

Visual Arts Glossary

Abstraction

A technique of depicting observable phenomena such as figures, places, or objects in a simplified or modified form (for example, as geometric shapes, stick figures, shapes and spaces composed of tonal areas). (See also abstract art, non-objective art, style, and stylize.)

Abstract art

Art that achieves its effect by simplifying the visual elements (for example, line, shape, colour) of images. Although people and things may not be recognizable as such in abstract art, they are the inspiration behind the simplified shapes and forms. (See also abstraction, non-objective art, style, and stylize.)

Advancing colour

Warm or vivid colour that appears to come forward in the picture plane and forward from the surface.

Aesthetics

The area of knowledge that deals with the nature and value of art objects and experiences. It is concerned with identifying the features within works that can be used to understand, evaluate, and defend judgments about those works. Originally, any activity connected with art, beauty and taste, becoming more broadly the study of art's function, nature, ontology and purpose.

Allegory

The use of symbolic figures, images, events, narratives or actions to represent abstract ideas and concepts

Analogous colours

Any two or more colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel and are closely related. For example, blue, blue-green, and green all have the colour blue in common. Families of analogous colours include the warm colours (red, orange and yellow) and the cool colours (green, blue and violet). Analogous colours are sometimes referred to as adjacent colours or harmonizing colours. (See also colour, cool colours, and warm colours.)

Analysis

(1) The separation of the parts of a subject for individual study, in order to find out their nature, function, and meaning. Exercising the ability to break down learned material into its component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. (2) A stage in art criticism, following the description of an artwork, and preceding its interpretation and judgment, in which one focuses on the relationships between the elements of art and principles of design in hopes of gaining an understanding of the work's design qualities, or how well the work is ordered, or put together. This understanding enables one to determine if a work has an overall sense of unity. (3) The fourth level of learning outcomes in Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain—the level of understanding just beyond comprehension and application because they require an understanding of both the content and the structural form of the material. Analysis may include the identification of the parts, analysis of the relationships between parts, and recognition of the organizational principles involved.

Angle of view

The angle from which the viewer sees the objects or scene. Angles of view include high angle, low angle, and bird's eye view. Also known as point of view or camera angle (in photography and film-making particularly).

Animation

The process of creating the illusion of movement through a series of images (for example, drawings, digital images, paper cut-outs, photographs, puppets, sculpted figures) that show slight, progressive changes sequentially in time using various techniques (for example, claymation, cut-out/collage animation, flipbook, thaumatrope, pixilation, rotoscope, stop motion, digital processes).

Appropriation

The taking or borrowing of elements to recontextualize them or create new works. The borrowed elements may include images, forms, or styles from art history or from popular culture, or materials and techniques from non-art contexts (for example, everyday objects). The audience or viewer may or may not be aware of the intertextuality of the imagery.

Artifact

(1) An object produced or shaped by human craft, especially a rudimentary art form or object, as in the products of prehistoric workmanship. Only in the last 10 or 20 years works of various native peoples have been considered art rather than artifacts, and displayed in museums of art as well as of ethnography. (2) In digital imagery, visual effects introduced into an image in the course of scanning or compression that do not correspond to the image scanned.

Artist's statement

A concise summary in which artists reflect on and/or analyse what they have done, in order to help the viewer understand the artist's purpose, priorities, and techniques

Assemblage

A three-dimensional work of art that combines a variety of materials such as textiles and found objects or parts of objects.

Asymmetry

Inequality in size, shape, and/or position between parts or elements or objects. An asymmetrical arrangement may still produce a balanced visual effect or weight.

Atmospheric perspective

The intensity of colour and the distinctness of detail are gradually lessened to indicate an increase in the distance between objects and the viewer. The technique is based on how atmosphere affects the appearance of distant objects (for example, dust and other substances in the air make background elements less distinct than the same things close to the viewer). Also referred to as aerial perspective.

Background

In a conventional two-dimensional representation of space, the part of a composition that appears to be farthest from the viewer or behind the other objects. (See also foreground and middle ground.)

Balance

A principle of design. A feeling of balance results when the elements of design are arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically to create the impression of equality in weight or importance or harmony of design and proportion. Forms and figures acquire greater weight the farther away they are positioned from the centre axis of the image. (See also principles of design.)

Block printing

See relief printing.

Body of work

The total collective creative output of an artist. Also known as an *œuvre*.

Breadth

In terms of the Visual arts guide (March 2014), a wide range or scope. This could be used to describe a range of critical methods used, the range of media experimented with, the scope of critical or historical investigations into

artists, styles and movements, the scope of ideas explored in a body of work or the range of curatorial practices considered.

Camera angles

Various positions of the camera with respect to the subject being photographed, each giving a different viewpoint and perspective. (See also angle of view.)

Camera shot

(1) The view that is seen or filmed through a camera's viewfinder. (2) The composition of key elements within a frame used to support the story or idea indicated in a storyboard. Different types of shots include extreme close-up, close-up, medium shot, wide angle, tracking shot and so on.

Canon

(1) The body of significant Western artists and works. Until recently the canon was seldom challenged, and changed at a sluggish pace. Now it is being relentlessly challenged by

art historians and critics recovering forgotten and ignored artists (especially by women, non-whites, and outsiders) both within and outside the Western world. The scope of what is considered art has been widening as new fields, including photography, performance art, video, crafts, and design, are added to what amounts to an ever-increasing canon. Postmodernism, however, has put in question the very idea of an irreducible list of masters and masterpieces.

(2) A rule or convention for representation such as ideal human proportions, so as to produce a harmoniously formed figure.

