Formal Elements of Design Assignment by Liana Graham

This assignment is given in my Concepts and Criticism class in the first quarter. The class has 9th and 10th grade students, all have been identified as gifted in the Visual Arts. The introduction to the assignment will take 1 class, 1 class studio work day, and 2-3 classes for critique, depending on number of students. Allow for in-depth critique. (classes are 1 hour)

This assignment covers the following SOL Applications: A1.3, A1.4, A1.5, A1.6, A1.8, A1.15, A1.18. A1.19, A1.20 and A1.23.

Pre-Assessment: Students are asked to list the Formal Elements of Design. The lists will be collected and saved for final day assessment.

Lesson: Content- First we discuss the Formal Elements of Design stated in *The Methodologies of Art* by Laurie Schneider Adams. They are as follows:

Line

Shape

Space

Color

Light

Dark

Which used together form broader categories of design:

Balance

Order

Proportion

Pattern

Rythym

In works of architecture and sculpture, the third dimension of depth is real. The following elements can be actual in 3-D works or illusory in 2-D works of art:

Mass

Volume

Texture

Perspective

It is the artist’s final arrangement of these elements that creates the *composition*. I explain that the first set of elements are like the alphabet. When combined, they make words. The broader categories of design are like sentences. It is up to the artist to decide how they are arranged. The final composition is similar to an essay, a song, or poem.

Process- Students take notes in their notebook. We look at images that are good examples of how an artist may use these elements in their composition. Then I have small pieces of paper with one of the design elements written on each paper. They get put into a hat. Students draw one out of the hat and doesn’t share with anyone what they chose.

Product with Differentiation- Each student has a formal element of design, and they must create a work of art featuring that element. It can be a painting, drawing, sculpture, etc. Any medium is acceptable. There are some 10th grade students who had this assignment the year before (if they came in as a 9th grader), so I give them an additional challenge. They still have to create a work of art showing they understand and can creatively feature the formal element of design they randomly picked, but they also have to base the concept on a current event. They have to reference an actual event that is taking place in the world right now, and use that as the concept for this project, while incorporating the formal element of design they were assigned.

On the due date, students hang their artwork up for critique. They present their work, and the class tries to guess which element of design they were focusing on. They also explain why. From CTA- John Strebe describes this as The Defense Mode- “Students discuss, compare, justify and defend their conclusions” in his workshop on Cooperative Learning. Once correctly guessed, the artist gets to say a few things about their piece, their process, the materials they used, etc. Then the class offers feedback on the artwork, craftsmanship, choice of materials, etc. From CTA- Kristina Doubet’s workshop on Instructional Grouping and Management discusses Formative Assessment: “Students receive their original pre-assessment back and revise. This information will be used to gauge whether or not students “got it” and will therefore drive further instruction.”

Rubric:

Elements of Design

Emerging- Does not demonstrate an understanding of the element of design

Proficient- Element of design used in an elementary or traditional way

Advanced- Element of design used in an original and creative way

Craftsmanship

Emerging- Craftsmanship needs improvement- work looks dirty, wrinkled, or torn

Proficient- Average craftsmanship- work is neat and clean

Advanced- Excellent craftsmanship- work is presentation-ready with matting/ wired to hang

Additional challenge for 10th grade/returning students

Emerging- Current event is not incorporated or not an actual event

Proficient- Current event is shown in an underdeveloped or obvious way

Advanced- Current event is incorporated into design element as part of the composition

Class Critique

Emerging- Does not participate in class critique or is overtly negative to others

Proficient- Participates when asked, some positive feedback/constructive criticism

Advanced- Critique participation is thoughtful and unsolicited, willingly contributes both

positive feedback and constructive criticism

References

Adams, L.S. (1996). *The Methodologies of Art.* Boulder: Colorado.

Collins, G. (June 28, 2016). Content, Process and Product Differentiation workshop. Content Teaching Academy at JMU.

Doubet, K. (June 27, 2016). Instructional Grouping and Management workshop. Content Teaching Academy at JMU.

Strebe, J. (June 30, 2016). Cooperative Learning workshop. Content Teaching Academy at JMU.