

## WPA Art and the Visual Elements

### Objectives:

1) Students will recognize in works of art the following formal elements: visual and tactile texture; shape or contour; value. They will choose a group of WPA artworks for each category of element from the images in the ISM's WPA Collection Online Photo Gallery (<http://webdev.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/collections/wpa/>), and write a paragraph about how each artist addressed the element in his or her piece.

2) Each student will choose one element they worked with above and create a 2-D or 3-D work of art that embodies this element strongly.



Max Kahn's *Ironing* has values of black and white

**Motivation:** Artists usually have a favorite medium in which they work. Each medium has its own characteristics. For example, artists who like to work with values, that is, tints and shades of black-to-white, can choose print media or pen and ink or pencil. Artists who like to express themselves with shape and contour may create sculptures (or paint strong positive and negative shapes in two-dimension). Textures can be created in sculpture and in drawing techniques. The ultimate example of visual textures is trompe l'oeuil painting.

Define in class discussion the meaning and application of the three elements of art.



### Materials:

computer with Internet access  
pencil and paper  
art materials of the students' or teachers' choice.

Leon Garland's *Blacksmith* has lots of rectangular shapes

### Procedure:

Have the class discussion outlined in the Motivation section.

Have students view the WPA Collection Photo Gallery.

Ask them to choose one or more works of art for each of the three elements of art: texture, shape, and value.

Each student will write a paragraph about how each chosen artwork addresses an element (how the artist used the medium to enhance the

effect of the element in their work). (Be sure they list the Title and Artist's name and the medium used.)

Before they create their own artwork, students should discuss their findings of art elements, comparing and critiquing one another's observations. One work of art could be chosen to represent more than one element. Several artworks, seemingly very different, could have the same element emphasized in common.

Students will choose one element with which to create a work of art themselves with the medium of their choice.

Students will create the artwork, present it for display, and participate in a class discussion of artworks. Suggestion: Sort the artworks into groups by element, discussing any disagreements (there may be more than one opinion for each work).

Emmanuel Viviano's *Ram*  
has a smooth, shiny texture



#### **Assessment:**

Student paragraphs should reflect the definitions they learned of the chosen elements.

Class discussion is part of the assessment: viewers should somewhat agree as to what element the student was addressing and why a medium is especially appropriate for addressing an element.

The teacher and the artist will evaluate how well the student incorporated the element into the work. (Clearly, moderately, poorly) (if the last two, discuss how it could be enhanced to improve the assignment – without ruining the integrity of the work).

#### **Illinois State Board of Education Goals and Standards Addressed:**

##### **Visual Arts: Language of Arts**

**Early Elementary: 25.A.1d:** Identify the elements of line, shape, space, color and texture; the principles of repetition and pattern; and the expressive qualities of mood, emotion and pictorial representation.

**Late Elementary: 25.A.2d:** Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure ground, value and form; the principles of rhythm, size, proportion and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbol and story.

**Middle School: 25.A.3d:** Identify and describe the elements of value, perspective and color schemes; the principles of contrast, emphasis and unity; and the expressive qualities of thematic development and sequence.

**Early High School: 25.B.:** Analyze and evaluate similar and distinctive

characteristics of works in two or more of the arts that share the same historical period or societal context.