Captured image

A form of image making in which the image is produced through the means of a lens-based device such as a camera.

Ceramics

(1) Objects made of clay and fired in a kiln. The term refers to functional and decorative objects, as well as sculpture made from clay. (2) The art of making ceramic objects.

Collage

A form of art in which a variety of materials (for example, photographs, fabric, found objects, bits and pieces of originally unrelated images including commercial images) are arranged and attached to a flat background, often in combination with painted or drawn areas. Also known as *découpage*.

Collagraph

A print made from a surface that has been constructed as a collage of objects and textures. The surface requires low-relief texture in order to print.

Colour

An element of design. The particular wavelength of light seen by the eye when an object reflects or emits light. The four characteristics of colour are hue (name), value (lightness and darkness), intensity (saturation, or amount of pigment), and temperature (warm and cool). (See also cool colours, elements of design, secondary colours, value, and warm colours.)

Complementary colours

Colours that are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel, such as red and green, blue and orange, and violet and yellow. When complements are mixed together, artists are using the full set or complement of primary colours, which form the neutral colours of brown or grey, or can be used to desaturate vivid colours.

Composition

The organization of the elements of design in an artwork, following principles of design. (See also design process, elements of design, and principles of design.)

Concept

The idea, thought, notion, meaning or purpose that is behind the production of a work of art or a body of work.

Conceptual art

Art that is intended to convey an idea or a concept to the perceiver, often rejecting the creation or appreciation of a traditional art object such as a painting or a sculpture as a precious commodity. The idea or concept is given primacy

over accurate mimetic representation or technical refinement.

Conceptual practice

Encompasses the intentions and processes used by an artist to build meaning and significance into their art-making. It addresses the mental or cognitive activities involved in the production of works of art.

Construction

A form of sculpture in which the form is built by adding on material such as a sculpture produced by joining blocks of timber. Also called additive sculpture.

Contemporary art

Art produced in the current time.

Contour drawing

An outline drawing that represents the edge of a form. In “blind” contour drawing, the artist slowly draws each bump

and curve on the edges of an object without looking at the paper.

Contour lines

Lines that define the edges, ridges, or outline of a shape or form.

Contrast

A principle of design. The juxtaposition of different elements of design (for example, complementary colours such as red and green, textures such as rough and smooth, values such as dark and light) in order to highlight their differences and/or create balance, visual interest, or a focal point. (See also principles of design.)

Conventions

Generally accepted standards, norms, criteria or custom pertaining to both representation and technical procedures in art-making (for example, in Western art history, the Modernists repeatedly challenged the long-held conventions of painting.)

Cool colours

Colours that suggest coolness (for example, blue, green, purple). Cool colours often appear to recede into the background or distance.

Craft

Technical skill, manual dexterity, considered apart from the fine arts, or from the cerebral, expressive, or aesthetic aspects of them. Also, any of the manual activities performed by artisans or craftspeople, as distinguished from the specific group of techniques that are practised by artists in the making of fine art. In the West, the term is highly loaded and political, resulting from various differentiations between art and craft. In many non-Western traditions, there is no distinction between art and craft.

Critical analysis

An appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation. There are several models used in education to critically analyse work of art. Most involve several stages that often include an initial reaction (involving initial identification) to a

work; a description identifying subject matter in a work; an analysis, identifying order (organization) in a work and how elements and principles of design have been used to arrange the elements of art in a work; an interpretation of the artist's expression/communication of feelings, moods, and ideas in a work and an evaluation, assessing the meaning and artistic merit in a work.

Critical methodologies

Any number of strategies employed to critique works of art or the œuvre of an artist, or a style or movement such as deconstruction, feminist perspectives, formalism, hermeneutics, iconology, LGBT perspectives, Marxist perspectives, materialist perspectives, post-colonial perspectives, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, structuralism and so on.

Critique

A review of a finished artwork, or constructive feedback that can be used by the artist for further revision of an artwork in progress.

Cropping

The trimming or cutting away of unnecessary or unwanted edges of a picture, or the reframing of an area of an image to create a stronger composition.

Cross-hatching

Drawing technique for shading using numerous crossed sets of parallel lines, and usually resulting in darker values. The darker values are created by frequency rather than thickness of line: fewer lines create a light image, while more lines, closely spaced, create a darker image. (See also hatching.)

Culture

For the purposes of the Visual arts guide (March 2014), “culture” is defined as learned and shared beliefs, values, interests, attitudes, products and all patterns of behaviour created by society. This view of culture includes an organized system of symbols, ideas, explanations, beliefs and material production that humans create and manipulate in their daily lives. Culture is dynamic and organic, operating on many levels in the global context—

international, national, regional and local, as well as among different social groups within a society. Culture is seen as fluid and subject to change.

Culture can be seen as providing the overall framework within which humans learn to organize their thoughts, emotions and behaviours in relation to their environment. Within this framework, “cultural context”—which specifically appears in both the taught syllabus and assessment tasks of the visual arts course—refers to the conditions that influence and are influenced by culture. These include historical, geographical, political, social and technological factors.

Culture jamming

Refers to forms of art and other activities involving social agitation. Culture jammers take a number of sociopolitical issues as their primary focus, including media literacy, consumerism, television addiction, television violence, pollution, social laziness, use of sweatshops, and various hazards of corporate dominance of media, government, and daily life. The term was coined in 1984 by the San

Francisco audio-collage band Negativland, but the concept dates back to the suffrage and avant-garde movements of the early 20th century.

