Chapter 4: The Visual Elements

The visual elements of art include:

1. Line
2. Shape and Mass
3. Light
4. Color
5. Texture and Pattern
6. Space
7. Time and Motion
Key Terms for this chapter include:

• **Line**: contour, outline

• **Shape and Mass**: geometric/organic shapes, figure/ground, positive/negative shapes

• **Light**: value, modeling, chiaroscuro, stippling, hatching, cross-hatching

• **Color**: reflected/refracted light, hue, value, intensity, tint, shade, monochromatic, complementary, analogous, triadic, simultaneous contrast, afterimage, pointillism

• **Texture and Pattern**: actual/visual texture

• **Space**: picture plane, perspective (linear, 1-point, 2-point, atmosphere, isometric), foreshortening

• **Time and Motion**: kinetic art
The **visual elements** help us analyze our visual experiences. These 7 terms are also used as the fundamental language for the discussion about works of art.
**LINE**: Contour and Outline

*Line* is defined as the path of moving point.

- **Outline**: Defines a 2-dimensional shape.
- **Contour lines**: Record boundaries and define more specifically what shapes represent.

Insert visual(s).
Suggestion: 4.4 Sequence 6 from Flow Chart for “The Perfect Ride”
Sequence 6 from Flow Chart of the “Perfect Ride” Animation, Jennifer Pastor, 2000
LINE: Direction and Movement

Artists use line to direct and move our eyes around a work of art.

- **Vertical lines** seem assertive, or denote growth & strength.
- **Horizontal lines** appear calm.
- **Diagonal lines** are the most dramatic and imply action.

Insert visual(s).
Suggestions:
4.7 Linear Analysis of The Biglin Brothers Racing
4.9 Linear Analysis of The Raft of Medusa
The Biglin Brothers Racing, Thomas Eakins, 1873-4
The Raft of the Medusa, Theodore Gericault, 1818-19 – 2 points of conflict
Dotted lines and directional cues such as a finger pointing in a specific direction creating a line of sight are examples of implied lines in action.
The Embarkation for Cythera, Jean-Antoine Watteau, 1718-19
SHAPE and MASS

Shape and mass can be created by line, texture and color change.

- **Shape**: 2-dimensional form that occupies an **area** with identifiable boundaries.
- **Mass**: 3-dimensional form that occupies a **volume** of space with identifiable boundaries.

Insert visual(s).

Suggestions:

4.12 The Raven and the First Men
4.13 Chanter
The Raven and the First Men, Bill Reid, 1980.6’2”

Chanter, Emmi Whitehorse, 1991
SHAPE and MASS

The 2 broad categories of shapes and masses are geometric and organic.

- **Geometric forms** can be mathematically defined.
- **Organic forms** are irregular and suggest forms found in nature.

Insert visual(s).
Suggestion: 4.14 circular shield with stepped fret design
Circular shield with stepped fret design, Aztec, 1521
SHAPE and MASS

The **figure** and the **ground** are how we perceive shapes and masses within a work of art.

- **Figure:** the *positive shape* on which visual focus is placed.
- **Ground:** the *negative shape* or area sometimes considered the background of a work of art.
SHAPE and MASS

Artists use implied shapes to help unify their compositions. Implied shapes can help to create a sense of order in a work of art.
The Madonna of the Meadows, Raphael, 1505 – Implied line
The fundamental purpose of light is to show us the material world. It helps us understand forms and spatial relationships.
DW 68 VEN MCASD 11, Doug Wheeler, Installation, 1968/2011
LIGHT

Both actual and illusionistic light are used and are important for artwork.

• **Actual light**: existing light either natural or man-made.

• **Illusionistic light**: the impression of light created by the artist.
LIGHT: Implied

There are several value techniques that artists use to **imply light** within works of art. These techniques result in the illusion of shape and mass of objects.

- **Shading/Modeling:** Using chiaroscuro or values to create mass.
- **Value:** Relative lightness or darkness.
- **Chiaroscuro:** Italian for light/dark; contrasts of light and shadow.
There are several value techniques that artists use to imply light within works of art. These techniques result in the illusion of shape and mass of objects.

- **Hatching**: Closely spaced parallel lines.
- **Cross-hatching**: Parallel lines intersect like a checkerboard.
- **Stippling**: Dots spaced close or far apart to suggest darker or lighter areas.
Implied Light

The Virgin and Saint Anne with the Christ Child and John the Baptist, Leonardo da Vinci,

Untitled, Charles White, 1979
COLOR: Color Theory

Color Wheel: Based on the refracted colors observed by Sir Isaac Newton when light was directed through a prism.

