

Introduction to the Visual Arts

Elements

Elements are the building blocks of art, and like medium, they are essential to any work of art. An “oil” painting is made from oil (the medium) and a cherry pie is made with cherries (the medium). The elements of the visual arts are much the same: line, color, and texture are essential in the sense that you can’t paint something “red” without using an element: color.

Line

Line is one of the most dominant and obvious elements in visual art. While nature seldom shows real lines (one would be surprised to find a clear line drawn around the edge of the person sitting next to you), they nevertheless seem natural to us and artists pay careful attention to this element. Lines may be presented directly, or suggested by other shapes, like edges. Lines come in six types. Three are straight: horizontal, vertical, diagonal; and three are curved: fast, slow, and S.

Straight Lines

Certain lines tend to evoke specific images.

A **horizontal** line is often used to depict rest or stability. We sleep horizontally, associate rest with the horizontal, and basically view anything in that position as quiet and non-moving. Trees may move with the wind, but trees in the horizontal are trees that have fallen over. They have no more movement left. We don’t expect them to rise again. A pen lying on the desk doesn’t move because it’s in a horizontal position. Were it in a vertical position, balanced on its tip, you’d expect to see it move at any moment.



While **vertical** lines may present a certain air of majesty—tall building, tall trees—they are also rather static, their motion limited to one of two basic directions: up or down (*David* by Michaelangelo). In nature, we seldom see trees as great sources of motion because they are always upright. But we still allow ourselves the thought that they can fall; thus any vertical object contains implied energy. The possibility always exists for objects that are vertical to become horizontal (your balanced pen will tip over), so vertical lines have more energy than horizontal lines.

Action is most frequently portrayed through the use of **diagonal** lines because a diagonal is part way between potential energy (vertical) and no energy (horizontal). Any position between those two is usually one of motion (your balanced pen is tipping over). Most buildings aren’t built on an angle because it would fight gravity (and thus cost much more to build - and scare anyone walking under them, not because they were going to fall, but because they would appear to be



David, Michelangelo



David, Bernini

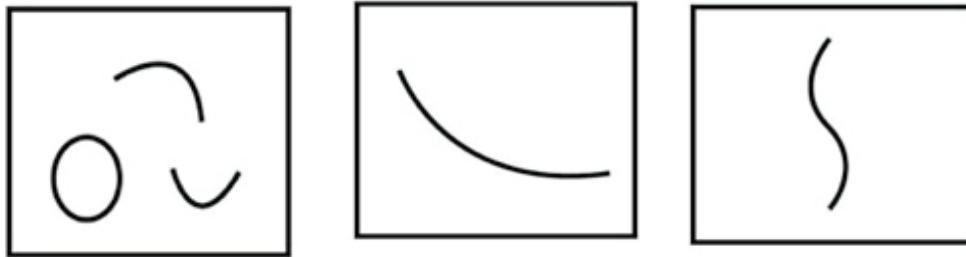
falling). When running you actually let yourself fall forward but stop the fall by propelling yourself ahead faster than your fall rate. That's why running requires more energy than standing. You're fighting gravity more in that position.

Since things around us are constantly in motion, going from a vertical position (a glass of milk) to a horizontal position (a spilled glass of milk), we tend to see any diagonal line as one of action. Even in the morning paper's cartoon section we can see running characters drawn bent over, moving forward, in a diagonal position, and our mind makes us see a static object on the page as having motion—all because the character is leaning forward. This same rule applies in art.

Any composition which has strong diagonal lines will make us feel that it is moving. Diagonal lines create a sense of movement.

Curved Lines

Straight lines are sometimes harsh (remember *Arrangement in Gray and Black* and how Whistler wanted you to feel about Mom? Remember all those 90° angles?) so artists need the opposite, something that is 'soft':



We call these lines curves, and like their straight cousins, they come in three varieties. **Slow** curves are broad, sweeping lines that go almost across the canvas and are associated with grace and elegance, while **quick** curves are like smiley faces or bubbles and happy. S curves are not only the most interesting but are considered, of all six types of lines, the most enjoyable (and if you think about it, it's because they are ABA).

Line is an important element in both painting and sculpture. Notice how different lines affect your response to two statues of the same subject. Michelangelo's *David* is vertical, presenting a feeling of calm and rest. He's not going anywhere; he's just standing there, thinking, "Should I take on this big-mouthed character or not?" Lots of thought here, but no action. Bernini's *David* is the opposite; it employs lots of diagonal lines to emphasize throwing the stone so there's plenty of action here. Michelangelo's solid posture is about the thought before the act, while Bernini's is all about the act itself. Both works are of the same person, yet each has a completely different effect on the viewer because of the type of line chosen by the artist. By the way, check out the size of the "pebble" being thrown; it's closer to the size of a baseball! Scripture tells us that "the stone sunk into his forehead." You'd die too if hit by a rock that size.

