

Formal Elements of Art

The 7 basic elements around this page are the building blocks for all artworks. When we create artwork, we need to understand and apply these elements.



Line
A mark made by a pointed tool such as a pen, brush or stick. A moving point.



Shape
A flat, enclosed area that has two dimensions, length and width. Artists use both geometric and organic shapes.



Colour
There are three properties of colour: Hue (name), Value (shades and tints) and Intensity (brightness). Colour is created by light.

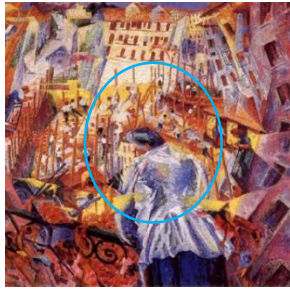
3 Composition Principles



Asymmetrical
The main focus/elements are on one side



Symmetrical
The main focus/elements are balanced (ie. middle or both sides)



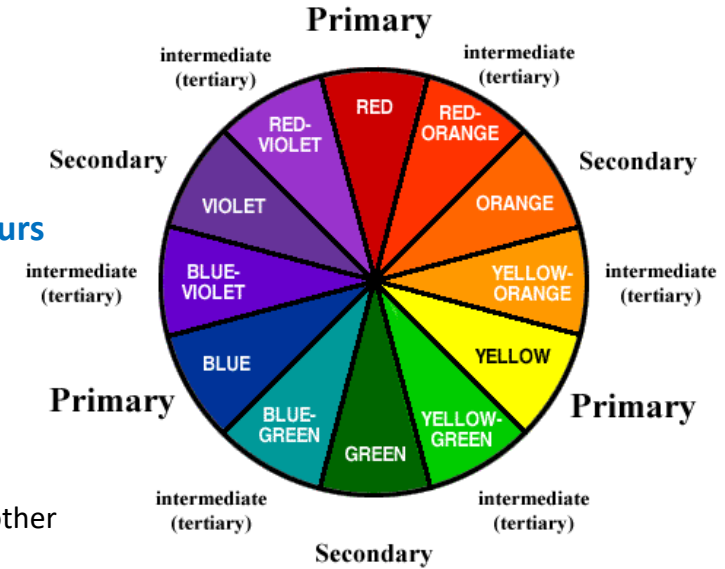
Radial
The main focus/elements are in the middle with other elements around them

YEAR 7 KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER 1



Harmonious Colours

These colours are next to each other on the colour wheel. These colours blend well together and create balance.



Complimentary Colours



Extend your knowledge by trying these tasks:

- Create an artwork focusing on just one of the formal elements – repeat with the other elements.
- Create your own colour wheel where you mix the three primary colours to make each of the other colours. Create the wheel again with a different media. (Eg. Pastel, paint, collage)
- Create your own version of an existing artwork but using a different composition principle to the one already used. Repeat the task using a third principle.
- Go to a gallery's website and analyse the artwork using – see, think, wonder. Create a timeline based on artist movements (example – Renaissance, Cubism, Pop Art etc)

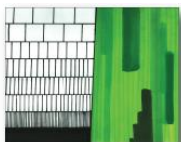
SEE – THINK – WONDER - Describing, Interpreting, Wondering Analysing Artist's Works.

Look at an image/painting/sculpture silently for about a minute then consider the following:

a) SEE -
What do you see? What do you observe? Explain what you see.

b) THINK -
Based on what you see? What do you think is happening in the image? What do you see that makes you think that?

c) WONDER -
What questions do you have about this image? What issues or ideas does it raise in your head?



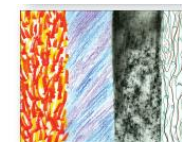
Tone
Degrees of lightness or darkness. When one tonal range blends into another is called a gradation.



Space
Is used to create the illusion of depth. Space can be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, negative and/or positive.



Form
Objects that are three-dimensional having length, width and height. They can be viewed from many sides.



Texture
Describes the feel of an actual surface. The surface quality of an object can be real or implied.

Aesthetics:

Originally the study of beautiful things. But currently aesthetics refers to the study or understanding of anything that is visually pleasing or "works" within the boundaries of the principles of art.

Analogous colours:

Colours next to each other on the colour wheel.

Armature:

A structural support for an object. Particularly used in sculpture to build upon.

Balance:

The art principle which refers to the arrangement of elements in an art work. Balance can be either formal symmetrical, informal asymmetrical or radial.

Bisque:

Clay objects that have been fired one time. (unglazed)

Ceramic:

Clay objects that have been fired twice, the second time with a glaze.

Clay:

A natural, moist earth substance used in making bricks, tile, pottery and ceramic sculpture.

Collage:

An arrangement of shapes adhered to a background.

Colour:

An element of art that refers to "hue".

Colour wheel:

The organization of colours on a wheel. Used to help understand colour schemes.

Complimentary colours:

Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel.

Composition:

The arrangement of the parts of a work of art.

Design:

From the Italian word meaning "drawing" which also implied planning and composing.

Drawing:

Representations on a flat surface usually made with pen, pencil, crayon, chalk or paint with an emphasis on line.

Emphasis:

A principle in art where important elements and ideas are emphasized via composition.

Firing:

The process of baking clay in a kiln or banked fire outside (such as raku firing). This process hardens the clay and makes it very permanent.

Greenware:

Dried clay forms that have not been fired.

Horizon line:

The horizontal line that distinguishes the sky from the earth, or the ground from the wall. The eye-level of the artists view. Also, where the vanishing point lies in a perspective drawing.

Kiln:

A large "oven" used for firing clay work.

Line:

An element of art used in drawing, painting and sculpture. A line is the path of a moving point.

Modelling:

Representation, or making sculptural, three-dimensional forms, usually with clay or wax. Also, making two-dimensional surfaces look three-dimensional, by use of light and shade, colour and form.

Pattern:

Design, motif or symbol repeated over and over.

Perspective:

The illusion of a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface through the use of vanishing point, converging lines and diminishing sizes of objects.

Primary colours:

The basic colours that can be used to mix other colours. The primary colours are red, yellow and blue.

Scoring:

A technique used in preparation for cementing two pieces of clay together using a series of incised lines. Also describes a process for indentation and curved line paper sculpture and folding.

Secondary colours:

Colours made by mixing two primary colours. Orange, green and purple.

Shade:

Refers to the darker values of a colour.