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INTRODUCTION

From Art Fundamentals I – The Elements of Design
In the first portfolio, the “Elements of Design”, we were introduced to the key elements of design in art: Line, Shape, Space, Texture, Colour and Pattern.

These elements are the basic components which the artist uses either separately or in combination to create a visual image. They form the basic visual language of art.

Art Fundamentals II - The Principles of Design
An artist, having planned some of the basic elements of an artwork, then has a choice on how he or she wishes to compose the artwork.

Why would he or she even have to consider this?

A piece of art, as we saw in the first portfolio, is the artist’s way of communicating an experience or an emotion. In making an artwork the artist uses their skill, creativity and often their personal intuition, to construct the piece in a way that communicates their vision effectively.

The artist will usually arrange or organise their chosen elements within an artwork so as to give it the emotional or aesthetic quality that they intend to convey or explore. This is the composition of the artwork.

Composition:
The composition of an artwork refers to the arrangement of the different elements of art within an artwork. Because composition is so integral to the concept of art, many people have started to use this term generally to refer to a piece of art, i.e. – “Can I see your new composition?”

Just as elements of art are selected to contribute to the overall feeling of the piece, so artists use the principles of art in arranging these elements to further achieve the feelings or ideas they wish to convey or explore.

Form, Content and Process
It’s important to remember that all of these principles of design are very much concerned with the formal aspect of the work, as opposed to the content, but for an art-work to be successful, they need to be working together, and there should be a strong relationship between the formal aspects of the work, as outlined in the Art Fundamentals Portfolios, and the meaning or feeling an artist is trying to convey.

It's worth briefly noting that the way a work is made, the process that an artist undertakes, is also an important factor in determining how these elements of design are deployed, and how they relate to the artist's intentions.
This Portfolio
The aim of Art Fundamentals II is to introduce students to these seven elements of design by discussing them in relation to seven different artworks (all by local and locally-based artists), which have been selected as strong examples of these elements in practice. The portfolio begins with brief definitions of each of the principles before looking at each of the artworks in detail.
THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN
Understanding the principles of design is extremely useful to an artist in planning their composition. By the same token, the principles of design can be used by the viewer of an artwork to understand and to clearly articulate what an artist is trying to communicate.

A work of art is often both a combination of aesthetic sensitivity and intellectual order. In this portfolio we will be talking about the principles of design that achieve visual ordering as intended by the artist.

Here are summaries for each of the design principles, some of which overlap and relate to one another (as well as the elements from Art Fundamentals I)

Unity
Unity refers to the cohesive quality that makes an artwork feel complete and finished. Unity in a work of art gives it the feeling that all the elements in the work relate to each other in a compatible way, to form a unified whole.

Unity can be achieved through the effective and consistent use of any of the elements, for example consistency of shape and color are powerful tools that can create coherence.

Balance
Balance refers to the distribution of visual equilibrium of the elements that causes the total image to have a certain symmetry or agreement between all the elements.

Balance can be:
Symmetrical - elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other.

Asymmetrical – elements in each side are different but still achieve balance, i.e. a large shape is asymmetrically balanced with several smaller ones.

Radial – similar elements are arranged around or emerge from a central point

Repetition
Repetitive elements, for example colours, shapes or lines, can create a degree of harmony within a piece of art. Repetition may, through the principle of emphasis, lead to the dominance of a particular element, or may assist in visual movement through a work. Repetition is a tool to intensify a particular feeling or idea.

Movement
Movement is used to draw the viewer's eye around the composition, as well as to create interest or an actual sense of visual movement in the work. Artists often arrange parts of an image to create a sense of motion within the image, for example in visual linking, similarity or physical proximity in lines, shapes, forms, and textures.
Movement also refers a way of combining elements of art to produce the look of action. In certain works there may be movement due to a representation or suggestion of motion.

Emphasis
Emphasis gives significance or importance to a part of an artwork, and is used by an artist to control and direct attention to a centre of interest within the artwork. This can be achieved when artists give prominence to colour, shapes, or other elements in their work.

Emphasis is important because it highlights the emotional or narrative significance of parts of a work. If nothing is highlighted, it implies that everything within the work is of equal importance. Repetition, movement and contrast can be used to give emphasis.

