CUT IT UP!
FRACTURING THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE
VISUAL ART
GRADES: 10 – 12
*adaptable for grades K-9

BASED ON

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Spain
Still Life with Glass and Lemon, 1910
Oil on canvas
Bequest of Mary E. Johnston, 1967.1428

OBJECTIVES

• Students will use cutting techniques and explain the relationship of these techniques to their image.
• Students will use the elements and principals of design to rearrange the images into a single, unified composition.
• Students will be able to explain how art historical techniques and concepts relate to the altered contemporary image.

CONCEPT

Cubist painter Pablo Picasso broke down images into geometric shapes and forms and rearranged these elements, to enable the viewer to experience the object from multiple perspectives. In the piece, Still Life with Glass and Lemon, Picasso fractures the objects to create a single, unified composition.

For this lesson, students will be using photographic images and a choice of cutting techniques to fracture the images. They will then rearrange them to create a single, unified composition.

MATERIALS

Printed Photographs
Xacto Knives
Scissors

Paper Clips
Cutting Mats
Adhesive
VOCABULARY

Cubism: an art movement attempting to break down three-dimensional objects into their basic geometric parts, depicting them as if viewing them simultaneously from a number of different angles.

Fracture: the separation of an object or material into two or more, pieces under the action of stress

Contemporary: of the present time; modern

PROCEDURE

1. Project Still Life with Glass and Lemon ask students to describe the work of art. Write on the board key words, adjectives, or verbs that the students name while discussing the work.

2. After they share descriptions, complete a class discussion about the painting. Direct students to focus on the “fractured” and rearranged elements, lines, and shapes.

3. Demonstrate and discuss various cutting or incising techniques. Show examples of each. Discuss how the technique used is dependent on their image choice, explaining the relationship between technique and images.

4. Students will select an image and experiment with various techniques to fracture and rearrange the image. Using an xacto knife, cutting matt, scissors, and technique procedures (below).

5. The student’s goal is to fracture or use multiple images and rearrange them to create a single, unified composition.

6. Students glue or mount the final arrangement to a board.

TECHNIQUES/PROCEDURES:

1. Sgraffito: Incise the surface to reveal something underneath, create texture and variety.
   a) Select a dark or low contrast image. A murky, underexposed photograph is best for this technique.
   b) Work on a piece of cardboard or a cutting mat.
   c) Use a Stylus, or other pointed tool, to scratch away to the base of the paper. You want to take off the top layer. Don’t cut through the paper! Eradicate specific sections, distress only the edges, or scratch in words, outlines, or patterns.
   d) Try using different grit of sandpaper for larger sections

2. Create a Texture/Pattern Patchwork
   a) Use flawed photos, extra prints, and magazine pictures. Select a pleasing color scheme.
   b) Find interesting texture to cut from, or photographs all from the same topic
   c) Cut geometric shapes (circles, triangles, rectangles…) or organic (free form shapes)
   d) Arranged and rearrange until you’re satisfied with the whole. It may end up symmetrical or as an irregular shape
   e) Fit the pieces together snugly, like a puzzle, and glue them to matte board or foam core. Mount them in an interesting way.
3. **Slice and Stretch:** Print the same photograph, multiple times. You might try a slight color difference or brightness/contrast.
   a) Decide in what direction you will slice and stretch. Horizontal or Vertical.
   b) Secure the photographs together with a paper clip. Cut the photographs, together, in one way.
   c) Lay the strips down on the board in order. The board needs to be almost double/three times the size of the original photograph.
   d) Be sure you are certain about your final image, and Glue your strips down!
   ✂ **CHALLENGE:** What if….you purposefully misalign them? Or have one slice with selective color? Trim the edges vs. leave them serrated? Have a few corners turned up? Overlay textures in small select areas?

4. **Weaving:** Use the same two photographs, printed slightly different, or use different photographs that work together with colors/textures/design.
   a) On the back of your Lengthwise (up and down) photograph, lightly draw a straight line 1/2 inch down from the top. This is called the **WARP**.
   b) From the bottom of that page, cut strips up to the line.
   ✂ **CHALLENGE:** What if….the lines are curvy or zigzagged?
   c) Draw, on the second photograph, the horizontal “sections” lightly on the back before cutting. Cut the second photograph all the way across horizontally. This is called the **WEFT**.
   d) Starting at one end of the warp. Weave your Weft under and over the warp. With the second strip, go the opposite, over and under. Use your fingers to tighten the Weaving.
   ✂ **CHALLENGE:** What if….more than 2 images (or more than 2 versions of the same image) are used? You cut them at an angle, similar to a triangle? Only small portions are weaved, and not the entire photograph?

5. **Kaleidoscope:**
   a) Shrink and copy an entire image -- or use a striking (or abstract) portion of one – multiply it many many times. You must use a SQUARE format. The photograph should run all the way to the edges of the Square.
   b) Cut out each square. Begin arranging them on the board so they touch each other. Rotate them, rearrange them, and find pleasing combinations of patterns that work together with your image.
   c) Once you have a pleasing image, you’ve experimented with ideas. Glue it down!
   ✂ **CHALLENGE:** What if….your images are the same, but have slight variations of color, texture, or other elements? You use techniques to “Flip” half of the images or “invert” the? Does size effect things….how do large vs. small squares matter?

6. **Consecutive Copies**
   a) Create multiple (min. 3) copies of the same image, but progressively enlarge or reduce the size. Make each copy lighter, darker, saturated, desaturated, or varying tones of the same colors.
   b) Arrange the pieces with largest first, and others on top of it. Experiment with a Formal and Informal Balance of the overall design. Try leading the photographs vertically or off to one side.
   c) Once you’ve experimented with multiple arrangements and ideas. Glue it down!
   a) **CHALLENGE:** What if….You have four or five images? Put your own spin on things….try a new approach to this method. Create a circular photograph, or organic shape. It does not have to be a rectangle.
7. **Shape Montage**
   a) Print a large photograph.
   b) Use stencils to trace shapes onto the back of the photograph. Portions of your photographs will be omitted….make sure you don’t lose very important sections, such as eyes on a portrait.
   c) Use an Exacto Knife to cut out the shapes and arrange them onto your mounting surface in the correct way. Glue down.

**ASSESSMENT**
- Informal observation during group discussion and individual consultations
- Formal rubric examining the execution of technique and the effects on composition

**NATIONAL STANDARDS**

Visual Art
Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Language Arts
English Language Arts Common Core: Text Type and Purposes #1-3 11-12 Grade

**RESOURCES**
Cincinnati Art Museum, *Collections Handbook*
http://dictionary.reference.com
Paula Guhin, *Art Image Workshop, Creative Ways to Embellish and Enhance Photographic Images*