AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF DESIGN IN ART

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PROJECT

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to discuss certain rudimentary elements of basic design in art; (2) to integrate more fully the art education of the author; (3) to demonstrate by means of three 20 x 24 inch vinylite paintings the elements, line, color and space.

Importance of the study. Man has a tendency to bring order out of chaos, an urge to order ideas and emotions so that they will reflect his intentions. This desire for order in art manifests itself in a love for expression of ideas or emotions to serve either decorative or functional purposes. Achieving orderliness then, becomes the process through which man expresses his thoughts and feelings his intermost desires, his love for and appreciation of life.

Art structure is essential to all types of art and to all their mediums of expression. It is the instrument of art expression, just as sound in sequence is the medium of music. Music exists only when notes are arranged in an appropriate structure of tonal sounds and sequences. Similarly, in the plastic and graphic mediums, order is achieved by
arranging the elements of art structure in a meaningful manner. Some of the elements consist of line, space, and color. It is with the above elements that this study will be concerned.

As it has been pointed out in the above passages design becomes and is essential to all types of art, and to all their mediums of expression, and therefore it is felt that a study in design would be of great value in clarifying these to the beginning student of design.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Design: An organization of the elements of art structure which creates a quality of pictorial or abstract organization compatible with the idea, emotion, or function which initiates a work of art.

Abstract Lyrical: Emotional art that emphasizes rhythmic use of line, color, and form for their abstract quality instead of those values which are associated with objects or things.

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2 Ibid., p. 267.
Elements of Structure: The fundamental aspects of art organization which permit the artist to express ideas or emotions in plastic or graphic terms.

Art Expression: The act or process of representing ideas and emotions in art terms.

Plastic Expression: The interpretation of art ideas in terms of three dimensions, emphasizing as structural elements light, space, and form.

Graphic Arts: The two-dimensional arts of design, painting, etching, engraving, and lithography.

Sequence: Arrangement of elements in a series or succession which develops the central theme in an orderly progression.

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4 Ibid., p. 267.

5 Ibid., p. 270.

6 Ibid., p. 269.

7 Ibid., p. 271.
Color: A quality of visual sensation which is ordinarily evoked by light stimulating the cones in the retina.

Line: An invention of man to portray emotions visually represent visual objects, or describe ideas graphically.

Space: The place containing tangible form. In art, it is an element of structure which locates shapes, creates scale, conveys emotions and counter balances forms.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

Description: The remaining portion of the thesis will be concerned with the review of related studies. The statement of methods of procedure in executing the paintings of the design elements line, space, and color, with a summary on each painting to be included.

Review of Research in the Field: Research studies on Basic Design elements have been many. There have been studies in the past in which definite structural elements

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9 Ibid., p. 269.

10 Ibid., p. 271.
have been pointed out as being the final end. These elements have, and are being used by many at present with that concept in mind. They are the result of minority groups and individuals in art who believe they have found a universal method or procedure involving the elements of design. Although there is not universal agreement as to what all of the design elements consist of; such as line, color, tone, space; and as to how they should be presented there is agreement as to the importance of establishing a solid foundation of certain elements in design. The elements that are pointed out are offered in the form of suggested basic methods of procedure, and those that are deemed important by the user are given specific emphasis. Therefore, the presentation of these elements is found to be varied in certain areas, and by certain individuals as to their specific use. In this particular study, main emphasis will be placed on the three elements; line, color, and space. And an explanation of their importance in understanding art structure.
CHAPTER II

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

In preliminary preparation for the execution of the basic paintings in design a review of the three elements line, color, space, with which this study is concerned, was carried out for the benefit of the author. The data for these elements was selected from the various class instructors with whom the author had studied. Their meaning was interpreted, and the author's own opinions were formulated. From these opinions the elements involved in the study were treated in a manner in which they would represent his views on how they should be carried out in painting.

Choice of medium. The choice of medium selected was vinylite, which is a new plastic medium that is mixed with dry tempera. Because of its qualities to be water proof, quick drying, flexible and durable, it was selected over the other possible mediums. The mediums other than vinylite, that were considered are oils, water color and tempera.

The oil paint is excellent in regard to color, and textural qualities that can be attained, but its drying qualities were found to be very slow, and therefore it was not found suitable for the purpose involved.
The water color was found to be excellent in creating a directness of statement and in painting transparencies, but not being water proof, it would necessitate a glass cover for protection, and would involve additional effort and expense.

The ready mixed tempera was excellent from the standpoint of color, and the illusion created in painting solid flat areas, but as was the case in water color a special protection would be necessary to preserve the painting from water damage.

Choice of subject. In as much as this was a basic presentation in design it was felt that it would be of greater value to the student if the subject matter was presented in an abstract lyrical form. The student having attained the basic elements through this method would then be qualified to carry on in a much more complex manner and a subject matter of his choosing.

Investigation and assembling of materials needed. The following list of materials were found to be necessary in order to create the paintings:

1. Pencils
2. Newsprint
3. Pastel Chalks
4. Drawing Board
5. Paint Brushes
6. Medium (Vinylite)
A good variety of pencils ranging from soft to hard were found to be helpful in creating preliminary sketches for the final designs. These were carried out on a common stock newsprint, which is not extremely costly and therefore many sketches could be attained in preliminary preparations for the designs. A good variety in colors in pastel chalks were found helpful in indicating color samples on the previously prepared sketches.

A good size drawing board, at least 20 x 24 inch was found to serve the purpose best in regards to ease of handling and adaption to various sizes of work.

Paint brushes are very important and one of the artist's most valuable tools. A variety of brushes is desirable, but a combination of stiff bristle flats, and sable pointed brushes will serve in most cases.

