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App Review

I got the opportunity to work with a program called Sketch-up. Sketch-up starts you off with templates, based on units of measurement and type of drawing that you'd like to create. It then places you in a 3D space with reference axes, and a simplified set of tools that let you draw lines, arcs, rectangles, and ovals, filling them with various textures and connecting them through “snappable” endpoints. Fun things like the Push/Pull tool let you take a 2D image and extrude it - though as an experienced 3D animator. You can also create offsets of your shapes, rotate them, change camera angles, etc. Sketch-up lets you design simple shapes in a 2-D or 3-D space. It is very straight forward. Now what sets this application apart is the fact that you can take your flat shapes and make them 3-D just by clicking on an edge and pulling it up or down. This will begin to create planes and will let you start designing buildings, poles, pools, and just an endless array of objects and the only limitation to your creative results is time and imagination.

There are many strong points to this program. First-time users will find it pretty easy to start plunking around and creating basic images, though there may be issues adapting to mouse movement in a 3D space; sometimes it requires a little finesse to get your drawings to stay on the plane you want, and if you're working with a touchpad laptop mouse it might take a little more practice. For more sophisticated output you'll definitely need to check out the tutorials and really learn your way around, though there's also flexibility to apply your own creativity and style. It does not rely on a vectors too much, but it does make limited use of them. It recognizes planes really well and makes it so simple to just draw upon each object to create impressions, bevels, and so many other details that one would like to simulate to create windows, doors, etc. My favorite part about this program was the ability to create a flat image and replicate an abstract painting but turn it into a full scale design for an open space, a home, and anywhere in-between.

Now for my least favorite part of this application was the limited use of shortcuts. It made it really difficult and tedious to create simple actions over and over by going into the menus. I tried the PC version of Sketch-Up and after looking at my partners’ trials, they had all used the Mac version. The Mac version of this program offers all the shortcuts I would have wanted to make it easier to switch between tools without going back in forth between the tool bars, menus, and workspace. I was able to use a graphic tablet as well and the program was really responsive to it. If you have a graphic tablet, it does make it a little easier to use in the PC version because of the limited use of shortcuts. Overall, this application has infinite uses and is a remarkable tool to have as an artist in design and for fun. Did I mention it’s free?