

ART 233: Drawing One
Instructor: Mandy Keathley

Project 1: WHITE STILL LIFE
Language of Light and Dark

One method artists have used to organize space in a painting or drawing is to observe the way natural light illuminates objects. By manipulating value and contrast, the artist establishes a logical sequence for the viewer's eye to follow and creates the illusion of three dimensions within a two dimensional piece. Illusionistic representation is but one of many visual languages an artist may choose from to express his or her meaning. Value refers to the continuum of darks and lights from black to white. Between black and white, there are an infinite number of grays, not just a single gray. The articulation of many different intermediate values will help you create spatial depth. You can visualize the drawing as a series of planes which recede from the picture plane.

Values are read in relation to one another, so you must work on the whole composition at once; changing the value in one area will affect the perception of adjacent areas. Contrast refers to the relationship between adjacent values. A high contrast between dark and light (values far apart on the gray scale) will make objects appear clearer and more distinct and thus will appear to come forward. Areas of low contrast (adjacent grays which are very close in value) will appear indistinct and further away.

Working on still lifes with strong directional light will help you to organize the space of the drawing. Depending on your viewing position relative to the angle of the light source, objects may or may not be both closer to you and closer to the light. There will always be some negotiation between the lights and darks you observe and what you know about creating an illusion. Remember drawing isn't a direct recording, it is a translation and transformation of what you see.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Focus on building a space for the objects to be in. How will you frame your view? Including the front, back and at least one side edge of the table will assist you in establishing the space.
2. Use the full range of value available to you. The still life is low contrast; the drawing will not be. Because everything is relative, it is the darks, that will make the light visible.
3. Identify foreground, middle ground and background within your drawing. In order to make the illusion of space you will apply the variables differently in each space. In addition to value contrast,
 - Distinct vs. indistinct edges: things closer to you will have clearer edges
 - Active vs. passive: greater activity in your marks will make a focal point and bring something forward.

HOMEWORK

- o 2 drawings in your notebook
- o Use the full page. Each drawing based on a view of where you live.
- o Using your softer (B) pencils; fill in the whole page scribbling and erase back (vinyl eraser) to block in the composition. Then you can work additively and subtractively to expand the value range.
- o Focus on location and scale to describe the space and the objects within it. Don't get caught up in details.