

Chapter Eight: Other Formal Elements

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- Texture
- Pattern
- Time and Motion

Works in Progress

Jackson Pollock's *No. 29*

The Critical Process

Thinking About the Formal Elements

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This Chapter Will:

- distinguish between actual and visual texture in art works
- describe how patterns are created by repeating previously learned visual elements—line shape, mass, color
- distinguish between spatial and temporal media
- discuss works of art that utilize time and motion

KEY TERMS

action painting
actual texture
visual (implied) texture
animal style
Brownian motion
pattern
motif
mnemonic
spatial media

decoration
temporal media
frottage
illumination
impasto
femmage
Op Art
kinetic art

LECTURE AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Michelangelo's *Pieta*

Michelangelo's famous *Pieta* at the Vatican (fig. 205), completed in 1499 when he was only 24, is a masterwork that reveals the artist's love for both his medium and his faith, and demonstrates the importance of texture as an element of art. Point out to students that artists will often produce or suggest textures in order to convey or further the notion of reality. The skill with which Michelangelo carved the sculpture creates a work so realistic that the human forms appear to be warm and fleshy, rather than cold and of stone. It has been described as "sublime perfection." A sense of classical structure and harmony are dominant, and the marble exudes a softness that betrays its true nature. Compare this work to Michelangelo's other *Pieta* (accessed in *A World of Art* companion website link) completed sometime between 1549 and 1555, some 50 years after the sculpture found in this chapter. It is thought that by the time Michelangelo carved this work he was despondent over the Protestant Reformation and the turn of Catholicism from its humanistic side back to a more rigid and dogmatic form of Puritanism. Ask students if they can identify any clues within the work itself that would indicate Michelangelo's dejection over the changes within the church, and perhaps his acceptance of his own inevitable mortality?

2. Actual and Visual Texture

Texture is the actual or perceived surface of a work of art and it has the ability to call forth certain visual phenomena and certain tactile sensations and feelings. Explain that textures are described by adjectives such as smooth and rough, and are often representative of the surfaces we encounter in our daily lives. However, like space, artists often create visual textures that are implications of real textures, or they use the textural qualities of their chosen media to convey their idea. For example, the actual textures found in Manuel Neri's *Mujer Pegada Series No. 2* (fig. 207) and Joan Snyder's *Sea Moons* (fig. 206) are created by manipulating media. The visual texture of Max Ernst's *Europe After the Rain* (fig. 208) is created by a process known as frottage. Reminiscent of childhood crayon rubbings, frottage is a term derived from the French *frotter* (to rub) and was invented by Ernst. Describe the technique of laying thin paper onto an actual texture, then rubbing over it with the soft lead of a pencil to achieve the visual qualities of the surface. Have students create their own frottage experiments.

3. Pattern in Textiles

Historically, pattern has served as a decorative tool, however, some artists have created works of art with incorporate pattern into the conceptual nature of the artwork. Pattern, whether revealed in manuscript illuminations, as seen in the page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (fig. 211) or in the *Lotto* rug (fig. 210), is an element that can imply motion—we visually follow serpentine lines, or feel a rhythmic, temporal beat as we glance at each repeated motif. Throughout history, decorative patterns have been applied to utilitarian objects in order to make them more pleasing to the eye. Ask students to name examples of other patterns that they encounter on a daily basis.

4. Femmage

Because decorative pattern is associated with the beautifying of utilitarian objects in the crafts, with folk art, or with “women’s work” such as quilt making, it has not been esteemed among artists. However, the artist Miriam Shapiro creates works she calls femmages, (from the French *femme* and *homage*) which, as she states, explores “a part of my life which I had always dismissed—my homemaking, my nesting.” In *Night Shade* (fig. 212), Shapiro has chosen an explicitly feminine image, the fan. Ask students how Shapiro has celebrated women with this work?

5. Monet’s *Waterlilies*

Waterlilies, Morning: Willows (fig. 215a and 215b) are displayed at Musée de l’Orangerie in Paris. Make the distinction between the plastic arts, such as painting and sculpture, and the written arts, such as music and literature. The plastic arts are spatial, meaning they are experienced in space, and the written arts are temporal, meaning they are experienced in the mind. However, a painting might also invite us to experience time in a temporal way. To appreciate a large-scale work of art, such as Monet’s famous *Waterlilies*, one must move around and view them from all sides—and view them over time. Monet’s famous paintings of his pond at Giverny are so large that they fully encircle two oval gallery rooms at the Musée de l’Orangerie, causing viewers to move about in order to fully see them. According to Monet’s friend, Georges Clemenceau, the paintings serve as an example of “Brownian Motion,” which stipulates that small solid particles suspended in a fluid will be buffeted by the water molecules that surround it and driven randomly throughout the solution. In the oval rooms of the Musée de l’Orangerie, the viewer’s eye is driven randomly through the space of the huge works. Of note is the fact that only a certain number of viewers are allowed into the *Waterlilies* gallery at one time so a viewer may have a genuinely pleasurable experience.

6. Op Art

Some works of art are designed to deliberately move, while others attempt to give us the sensation of movement. Bridget Riley’s *Drift 2* (fig. 220) is an example of Op art, which is temporal in nature because the manipulation of the formal elements stimulates the nervous system into thinking it perceives movement. The term Op art is coined from its ability to create this optical illusion of movement. Another Op artist to research is Victor Vasarely, who used color to create the illusion of movement.

