state of play

organized activities disguised as something fun

Edited by Anthony Fontana & Stacy Isenbarger
Developed in Cooperation with
The Integrative Teaching ThinkTank

Play is an organized activity that is disguised as something that is fun and/or competitive.

The form of play can be very structured (with rules and deep strategies, as in chess) or more loosely defined and open-ended (as in playing with blocks).

In a state of play, teaching and learning flow naturally, opening up opportunities for exploration and experimentation by every person in the room.

Play is something students understand.

Anthony Fontana, State of Play Co-Editor

State of Play Sponsors

ThinkTank is a facilitated forum offered by the Integrative Teaching ThinkTank organization. It brings together art and design master teachers, administrators & emerging educators to address thematic issues of higher education.

By linking educational theory to practice, ThinkTank identifies innovative new approaches to higher education.

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higher education at a higher level

Integrative Teaching ThinkTank evaluates ThinkTank outcomes and creates or modifies theories, policies and curricula for future ThinkTank sessions.

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a breakout session at ThinkTank 4, the Lamar Dodd School of Art, The University of Georgia

A Few Thoughts on Play

Integrative Teaching ThinkTank (ITT) promotes identifying, teaching, and assessing visual thinking skills for today's artists and designers. During our ThinkTank intensives, master and emerging educators collaborate through hands-on workshops, presentations, and discussions. We work in small groups to openly exchange—and sometimes challenge—ideas. We seek to heighten understanding of curriculum design and explore innovative assessment strategies.

The concept for State of Play arose during ITT's Think-Tank 4 held at the University of Georgia in June 2009. The publication exemplifies the mission of ITT. It presents practical, innovative assignments that prepare students to learn the technical skills that ground study in art and design by introducing habits of mind that are the foundation for creative inquiry.

State of Play is also an excellent example of how, as Elliot Eisner has put it, the teaching of art is more than the teaching of art. The lessons presented here help students encounter and engage in authentic self-directed learning while simultaneously presenting base-line vocabulary and essential skills.

There are many different approaches and purposes for teaching art and design. There is no single best method. ITT celebrates this diversity at the same time it seeks to find exemplars of best practice.

Richard Siegesmund
President, Integrative Teaching ThinkTank

In September, 2005 Jim Elniski, then First-Year Program Director at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and I, then directing Foundations Program Director at Northern Illinois University, met to discuss a serious challenge.

The earnest and energetic emerging artists and designers now teaching Foundations courses rarely have any training as educators. As a result, they expend enormous effort seeking effective teaching strategies, at the expense of both their studio time and their students.

Determined to support these emerging educators and to improve Foundations teaching, we collaborated on ThinkTank1, held in Chicago in June 2006. Integrative Teaching ThinkTank, a non-profit educational organization evolved from this pilot project.

September, 2009. As we prepare for ThinkTank5, scheduled at University of Georgia in June 2010, we are proud to present a collection of creativity exercises developed by a group of our emerging educators.

Engaging, challenging, and inventive, each assignment is designed to expand learning while overcoming the perfectionism that so often paralyzes contemporary students. Piloted by Anthony Fontana, Learning Technologies Consultant and Instructor of Art at Bowling Green State University and Stacy Isenbarger, Visiting Assistant Professor, East Tennessee State University, this collection of ideas and approaches is designed to stimulate your own creativity as you develop new assignments.

Mary Stewart
Integrative Teaching ThinkTank, Co-Founder


– PROLIFIC PRODUCTION
WITH EDITING – A P
TOWARD SOLUTION
CREATIVITY DEFINITION:
"Novel, New

play

contents

play

warm ups

What's in a Name?
Expressive Line Quality Exercise
Two-Dimensional Design

Melanie Lowrance, Instructor of Art
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Description

Students will create variations on the manner in which they write their name, and then assign descriptive and associative terms to each variation.

Objectives

→ To explore expressive line quality—both physically and verbally

How to Play

Each student is asked to write his/her name in cursive at the top left of the piece of paper. The task is repeated, making the signature a continuous line. Several variations are introduced, such as:

→ Writing with non-dominant hand
→ Writing with eyes closed
→ Jump on one foot
→ Write SLOWLY
→ Write backwards, etc.

