

Cleveland Institute of Art  
Creativity Matters

# Glossary of art terms

walk the walk, talk the talk

CIA

## AESTHETICS

the study or theory of “beauty” and of the psychological responses to it; specifically, the branch of philosophy dealing with art, its creative sources, its forms, and its effects

## BALANCE

a feeling of equal weight, attention, or attraction of visual elements within an artwork

1. the hidden structure and relationship of elements within a work, giving it stability, tension, excitement, or equilibrium. Individual relationships may be unbalanced but balance may exist within the total structure.
2. a feeling of equality in weight, attention, or attraction of the various elements within the pictorial field

## CHIAROSCURO

effect of blending light and shade on objects to create the illusion of 3D (three-dimensionality), or volume

## CHROMA

1. purity or intensity of a color
2. refers to the range from pure, full-strength pigments to dull, muted pigments reduced by the addition of white, black, gray, or another color

## CLICHÉ

1. originally, a stereotype printing plate
2. an expression or idea that has become trite, or worn out by constant use

## COLLABORATION

the action of working with someone (or as a member of a team) to produce or create something

## COMMUNITY

a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, goals, or a common culture.

## COMPOSITION

the organizing of elements of an artwork into a unified whole; the arrangement of pictorial elements in a picture plane

## CONCEPT/CONCEPTUAL

the idea underlying a work of art or design; the meaning of a creative work; sometimes seen in comparison to Form (see Form)

## CONTEXT

The circumstances that create the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed. Art is often described as being part of its social or historical context. That is, as part of the culture and period of its making

## CRAFTSMANSHIP

Everything from attention to detail, to sensitivity with materials, and the appropriateness of the form... things to look at and think about in relation to how we make things; the ability to produce well-made objects and images

## CRITIQUE

1. a critical analysis or evaluation of a subject, situation, literacy work, etc.
2. the act or art of criticizing.
3. “...period for the student to get up and talk about his/her work...a critique can be formal or informal... it’s a period in which we stop and review what has been done...”

Purpose: open discussion directed toward assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the work being viewed

## ASYMMETRICAL/

## SYMMETRICAL BALANCE

Asymmetrical:

a form of balance created when visual units are placed in different positions within the picture, creating a sense of equilibrium, without repeating placement of units with respect to the central axis



Symmetrical:

a form of balance in which each half of an image is a mirror reflection of the other half.





## CONTOUR

1. in art, the outer edge of an object or shape that is most often defined by line, but can be defined by value, texture, color, and mass
2. outline, borderline, or containment of a form, 2-D or 3-D



## GESTURAL

used to describe a quality of expressive movement, often a loose, energetic quality

## DEPICT

1. to represent, describe in a drawing, painting, sculpture, etc; portray, picture
2. to picture in words or images

## DESIGN

the process of structuring a coherent field of relationships which are imaginative and visually interesting

## DOMINANCE/DOMINANT

1. principal of visual organization which suggests some elements are more important than others in the same composition
2. the most influential or conspicuous aspect or element of a work

## DYNAMIC

active quality conveyed by a sense of movement between the elements

## ENERGY

1. implied movement
2. the gestural nature of the materials as it provides a sense of the process as a physical one

## FIGURE/GROUND

Figure:

1. in two-dimensional and three-dimensional arts, a representation of the human body
2. in design, any pattern or repeated decorative motif, as in figured textiles positive shape or form
3. any shape that represents an object

Ground:

The area around the figure, sometimes referred to as the "background"

## FORESHORTENING

the reduction or diminishing of the dimensions, usually length, of an object of figure in order to present it in the correct spatial relationship

## FORM/FORMAL

1. the shape, outline, or configuration of any structure as apart from color, material, etc.
2. the body or figure of a person or animal/a model of a human figure
3. anything used to give shape to something else; mold
4. arrangement; esp. orderly arrangement; way in which parts of a whole are organized
5. the organization of all the elements that give the work expression /consideration of visual elements of a work regardless of subject concept or statement; (see Concept)

## GESTALT

the phenomenon that causes images to be perceived as unified wholes before they are perceived as parts. For example, a human face is seen as a whole unit prior to seeing/perceiving the individual components (ear, nose, etc.

## GROUND

1. a surface to which paint is applied; also, a coating material used to prepare a surface for painting
2. in relief sculpture, the flat surface from which figures project...usually, the negative space or shape..

## GEOMETRIC SHAPE

A shape that appears related to geometry. Geometric shapes are usually simple, such as the triangle, the rectangle, the pentagon, and the circle.



## HUE (COLOR)

1. a pure color, the quality of a color
2. the common name of a color (i.e. red, yellow, blue)
3. hue also implies the temperature of a color

## ILLUSORY SPACE

the imitation or visual reality created on a flat surface by the use of perspective, light and dark shading, etc.

## IMAGE

1. an imitation of representation of a person or thing, drawn, painted, or photographed, etc., esp. a statue
2. a mental picture of something; conception, idea, impression
3. a vivid representation, graphic depiction

## INTERPRETATION

1. the expression of a person's conception of a work of art, subject, etc., through acting, playing, writing, or criticizing
2. the act or result of explaining, translating, etc.

