

Elements of Art

All artists have the same elements of art with which to work. They are line, shape, color, value, form, texture, and space. All the art in the world is done with one or more of these elements. If we want to make art, we need to understand these seven elements of art.



We can see the art elements in nature in this photograph.
Line — in the road and the wire;
Shape — of the roof, road, and trees;
Color — in the cool green trees and the warm red roof;
Form — of the house and trees;
Texture — of the trees and road;
Space — between us and the house.



Line, Shape, Color, Value



Texture, Shape, Value, Color



Line, Shape, Color, Texture, Value, Space



Form, Value, Color

Consultant: Gerald F. Blumner

Line



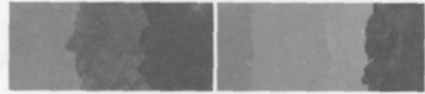
Different tools make different kinds of lines.

Shape



Shapes come in many types and sizes.

Color



Every color can be bright, dull, dark, or light.

Value



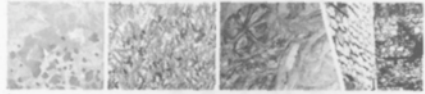
Value refers to dark and light in painting or drawing.

Form



Form is three-dimensional, and takes up space.

Texture



Texture is how a surface of something feels or looks.

Space



Space exists around us. We use illusions to make space in art.

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All artists have the same elements of art with which to work. They are **line**, **shape**, **form**, **color**, **value**, **texture**, and **space**. All the art in the world is done with one or more of these elements. If we want to make art, we need to understand these seven elements of art.

We can separate the **art elements** to study them to see how they look and how they can be used in making art. Most of the time, however, they are **combined** when they are used in painting, sculpture, or other forms of art.

If we look around us, we can see the art elements in nature. The photograph on the poster of a roadside house in a forest area is an example of how the art elements are combined. **Line** — in the road, and wires; **Shape** — of the roof, road and trees; **Color** — in the cool green forest and the warm accent of the house; **Value contrast** — in the dark and light of the trees and the dark and light house; **Form** — of the three-dimensional house, trees, and the tree trunk; **Texture** — of the trees and road; **Space** — in the distance that can be “felt” between us and the house. If you wished to paint this picture, you would need to use all the **elements of art**.

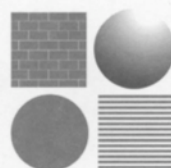
The wood sculpture is an example of **form**, because it is three-dimensional and takes up space. It looks three-dimensional on the poster because of **value contrast** that can be seen in the dark and light values of the same **color** of wood. Notice the **warm tan color** of the carving.

The collage, made of fabric and paint, is full of **texture**. But it also has **shapes** — **round** and **organic** for the animals, and **square** and **geometric** in the background. We can see the textures and shapes because of **value contrast**. All the **colors** are **muted** or **neutralized**.

In the painting of a barber in his shop, the artist used most of the elements of art. Look for **lines**; **overlapping shapes** to show depth; **warm** and **cool colors**; **different textures**; and **value contrast**. How are shadows used to show the **form** of the barber? How did the artist make us

“feel” the **space** between the barber and the man in the background?

The student who drew and painted the vase of flowers combined **line, shape, color** and **value** to create her work. Most artists combine several or all of the art elements in their work.



Concepts of the Elements of Art

Line: contour lines; hatching and cross-hatching; gestural lines; implied lines; and expressive lines.

Shape: geometric and organic shapes; positive and negative shapes; abstract shapes; and outlined shapes.

Form: geometric, organic, and natural forms; realistic, abstract, and nonobjective forms.

Color: primary and secondary colors; warm, cool, and neutral colors, color value; hue; and intensity.

Value: high key – light — and low key – dark — paintings; value contrasts; graded values; and values in atmospheric perspective.

Texture: actual and simulated texture; textures in fabric, wood, metal, and in nature.

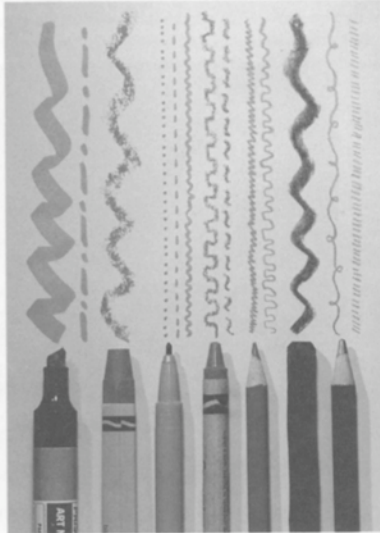
Space: two-dimensional and three-dimensional space; creating space with different sized and overlapping shapes; and linear perspective.

Line

A line is a mark made by a pointed tool — such as a brush, pen, or stick. People use lines to write words and artists draw lines with pencils or other tools. But lines can also be found in nature — on a zebra or tiger, in tree branches, in a spider's web, or in tall grass.



Look on the ground and up above to see lines in nature. See cracks in the sidewalk or street, branches, twigs, poles, and wires.