Curator

Traditionally, a person responsible for the collection of works of art and cultural artifacts. In contemporary art, the title curator is given to a person who selects and often interprets works of art for display or exhibition. In addition to selecting works, the curator often is responsible for writing labels, catalogue essays, and other supporting content for the exhibition, but also suggests and constructs relationships among artists, artworks, exhibition spaces, and audiences.

Curatorial practice

Primarily concerned with presenting collections of art in an appealing fashion. An increasing array of curatorial approaches exists and includes historical (chronological), discipline-based, retrospective, thematic and conceptual. Many curatorial approaches suggest associations, meanings and narratives to an audience independent of the artist. It

raises questions as to which is more important: the way in which a work of art is presented and contextualized or what the artwork itself is trying to convey.

Depth

In terms of the Visual arts guide (March 2014), the intensity, detail, complexity, strength, seriousness or importance of one's work, including the complexity or detail of investigation into an artist, style or movement, or the sophistication of the ideas conveyed through a body of work or work of art.

Design

(1) A plan, or to plan. The organization or composition of a work; the skilled arrangement of its parts. An effective design is one in which the elements of art and principles of design have been combined to achieve an overall sense of unity. (See also composition.) (2) The production of attractive and well-crafted functional objects. Subcategories of the design arts include: architecture, fashion design, furniture design, graphic design, ikebana, industrial design,

interior design, landscape architecture, stagecraft, textile design, and web page design. (See also craft.)

Design process

Any one of many problem-solving models that involves the concrete manipulation of images, materials, and technology for the purpose of solving a design problem. The technical design process can be open-ended when the student designs all the steps, or it can be teacher-directed to varying degrees. Most models fit one of two broad categories: reason-centric and action-centric. Reason-centric models tend to be cyclical in nature and use defined stages such as identifying design problem, research, prototype development, prototype evaluation, modification, final product development. In action-centric models, the design process is more improvised and fluid.

Dimension

An object's extent in space. A two-dimensional object has length and width. A three-dimensional object has length, width, and depth.

Diminishing perspective

Objects are depicted as smaller in size as their distance from the viewer increases.

Direct sources

In art-making, a direct source is where an artist produces images based on the simultaneous observation of the actual subject matter, rather than relying on memory, imagination or secondary source images. For example, in life drawing, the artist's model is the direct source for the image produced.

Drawing

The process of marking a surface by applying pressure on a tool (for example, pencil, marker, computer drawing tablet) and moving it across the surface to record observations, thoughts, feelings, and ideas, or to explore the artistic possibilities of the drawing material(s). Dry drawing materials include charcoal, conté, crayon, ink, marker, pastel, pencil, scratchboard, software, and watercolour pencils. Wet drawing materials include black or coloured ink applied with a pen, soft brush, nib, or other stylus.

Dry brush

A technique that involves the use of thick paint and little water on the brush. The relative dryness causes the brush to skip on the surface of the paper, producing a broken or textured appearance.

Dry point

An intaglio printing process in which burrs are left on the plate by the pointed needle (or “pencil”) that directly inscribes lines. A kind of engraving that has a soft, fuzzy line because of the metal burrs. (See also intaglio printing.)

Dye

A colorant or pigment that dissolves completely and is translucent. Textile fibre and fabrics are typically dyed in vats of the stuff. Because dyes are mixed with liquids just before their use, commercially produced dyes are highly concentrated. Natural dyes have been derived from a wide range of plant and animal sources, and are sometimes referred to as dyestuff. Dyes colour by penetrating substances, in contrast to drawing and painting colours,

which must simply adhere to surfaces. There are many types of dyes, varying in their effects, the means of their use, and permanence.

Elaboration

A technique in which the shapes or forms are decorated with additional features such as lines, dots, circles, and patterns.

Elements of design

Fundamental components of artworks. They include colour, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value (or tone).

Emerging technologies

Recently (late 20th century and beyond) developed digital technologies that can be used to create such artworks as digital animation, interactive video-based displays, installations incorporating new media, and web-based art.

Emphasis

A principle of design. Special attention or importance given to one part or element in an artwork (for example, a shape of darker value in a light composition). Emphasis can be achieved through placement, contrast, colour, size, and repetition, among other means. (See also principles of design.)

Etching

(1) An intaglio printing process in which an etching needle is used to draw into a wax ground applied over a metal plate. The plate is then submerged in a series of acid baths, each biting into the metal surface only where unprotected by the ground. The ground is removed, ink is forced into the etched depressions, the unetched surfaces wiped, and an impression is printed. (2) The design etched on a plate (3) An impression made from an etched plate. (See also intaglio printing.)

Exaggeration

A technique of increasing, distorting, or enlarging an element, object, or figure.

Fashion design

An applied art, which applies design and aesthetic principles to the design and production of clothing and accessories. Fashion design is influenced by cultural and social latitudes, and has varied over time and place.

Fashion design can be broadly categorized into haute couture (high sewing), prêt-à-porter (ready-to-wear) or mass market.

Figurative art

(1) Drawings and paintings of the human figure. (2) Art that depicts recognizable subjects such as landscapes, still life, portraits, and figures.

Film-based photography

Refers broadly to any form of non-digital photographic process that usually involved the use of light sensitive film, which is developed with chemicals, usually as a transparent negative, and is then used through either contact printing or enlarged projection onto a light sensitive paper to produce a positive print. Also referred to as wet photography or analogue photography.

Flipbook

A book of pictures in which the sequential images vary slightly from one page to the next. When the pages are turned (flipped) rapidly, the sequence of changes in the pictures simulates motion. Persistence of vision creates the illusion that continuous motion, rather than a series of discontinuous images, is being seen.

