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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1986 Volume III: Topics in Western Civilization: Ideals of Community and the Development of Urban Life,
1250-1700

The Illusion of the Renaissance

Guide for Curriculum Unit 86.03.08
by Sandra Willard

This unit is designed for eighth grade and high school art students. It is primarily a unit for a studio art course. The activities are designed to teach the rules of perspective in order to help the students develop drawing skills. Further, the activities, by focusing on obtaining illusionary effects, illustrate some curious applications of the rules of perspective. Along with learning the rules, the students are informed about how the rules can be manipulated. They will then have the opportunity to develop their imaginative and creative abilities by trying to invent some of their own versions of the curious use of perspective.

In order to make these activities more meaningful, some background in historical perspective is useful. The unit paper starts with a brief sketch stating in broad strokes the primary differences between Medieval and Renaissance art. The paper continues with a scaled down history of the discovery of perspective. Finally, the paper is completed with a brief explanation and exhibition of trompe l'oeil or illusionistic art work from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.

(Recommended for Art classes and Studio Art classes, grade 8 and at the high school level)

Key Words

Renaissance Art History General Instruction Perspective

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