Chapter Five: Line

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

• outline and contour line
• implied line
• expressive line
• analytical and classical line
• line and cultural convention

Works in Progress:
Vincent van Gogh’s The Sower
Hung Liu’s Three Fujins
J. A. D. Ingres’s Turkish Bath

The Critical Process:
Thinking about Line: Robert Mapplethorpe’s Lisa Lyon

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This Chapter Will:
• introduce the visual element of line
• identify the difference between actual and implied lines and the usage of each
• identify the various types of line, such as contour or hatched
• identify line quality in art works and how they can affect the dynamic or static nature of a composition
• illustrate the expressive possibilities of the line and how an artist can utilize line to portray their idea or evoke a feeling
• discuss cultural associations of specific line usage

KEY TERMS

composition
cultural convention
outline
contour line
implied line
line of sight
kinetic
expressive line
autographic line
analytic line
grid
romantic line
classical line
LECTURE AND DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. Introducing the Elements of Art
Using Paul Cézanne’s The Basket of Apples (fig. 94), introduce Part II of the text, The Formal Elements and Their Design, with an overview of the elements of art and principles of design and their role in the process of making art. Discuss how most artists consciously employ traditional design strategies learned in their professional training to create effective compositions. Conversely, discuss how artists and art movements have radically altered traditional methods of manipulating elements of art. For example, expound upon how the work of Cézanne, Picasso and Braque revolutionized shape with Cubism. Cubists dissected objects into two-dimensional shapes, which resulted in the representation of multiple points of view of an object on a single surface. Cubists liberated the traditional static method of depicting form to an active, more dimensional method. In a similar manner, by using color arbitrarily, Matisse and the Fauves liberated color from its traditional role of objective description to that of expressive stimulus. Finally, discuss the intuitive or subconscious use of the elements and principles employed by untrained, or folk artists.

2. Lines in Life
When discussing each element, consider ideas that connect each element to the student's daily life in order to elaborate on how viewers perceptually and visually responds to each element. For example, reflecting on the element of line, ask students where they see lines in everyday life. Discuss the variation in line quality they may see by comparing the horizon line, a waiting line at a movie theatre, a city skyline, a road, and so on. Associate the variety of lines in Jean Tinguely’s plate from La Vittoria (fig. 95) to those found in everyday life.

3. Lines are Style
Point out that the types of lines an artist makes vary as well, and are indicative of their style. An artist’s line is unique, like a signature. As a side-note, remind students that a signature is comprised of alphabet letters, which are linear. Initiate a discussion with students about how their personal signature has the potential of describing their personality. Using Pat Steir’s Drawing Lesson Part 1, Line # 1 and Line # 5 (figs. 103 and 105) demonstrate how line can possess specific intellectual, emotional and/or expressive qualities. Illustrate how the artist employed the mark making “autographs” of Rembrandt and Van Gogh in these works. Ask students to create their own “drawing lesson” based on the artwork of another artist represented in the chapter. How would the line quality express the autograph of their chosen artist?

4. Actual and Implied Lines
Focus on the work of Keith Haring to illustrate contour, outline, and implied types of lines. Compare Haring’s use of implied motion in Untitled, March 24, 1982 (fig. 98) with Alexander Calder’s actual motion in such kinetic works as Dots and Dashes (figs. 99 and 100). Discuss the significance of motion in kinetic works of art and how Calder compared the movement of this type of sculpture to the movements of a dancer moving
through space. Refer to the formal definition of a line as the “path left by a moving point through space.”

Illustrate with Sol LeWitt’s *Lines from Four Corners to Points on a Grid* (fig. 110) how line is actual and implied at the same time. Ask students to identify how the artist accomplishes this? Have students discuss the physical and perceptual nature of how we interpret lines.

5. **Line of Sight**

Illustrate line of sight with Titian’s *Assumption and Consecration of the Virgin* (fig. 101 and 102) to emphasize how artists activate their compositions by directing the viewer’s attention to various focal points. Use the example of pointing your finger at something and saying “look at that” shows how attention is drawn to a particular area using an invisible line of sight from the end of your finger to the “that” in question.