Variety
Variety refers to the differences that occur within a work of art that add visual interest and prevent monotony. An artist may use diverse colours, shapes, lines or textures to increase the visual interest in an artwork. He or she may also achieve this by contrasting or elaborating elements in a composition.

Contrast
Contrast occurs when elements are repeated in a way that makes them appear different, or through striking differences within a composition, for example, by having warm and cool colours, or straight lines and curved lines. Like variety, contrast creates visual excitement and can make a work visually compelling to a viewer.
ISKANDAR JALIL and UNITY

Belanga (Big curry pot) (1995)
Local stoneware clay
H24 x W30cm x B30 cm

Key Points:
Unity in a work of art gives it the feeling that all the elements in the work relate to each other in harmony, to form a complete, coherent whole.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of unity in terms of its circularity and depth, its presence in the space, and the way it links to social and ethnic traditions. The combination of these interrelated elements unifies the artwork.

About the Artist:
With a reputation as Singapore’s finest ceramicist, Iskandar Jalil is has been willing to spend decades perfecting the simplest and most basic skills of pottery. “Pottery is a long process,” he has said, "You cannot hurry it. To just get the basics of the craft right, you need 4 to 6 years. To find your own style you need another 5 to 10 years. And to become a good potter requires another 10 to 20 years."

When he was in his early 30’s he was awarded a scholarship to study ceramics in Japan’s traditional centre of pottery, Nagoya. Since then he has traveled extensively around the world and the region, showing his work, and gaining inspiration from other countries and other ceramic traditions.

He was finally declared a “Master Potter” by his 78-year-old teacher in 2001, when he himself was 61. It had taken him 30 years to reach that goal.

A dedicated teacher since the late-50’s, he has continued to teach in Singapore and in other countries after he became famous as a potter. He was awarded the Cultural Medallion, Singapore’s highest arts award in 1988.

Iskandar’s pottery is about simplicity. He is preoccupied with the most basic, everyday objects – the bowl, the cup and the pot. All of Iskandar’s works are linked by their circular, spherical form, which is of course, the essence of pottery – the act of spinning and controlling the potter’s wheel.

Out of many pieces of pottery, he will choose only a few to become ‘finished’ works. This is an important element that defines Iskandar as an artist – he doesn’t just make
hundreds of bowls, which he could then sell in quantity. Rather, he only finishes very few – and these are his artworks.

He prefers the clay of his finished works, to have a rough, earthy texture and to be painted with natural colours. It is clear his work is very rooted in a sense of history, place and society.

**About the Artwork:**
“The spherical form is synonymous with me – a hallmark. It represents human traditions and my vision of the globe.” Iskandar Jalil

This pot is one of Jalil’s favourite objects, held in his personal collection until now. It’s round and deep, and it links to Asian traditions of cooking and preparing food. This bowl is named *Belanga*, Malay for Big Curry Pot, typically used in old-fashioned Malay kitchens for simmering curries for many hours over a hot flame. The pot is **symbolic** of these traditions, and it strongly suggests a notion of **unity** linked with images of domestic living, family, food and **community**.

Jalil has chosen to paint it with earthy, natural colours in a series of thick lines. Simple and striking, they give the pot a timeless feel, and emphasize its circularity. If you look inside the pot, you can see more circular ridges in the clay, forming a perfect spiral. There is **unity** in this consistency of making the circle a key part of the pots structure and design.

Pottery is a craft that involves shaping and creating a form from soft-clay while it is in motion on the wheel. It requires the potter to focus mentally and physically in order to get it right in that brief instant of time. The process of pottery is very much about achieving a special moment of **unity**, between the potter, the clay and the form of the finished pot.

Because of this process no piece of pottery can ever truly be the same. Knowing how it was created, and how unique it is, gives the work a special kind of presence in the space where it is placed.

The ladle or spoon that he has placed on top of the pot, which has been handcrafted from natural materials (wood, coconut shell), is a deliberate gesture that signals the completeness of the artwork.

