More than Meets the Eye

PHILLIPS
The Phillips Collection

Sam Gilliam, *Purple Antelope Space Squeeze*, 1987, Diptych: Relief, etching, aquatint and collagraph on handmade paper with embossing, hand-painting and hand-painted collage, 41 1/2 x 81 5/8 in., Bequest of the Estate of Marion Goldin, 2017
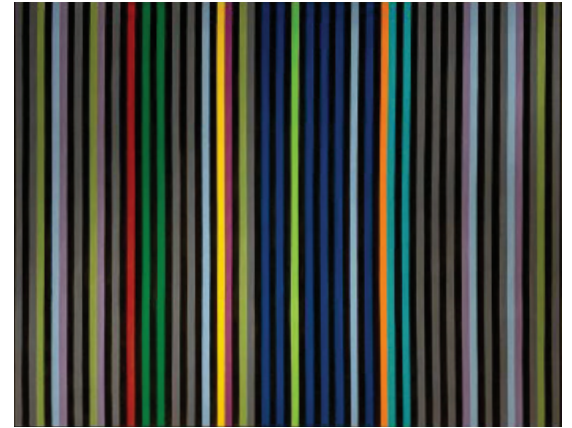
Gene Davis, *65-2*, 1965, Acrylic on canvas, 58 1/4 x 74 in., Gift of Richard E. Thompson, 2017

WARM-UP

Color, Symbol & Image

Consider the words **order** and **chaos**. For each word:

1. Choose a **color** that best represents the essence of the word.
2. Create a **symbol** that you think best represents the essence of the word.
3. Sketch an **image** that you think best represents the essence of the word.

CLOSE LOOKING

Think, Puzzle & Explore

Consider the two artworks. For each artwork:

1. What do you **think** you know about this artwork?
2. What questions do you have? What **puzzles** you?
3. What does this artwork make you want to **explore**?

MAKE CONNECTIONS

Look back at the two artworks.

1. Which words best fit each artwork? Why?
2. What other descriptive words would you use to describe these artworks?
3. Now, look back at the color, symbol, and image you chose to describe "order" and "chaos." How do those compare or contrast with the artworks?

ART + MATH

Just like with our varied understandings of order and chaos, we all see things differently and can come up with different ideas, even when we begin with the same simple concepts. Follow the instructions to create a work of art. Your drawing must include all of the elements below, however you are not limited solely to those elements.

Materials:
- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Your drawing must include:
1. Two parallel lines
2. A biomorphic shape and a geometric shape
3. One 90 degree angle that intersects one of your shapes
4. Two curved lines
5. One primary color and one secondary color

EXTENDED ACTIVITY: OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Depict a pair of opposite words. You may do so in any way you'd like—make a drawing, grab physical objects in your home, move your body kinesthetically, write a poem, or create something in any other way. Use any materials you have in your home. After everyone is done, take turns guessing the word pairs based on the artwork each person created.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sam Gilliam, *Purple Antelope Space Squeeze*, 1987
- In 1987, professor and artist William Weege invited Sam Gilliam to christen his newly founded Tandem Press. *Purple Antelope Space Squeeze* is the first editioned work created there.
- Process was key in the creation of the work:
  - Gilliam first sent Weege a drawing of the shape he wanted the paper to be, and a mold was made according to those specifications. The initial image was a relief print using carved woodblock elements and lithography inks.
  - Then, Gilliam attached handmade paper collage pieces he had painted. A variety of printing techniques followed involving inked and un-inked metal relief plates, steel and zinc etchings, and aquatint plates.
  - Gilliam then hand-painted details on the surfaces to prepare them for their final printing while inks from previous runs were still wet. Each impression of the print bears a unique pattern because the artist placed the printing elements in different positions and inked them in a variety of colors.

Gene Davis, *65-2*, 1965
- Davis often compared himself to a jazz musician who plays by ear, describing his approach to painting as "playing by eye." Despite their calculated appearance, Davis's stripe works were not based on conscious use of theories or formulas.
- Davis experimented with complex schemes that lend themselves to sustained periods of viewing. He suggested that "instead of simply glancing at the work, select a specific color … and take the time to see how it operates across the painting … Enter the painting through the door of a single color, and then you can understand what my painting is all about."
- In discussing his stripe work, Davis spoke not simply about the importance of color, but about "color interval: the rhythmic, almost musical, effects caused by the irregular appearance of colors or shades within a composition."

Excerpts from SAAM artist bio: https://americanart.si.edu/artist/gene-davis-1147