

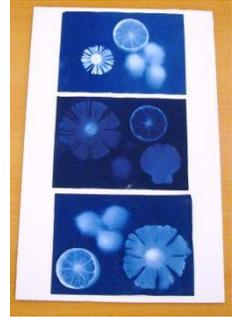
LESSON PLAN: Contrast in Light & Shadows

By Cynthia Lofquist, June 2013

Learn about contrasts and the value scale in art and create a sun-printed image.

Key questions / ideas

Introduce the concepts of **contrast** and the **value scale**. One of the basic Principles of Design, **contrast** is the dramatic effect created by opposites in art: dark and light, bright and dull, large and small, focused and blurry, busy and static, smooth and rough, etc. Discuss the Rubin's Vase optical illusion, and introduce the concepts of negative and positive space (this simple illusion devised by Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin can be perceived as both a vase or as the profiles of two human faces gazing at one another; this is often considered to be one of the best examples of an optical illusion).



Discuss and identify how shadows are created by manipulating light. Talk about sun position, weather, and nature.

- What is a **shadow**, and how is it made?
- Who can name a source of **light**?
- What does the word **contrast** mean?
- Has anyone used the sun to make an image before?

Objectives

DEMONSTRATION: Use a flashlight to demonstrate shadow casting in the classroom and give everyone a turn to participate. Look at some photographic negatives, and the positive image as printed from the enlarger. Photography uses light to capture images, and we only have a few photographs out on view in the museum at any given time due to the sensitivity of the paper. If the paper is exposed to sunlight over time, the images start to fade.

We will enjoy a museum tour exploring works of art that have **silhouettes**, **shadows** and **highlights**; we will investigate several works of art that have a strong contrast between the foreground and background, and discuss **contrasts** in the **value scale** (light to dark). We will see how artists use light and shadow to create drama, contrast and movement in their work.

We will complete a studio project outside using light sensitive paper, natural and human made objects, sunlight and water. Instead of a dark shadow, our images will be white where the sun does not touch the paper, and shades of lighter color where the sun is only partly blocked. The **negative space** around the objects will turn darker when the sunlight hits it. Each student will select a handful of objects from the plates and bins to use in their artworks, and place their selected objects in an individual Ziploc baggie (assistants will bring the materials and distribute each baggie to respective students after the demonstration). Students will plan their compositions, taking into consideration that they will be making 3 artworks that will function as a series. Students will arrange their 3 prints and attach them to the foam core.

Vocabulary

Value (light, shadow)
Silhouette

Contrast
Negative / positive space

Materials needed

Nature Print paper (Blue with white)

Variety of items to block sunlight with varying translucency (pebbles, sea shells, buttons, silk flower petals, marbles and glass disks, plastic beads, plastic lime slices from floral, plastic lids, twigs and leaves etc.)

With advanced notice, students may bring in one sandwich bag full of small items to class (like silverware or glassware, jewelry, hair accessories, keys, etc.).

Plastic tub with water

Masking tape

Drawing paper 5" x 7"

Paper towels

Cardboard panels, one per student

Glue dots

T-pins (4 per student)

Foam core 10" x 17" for mounting

Zip lock baggies (gallon sized)

Vase / face worksheet

Hands-on Tour Elements: mirror, pencils and paper, snapshots w/ developed film negatives

Assessment: Set out the finished artworks in a group, and talk about the compositions.

Which works have the most contrast? How did the different objects work for you?

TIPS: Work in a reserved room inside the Carlsen Center near the entryway. Toward the end of the tour, an assistant can go and fill the tub with water and meet the class outside near the CC south entrance when they are finished with the tour; this entrance has easy access to the restrooms for a water source.

Lay out 10 of the gallon-sized Ziploc baggies (label one baggie per student, write each student's name with marker on masking tape) and secure each of them to the ground with a handful of pebbles.*

Students will compose their object elements directly on their sun print paper pinned to a cardboard panel in the interior room next to the sunlit area of the sidewalk. Line up and take the compositions outdoors and let it sit still. NOTE: It takes a few minutes to expose the paper to the sun ...it is ready for the water bath when the paper turns white. The images appear in the water bath as negative, white where the sun was blocked and dark blue where the sun hit the paper fully. Prints will darken over time, with the image becoming more defined.

The assistant may dump the water in the grass and refill it in the restroom as needed.

When the children are finished with their 3rd prints, the instructor will walk them back to the classroom.

Assistants will stack each child's 3 works with paper towels to blot in between. The artworks must be sealed in the baggies when they are brought inside (NO open moisture is allowed to pass through the museum lobby, rule goes for food and drink as well).

The assistants will distribute the prints and students will secure the artworks as triptychs on the foam core with the glue dots or double stick tape.

*Even a slight breeze can blow around the artworks or materials. Use a button or a pebble to secure silk flowers and leaves while the paper is exposed to the sun. Assistants, use handfuls of pebbles to secure the papers while they are drying on the baggies.

Tour artwork images:



Jerry Uelsmann (American, b. 1934)
Untitled, 1969
Gelatin silver print
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990.13



Nick Cave (American, b. 1959)

Soundsuit, 2011

Buttons, wire, bugle beads, basket, upholstery and mannequin

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012.01

Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation



Paul Anthony Smith (American, b. 1988)
Ras, 2013
Unique picotage on pigment print
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013.11
Gift of the H Tony and Marti Oppenheimer Foundation



Diego Romero (American Indian, Cochiti Pueblo, b. 1964)

Dancing Coyotes, 2007

Earthenware

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.46



Clement Meadmore (Australian-American b. 1929 - d. 2005)

Always, 1992

Painted aluminum

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994.05