Shallow Fields and continued Figure Ground Manipulation

Texture versus non-texture: If we look at the floor immediately in front of us, we can see the various stains and marks the have accumulated. If we look across the room at the same floor, we do not see the same detail. This is in part due to the fact that fewer of our optical receptors are picking out the detail. In addition, if we look at greater distances outside (looking at the library or the mountains) we encounter increasing obscuring “haze” or atmosphere. Especially outside, this is the result of light scatter and loss of focus. Since birth, we have equated this loss of detail with increased distance.

Sharply defined texture is to be created by high contrast value and relatively large forms. Define smoother surfaces by use of smaller forms, or by use of smoother transitions.

1) Use charcoal or black acrylic (or gouache) to create a bold pattern with elements no larger than one inch on a side on an 8 ½ by 11 piece of Bristol paper. You may lay out a delicate grid with hard graphite pencil, non-photographic blue pencil, or disappearing ink. Apply fixative or allow paint to dry and make multiple copies of this pattern. Keep two copies of your pattern in your notebook and trade with classmates until you have ten pages of photocopied patterns. Arrange these in your notebook in order from most assertive (forward in appearance) to least assertive (apparent recession.)

2) Using charcoal, graphite, or paint, create a pattern which is smaller than the one above. Rather than soft charcoal use harder types delicately applied. If using paint, use gray rather than black. Make ten copies of these. Trade with classmates and arrange them in your notebook from apparent nearness to far.

3) Using cut copies of the materials created above compose an 11 x 8 inch image in which one layer of forms appears to be in front of a second layer. Both layers are to appear flat and parallel too the viewer. For example, if you were standing in front of a typical store window and lettering was on the glass. The goal is a clear sensation of space. Make adjustments to the edges of either the foreground or background patterns to clarify the space. Clarify edges as needed to provide effective closure of forms instead of ambiguity.

4) Turn a notebook page on its side and create a landscape in which the progression from near to far is defined by selected pieces of the paper created in one and two. Place a single (notional) object in that environment, and make it seem to be at a middle distance but clearly not the same as the environment.

5) Distorting geometrically: Cross-contour drawing is a method of analyzing and drawing forms in space when drawing from objects. It can enhance the sense of space possible in conventional crosshatching by helping artists “follow the form.” Draw an inverted “U” shape on your paper. Using a compass or dividers, or simply marking a small increment on a piece of paper, “step” off your marked distance along the length of the “U.”
Using a drafting triangle draw lines straight down from those marks. These should be close together in places and further apart in others. Copy this “drawing” three times.

Fill the spaces between the marks using markers or paint. There should be wide and narrow stripes. Examine the effect of these stripes. What seems to come forward?

Using a second copy of the drawing, use different values so the broader stripes are filled with lighter value. How does this compare with the previous study?

Copy these images and share them with classmates.

One of these images should appear to bulge, and the other recede into the paper. Make copies of these pages and cut out a silhouette of an easily understood form. Place the other page behind this “hole” and move it to experimental positions. When you have a satisfactory result, glue the pieces in place and write notes about its effect.

Three layers of cross-contour lines describing volume.