7. Kinetic Art

Some artist's spatial works are truly dependent upon time and motion as a basic component of the artist’s intention. Jean Tinguely dedicated his career to making large machines out of the refuse of machine culture. *Homage to New York* (fig. 221), activated in the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art in 1960, performed numerous kinetic actions, inflating a large balloon, playing a piano, which was part of the structure, even discharging a small burning machine on wheels that headed for the audience before finally being doused by a fire fighter.

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 located on the Companion Website and Companion CD-ROM.

1. Works in Progress: Jackson Pollock's No. 29

The work of Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock is featured in the Works in Progress section of Chapter 8 (p. 154-155). His huge abstract action paintings brought him tremendous acclaim. The large compositions cause the eye to travel in what one critic called a "galactic space," following first one line, then another. Works such as *No. 29* (fig. 219) are labeled Action Painting, not only because the lines prompt the eye of the viewer to follow the action, but also because the work as a whole serves to document the action of the artist. In fact, Jackson Pollock was nicknamed "Action Jackson," and you can see why from viewing the photographs of Pollock at work in figures 217 and 218. Pollock typically painted on the floor, Pollock described his choice with this statement: "On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting." According to Hans Namuth who took the photographs of Pollock, when Pollock was painting, his movements, slow at first, gradually became faster and more dance-like.

2. Thinking about Bill Viola *Room for St. John of the Cross*

Chapter 8 ends with *The Critical Process*, an analysis of Bill Viola's *Room for St. John of the Cross* (figs. 225 and 226). This work demonstrates how time and motion in television are very different from time and motion in video art. The work consists of a color television monitor displaying a videotaped image of a snow-covered mountain. On the tape, the poems of St. John are being read and are just barely audible. The only movement is evidenced by the wind rustling leaves and branches. On a screen behind the monitor, Viola has projected a black and white video image of snow covered mountains shot with an unstable hand-held camera. Neither of these two images could be shown on television, purely because of their disparity in what consumers expect as entertainment. In order to fully experience them, however, we must move within the installation, and in doing so, we experience a broad contrast of many formal elements all at once. In this regard, Viola's *Room for St. John on the Cross* actually function like a sculpture piece. Be sure to refer to the detailed analysis of this work, which answers many of the questions posed in the chapter, found 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 guide as they are here.

1. The Time and Motion of Jackson Pollock

Jackson Pollock's paintings, as we have seen, have been described by Pollock himself as "energy and motion/made visible." In an essay, have students compare and contrast

Pollock's work another work of their choice to describe how other works differ from Pollock's, whether visually, physically, or in media usage?

2. Pollock: The Movie

Have students rent the highly acclaimed film of Pollock's life at their local video store and write a review of the film based upon what they know and have come to appreciate about Pollock's work.

3. The Aesthetics of Kitsch

Joan Snyder has painted *Sea Moons* (fig. 193) on velvet. We normally think of paintings on velvet as something less than "high" art – paintings of Elvis, pink flamingos, mass-produced often as souvenirs. The word for this sort of art is kitsch. Kitsch objects raise the question of just what makes something art? Who develops these "aesthetic standards" of high and low art? Have students find an object they would consider kitsch and describe why they consider the piece to be a fine work of art, or why they consider it to be a mass-produced item that insults their aesthetic standards.

HANDS-ON PROJECTS

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 guide as they are here. For additional project ideas, remember to investigate the Hands-On Projects found on the Companion Website.

1. Cartoon Time

Have students use colored pencils and a fine-line marker to draw a comic strip of their life by showing elapsed time and implied motion on white paper. A minimum of four and a maximum of eight frames will encourage creative solutions.

2. Frottage

Have students use crayons and paper to collect texture rubbings from 12 different sources. Assign to them to create a collage of a representational image using the texture rubbings to imply texture appropriate to the image.

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: Dream Screens is a site produced especially for the web by artist Susan Hiller. The work is sponsored by the Dia Foundation in New York and consists of pure color screens accompanied by a sound tract that reveals dream "dialogs." It is one example of the potential that the World Wide Web has for presenting temporal works of art. This site may require that you download additional sound plug-ins in order to experience the work properly. Turn off the lights and click on the work, it is well worth it.

GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS: The Book of Kells. Pattern has historically been used to create decorative effects on utilitarian objects—to augment the aesthetic nature of our tools, our clothes, our homes and environments. Most of us are attracted to the visual rhythm that occurs through our observation of pattern. In early Christian history, the pattern of pagan "animal style" imagery merged with Christian imagery to produce a unique and beautiful form of book illustration, or "illumination." Books such as the Lindesfarne Gospels were celebrated for their intricacy as well as their beauty. The most famous of these early manuscripts is the Book of Kells, a decorated manuscript of the Four Gospels begun at the island monastery of Iona and finished at Kells, Ireland. Its calligraphy and penmanship have earned it a reputation as the most beautiful book in the world. A facsimile of the Book of Kells is available for viewing at the Oregon State Library in Salem, Oregon. The library has also created a beautiful website complete with sound that allows you to visit the book and see many of its pages.

Other Suggested Websites:

Miriam Shapiro coined the term "femmeage" to describe her works that use painting and collage elements to express women's experiences and traditions. To view more works and read about the many contributions by this artist go to 204.212.40.145/exhibits/Shapiro/Shapiro3.ht

Max Ernst's, biography, artist information and other works containing his frottage methods are visible online at www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/ernst_max.html

Claude Monet's Waterlily paintings are exhibited online at www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet/waterlilies/

Jackson Pollock's brief biography and art works are provided at the WEBMuseum at www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/pollock/

Suggested Videos:

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

Elements of Design *overview* (30 Minutes)

Jackson Pollock: Strokes of Genius, 1997

The Impressionists: Monet

Max Ernst, 1968