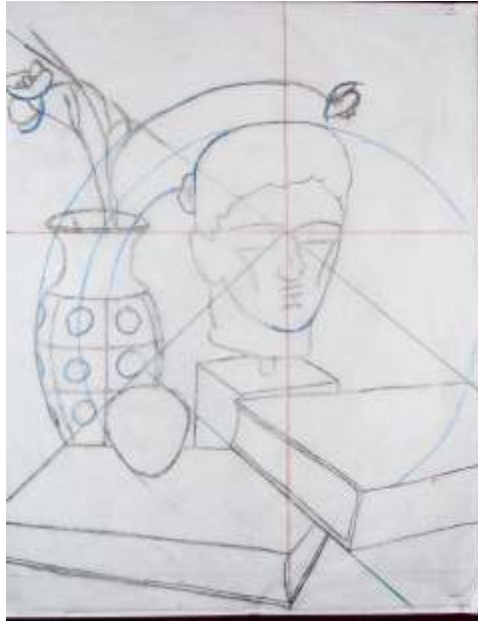


ART EDUCATION: COMPOSITION/VISUAL THINKING

Visual Art has been shrouded in the mystique of being a gift or inherent talent bestowed on a few. This notion of special gift implies that its production and comprehension is beyond the grasp of most individuals. In reality we all receive the same visual input through our eyes the difference is the visual artist has a better comprehension of what they see and how to translate and communicate that information into a different medium format. Harvard Professor Howard Gardner, in his publications *Frames of Mind and Multiple Intelligences* identifies this visual perceptiveness as visual intelligence. Persons of this cognitive profile are visual learners meaning that vision is their primary sensory input source for learning. They simply learn by seeing and learning without a visual component becomes more of a challenge to the visual learner. Another Harvard Professor Rudolf Arnheim in his publication *Visual Thinking* also supports the concept of visual intelligence. The point of his book is that the production of art is not the production of a commodity or product but is a product of thinking visually and the art is in the communication or idea of the thought being presented in a visual format and that communication depends on a substructure/matrix that must convey a sense of completion to the coconscious mind.
(Right/left hemispheres of the brain)

The visual artist must have skillful control and technical knowledge of materials, medium, form and color. This knowledge forms the artist's visual vocabulary but is not in itself art just as the rendering of objects is not art. The combination of these skills and knowledge are merely what words are to the writer and notes to the musician/composer. The art in poetry is the composition of words just as the art of music is the composition of notes. Techniques and objects in visual art must be structured and composed to become a work of art. My intent is to use the following compositions of students work and my work to illustrate the coconscious compositional structure of objects to make a work of visual art. I will then justify these assertions by diagramming the compositional substructures of works of art created by highly successful artists whose artworks are found in the collections of many major museums throughout the world.



Composition #1

Compositional drawing for painting by Art Academy 2 Student Angelica Ortiz

A work of art is not determined by the objects but by the association of the objects and its geometrical substructure. The substructure consists of the fundamental elements of art, the circle, square and triangle. These forms are universal and complete in their structure and simply transfer their structural completeness/wholeness to a sense of completeness/wholeness to the compositional work of art. This substructure is nearly always subliminal and can be seen and understood by the coconscious right hemisphere of the brain. This sector of the brain can establish patterns connect and complete partial patterns and transfer a sense of completion to the conscious only, analytical left hemisphere of the brain which can only see and detect the visible objects of the painting.

In Angelica's drawing you will see how the green lines continue from the edges of the books to form a triangle with its apex centered on the head of the Greek sculpture. These triangular lines form the basis of a dialog between the objects, which also include the apple that assists in forming the triangular structure and becomes part of the dialog. The diagonal lines of the books/triangle also perform the important task of directing the viewer into the painting from the conflictive set of opposite parallels that forms the barrier that separates the painting from the reality of environment/world to the reality of the painting and to its subject.

The placement of the sculpture head is based on the mathematical formula the golden mean. This formula is sometimes referred to the formula of life meaning that every living thing and structure is based on this mathematical formula. In a compositional painting the use of the formula is used to place the subject and its dialog to a position that the viewer is predisposed to look in the composition. The red lines indicate the application of the golden mean. The intersection of the vertical and horizontal lines marks the converging point of the compositions theme.

The square/rectangular form is used and repeated in the objects of the books, sculpture base and assists in creating the dialog directive triangle. They also form the weight/gravity of the composition.

The last form is the circle, which psychologically transfers a greater sense of completion to the viewer. The positioning of the vase and stems of the flowers, the pattern on the vase, elements of the apple and the head imply this form.

