

This document contains the interpretive text and accompanying images for the exhibit *Artists First* which was hosted at the Kirkland Arts Center.

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## Curatorial Statement

Animators and video game artists bring joy and connection to the comfort of our homes. Through their art we can escape into fantastical worlds, learn histories excluded from classrooms, and reflect our true selves through character creation.

Digital entertainment development can take many forms, each with its own complexity. From stop motion to risographs to digital drawings to endless coding sequences, digital entertainment artists devote immeasurable amounts of time, energy, and creativity to produce media we love. These artists create worlds and characters that reflect our own reality, allowing us to experience new perspectives through stories and gameplay.

Digital artists are often at the forefront of technological innovations, enhancing the entertainment we love. However, as technology advances, many studios and producers are turning to generative artificial intelligence (genAI) to cut production time and cost, at the expense of artists' livelihoods, quality of work, and originality.

The basic artistic elements highlighted throughout this exhibit are markers of an artist's hand – something genAI cannot replicate. Artists use a wide array of tools and techniques to tell stories and connect with their audience through even the smallest of details. The art we love is only as good as each little decision made to create the work. Now, more than ever, we must uplift digital artists and celebrate their creations. Above everything, we must place Artists First.



## **Grab a Zine, take it home!**

The use of generative AI is a controversial topic in every entertainment industry right now. GenAI can affect anyone - storyboard and concept artists, developers, script writers, coders, production managers, and everyone in between. It is important to understand what is happening and the lived experiences of artists facing corporate use of genAI head on.

**If you would like to learn more about genAI, how it is affecting digital entertainment, and what our artists and unions have to say about it, snag one of our zines!**

Thanks for coming, enjoy the exhibit!



Link to Online Booklet:

[https://issuu.com/emattixwand/docs/artists\\_first\\_zine](https://issuu.com/emattixwand/docs/artists_first_zine)

## **Perspective and Color**

### **What is Perspective?**

Perspective provides dimension, transforming shape into form by creating depth. In essence, perspective makes 2-D art appear 3-D. Generally, there are two kinds of perspective drawing: linear and atmospheric. Linear perspective utilizes a precise combination of straight and angled lines to create depth while atmospheric perspective relies on color and light.

When working with perspective, artists need to consider scale and proportion. Scale refers to the relative size of one object compared to another. If an object is far away, it will appear smaller in scale while nearby objects look larger. Proportion refers to the different sizes of individual parts that make up a singular object.

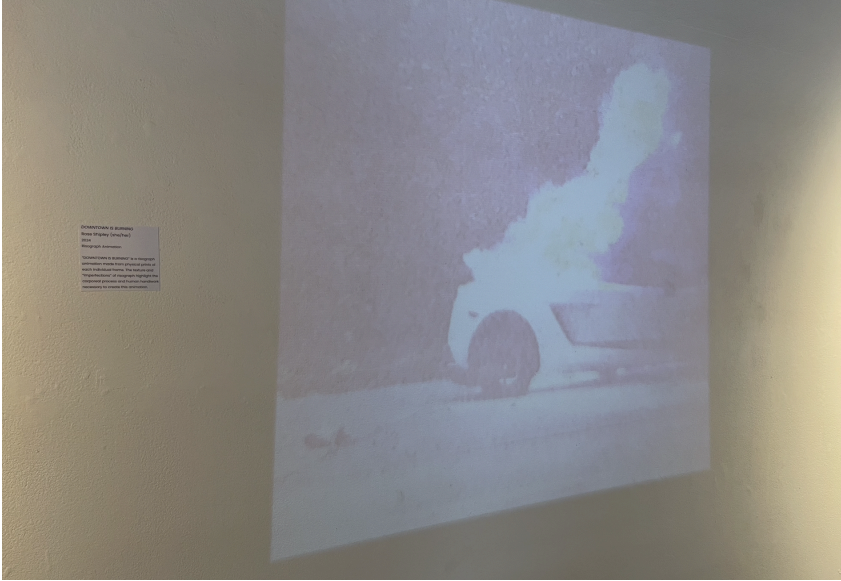
An example where these elements need to work together is in illustrating the human body. Understanding perspective and proportions is necessary to create realistic, life-like characters with bent limbs and bodies in motion.

### **How can Colors Change Perspective?**

Color can help create physical perspective as in atmospheric perspective as well as emotional perspective. Artists utilize the symbolism associated with colors to create emotion. Color symbolism can be subjective, allowing artists to communicate their message and audiences to interpret works from their own perspectives – simultaneously. For example, blue often feels sad, but can also reflect tranquility and peace, while yellow feels happy, and is associated with life and knowledge.

