

VISUAL ARTS VOCABULARY

Abstract	Artwork in which the subject matter is stated in a brief, simplified manner; little or no attempt is made to represent images realistically, and objects are often simplified or distorted.
Acrylics	Quick drying, plastic polymer pigment used with water.
Additive	The process of adding or joining parts and/or visual elements together to create a painting, collage or sculpture (as opposed to subtractive).
Analogous	Closely related colors; a color scheme that combines several hues next to each other on the color wheel.
Art criticism	An organized system for looking at the visual arts; a process of appraising what we want students to know and be able to do.
Assemblage	A three-dimensional composition in which a collection of objects is unified in a sculptural work.
Asymmetry	A balance of parts on opposite sides of a perceived midline, giving the appearance of equal visual weight.
Background	The part of the picture plane that seems to be farthest from the viewer.
Balance	The way in which the elements in visual arts are arranged to create a feeling of equilibrium in an artwork. The three types of balance are symmetry, asymmetry, and radial.
Collage	An artistic composition made of various materials (e.g., paper, cloth, or wood) glued on a surface.
Color	The visual sensation dependent on the reflection or absorption of light from a given surface. The three characteristics of colors are hue, intensity, and value.
Color relationships	Also called <i>color schemes or harmonies</i> . They to the relationships of colors on the color wheel. Basic color schemes include monochromatic, analogous, and complementary.
Color wheel	A circular diagram of the spectrum used to show the relationships between the colors
Complementary colors	Colors opposite one another on the color wheel. Red/green, blue/orange, yellow/violet are complementary colors.

Composition	The overall placement and organization of elements in a work of art, as well as the interrelationships between individual elements.
Content	The representations, messages, ideas, and/or feelings expressed in a work of art.
Contour line drawings	Drawing that represents the edges and ridges of a form, without tonal variation, shading, etc.
Contrast	Differences between two or more elements (e.g., value, color, texture) in a composition; juxtaposition of dissimilar elements in a work of art. Also refers the degree of difference between the lightest and darkest areas of an image.
Cool colors	Colors suggesting coolness, blues, greens, violets and their variants.
Design	The plan, conception, or organization of a work of art; the arrangement of independent parts (the elements of art) to form a coordinated whole.
Distortion	The condition of being twisted or altered from a usual or regular shape. In visual art, distortion is often used as an expressive technique.
Dominance	An emphasis of one aspect, characteristic or quality in an image in relation to all others.
Elements of art	Sensory components used to create and talks about works of art; line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space.
Emphasis	Special attention or embellishment on an element, characteristic, or object in a work of art that makes it stand out from others.
Expressive content	Content expressive of ideas and moods in a work of art.
Foreground	Part of a two-dimensional artwork that appears to be nearer the viewer or in the “front” of the image. <i>Middle ground</i> and <i>background</i> are the parts of the picture that appear to be farther and farthest away.
Focal point	The place in a work of art at which attention becomes focused because of an element emphasized in some way.
Form	(1) The particular characteristics of an artwork’s visual elements (as distinguished from its subject matter or content). (2) A three-dimensional volume or the illusion of three dimensions; related to shape (which is 2-D).
Function	Purpose and use of a work of art.
Genre	The representation of people, subjects, and scenes from everyday life.
Gesture drawing	The drawing of lines quickly and loosely to show movement in a subject.
Harmony	The principle of design that creates unity within a work of art.

Hue	The gradation or attribute of a color that defines it's general classification as a red, blue, yellow, green, or intermediate color.
Installation art	The combining of elements into a singular artwork that is specifically located in one place; an artwork that exists only in the place in which it was/is installed, and is not able to be relocated like a painting or print.
Intensity	Also called <i>chroma</i> or <i>saturation</i> ; refers to the brightness of a color (a color is full in intensity only when in its pure form and unmixed). Color intensity can be changed by adding black, white, gray, or an opposite color on the color wheel.
Line	In visual art, a delineation or fracturing of space in color or black and white. Line qualities can vary in width, length, gesture, color, direction, etc.
Linear perspective	A graphic system used to create the illusion of depth and volume on a flat surface. In images of buildings and objects, the lines defining their edges and features are slanted, making them appear to extend back into space.
Mass	The outside size and bulk of an object, such as a building or a sculpture; the visual <i>weight</i> of an object.
Maquette	A preliminary model (as of a sculpture or a building), usually small.
Media	(1) Plural of <i>medium</i> referring to materials used to make works of art. (2) Classifications of artworks, such as painting, printmaking, sculpture, film, etc.).
Middle ground	Area of a two-dimensional work of art between the foreground (closest to the front) and background (furthest receded).
Mixed media	An artwork in which more than one type of art material.
Monochromatic	Use of only one hue or color, that can vary in value or intensity.
Mood	The state of mind or emotion communicated in a work of art, through color, composition, media, scale, size, etc.
Motif	A repeated pattern, often creating a sense of rhythm.
Movement	The principle of design that deals with the creation of action.
Multimedia	Computer programs that involve users in the design and organization of text, graphics, video, and sound in one presentation.
Negative space	Shapes or spaces that are or represent the areas unoccupied by objects.
Neutral colors	Black, white, gray, and variations of brown. They are included in the color family called <i>earth colors</i> .
Nonobjective	Having no recognizable object or subject; also, <i>nonrepresentational</i> .

