I Saw the Figure Three in Orange

Grades 4-12
Cross Curricular: Art, Math and Language Arts
Lesson plan and artwork by Eric Orr, Art Consultant, North Texas & Louisiana

Description
This lesson is inspired by the painting “I saw the Figure 5 in Gold” by American artist Charles Demuth. American regionalist Charles Demuth (1883-1935) used a style called “Precisionism” in his futuristic work inspired by poet friend William Carlos Williams. Demuth’s 1928 work is an abstract oil painting featuring numbers as design elements. This work was his reaction to seeing a red fire engine “Number 5” clanging and screaming through busy city streets.

Demuth employs perspective lines receding into the canvas as well as graphic repetition of the # 5 in his artwork. Size differences in the repeated number also help to create an illusion of depth on his flat canvas.

National Standards
Content Standard #1: Understanding media, techniques and processes.
Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.
Content Standard #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their works and the work of others.
Content Standard #6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Objectives
- Students will create a painting based on a number of their choice as the visual theme/subject.
- Students will manipulate paint with special rubber tools that will allow their work to have a texture that is both actual as well as visual.
- Students will work with color theories of analogous, complimentary, warm or cool in their numerical compositions.
DIRECTIONS

1. Have students study the art of Demuth, his style and techniques of creating the illusion of depth.

2. On sketch paper, students can draw out their design based on one number...how many ways can you arrange it, turn it, tilt it, and overlap it? Change the size, the type or style of number?

Can you use a numerical figure as well as the written word for it? How about other ways to show it....Roman Numerals? Bundles of sticks etc. Rows of dots? Stars?

3. Once the sketch is determined, have students choose a thick tempera or acrylic paint, and Catalyst Flexible Wedges and Blades to move the paint around the page. Work from dark to light or light to dark. Textures might be coarse to fine...use the big silicone ribs first, then let the background dry...you are working in layers.

4. Gel medium may be used to create non-colored texture with the Catalyst tools.

5. Give yourself permission to vary your design and do more than one idea/color combination. Remember, it is when your artistic intuition takes over your work that you are really being an artist!

6. Experiment with various types of Neenah Creative Collection™ and Premium Astrobright Construction Papers. The paper you use and the paint colors chosen can make all the difference in your creating a dramatic visual statement.

7. The next coating of textural paint might employ a different color and a finer texture tool. You might want to continue creating layers of paint being careful to not mix any three primaries (what will you get? probably muddy brown!)

8. Try to use your paint tools to create interesting textures that you can not only see, but feel. Do you notice a rhythm of lines, patterns and colorful textures? Employ various design elements and principles in your work and try to concentrate on different sizes, positions and colors of your chosen number.

EXTENSION:

Use the finished painting as a creative writing springboard to write a poem, Haiku or story about the visual effect of your bold number painting. Remember that a Haiku uses just three lines of words. Use 5 syllables in the first and third, and 7 in the second line of this simple Japanese poetry form.

MATERIALS

1362661 Astrobrights® Premium Construction Paper, Assorted, 9" x 12", Pack of 50 Sheets
077426 Astrobrights® Assorted Convenience Pack, 24 lb., 8.5" x 11", Pack of 200 Sheets
1369011 Creative Collection™ Pearlescent Finish Cardstock, 65 lb., 8.5" x 11", Pack of 48 Sheets
409385 Creative Collection™ Metallic Finish Cardstock - Assorted Dark Colors, 8.5" x 11", 65 lb., Pack of 40 Sheets
409384 Creative Collection™ Metallic Finish Cardstock Assorted Colors, 8.5" x 11", 65 lb., Pack of 40 Sheets
1371306 Sax® True Flow® Artist Gel Medium, Matte, Pint
239943 3" Blade Palette Knife, Sold Individually

Catalyst™ Wedges & Blades (More Sizes Available on www.saxarts.com)
1436163 Catalyst™ Blade 1, Sold Individually
1436164 Catalyst™ Blade 2, Sold Individually
1436167 Catalyst™ Blade 5, Sold Individually
1436157 Catalyst™ Wedge 1, Sold Individually
1436158 Catalyst™ Wedge 2, Sold Individually

1371112 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Bright Red, 500 ml
1371110 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Bright Yellow, 500 ml
1371117 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Phthalo Blue, 500 ml
1371124 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Chrome Oxide Green, 500 ml
1371111 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Chrome Orange, 500 ml
1371115 Sax® True Flow® Artist's Acrylic Paint, Violet, 500 ml