

VISUAL ART GLOSSARY

Abstract art: Artwork in which the subject is often simplified, distorted, deconstructed, or obscured.

Aesthetics: A branch of philosophy that focuses on the nature of beauty, the nature and value of art, and the inquiry processes of human response.

Aesthetic theories: A formal method of criticism used primarily by art critics and historians (see Emotionalism, Formalism, Imitationalism).

Analysis: One of the steps in art criticism, analysis is discovering how the principles of design are used to organize the elements of art. In art history, analysis is the step which determines the style and aesthetic meaning of the artwork.

Architecture: The art and science of designing the interiors and/or exteriors of structures, living/environmental spaces, and/or cities.

Armature: Supporting structure for sculpture.

Art Criticism: Describing and evaluating the media, processes, and meanings of works of visual art and making comparative judgments. Its four stages are description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment (see Aesthetic Theories).

Art Elements: Visual arts components, such as line, texture, color, form, value, shape, and space (see Elements of Art).

Art History; A record of the visual arts, incorporating information, interpretations, and judgments about art objects, artists, and conceptual influences on developments in the visual arts.

Artifact: An object from a particular culture or stage of technological development.

Art Media: (see Medium)

Assemblage: Work created by combining existing objects into a meaningful whole (see Sculpture).

Atmospheric Perspective: The effect of air and light on how an object is perceived at a distance by the viewer.

Background: The area of an artwork that appears to be behind other objects or farther away from the viewer.

Balance: Principle of design used for arranging visual elements in a work of art.

Symmetrical – Formal balance in which two halves or sides of a design create a mirror image.

Asymmetrical – A way of organizing the parts of a design so that one side differs from the other without destroying the overall harmony.

Radial Balance – Type of balance in which forces or elements branch out from a central axis in a circular pattern.

Bas-relief: Sculpture in which areas project from a flat surface.

Blending: Smooth, gradual application of media.

Carving: A subtractive form of sculpture, in which the material is cut, chipped, or drilled away from a solid material to create a sculpture.

Casting: Process of sculpture in which a substance is poured into a mold and allowed to harden.

Ceramic: Art of making objects with clay fired in a kiln to produce pottery and sculpture.

Chiaroscuro: Method of arranging light and shadow in two-dimensional art to create the illusion of a three-dimensional form which appears to emerge from the darkness.

Clay: A natural earthly material which is plastic when wet and becomes hard when fired.

Coil: Long roll of clay joined into a circle or spiral.

Collage: An additive process of gluing or pasting materials together to create a work of art.

Color: Element of art that is a property of reflected light.

Primary – red, yellow, blue.

Secondary – orange, green, violet (produced by mixing two primary colors).

Tertiary/Intermediate – produced by mixing a primary and a secondary color.

Intensity – brightness of a color.

Value – lightness and darkness of a color.

Hue – name of color.

Neutral – black, white, grey, brown, tan.

Tint – to lighten a color using white.

Shade – to darken a color using black.

Color Schemes: Plan for organizing color.

Complementary – colors opposite each other on a standard color wheel.

Analogous – colors which are closely related to each other and in which common color can be found (e.g., yellow, yellow-orange, orange).

Monochromatic – tones of one color in addition to the main hue.

Triad – any three colors found on a standard color wheel that are connected by a triangle (red, yellow, and blue)

Split complement – color on either side of the direct complement (e.g., blue-green, yellow-green, red).

Cool Colors – Colors in which blue, green or violet predominate.

Warm Colors – Colors in which red, orange or yellow predominate.

Color Wheel: A visual diagram featuring a sectioned circle with colors in a bent spectrum.

Composition: The ordered arrangement of the elements of art according to the principles of design.

Content: Meaning, significance, and information in a work of art.

Context: The interrelated conditions (cultural, political, social, economic) in which something exists or occurs.

Contour Line: A line that defines the edges and surface ridges of an object.

Contrast: Differences between two or more elements (e.g., value, color, texture) in a composition.

Craftsmanship: The technique, style, and quality of working.

Criteria: Standards of judgment.

Critique: A formal or informal system of evaluation featuring four steps to evaluate artworks: describe, analyze, interpret, and judge.

Cross Hatching: Superimposed layers of parallel lines (hatching) at an angle to one another; used to create shadow and modeling.

Culture: The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art.

Decorative: Ornamental; beauty over function.

Design: A compositional plan using the principles of design to organize the elements of art for a work.

Dimension: Amount of space an object takes up in one direction.

Diptych: A two-paneled work of art.

Drawing: Mark making using pencil, pen, brush, charcoal, crayon, pastel, or stylus.

Elements of Art: Visual arts components, such as line, texture, color, form, value, shape, and space (see Art Elements).

Emotionalism: A theory of art that places emphasis on expressive qualities. According to this theory, the most important thing about a work of art is the vivid communication of moods, feelings, and ideas.

Emphasis: Principle of design that makes one part dominant over the other parts.

Enamel: A glass coating, usually colored, fused onto the surface of metal or glass.

