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**SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO DECORATE YOUR FLUTE**

By Martin Espino

In my work on making instruments with students I focus on mainly art designs of the Ancient Americas (North, Central & South America). When decorating the flutes, I may have to one kind of design or the other. In other words: I may have them just:

1. Utilize the “7 Universal Designs of Art” especially when they are younger.
2. When they are older, 3rd grade on…may I suggest the simplicity of the petroglyph art from California, especially that of the Coso Mountain Range or Little Petroglyph Canyon.
3. Or the designs found in Ancient Mexico, which are a little more complex and pretty much require a thorough understanding of the 7 Universal Designs of Art.
4. To view great and crazy example of “Tesselation” (outlining in multiple colors, I highly suggest looking up “Huichol Yarn Painting from Mexico”.

Before I go on, I must say that I have taught and seen pre-schoolers and kinders to do this, they are able to grasp most, if not, all of these concepts. I always say “try it”. Today, more and more, I notice that it seems be a big effort to ask some kids to create designs, like as if it were something so difficult. Besides, the 7 Designs help them begin the journey to drawing the world around them, as well as helps them form their letters and numbers and helps recognize shapes. I tell them they can draw, paint, sculpt anything using these designs! The students can analyze their world in terms of shapes. It works, this is an incredible tool and weirdly enough, most people don’t know this!!!

**CONTROLLING THE MARKER:**

1. Hold it correctly
2. Do not smash down on it.
3. It’s better to use crayons to practice with and not waste the markers’ ink, especially since they cost more money.
4. Use only the Sharpie, don’t experiment, I already did and Sharpies are what work!
5. Draw or color “slowly” especially if it is on a “cylindrical” object flute.
6. Pull the marker down or across, avoid drawing or coloring upward!
7. When done, place the cap on the marker “tight”.
8. Very important is when you are coloring, try to keep light colors away from dark colors, because the dark WILL get on the light markers and mess it up. I think it’s best to color the color your work in light colors first and then come in with the dark after.
9. We often don’t think of “controlling” the marker or pen or pencil, but when we use it, we do have to control it.

**7 UNIVERSAL DESIGNS OF ART:**

a) Practice and Memorize these deigns. Look for these designs within things you want to draw, they are there, everywhere! Everything is made up of these designs, either alone or in combinations.

b) If you can't think of what to do: pick one of the 7 Designs: use "one or two or more" of them and repeat them over and over, in different colors.

c) Practicing and using the 7 Designs, will help you in controlling your pen, marker or paint brush! They will help you in the following suggestions!!!

d) I suggest practicing the 7 Designs, having the students show they know the names of each and then move on, reminding them that when they have difficulty drawing something to think which of the 7 Designs would you use to make you be able to draw it, for example, the “eye”. You can use two “C” shapes to draw the eye’s opening, the “Circle” to draw the pupil and the “Dot” to draw the center of the eye. Eyelashes can be done with “C” shapes! A “Star” can be drawn using “Bent lines”, a snake with two parallel “S” curves and the head with six “C” curves! After memorizing the 7 Designs, you can look at a picture of something you want to draw and analyze it to recognize which of the 7 Designs would it take to draw it.

**NO COLORING IN:**

We are not “coloring in” the space. We are learning to make decisions how to fill space with designs and with the ideas found here.

**TESSELATION:**

Draw an image, then proceed to color around the outside of it, in different colors, you can see tessellation at work in the "Yarn Painting Art of the Huichol and Tepehuano people of Mexico.

Many times, though, in that art, they’ll tessellate and then they’ll stop and fill in the background with various colors.

**CONTRAST:**

In using different colors, again, “Think” before you color, even better, “practice before you color” (you don’t have an extra flute) and there is no way to erase the Sharpie Marker, so think: Do I really want to use nothing but dark colors or all light colors, all next to each other? Practice it first, you’ll see how these colors really look together! Don’t use your flute to find out. These are things I tell my students!

Keep a watchful eye when students tessellate, because sometimes:

1. right after talking about what contrast is, some will still use colors that are too close to each other, i.e., dark red, violet, dark blue. Which goes back to “practice this first”. However, tessellating using yellow to darker yellow to light orange to orange and then red, can be spectacular as it is a gradation of colors but is not as visual as tessellating with contrasting colors.
2. Tessellating with “thin” lines will not make it look very striking and visible, have them make thicker (but not real think lines). Students are right in front of their art and we need to tell them to think about how the flute will look from farther away.
3. Tesselating is NOT doing a color and then a space and then a color and then a space! The colors MUST be right next to each other. Again, “practice”!

**SYMBOLS:**

Are a design that “means something” to you or someone else. A “sun” design may mean “the power of light and warmth” to you. A heart design with light rays around it may mean “love and friendship” to you. Cultures around the world have created symbols, maybe you can pick a symbol from your culture or from another culture, or…create “your own”!

**PATTERNS & SYMBOLS:**

Choose two or more cultural symbols or create your own symbol (something you want to represent you, maybe a lightening bolt, a sun, a heart and “repeat” them, it will turn into a pattern.

Repeat the design with the colors or repeat the design but change the colors!

**PARALLEL:**

Take one or even two or more designs and then make a parallel design. These designs can expand like crazy.

**PARALLEL & TESSELATION:**

Mix these ideas together, NOT forgetting “contrast”.

**TESSELATION AND COLORING SPACES:**

Now you can keep tessellating until there’s no room, or tessellate maybe 8-10 time and then color in the background, like the Huichol people (of Mexico, look up “Huichol Yarn Painting”).

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS’ DESCISION:**

I respect the artists’ decision to use, say, all dark colors or not color in “blank” areas, but with younger kids it may be laziness that stops them, urge them to keep coloring and covering space all over. I hear too many times within the first 10 minutes of an exercise of coloring that may take 30 minutes, “I’m done”…

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