Value

Value refers to the relative degree of light or darkness in a painting. This element is often an important part in setting a mood. Darkness can convey a feeling of gloom and despair, while light tones give a more pleasing feeling. One theorist

created a “gray” scale of values ranging from a low-est level of 1 (black) to a high of 10 (pure white). This same gray scale is used in B/W photography by such greats as Ansel Adams. In a very general sense, we may say that a painting is high in value (light), medium (gray), or low (dark). It’s important to understand that value refers to the overall lightness or darkness of a painting, not specific figures within a work. Works by Rembrandt or Caravaggio are usually dark, while Van Gogh and Renoir’s paintings are usually light.

Value can also have its normal definition: how much the work cost. If asked about a painting’s value you would be entirely correct to say “It’s rather dark,” or “About \$82 million.” Either answer could be correct.



Night Watch, Rembrandt

We perceive depth by looking at the shadows on an object. **Chiaroscuro** is an Italian term meaning **light and shadow** and is a term reserved for painted works because the painter’s problem is how to portray three dimensions (depth) on a flat surface. A loaf of bread is easy to visualize as having depth because it does—it’s an object. But painting a loaf of bread requires the ability to give it visual mass, and this is accomplished by adding shadows. Good paintings (or photographs)

need shadows to create depth. Take your favorite photo from your wallet and look at the shadows on the face. A nose is not a nose unless it casts a shadow (usually just below and slightly to the side). Remove that shadow and the nose becomes flat. Yuck.



The Virgin of the Rocks, Leonardo

One of the traits that made Rembrandt an artistic genius was his use of chiaroscuro. While it is normal for the light in a painting to go from bright areas in the foreground to darkness in the background, Rembrandt gave depth to his works by placing several of his lightest areas in the middle ground of the work. This light-lighter-dark sequence is what constitutes a “Rembrandt” look and is one of the tricks that made his *Night Watch* famous.

Another technique for making an object appear three-dimensional is **foreshortening**. This involves making the lines of an object shorter than normal to give the appearance of forward projection toward the viewer. Notice how the outstretched hands in both Rembrandt’s *Night Watch* and in Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks* are really smaller than the other hand of the same figure. By foreshortening the fingers in these instances both artists have increased the three-dimensionality of their respective works.

Another type of foreshortening is the foreshortened circle. In his portrait of Senora Dolores Trevino demonstrates both a foreshortened arm and a foreshortened circle. Notice how the laundry basket is not as much a circle as it is an oval. The front of the circle has been shortened to give the illusion of depth. Her

Night Watch, Rembrandt

outstretched arm is just like the technique we see in the Leonardo and Rembrandt paintings. Even though nearly five centuries separate these three works, the principle remains the same: foreshortening produces a sense of depth.

Try this little experiment: go to a mirror and hold out your arm in front of you, palm facing the mirror, and then close one eye. Position your arm so that you can't see your arm in the mirror, only the hand, seemingly attached directly to your shoulder! Your mind knows that it's not, and adds the arm, but by closing your eye you remove the

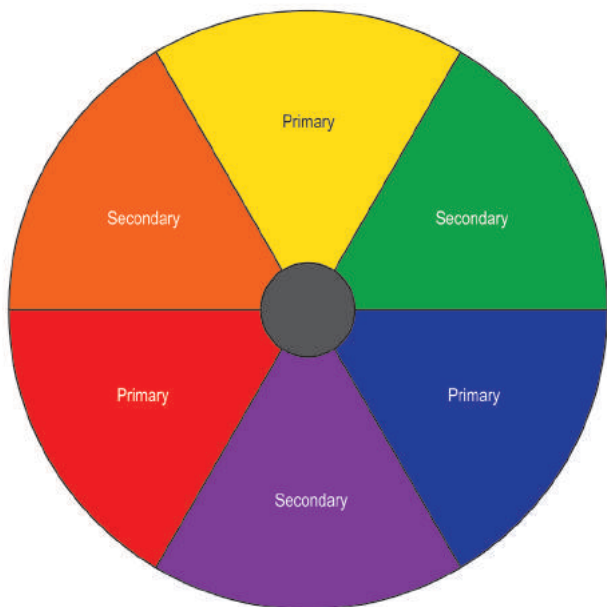


Senora Delores Trevino, Jesse Trevino

3-dimensional world we all live in and move into the 2-dimensional world of painting. Look at some other paintings and try to find examples of foreshortening. Some artists are good; others do no better than you or I.

