

Form Space & Media

THE CONSTRUCTED PAINTING

In our day and time we are inevitably concerned with the surfaces of things. We can all apparently *read* two dimensional images (especially when they are pictorial), but we rarely take the time to consider or really understand spatial relationships within these representations. This project is designed to help you experience how space, color and form interact as you move from the two dimensional to the three dimensional world.

You must find a good reproduction of an **ABSTRACT** painting. Paintings that are planar, hard edged, not too complicated (made of many small shapes), and that have some sense of perceptual depth will work best. Some good **SCHOOLS** for you to look at are (but not limited to): Dutch de Stijl, Russian constructivism, cubism and fauvism.

Once you have settled on a painting (I will help you decide based on the stated criteria), you will make an accurate, to-scale drawing of the shapes that make up its composition. To begin the process of moving from two to three dimensions, label or number each of these shapes according to their **DISTANCE** from the background. Of course this distance exists only perceptually, and you must make these judgements for yourself based on the interaction of the shapes' size, value, color, and context (ie. apparent overlap). You must have at least **SEVEN** different levels and **ONE** plane that slants in space (is not parallel to the base) .

You must now determine how to reconstruct the painting. Consider which planes might continue behind others, be determined by the edges of those surrounding, and how you will elevate them from the base. **DO NOT** simply transfer the entire drawing to a piece of foamcore and cut it apart *jigsaw style*. You may find it necessary to adjust a plane's scale due to its new presence in space (ie. a shape that is now closer to you will appear larger). You may use pedestals or columns of your own design, or you may **BOX** in the sides, or a combination of techniques. You will eventually be painting these constructions, so you will want to consider this as you determine your method of construction (some may prove more difficult to navigate with a paintbrush).

Materials & Process

You will be working with foamcore, a board which has foam at its core and paper facing. It is cut best with a *very sharp* xacto knife. White or yellow glue are best for attaching foamcore to itself, though you may find that hot glue will harden much quicker and hold pieces in gravity defying positions.

Foamcore dents with ridiculous ease, so you must be careful to not put your weight on it. Elbows are notorious offenders. You will be using simple **BUTT** joints, where one piece rests against the flat surface of another. Do not use large amounts or globs of glue. Neatness is essential to the successful craft of this material.

Your construction should be as exactly **PROPORTIONATE** to the original painting, and should not exceed an area of 2 square feet (288 square inches). Multiply height by width in inches to figure this out. Somewhere in the 14" x 18" range is what we are looking for. You will soon receive information about phase two of the project.

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(RE)PAINTING THE CONSTRUCTED PAINTING

In three dimensional work (as in three dimensional living) there is a greater complexity to the phenomena and perception of color and value than is present in two dimensions. In flatland, space and form are only illusory, while in the third dimension they exist (along with light) as real entities. As you consider the painting of your construction, you will not be able to rethink or alter the size or shape of its individual forms, their relationship and physical distance from one another, or the light that will be present, reflecting off its surfaces, to make it visible to the eye.

There are a myriad of ways and systems that have been codified to classify and study color. Johannes Itten's *The Art of Color* is one of the most respected and best. His approach is to see colors in relation (and necessarily contrast) to one another. It would be good for you to look through and try to get a good handle on his ideas.

Before you begin painting, you should have an excellent understanding of your construction and its inherent physical relationships. So, as before, you must spend significant time *looking* and really *seeing* your unpainted forms. Your task in this phase of the project is to use your growing understanding of color and its nature to *change our perception* of your construction's internal relationships and structure.

Process

While you are NOT recreating the original painting, you may look to the original color palette for ideas of how to paint your structure. Or, you may choose a completely different set of colors. I would suggest you not be completely arbitrary in your selection of colors, and do not settle for color as it comes from the tube. Do not paint patterns or give texture to planes, but rather, paint them cleanly and with as little *painterliness* as possible. If you want to shift color on a single plane, do so in a gradual and even gradient.

As you work to change our perception of your construction, you should consider all three of the following. ONE: Change our perception of the *spatial* relationship between elements in the painting (make them seem further away or closer together). TWO: Change the *weight* or perceived weight of elements in your painting. THREE: Change the apparent *size* of elements (make them seem bigger or smaller).

Materials

I will provide primer and acrylic paint. I would suggest you bring your own brushes, as there are limited numbers in the studio. *It is essential that you use all materials sparingly and economically.* Do not leave used brushes out of water, as they will quickly be ruined, and close all tubes and cans of paint so it does not get dried up. You can save paint you have mixed (for a limited time) by sprinkling it with a bit of water and covering it with saran wrap.