



## Elements of Art in the Rahr-West Art Museum Collection

---

In this activity students will learn about the elements of art and use them to describe works of art from the Rahr-West Art Museum's collection.

### Target Grade Level

K-5

### Objective

- Students will use the elements of art to describe a work of art.
- Students will use the elements of art to analyze works of art.
- Students will identify how artists use the elements of art in developing compositions

### Wisconsin Standards Addressed

- A.A.Pr.1.e Develop Meaning – Explore and develop meaning by viewing personal historical and contemporary art.
- A.A. Pr.2.e Communicate – Explain artwork through verbal and/or written descriptions using art and design vocabulary.
- A.A.Pr.3.2 Share – Share artwork through a presentation or exhibit.
- A.A.Pr.4i Develop Meaning – Explore and make connections through comparison of artwork from personal, historical, and contemporary artists.

- A.A.Pr.5i Communicate – Using art and design vocabulary communicate ideas and artistic process through verbal and written descriptions.
- A.A.Pr.6i Share – Create share and exhibit pieces from an ongoing portfolio.

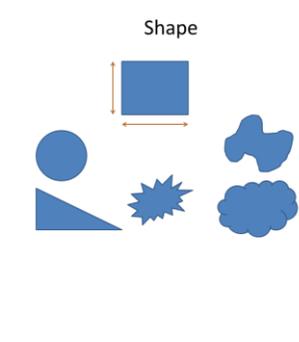
## Materials

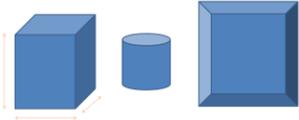
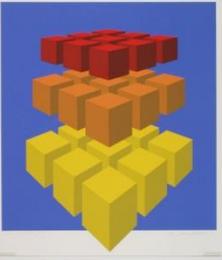
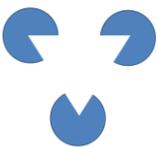
- Slideshow of images or virtual exhibit.
- Additional works of art or reproductions

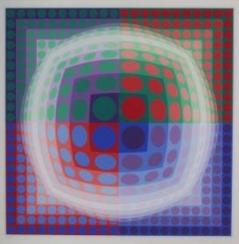
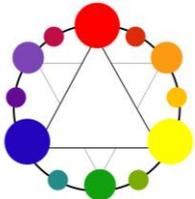
## Discussion Outline

This discussion outline aligns with the Elements of Art Slideshow which can be found on the Rahr-West's Educational Resources page.

 <p>The Elements of Art Rahr-West Art Museum The Art Experience</p>	<p>In this activity we will be looking closely at art to dissect it into its various parts. Artist use basic structures called elements of art to create interesting and effective pictures or compositions. Understanding how artists use the elements of art will help you to think critically about what you see and be able to describe is well. We will look at several works of art together to talk about the elements of art and then I will give you an activity to do on your own or in pairs and we will share your findings with the group.</p>
 <p>Line</p>	<p>A line can be described as a point that moves through space, or a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal; straight or curved; thick or thin.</p> <p>Artists use lines to express emotion, to imply movement or direction, and to move the eye around the canvas or composition.</p>
	<p>Frank Stella, <i>Hark</i>, Mixed Media, 1988, Gift of Mrs. John D. West, 88.10.1</p> <p>Look closely to see how Frank Stella used lines in various ways in his mixed-media work <i>Hark</i>.</p> <p>Use your fingers to trace the lines in the air. How did he use line to create shapes, define space, and create pattern?</p> <p>What types of lines to you see (curved, straight, jagged, repeated...)</p> <p>How do the lines in this work draw your eye around the canvas?</p>

	<p>Matthew Carone, <i>In Soodokulchur Land</i>, Oil, 1989, Gift of Mrs. John D. West, 89.3.4</p> <p>How are the lines in Matthew Carone's work similar to or different from the lines in Frank Stella work? Do they accomplish the same things?</p>
	<p>Harold Altman, <i>Jardin du Luxenbouorg II</i>, lithograph, 1980, Gift of Mrs. John D. West, 82.197.1</p> <p>Harold Altman's works are representational, that is they depict an identifiable subject rather than being completely abstract like the previous two works. We will talk about both representational and abstract art in this activity. How does Altman use lines? (Note the walking paths and the lines of the tree trunks and branches)</p>
	<p>A shape is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles, or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat and can express length and width. They are two-dimensional – see how the square can be measured up and down and then across? That tells you it can be measured in two dimensions, thus it is a two dimensional shape.</p> <p>What shapes are made up of just one closed line? How many lines make up the other shapes?</p>
	<p>Ilya Bolotowski, <i>Golden Tondo</i>, Acrylic, 1975, 82.203, Gift of the Grace Borgenicht Gallery</p> <p>What shapes are defined by the bold lines in this work? What shape is the canvas?</p> <p>Shapes that are defined by geometry with precise angles and rule are called geometric shapes. These include circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles.</p>
	<p>Joan Miro, <i>La Pierre Philosophale</i>, Aquatint, 1975, 85.13, gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What kind of lines did Miro use to define the shapes in this work? (Straight or Curvy? Thick or thin?) Shapes with irregular edges not defined by geometry are called organic shapes. A lot of the time these are shapes that can be found in nature, like the shape of a mountain or a handprint</p>

