

On the Edge of Value, presentation for mini Workshop September 2011

I. Definitions/terminology, comments about “Color gets the credit, but Value does the work”, Alternate terminology to think about with “Values.” Strictly my interpretation.

A. Value → Lights and darks

1. The term Value, has too many other meanings in English, like cost, implied priorities, political, moral. I find this not useful. Lights & Darks works better for me.
2. Value applies to both chromatic realms– whether black to white, or colors! Colors HAVE VALUE, don't forget that!
2. Understanding of how brain functions implies that it is the change of lights and darks that works in the right side of our brain, the spacial, non-verbal side. Consider how quickly we react to lights and darks changing, things moving out of the corner of your eye.
3. Questions to ask: “Where are the lights?” “Where are the darks?” “What's important in this design?”
4. From photography, “high key” = whites, lights, “low key” =darks, blacks. Both types of composition are possible in fabric creation, paintings, photography....

B. Contrast

1. Implies a difference in lightness and darkness, big differences, or small gradations (like modeling). Mathematical definition, the bigger the difference, the higher the number, hence the higher the contrast. If 0 is white, and 10 is Black the difference is larger than a number between two medium grays.... Shadows require contrast.
2. Questions to ask: Is there ENOUGH contrast? Is there too much? Are there areas that need MORE contrast, areas that need less?

C. Separation

1. Differences in lightness and darkness provide strong separation of parts within a composition. Hints that much of our right side brain – non-verbal-spacial learning may be in lights/darks. (Recommended reading “Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, by Betty Edwards, 1999, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, a groundbreaking book back in the 1990's)
2. Ways Artists have “created” their own separation, examples of stained glass windows, and Cedar Point T-shirt, Christ always has a “halo”. Lights& Darks can “Force the issue.”
3. Questions to consider: Are the important portions of my design separated sufficiently by lights and darks?

## II. Artistic methods to determine values

### A. Blur up your edges

1. Why do you want to blur/fuzzy up your edges? Comments about vision processing, acuity, and edges become important to visual understanding and processing. When you interrupt that, you can look at lights and darks separately from your understanding to whether the object you are creating is a tree/house, etc.
2. Messes with your perception briefly, Arms length, a constant, change your perspective, stand up/ sit down, keeps vision active.

### B. Ways to blur edges

#### 1. Natural

- a. "Stand Back and Squint"
- b. If nearsighted – look around your glasses, or remove them
- c. Art on wall, walk away. Don't always sit at a horizontal table!
- d. Turn art upside down, come back later. Comments about "Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain" Investigation of brain function and visual perception.
- e. Why do this? Asking the brain to quiet the left language side, and changing perception, spacial, non-verbal, right side, just enough to consider lights & darks.

#### 2. Mechanical

- a. Use a computer, photo software, change color to "grayscale" and check out what your photo looks like in "Black and White" for highlights.
- b. Use a camera lens to blur focus, use a cell phone, binoculars backward.
- c. Use a Ruby beholder – red lens to differentiate lights/darks. Works well with a single color group, (personal preference) but many colors, it is just confusing. Reds may work best with a green "beholder"

3. Artists need to consider what will work for them, so that they can use during art creation.

## IV. Lights & Darks and Fabric Selection

- A. The Universal difficulty in art – you NEVER have the correct color for what you are making. Some suggestions to making your stash work.

- B. Darks can hide plenty when combined with other darks, especially if you are piecing.
- C. Midtones can be tricky, but not impossible. Remember “grey rabbits in green grass”, just find the correct grey tone. Grey fabrics can be helpful. Green things in rocks can also disappear.
- D. Lights need more careful matching, but it can be done. (just get dirty quicker...)
- E. Texture –remember with many novelty fabrics, another designer is working their own “artwork” on the fabric, so beware of many different lights and darks juxtaposed can be difficult. However, there are times and places where some of the busy-mess of a novelty can work to your benefit.

IV. Value studies (however simple) early in the process can aid the whole artwork/fabric design process. Fabric and textile art involves a PROCESS (not necessarily a “direct” medium) and works well if you can do some preliminary planning before even consider fabrics!

- A. Look for 3 tones, light, middle, dark. Use cross hatching, twice across = dark, single hatch = midtone, and nothing for lights. Example of cats.
- B. I’ve provided some small samples you can try, mostly whites/lights since they work easiest without a window or lightbox. You may use your own if you choose.
- C. Remember that this is one way of “abstracting” a photo, and using a pencil is a method of “making YOUR mark”. (Even how you cut things out is one way to make a mark sewing free form, feed-dogs down, or using fabric.)
- D. When using a drawing tool, try NOT to use it like a writing tool! The needs are different. Writing requires tiny precise movements on a horizontal surface, drawing needs larger ones, especially if working larger than a piece of paper! How you hold a tool, can make a big difference in what your line work looks like!
- E. Simple cross hatching, is on hatch for mid tones, two hatches crossed for darks, and nothing for lights. Examples.
- F. I’m going to quit talking so the “right side of your brain” can kick in. Left side of your brain is the analytical side, and LANGUAGE side, turn off the words, and the VISUAL right side can kick in. Takes a couple minutes. (Music with words can also be a challenge if you are trying to do visual things!)

V. Biography for Kathy Pfeufer

- A. Lived with a house with a black & white darkroom in the basement as a child.
- B. Learned to sew on a Treadle machine, ouch! Sewed through a finger in the process. OUCH.
- C. University of Maryland, BA, Fine Arts, in the dark ages. If this lecture sounds like a charcoal drawing, that is how I’m thinking about it. Oh yes, a minor in Art History, of all things! YIKES.

D. Married, Moved, Worked at Los Alamos National Lab. Worked as a designer/draftperson in electrical and mechanical engineering about 30 years. Blew a lot of things up when working for the Nevada Test Site! Oh, Yeah!

E. Retired, 2004, moved to Grand Junction, and still fiddling with art. Volunteered a couple years in the District 51 Art Heritage program for elementary schools, (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders are the best!) also worked as graphic artist for Wheels and Deals building ads, part time for a couple of years.