

Headley-Whitney Museum
Lesson Plan
Elements of Design

Balance

Symmetrical balance means both sides of an imaginary line are the same.

Asymmetrical balance means both sides of an imaginary line are different yet equal.

Radial balance means lines or shapes grow from a center point.

Line

Lines are used in art to define objects with outlines, add details and textures, or emphasize important elements. They are the basis for all shapes and forms.

Color

Artists use **color** to represent their objects, to move the viewer's eye around a piece, to symbolize important concepts, create contrasts, and spark interest in the piece.

Form/Shape

A **shape** is a two-dimensional or flat image. A **form** is the three-dimensional version of a shape. All paintings are made of shapes because the painting's canvas is always flat. Artists use paints, light, and shadow to create the illusion of three-dimensional forms.

Mood

Mood is the feeling and emotion evoked by a piece of artwork. Mood can reflect the artist, subject, or environment of the painting. Mood strongly influences the way that the viewer understands the artwork. Examples: cheerful, playful, melancholy, satirical, whimsical.

Contrast

Contrast is when the artist places two conflicting things together to emphasize something or to create interest and excitement. Contrast may be created between colors (black/white), moods (happy/sad), textures (smooth/bumpy), rhythm (fast/slow), or in a variety of different ways.

Texture

Texture is the way something feels when you touch it. Artists also create the illusion of texture in artworks such as paintings, drawings and prints.

Space

Space is an empty place or surface in or around a work of art. Space can be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, negative and/or positive. Positive space is where something exists; negative space is where something is absent (an empty space)

Focal point

A **focal point** (or center of interest) is the part of an artwork you look at first. Artists focus your attention on the focal point by using various art elements and principles such as color, movement, line, and space. The focal point is usually at the center of the artwork.

Rhythm/movement

Visual rhythm makes you think of the rhythms you hear in music or dance. Artists create visual rhythm by repeating art elements and creating patterns. Rhythm is used to create **movement**, which is the appearance of motion in the painting. Although the image is still, the viewer understands that objects are in the process of moving. Examples are images of dancers, athletes, or workers. Movement is how we know that these stationary images are not actually standing still. Movement also refers to the way the artist forces the viewer's eye to move around the painting by using the elements of art.