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WEEK 8: Module 2: Design>Shapes

Imagine you're making a pendant with a patterned veneer and don't seem to mind spending long hours preparing, designing and composing your patterns on a sheet of clay. The veneer is now finished and you have overlaid it on a base sheet. You pick up your blade and trim off the ragged edges and also the areas where the pattern didn't quite succeed. Now's the time to cut the sheet into a pendant. You had the idea of a simple shape – a triangle or a leaf-shape – at the start of the project. But, in order to keep the good work you've done, you forget about your initial idea and make a few cuts that best show off the veneer.

And so, you compromise. You fit the shape to your veneer and end up with a piece that is the result of tactical decisions. Is compromise the only solution? Often we feel that this expedient is justified and this is where we make an artistic mistake.

Design involves the choices we make to bring something into the real-world from our creative imagination – without Design, our creations would have no reality. The innovating artist does not compromise in bringing their creation to reality. They take chances.

Design, the subject of this new Module, includes the use of Line, Colour, Shape and Texture. All these elements cannot be covered in the course. Hence, we'll focus on Shape and more specifically on the shape of the contour of a piece as its creative potential is often overlooked.

Good Design integrates contour into the overall composition of the piece and uses it to communicate an intent. Let's start our exploration by looking at how other artists have designed their own contours and how these contribute to the overall success of the piece. Below is my analysis – you can view the corresponding images in the **Showcase**.

Studied accident: Kathleen Dustin

It's impossible to look at this piece without thinking of its components as found fragments of a painting now lost and which the mind busily tries to reconstruct. On first appearance the contours seem to have been cut in a slapdash way to look like broken bits. But on analysis, each contour is carefully designed in its relationship to the collective to create an asymmetrical composition reinforcing the message of accidentalness.

Prime Real-estate: Tory Hughes

A brooch offers concentrated space to tell a story. Tory makes sure she puts every bit of real estate to

work to communicate her intent. Without the scalloped edges, the landscape in this brooch would look static. Instead the curves in the frame echo the shapes of the pattern inside the piece, adding movement and life.

Clever balance: Maggie Maggio

Maggie's chosen contour is an elongated triangle. The long sides of the triangle contrast with the vertical lines, enhancing the feeling of calmness conveyed by the landscape stratifications. Replicating the lines of the inlay, the overall shape of the piece also creates a vertical rhythm that imbues the landscape with strength and power.

Fluid movement: Sandra McCaw

The sense of movement conveyed is immediate. The artist has chosen simple leaf-shapes to express her theme. The contours have been designed individually so that, when placed together, their outlines create the rhythm which evokes this movement. Fluidity is enhanced by their loose interlocking.

Arrested instability: “La Sagrada”

With its uneven texturing and the seemingly “any-which-way” orientation of its components, the piece projects a spontaneous exuberance. This message is re-enforced by the casual contours – four ovals and a circle. It is the collective arrangement of these shapes that brings the message home: the ovals seem to have stopped moving at the moment, balanced precariously on the unpredictable circle – it could move either way, itself dependent on the oval below.

Assignment

How Artists Speak Through Contour Shapes

Surf the internet and collect images of works where the Contour Shapes contribute to the overall success of the piece as shown in the Showcase. Analyse your collection and document these contributions.

Leave a comment in the Forums to let me know you have completed the assignment. Any feedback is welcome. To do this click the following link:

Go to the Forums and share your progress or ask for help. Use the following link to do this:
<http://voila.eu.com/forums/Forum/week-8-shape/>