6. **Analytical and Expressive Line**

Distinguish between analytical and expressive line qualities by comparing the works of Vincent van Gogh and Sol LeWitt. Discuss van Gogh’s creative process as it relates to *The Sower* (figs. 107-109). Beyond learning of the struggles van Gogh endured with his color application, of note for this work is van Gogh’s acknowledgement that the “painted studies lack clearness of touch. That is [the] reason why I felt it necessary to draw them.” Discuss van Gogh’s line work as a more realistic, or clearer, visualization of the tactile sensations that entice the viewer as they contemplate this image. Associate the action of expressionistic drawing to that of expressing emotions and sensual experiences of sight, touch, smell, and sound. Does Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night* (fig. 106), also seen in this chapter, contain lines that represent the tactile qualities of the image depicted? What would it look like as a drawing?

In contrast, elaborate upon LeWitt’s creative process, which includes the temporary nature of his work, which is often created by museum staff. Discuss the evidence of emotional or sensual associations to the lines in LeWitt’s work. Is it necessary to have these qualities in a work of art?

7. **Neoclassic and Romantic Line Comparison**

Regarding cultural conventions and line, compare *The Death of Socrates* (figs. 112 and 113) by Jacques-Louis David to that of *The Death of Sardanapalus* (figs. 114 and 115) by Eugene Delacroix to illustrate the artists’ different utilization of line quality. Neoclassic artists, such as David, focused on linear qualities since they felt the controlled precision lines exemplified intellect, reason and logic. On the other hand, Romantic artists, such as Delacroix, were more interested in the emotional quality of line, and used expressive painterly strokes to emphasize the hierarchy of emotion over reason. Delacroix’s drawing is highly expressive in line quality, yet his painting is much more controlled. Why? Discuss the process of creating preliminary studies with an analogy to the excitement of executing a new discovery or trying out a new idea.
**CRITICAL THINKING: More Opportunities to Think About Art**
Several artworks are detailed in the Critical Thinking and Works in Progress features found in this chapter. In addition, diverse opportunities for studying these works are often located on the Companion Website and Companion CDROM.

1. **Works in Progress: Ingres’s The Turkish Bath**
A discussion of cultural conventions (assumptions) associated with line specifically related to the depiction of gender is also addressed within two of the Works In Progress features of this chapter. The author states, "Line carries a certain cultural burden, often reflecting questionable cultural values." Specifically, Sayre is referring to the tradition of representing the male form with a controlled, logical or rational line, and the female form with expressive "less-logical/more emotional" line. As Ingres sacrifices, or controls, female anatomy in *The Turkish Bath* (fig. 123) to meet the demands of his circular design, the sexist implications of his work become clear. Even though women are freed from the world of men, they are thoroughly submitted to the male gaze, not least of all Ingres’s own. Discuss the sensual quality of Ingres's work in contrast with the sexist implications.

2. **Works in Progress: Hung Liu’s Three Fujins**
In another Works in Progress feature found in this chapter, Hung Liu’s *Three Fujins* (fig. 117) addresses concerns related to both gender and social status. Liu presents a seemingly contradictory union of classical and expressive line within one composition to evoke a sense of journalistic presentation and subjective interpretation at the same time. Discuss this contradictory line usage, along with the biography of Liu, as you remind students of the artist’s desire to present her personal feelings about her heritage. Reinforce students’ understanding of the power of the elements of art as essential components in presenting an artist’s idea. A feature video on Hung Liu and her work is part of the Works in Progress Video Series.

3. **Thinking about Robert Mapplethorpe’s Photograph Lisa Lyon**
Chapter 5 ends with *The Critical Process*, an analysis of the cultural conventions that are challenged with the line usage in Robert Mapplethorpe’s photograph *Lisa Lyon* (fig. 121). This analysis challenges our notions of gender representation by comparing Lyon’s classical pose to that of the Greek *Zeus* or *Poseidon* (fig. 118). Be sure to refer to a detailed analysis of these attributes in the back of the textbook.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**
Direct students to their Student Study Guide when assigning Writing Assignments as the following assignments are written as instruction for the student and are contained in the Student Study Guide as they are here.

1. **The Ingredients of an Artwork**
Just as a good cook assembles the perfect ingredients for a delicious recipe, an artist assembles the right elements for a successful artwork. Have students contemplate any artwork from the textbook and make a recipe of the composition. For example,
Delacroix’s Lady Liberty Leading the People (fig. 697) contains implied lines, organic shape, range of values, primary color scheme and depth in space. Assign a one-page synopsis of what elements students readily see and how the artist has used them. After completing their studies of Chapters 5-9, have them re-write the analysis to evaluate their ability to “think like an artist” as they deconstruct the compositional masterpieces in A World of Art.