## ITERATIVE PROCESS

A process for arriving at a decision or a desired result by repeating rounds of analysis or a cycle of operations. For example, in class a student's work may be reviewed by the faculty member and others in the class and then the work is reconsidered based on that feedback

## LINE QUALITY

the sensitivity and control of line variation to express particular visual characteristics

## LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

the drawing of objects in line to suggest their three-dimensionality and their existence in space

## LOCAL COLOR

the natural color of an object as understood by the mind; i.e. green grass, blue sky

## MONOCHROMATIC

having only one hue, but varying in value and/or chroma

## MOVEMENT

an implied visual sensation through repetition of an element or through a progressive change of an element

## ORGANIC SHAPE

free-flowing, curvilinear shapes frequently occurring in nature

## PAINTERLY

1. having the quality of expertly brushed workmanship
2. a term applied to the dominance of tonal masses over line as a means of defining form in architecture, painting and sculpture. Edvard Munch's *The Scream* is an example of a painterly style

## PATTERN

repetition of an element or a motif, and/or the emphasis of directional movements

## PERSPECTIVE

Depiction of three-dimensional objects and spatial relationships on a two-dimensional plane. In Western art, illusions of volume and space are generally created by use of the linear perspective system, based on the observation that objects appear to shrink and parallel lines to converge at an infinitely distant vanishing point as they recede in space from the viewer.

## PICTURE PLANE

The surface area of a drawing, painting, print, etc.



## **RHYTHM**

sensation of ordered movement implied by repetition and variation of visual elements in a work

## POSITIVE/NEGATIVE SPACE

Positive Space:  
space implying an object

Negative Space:  
space surrounding a object  
or between objects  
(Positive/Negative Space  
can also refer to the Figure/  
Ground relationship (see  
*Figure/Ground*)





## PLANAR

characteristic of an image being formed by planes in relation to one another

## PLANE

a shape that is 2-D and therefore has height and width

## PLASTIC

1. synthetic material
2. 3-D form, sculpture (plastique)
3. 2-D form that gives the illusion of sculptural reality

## PORTRAYAL

1. to make a picture or portrait; depict; delineate
2. to make a word picture of; to describe graphically
3. An artist's individual rendition of an object of theme

## PROCESS

a particular method of doing something, generally involving a number of steps or operations

## PROPORTION

comparison of elements in terms of their relative size, or quantity

## RENDER

1. to represent; depict; specifically to make a drawing in perspective
2. to express in other words, ways; especially to translate

## REPRESENTATION

a (visual) description or statement of facts

## SCALE

the relative size of an art work or a component within an artwork.

## SHADING

(verb) the subtle blending of one color into another

## SHAPE

(2-D): an area that stands out because of a defined boundary or because of a difference in value, color, or texture

(3-D): refers to a solid or the illusion of a solid; a shape having height, width, depth, i.e. geometric, organic shape

## SPACE

1. (in 2-D works) may refer to the distance between points on the surface
2. the implied receding distance from the viewer
3. the illusion of space

## STATIC

when an element or composition is motionless

## STYLIZED

representation of natural forms which deals with artistic ideals or conventions more than observation

## SYMBOL

A shaped used to represent something abstract; a shape that arouses in the viewer's mind a general, yet universally accepted concept

## TECHNIQUE

the manner and skill with which artists use their tools and materials; an artist's technique can affect the aesthetic and concept of an artwork, and may reveal a certain style

## TENSION

1. the visual pulling, straining between any number of points in a composition
2. the balance that is maintained between opposing visual forces

## TEXTURE

the actual and visual feel of surface areas

## VALUE CONTRAST

opposing degrees of lightness or darkness;  
i.e. black & white

## VOLUME

1. a 3-D shape that occupies a quantity of space
2. implied sense of mass through modeling of form

## WARM/COOL CONTRASTS

With similar hues:

red: red-orange (warm) + red-violet (cool)

blue: blue-violet (warm) + blue-green (cool)

Contrasting hues:

blue (cool) – orange (warm)

green (cool) – red (warm)

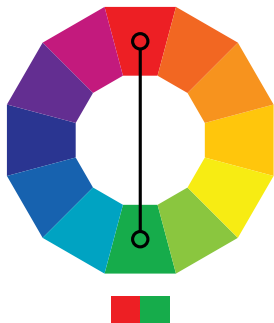
## WASH

an application of dilute material (as oil, acrylic, watercolor, etc.) to the paper or canvas

## WEIGHT

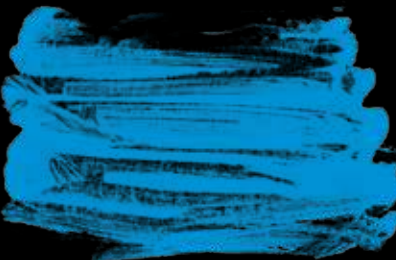
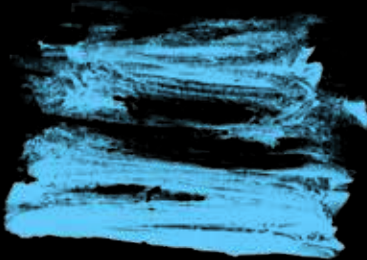
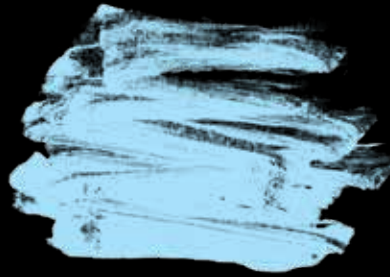
visual importance that an element, (color, pattern, etc.), carries in a composition

Complementary color scheme



Analogous color scheme





## VALUE SCALE

the sequence of values which allows us to measure the lightness or darkness of an object

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The logo for the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) is displayed in white. It consists of the letters 'CIA' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'C' and 'I' are connected, and the 'A' is slightly larger and positioned to the right. The logo is set against a black background with a blue and black abstract brushstroke pattern in the bottom left corner. A solid orange vertical bar is visible on the far right edge of the page.

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