THE ABCs OF ART

THE ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Compiled, organized, and added to by M.C. Gillis
Dedication
This is dedicated to all learners & teachers of art.

Introduction
The elements & principles of art, also known as the elements & principles of design, open our eyes to the beauty that is in us & all around us. The elements & principles of art are the building blocks of understanding & creating art that expresses and moves us. That is the reason I call them the ABCs of Art. Just as the letters of any alphabet are fundamental to understanding that language, the elements & principles of art are fundamental to understanding the language of art.
# The ABCs of Art

The Elements & Principles of Design/Art

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication &amp; Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated Elements of Art</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Art Poem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Line</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape &amp; Form</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color-Simple</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color-Warm &amp; Cool</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color-Advanced Theory</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-Draw Big/Fill Space Poster</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated Principles of Art</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern Poem Poster</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety-Detail Poster</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm &amp; Movement</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Contact artist, mce@expandingheart.com, to give feedback.

Elements of Art

Line

Shape & Form

Circle  Triangle  Square  Rectangle  Oval  Semi-circle  Trapezoid

Free Form  Sphere  Pyramid  Cube  Cylinder  Leaf

Color

WARM COLORS  Neutral  Tints  Shades

Cool Colors

Texture

Smooth  Rough  Hard  Soft Bumpy  Jogged  Woven

Space

Smaller in the Distance  Filled the Whole Paper  Shows Perspective  Overlapping Shapes

Value

Range of Light to Dark  Contrast = Light Against Dark
Line, shape and color
Are elements of art.
Texture, space and value
That’s where I start.
When I use
What I know,
As an artist,
I will grow.
Line, shape, color
Texture, space and value...
The ABCs of art.
LINE
(línea)

- LONG (largo)
- SHORT (corta)
- CURVED (curva)
- HORIZONTAL (horizontal)
- VERTICAL (vertical)
- PERPENDICULAR (perpendicular)
- PARALLEL (paralelas)

- BROKEN (quebrado)
- THICK (grueso)
- THIN (delgado)
- DOTTED (línea de puntos)
- WAVY/CURLY (ondulado)
- VERTICAL (vertical)
- STRAIGHT (derecho)
- VARIED (variadas)

- ZIG-ZAG (zig-zag)
- JAGGED (jagged)
- TAPERED (termina en punta conico)
- SPIRAL (espiral)

Contact artist, mo@expandingheart.com, to give feedback.
LINE

Contour (Outline)

= The outer edge/line of an image, object or shape.

Lines can be used to show movement....

Lines can be used to show mood.

Here are more words to describe lines.

lazy
energetic
bold
light
broken
flexible
Shy
dark
continuous
rigid
SHAPE AND FORM
(forma y forma)

GEOMETRIC (geometrica)
- Sphere (esfera)
- Pyramid (pyramide)
- Cube (cubo)
- Circle (círculo)
- Triangle (triángulo)
- Square (cuadrado)
- Rectangle (rectángulo)
- Oval (ovalo)
- Cylinder
- Trapezoid (trapezoide)
- Diamond (diamante)
- Star (estrella)
- Pentagon (pentágono)
- Heart (corazón)
- Semi-circle (medio-círculo)
- Hexagon (hexágono)
- Octagon (octágono)
- Moon (luna)

ORGANIC/FREE FORM/NATURAL
(órganico) (forma libre) (natural)
- Cloud (nube)
- Leaf (hoja)

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COLOR SCHEMES (PLANS)

are ways I can use color to improve my artwork.

PRIMARY  
RAINBOW

SECONDARY  
WARM  
COOL

COMPLIMENTARY  
NEUTRAL

This is a color wheel, a simple one.

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COLOR THEORY

Color is an element of art.

Everytime I use color, I am creating a color scheme.

This is a color wheel.

The most common color schemes are listed below.

Primary....  I can make all the other colors by mixing different amounts of primary colors
Secondary.... I can mix two primary colors to make a secondary color.
Warm.... Yellow and all the colors with red and orange tones are warm.
Cool.... Violet and all the colors with blue and green tones are cool.
Complimentary.... {Opposites on the color wheel are complimentary.}
Analogous.... Colors that are close neighbors on the color wheel are analogous.
Rainbow... Using primary and secondary colors placed in order from the color wheel. I can make a rainbow

Intermediate... is a color term I need to know. It is the color in between the primary and secondary colors on the color wheel.
TEXTURE

SMOOTH

ROUGH

HARD

SOFT

WOVEN

BUMPY/LUMPY

JAGGED/IRREGULAR

RIDGED
SPACE

How shapes are arranged in an art work creates a sense of space. Consider the possible ways shown below to create space.

Draw Big.
Fill the whole paper.
Extend lines off paper.

