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2D-Design Project: Color Transcription

Color is an important element in any work of visual art or design, whether it is a painting made out of oil paints or a page on a website that has been designed with a computer. Color helps distinguish objects or areas in an image. For example: the apple is red, which is next to a cream vase, which are both on a light brown table. But artists and designers use color for more than just differentiation. Artist thinks of color as a powerful element of composition, and modulate descriptive colors slightly here and a little there to create dynamic images.

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The Impressionists were pioneers in manipulating the color of perceived objects for the sake of compositional interest. They observed that the local-descriptive color of objects actually looked different depending on atmospheric qualities and light. They recorded these difference in their paintings. Eventually ,they also began inventing color completely with more freedom from any objective perceptions they were making of the 'real world.'

For this project we will make a color transcription/study of an impressionist painting or a painting that is related to impressionist painting. Each student will be asked to choose a reproduction of a painting from those that are provided. Students will draw a grid over the reproduction in pencil and then create copy of this same grid, maybe slightly larger, onto a piece of bristol board, in pencil. The next step is to paint a color in each of the squares. Since there will often be multiple colors in one square, students should choose the color that seems to be the most important in terms of the overall compositional matrix of colors. Squares will likely have to be repainted multiple times.

By the end of this assignment students will to experience how artists modify the perceived color of objects in order to create dynamic compositional patterns and relationships. As students translate the impressionist works into gridded squares, devoid of representational details, they will notice some of the underlying abstract compositional qualities that color serves. For example an artist may paint a bush brown but add a little more red to it to create more unity or variety.

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