

Building Blocks of Art: Exploring Design Principles with Lego

Materials Needed:

- Assortment of Lego bricks (various sizes, shapes, and colors)
- Device with internet access OR printed pictures of diverse artworks/sculptures demonstrating key design principles (e.g., Alexander Calder mobile for balance, Greek Parthenon for proportion, Van Gogh's 'Starry Night' for rhythm/emphasis, a sculpture by Louise Nevelson for unity)
- Optional: Paper and pencil for sketching ideas
- Optional: Baseplate for Lego building

Introduction: What Makes Art Look 'Right'? (10 mins)

Start with a discussion: What makes some buildings, sculptures, or even Lego creations look interesting or well-put-together? Explain that artists and designers use 'rules' or guidelines called Principles of Design to organize the different parts (Elements of Art like line, shape, color) of their work. Today, we'll explore some of these principles using a fun material: Legos!

Exploring the Principles (15-20 mins)

Introduce 3-5 key Principles of Design. Use simple terms and Lego examples where possible:

- **Balance:** How visual weight is distributed. Can be symmetrical (same on both sides, like a simple Lego house facade) or asymmetrical (balanced but different, like a complex spaceship design). Show an artwork example (like a Calder mobile for asymmetrical balance). Quickly build a symmetrical vs. asymmetrical small Lego structure.
- **Proportion:** The relationship of sizes between different parts of a whole. Are the Lego car's wheels huge compared to the body, or tiny? Discuss how proportion affects realism or creates a cartoonish effect. Show an artwork example (like the Parthenon's columns).
- **Emphasis (Focal Point):** Drawing attention to a specific area. How can you make one part of a Lego creation stand out? (Using a unique color, a special piece, making it larger). Show an artwork example (where does your eye go first in 'Starry Night'?).
- **Rhythm/Movement:** Creating a sense of flow or repeating pattern. How can you use repeating Lego bricks or shapes to make the eye move across the creation? Show an artwork example.
- **Unity:** Making all the parts feel like they belong together. How can using similar colors, shapes, or a consistent theme make a Lego build look complete? Show an artwork example (like a Louise Nevelson sculpture).

Lego Design Challenge (25-30 mins)

The Challenge: Build your own original Lego sculpture! Before starting, choose at least TWO Principles of Design you want to focus on incorporating into your creation. You can build anything you like – an abstract sculpture, a vehicle, a creature, a small scene.

Steps:

1. Choose your two (or more) principles.
2. Optional: Quickly sketch your idea.
3. Start building! Think consciously about how you are using your chosen principles. (e.g., 'I am making this side taller to create asymmetrical balance,' or 'I am using all blue bricks except one red one for emphasis.')
4. Refine your creation as you go.

Art Connection & Discussion (10 mins)

Once the sculpture is finished:

- Have the student present their Lego creation.
- Ask them to explain which principles of design they focused on and how they incorporated them into their build.
- Briefly revisit the images of famous artworks. Ask: Can you see any similarities in how the artist used balance or emphasis compared to how you used it in your Lego sculpture?

Wrap-up & Assessment (5 mins)

Recap the principles learned. Praise the student's creativity and thoughtful application of design principles in their Lego sculpture. The successful construction of the sculpture and the student's ability to articulate how they used at least two principles serve as the assessment for this lesson.

Extension ideas (Optional): Try building another sculpture focusing on different principles, try recreating a famous sculpture's basic form with Legos, or write a short paragraph describing the principles used in a favorite Lego set.