Color

Color is a major consideration in any painting (anciently it was even used in sculpture; they'd paint the eyes and hair). Colors have a number of effects on us. We perceive colors and our mood changes accordingly. A German psychological study found a definite link between the color of one's surroundings and the corresponding IQ scores of students in the room. It was shown that rooms painted in "cool" colors (on the blue side of the scale) tended to suppress the personality, while the same room, painted with "warm" colors (tan, beige, earth tones, etc.) made the people feel much better about both themselves and the world around them. They even tended to do better on exams. This same experiment was done with inmates in a prison, and the same results were found: convicts in warm-colored rooms were usually much more behaved and easier to work with than those in cool-colored rooms. Those in the latter were standoffish, alone, distant, and more irritable.



Warmer.....Cooler

Take a moment to study the color wheel. Consider how you feel when surrounded by large areas of a certain color. Consider your bedroom all done in shades of red, or green, or yellow, or blue. Wouldn't you feel different? I meant that literally. Do you *feel* the difference between certain colors? Do they affect you? Because these feelings are physical as well a psychological they are the basis for much modern art. Your eye/brain combination responds first to colors on the left side of the chart, then the red side. It is because you see red first that all stop signs are red, that taillights are red, that anything that says "Watch Out!" is painted red.

The middle colors on the wheel are neutral. You see both yellow and violet at the same moment, yet most people would say they see yellow first. Not true. And we see blues last. They are the least obtrusive of all. They seem to say, "Look at everyone else first." Because colors

The Example of Abraham

President Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, June 1975



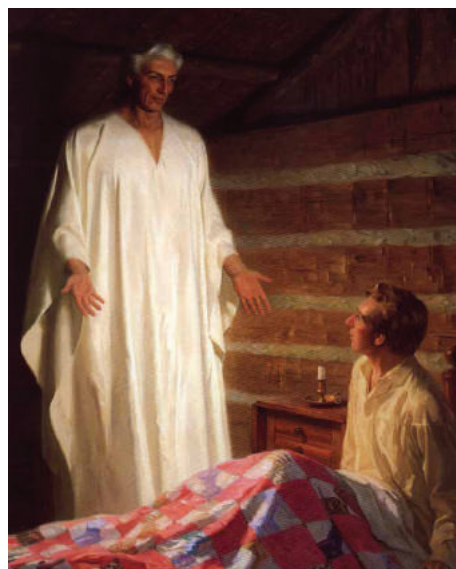
Born on March 28, 1895, in Salt Lake City, Spencer W. Kimball grew up in Thatcher, Arizona. After completing a mission and marrying Camilla Eyring, he settled in Safford, Arizona, to raise his family and run an insurance business. Years of Church and community leadership preceded his call-ing as an Apostle in 1943. Overcoming severe health prob-blems, he became Church President on December 30, 1973, at the age of 78. He led the Church with spiritual power and energetic determination during a period of dramatic vitality and growth. His administration produced significant advances in doctrinal understanding, member unity, and gos-pel expansion worldwide. In the 12 years of his presidency, the number of operating temples doubled, the number of missionaries increased by 50 percent, and the priesthood was extended to all worthy male members. He died in Salt Lake City on November 5, 1985. [From LDS.org]

The Example of Abraham

Abraham’s fulfillment of his stewardship in the home led the Lord to say of him: “For I know him, that he will command his children ... and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” (Gen. 18:19.)

On September 21, 1823, the Angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in his father’s home at Manchester, New York. In the course of this revelation the angel quoted a prophecy contained in the fourth chapter of Malachi in these words: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” (JS—H 1:38.) This prophecy, made nearly 2,300 years previously, was fulfilled early in the summer of 1829, when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John, “whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and special witnesses of my name.” (D&C 27:12.)