Oils	Oil-based pigment used with paint thinner, turpentine, or other non-water-based suspension.
One-point perspective	A way to show 3-D objects on a 2-D surface, lines appear to go away from the viewer meet at a single point on the horizon known as the <i>vanishing point</i> .
Organic	Refers to shapes or forms not of geometric shape, having irregular edges, surfaces, or objects similar to natural forms.
Pattern	A design, image, or shape repeated in a predictable combination.
Performance art	A type of art in which an event or events are planned and enacted before an audience for aesthetic reasons.
Perspective	A system for representing three-dimensional objects viewed in spatial recession on a two-dimensional surface.
Point of view	The angle from which a viewer sees the objects or scene in an image.
Portfolio	A systematic, organized collection of artwork, usually student artwork.
Positive	Shapes or spaces in an image that represent solid objects or forms.
Printmaking	The transference of an image from one surface (plate or block) to another (usually paper) using ink.
Primary colors	Red, yellow, and blue. From these all other colors are created.
Principles of design	A design concept describing the ways in which the elements of an image are arranged (i.e. balance, contrast, dominance, emphasis, movement, repetition, rhythm, variation, unity).
Properties of color	The characteristics of color that are perceived: hue, value, and intensity.
Proportion	The scale relationships of one part to the whole and of one part to another. In images of figures, the appropriate balance between the size of body and its limbs.
Reflection	Personal and thoughtful consideration of an artwork, an aesthetic experience, or the creative process.
Rhythm	Repetitive visual elements that achieve a specific effect.
Rubric	A guide for judgment or scoring, a description of expectations.
Scale	Relative size, proportion; the determination of measurements of dimensions within a design or artwork.
Sculpture	Three-dimensional artwork to be seen either in the round (from all sides) or as a bas relief (a low relief in which figures protrude only slightly from the background).
Secondary colors	Colors that are created by the mixture of two primary colors, i.e. red and yellow make orange, yellow and blue make green, blue and red make violet, etc.

Shade	A color produced by the addition of black.
Shape	A two-dimensional area or plane that may be open or closed, free form or geometric. It can be found in nature or created by humans.
Space	The area between, around, above, below, or contained within objects. Spaces are areas defined by the shapes and forms around them and within them, just as shapes and forms are defined by the space around and within them.
Still life	A specific type of visual artwork representing one or more inanimate objects.
Structure	The way parts are arranged or put together to form a whole.
Style	A set of characteristics of the art of a culture, a period, or school of art; the characteristic expression of individual artists or groups.
Subtractive	Artistic method accomplished by removing or taking away from the original creative material, (the opposite of <i>additive</i>).
Texture	The surface quality of materials, either actual (tactile) or implied (visual). It is one of the elements of art.
Theme	A subject or topic of discourse or of artistic representation.
Three-dimensional	Having height, width, and depth (3-D).
Tint	A slight or pale coloration; a variation of a color produced by adding white to it and characterized by a low saturation and high lightness.
Tone	Color with gray added to it.
Two-dimensional	Having height and width but not depth (2-D).
Two-point perspective	A visual system of representation designed to show 3-D objects on a 2-D surface. This illusion of space and volume utilizes two vanishing points on the horizon line.
Unity	A principle of design that connects a variety of elements of art and principles of design into a work of art with harmony and balance.
Value	Lightness or darkness of a hue or neutral color. A <i>value scale</i> shows the range of values from black to white and light to dark.
Value scale	A value scale shows the range of values from black to white and light to dark.
Vanishing point	In perspective drawing, a point at which receding lines seem to converge.
Variety	A principle of art concerned with combining one or more elements of art in different ways to create interest.

Visual metaphor	Images in which characteristics of objects are likened to one another and presented as that other. They are closely related to concepts about symbolism.
Volume	Describes the space within a form, such as that of a container or building.
Warm colors	Colors suggesting warmth, such as reds, yellows, and oranges.
Watercolor	A transparent pigment used with water. Paintings done with this medium are known as <i>watercolors</i> .