

BACKGROUND READING TO ACCOMPANY

Stuart Davis
Combination Concrete

Stuart Davis (1894-1964)
Grade Three

Source: *World Book* and *Stuart Davis*, Smithsonian Publication #4614

Stuart Davis was born in Philadelphia, PA. His father, Edward Wyatt Davis, was art editor of the *Philadelphia Press*. His mother, Helen S. Davis, was a sculptor. Davis studied at the Robert Henri School of Art in New York City and in Paris. At the age of nineteen he exhibited in the famous Armory Show of 1913. At this time he had largely completed his formal training and was making his place as a professional artist, participating in exhibitions and working as a magazine illustrator.

Although Davis was associated with abstract painting in the United States from the 1920's, he described himself as a realist. His bright, lively paintings deal with everyday life. Bold areas of intense, pure color and rugged written lines characterize his work. He received his inspiration from such things as jazz, motion pictures, gas stations, billboards and store fronts. He included words from street signs in many of his works. It's been said that Davis's works were an influence on later "pop artists".

During World War I he served as a map maker with a special commission under the Army Intelligence Department preparing materials for the peace conference. During the 1930's Davis continued his career, teaching for a year at the Art Students League in New York, receiving commissions for murals, putting on one-man shows and participating in group shows. In 1933 he enrolled in the Federal Art Project. In 1938 he married Roselle Springer of New York. His only child, George Earl Davis was born in 1952. He continued painting energetically until June 24, 1964, the day of his death of a heart attack.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Description

1. What thing first attracts your attention?
2. What do you think the title means?
3. What would you name this painting if you had made it?
4. Describe the painting. Tell as much as you can about what you see in it.
5. How does it made you feel when you look at it?

Color

6. What kinds of color are used in this work?
7. Why do you think he chose these colors?
8. Would the meaning of the signs have as much impact upon you if he had chosen soft colors such as pale pink or pale blue?
9. Let's identify the different sections that have different background colors.
10. Color is said to lend balance to a design. How did Davis balance this design with the use of color?

Design

11. One element of design is called "line". Point to parts of this painting which could be called "lines". Their purpose is to lead your eyes around to different parts of the painting.
12. Another element of design is called "balance". Example: if you removed all the white areas in the painting, you wouldn't have the same balance as it has now.

Shape

13. What shapes can you see in this painting?
14. How does shape help contribute to the balance of the design?

Reactions

15. Raise your hand if you like this painting.
16. What are some things that you like about it?

ART PRESENTER PROGRAM

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EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Name Designs

Materials: Crayons, drawing paper at least four inches high and 18 to 24 inches long. (it would be helpful to maybe use a thicker white paper)

Have each student write his/her name using cursive writing. Make is so large that the

entire sheet of paper is filled. (tops of letters touch top of paper, and bottoms of letters

go to edge of bottom of paper) You may want to get a class list of first names ahead

of time and write the names for the students. That way all of their time may be spent

decorating their card. Some students may not remember cursive either. With crayons

have students make designs in spaces made by letter borders. Encourage them to make

some lines thicker, and make other interesting border designs, plaids, stripes, etc.

Make each space different then the others and cover entire surface so that no paper

shows through. **There are good examples in the folder.**

2. Construction paper shape symbol design in a collage style

Materials: regular size construction paper, pieces of construction paper to cut into

interesting shapes and designs, scissors, glue

Each student is given a piece of construction paper and a variety of pieces of different

sizes and colors of construction paper. Students are encouraged to cut out shapes, words and glue on in an overlapping style. **Good examples are in the folder that may be shown to students to give them ideas.**