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A Value: Pencil_City

This project combines research about a pencil and related ideas with imagining residential part of a city. Consider limiting color palette to grayscale.

First, conduct a research about the origin of a pencil, and all the developments related to this tool. Sticks of graphite are used as the handwriting material in pencils. Henry Petroski (1992) described in a monographic way a history of the pencil design and its circumstances. According to Petroski, deposits of graphite, that was thought a form of lead, were found in Cumbria, England about 1565. At that time, the Crown – the corporation sole in England, guarded graphite because it could be used to line the cannonballs, so it had to be smuggled out for use in pencils or for marking sheep. There were at first many confusing names for a pencil. Cannabis hemp fibres with clamps of plumbago (an old-fashioned term for graphite) were used in pencils. In his letter of 1586, William Camden's wrote, "Here also is found abundance of that mineral earth, or hard shining stone, which we call Blacklead, used by painters in drawing their lines and shading" (cited after Petroski, 1992, p. 46). In the 17th century pieces of plumbago were held in brass and silver cases with Baroque designs; early wood-cased graphite changed into pencils in the shape of octagonal shaft of wood. Black lead was discovered in the black-lead mine of Cumberland (which is now exhausted) and also imported from the Balearic Islands, Ceylon, Bohemia, and Sicily. In 1795 Nicolas Jacques Conté discovered the process of mixing graphite dust with clay, so the pencils could be made in variety of hardness; it was universally used for making pencils called Conte crayons. In the 19th century Johann Faber used Siberian graphite that was 94.5% pure. In 1800 in Concord, Mass., an unknown woman mixed plumbago with English red chalk; this was the beginning of first pencils made in America (Petroski, 1992). Although lead is not used for writing, there were many lead poisoning cases in the 20th century because of the lead content in the pencils' lacquer outer coating; people ingested lead by sucking and chewing pencils (Life, 1972).

Charcoal drawings in caves were inspiring for artists; for example, Pablo Picasso drew inspiration from the Lascaux caves and the German film director and screenwriter Werner Herzog from the Chauvet cave. A pencil has become a tool for its own medium, a metaphor and even an object for auto identification. The French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) had reportedly said of himself, "I am a pencil." The American painter Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) described his pencil as "the fencer's foil." The Moscow-born Paris illustrator and caricaturist Emmanuel Poiré took his pseudonym after the Russian word for pencil, karandash. In turn, a Swiss pencil-making firm was named Caran d'Ache after this artist (Petroski, 1992, p. 6). Find out about some companies that excel in production of this mighty tool. Why are they able to focus on this particular product with such a success?

This project deals with value, light and perspective expressed through showing three different views in one composition. Think about a grayscale as representation colors. We tend to think that yellow is lighter than green, but when talking about values, dark yellow will be perceived darker than light green. You might want to think about the differences between the brushwork, pencil work, and simulated pencil-work on the computer, so the imitate pencil work would be introduced.

Imagine you are sitting by the window on the high floor in a building located in the center of some city. Show what could be seen from various perspectives. Depict what you'd see in front of you when you'd look out of your window (orthogonal view), what's above (ant's perspective) and below you (bird eye's view). When you look in front of you, you will see windows of the building across the street They are usually perceived as rows and columns of rectangles. Some people might be visible in those windows working, talking or doing daily tasks. When looking up, you'd see the buildings above you and their window's would not be seen as rectangles anymore due to perspective, you'd see them as trapezoids. The street level will be shown from above. You'll see the facades of the building with people walking down there, cars moving, and all the white signage on the streets. When looking down try to show people performing their tasks, interacting and being a core of a street life. Focus on light. How would you present daily actions of a street during the day and getting ready for its nightlife? Show the trees, cars, and people walking down the street. Would you show it as dark, light, from top to bottom of your work, or vice versa? Try to show the city you'd see in front of you, what you'd see when looking down, and from the bottom up when you look up to see the tall-risers. Please write your statement as well.