Many tools can be used to make lines. Some tools or materials make their own marks; others can be dipped in ink or paint to make lines. Lines can be thick, thin, curved, angular, broken, light, and dark.

Consultant: Gerald F. Blommer



This painting uses many kinds of line. There are lines that are thick, thin, curved, straight, short, and long. The window frame, furniture, and building are made of lines, and the shadows make dramatic linear patterns.

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This student used a marker to draw lines around the color shapes in his painting.



Contour lines show the edges of forms and shapes.

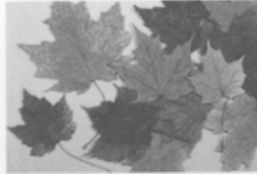
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Line

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Shape

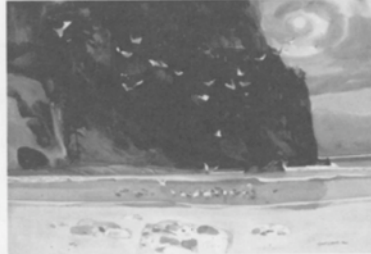
A shape is a flat, enclosed area that has two dimensions — length and width. We can see a shape because it is either surrounded by a line, or because a change in color or value allows us to see its edges. Artists make shapes of many kinds.



Shapes in nature are usually organic such as flowers, people, trees, or lakes. If you want to draw or paint them, you need to see their shapes. Line drawings and changes in color or value can define shapes.



The artist used both geometric and organic shapes in this collage. Most of the numbers are organic shapes and are placed on rectangles which are geometric shapes.



This painting is made of organic shapes — cliff shape, bird shapes, sun shape, rock shapes, water shapes, and cloud shapes.



This painting contains both positive and negative shapes — the figure is the positive shape and the background is the negative shape.



Shapes are geometric or organic. Organic shapes are freeform and curved — people, animals, trees, or flowers.



Geometric shapes are precise and regular — squares, circles, triangles, and rectangles.



Abstract shapes are simplified, flat shapes of three-dimensional things that we can recognize, but which may not look real.

Consultant: Gerald F. Brommer

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Shape

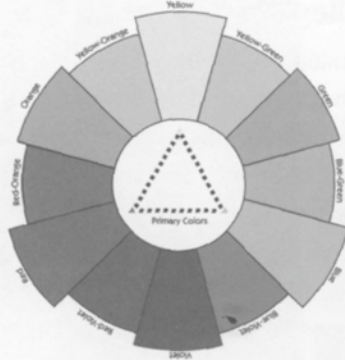
A **shape** is a flat, enclosed area that has two dimensions — length and width. We can see a shape because it is either surrounded by a line, or because a change in color or value allows us to see its edges. When we paint on a flat sheet of paper, we make shapes of many kinds.

Color

Color is one of the most exciting elements of art. There must be light for us to see colors. A blue shirt does not look blue in the dark; it will not look blue under yellow or red light either. For colors to look their truest, they should be seen under white light.

Hue

There are three properties or characteristics of color — 1) hue, 2) value, and 3) intensity. Hue is simply the name for a color.



The spectrum can be arranged in a circle, called a color wheel, which shows us how colors are related.

The most important colors are the primary colors — red, blue, and yellow. All other colors can be made by mixing them.

If we mix two primary colors, we get a secondary color — violet, orange, or green.

If we mix a primary color (red) with a neighboring secondary color (orange), we will get an intermediate color (red-orange).

Complementary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel. Red and green are complementary colors.



Nature is full of color. Many colors are not bright, but are dulled a little. Flowers and fruit, however, are often intense or bright.

Intensity

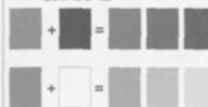


Intensity refers to the brightness of a color. If we want to dull a color, we mix in a little of its complementary color. If we add a little blue to orange, the orange becomes less intense.



There are no intense colors in this painting. It contains muted or neutralized colors, created by mixing two complementary colors.

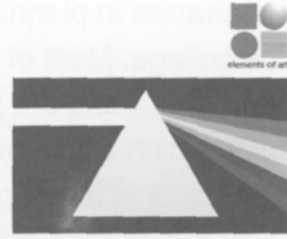
Value



Value refers to the darkness or lightness of a color. If black is added to a color, the color becomes darker and is called a shade. If white is added to a color, it is called a tint.



These flowers are all the same color or hue. Shadows make the values darker — and sunlight makes the values lighter.



Color comes from light. When a ray of white light passes through a glass prism, the ray is bent, or refracted. It is separated into bands of color, called the color spectrum. You can also see the spectrum in a rainbow.



Colors on the blue and green part of the color wheel are called cool colors. This painting is made with cool colors (blues), but it has some warm (orange) accents.



Colors on the red and orange part of the color wheel are called warm colors. This collage is made of warm colors and cool accents.