Therefore, Jalil’s work exemplifies the principle of **unity** in terms of its circularity and depth, its presence in the space, and the way it links to social and ethnic traditions. Furthermore, all of these elements work in harmony in this work.

**Questions:**
**Primary 2**
What is this kind of pot used for? Where would you imagine this pot might be used? Is it old or new? Do you know how pots like this are made? What shape is it? This pot is a good example of **unity** in an artwork, which means that it is complete and whole - how is this pot complete and whole? If it had sharp edges would it have **unity**?
Primary 5
How would using a potter’s wheel affect the shape of the pot? This pot is a good example of unity in an artwork, which means that it is complete and whole - how is this pot complete and whole? How does the way a pot like this is used (to cook a meal for a family) relate to unity? Why is this pot a work of art and not just an ordinary pot?

Secondary 1
How do you think the way it was made, on a potter’s wheel, affects how it looks and feels overall?

Secondary 3
Do you think this is a modern pot or a traditional pot? How do you think this sense of tradition relates to unity?
Key Points:

Balance refers to the distribution of visual equilibrium of the elements that causes the total image to have a certain symmetry or agreement between all the elements.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of balance in terms of the equilibrium that is reached through the artist’s manipulation of the elements he uses – shape, weight, colour and texture. Although each side of the work is by no means identical, they are similar enough in their use of shape and weight to say that it achieves symmetrical balance.

About the Artist:

Born in 1945 in Singapore, Poon was educated at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. He went to England to study, between 1967 and 1971 and then graduated from the Byam Shaw School of Art in London.

Labeled as part of the ‘Second Generation’ of Singapore artists, who were largely characterized by having gone abroad to study, he began his career as an abstract painter, before moving on to sculpture.

Poon is the recipient of numerous awards, the most outstanding of which is the Cultural Medallion awarded by the Singapore Government in 1991.

His impressive range of large-scale, site-specific sculptures, reliefs and paintings are located around Singapore. In 2002, his first international commission was permanently installed in Beijing at the China International City Sculpture exhibition and symposium.

As a painter Poon was concerned with space, and the organization of lines and colour. His paintings were known for their absolute precision in terms of shape.

He has always been concerned with exploring form in his work, as opposed to concrete or representational meanings. He is fascinated with the relationship between form, line, colour and space, and is acclaimed for being able to maintain a fine balance within these components.
Currently, Poon is working with strips of aluminum, and an essential part of the process is the way that he manipulates the metal into the shapes he desires.

About the Artwork:
*Ribbons* is from Poon’s new sculpture series. It’s a sculptural relief, which means in this case that it’s a sculpture that projects out from the wall where it is mounted.

To create the piece, Poon has hand-twisted the strips of metal into his desired form, then the metal is chemically treated, after that the colours are applied. A full rainbow of colours has been painstakingly stenciled onto the surface to create the patterns that we can see.

The sculpture is the result of patience and precise effort, and this is reflected in the work. But in light of the title it is a very dynamic work, the metal appears to be a frozen ribbon flowing and rippling in the wind.

Having cast his ribbon in metal, Poon has also designed it to achieve a level of balance. In keeping with his subject, he hasn’t tried to make a perfect symmetrical work, rather *Ribbons* is asymmetrical, but it still maintains a balance, not just between its two halves, which are roughly similar, but also in the distribution across the work of lines, curved and straight, and the angles at which the metal has been sculpted. The finely stenciled patterns of colour have also been consistently balanced on all sides of the metal.

Questions:
**Primary 2**
What do you think this looks like? Why? It’s called *Ribbons* – why do you think that is? What do you think it’s made of? How do you think it was made? If you split it in half would both sides be the same? It isn’t symmetrically balanced (like *Belanga*), but this artwork does have balance, it doesn’t have to be perfectly equal to be balanced. List some objects (in the classroom) that you think have balance. Which of these are symmetrical and which of these are not?

**Primary 5**
If an artwork is hard to make, does that make it a better piece of art? It isn’t symmetrically balanced (like *Belanga*), but this artwork does have balance, describe the ways you think this might be balanced. If you think it isn’t balanced say why.