2. Analyzing Cultural Conventions
Have students experiment with friends or acquaintances to determine whether the cultural conventions associated with line still hold true. Have them draw a straight line and a curved one, asking people to associate freely with these two lines. Have them respond with whatever words come to mind when they look at them? In an essay, have students write a synopsis of their findings.

3. Expressive Drips
Have students consider the use of line in Robert Motherwell’s Elegy to the Spanish Republic #34 (fig. 56), discussed in Chapter 3. How does his use of line help to underscore his thematic concern with “the struggle between life and death”? How does the drip inform his work? How does the work compare, in fact, to Hung Liu’s Three Fujins?

HANDS-ON PROJECT
Direct students to their Student Study Guide when assigning Hands-On Projects as the following assignments are written as instruction for the student and are contained in the Student Study Guide as they are here. For additional project ideas, remember to investigate the Hands-On Projects found on the Companion Website.

1. Express Line
This project is best done as a timed group activity. Each participant needs a drawing medium and a piece of paper; markers are best. The leader needs a list of words that describe emotional and physical states, sounds, places, and activities. The leader calls out a word every ten to twenty seconds while participants respond to the word by drawing a line that describes the word. After a dozen words, discuss how the process became easier due to creative thinking habits, and how a visual image can convey a verbal word. Compare lines among participants to reveal the many ways people express themselves.

2. Life Lines
Have students keep a journal of the lines they see in one day by tracking the lines they see at any given point, at any given time on a grid. Have them create a grid of 2” squares on a piece of paper and challenge them to draw a line per hour for at least a twelve-hour period. This assignment is interesting when students connect the lines to reveal the “pulse” of their day, as we often notice particular lines when our energy levels are at certain levels and minds are clear, versus the quiet times of our days when we are more relaxed.
RESOURCES

A World of Art Companion Website:
Remember to direct students to A World of Art companion website (www.prenhall.com/sayre) to help further their understanding of the materials discussed in this chapter with ideas for completing hands-on projects and exercises. Self-testing materials are also available and offer students the opportunity to evaluate their understanding of the chapter materials in a variety of formats. In addition, links to websites featuring contemporary artists, and museum and gallery exhibitions related to this chapter will enhance discussion and comprehension. Links for this chapter include:

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS: Latitudes is a special work created for the World Wide Web by Melissa Fenley, a dancer who has traveled extensively and lived in both Nigeria and Spain. These influences have affected the modern dance work she has created and choreographed. Implied line has been likened to the movement of dance. In Latitudes Fenley's connections between her body forms, movements, and various ritualistic objects make for an engaging and unique viewing experience.

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS: Keith Haring was a prolific artist whose life was tragically cut short by AIDS. During his brief career, he demonstrated a unique mastery of explicit line. As an artist, Haring attracted international acclaim for both his artwork and his dedication to social causes. This is the official site of the Haring Foundation. Download Haring's World for a wild ride.

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS: Jean-Michel Basquiat’s work came directly from his involvement with graffiti art in New York City. He died in 1988 at the age of 27, but in that time produced an astonishing body of work. The paintings of Basquiat linger confidently between drawing, scribbling and rendering. His line carries with it an edge that seems both physically and psychologically jagged. Despite an initial appearance to many first time viewers that the compositions are haphazard or disorganized, there is an organizational logic and a complete unity that is readily perceived within each work. The work possesses power, and much of that power came through Basquiat's ability to employ expressive line.

GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS: Amedeo Modigliani (b. July 12, 1884, d. Jan. 24, 1920) produced work that often featured the figure simplified and elongated in what was truly a beautiful and unique personal style. The abstraction of Modigliani's figures was further heightened by his use of outline, which not only enhance the linearity of the figures, but also often sets them apart from their painted backgrounds. When you enter the site, double click the images to view them in full screen size.

Other Suggested Websites:
Pat Steir’s biography and other examples of prints and paintings are on view at www.crownpoint.com/artists/steir/about.html

Sol LeWitt’s conceptual installations are exhibited at numerous museums and galleries at www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/lewitt_sol.html

Jean Michel-Basquait’s life is remembered by one of his studio assistants at www.johnseed.com/basquiat.html complete with works of his art and links to other websites about the artist.

Hung Lui’s artworks and biography are provided by the Rena Branstan Gallery at www.renabranstengallery.com/liu.html

Suggested Videos:
Videos and other resources are available for purchase through any of the distributors listed in the Resources section of this manual.

Works in Progress: Hung Liu
Elements of Design
Drawing the Line: A Portrait of Keith Haring
Pat Steir
Sol LeWitt