	<p>Stuart Davis, <i>Downtown Street</i>, Oil, 1931, 75.19.3, Purchase of the Little Gallery, Inc.</p> <p>This work is composed of lots of shapes and lines. What organic shapes do you see? What geometric shapes do you see?</p> <p>Does this work give you a feeling or express mood? How do the lines and shapes do this?</p>
<p>Form</p> 	<p>Forms are three-dimensional shapes expressing length, width, and depth. Three dimensional means that they can be measured in three direction look at the box and see how you can measure it up and down, across, and from front to back – these measurements are known as width, length and depth. Balls, cylinders, boxes, and pyramids are forms.</p> <p>In paintings and drawings, three dimensional forms are implied, that is, they aren't real, but are an illusion created by the artist. In three dimensional work, like sculpture, forms really are three dimensional.</p>
	<p>Marko Spalatin, <i>Cubes Separated III</i>, serigraph, 1968, 74.13.10, Museum purchase</p> <p>What forms do you see? What shapes are the forms made up of?</p>
	<p>Herbert Davidson, <i>Paper Peacock</i>, Oil, 1980, 83.27, Gift of Mrs. John D. West.</p> <p>What forms do you see here?</p>
	<p>John Wilde, <i>Winter Squash</i>, Oil, 1980, 82.197.39, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What kind of forms do you see here? How does the artist make them look three dimensional?</p>
<p>Space</p> 	<p>Space is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. In this image the shape of the triangle is made from the negative space between the circles.</p> <p>Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art, when we create the feeling or illusion of</p>

	<p>depth, we call it space.</p>
	<p>Victor Vasarely, <i>Untitled</i>, Serigraph, n.d., 91.4.50, Mark and Helen Hooper Collection</p> <p>How does Victor Vasarely give us the feeling of depth in this image? (changing the size of the shapes, changing the background colors, etc.) Do you think the circle is coming towards you or moving away? Why?</p>
	<p>Salvador Dali, <i>Carmen, Act II/ Don Jose's Flower Song</i>, lithograph, 1968, 74.12.1, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dorsky Collection</p> <p>Describe the negative spaces you see in this work. How does Dali create the illusion of depth in this work? (horizon line, size of objects, etc.)</p>
<p>Color</p> 	<p>Color is light reflected off of objects. This color wheel shows the three primary colors: red, blue, and yellow; the secondary colors that you get when the primaries are mixed in equal amount: orange, green, and purple; and the tertiary colors, which are made by mixing the secondary colors with the primary next to it on the color wheel.</p> <p>Color has three main characteristics. Hue is the name of the color, like red, green or blue. Value is how light or dark a color is. And intensity is a bright or dull a color is.</p> <p>Complimentary colors are located directly across from each other on the color wheel. Complementary pairs contrast because they share no common colors. So when you put orange next to blue, for examples, the colors kind of pulsate because they are discordant.</p>
	<p>Paul Jenkins, <i>Phenomena, Saturn Ascent</i>, Acrylic, 1974, 75.4, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What colors do you see in this painting? Can you identify any secondary colors? (purple and yellow; blue and orange) What colors pop out at you the most and why?</p>
	<p>Charles Dix, <i>Shore of Night</i>, acrylic, 1976, 91.5.25, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What colors do you see here?</p>

<p>Value</p> 	<p>Value is how light or dark a color is. Artists use value to imply form and depth, and create to contrast.</p>
	<p>Andrew Wyeth, <i>Back Way</i>, Watercolor, 1982, 83.6, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What colors do you see in this watercolor? What shapes and objects are defined by the light value? What shapes and objects are defined by the dark values?</p>
	<p>Patrick Heron, <i>January</i>, Serigraph, 83.10.13, 1973, Gift of the Mark and Helen Hooper Foundation</p> <p>What colors do you see that are opposites on the color wheel? Where do you see contrast in intensity and value? What happens when the colors are close to each other on the color wheel and close to each other in value?</p>
<p>Texture</p> 	<p>Texture is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Texture can be rough or smooth, soft or hard.</p> <p>Texture can be real (like a fuzzy stuffed toy), created (like rough brushwork), or implied (through the use of shading or repetition of lines and shapes).</p>
	<p>Daniel Ridgway Knight, <i>The Harvest</i>, Oil, 1883, 83.20, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>Notice the treatment of the different surfaces. How does the way Knight treated the cloth, plants, skin, and porcelain jug differ? What is the result?</p>
	<p>Charles Munday, <i>Caddy 1950</i>, watercolor, 1979, 79.93, Gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What texture is implied here by the artist? How do you think the car would feel? How do you think the paper that the watercolor was applied to actually feels?</p>

	<p>Louise Nevelson, <i>Composition</i>, serigraph/photography, 196, 74.12.28, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dorsky</p> <p>This work has a very flat, smooth actual texture. But the artist implied the texture of the wood through changes in value.</p>
	<p>Ido Ozonoff, <i>Target</i>, 89.11.7 Ido Ozonoff, <i>Target</i>, Oil/Collage, n.d., 89.11.7, gift of Mrs. John D. West</p> <p>What are the different textures that you see in this image? Which do you think are real and which do you think are implied?</p>
	<p>Find a work in the gallery (or in the slideshow or from another source) that you think is a good example of two of the elements of art. Make a quick drawing of the work and label it with how the artist is using those elements of art. Be ready to share with the larger group.</p>

## Extensions

- Listen to music and make lines that evoke the emotion of the music.
- Create a picture using only geometric, or only organic, shapes.
- Mix paints or clay to create a color wheel.
- Using a pencil, create emulate different textures by using stippling, cross catching, and smearing of the graphite.