However, understanding color symbolism is not enough. Artists must also have an in-depth knowledge of color theory, which can be broken down into the color wheel (hue), color value (the relative lightness or darkness of the color), and intensity or saturation. Color theory helps us understand how colors interact with one another. For example, colors across from one another on the color wheel are complementary (such as yellow and purple or blue and orange), meaning they will create either white or black when combined. Complementary colors exhibit high contrast and, when placed side-by-side, make each other appear brighter.

Utilizing color theory allows artists to create well-balanced artworks, loaded with symbolic meaning and feeling.



## **Line, Shape, and Form**

Line, shape, and form are the most basic components of art. Artists develop great skill to communicate with us through the most basic details, they make deliberate choices utilizing each of these foundational elements which combine to create a world for us to enjoy.

### **Why are Simple Lines Important in Art?**

At their simplest, lines are one-dimensional elements with a beginning and an end, creating the foundation for shapes and forms. But even this basic element can mean so much more. Lines provide direction, movement, and emotion. They guide the viewer's eyes, draw attention to a point, and create lines-of-sight.

Lines can be: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, straight, or zigzagged. Lines can even be implied using negative space. Each type creates a different feeling. The verticality of a skyscraper feels stable and strong; the horizontal skyline of a landscape is peaceful and calming. A diagonal line can feel unstable, as if something is about to fall. Zigzags create motion, implying turmoil as direction changes quickly and harshly, like waves rocking a boat, while soft curves can evoke calm. Whether the line is one-dimensional or implied by the direction of a shape or form, lines play a key role in developing and telling a story.

### **How do Artists use Shapes?**

Shapes are flat, two-dimensional enclosed areas where basic lines meet – they dictate height and width. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and triangles, or organic, like a tree or cloud. Though flat shapes do not represent our three-dimensional reality, digital artists have long used simple shapes to tell full, complex stories. From pixel squares to flat characters, digital artists use shape to translate movement in our three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional plane.

### **So, What's the Difference Between Shape and Form?**

Form, like shape, has height and width but includes depth, creating a three-dimensional effect. A square becomes a cube and a circle becomes a sphere by adding depth. Forms have weight and dimensionality, which create more realistic objects. Form can also be geometric or organic, like a cube or the human body. Understanding how things move and contort, such as how muscles shift to create different facial expressions, are necessary to create realistic forms. Understanding how 2-dimensional shapes become 3-dimensional forms allows artists to play with the world around them to create realistic original characters, objects, and worlds.



# Light

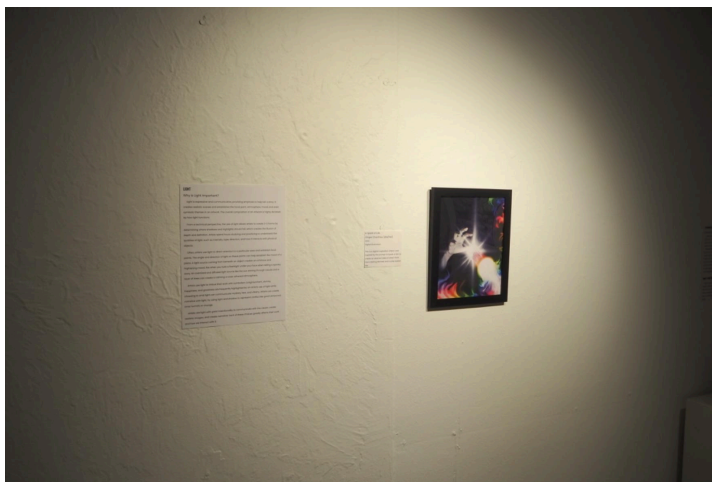
## Why is Light Important?

Light is expressive and communicative, providing emphasis to help tell a story. It creates realistic scenes and establishes the focal point, atmosphere, mood, and even symbolic themes in an artwork. The overall composition of an artwork is highly dictated by how light functions. From a technical perspective, the use of light allows artists to create 3-D forms by determining where shadows and highlights should fall, which creates the illusion of depth and definition. Artists spend hours studying and practicing to understand the qualities of light, such as intensity, type, direction, and how it interacts with physical objects.

Often, artists use light to direct attention to a particular area and establish focal points. The angle and direction of light on these points can help establish the mood of a piece. A light source coming from beneath an object creates an ominous and frightening mood, like when you hold a flashlight under your face when telling a spooky story. An oversized and diffused light source like the sun shining through clouds and a layer of trees can create a calming or even ethereal atmosphere.

