No Computers Needed! Foundational 2-D Graphic Design Projects

Empire State Creates: Teaching Artist-Led Activities for Everyone

**Project Title:**  Project 1: Big Picture, Small Parts

**Age(s):** 14-Adult (focus on high school students, early college students)

**Time:** 45 - 120 minutes

**Arts Discipline:** Graphic Design (Visual Art, Media Art)

### ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

Students are challenged to combine 2 subjects/categories (one represented in the large and one in the small) to create a compelling larger meaning or statement. A large shape will be constructed of (filled with) a variety of smaller shapes. The main challenge is to use strong shapes that clearly communicate in silhouette from a distance, providing the viewer with fast, clear, exciting impressions. Photographs of the objects are carefully referenced and drawn from, and pre-existing symbols, icons, logos, and designs are avoided. The results create commentaries and associations that compel audience engagement.

Students will share finished work with an audience (5 or more is ideal) to get reactions- what do they notice first? What impressions do they have? What meanings do they take from it? Why? Is there any mis-interpretation? Confusion that works against your vision? What is cohesive and clear? Option: Students can use audience impressions to further refine work.

### GOALS

(Learning Objective) Students will walk away with a solid understanding of the power of strong shapes to communicate. They will also develop an understanding of simple hierarchy, as well as gestalt theory (focus on similarity, proximity, and closure).

### MATERIALS

- Black Ultra fine point sharpie
- Black Fine point sharpie
- Plain sketchbook paper
- 11” x 14” Bristol Paper
- Mechanical Pencil with eraser
- Ruler
- Device with internet to search reference photos

### NEW WORD(S)

Hierarchy: The control of visual information in an arrangement or presentation to imply importance. Hierarchy influences the order in which the human eye perceives what it sees, sometimes through size, color, placement, font, etc.

Gestalt Theory:
Gestalt theory emphasizes that the whole of anything is greater than its parts. That is, the attributes of the whole are not deducible from analysis of the parts in isolation. The word Gestalt is used in modern German to mean the way a thing has been "placed," or "put together."

Similarity: Elements that are similar are perceived to be more related via color, size, shape, or orientation.
Proximity: Objects or shapes that are close to one another appear to form groups.
Closure: If there is a break in an object, we perceive the object as continuing in a smooth pattern.

### NYS ARTS LEARNING STANDARDS

**HS Advanced, VA: Cr1.2.HSIII, a.** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design connected by a theme, idea, or concept.

**HS Advanced, VA: Cr3.1.HSIII, a.** Reflect on, re engage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.

### STEPS

#### Step #1
1. Brainstorm ideas using sketches (3 is a good number) and then get feedback. Show to 5 or more people for their impressions and thoughts. Bonus if they are also working on the project. Talk about your topics chosen, why they are important to you, how do the smaller shapes ‘fit in’ with the larger shape? Verbally describe. Which of your ideas is the most interesting, visually compelling, and clear? Take strongest forward)

#### Step #2
2. Collect photos to use as reference, starting with the large shape. Sketch lightly on the paper, and allow for a natural ‘frame’ of space to happen comfortably around it.

#### Step #3
3. Collect photos to use as reference for the small shapes. At least 8 or so works best. You can repeat them, or have all unique shapes (see in examples). Look at the group and see if there are opportunities for interesting placement- use it to your advantage; do some shapes help define the larger around the edges a little? Would the placement of some shapes reference the ‘anatomy’ of the larger object in some way?

#### Step #4
4. Begin lightly sketching in the smaller shapes, make sure they have enough resting space around them, and are dense enough to fill the large shape idea. (Here is another point in time where you can share to get feedback- ask if the shapes, both smaller and large, are clear).

#### Step #5
5. Once all the pencil work looks good to you, begin outlining them with ultra fine point sharpie, and fill with fine point sharpie. Be careful to let the marker ink dry as you go, so your work does not become smudged. After it has all dried for 45 minutes, erase away any stray pencil marks.

### ACTIVITY MODIFICATIONS

Topics can be geared towards activism (attention to important social issues), or keep things light and humorous, working with ironic or pun-based combinations of the "large and small".

Students can free-draw or trace their shapes.

### TAKING IT TO DIGITAL
Students can use basic vector building skills in Adobe Illustrator to construct and assemble the small shapes. Simply scan in the drawn work, and build over it, or build each shape over a photographic reference, bit by bit.