**Secondary 1**
It’s called *Ribbons*; describe the difference between a ribbon and a strip of metal. If I held up a ribbon in the air when there is a breeze, would it be balanced? Why do you think he has he made something that looks like a ribbon out of metal?

**Secondary 3**
Compare this to the other sculpture we have looked at (*Belanga* by Iskandar Jalil), are there any big similarities or differences? Is one more balanced than the other? What do you think the Anthony Poon’s intention was in terms of the balancing of *Ribbons*?
OM MEE AI and REPETITION

Untitled (Yellow) (2003)
Oil on canvas
H116 x W116 x D9.4 cm

Key Points:
Repetitive elements, for example colours, shapes or lines, can create a degree of harmony within a piece of art. Repetition is a tool to intensify a particular feeling or idea.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of repetition in its recurring grids of yellow and oranges lines, which are used to create a sense of depth, to explore ideas about, form, colour, reality and the modern world.

About the Artist:
Born in Korea in 1959, Om received a Bachelors of Fine Arts with High Distinction from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) conducted at LASALLE-SIA College of Fine Arts.

In 2003, Om was awarded the Juror’s Choice Award in the Philip Morris Group of Companies Singapore Art Awards and the Category Winner of the Abstract Medium in the 22nd UOB Painting of the Year Competition.

Her works are held in institutional and private collections in Singapore and abroad.

The principle of repetition is very applicable across the whole body of Om’s painting. As an abstract artist her strategy has been to take the format of a square canvas (the same size nearly every time), and to build up colour fields, often from shades of a single colour, into a single block.

A lot of her work is named after colours, and as a painter this is clearly a formal and thematic concern – the way that colour can be used, the ways it creates an atmosphere and provokes many emotional reactions in her viewers.

She paints with oils that dry very quickly, then she applies several layers of glaze. Om calls this personal process and style ‘oil lacquering’. It gives the paintings a very shiny, and reflective texture.
About the Artwork:

*Untitled (Yellow)* reflects Om’s interest in the duality of traditional Asian spirituality and the modernity.

She has said that one of the effects of her ‘oil lacquering’ process is that it makes the viewer of the artwork shift their perception between the glossy surface of the work, and a deeper sense of the colours on the canvas. This is for her a kind of metaphor for the way we experience the reality of our daily lives, while sensing a spiritual world beyond that reality.

In this painting, Om creates endlessly repeating grids of yellows and oranges, lines and shapes, which give the work an extraordinary feeling of depth. She has said that she wants her paintings to be meditative (which links back to her interest in Asian spirituality) and calming.

The grids are also meant to introduce a note of modernity, a hint of the harder shapes and arrangements of contemporary industry and technology.

**Repetition** is therefore a formal concern of Om’s, and by using it she intends to affect the viewers of her work in a number of ways.

Questions:

**Primary 2**  
This painting is named after a colour, which one do you think it is? How does this painting make you feel? Why? Would you like to have it in your home? Why do you think the painter repeated these colours and lines? List some things that are repetitive.

**Primary 5**  
What does this repetition make you feel when you look at the painting? Why would an artist want to make a painting that is repetitive?

**Secondary 1**  
Why do you think the painter repeated these colours and lines? The surface of the painting is very glossy, why do you think she made it that way? Does the glossiness work together with the repetition of the colours and lines? What else is in this painting apart from colours? (Grids and lines) What do they add to it? Do they make you think of anything? Roads? Maps? Walls? Buildings? The Matrix? How does repetition relate to the modern world?

**Secondary 3**  
Do you think this artwork is using repetition to reflect the world or make us see it differently?
ERIC CHAN and MOVEMENT

Getting Across (2002)
Oil on canvas
H100 x W100 cm

Key Point:
Movement is used to draw the viewer's eye around the composition, as well as to create interest or an actual sense of visual movement in the work. Artists often arrange parts of an image to create a sense or suggestion of motion within the image.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of movement because it’s subject is an animal (a rooster) captured in mid-movement - the artist uses light; blurry strokes of paint to evoke the fluttering, restlessness of the animal.

About the Artist:
Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1975, Eric Chan studied at LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts in Singapore, and at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) where he attained both a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art and a Master of Fine Art (Painting).