Focal point

The centre of interest in an artwork (that is, the elements or area in an artwork on which the viewer's attention is focused). The artist directs the viewer's eye using a variety of means, including directional lines, contrast, location, isolation, convergence, and the unusual (for example, areas that are light in value, or bright in colour, or highly detailed).

Foreground

In a conventional two-dimensional representation of space, the area of a picture that appears to be closest to the viewer and in front of the other objects. It is often at the bottom of

the picture plane. (See also background and middle ground.)

Form

(1) The total structure of an artwork; a synthesis of all the visible aspects of that structure and of the manner in which they are united to create its distinctive character. The form of a work is what enables us to perceive it. (2) An element of design. Concerned specifically with three-dimensional shape (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume. Its use can be either physical, such as in a sculptural work or representational, such as in a drawing or painting. (See also elements of design.) (3) All of the elements of a work of art independent of their meaning. Formal elements are primary features, which are not a matter of semantic significance—including colour, dimensions, line, mass, medium, scale, shape, space, texture, value—and the principles of design under which they are placed—including balance, contrast, dominance, harmony, movement, proportion, proximity, rhythm, similarity, unity, and variety. (4) A particular art-making discipline within the visual arts in which a work is created (for example, painting, printmaking, sculpture).

Formal qualities

The characteristics, constraints and limitations of a particular medium. For example, the formal qualities of painting are the canvas texture, colour, and brush texture. The formal qualities of an interactive multimedia work are non-linearity, interactivity and virtual presence.

Found-object sculpture

A type of sculpture made of materials and objects found in the environment. The materials and objects are reorganized and reassembled into a new form with or without surface decoration.

Function

Refers to the intended use or purpose of an object, artifact or artwork. The term is often applied to manufactured products, particularly crafts, and when discussing designs for architecture. Although sometimes said to be non-functional, art is expected to function in various ways, including: to beautify, to adorn, to express, to illustrate, to mediate, to persuade, to record, to redefine reality, to redefine art, to provide therapy, to give unselfconscious

experience, to provide paradigms of order and/or chaos, and to train perception of reality.

Genre

The depiction in art of subjects and scenes from everyday life, ordinary folk and common activities.

Genres

The various categories of subject matter in the traditional academic hierarchy, in descending order of importance: history, megalography, mythology, religion, portraiture, genre, landscape, still life, rhopography, and vernacular.

Gestural drawing

Drawing done quickly to capture the action and movement of the subject. It is most concerned with the essence of the pose and economy of means in representing it rather than careful depiction of anatomy or form.

Gradation

In a drawing or painting, a small, subtle change from one shade, tone, or colour to another.

Graphic design

(1) The art of communication, stylizing, and problem-solving through the use of graphics, usually for commercial purposes. Various methods are employed to create and combine words, symbols, and images to create a visual representation of ideas and messages. A graphic designer may use a combination of typography, visual arts and page layout techniques to produce a final result. (2) The products (designs) that are generated by graphic designers, which include logos and branding, publications such as magazines, newspapers and books, print advertisements, posters, billboards, website graphics and elements, signs and product packaging.

Graphics

Any image that is especially linear in character, such as a drawing, and any image made by or for printmaking or digital imaging.

Harmony

A principle of design. The combination of elements so as to highlight their similarities and produce a unified composition. (See also principles of design.)

Hatching

A drawing technique used to create a sense of depth or three-dimensionality on a flat surface. Areas of darker value and shading are created by using numerous repeated strokes of an art tool (for example, pencil, marker) to produce clustered lines. The lines are usually parallel, but may also be curved to follow the shape of the object. Fewer lines create a lighter image, while more lines, closely spaced, create a darker image, since less white paper shows. (See also cross-hatching.)

Hybridization

The technique used in creating hybrid artworks. Hybrid art is art in which genres, styles, concepts, materials, media, and cultural forms are combined to create new forms.

Icon

(1) A symbol, image, motif, emblem, or object that is generally recognized as representative of a person, place, era, or culture. (2) A picture, a sculpture, or even a building, when regarded as an object of veneration.

Identity

The characteristics by which a thing (for example, a product, event, fictional character, concept), a person, or a people (a culture, a company, government, or other organization) is definitively known. It refers to individuality in some ways, and sameness (identical) in others. Any person's identity can be understood only as shifting and ever-changing in two ways. First, identity is not fixed: it changes over the course of a lifetime. Second, identity is how one is perceived by others. Resemblance is relative to the culture and the purpose of classification. Many artists have explored issues concerning their own as well as other people's identities, sometimes in the context of interpersonal, intrapersonal, gender, feminist, racial, spiritual, class, or political issues.

Illustration

A visual representation made by an artist, such as a drawing, painting, photograph, or other kind of image of things seen, remembered or imagined, using a graphical representation. The purpose of an illustration is often to elucidate or decorate a story, poem or piece of textual information by providing a visual representation of something described in the text. Illustrations can also represent scientific images of flora, medicine or different processes, biological or chemical processes or illustrations to give information on how to use something.

Implied line

A line that is not drawn but suggested by the way elements have been combined in an artwork.

Inquiry learning cycle

Any number of simple models based on John Dewey's philosophy that education should emerge from the curiosity of the learner. Most models include stages of inquiry, investigation or research, followed by an action, followed by reflection.