Each variation is written under the last on the left of the paper until a range of signatures is created.

Next students isolate a section of each signature and assign it a name. Students are then asked to jot down words they would use to describe each line segment as well as associative or connotative qualities. Students share their signature/lines in small groups, followed by class discussion on expressive uses of line.

Equipment

Pencil or ballpoint pen, 8 ½" x 11 typing or notebook paper (scrap paper is fine)

Note to Instructors

This exercise is conducted in the first twenty minutes of the class as an introduction to Expressive Line Quality and a long- term assignment.

Time Allotment

Twenty minutes.

Talking Color
Color Painting

Anna Kell, Visiting Assistant Professor
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Description	Working in pairs, students are challenged to match color swatches by mixing color based on their partner's verbal instructions.
Objectives	→ To effectively describe color by referring only to its three constituent parts: hue, value, and saturation.
How to Play	Partner students and give one student a swatch of color. The other student in the pair should NOT see this swatch. The student with the swatch then begins to describe the color on the swatch while the other student attempts to match this color by mixing paint. The describer can only use clues about its hue, saturation, and value, saying things like: "No, it is less green and darker in value," "You're in the value range, now make it less saturated," etc. When the goal is met, students switch roles.
Equipment	Paint for mixing (gouache or oil paint), palette, palette knives, and assorted color swatches (these could be color swatches from a paint store or previously prepared swatches)
Notes to Instructors	This exercise is a fun way to get students to stop being subjective ("midnight blue" or "velvety pink") with language and also builds color-mixing skills.
Time Allotment	One hour for each student to take turns mixing. Students should continue until they have matched the color on the swatch (starting over if necessary).

Rapid Practice and Perfection Through Blind Contour Skeletons Drawing I

Kip Bradley, Visiting Assistant Professor of Art,
Armstrong Atlantic State University, kip@kipbradley.com

Description	Create a proportionally accurate, linearly extravagant blind contour drawing of a skeleton on first day of class with limited instruction.
Objectives	→ To make connections to the same sense of attempt and re-attempt that they may exemplify in an effort to perfect a video game button combo → To use the effort necessary to create an accurate well proportioned drawing
How to Play	Contact students prior to class and instruct them to bring a large newsprint pad and sharpie marker to the first day of class. After a brief explanation of blind contour ideas of continuous line, fixed gaze, and the marker's limited but potential line variation, students are asked to produce blind contour after blind contour of a skeleton. A variety of techniques can be used to keep the students guessing such as time restraints, image size restraints, and seat adjustments left or right, as well as full seat swaps.
Equipment	Skeleton, Sharpie marker, 22"x 30" newsprint pad
Notes to Instructors	Keep the students moving and energy high. As soon as students show the slightest sign of slowing or tiring make a change in the approach or provide a new challenge. Encourage students to approach repetitive attempts towards accurate lines as opposed to their preconceived idea of perfection on the first mark.
Time Allotment	1-2 hours. This can be repeated on the second day of class, giving students 1 hour to warm up and then 30 minutes to produce a final drawing for grading.

Walkabout
STUDIO, Foundations

M. Michelle Illuminato, Assistant Professor
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(Created in collaboration with Brett Hunter)

Description

Students are introduced to experiential research methods and given the opportunity to explore their new home through a walkabout.

Objectives

→ To explore new surroundings in create relationships to a new environment

→ To generate ideas of how to discuss mapping, spatial experience, and the power of objects and images to convey information.

How to Play

To create the rules of their personal walkabout have the students write a letter (A, B, C, or D) and a number (1, 2, 3, or 4) on a piece of paper. Next, reveal the code that determines the time and length of the students' exercise (see code below). Starting at a pre-determined main point on campus, each student works their way through their individual pilgrimage by flipping a coin to determine which direction to turn, observing and collecting objects as they walk.

Example Set of Instructions

Time (hours)		Change direction every (minutes)
A. 1	1. 5	
B. 1.5	2. 10	
C. 2	3. 15	
D. 2.5	4. 20	

Flip of coin determines direction

HEADS=RIGHT

TAILS=LEFT

Directions to Students

1. Start at a central location on campus
2. Choose a spot around the area to begin.
3. Flip the coin to determine direction.
4. Walk for the number of minutes above in the determined direction.
5. Stop and observe your surroundings.
6. Select one object within your frontal view to place in your bag. (Walk up to that object if necessary.)
7. Make a notation as to where the object was found and any other interesting things you notice about the site.
8. Repeat steps 1-7 until you have completed the hours specified above for the walkabout.

Having completed their journey, students come to the following class period with materials collected. Photos of landmarks are posted in the classroom in relationship to their real location on campus. Students are given a ball of string and directed to 'map' their experience along with their classmates. They should show the distance they traveled and arrange all of their objects on the string. How to show the scale of their walk, position, and time may be determined by talking to other students and using the reference points (images) posted in studio. Following this activity, discuss with students mapping, spatial experience, and the power of objects to convey information.

Equipment

Student : The code and directions, a coin, time keeping device, bag, notepad, pencil, observation skills.
Faculty : String, photos of local landmarks placed in room in relationship to actual site to create a room-sized map of the town.

Notes to Instructors

After students complete the walkabout and before a classroom discussion, you may have them read Chapter 16 of The Shape of a Walk from Wanderlust: A History of Walking by Rebecca Solnit. This exercise may be used as a fieldwork component for assignments that explore: pilgrimage, walking, collection, landscape, nature, guidebooks.

Time Allotment

1-2.5 hours, outside exercise for student, 1.5 hours to organize room-sized map and discuss.

Abstract Puzzling Three-Dimensional Design

Oliver B. Schemm, Abjunct Professor in Art History
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Description	To memorize puzzle shapes and then, blind folded, place them in the correct spot using the mind's eye.
Objectives	→ To attempt to visualize form and space without sight
How to Play	Two people team up. One person is the facilitator and will help in the process. 1. Let student examine the wooden picture puzzle. 2. Blind fold student and mix up all the shapes. 3. Let student puzzle out positive shapes in the negative spaces. 4. Facilitator should encourage and help blind folded person with small hints, so frustration is kept in check. 5. When complete, reverse facilitator and puzzler.
Equipment	7-8 Melissa and Doug Wooden Peg Puzzles. They are around $5-10, but you could try to borrow from Day Care or find them in thrift shops.
Notes to Instructors	This is harder then it seems. Over time it gets easier. Consider continuing this periodically throughout semester. It is quite fascinating to imagine the shapes in your mind. Another variation: have a student memorize a room and its contents then traverse the space slowly while blindfolded.
Time Allotment	10 minutes each.

Scavengers & Dignitaries
Three-Dimensional Design

Stacy Isenbarger, Visiting Assistant Professor
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Description

Students are challenged to let go of the idea that their work is precious by working in pairs to create cohesive three-dimensional forms using various materials from classmates.

Objectives

- → To investigate individual connections to materials and how three-dimensional form can be used as communicative structures
- → To appreciate further how we collect information and materials
- → To collaborate effectively

How to Play

1. Early in a semester, students are asked to bring a shoebox full of found objects that they are willing to transform in class and at least 3 forms of adhesives or materials that could be used to connect them. At the beginning of class, students display all they've brought including adhesives.
2. Ask students to draw a card from a hat (or whatever is handy) that is labeled either Scavenger or Dignitary.
3. All those with the Scavenger card are asked to go around the room and scavenge materials to create a new pile for themselves. During this time no one is allowed to speak. (Approximately 10 minutes)
4. Dignitaries are asked to select one of the new Scavenger piles and investigate & organize this collection in a way that makes sense to them using whatever means necessary; again without speaking. (Approximately 10 minutes)
5. Now the pairs created must attempt to work together, without speaking, to create a cohesive structure that includes all items. Adhesives do not necessarily have to become part of the final works. (Approximately 20 minutes)

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Scavengers & Dignitaries
Three-Dimensional Design

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6. For the final 10 minutes of the construction, allow them to speak to one another and attempt to solidify their structure.
7. Follow this with a discussion of each pairs work, allowing the students to present their decisions to the class first.

Equipment

Found objects, adhesives, & camera to document.

Notes to Instructors

Discuss this exercise with the class to highlight characteristics of each student and build a better sense of the unique community within the classroom. This project exposes the connection skills students have, types of materials they are drawn to, and the kind of object-makers they already are. If there are an odd number of students, assign one extra dignitary to a team.

Time Allotment

Approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

What do you think so far?
Let's play some more

play

projects

Rule Based Drawing (RIP Sol Lewitt)
Drawing XYZ

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Description

Students work as a class to develop a set of written instructions that will yield a large-scale non-representational drawing in pencil.

Objectives

→ To execute a dynamic drawing as group

→ To produce text that clearly explains the process of creating this drawing to the public

How to Play

Students are responsible for working together to create their own set of "rules" that they then have to follow.

Directions to Students

→ You may work as a whole group, work in shifts, or split off into competing splinter groups. How you collaborate should be included as part of your set of instructions.

→ You can specify the type (hardness, thickness, color) of pencil and type or eraser if it is important.

→ Make use of the entire wall.

→ The public may not be involved in the execution of the drawing.

Example Set of Instructions

1) The center of the first circle is determined by the tallest point reached by the hand of the shortest person in the class

2) The center of the second circle is determined by the mark made when a piece of charcoal is thrown at the center of the wall by someone who is good at throwing

3) The center of the third circle is determined by the distance one's arm can reach from the nearest window or door

4) From each center, lines of painter's tape will be extended out in all directions to create starburst shapes that intersect and vary in thickness according to the taper's discretion.

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Rule Based Drawing (RIP Sol Lewitt) Drawing XYZ

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5) Each person on the team, represented by one color, will draw a ring (circle) around each center, going one by one in the order of the rainbow with whomever is present at the time
6) Each person will draw until their pencil needs to be sharpened and then switch to the next circle and repeat
7) After two days of drawing, the starburst tape designs will be removed to reveal clean white strips of wall
8) If music is available, it will be played
9) Meditative sounds are preferred to emphasize the ritual of the wall drawing
10) Whatever music is chosen will intermingle with the conversation of negotiating art students and teachers setting up the show

Equipment

Pencil, erasers, tape, ladder, etc as determined by the students' set of instructions.

Notes to Instructors

Start with a discussion about the theoretical implications and history of Conceptual Art, including its relationship to the ideas of authorship, spontaneity, expression, and play. Readings included Sol Lewitt's Sentences on Conceptual Art, (1969), and selections from Recording Conceptual Art (Norvell, Patricia and Alberro, Alexanders ed. University of California Press, 2001).

Tall Straw
Three-Dimensional Design

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Description	In pairs, students create the tallest freestanding structure in 60 minutes made from drinking straws and tape. The tallest structure that stands for 15 minutes is the winner.
Objectives	→ To problem solve and work collaboratively to a create strong, free-standing structure → To use time effectively
How to Play	Give students the above challenge and assign partners. Each pair is given 30 minutes to strategize building techniques and types of straws and tape will be used for their structure. An additional hour may be assigned to practice and revise building methods before the 60 minute challenge begins.
Equipment	Drinking Straws and Tape
Notes to Instructors	Introduce and discuss issues of structure and various strategies of construction with the class, as well as problem solving methods and approaches for a timed project. During the measuring and critique portion of the assignment, have the large group identify successful and unsuccessful strategies to the problem.
Time Allotment	Day 1 – 30 minute strategizing session Day 2 – 60 minute "practice and revise" session 60 minute challenge 30 minute discussion/critique

VIDEO : GAME
Two-Dimensional Design

Anthony Fontana, Instructor & Learning Technologies Consultant
Bowling Green State University

Description	Students are challenged to generate quick video responses using competitive and collaborative game play.
Objectives	→ To produce narrative structures through a series of video responses → To collaborate innovatively and resourcefully and make good use of time
How to Play	Have students partner to form teams. Give each team a video camera. The team to complete the most videos by the end of the class period wins. Each option under a category may only be completed once.
Directions to Students	→ Complete the task by showing it to the Instructor → Roll 1 dice for categories Format and Time (minutes) → Roll 1 or 2 die for categories Content and Wildcard → Complete 6 tasks to win the game. If 2 teams tie, create an additional video for a tie breaker.

