

## Glossary of Art Terms

Other glossaries are available for specific mediums.

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**abstract art** Art that departs significantly from natural appearances. Forms are modified or changed to varying degrees in order to emphasize certain qualities or content. Recognizable references to original appearances may be slight. The term is also used to describe art that is *nonrepresentational*.

**Abstract Expressionism** An art movement, primarily in painting, that originated in the United States in the 1940s and remained strong through the 1950s. Artists working in many different styles emphasized spontaneous personal expression in large paintings that are *abstract* or *nonrepresentational*. One type of Abstract Expressionism is called *action painting*. See also *expressionism*.

**academic art** Art governed by rules, especially art sanctioned by an official institution, academy, or school. Originally applied to art that conformed to standards established by the French Academy regarding composition, drawing, and color usage. The term has come to mean conservative and lacking in originality.

**academy** An institution of artists and scholars, originally formed during the Renaissance to free artists from control by guilds and to elevate them from artisan to professional status. In an academy, art is taught as a *humanist* discipline along with other disciplines of the liberal arts.

**achromatic** Having no color or *hue*; without identifiable hue. Most blacks, whites, grays, and browns are achromatic.

**acrylic (acrylic resin)** A clear plastic used as a *binder* in paint and as a casting material in sculpture.

**action painting** A style of *nonrepresentational* painting that relies on the physical movement of the artist in using such gestural techniques as vigorous brushwork, dripping, and pouring. Dynamism is often created through the interlaced directions of the paint. A subcategory of *Abstract Expressionism*.

**additive sculpture** Sculptural form produced by combining or building up material from a core or *armature*. Modeling in clay and welding steel are additive processes.

**advancing colors** Colors that appear to come towards you (warm colors).

**aesthetic** Relating to the sense of the beautiful and to heightened sensory perception in general.

**aesthetics** The study and philosophy of the quality and nature of sensory responses related to, but not limited by, the concept of beauty.

**afterimage** The visual impression that remains after the initial stimulus is removed. Staring at a single intense *hue* may cause the cones, or color receptors, of the eye to become so fatigued that they perceive only the complement of the original hue when it has been removed.

**airbrush** A small-scale paint sprayer that allows the artist to control a fine mist of paint.

**analogous colors** Closely related *hues*, especially those in which we can see a common hue; hues that are neighbors on the color wheel, such as blue, blue-green, and green.

**aperture** In photography, the *camera lens* opening and its relative diameter which is measured in f-stops, such as f/8, f/5.6, etc. The aperture size controls how much light passes through the lens to the film plane (often expressed as a fraction or ratio 1:1.8). As the number increases, the size of the aperture decreases, thereby reducing the amount of light passing through the *lens* and striking the film.

**applied art** Art in which aesthetic values are used in the design or decoration of utilitarian objects.

**aquatint** An *intaglio* printmaking process in which value areas rather than lines are etched on the printing plate. Powdered resin is sprinkled on the plate and heated until it adheres. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath. The acid bites around the resin particles, creating a rough surface that holds ink. Also, a *print* made using this process.

**arabesque** Ornament or surface decoration with intricate curves and flowing lines based on plant forms.

**arcade** A series of *arches* supported by columns or piers. Also, a covered passageway between two series of arches or between a series of arches and a wall.

**arch** A curved structure designed to span an opening, usually made of stone or other masonry. Roman arches are semicircular; Islamic and Gothic arches come to a point at the top.

**armature** A rigid framework serving as a supporting inner core for clay or other soft sculpting material.

**Art Nouveau** A style that originated in the late 1880s, based on the sinuous curves of plant forms, used primarily in architectural detailing and the applied arts.

**assemblage** Sculpture using preexisting, sometimes “found” objects that may or may not contribute their original identities to the total content of the work.

**asymmetrical** Without *symmetry*.

**automatism** Automatic or unconscious action. Employed by *Surrealist* writers and artists to allow unconscious ideas and feelings to be expressed.

**avant-garde** French for “advance guard” or “vanguard.” Those considered the leaders (and often regarded as radicals) in the invention and application of new concepts in a given field.

**axis** An implied straight line in the center of a form along its dominant direction.

**background** The area within a composition that appears further away from the viewer; objects appear smaller and with less detail.

**balance** An arrangement of parts achieving a state of equilibrium between opposing forces or influences. Major types are symmetrical and *asymmetrical*. See *symmetry*.

**Baroque** The seventeenth-century period in Europe characterized in the visual arts by dramatic light and shade, turbulent composition, and exaggerated emotional expression.

**Bauhaus** German art school in existence from 1919 to 1933, best known for its influence on design, leadership in art education, and a radically innovative philosophy of applying design principles to machine technology and mass production.

**beam** The horizontal stone or timber placed across an architectural space to take the weight of the roof or wall above; also called a lintel.

**binder** The medium that holds pigment particles together in paint; for example, linseed oil or acrylic polymer.

**buttress** A *support*, usually exterior, for a *wall*, *arch*, or *vault*, that opposes the lateral forces of these structures. A flying buttress consists of a strut or segment of an arch carrying the thrust of a vault to a vertical pier positioned away from the main portion of the building. An important element in *Gothic* cathedrals.

**Byzantine art** Styles of painting, design, and architecture developed from the fifth century A.D. in the Byzantine Empire of Eastern Europe. Characterized in architecture by round *arches*, large *domes*, and extensive use of *mosaic*; characterized in painting by formal design, *frontal* and *stylized* figures, and a rich use of color, especially gold, in generally religious subject matter.

