

Elements of Art

Elements of Art – Quick Reference Notes

1. Line

- **Definition:** A mark with length and direction created by a point moving through space.
 - **Types & Characteristics**
 - **Straight vs. Curved** – conveys stability vs. fluidity.
 - **Horizontal** – calm, restful.
 - **Vertical** – strong, formal, upright.
 - **Diagonal** – dynamic, tension, movement.
 - **Implied/Invisible** – suggested by edges or alignment of shapes.
 - **Functions**
 - Outlines forms.
 - Guides the eye (lead-in lines, pathways).
 - Expresses emotion (sharp, jagged lines ? aggression; soft, flowing lines ? serenity).
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2. Shape

- **Definition:** A two-dimensional area defined by boundaries (lines, color, texture).
 - **Categories**
 - **Geometric (regular)** – circles, squares, triangles; convey order, logic.
 - **Organic (irregular)** – free-form, natural shapes; suggest growth, spontaneity.
 - **Positive vs. Negative Shape**
 - **Positive:** The main subject area.
 - **Negative:** The space around/between subjects; crucial for balance.
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3. Form

- **Definition:** A three-dimensional shape that has height, width, and depth (e.g., sphere, cube, cylinder).
- **Representation Techniques**
 - **Shading & Light** – create illusion of volume.
 - **Perspective** – linear, atmospheric, or isometric to suggest depth.

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- **Real vs. Implied Form**

- **Real:** Sculpted or modeled objects.
 - **Implied:** Suggested by overlapping shapes, shading, or contour lines.
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4. Value (Tone)

- **Definition:** The lightness or darkness of a color; a grayscale measure.

- **Key Concepts**

- **Value Scale:** From pure white (high value) to pure black (low value); middle grays in between.
- **Contrast:** High contrast (dark vs. light) creates drama; low contrast yields subtlety.
- **Modeling:** Gradual changes in value give the illusion of three-dimensional form.

- **Applications**

- Define light source direction.
 - Create mood (bright values ? cheerful; dark values ? somber).
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5. Color

- **Components**

- **Hue:** The name of the color (red, blue, etc.).
- **Saturation (Chroma):** Intensity or purity of the hue.
- **Value:** Lightness/darkness (same as value in grayscale).

- **Color Relationships**

- **Complementary:** Opposite hues on the color wheel (e.g., blue/orange); high contrast.
- **Analogous:** Adjacent hues; harmonious.
- **Triadic:** Three hues evenly spaced; balanced vibrancy.

- **Psychological Effects**

- Warm colors (reds, oranges) ? energy, warmth.
 - Cool colors (blues, greens) ? calm, distance.
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6. Texture

- **Definition:** The surface quality—how something feels or appears to feel.

- **Types**

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- **Actual (Physical) Texture:** Tactile; e.g., rough sandpaper.
 - **Implied (Visual) Texture:** Created through technique; e.g., brushstrokes suggesting fur.
 - **Purpose**
 - Adds realism or expressive quality.
 - Influences the viewer's perception of material (metal vs. fabric).
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7. Space

- **Definition:** The illusion of depth and the area within