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Back to the Basics

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I am enclosing a copy of a successful Basic Design problem I used as a Graduate Assistant at Nebraska. It is a variation of an exercise I experienced as rendering student of Tom Piper (to my knowledge, he's now in "Communications" at MIT). To clarify the problem description, also enclosed is a slide of a student project done for this assignment. He worked from a color photograph of "Falling Water". (If possible, I would appreciate the return of this slide whenever you've finished with it).

In my opinion, this exercise has great flexibility in its application. I've listed a few possibilities of my own making, but I'm sure there many more possible uses. It is this versatility that led me to suggest this exercise for your "Collection".

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Kudrna (70)

"A BACK TO THE BASICS" Exercise

PROBLEM: To stimulate the students' perceptive abilities to the point of focusing on and identifying the basic compositional elements of building massing, design, etc. rather than the details..... (i.e... in a basic design sense, to perceptually sort the "essential" from the "extraneous")

INTENT OF EXERCISE: To develop an exercise that stresses more the students' perceptual abilities than his techniques of graphic communication.

EXERCISE: From a photograph or "real-experience" observation, "render" a building focusing on the essential massing and compositional elements of the design. Use only hand-torn paper as the palette. The "Paper Palette" is limited to black, white and shades of gray.

APPLICATIONS: Excellent for environmental awareness instruction... "fine-tuning" a student's perceptual abilities to encourage the definition of BASIC DESIGN elements within the relative complexity of "real-experience" visual images.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS ON A THEME: (These have yet to be tested)

1. Instead of focusing the exercise on elements of building massing, emphasize changes in value (light/dark), textural patterns or patterns of color.....This would theoretically further exercise and "fine-tune" perceptual skills.
2. Combine the original exercise with one of the above variations to study the relationship among the various design elements.
3. Utilize this exercise in conjunction with a beginning level study of the design motifs, compositional attitudes, etc. of a particular architect or school of thought....(e.g...work from photos of the Robie house to explore the use of "horizontal" in the work of FLW...)
4. Expand "palette" to include colored paper to study relationships of hue, tint, shades, etc....