The multi-talented artist established his own design company, Black Sheep Creatives, in 1997, and is also involved in art education, lecturing part-time at LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts. In addition, Chan is a talented dancer, and is active in the performing arts both as a dancer and a designer.

Chan is well known for his Impressionistic style, whereby he takes a recognizable image and through his painting process creates a blurring effect, which is dream-like and very atmospheric.

Chan’s art is very much about capturing a specific instant in time, but he isn’t interested in creating a realistic representation of that moment. Rather as an artist he intervenes to apply a kind of filter over the image through his painting, which removes it from reality – blurring, softening, subtly altering the contours of the shapes of the subject of his paintings.

His process often begins with a photograph that he has taken himself. He will then paint the outlines of that image onto his canvas, before filling it in with oil paints in extremely quick, light strokes. As a result the finished works are highly dynamic, suggesting movement.
Nature and animals have been key subjects of his paintings, notably pigs, horses, plants and flowers. Chan's style is admired for its ability to convey that these are living things, not merely flattened out representations, and that they exist beyond the frame of his paintings.

About the Artwork:
In Getting Across, a rooster is depicted with an illusion of depth and movement, even though the canvas is itself a static, two-dimensional object.

Eric Chan uses tones and visual texture to achieve that sense of movement. His light, quick application of paint lends itself perfectly to painting a feathery rooster in a state of restless animation.

Hazy and out of focus, the painting is like an image from a film that has been placed on 'pause' – as you look at it, you can sense what has gone before and what will happen next.

The nuances of light and dark in the foreground are very intriguing; Chan uses these tonal differences to bring the subject to life, and to keep the viewer's eyes moving around the piece.

The title Getting Across is also evocative. It might even be a reference to the old joke – “Q: Why did the chicken cross the road? A: To get to the other side”. Again it emphasises the importance of movement in this work.

Questions:
Primary 2
What does the painting show? Is this rooster standing still or moving? How can you tell? Why do you think its called Getting Across? How has the painter tried to make this rooster look like it's moving? When you see an animal or a person moving quickly, can you see them properly? Does this painting capture what its like to look at movement?

Primary 5
What do you think is happening in this painting? Does this painting capture what its like to look at movement? How has the painter tried to give his painting a sense of movement? Is it a sharp image or slightly blurred? Do these techniques work? Why would a painter want to show movement?

Secondary 1
What do you think is happening in this painting? Paintings often show things that are still and clear (plants, people, landscapes), this one is different. Do you think it captures the way an animal moves? What would it have been like if it was sharply in focus and clear? How does the movement in the painting affect the way you look at it? Does it make your eyes move quickly around the painting?

Secondary 3
Why didn’t the painter just take a photo? What can a painting show that a photograph cannot? (this could lead on to discussing Impressionism and the way
that style attempts to reflect visual memories in a dream-like fashion) Do you think the painter has emphasised the sense of movement in this painting? Does that work in unity with movement of the rooster?
CHNG NAI WEE and EMPHASIS

Acrylic on canvas
H238 x W190 cm

Key Points:
Emphasis gives significance or importance to a part of an artwork, and is used by an artist to control and direct attention to a centre of interest within the artwork. This can be achieved when artists give prominence to colour, shapes, or other elements in their work.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of emphasis in its strong use of the colour yellow, which is applied in several shades and contrasted against patches of brown colour, to intensify the atmosphere and sensuality of the painting.

About the Artist:
“Chng Nai Wee’s art is characterised by inventiveness and imagination. It is also imbued with forcefulness and purpose. In encountering his works, we dwell on the methods employed in making and are engrossed in the process of transformation”
T.K. Sabapathy

Unusually, Chng is both a practicing eye surgeon and a highly respected artist. His interest in art began when he was at school, and while he trained to become a doctor, his art training has been more informal, as he has enrolled himself in a number of art courses and traveled around the world extensively.

He has said that he is “constantly reinventing [him]self : always questioning and probing ... hungry always for knowledge and skills ... never ceasing to be in the quest for the new…”

In 1991, at 21, Chng became the youngest artist to stage a solo show at the Singapore National Museum, and has since won several awards for his art, including the Young Artist Award in 1999. His art has been shown in exhibitions in Singapore and worldwide.

