No Computers Needed! Foundational 2-D Graphic Design Projects

Empire State Creates: Teaching Artist-Led Activities for Everyone

Project Title: Project 2A: Pattern Motif

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 work with 2 essential shapes to create 2 different arrangements (via repetition, placement, scale, overlap, rotation, and reflection). These key arrangements are then realized in a repeating motif through a variety of (potential) underlying grid ideas (some basic ones are brick, stack, radial, isometric). Tracing, scaling, and translation techniques are demonstrated.

GOALS

(Learning objective) Students will walk away with a solid understanding of how to build repeating modular motifs that use grid structures and communicate depth and rhythm.

MATERIALS

1 page of gridded paper
11” x 14” Bristol Paper
Mechanical Pencil with eraser
Ruler

NEW WORD(S)

Motif: A recurring fragment, theme, or pattern that appears in work of art or design.
Key: The core idea that gets repeated in a 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. Choose 2 simple shapes. Sketch them out lightly on your gridded paper.
Step #2 2. Now draw 6 small squares and try out different arrangements that use just those 2 shapes. Use repetition, overlap, scale change, and rotation as you wish in your arrangements. We will refer to these as your 'key' that will then repeat. It's ok if they aren't sketched perfectly, just get it as clear and accurate as you can in this planning phase.

Step #3 3. Once 6 key ideas are created, choose your favorite 2. Now sketch those key ideas in 2 larger squares on your grided page. Determine how you want them to repeat. The simplest approach is to stack 2 keys on top of 2 keys. If you would like, you can try a brick formation, radial formation, or isometric formation. Now that your key idea repeats, it is now officially a pattern!

Step #4 4. Time to take it to the 11” x 14” Bristol paper. Use the given chart to measure and set up your 4” x 4” squares.

Step #5 5. Create a 2” x 2” key on a scrap piece of paper, and outline in sharpie so it is dark.

Step #6 6. Hold your Bristol paper up to a bright window and hold your key behind it. Trace it in pencil in the repeating manner that you have decided on. Do the same pattern for the top 2, and your second pattern for the bottom 2. You now have 4 well-planned, and well-sketched squares of pattern. CHOICE: You can stop here and add color however you like, OR continue on to Project 2B Color Motif to learn about color relationships.

ACTIVITY MODIFICATIONS
If you want to work with a theme, choose 2 simple starting shapes that reference the theme in some way (Ex: Nature theme, so one shape is leaf-like and the other is an imperfect circle, berry-like. Even be as specific as using a single plant, flower, or region to inspire the entire thing!)

TAKING IT TO DIGITAL
Students can use basic vector building skills in Adobe Illustrator to construct the simple shapes. They can then be assembled into a key idea, selected, and then use ‘Object--> Pattern -->Make’ to get it to repeat. The resulting pattern will temporarily save to your ‘Swatches’ panel. Save to your ‘Swatches Library’ to permanently keep it saved.