Installation

A two-dimensional, three-dimensional, or time-based artwork (or a combination of these) made specifically for a chosen site or environment, arranged in place either by the artist or to the artist's specifications, and often involving interaction between the work, its audience, and the site. Installations are relatively large, and may be temporary or permanent and created for indoor or outdoor settings. (See also land art.)

Intaglio printing

The collective term for several printmaking processes in which prints are produced from the ink trapped in the grooves in an incised, usually metal, plate. Etchings and engravings are the most typical examples.

Intaglio sculpture

A sculptural form where an image is fully modelled in a "negative" manner such as seen in engraved gem seals. The image goes into the surface, so that when impressed on wax

it gives an impression in normal relief. Also known as counter-relief.

Interactive media

Generally refers to artworks produced with electronic media or digital media, which respond to the audiences' actions by presenting content such as text, graphics, animation, video and sound. Any form of interface between the audience and the medium may be considered interactive. Interactive media is not always limited to electronic media or digital media. Artist books are an example of printed interactive media.

Interpretation

A stage in the work of art criticism that follows the describing and analysing of an artwork, in which one identifies the work's expressive qualities, or the meaning, or the mood, or idea communicated to the audience.

Juxtaposition

The placing of items in an image close to one another to reveal some contrast or similarity that conveys a message.

Kinetic art

Any work of art that includes natural or mechanical movement as one of its defining properties or as part of its intended purpose.

Land art

Refers to art that involves the creation or manipulation of a large or enclosed space, effectively surrounding its audience. Also referred to as environment art, earth art or earthworks.

Landscape

(1) A painting or drawing in which rural scenery is the main feature. Cityscapes, streetscapes, and seascapes are variants of the landscape genre. (2) The physical orientation of a two-dimensional artwork, where the width is greater than the height.

Layering

A technique of applying one layer of opaque or transparent material (for example, tissue paper, paint, glaze or digital images) on top of another.

Layout

The arrangement and positioning in a design of text, illustrations, photographs, and/or diagrams.

Line

An element of design. The visual path left by a moving point; also, a mark, guide, or boundary that leads the eye in an artwork. Differences in the type, orientation, and/or quality of lines can be used to suggest a variety of ideas, states, or moods. For example, horizontal and curving lines can feel restful or inactive, and vertical and diagonal lines can imply movement or action; combinations of horizontal and vertical lines can suggest stability. (See also elements of design.)

Linear perspective

The parallel lines of buildings and rectangular shapes or objects are drawn so as to converge at a point on the horizon or eye-level line called the vanishing point. There can be as many vanishing points in a painting as there are sets of converging parallel lines. In one-point linear perspective, parallel lines converge at a single point on the horizon or eye-level line. In two-point linear perspective, parallel lines converge at two vanishing points on the horizon or eye-level line. In three-point perspective, parallel lines converge at two vanishing points on the horizon or eye-level line while a third vanishing point extends above or below the horizon to conveying the convergence of vertical lines to communicate extreme height or depth.

Logo

A typographic or graphic form or image used as an emblem to identify an individual, club, organization, project, or product. Also called a logotype.

Maquette

A small-scale preliminary work made as a “trial run” in preparation for a larger sculpture or architectural work.

Materials

The substances out of which something is or can be made, including various media (for example, acrylic paint, chalk, modelling clay, canvas, paper, wood) and found objects (for example, leaves, shells, wire). (See also medium.)

Medium (plural: media)

(1) The material(s) used by an artist to produce a work of art. A medium may be two-dimensional (for example, graphite, ink, paint, photographic paper, canvas), three-dimensional (for example, fibre, clay, wood, metal, glass, plastic), or time-based (for example, animation, video), and may have wet properties (for example, paint, ink, dye, wash) or dry properties (for example, pencil, charcoal, conté, crayon). (2) A substance that is added to paint to alter the properties of the paint (such as an impasto medium to thicken the paint, a clear polymer or acrylic gel or emulsion used for glazing or varnishing in painting, in image transfer processes, or as an adhesive in collage). (3)

The liquid with which powdered pigments are mixed to make paint (for example, in oil paints, linseed oil is the medium). (See also materials and mixed-media work.)

Metalanguage

Any language or symbolic system used to discuss, describe, or analyse another language or symbolic system.

Methodologies of inquiry

Any number of systems and strategies in which art-making, artworks, artists, styles and movements can be investigated. Art can be explored technically, contextually and critically.

Middle ground

In a conventional two-dimensional representation of space, the part of a composition that lies between the foreground and the background. (See also foreground and background.)

Mixed-media work

An artwork in which more than one medium is used (for example, acrylic paint, collage, and oil pastels, in combination).

Modulation

Drawing technique for depicting levels of darkness on paper by applying a medium (for example, pencil) more densely or with a darker shade for darker areas, and less densely or with a lighter shade for lighter areas.

Monochromatic

A colour scheme in which only one hue is used, along with its tints and shades (see also modulation, shades, tints and value).

Monoprint

One of a series of prints in which each has some differences of colour, design, texture, and so on applied to an underlying common image, such as a block print using a chine collé technique. Not to be confused with a monotype.

Monotype

A unique print made by painting on a smooth metal, glass or stone plate and then printing on paper. The pressure of printing creates a texture not possible when painting directly on paper. Not to be confused with a monoprint.

Mosaic

An artwork made with small pieces of a material, such as coloured stone, glass, paper, or tile that are usually laminated onto a stable substrate with some form of adhesive or cement.

Motif

A design or theme that may be repeated in a larger overall composition for decorative or narrative purposes. (See also icon, sign and symbolism.)

Movement

A principle of design. The way in which the elements of design are organized so that the viewer's eye is led through a work of art in a systematic way, often to the focal area.