The paint pallette used was a standard sheet of window glass, which worked well because of its hard surface and ease of cleaning.

A medium weight illustration board was used to carry out the final designs, although any other surface would work.
as well. The choice becomes one of personal preference.
Painting #1 space. Whether the artist’s aim is painting a picture, designing a building, carving a statue, weaving a tapestry, or designing a radio cabinet, his first consideration as he begins to work is how to divide a given space into significant shapes and areas to achieve his purpose best. In advertising, space breaking is called layout. In architecture it is called floor planning, and in painting it is called design.

The problem of space breaking is one of the first, with which the individual is confronted. If he is familiar with this problem, he will be able to solve those problems which will arise in the use of other elements.

The author approached the problem of space breaking by first making several preliminary studies with pastel in breaking space, and organizing space. From these, forms were suggested to the author that might be used in the final painting. The final painting on space is one in which the author was attempting to create an illusion of space. A large black silhouette form was placed in the foreground. Forms of various values of reds, oranges and yellow were placed behind it. In the background there are greyed reds,
and blues with a textured sky area in pale blue greys. By using a progression in color values from very dark to light an illusion of depth into space is achieved. To further create an illusion of space the author placed freely drawn black lines of various widths and forms over the surface of the painting to create a type of grill, which would create a feeling of looking into the painting. The other elements of structure not only have their function of breaking space, but also contribute their particular quality to the whole painting.

Painting #2 color. Color is the most descriptive element of art structure. It can be employed to create lines, forms, texture; to suggest space, ideas, emotions; and to portray moods.

Color is probably more expressive than other structural elements because its quality affects our emotions directly and immediately in the same manner that music affects our emotions even when we are not listening attentively. We cannot escape the emotional effect of color because its appeal is direct and the eye is constantly recording color images. When colors are well arranged they have a greater effect, making us gay, sad, angry, excited or depressed.

The painting on color is one in which the space of the painting was broken up with various horizontal and vertical
shapes of color. They vary not only in shape and color, but also in intensity, value and size. The reds and yellows in the painting carry the greatest intensity and they were placed next to dark colors in order to create a dynamic quality. When contrasts of dark colors against light colors occur they create the quality mentioned. The reds, yellows, and oranges, or warm colors, seem to be resting on the blues, violets, and greens, therefore creating a feeling of coolness, in contrast with the warm colors, red, yellow, and orange. In order to create further interest, and contrast with composition, various lines, thick, thin, curved, straight, and diagonal were added. The colors of the lines were related to those of the shapes used, although their values were different. By using lines over the colored shapes they tend to pull together colors which would otherwise be isolated. In areas where the intensity seemed to be very strong, a texture, of different value but of the same color, was placed over the area to create an effect of receding.

From the painting on color, the importance of color was stressed by the author according to its size, shape, placement, texture, contrast, contrast of value, and background.

Painting #3 line. Line is an invention of man which resulted from his desire to express emotions visually or
describe ideas pictorially. There is no counterpart in nature for the drawn line; there are only thin forms, edges of forms, or suggestions of lines.

Some lines are like some phrases of music and appeal directly to the feelings; they are emotional lines. Others have a delayed emotional appeal, and as with poetry which causes us to think, their appeal is intellectual. Other lines are used solely to convey ideas, as in expository writing or mechanical drawing. They are lines of pure reason, made with rulers, triangles, and protractor. Such lines are exact, cold, and unemotional, with no intention of arousing emotions.

The freely drawn line, on the other hand, is emotional and is charged with activity. It is nervous or steady, spontaneous or uninspired, exact or careless, halting or gay, but always alive with emotion which affects us without our being conscious of it.

In order to discover the various kinds of line, which would be suitable for use in the painting on line, the author began by taking a stick of pastel or chalk, and started to scribble on a sheet of newsprint paper. The author sought to vary the scribbles by pressing hard on the pastel, wiggling it, pressing lightly, jumping over lines; and by imagining that the pastel was climbing, jumping, skipping, hopping, darting
here and there, slowing down, stopping, starting and running again. By using this method the author was drawing straight lines, curved lines, meandering lines and other kinds. The lines reflected feeling; some were angry, sad, proud, or strong; some would express still other emotions or attitudes to other individuals.

From this method the author became selective of the various lines which would be used in the final painting. The painting was begun with the previous experiments in mind, and vertical and horizontal lines were used to break up the given space of the illustration board, with variations in the brush strokes, to create thick lines and thin lines. Diagonal lines were introduced along with wiggly nervous lines, and curved lines to create further interest. By using lines of one continuous color, and value over those of different colors and values a sense of space is achieved. The black lines in the painting appear to be in the foreground and the pale greys in the background, thus creating an illusion of space with lines. A very subdued texture was added to prevent the lines from floating in endless space. As was discovered the element line could not be completely isolated from the other elements of design, but that it relied on other elements in order to achieve its own purpose.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the presentation of the study on design, the various rudimentary elements line, color, and space were discussed. Their importance was found to stem from man's tendency to bring order out of chaos, and his urge to order ideas and emotions so that they would reflect his intentions.

Art structure was found to be essential to all types of art and to all its mediums of expression. Among various authors and painters in the field of art, this concept was held to be valid. Disagreements were confined to the actual procedure in presenting the various elements, but a majority of the previously mentioned group agreed that the development of a solid foundation in art structure involving design elements, such as line, color, space, form, and others was essential.

The three vinylite paintings on design, were painted with the purpose of stressing the elements, line, color, and space. It was discovered that the particular elements stressed in the study, not only stressed their own qualities, but they relied on other elements which also contribute their particular quality to the whole painting.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


