



Top to bottom: Daniel Markou; Eva Demetriou.

Creating Shop Window Displays

Martha Christopoulou

The initial idea of teaching about shop window displays came from my reading about visual culture education.

Examining visual images and cultural sites from everyday life is crucial in visual culture theory because it can enrich students' understandings about their role in identity construction.

In an effort to help my first-grade students identify visual resources in the environment surrounding the school district, I decided to design a lesson about shop window displays.

Shop Window Displays

Shop window displays combine products and messages to promote certain

items, announce sales, or welcome a season, and invite passersby to look at, desire, enter, and buy. The neat and well-ordered arrangement of goods depends on composition with regard to color schemes, materials, cultural or seasonal themes, harmony, balance, variety, and effective details to convey meaning. They also produce emotion as looking at them gives enjoyment and pleasure to the consumer. Successful displays may invite repeated contemplation and become memories of aesthetically satisfying moments.

Discussing Windows

I started by asking students if they usually look at shop window displays,

when was the last time they did so, and why they looked at them. I also asked them to describe a shop window display that impressed them. I invited them to look at some photographs I had taken of local window displays.

I asked students to observe and discuss the arrangement of the goods, composition of colors, and themes. My goal was to enable them to understand that effective shop window displays are made by tasteful, harmonious, and stylish arrangements of objects, and focus on a theme or idea.

Discussing these arrangements, students identified the convention of using mannequins or hangers to display clothes. They talked about

the use of large graphics to promote sales, bargains, special offers, or just to advertise the goods by making use of memorable mottos.

Students also talked about the creative use of and emphasis given on one or more colors and brought examples of displays they remembered. They identified and discussed the themes of the displays in the photographs I showed them, the messages they conveyed, and the purpose of their creation.

Creating Display

After discussion, I encouraged students to imagine their own shop window displays. I invited them to think

of the kinds of themes, graphics, or objects they would like to include. I gave them paper and pencils and instructed them to sketch the shop window frames and the objects in them.

Examining visual images and cultural sites from everyday life enriches students' knowledge and critical understandings about their role in identity construction.

Students used colored pencils, felt-tip markers, or thick markers and/or crayons to add color to their drawings. They could use metallic gold, silver, and colored pens as well as glitter to emphasize details and decorate their pictures. Most students painted displays of fashion stores in which clothes in bright colors were worn by mannequins, hung up on hangers, or displayed on shelves.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- observe photographs of shop windows.
- discuss the displays and their possible meanings and interpretations.
- learn basic principles of design (unity, balance, harmony, repetition, emphasis).
- reflect on how and why they look at shop window displays.
- use imagination and creative thinking in the design of their own shop window displays.

Materials

- pencils
- colored pencils
- permanent colored felt-tip markers
- crayons
- glitter
- metallic gold, silver, and colored pens
- 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) white drawing paper
- photographs of different shop window displays

Reflection Time

After students displayed their work on our "exhibition board," I invited them to recall their own visual experiences from shop window displays and compare them with their own and others' work. They traced and discussed influences on their work from the shop window displays they had seen at the past. Finally, students brainstormed and listed possible themes or objects they could use to make their displays more imaginative, exquisite, fascinating, and attractive.

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

www.wowwindowsdisplay.com

Below: Emma, grade three, Helicopter.
Right: Jackie, grade four, Hot Air Balloon.



MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Dawn Carson

I wanted to introduce my third- and fourth-grade Saturday morning art program students to the aviation murals created by Arshile Gorky. Creating their own murals after Gorky's Newark Airport aviation murals was a fun way to introduce students to Gorky, an artist who worked not far from where students live.

We began our project by studying Arshile Gorky's work. We talked about his use of expressive line and abstract shape, background, foreground, and overlapping. We spent some time talking about how students would create basic two-dimensional shapes from a three-dimensional model. We discussed modes of transportation and brainstormed a list divided into land, sea, and air. We also considered how a mural is created and discussed where students have seen a mural.

Creating Expressive Lines

Students began by drawing expressive lines on colored construction paper. We talked about how they could

listen to the classical music that was playing in the background for emotional inspiration to aid them in drawing their expressive lines. Students then used scissors to cut out the abstract shapes they created. Next, they applied their shapes with glue onto an 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) sheet of white drawing paper.

Simple Shape Construction

After students finished their backgrounds they were given a choice as to which toy vehicle they wanted to use as a model for their part of the mural. Each student had to choose a different model.

We talked about the shapes they recognized in the vehicles. The key here was to have students be able to dissect a complex shape into many basic recognizable shapes. For additional inspiration we looked at a few of Gorky's lost studies for his aviation murals from the book *Murals Without Walls: Arshile Gorky's Aviation*

Murals Rediscovered by Ruth Bowman (Newark Museum, 1978).

Creating the Finished Mural

Students glued their basic vehicle shapes onto their drawing paper in order to reconstruct their vehicles. They were encouraged to overlap their shapes as Gorky had done. When all of the students had finished creating their pieces

of the mural, they were assembled as one completed mural with the theme of transportation. 🌀

Dawn Carson is a preservice teacher who attends Rowan University's Art Education Program.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

WEB LINK

arshilegorkyfoundation.org