- Krylon® Low-Odor Spray Finish, gloss (23710-1001)

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8

Students select media, techniques and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

5-8

Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas

9-12

Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems