

Kitchen Utensil Design

Inspiration

This project, which begins with a series of planned homework drawings, evolved out of my efforts to encourage beginning art students to see that any form can be used to create an unusual design or pattern. The subject-form could easily come from nature, though in this case a manufactured object was selected.

Visual Problem

How can a simple everyday object, such as a kitchen utensil, be used to create an unusual or visually appealing pattern?

Materials

- ▶ sketchbooks (11" x 14" minimum)
- ▶ pencils, felt-tip markers
- ▶ 4" x 6" oak tag for stencils
- ▶ X-Acto knives, scissors
- ▶ 18" x 24" newsprint and white vellum

Time

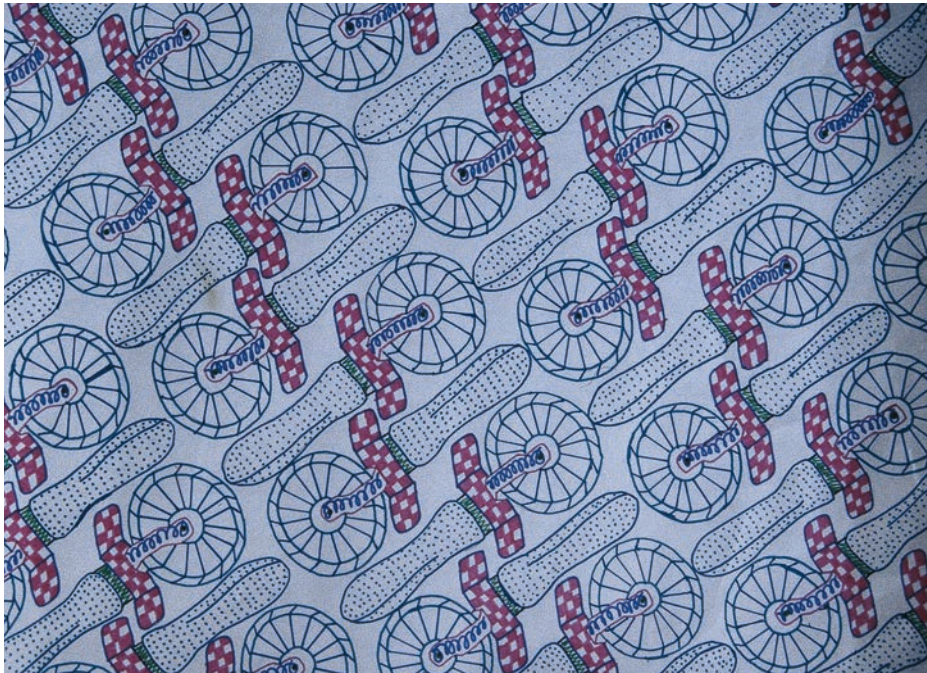
Eight 45-minute periods: 1 for review of homework assignments and to introduce classroom studio, 2 to draw and cut the oak tag stencil and experiment on 18" x 24" newsprint, 2 to produce the light pencil drawing on white vellum, and 3 to develop the image in color using felt-tip markers

Student Choices

- media for homework
- subject
- orientation of object-form and direction of pattern
- color

Preactivity

Students should select a single object found in the kitchen, such as an electric mixer, teapot, ice-cream scoop, wire whisk, can opener, or potato peeler, and draw it in five varied ways in their sketchbook:



1-1 Julie Baker

This design features a pizza cutter repeated on the diagonal.

Felt-tip markers, 18" x 24" (45.7 x 61 cm).



1-2 Marni Kleinfield-Hayes
 A repeated corkscrew image creates both positive and negative shapes.
 Felt-tip markers, 18" x 24" (45.7 x 61 cm).

1. in contour line or weighted line
2. in value study (rich blacks through shades of gray)
3. in the color and media of the student's choice
4. in black and white or color, emphasizing the texture of the object (smooth, rough, reflective, etc.), and
5. repeating the shape of the object in pencil as a line drawing to create a pattern that fills a large sheet of paper

This homework can be done over consecutive days or weeks if desired. Group critiquing happens after each individual drawing is done. The fifth image is intended to serve as a rough draft for the classroom project.

As an art history reference, teachers may want to share the

work of M. C. Escher (Dutch graphic artist, 1898–1972), whose work offers examples of rhythmic repetition of like shapes found in nature and in art.

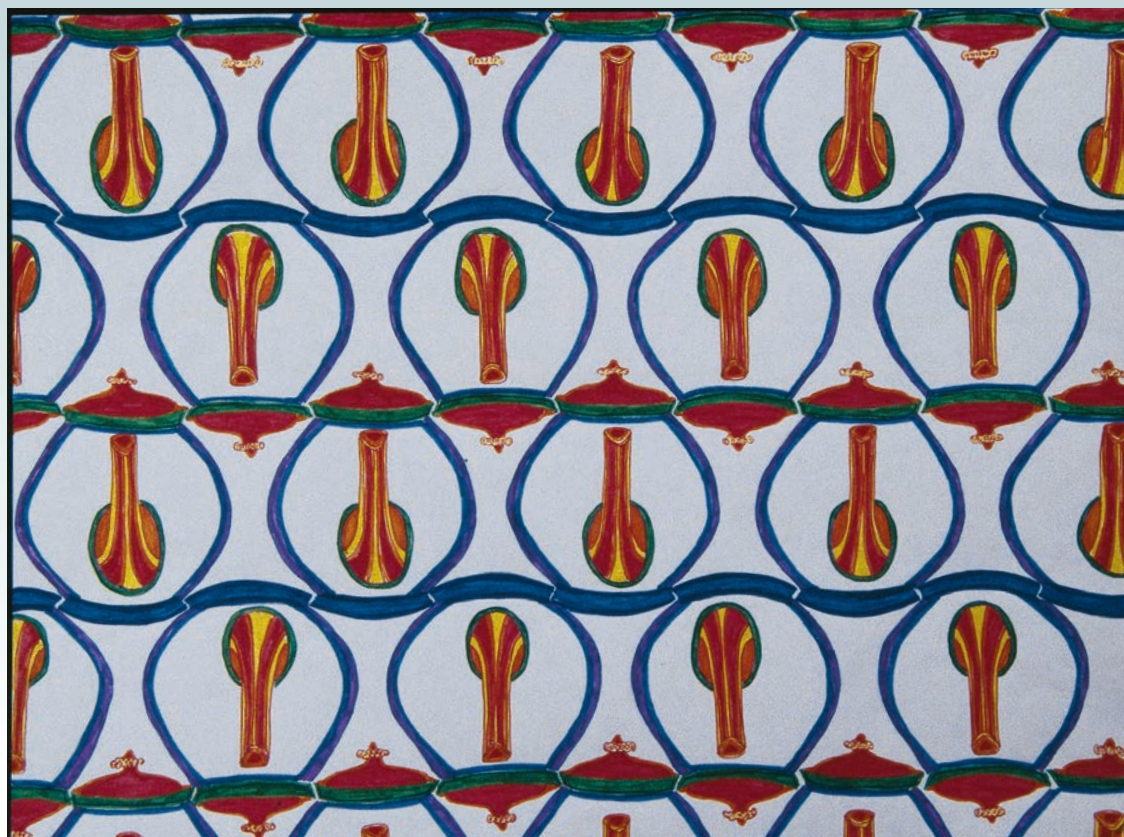
Process

As students bring in their sketchbooks and share their last image in a group critique, point out which designs maintain the most interest when developed as a pattern. This allows students to see how they have done in relation to their peers and to make decisions about how they will proceed. Be sure to note how any object can be oriented right-side up or upside down and repeated across the page from side to side, from top to bottom, or at a diagonal to create a pattern.

The classwork component begins as students trace or redraw their

chosen subject onto a sheet of oak tag (4" x 6") from which they can create a stencil. The stencil should be used to experiment on newsprint with repeating their image to create an identifiable pattern that completely fills the paper. Students are encouraged to carefully consider the negative space created as they develop their pattern. A final image can be developed in light pencil on a sheet of 18" x 24" white vellum.

When this drawing is complete, students can make decisions on the color range they want to employ in developing their image with felt-tip markers. To ensure that the image evolves as a whole composition, and to avoid the tedium of the need to complete an entire object before moving on to the next object in the pattern, I suggest that



1-3 Erin Santye
The end view of a teapot spout inspired this strong design.
Felt-tip markers, 18" x 24"
(45.7 x 61 cm).

each color used be applied all at once as it repeats throughout the composition in line or shape.

Encourage students to take the time to view how others in the class are completing their images and how their choices of color work to achieve color unity. Finally, inform students that successful design is by nature clean and precise, so craftsmanship is extremely important. It is important to avoid making dark graphite lines on the white paper or smearing the water-based markers.

Evaluation

Ask students: Can the viewer easily see the repetition in your design? What elements create visual unity? How could this type of imagery be used in another way? Do you see any potential for use of the pattern in product design or marketing?

Results and Observations

Students benefited from the homework component, as it allowed them to consider and prepare for the design challenge of the classroom experience. They easily made the transition from drawing a single object to repeating it in the form of a pattern, and they seemed to enjoy the freedom of expression the project's composition and color choices allowed for.

Conclusion

This experience offered beginning art students a basic-level design understanding and the experience of producing bold and varied designs from simple kitchen utensils. Some students commented that the finished work looked like wallpaper or wrapping paper, while others saw the potential for using pattern in product advertising design.