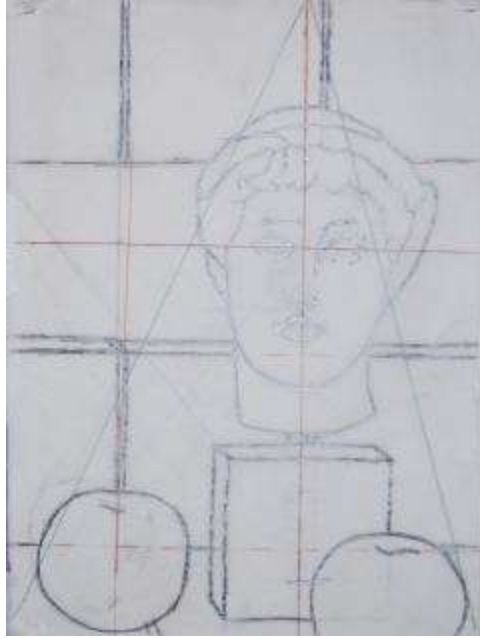
It is also important to note that there is no one isolated shape in the composition. The square, triangle and circle has been repeated to form what Picasso refers to as “Plastic Rhyme” which is the repetition of pattern and shape to maintain a visual rhythm and movement throughout the entire painting. This simply means that the viewer moves from shape to shape in the composition. From circle to circle and from square to square.



Composition # 2

Self-portrait by Art Academy 3 Student Kumhyun Song

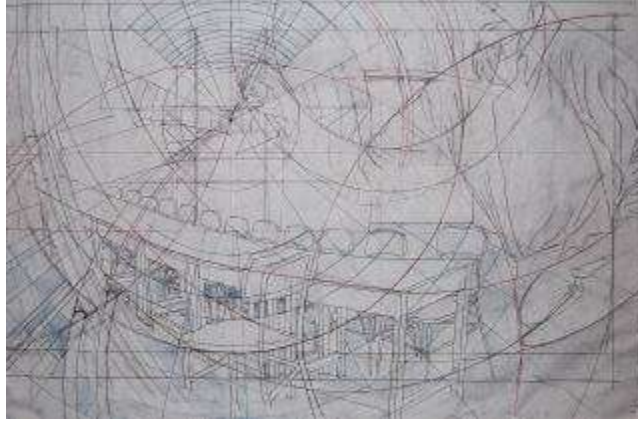
Kumhyun's self-portrait is a simple composition reliant on the golden mean for placement of the figure and the implied suggestion of the circle/elliptical form. In this composition the figure is placed along the vertical golden section line as well as the base of the book she is viewing. Both Artist present and artist past (book of Raphael's work) are aligned to form one linear thought. The elliptical lines in blue form the plastic rhyme necessary to carry the viewer through the entire composition with the largest curve placed at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal golden mean lines in red. It creates a very simple dialog between the subjects/objects of the painting.



Composition #3

Still life by Art Academy 2 Student Angelica Ortiz

This is a still life that Angelica is working on in class at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is a much simpler still life composition than the one in Composition #1. The idea is less developed due to the time restraint of the museum's five two-hour classes. This composition exemplifies a more extensive use of the golden mean as a compositional structure. Once again the vertical and horizontal golden mean line intersect in the center of the sculpture head at eye level. This is one of the major points where we are predisposed to look. Also each vertical and horizontal line of the tile work in the background is determined by continuing application use of the mathematical formula of the golden mean. The apple on the left is also positioned according to the same formula. The viewer is carried through the composition by the rounded shapes of the apples with their implied circular shape and by forming a visual triangle of the objects. The square of the sculpture base is repeated in the background tile work that also forms a square. No element is isolated and all the geometric elements are represented in the composition giving this simple composition a sense of completeness.



Composition #4
Drawing for Night Journey #25 by Mr. Gary Horn

I am using my own work to show a more complex dialog and substructure. This is the last of three compositions of a same theme. Night Journeys #23 and #24 can be viewed on my website gjustpaintings.com. The series primary subject is spirituality, spirituality in art and the creative process. The objects that form the dialog and subject of the painting are the compositional structure of Leonardo's Last supper juxtaposed to the New York cityscape merging together in the artist studio forming a moment of quiet contemplation or an unspoken dialog. In Journeys 23 and 24 I use the human figure not as subject but as a point of projection for the viewer to enter the painting. In Journey 25 the human figure becomes more a part of the creative dialog as the objects in the painting becomes more compositionally based than the reality based objects previously employed in paintings numbers 23 and 24. In this composition follow the circular lines as they connect all the objects/elements together to form a flowing dialog centered on the spiritual ideas and creative concepts of the artist Leonardo da Vinci.



Night Journey 23



Night Journey 24

It is essential for the artist to compose for both hemispheres of the mind. The subliminal, visual coconscious right and the objective, reflective conscious left. It is the substructure of composition combined with the skill of medium and the development of form that complete the sense of wholeness of idea/visual thought.

My approach to teaching and conclusions of the concepts presented are interpretive assimilations from multiple sources. A partial list of the sources is listed below. A complete list can be found on my website gjustpaintings.com

CONSCIOUSNESS EXPLAINED by Daniel C. Dennett

CONSCIOUSNESS A USER'S GUIDE by Adam Zeman

THE ACT OF CREATION by Arthur Koestler

THE DYNAMICS OF CREATION by Anthony Storr

TOUCHED WITH FIRE, Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament by Kay Redfield Jamison PhD

CREATING MINDS, An anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi by Howard Gardner

VISUAL THINKING by Rudolf Arnheim

FRAMES OF MIND, Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner

THE FLIGHT OF THE MIND, Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive
Illness by Thomas C. Caramagno