The first art-works Chng exhibited were multi-screen video installations, and he has always had a very strong interest in technology, science and new media in relation to his art practice. Because he is an eye doctor, issues of perception are
crucial to his art. He is particularly fascinated with biological patterns that occur under the microscope – such as cell formations and organisms.

He is also a self-taught painter, and he looks at painting in the same way he approaches working with video and digital art-works. The tools and the information are widely available, so you just have to practice and discover your own personal creativity through how you use them.

About the Artwork:
*Woods and Cacophony In Yellow* is part of a new and ongoing series of playful paintings that Chng is embarking on. The title itself recalls the woods Chng was immersed in when he was a soldier in NS - dark and dense, full of decaying bark, draping vines, and buzzing with insects that create the cacophony of the title.

Although multi-coloured in appearance, the emphasis here is on the colour yellow – there’s a great deal of it. When you first look at the work, yellow stands out, far more than what the artist might actually be depicting. Yellow is Chng’s favourite colour, and he applies it freely, spontaneously and provocatively.

Yellow creates a certain emotional state and atmosphere. The dominance of the colour and its varying intonations gives the painting an exultant, carefree feeling; just as the colour is itself woven around the form of the tree. It’s worth noting that this is a very large painting.

This feeling is given further emphasis by the contrasting brown colours, which appear solid and dark against the playful yellows. The painting also conveys a feeling for nature, in its texture and sensuality as well as the patterns that it creates.

Chng himself notes of this painting: “There’s a certain sensuality in this painting and it is because of the yellow colour.”

Questions:
**Primary 2**
What do you think this painting shows? What colour do you think is the emphasis of this painting? This painting is called *Woods and Cacophony in Yellow*, why do you think the artist gave it this title? (First explain to those who don’t know what a cacophony is)? Why might you name a painting after a noise? Can you see how the painter wants you to notice the colour yellow? It’s his favourite colour (is it any of the students’ favourite colour?) and he has chosen to emphasise that colour. If he had painted it in dark green or bright red how would the painting have felt different?

**Primary 5**
When you think of woods, what colours do you think about? Why do you think he has chosen to emphasise yellow? What kind of mood does it create for you? How do the things an artist chooses to place emphasis upon effect a finished painting?

**Secondary 1**
The painter is also an eye surgeon, how might that affect the way he thinks about painting? Do you think his understanding of how eyes see objects might help him
think about emphasis in his paintings (Could talk a little about how everyone sees and experiences colour differently)?

Secondary 3
Can you link emotional states to colours? Give some examples? Remember the earlier yellow painting (Untitled (yellow) by Om Mee Ai), can you describe how they are different in terms of emphasis?
PACITA ABAD and VARIETY

Burnt by the Sun (2003)
Mixed media on Hand-made paper
W118 X H 83 cm

Key Points:
Variety refers to the differences within a work of art that increase visual interest, such as using diverse colours, shapes, lines or textures. He or she may also achieve this by contrasting or elaborating elements in a composition.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of variety in its vibrant use of colours, textures and materials. Although it has a repeated circular motif, they are of several sizes; each circle is different, creating a richly diverse and visually exciting artwork.

About the Artist:
Born in the Philippines in 1946, Pacita Abad holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of the Philippines and a Master of Arts degree from the University of San Francisco, California. She studied painting at the Corcoran School of Art, Washington D.C. and The Art Students League in New York City.

Abad considers herself an “artist, traveler and social activist”. Having traveled widely throughout her life, Pacita infuses her art with cultural and ethnic inspirations drawn from her journeys through the region and globally.

For the last 10 years Abad has been living in Indonesia and Singapore, but has been traveling widely around the region as well, discovering rural places from which she draws her inspiration. She was only the fourth artist to participate in Singapore Tyler Print Institute’s (STPI) Visiting Artists Program, where she created 57 print and paper pulp pieces.

She was also asked to paint the Alkaff Bridge, which spans the Singapore River. She did this in her typically vibrant and colourful style. She says of the project: "I believe in public art and we should have more projects like this so more people can enjoy them."

