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Lesson Plan #2

Lesson Title: From Flat to 3D: Depth and Dimension in Video Game Concept Art
Grade Level: 9-12

Description & Rationale:

Students will be introduced to the concept of concept art, particularly that of video games. An important aspect for young artists to learn and understand is that of the picture plane. Concepts such as the foreground, midground, and background play a major role in art creation and discussion. Video game concept art maximizes its use of the picture plane to depict dramatic and illustrative scenes. By looking at this form of concept art, students will gain an understanding of the picture plane, develop a sense of depth within 2-D art, and learn to elevate their artworks through perspective. This lesson and project will take place over the span of 5 days.

Students will primarily look at the works of Chinese American artist Donglu Yu and African American artist and developer Neil Jones. Students will then design their own concept for a game (or pick an existing game) and develop concept art for the game making sure they place objects within each section of the picture plane. They will then present their work, discussing their use of depth and the picture plane, as well as describe the concept of their game.

Skills:

Spatial Depth: Students will learn to manipulate the picture plane to create depth in a 2-D drawing using elements in the foreground, midground, and background.

Composition/Framing: Students will learn to plan their works by establishing a picture plane through framing and composition. Students will use the picture plane to guide the viewer's eye and convey storytelling.

Drafting: Students will learn to draft sketches and thumbnails for their work and understand the importance of planning their work prior to rendering.

Scale/Proportion: Students will understand the interaction between objects and the picture plane and develop a sense of scale through the position of objects in the picture plane and their relative size.

Lighting/Color Theory: Students will understand the relationship between light and color with the picture plane and how their manipulation affects the tone and scale of their work.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and apply techniques used to establish depth and perspective in 2-D drawings
- Identify the picture plane and effectively utilize the foreground, midground, and background in their work
- Analyze video game concept art to identify proper use of composition and framing to convey storytelling
- Demonstrate an understanding of light and color theory to develop depth and mood
- Demonstrate an understanding of emphasis within the picture plane using contrast, depth, and scale
- Analyze the spatial relationship between objects and the picture plane and apply it to their own work

State Standards:

Prof.VA:Cr1.1: Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

Prof.VA:Cr1.2: Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.

Prof.VA:Cr3: Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

Prof.VA:Re7.2: Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery

Prof.VA:Re9: Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.

Prof.VA:Cn10: Document the process of idea development, from early-stage ideas to fully elaborated ideas

Teaching Resources Needed to Support the Lesson:

- Resources about the picture plane, depth, and perspective
 - A short introduction about the picture plane with visual examples
<https://www.australianarthistory.com/picture-plane>
 - A useful website that talks about the picture plane, perspective, and depth and provides interactive, visual examples
https://www.artfactory.com/perspective_drawing/perspective_1.html
 - A short YouTube video explaining the picture plane and horizon lines
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xc8o_xDhny4
 - A short YouTube video explaining the picture plane and depth (foreground, midground, and background)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZKqr1Wy45w>
- Resources on video game concept art
 - A YouTube by Donglu Yu showcasing her process of creating concept art through photobashing and using photo reference
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hLinc-ycLO>
 - A YouTube video of an artist detailing their process of creating concept art
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NV6cDK9CUOc>
 - A webpage that goes into depth on concept art, its applications, and how to make it (includes a lengthy video series)
<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-concept-art-definition/>
 - A YouTube video on art careers in the video game industry, specifically, talks about concept artists and the skills you need to achieve this career
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yY7SFILrGQ>

Art Materials Necessary for the Lesson:

Drawing and Sketching Materials:

- Drawing paper / sketchbooks
- Graphite pencils and erasers
- Rulers

Additional Materials:

- Watercolor or acrylic paints
- Palettes and water cups
- Markers

- Colored pencils
- Pastels
- Transparent grid sheets
- Concept art printouts

Materials will be made available to students seeing as this isn't a material intensive project. Should students want to purchase their own materials to use, they may do so through online or physical shops.

- Dickblick <https://www.dickblick.com>
- Micheals www.michaels.com
- School Specialty <https://www.schoolspecialty.com>
- United Art and Education <https://www.unitednow.com>

Considerations/Extensions

High Achieving Students: Students who finish early or feel unchallenged by the project may be provided additional tasks or challenges to deepen their understanding of the picture plane, depth, and video game concept art.

Students may be asked to:

- Help their fellow peers by providing guidance or supportive ideas
- Increase the complexity of their artwork through use of color, additional objects, or using a challenging perspective angle
- Create a set of works around their chosen video game using different perspectives or creating the same work from an opposing angle.
- Create a presentation on their chosen video game and how their concept art depicts the game

Low Achieving Students: Students who struggle to keep up with the assignment or feel disinterested may be provided with alternative expectations or encouraging material to guide through the project.