We commemorate the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, called “the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3), once more this month. It is an event of supreme importance to man in this dispensation, for the priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things pertaining to the salvation of men. It is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. Without this priesthood power, men are lost. Only through this power does man “hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church,” enabling him to receive “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened” unto him (see



Moroni appears to Joseph Smith

The Meaning of the Temple

Hugh Nibley



Hugh Nibley

Hugh Nibley (1910-2005 studied at UCLA and the University of California, Berkeley receiving a doctoral degree in classics. He later became a Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Younger University-Provo. His collected works now stand at 17 volumes including “An Approach to the Book of Mormon” which originally was the lesson manual for priesthood quorums of the LDS Church in 1957. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said of Dr. Nibley, “I’m grateful that he (Hugh Nibley) has been preserved to be here in the dispensation of the fullness of times when there could be a full flowering of his genius and ability put at the disposal of the kingdom. And Hugh Nibley in his field would be the most remarkable scholar we have. He is so focused on the things that matter and is spiritually submissive that he’s impatient with mediocrity, he’s impatient with irrelevance, and to the casual eye that may be seen as eccentricity when in fact I think it is a reflection of his deep discipleship.”

The following essay, originally given in 1973, is found in volume 12 of his collected works: Temple and Cosmos. The first several pages may catch you off guard as Nibley discusses the second law of thermodynamics leading to an understanding of order versus chaos. He connects this material to temple building – both ancient and modern – to express major purposes and meanings of the temple. Nibley stated, “where there is no true temple, civilization itself is but an empty shell—a material structure of expediency and tradition alone, bereft of the living organism at its center that once gave it life and brought it forth.” (“What is a Temple?” Mormonism and Early Christianity).

Reprinted by permission from Temple and Cosmos, volume 12 in The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 1–41.

Recently in our family night, I was supposed to talk about the meaning of the temple in light of the gospel. One of the many distinguishing features of our time is the availability of really good popular science summaries written by top men in various fields; and none of us should neglect these, no matter what our own fields are. Any field of serious study today is necessarily highly specialized, and at the same time it calls for branching out into related fields. These summaries go far beyond the popularizing of another day. Because of our marvelous processes of photographic reproduction, magnificently illustrated books on every branch of science are now available.

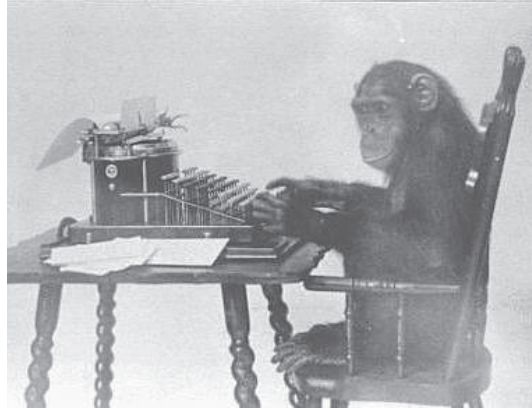
For example, recently I looked at P. T. Matthews’s *The Nuclear Apple*, and before that, it was the biologist Lyall Watson’s book *Supernature*, and before that, Nigel Calder’s broad survey of recent studies of the brain called *The Mind of Man*. That same Nigel Calder, who works for the British Broadcasting Corporation, goes all around the world getting up television programs of very high caliber. Thus, while surveying recent astronomical developments, he consulted with major astronomers in every part of the world and so built up the programs. The last one was called *The Violent Universe*. It was required reading in our Honors Program (and probably still is), and he recently has put out one on the new geology, plate tectonics, which he calls *The Restless Earth*. The data of these books is significant. *The Violent Universe*, *Restless Earth*, and *Supernature*—that is not the way I heard it when I went to school.

books in the British Museum, but did any religionist ever express such boundless faith? I don't know any religious person who ever had greater faith than that. Yet serious minds actually believed such an impossibility. They say it is impossible, but then it happens.

Remember, "the decay interaction is the shuffling agent [and] . . . by the relentless operation of the Second Law, essentially every proton would by now have decayed into lighter particles . . . Clearly the opposite is the case." Now "there must be some very exact law which is preventing this from happening."¹⁵

Kammerees new law of seriality is in direct opposition to the second law: there is "a force that tends toward symmetry and coherence by bringing like and like together."¹⁶ That is a very interesting point. We say that light cleaves unto light, etc. What is that force? Nobody knows. They say it is there because you see it working. Buckminster Fuller calls it syntropy.¹⁷ The greatest Soviet astrophysicist today, the Soviets' foremost man in that field, Nikolai Kozyrev, has been working for years on this question. He claims that the second law of thermodynamics is all right, but it doesn't work. Something works against it, something stronger. He says,

Some processes unobserved by mechanics and preventing the death of the world are at work everywhere, maintaining the variety of life. These processes must be similar to biological processes maintaining organic life. Therefore, they may be called vital processes and the life of cosmic bodies or other physical systems can be referred to as vital processes in this sense.¹⁸