Folio: A page of a manuscript book.

Foreground: In a visual work, the area that appears to be closest to the viewer.

Foreshortening: Method of drawing or painting an object or person so that it appears to move forward in space.

Form: Element of art that is three-dimensional and encloses space. Form has length, width, and depth.

Formalism: A theory of art that emphasizes design qualities. According to this theory, the most important thing about a work of art is the effective organization of the elements of art through the use of the principles of design.

Freestanding: Work of art surrounded on all sides by space, in-the-round.

Fresco: A method of painting in which pigments are applied to wet plaster so that they will be absorbed and the painting becomes part of the wall.

Function/Functional: Purpose of an art work; utilitarian or decorative.

Genre: The representation of people, subjects, and scenes from everyday life.

Gesture Drawing: Quick sketch used to capture the movement or position of a figure.

Glaze: A gloss or mat coating.

Graphics: Images and words generated by hand or computer.

Harmony: A principle of design that creates unity in a work of art by stressing similarities of separate but related parts.

Hatching: Parallel lines made in drawing or engraving.

Icon: Symbol or image of cultural significance.

Imitationalism: A theory of art that places emphasis on the literal qualities. According to this theory, the most important thing about a work of art is the realistic representation of subject matter.

Jewelry: An ornament for personal adornment.

Judgment: In art criticism, determining the degree of artistic merit. In art history, determining the contribution of a work of art to the history of art.

Kinetic Art: Any art construction that contains moving elements.

Line: An element of art that refers to a continuous mark made on some surface by a moving point.

Linear Perspective: Graphic system that creates the illusion of depth and volume on a flat surface.

Medium: Material used to make art (Plural is media).

Middleground: The area of an artwork that appears to be between the foreground and the background.

Mixed Media: Two or more media used in an artwork.

Mobile: A kinetic sculpture with a balanced arrangement of moveable parts.

Modeling: A process of sculpture in which soft, pliable material is built up and shaped.

Mosaic: Artwork made with shapes of colored paper, marble, glass, tile, or found objects set into an adhesive surface.

Motif: An element of art and/or a symbol that is repeated in visual rhythm.

Movement: A principle of design used to create the feeling of action and to guide the viewer's eye throughout the work of art.

Mural: Painting on a wall or ceiling.

Negative Space: Empty space surrounding shapes and forms.

Opaque: Quality of a material that does not let any light pass through.

Paint: Pigments mixed with a binder.

Palette: Tray for mixing colors of paints; colors used in a particular work of art.

Papier Mache: Modeling material made of paper and liquid paste molded over a supporting structure.

Pastels: Pigments held together with a binder and molded into sticks.

Pattern: A principle of design repeating an element or combination of elements in a recognizable organization.

Performance Art: A type of art in which events are planned and enacted before an audience for aesthetic reasons.

Perspective: A method for representing three dimensional objects on a two dimensional surface (Linear or atmospheric).

Photography: The art or process of capturing images on photosensitive surfaces.

Picture Plane: The surface of an artwork.

Pigment: Finely ground, colored powders that form paint when mixed with a liquid.

Portfolio: A body of work.

Portrait: Image of a person, especially the face and upper body.

Positive Space: Shapes or spaces that are or represent solid objects.

Principles of Design: Used to organize the elements of art. The principles consist of balance, emphasis, unity/harmony, variety, movement, pattern, rhythm, and proportion.

Printmaking: A process in which an artist repeatedly transfers an original image from one prepared surface to another.

Proportion: A principle of design illustrating size relationships of one part to another part or of one part to the whole.

Relief: Artwork that projects from a flat background.

Repetition: A technique used for creating rhythm and unity in which a motif appears.

Rhythm: Principle of design, that refers to the placement of repeated elements in a work of art to create a visual tempo.

Sculpture: A three dimensional work of art.

Shape: Element of art that defines a two dimensional space.

Sketch: Quick, rough drawing without much detail that can be used as a plan for later work.

Space: The element of art referring to the emptiness or area between, around, above, below or within objects.

Stippling: Technique of using patterns of dots to create values and value gradation

Structures of Art: The elements of art and principles of design.

Style: Identifying characteristics of a particular artist, period, group, or movement.

Subject Matter: The central focus or main theme of a work of art.

Surface Design: The patterning, coloring, and transformation of materials directed toward art and design.

Symbol: An image that stands for, or represents, something else.

Technique: A specific way to create artwork, often by following a step-by-step procedure.

Texture: An element of art that refers to how things feel, or look as if they might feel if touched.

Three-Dimensional: An area defined by height, width, and depth.

Transparent: Quality of a material that allows light to pass through.

Triptych: A three-paneled work of art.

Two-Dimensional: An area defined by height and width.

Unity: Principle of design that allows a combination of elements, principles, and media to be viewed as a whole.

Value: An element of art that describes the lightness or darkness of a hue.

Variety: A principle of design concerned with difference or contrast.

Wash: Thin, liquid application of any medium.

Weaving: Interlacing strands of material.