Roll	Format	Content	Time	Wildcard
1	Linear Narrative	Show a person moving from one place to another without walking	1	Must talk funny
2	Non-Linear Narrative	Show two people having a conversation	2	All shots must be taken with camera on floor
3	Montage	Record a music video	3	All shots must be taken with camera 6 inches from subject

Roll	Format	Content	Time	Wildcard
4	Repetitive	Make an abstract animation with line and shape	4	All shots must be taken from above subject
5	Cyclical	Reenact a famous scene from a movie	5	Must use the color roll dice) 1-Red, 2- Blue, 3- Yellow, 4-Orange, 5- Purple, 6- Green
6	Tension/ Resolution	Tell your life story	6	Must shout all lines of dialogue
7		Use an object as the star/ main component of the video (roll dice) 1-Phone, 2-Computer, 3-Mp3 player or headphones, 4-Pen/pencil, 5-Keys, 6-Shoes		No verbal dialogue (no talking)
8		Reenact a Presidential speech from a movie		No people can be in this video
9		Show the meaning of life		Must use a dominant shape (roll dice) 1-Circle, 2-Square, 3-Line, 4-Triangle, 5-Oval, 6-Rectangle
10		Break something, then put it back together		Must show Gestalt (roll dice) 1-Continuity, 2-Containment, 3-Closure, 4-Proximity, 5-Repetition, 6-Grouping
11		6-Grouping sequence from a movie		Must take place in rone location (camera cannot move)
12		Make a video about making Must be one		Must be one continuous shot

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VIDEO : GAME
Two-Dimensional Design

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Equipment	Video camera
Notes to Instructor	Discuss how analogy, metaphor, algorithms, contrast, and variety may be used to problem solve during the game. Awards for winning may be physical prizes or extra credit. This game may be transformed into a longer assignment, having the students edit their footage in a later class to further explore narrative structures.
Time Allotment	2.5 Hours

Urban Fabric: The City as Text
Two-Dimensional Design

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Description

After in class exercises and visits to chosen outside locations, students will create a thematic, narrative mixed media artwork based on their environment

Objectives

→ To utilize students' surroundings and examine sequence, context, and meaning.

How to Play

Part I: Playing, In Class Exercise stateTo play with and look at the impact of sequence and context, each student writes down one thoughtful sentence. Make photocopies so that each member of the classroom gets a collection of all sentences. In an hour or less, have them create a piece of writing using all the words they have. They cannot delete any words, but can cut the sentences into fragments to rejoin them with other sentences and can add words in between sentences if necessary. This word play allows them to see how sequence and context of words affect meaning.

Part II: Generating Begin by asking students to take a close look at their urban surroundings—both the natural and built environment. When walking through a city, their path creates a sequence of encounters on a daily basis. This sequence will operate as the inspiration for their imagery and content. Ask students to organize a narrative of sequential events or movements to create a path through the city. Students should make rubbings, tracings, and transfers of signage and "landmarks" they encounter to record their environment. Students will then bring this raw material into class, break into small groups, begin to brainstorm ideas based on their collections. Then draw, trace, color, and collage ideas into a sketches or studies for a composition.

Part III: Developing Have students expand on their ideas by going back out into the city and collecting again,

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Urban Fabric: The City as Text
Two-Dimensional Design

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	but with new ideas in mind. In addition to making more rubbings, transfers and note taking, students are asked to bring a camera along. These recordings will combine tracing, transferring, drawing, rubbings and photos. Students may use color and elect to incorporate digital technology into this project when needed. Part IV: Producing At this point students will have worked through a number of ideas and discussed them with their classmates. They will need to narrow their content and select a theme to complete their project. Ask students to consider how the juxtaposition or scale of images, along with value and color can affect meaning, narrative, expression, or mood? Visual elements are brought together to interpret their experience of how they see life around them. Encourage students to incorporate any techniques in addition to those that are explored in the course—drawing, gesture, photo material, rubbings, textures, digital media, found objects etc. The final outcome should utilize the equivalent of 5 sheets of quality 22"x30" paper. They may keep the paper whole or cut the paper into multiple sheets.
Equipment	Mixed media, paper, camera
Time Allotment	3 weeks

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Integrative
Teaching
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Integrative Teaching ThinkTank (ITT) is dedicated to identifying concepts, creating curriculum and defining policies that can strengthen 21st century foundations.

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http://integrativeteaching.org/stateofplay