Movement can be directed, for example, along lines and edges and by means of shape and colour within the work. (See also principles of design and line.)

Moving image

The product of a number of processes that create the illusion of movement through a series of images (for example, drawings, digital images, paper cut-outs, photographs, puppets, sculpted figures) that show slight, progressive changes sequentially in time using various techniques (for example, claymation, cut-out/collage animation, flipbook, thaumatrope, pixilation, rotoscope, stop motion, digital processes).

Multimedia applications

Computer software programs that combine a variety of elements such as sound, animation, text, and graphics and can be used to create a multimedia production. Multimedia applications that provide hypertext links among elements such as computer text, visual material, and sound files are called hypermedia applications. Multimedia applications

may be non-linear. They allow students to compose, communicate, and create in innovative ways.

Negative space

The empty or open areas within or around an object or form (in two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork). When these areas have boundaries, they also function as design shapes in the total structure.

Naturalism

Art in which objects, figures, or scenes are drawn or painted as they appear in nature or in real life. (See also realism.)

Neutral colour

Colours such as black and grey that are created by mixing equal proportions of complementary colours. The proportions may be altered to create variable colours such as blue-grey, green-grey, or purple-grey or red-brown, yellow-brown, or green-brown. (See also complementary colours.)

Non-objective art

Art that achieves its effect by using the elements of line, shape, and colour in a non-representational way rather than to depict recognizable objects or figures. It is often focused on exploring colour, form, and texture as formal concepts or shapes and forms produced from the imagination. (See also abstract art, abstraction, and stylize.)

Opaque

A material or colour that does not let light pass through. Strong opacity will prevent the colour below from showing through.

Organic shape

Non-geometric, irregular, or free-flowing shapes or forms that are based on shapes or forms found in nature.

Original artwork

An artwork created by hand using techniques such as drawing, printmaking, painting, and sculpture, singly or in combination.

Pastel

(1) A drawing medium consisting of pigment compressed into a stick. Pastels are usually categorized into chalk pastels, such as conté crayons, and oil pastels such as wax crayons. (2) An artwork created using pastels. (3) An adjective for certain soft, light shades of colour.

Pattern

(1) A principle of design. A regular arrangement or sequence of alternated or repeated elements (shapes, lines, colours) or motifs. (2) A template, model, or guide for making something. (See also principles of design.)

Performance art

A series of events or happenings performed or staged by an artist for an audience.

Perspective

The representation of space and three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface so as to convey the impression of height, width, depth, and relative distance. The illusion of depth, distance, and so on, is created through methods such as the depiction of faraway objects as smaller in scale and positioned closer to the top of the art paper and the use of overlapping objects, vertical placement, diminishing size, and shadows and shading. In linear perspective, the parallel lines of buildings and rectangular shapes or objects are drawn so as to converge at a point on the horizon or eye-level line called the vanishing point. In atmospheric perspective, the intensity of colour and the distinctness of detail are gradually lessened to indicate an increase in the distance between objects and the viewer.

Photography

The act of creating durable images by recording light either chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as photographic film, or electronically by means of an image sensor. Photography may produce still or moving images, and may be lens-based (such as when using a camera) or

non-lens based (such as rayographs or photograms). The common feature is always light (or other forms of electromagnetic radiation) and time (from a fraction of a second to much longer periods of time).

Photomontage

A form of collage in which photographs are used to create a composition. The subject matter and arrangement of the individual photographs combine to express a new meaning conceived by the artist. Assembly can be done through cut and paste or digitally.

Planographic printing

The collective term for several printmaking processes in which prints are produced from a flat surface, often relying on the principle that water and oil do not mix. Lithography and offset printing processes are examples of planographic printing, but monotype could also be considered as a simple form of planographic printmaking.

Popular culture

Art, objects, images, artifacts, literature, music, fashion, and so on, intended for, consumed by, or representing the taste of the general public.

Portrait

(1) An artwork that depicts a person. Portraits may be life size, or smaller or larger than life, and may depict heads, torsos, or full-length figures. They may be abstract or realistic and executed in a variety of media. A self-portrait is an artist's depiction of him or herself. (2) The physical orientation of a two-dimensional artwork, where the height is greater than the width.

Pose

The position of a figure. The artist may position a subject to suggest the subject's mental attitude or a physical movement or action.

Primary colours

An element of design. The colours yellow, red (magenta), and blue (cyan) from which it is possible to mix all the

other colours of the spectrum—also known as the subtractive or colorant primaries. Thus, pigments that reflect light of one of these wavelengths and absorb other wavelengths may be mixed to produce all colours. Also, the additive primaries: lights of red, green, and blue wavelengths may be mixed to produce all colours. Additive primaries (or RGB primaries) are used in theatrical stage lighting, and in colour video and computer screens.

Principles of design

Generally accepted ideas about the qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of an artwork that are used as guidelines in composing an image and analysing how viewers are likely to perceive it. The qualities include but are not limited to the following: balance, emphasis, harmony, movement, proportion, repetition, rhythm, unity, and variety.

Print

An image created and reproduced by hand, mechanically or digitally, on paper, fabric, or other support, using a

printmaking technique, photographic reproduction or other mechanical means.

Printmaking

An artistic method or process that uses a printing plate, screen, stamp, or stencil to create one or a series of prints. Printmaking processes include intaglio, relief and planographic. (See also intaglio printing, relief printing, serigraphic printing and planographic printing.)

