

# Elements of Art and Principles of Design

## Elements of Art:

**Line:** A mark left in the path of a moving point. A mark with length and direction(s)

- Lines can be: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, straight, curved, angular or bent, thick or wide, thin, blurred, fuzzy, controlled, or meandering.
- Lines can create an outline or contour.
- Lines are often used to define space or direct the movement of your eyes.

**Shape/Form:** An enclosed space defined and determined by other art elements such as line, color, value and texture.

- Shape refers to a closed space made when a line connects to itself.
- Form refers to a shape that is or appears to be three dimensional, having weight, width and depth.

**Texture:** a surface quality that can be seen (simulated texture) or felt (actual texture)

**Color:** The visible spectrum of reflected light

- It has the 3 attributes of:
  - hue(it's unique color name)
  - value (lightness or darkness)
  - intensity or saturation (purity and strength)
- When the spectrum is organized as a color wheel, the colors are divided into:
  - primary (red, blue, yellow), secondary (orange, green, violet) and intermediate (or tertiary) colors (orange-red, blue-green, etc.)
  - analogous (next to each other) or complementary (opposites)
  - warm or color colors (warm colors move forward, cool colors recede)

**Space:** The area around, above, below and within an artwork.

- It can be described as:
  - two-dimensional (2D) or three dimensional (3D)
  - flat, shallow, or deep
  - open or closed
  - positive (subject) or negative (background)
- The illusion of space can be created with perspective, shading, overlapping, or relative scale.
- The perception of space can be created or distorted with optical illusions.

**Value:** The lightness or darkness of a color.

- A value scale or gray scale shows steps or gradations of lightness and darkness.
- When values that appear next to each other are very different, it's called contrast. Artists use contrast to draw your attention to things.
- Value changes in color are called:
  - tints when they are lighter than the original color
  - shades when they are darker than the original color)

## **Principles of Design**

**Design:** The composition of an artwork. Intentionally arranging the elements of art (listed above) using the principles of organization to create a unified artwork.

**Balance:** Parts of a composition can be described as having weight or dominance. The arrangement of these elements to create a sense of visual stability or tension is called balance. This is sometimes also referred to as symmetry.

- Balance can be symmetrical (or formal), asymmetrical (informal), or radial (around a central point, like a flower)

**Emphasis/Dominance:** The importance given to certain objects in an artwork. Where your eye goes first. The center of attention.

- The “center of attention is also called the focal point. A painting can have a main focal point with secondary focal points.
- Contrast creates emphasis and determines the focal point. This can be contrast in color, value, texture, shape, space or line.

**Proportion:** The relationship of the parts of an artwork to the whole, or of one part to another. Related to size or scale. (Can also refer to quantity or degree.)

**Movement/Rhythm:** Movement refers to how elements are arranged to draw your eye through an artwork or imply a sense of motion. (Some sculpture, video etc. may have actual motion.)

- Rhythm is a special kind of movement created by repeated components in an artwork. It refers to the visual tempo or beat as the viewer’s eyes jump rapidly or glide smoothly from one related element to the next.

**Repetition/Pattern:** An element that is repeated in a planned way to create rhythm or unity.

**Variety:** Using the art elements to create differences in an artwork that add visual interest.

**Harmony:** The accentuating of similarities within an artwork to create unity. The opposite of variety. Components that share common traits.

**Unity:** A successful combination of art elements that creates a sense of wholeness and visual completion in an artwork. How the artwork functions as a whole, unified piece.