Abad works mainly with paint and mixed media. She is known for painting a wide variety of subjects: nature scenes, works that she calls ‘social commentary’ – where she depicts people in poverty and unrest, and highly abstract work characterized by bright colours and dynamic shapes and patterns.
“Although I have done a tremendous amount of figurative, naturalistic and social commentary paintings”, she says "all along I have been working on abstract works incorporating different influences, experimenting with techniques, colors, textures and surfaces" Pacita Abad

This interest in experimentation, textures and surfaces can be seen in her work at STPI, where she became fascinated with the process of making the paper that could later be used to create art-works.

About the Artwork: Abad created *Burnt by the Sun* based on her public art project for the Alkaff Bridge. It’s typical of Abad in its use of vibrant colours and bold shapes which reflect her personality, her jubilation and passion for life and it conveys a palpable sense of the artist’s excitement at the diversity of life and cultures.

Circular shapes recur in the piece, but there are a variety of colours and patterns within the circles. Every circle in the work is different; each embellished with even more colours and abstracted shapes.

This variety is accentuated by the use of diverse materials such as glitter and mirrors to give a different level of texture and sensuality, and to create an impact that extends beyond a two-dimensional painting.

Questions:

**Primary 2**
What is this artwork made of? Can you list the colours you can see? What else is there apart from colours? Would you agree that this picture has a great deal of variety? How does this that variety of colours and surfaces make you feel? Happy? Sad? Why? If it didn’t have variety and all the circles were one colour, how would it change things?

**Primary 5**
Is there anything that repeats? If it didn’t have variety and all the circles were one colour, how would it change things?

**Secondary 1**
Is this a painting? Or is it something else? (Can define for them mixed media) What mood or feelings does it create? How does it do that? Do you think mixed media is a good medium for creating variety? Why? (Getting them to discuss the use of texture and other kinds of surface in mixed-media works)

**Secondary 3**
Remember *untitled (Yellow)* by Om Mee Ai, which used repetition, what are the similarities and differences between these two artworks? Is there a relationship between repetition and variety? Can they exist in the same work? What kind of atmosphere or feeling does this picture convey? Does it tell you anything about the personality of the painter? How does her use of variety in the design suggest those feelings?
CHEN KEZHAN and CONTRAST

Autumn Lotus, 2004
Chinese ink and mineral colours
69 x 137cm

Key Points:
Contrast occurs when elements are repeated in a way that makes them appear different, or through striking differences within a composition, for example, by having warm and cool colours, or straight lines and curved lines.

This artwork exemplifies the principle of contrast in the ways colours are layered, creating both delicate yet powerful areas that define the composition, as well as the painter’s use of empty, negative space.

About the Artist
"Painting is very important to me. It's my way of expressing myself. It's an abstraction of how I feel about things, and in a way, art to me is an abstraction of life." Chen Kezhan

Born in Singapore in 1959, Chen showed his interest in art at an early age when he saw his Grandfather’s Chinese art collection. Noticing his talent and curiosity, his Grand Uncle, an accomplished calligrapher, began to teach him the rigorous tradition of Chinese calligraphy.

Later, Chen was a student of the famous Shanghai School Master Fan Chang Tien, Lingnan master Chao Shaoan and calligraphist Fung Kangho, and later attended the Ecoles des Beaux Arts in Paris. He studied music there as well.

He received the Patron of the Arts award, presented by MITA Singapore in 1999; the Young Artist Award, Singapore in 1993; and the Silver Medal in the Salon des Artistes Francais in Paris in 1985.

Chen represented Singapore in the 2001 Venice Biennale. He has held many solo exhibitions internationally including Singapore, China, Japan, Korea, USA, and France. His works are held in both corporate and private collections around the world.

"I love nature. I see myself really as a gardener. In the day I garden in the garden, and at night I garden in my studio where I paint,"

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Chen has been known to sign his paintings with a stamp that means ‘Gardener’, he is very much inspired by nature and this extends onto his canvasses – representing the plant-life that he sees, and creating imaginary gardens on his canvasses.