Consultant: Gerald R. Brumbyer

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Color

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There are three **properties** or characteristics of color — **hue**, **value**, and **intensity**. **Hue** is simply the name for a color. Hue and color are two words for the same thing.

Value

Value refers to dark and light. Paintings and drawings are made up of dark, light, and middle value areas. The difference between values is called value contrast. Colors have value also, and paintings can be seen and studied because of their value contrast.



Trees have light, dark, and middle value areas or shapes.



Ten different values can be shown on a value scale from white to black. The closer together the values are, the less contrast there is.



Dark and middle values are used in making low key paintings. There is very little value contrast.



Light and middle values are used to make high key paintings, with little value contrast.



A black and white photograph of a full color painting helps us see the values of the colors. Some intense colors, yellow and orange, are light values; blue and purple are dark values. Black added to any color will make it darker, a shade; white added to any color will make it lighter, a tint.



Black and white photographs help us see value contrast. You can see dark, middle, and light values in this photograph.



When a three-dimensional object is photographed, we can feel the form and texture because of value contrasts.

Consultant: Gerald F. Brommer

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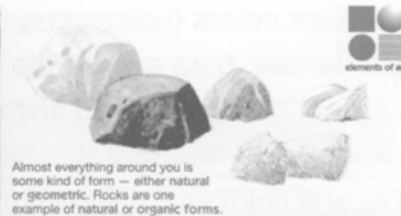
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Value

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Form

Form describes objects that are three-dimensional — having length, width, and height. While a two-dimensional shape can be seen from only one side, a three-dimensional form can be viewed from many sides. Forms take up space, whether they are natural or made by a designer. We are surrounded by forms.



Almost everything around you is some kind of form — either natural or geometric. Rocks are one example of natural or organic forms.



This sculpture is an example of three-dimensional form. The birds take up space themselves, but the spaces under, above, and around the sculpture are also important.



Three-dimensional forms can be viewed from many angles — each one different from the others.



Architecture is almost always made of geometric forms — which are cubes, pyramids, cones, spheres, cylinders, etc. A building takes up space, but also has space inside it, which is called volume. Notice the contrast of geometric and natural forms in this photo.



A student created this three-dimensional natural form of papier-mâché.

Consultant: Gerald F. Brommer

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Form

Form describes objects that are **three-dimensional** — having length, width, and height. While a two-dimensional shape can be seen from only one side, a three-dimensional form can be viewed from many sides. Forms take up space, whether they are natural or made by a designer. Forms include rocks, sculpture, people, bottles, balls, and automobiles. We are surrounded by forms.

Texture

Texture describes the feel of an actual surface. Sculptures, ceramic ware, or collages may have rough or grainy surfaces — or actual textures you can feel. A drawing, print, or painting can be made to look like a textured surface and has implied texture, because it may look like texture, but actually is on smooth, flat paper.



We can see many actual textures around us — rocks, trees, animals, and fabrics. Textured surfaces vary from rough to smooth and furry to crisp.



This colorful collage was created by building up many layers of paper material to make a richly textured surface. Because your hand can actually feel the textures of the original work, it is a surface that has actual textures.

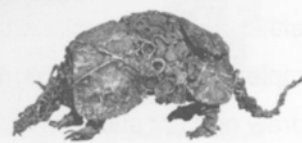


Look at the actual textures of your clothes. Cloth has a different texture than leather. Linen has a different texture than denim.

The rocks, plants, sand, and water in this painting appear textured. They are called implied textures or simulated textures because they look like textures but are actually smooth.



The surface of this clay vase is an example of actual texture; tools were used to add texture to the clay. The texture of clay can also be smooth.



The surface of this sculpture is easy to see. Sculptures have surfaces of actual texture.

There is no actual texture in this painting. Implied textures are made with contrasting colors and values.

Consultant: Gerald F. Brummett

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Space

Sculptors, craftspeople, and architects work with actual space. Their forms have three dimensions — height, width, and depth. Painters work with two dimensions — height and width. To show depth in their flat work, they must create the illusion of depth.



In the painting above and the figures below, distance or depth can be felt because of size differences. Buildings, people, and other objects appear smaller as they get farther away.



When we look down a street, we notice a lot of space or depth. Things get smaller and are less sharp as they get farther away. Forms overlap each other and colors become less intense in the distance.



If objects overlap, we can feel space between them.



If overlapping is combined with size difference, the sense of space is even stronger.



Sculpture, architecture, and people take up positive space. The space around and between the forms is called negative space.

The artist created the illusion of space by: overlapping shapes; intense colors up close and grayed ones farther away; size differences; and less detail as things get farther away.



Atmospheric perspective is a way of using color or value to show depth. Distant things appear lighter in value and have less detail than things up close.



Consultant: Gerald F. Brunner

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Space

Sculptors, craftspeople, and architects work with actual **space**. Their forms have three dimensions — height, width, and **depth**. Painters and other artists work with two dimensions — height and width. If they want to show depth in their flat work, they must make it appear to have depth. There are several ways to create this **illusion**.