Monkey typing on a typewriter



Hamlet seeing his father's ghost

We are beginning to realize with the Egyptians and the Jews that when we speak of everything, we must consider what we are not aware of, along with what we are aware of. We recognize in that principle the overwhelming rate of quantity. What we are not aware of is part of the calculation which must be used; but we've never used it before. We've just heard that anything you haven't experienced doesn't exist. Gertrude doesn't see the ghost of the King standing there. Hamlet does, yet she says she sees nothing at all; yet all that is I see."¹⁹ Granted, she doesn't see anything, but she has no right to add, "but all that is I see": if I don't see it, it is not there, because I see everything that is there. How does one know if someone else is seeing something else? The Egyptian word for everything is ntt ÎAwtt: everything I know and everything I don't know. Everything we are aware of and everything we are not aware of makes up everything. So you can't say "everything," just "everything I happen to know."

Calder says in the Restless Earth, "For all who inhabit this planet, the earth sciences now supply a new enlightenment, tantamount to a rediscovery of the earth."²⁰ And this new knowledge has all come forth since the mid-1960s, as a result of which "suddenly geology makes sense."²¹ Then what did geology make all these other years I have been at the BYU? The mid-1960s is not so far away. Calder says it is like the discovery of a new world,²² something completely different. And finally we are told by the brain specialists that "in our own time, the first attempts at . . . using computers for the translation of foreign language texts, have been an expensive failure."²³ Noam Chomsky played an important part in

stopping the computer people and their patrons from wasting more effort on this hopeless task. (I used to share an office with a professor who had worked on a Russian translating machine, way back in the 1940s. He took over the project at Georgetown University, where he worked at it for thirty years and then gave it up. It just wouldn't go. Yet they were all enthusiastic: "There is no problem we cannot solve. The computer is going to solve everything for us." This hope has now gone down the drain.) We are now assured that it is only a working assumption that the mind and the brain are inseparable. Ralph Sperry, who has been doing a lot with this, says, "The brain . . . transcend[s] . . . the properties of its cells."²⁴ There is something up and above and beyond the brain, and this is what is having a very important influence today. And now the chaos factor makes our uncertainty certain!

The nuclear physicists, speaking on the same subject, say, "Between the electrical signals coming through the eye to the brain and our reaction to a tree in blossom on a fresh spring day, there is a vast gap which physics shows no signs of ever being able to bridge . . . It may even be that whatever it is that is peculiar to life and particular to thought lies outside the scope of physical concepts."²⁵ I was also surprised to learn that in the field of the relationship of the particles within the nucleus (nuclear physics), no problem is exactly soluble: "With the present mathematical techniques, we have no idea of how to cope with this problem."²⁶ In mathematics there is no sign that we will ever be able to solve many of these problems. We just do it by approximations—that is as near as we can get to solving them.

Two things stand out in all this. First is the awareness of an organizing, ordering force in the universe that is very active and runs counter to all we know of the laws of science. The second is the awareness of great gaps in our knowledge that may account for our failure to discover the source of that force. This takes us directly to the subject of the temple—though you would never have guessed this from what I have said so far.

We talk a lot about the second law, but what about the first law—the law about the conservation of energy,²⁷ which is the conservation of mass and matter, in all their forms. It is important too. With that law, the Latter-day Saints have never had any quarrel. We have always believed it. By contrast, the Christian world has its doctrine of creation out of nothing—*creatio ex nihilo*. Recently David Winston and Jonathan Goldstein, writing on Jewish Hellenistic thought, have shown at great length that the idea of creation out of nothing was totally unknown to the Christian or the Jewish Doctors before the fourth century A.D.²⁸ It had no place in their doctrines. It was always taught in the early church, as the Jews teach yet, that the world was organized out of matter that was already there. This Mormon teaching was greatly offensive to the standard Christian doctrine that God created the world out of nothing. We Latter-day Saints don't quarrel with the first law of conservation of energy.



The Milkyway

Surprisingly, we also accept the second law. In the course of nature, that law takes its relentless course. Jacob says, "This corruption [could not] put on incorruption" (2 Nephi 9:7; cf. Mosiah 16:10). There is no chance of it. As he put it, corruption is a one-way process that is irreversible: "This corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to endless duration" (2 Nephi 9:7). It could not be reversed. Incorruption can put on corruption—something can decay and break down, particles breaking down into smaller and lighter particles—but you can never reverse the process. Nevertheless, something is making it reverse. (This is what the scientists talk about. It is baffling everybody. In fact, Henry Eyring, at the University of Utah, talked about it years ago. The theory is that the universe is exploding, because it was wound up tight. But what wound it up? You have to start