Primary Colors: Yellow, Red, Blue
Secondary Colors: Orange, Green, Violet
Intermediate Colors (total of 6): Also called tertiary; Mix a primary and adjacent secondary together
**COLOR: Color Properties**

**Hue:** Name of the color

**Value:** *Relative* lightness or darkness

**Intensity:** *(Chroma, Saturation)* *Relative* purity of a color

![Color, Value, and Intensity](image)
COLOR: Color Properties

- **Warm colors**: located on red-orange side of the color wheel
- **Cool colors**: located on the blue-green side of the color wheel.
- **Tint**: adding white to a pigmented color.
- **Shade**: adding black to a color

Color Wheel
COLOR: Light and Pigment

• **Additive Color:** Colors of light mixed to produce still lighter colors.

![Light primaries and their additive mixtures](image)
COLOR: Light and Pigment

- **Subtractive Color**: Pigments of different hues mixed together result in darker and duller colors.

Pigment primaries and their subtractive mixtures.
A color scheme is the selective use of 2 or more colors in a single composition.

- **Monochromatic:** Variations of the same hue.
- **Complementary:** Hues directly opposite on the color wheel.
- **Analogous:** Adjacent hues on the color wheel.
- **Triadic:** 3 equidistant hues on the color wheel.
COLOR: Optical Effects

• **Simultaneous contrast:** also called an afterimage.

Complementary color afterimage
COLOR: Optical Effects

• **Pointillism**: A technique of applying dots of pure color that are then *mixed by our eyes* to produce the illusion of color mixtures.

• **Optical Color Mixture**: Color that is mixed by the eyes.
Evening, Honfleur, Georges Seurat, 1886

Hendrix, Devorah Sperber, 2009
The Scream, Edward Munch, 1893

- I sensed a shriek passing through nature --- I painted this picture. I painted the clouds as actual blood.
TEXTURE and PATTERN

Texture and pattern are the perceived surface qualities of a work of art. They can be actual or implied.

• **Actual texture:** A tactile experience.

• **Implied texture:** An illusionary experience.

• **Pattern:** Any decorative, repetitive motif or design.
The Chief: He Who Sold Africa to the Colonists,
Samuel Fosso, 1997
Prayer Mat, Mona Hatourn, 1995
Space interacts with other visual elements and helps give them definition. There exists both negative and positive space.

Three dimensional space has height, width, and depth.
3d space

- **Nose, Alberto Giacometti, 1947**

- Inspired by dying friend’s frail and hollow face
Reflection, Do Ho Suh, 2004
**SPACE**: Implied and Illusionistic

Two dimensional space has only **height and width**. There exists the **picture plane** and the illusion of the **negative (ground)** and **positive (figure)** space.

**Implied Space**: Includes overlapping and **position** (foreground, middle-ground, background)

**Illusionistic Space**: Includes **foreshortening**, **linear**, **isometric**, and **atmospheric perspective**
SPACE: Illusionistic Linear Perspective

Basic principles of linear perspective
The Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, 1495-97
SPACÉ: Illusionistic

Isometric Perspective

Basic principles of isometric perspective
The Rocky Mountains, Landers Peak, Albert Bierstadt, 1863- atmospheric perspective
**SPACE: Illusionistic**

- **Foreshortening:** The affect of linear perspective when applied to objects and human forms within a work of art.

- **Atmospheric Perspective:** As objects recede into the distance they become paler, bluer, and less distinct.
The Groom and the Witch, Hans Baldung Grien, 1540

Draftsman Drawing a Reclining Nude, Albrecht Durer, 1527

FORESHORTENING
Time and motion have become increasingly important to art during the 20th and 21st centuries. There is more thought and emphasis placed on the nature of time in our modern world.

**Kinetic art:** Art that actually moves.
Southern Cross, Alexander Calder, 1963
Bellamy, Richard Serra, 2001
Soundsuit, Nick Cave, 2011

Performance art, made to be worn, costume for dance. First soundsuit made as response to brutal beating of Rodney King in early 1990s. Based on notion that “black man is discarded, devalued, etc. Chose discarded objects to create a costume that made one stand erect and want to dance. Identity/race was hidden.
The Visual Elements: Summary

The Visual Elements and Key Terms:

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