Proportion

A principle of design. Refers to the comparative, proper, or harmonious relationship of one part to another or to the whole with respect to size, quantity, or degree; a ratio. Also known as scale. (See also principles of design and scale.)

Purpose

- (1) An artist's specific intent in creating an artwork, the end or goal that is aimed at. Outcomes that are not anticipated and not foreseen are known as unintended consequences.
- (2) The intent for which an artwork has been created. The

purpose of an artwork could include affective, religious, narrative, decorative, social comment, analytical, expressive, aesthetic and anti-aesthetic.

Realism

(1) Art in which objects, figures, or scenes are drawn or painted as they appear in nature or in real life. (See also Naturalism.) (2) A style of art, developed in 19th century France and influenced by the advent of photography, that based its depictions on direct observation of reality without the addition of personal emotion associated with romanticism.

Relief printing

Any method of printmaking where the surface to be inked is raised (“in relief”). The printing plate (for example, woodblock, polystyrene, glue line, linoleum, rubber) is adapted, cut, incised, or built up to create a low-relief image, and the image is then transferred to a surface (for example, paper or fabric) after a colour medium (for example, ink) is applied. Also called block printing.

Relief sculpture

A type of carving or sculpture in which the form projects from a background (for example, high relief, low relief/bas-relief, sunken relief). Unlike other types of sculpture, relief sculpture is intended to be viewed from one side.

Repetition

A principle of design. The repeated use of similar elements and visual effects in a composition. Repetition may produce the dominance of one visual idea, a feeling of harmonious relationship or unity, a pattern, or a rhythmic movement of the viewer's eye (for example, a repeated pattern of similar colours, brushstrokes, and textures can lead the eye through the artwork). (See also principles of design.)

Representational art

Art that depicts the physical appearance of recognizable images from "real" life.

Rhythm

A principle of design. The use of recurring elements to direct the movement of the viewer's eye through the artwork and give a sense of unity to the composition. There are five kinds of rhythm: random, regular, alternating, progressive, and flowing. (See also principles of design.)

Salt resist

A technique that involves sprinkling coarse salt on washes of damp, water-based paint. The salt crystals gradually take up the pigment, creating a multiplicity of light, starlike shapes on the surface of the paper.

Scale

(1) A ratio used in determining the dimensional relationship between a representation to that which it represents (its actual size), as in maps, architectural plans, and models. This is often expressed numerically as two quantities separated by a colon (:). For example, a scale noted as "1:50". This scale would be read "one to fifty", meaning "one unit of measurement [inches, feet, meters, etc] here represents fifty of the same units at full size". A size equal to actual size is full-scale. Sometimes scale is called

“proper proportion”. (2) A principle of design, proportion refers to the comparative, proper, or harmonious relationship of one part to another or to the whole with respect to size, quantity, or degree also known as proportion. (See also Principles of design and proportion.)

Sculpture

(1) A work of art in three dimensions (that is, with height, width, and depth), usually intended to be viewed from all sides. (2) The technique of creating three-dimensional forms or figures by carving, cutting, hewing, casting, moulding, welding, or assembling materials. Materials may include clay, found objects, modelling clay, papier mâché, plaster bandages, wire, and wood. Types of sculpture include in the round, intaglio, relief and found-object.

Sculpture in the round

A self-supporting three-dimensional form surrounded by space and designed to be viewed from all sides. Also called free-standing sculpture.

Scumbling (drawing)

A drawing technique that uses layers of small, calligraphic, scribbled marks to build up value and texture.

Scumbling (painting)

(1) Originally (Venetian school of painters c.1488–1576), a broken passage of opaque or translucent colour (most often paint) skimmed or dragged across the surface in such a way that each colour is visible, each modifying the other, or, to apply a colour in this way. (2) More recently, to smudge or smear the lines, edges, or colours in an image by rubbing lightly. This use appeared in the mid-19th century.

Secondary colours

Colours that are created by mixing two primary colours (for example, in subtractive or colourant colours orange is made by mixing red and yellow; green is made by mixing blue and yellow; violet is made by mixing blue and red).

Sequential art

The term credited to Will Eisner to describe the use of a train of images in sequence to graphic storytelling or to

convey information. The best-known example of sequential art is comics, which are a printed arrangement of art and balloons, especially comic books and comic strips. The term is sometimes applied to other time-based media, such as film, animation or storyboards. (See time-based.)

Sgraffito

A method of mark making used in drawing, painting and ceramics in which a sharp instrument is used to scratch through the outermost surface to reveal the underlying surface.

Shade

A dark value of a colour is created by adding black. (See also value.)

Shape

An element of design. The external form or outline of an image produced by the use of line, value, colour, and/or texture. Shape may be geometric or organic, positive or

negative. Shapes have two dimensions, length and width. (See also elements of design.)

Serigraphic printing

A stencil method of printmaking in which an image is imposed on a screen of silk or other fine mesh, with blank areas coated with an impermeable substance, and ink is forced through the mesh onto the printing surface. Also called silkscreen process and screen-printing.

Sign

An image used to represent or point to something (for example, a concept or object) other than itself.

Significance

(1) The intrinsic value of a work of art either within the culture (as in time and place) it was created or within the culture it is now viewed. The judgment can be based on artistic merit, cultural importance or commercial value. (2) The meaning assigned to a sign or symbol used to communicate meaning in a work of art.

Sketch

Quick drawing that may be a reference or plan for composition or later work.

Space

An element of design. The area around, within, or between images or elements. The appearance of space can be created on a two-dimensional surface by means of techniques such as the overlapping of objects, the varying of object size or placement, the varying of colour intensity and value, and the use of detail and diagonal lines. (See also elements of design.)