He uses the classic medium of Chinese brushwork, and formally he is highly influenced by that style, but his work also contains Western influences, in its use of colour and shape. He has often been praised for successfully fusing together these two traditions.

About the Artwork:
“These paintings signal potentially significant contributions to reinvigorate Chinese art practices in the century.” T.K. Sabapathy

Autumn Lotus represents a continuation with a series of paintings he has created over the years which explore the colours and feelings evoked by Autumn, in particular the way that season effects nature. Other titles have included Gardening Autumn and Autumn Water, Horizontal Wave.

Chen’s work is seen as reinvigorating Chinese brush painting, with original and innovative approaches to this traditional form, and that is exemplified here by the use of colour and space in this painting and in particular the deceptively casual way he lets his ink splashes sink into the page. In this work, colours are layered, creating both delicate yet powerful areas that define the composition, and provide strong visual contrast.

Contrast is used to emphasise and bring out the tranquil, autumnal beauty of the work. It’s immediately striking that he has chosen to create a composition in which much of the canvas has been untouched by paint. This use of space as an element of the artwork is often called negative space. The emptiness of this space contrasts strongly, and draws our attention to the space occupied by the flowers.

He has also chosen to paint the flowers in two basic colours, a light brown and a green, they are both colours associated with Autumn, and yet they are also highly contrasting. He has also sparingly applied strokes of black ink, which give an impression of movement.

By using these contrasts, in a simple, almost effortless manner, Chen has created a visually compelling picture, which is both pleasurable to view and yet has a sense of absence and tranquility, and gentle, shimmering movement.

Questions:
Primary 2
What do you see in this painting? What else? (Help the students to recognise that the empty space is also a part of the composition). Can you see the contrast between the empty space and the space where he has painted the flowers? Do you think this contrast emphasises the flowers? If the painter covered the whole canvas in colours would it have the same level of contrast?
Primary 5
Can you see any other kinds of contrast? (Help students to see the brown, green and black shades) How do these colours relate to the title (discussing the colours we associate with Autumn)?

Secondary 1
This work combines calligraphic traditions with a modern style, how do you think he has done that? Do they work well together? Can you see how colours can be used as a form of contrast? What other design principles does contrast relate to?

Secondary 3
If you remember the other painting of nature that we looked at earlier (Woods and Cacophony in Yellow – Chng Nai Wee) what are the similarities and differences in terms of contrast.
Glossary
Throughout the portfolio certain key words and phrases have been highlighted in bold, these are usually terms that are commonly used in discussing and writing about art and therefore may require explanation. Many of these refer back to the principles of design which are defined on pages 3 and 4 so they are deliberately not included again here.

Abstract
Art that either distorts or transforms its subject matter so that it is no longer clearly recognizable, or is art that resists representation of anything concrete or realistic.

Cacophony
Sound or sounds that are disagreeable and harsh

Content
The subject matter, narrative or thematic concerns of an artwork.

Form/Formal concern
The characteristics of an artwork's visual elements, not subject matter or content.

Foreground
That which is in the forefront of an artwork, as opposed to the background.

Impressionist/Impressionism
A style of painting that originated in France about 1870. Paintings of casual subjects were executed outdoors using divided brush strokes to capture light and mood of a particular moment and the transitory effects of natural light and color.

Mixed-media
Artwork created with more than one type of art material.

Modernity
Pertaining to the set of political, social, economic and aesthetic ideas that characterize the modern world in the 20th Century.

Multi-screen video installations
A practice of art using TV monitors or video projection that deploys sound and image on more than one screen simultaneously.

Negative Space
Areas of an artwork which are unoccupied by shape or colour, see Positive Space.

New media
A term that is used to generally describe forms of art that primarily uses digital technology.

Perception
Pertaining to how we see and experience the external world, both physically, and psychologically.
**Positive Space**
The space in a composition that is filled with form and shape. The opposite of **Negative Space**.

**Process**
The methods or techniques through which an artwork is created.

**Relief**
Artwork that projects out or above the surface plane where it is presented or made.

**Representation**
A tangible of recognizable image or likeness of something or someone.

**Symbolic**
An artwork is symbolic if it, or a part of it, stands for or represents something else.