Students may be asked to:

- Simplify their work and focus on capturing an understanding of the picture plane, depth, and video game concept art instead of creating a polished work
- Work with video games that they personally enjoy, potentially even reproducing an existing in their own style
- Give an oral explanation of their understanding of the lesson using simple drawings to guide us through their understanding

Teacher Activities	Purpose/Student Activities
Introduction (Day 1): The lesson begins with a brief, informal talk about video games. Which games I like, which the students like, and so on to help build interest in the lesson. (10-15 minutes)	Students will engage in conversation with me and their classmates about video games, thinking about their importance in their lives and why they enjoy them

The conversation will then move into how artists play a large role in video game direction, specifically with the production of concept art. (10 minutes)

- Have students suggest video games to look at concept art for

Introduce the concept of the picture plane. Go through videos and visual/written examples of what the picture plane is, how depth is achieved in 2-D art, and basic perspective. We will focus on the works of Yu and Jone for this section. (10 minutes)

- Have handouts available for students who would like them and for students to reference later
- Show a video of Donglu Yu's process of creating concept art to provide students a reference point

Introduce the project of this lesson. Explain how students will either create a concept of a video game, or choose a video game they like, and create a piece of concept art for it. (10 minutes)

- Emphasize that students are to include elements in the foreground, midground, and background and convey a sense of storytelling

Development (Days 2-4):

The project begins with students creating a video game concept or choosing a video game they like to create their concept art on

- Giving them the autonomy of choice should help engage most students
- Will help guide students in selecting their subjects or provide pre-planned video games to base their work on

Students will provide a visual analysis of the concept art shown focusing on verbalizing or writing what they physically see in the work and what they feel when seeing them

- Will develop their ability to speak formally about art and explain their thoughts when viewing art

Have students examine which elements fall into the foreground, midground, and background of Yu and Jone's work, if possible.

- Encourage conversation between classmates to analyze the work and develop their answers

Day 2

Students will create an interesting concept for a video game or choose an existing video game to create a piece of concept art for (10-15 minutes)

- Have students gather multiple concepts and choose the one they are most interested in

Upon choosing a concept to work on, students will create thumbnail sketches

<p>-----</p> <p>Will periodically walk around to check in on students to see how their progress is going and to answer any questions</p> <p>Time will be allotted for students to discuss their work with me prior to finalizing their work should they want feedback.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Students should be close to having a finished piece by this point</p> <p>Introduce the final aspect of this project, the critique</p>	<p>where they will plan out how their concept art will look (30 minutes w/ 5 minute break)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to create multiple thumbnails and work through different angles and perspectives <p>Have students explain on their final thumbnail what elements sit in the foreground, midground, and background</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Day 3</p> <p>Students will use their final thumbnail to work on creating their concept art piece (20 minute intervals w/ 5 minute breaks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to use color in their work to further emphasize their storytelling Encourage working through the ideas of the picture plane, depth, and storytelling over having a polished, finished piece <p>Students will take breaks from working to refresh their minds, reflect on their work so far, and talk with each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may also use this time to share their progress with me and ask for assistance <p>-----</p> <p>Day 4</p> <p>Students should be working on finalizing their concept art, ensuring they have all of the elements necessary for the assignment and rendering their artwork to their liking (20 minute intervals w/ 5 minute breaks)</p> <p>Students may also use this time to plan how they will present their work for critique</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell students that they will have to share their artwork with the class and explain what video game concept they chose, what story they're telling, how they used the picture plane, and where their elements lie in the picture plane <p>Give a brief lecture about art critique focusing on ensuring that we are providing constructive feedback to students while maintaining a professional and caring discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While criticism would be allowed, the focus for students will be to identify the elements learned throughout this lesson within other students' works and be able to verbalize their analysis <p>-----</p> <p>Conclusion (Day 5): Students should have their work completed and ready for critique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are finished may be given extra time to finish, or they may present their work as is (if they feel that the basic elements of the assignment are present) and resubmit the project later <p>Discussion will be encouraged but not mandated. Should no one speak up, I will provide some feedback to the student highlighting their achievements and encouraging them to continue to grow</p> <p>The lesson ends by highlighting how the work the students have created could easily be expanded upon to create a video game thus wrapping the project back towards its emphasis as being an important aspect of video game creation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may have their statements written beforehand, create a presentation, or explain their project in whatever way works best for them (and fits within the timeframe and scope of the class) <p>-----</p> <p>Students will be have their completed work present with them and ready to present to their classmates</p> <p>Have students take turns talking briefly talking about their work and how they felt about the project (~5 minutes per student, depending on class size)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be given an opportunity to say something about each other's works and engage in conversation about the assignment <p>Students will submit their all relevant work to be graded (notes, sketches, final product, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of notes and sketches in final submission will provide students
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- Students will be encouraged to continue viewing and appreciating art beyond the traditional fine arts and into whatever mediums or topics interest them

who may not be as artistically inclined a chance to demonstrate their understanding of the assignment through other means and provides me an understanding of each individual's growth and learning style

Example Works

The two artists that will be focused on this lesson are Donglu Yu and Neil Jones, both of which come from different backgrounds and provide different approaches to their creation of video game concept art.

Donglu Yu is a Chinese Canadian concept artists who has worked some major video games titles such as Assassin's Creed: Valhalla (pictured below). Her work is exemplary of what we think of as concept art, providing wonderful concepts and renders of imagined scenes with an excellent use of depth and scale.



Neil Jones (aka Aerial_Knight) is an African American video game concept artists and designer. Jones develops his own games featuring characters of color and seeks to develop inclusivity in the video game industry. This concept art is for his game *Never Yield*.



Resources

- Information on the artists of focus
 - Donglu Yu's ArtStation account <https://www.artstation.com/donglu>
 - Neil Jone's personal site, includes a description of him and his concept art work <https://www.aerialknight.com/about.html>
- A webpage with concept art from various video games (useful for student research and engagement) <https://www.creativeuncut.com/game-art-galleries.html>
- An Adobe article talking about video game concept art and how to make it (has useful examples for varying styles of concept art) <https://www.adobe.com/uk/creativecloud/illustration/discover/video-game-concept-art.html>
- An article about video game concept art and its use of perspective and depth <https://jordanellis134.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/the-purpose-of-concept-art-within-video-games/>