Stamp

(1) A piece of clay, rubber, polystyrene, or similar material on which a design has been carved or incised. When its surface is inked, it can be used to print the design onto another surface (for example, paper, fabric). (2) A created or found texture tool (for example, shells, lace, textured rolling pins) with a raised, low-relief surface used to impress a design onto the surface of clay.

Stencil

Thick paper, cardboard, or other stiff material with a cut-out design used as a template in printmaking. The stencil is held above a surface, and paint or ink is brushed over it to reproduce the design on the surface below.

Still life

An artwork depicting a grouping of inanimate objects.

Style

The way of creating art that is characteristic of a particular person, culture, historical period, or group. In an artwork, the type and use of materials, methods of work, subject matter, and so on, may reflect a particular style. The following are some major artistic styles: abstract art, cubism, expressionism, impressionism, modernism, naturalism or realism, non-objective art, op art (optical art), postmodernism, and surrealism.

Stylize

To alter natural appearance of the subject matter in order to make a representation in a pre-set style or manner. This may be achieved through processes of simplification, exaggeration or distortion.

Subject matter

The ideas, objects, figures, feelings, and understandings represented in a work of art.

Substitution

The technique in which the qualities of an object are changed to create an incongruous effect.

Symbolism

The use of something (for example, an object) to represent something else (for example, an idea or person). In art, a style that uses symbolic images to suggest abstract ideas or intangible things or states.

Symmetry

Equality in size, shape, and/or position between parts or elements or objects.

Synthesis

(1) Generally refers to a combination of two or more entities that together form something new; alternately, it refers to the creating of something by artificial means. (2) In Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Outcomes, a level of learning in which a student can combine the part of a process in new and useful ways.

Technique

A method or procedure of using a tool or material to produce a work of art or achieve an expressive effect (for example, using the side of a pencil to shade light and dark tones; using the point of a pencil to create a fine line).

Tertiary colours

(1) The third level in a colour wheel where colours are produced by mixing unequal amounts of two primary colours (or a secondary colour and one of the primaries

used to produce it). For example, adding more red to the combination of red and yellow will produce the intermediate colour of red-orange). (2) Any colour produced by a combination of a primary and a secondary, including the neutral colours produced when mixing a primary with its complementary secondary colour (such as orange and blue).

Textile

Fibre or yarn usually woven into cloth.

Textiles and fibre

An art-making form in which works are produced using animal-based fibres (or protein fibres), plant-based fibres (or cellulosic fibres), mineral-based fibres or synthetic fibres. Works of art created could include various forms of needlework, wearable art, paper-based works, weaving and so on.

Texture

An element of design. The feel, appearance, thickness, or stickiness of a surface or substance. Texture may be illusory or physical. Where illusory texture is employed in an artwork a visual effect is used in which the eye is tricked into seeing three-dimensional materials (for example, wood, fur, glass, metal, fabric) on a two-dimensional surface. Also called simulated texture or the illusion of texture. Where physical texture is employed in an artwork, the three-dimensionality of surfaces and materials is perceptible by touch as well as sight (for example, smooth, rough, silky, furry).

Theories

A set of abstract rules, ideas, and principles that explain a particular subject, as opposed to actual practice, or, an unproved assumption; a hypothesis or conjecture assumed for the sake of argument (for example, aesthetics, androgyny, archetypes, chaos, deformatism, emotionalism, empiricism, entropy, feminism and feminist art, formalism, game theory, idealism, imitationalism, LGBT theory, optical mixing, right brain, and subliminal message).

Thumbnail sketch

A small, quick sketch that records and communicates ideas and very basic information. Thumbnail sketches are often used as examples of possible layouts, showing combinations of pictorial elements of various heights and widths, different vertical and horizontal treatments, and/or close-ups and distant views.

Time-based

Artistic forms that use the passage of and the manipulation of time as the essential element with specific reference to experimental film, video art and installation, sound, performance and multimedia computing.

Tint

A light value of a colour is created by adding white. (See also value.)

Tone

See value.

Unity

A principle of design. The arrangement of elements to give the viewer the feeling that all the parts of the piece form a coherent whole. (See also principles of design.)

Value

An element of design that describes the lightness or darkness of a colour and/or the gradual changes in the lightness or darkness of an artwork even when colour is absent. In technical terms, a tint, or a light value of a colour, is created by adding white, and a shade, or a dark value of a colour, is created by adding black. (See also elements of design.)

Variety

A principle of design. The quality of being diverse or incorporating a number of different or contrasting elements. Variety may be achieved by opposing, changing, elaborating, or contrasting the elements of design. (See also principles of design.)

Vector graphics

A digital image encoded as formulas that represent lines and curves. Vector graphics can be reduced and enlarged (zoomed in and out) with no loss of resolution.

Warm colours

Colours that suggest warmth (for example, red, yellow, orange). Warm colours usually appear to advance into the foreground.

Wash

A technique that involves broadly applying thin layers of diluted pigment to a surface, producing an almost transparent effect.

Watercolour paint

Transparent, water-soluble paint available in solid cakes, semi-moist pans or in semi-liquid form in tubes.

Watercolour techniques

Painting techniques using water-soluble paint or mimicked by other types of paint. Types of watercolour techniques include dry brush, salt resist, wash, wet on dry and dry on dry.

Wet on dry

A technique that involves letting each layer dry before applying another layer of colour on top.

Wet on wet

A technique that involves applying layers of wet paint to previous layers of wet paint.

The visual arts glossary has been created using the following sources.

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