Placement in relation to horizon
Smaller in distance
Larger closer up
Lighter farther away

Overlapping

Foreground (near space)
Midground (middle space)
Background (far space)

Positive Space (the subject or objects in the work of art, not the space around them)
Negative Space (The empty space around the subject or objects)
VALUE
Is the range of light to dark.

VALUE CHANGES WITH BLACK + WHITE
- Ink shading with lines
- Pencil shading with cross-hatching

VALUE CHANGES WITH COLOR
- Tinting with color to a little bit of color, add increasing amounts of white to change the value.
- Shading with color to a light or medium color, add black or a dark color, a little at a time to change the value.

SHADING APPLIED TO OBJECTS:
- Vase
- Cube
- Cylinder
- House
- Flower
- Deer

CONTRAST = TO SHOW UNLIKENESS (SOMETHING DIFFERENT, OPPOSITE, OR DISSIMILAR)
- Light against dark (black + white)
- Light against dark (color)
- Pattern against no pattern (black + white)
- Pattern against no pattern (color)
- Detailed against undetailed space

I will look for value and contrast, both natural and man-made, in my environment.

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Principles of Art

Pattern  Repetition of the elements of art

Emphasis  Focus - Main idea What “grabs” your attention

Variety  An assortment of lines, shapes, colors and other elements of art in the art work

Unity  How the elements work together, fit together, so the art work looks complete

Balance  
- Symmetrical
  - same design on both sides of a midline.
- Asymmetrical
  - A balance that is not even
- Radial

Rhythm & Movement  A regular repetition of the elements of art to create a sense of rhythm and/or movement

Proportion  How parts fit together to make a whole - Size relations (Includes scale, monumental, miniature, exaggeration...)

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PATTERN
IS THE REPITITION OF THE ELEMENTS OF ART OR ANYTHING ELSE.

PATTERNS OF LINES
Non-objective Design
Portrait
Landscape
Leopard
City

PATTERNS OF SHAPES
Rainbow
Flower
Butterfly
Clothing
Wall Paper

PATTERNS OF COLOR
Birds flying in formation are a pattern.
Cars stopped in traffic makes a pattern.

PATTERN IS EVERYWHERE!

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Patterns are everywhere. Many of our habits are patterns.

Identify the patterns on this page.

Try making patterns with your own ideas
or use some of the images below.

Use the images above to create your own patterns.
EMPHASIS

FOCUS - MAIN IDEA - WHAT “GRABS” MY ATTENTION?

- It can be to make a point or for a message.
- A non-objective design.
- A house that stands out from the rest.
- Big lettering draws our focus.

- Loud noise draws our attention.
- Peace!!!
- Shiny, bright things like jewelry attract our attention.

A beautiful flower growing in a grey, dismal setting.

The light at the end of a tunnel.

A flower with more detail in the center draws our eyes to the center.
VARIETY
IS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF THINGS.

VARIETY SHOWS CONTRAST.
THERE IS NO END TO THE VARIETY IN NATURE AND MAN-MADE THINGS.

A variety of people
A variety of insects

A variety of pens
A variety of flowers

A variety of emotions
A variety of buildings

People can have a variety of ideas about the same thing.

I will notice the limitless variety all around me.
Add detail.

Using a variety of elements and principles of design adds detail and interest to a work of art.
UNITY

UNITY SHOWS WHAT THINGS HAVE IN COMMON, HOW THEY ARE ALIKE.

UNITY IS THE THING THAT JOINS THE PARTS TOGETHER.

SAMENESS... ONENESS...

Uniforms show we are joined as a team.

In art, the elements work together, fit together, in the artwork so it looks complete (some art looks more unified than other art).

- Tints (white added), Colors unite.
- Repetition of line, shape or color can unify an image.
- Analogous colors (neighbors on the color wheel)
- Shapes unify.
- Line unites.
- Black line unites.

Unifrom-united by size and shape
Not uniform-a variety of size and shape
When people join hands and unite, they become stronger.

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**Balance**

**Symmetrical**
I create symmetrical balance when I evenly place images on both sides of a mid-line.

**Asymmetrical**
I create asymmetrical balance when I balance by size and weight and variety of images, but not evenly from the mid-line.

**Radial**
I create radial balance when I repeat shapes and images evenly from the center outward.
RHYTHM AND MOVEMENT

A regular repetition of the elements of art can create a sense of movement/rhythm.

Trees blowing in the wind...

Non-objective design...

The day has a rhythm to it. Sunrise... sunset... Sunrise... sunset...

People marching...

The city has a rhythm.

Rhythm is all around us.

Active lines create a sense of movement.

Diagonal lines create a sense of motion.

The ticking of a clock is a rhythm.
Proportion is the size relationship between two or more objects.
It can be how the parts fit together to make a whole.

A change in proportion can change the way we look at things.
Accurate proportions are used more when creating realistic images.
Distorted proportions are used more for cartoons and imaginary images.

I approximate and think about volume when I work with proportions.
It’s math. I mentally measure size, shape, mass, weight and volume.