Artists use light to imbue their work with symbolism. Enlightenment, divinity, happiness, and goodness are frequently highlighted by an artist's use of light while choosing to omit light can communicate mystery, fear, and villainy. Artists can create narrative with light, by using light and shadow to represent conflict like good versus evil, inner turmoil, or change.

Artists use light with great intentionality to communicate with the viewer, create realistic images, and create narrative. Each of these choices greatly affects their work and how we interact with it.



## Playing with Light

### What are the basic qualities of Light?

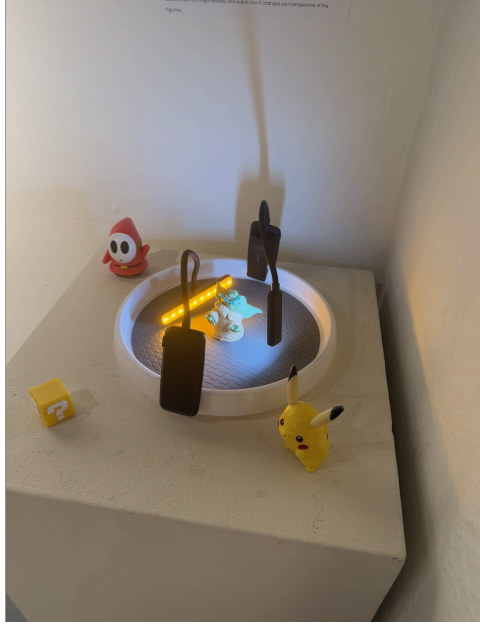
To effectively utilize light, artists have to understand a variety of its qualities like the intensity, form, type, and direction. These qualities of light combined with the material, color, and shape of the object determine how light will reflect, scatter, absorb, transmit, or emit and how it will affect the appearance of an object.

Intensity refers to the amount or value of the light. This includes both how “bright” the light source is as well as if it is a direct or indirect light source. Form refers to the size and number of light sources while the type of light refers to the color of the light. The color of the light interacts and affects how we see the color of objects and if there are multiple light sources of different colors then an artist must have an in-depth understanding of color theory along with light. Directionality includes the distance the light source is from the object (density) as well as the angle of the source. All of this affects how strong and at what angles shadows and highlights will sit on an object.

### Now it’s your turn to play!

Choose a figurine and see how changing the intensity, form, type and direction of the light sources below affects its appearance. Note how the highlights and shadows differ as you move the light sources closer to or further from the object. Observe how different color lights interact with one another and the object. Up the brightness, make it duller, or turn off a light entirely and watch how it changes your perspective of the figurine.





## Character and World Building

### What Does it Mean to Build a World?

Whether creating a painting, novel, movie, comic strip, or video game, well-developed worlds and the characters that inhabit them are necessary for immersive and compelling stories. Artists combine technical skills and real-world inspiration with creativity to make captivating fictional realities.

World building is the creation of a fictional planet or realm, or the reimagining of our own reality. Artists develop unique environments, cultures, and histories which influence characters and their actions and set the narrative in motion. Artists make countless decisions to create an immersive space full of surprises and easter eggs, or hidden features, to enhance their story.

Artists incorporate small, meaningful details in the clothing, accessories, physicality, and overall appearance of a character to enrich their world. A villain's dark clothes and angular features may reflect their undercutting and ill intentions. A plucky, young aspiring artist may have paint splattered jeans and a brush in their back pocket. Even the littlest details communicate the story's message and add magic to an artist's world.

Character development adds depth and complexity to that world. Backstories, personalities, and concept art all work together to create a believable character. Through their actions, dialogue, and emotions, these characters invite audiences to experience a perspective that may differ from ours, and can help us develop a new understanding of our own reality.



## *Artists First Print Shop*

Support our artists by checking out these prints for sale, and scan this QR code to find more of our artists' work!



Artists aren't just born. They learn from the world around them and practice constantly. No matter your experience, there is always opportunity to grow. Use the art supplies here to learn new skills, practice old ones, and become an artist!

## Drawing Station

Pick up a pencil and start drawing! Don't know how to draw? Want to learn how to draw something new? Use one of our drawing books. There are three books of varying difficulty. We recommend beginners use either the Level 1 drawings from 1007 Drawings to Sketch in 5 Minutes or Less or How to Draw 101 Things to start learning and creating.

## Animation Station

Have you ever wanted to animate? Well here is a chance to practice an analog version of animating by creating a flipbook! Grab one of our premade flip books, read through our "How To," and start animating.