**calligraphy** The art of beautiful writing. Broadly, a flowing use of line, often varying from thick to thin.

**camera obscura** A dark room (or box) with a small hole in one side, through which an inverted image of the view outside is projected onto the opposite wall, screen, or mirror. The image is then traced. This forerunner of the modern camera was a tool for recording an optically accurate image.

**cantilever** A beam or slab projecting a substantial distance beyond its supporting post or wall; a projection supported at only one end.

**canvas** Canvas is a plain woven cloth of natural fibers (typically linen or cotton) usually stretched tightly over a wooden frame called a stretcher.

**capital** In architecture, the top part, capstone, or head of a column or pillar.

**caricature** A representation in which the subject's distinctive features are exaggerated.

**cartoon** 1. A humorous or satirical drawing. 2. A drawing completed as a full-scale working drawing, usually for a *fresco* painting, *mural*, or tapestry.

**carving** A *subtractive* process in which a sculpture is formed by removing material from a block or mass of wood, stone, or other material, using sharpened tools.

**casein** A white, tasteless, odorless milk protein used in making paint as well as plastics, adhesives, and foods.

**casting** A process that involves pouring liquid material such as molten metal, clay, wax, or plaster into a mold. When the liquid hardens, the mold is removed, leaving a form in the shape of the mold.

**ceramic** Objects made of clay hardened into a relatively permanent material by firing. Also, the process of making such objects.

**charcoal** Used for drawing and for preliminary sketching on primed canvas for oil painting. Natural vine charcoal is very soft and can be easily rubbed off with a soft rag. Natural willow charcoal is harder than vine charcoal and gives a darker line. Compressed charcoal is available in several forms. You can choose from stick form, wood-encased pencils, and peel-as-you-go paper wrapped pencils. These charcoal formulations range from extra soft to hard.

**chiaroscuro** Italian for "light-dark." Chiaroscuro is defined as a bold contrast between both light and dark. The gradations of light and dark *values in two-dimensional* imagery; especially the illusion of rounded, three-dimensional form created through gradations of light and shade rather than line. Highly developed by *Renaissance* painters.

**chroma** The purity or degree of saturation of a color; relative absence of white or gray in a color. See *intensity*.

**cinematography** The art and technique of making motion pictures, especially the work done by motion picture camera operators.

**classical** 1. The art of ancient Greece and Rome. More specifically, Classical refers to the style of Greek art that flourished during the fifth century B.C. 2. Any art based on a clear, rational, and regular structure, emphasizing horizontal and vertical directions, and organizing its parts with special emphasis on balance and proportion. The term classic is also used to indicate recognized excellence.

**closed form** A self-contained or explicitly limited form; having a resolved balance of tensions, a sense of calm completeness implying a totality within itself.

**collage** (N) From the French *coller*, to glue. A work made by gluing materials such as paper scraps, photographs, and cloth on to a flat surface. (V) To make a collage.

**colonnade** A row of columns usually spanned or connected by *beams (lintels)*.

**color field painting** A movement that grew out of *Abstract Expressionism*, in which large stained or painted areas or “fields of color” evoke aesthetic and emotional responses.

**color wheel** A circular arrangement of contiguous spectral *hues* used in some color systems. Also called a color circle.

**complementary colors** Two *hues* directly opposite one another on a *color wheel* (for example, red and green, yellow and purple) which, when mixed together in proper proportions, produce a neutral gray. These color combinations create the strongest possible contrast of color, and when placed close together, intensify the appearance of the other. The true complement of a color can be seen in its *afterimage*.

**composition** The bringing together of parts or elements to form a whole; the structure, organization, or total form of a work of art. The “art” of arranging the elements and/or color of an artwork in a manner that pleases the eye. See also *design*.

**Conceptual art** An art form in which the originating idea and the process by which it is presented take precedence over a tangible product. Conceptual works are sometimes produced in visible form, but they often exist only as descriptions of mental concepts or ideas. This trend developed in the late 1960s, in part as a way to avoid the commercialization of art.

**content** Meaning or message contained and communicated by a work of art, including its emotional, intellectual, symbolic, thematic, and narrative connotations.

**contour** The edge or apparent line that separates one area or mass from another; a line following a surface drawn to suggest volume.

**contrapposto** Italian for “counterpoise.” The counterpositioning of parts of the human figure about a central vertical axis, as when the weight is placed on one foot, causing the hip and shoulder lines to counterbalance each other, often in a graceful S-curve.

**cool colors** Colors whose relative visual temperatures make them seem cool. Cool colors generally include green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, and violet. The quality of warmth or coolness is relative to adjacent hues. See also *warm colors*.

**crosshatch** To use fine overlapping lines of color or pencil to achieve texture, value, or shading. Used in drawing in pencil, chalk, pen and ink; and engraving, etching, and other printmaking techniques.

**Cubism** The most influential style of the twentieth century, developed in Paris by Picasso and Braque, beginning in 1907. The early mature phase of the style, called Analytical Cubism, lasted from 1909 through 1911. Cubism is based on the simultaneous presentation of multiple views, disintegration, and the geometric reconstruction of objects in flattened, ambiguous pictorial space; figure and ground merge into one interwoven surface of shifting planes. Color is limited to *neutrals*. By 1912 the more decorative phase called Synthetic (or Collage) Cubism, began to appear; it was characterized by fewer, more solid forms, conceptual rather than observed subject matter, and richer color and texture.

**curvilinear** Formed or characterized by curving lines or edges.

**Dada** A movement in art and literature, founded in Switzerland in the early twentieth century, which ridiculed contemporary culture and conventional art. The Dadaists shared an antimilitaristic and antiaesthetic attitude, generated in part by the horrors of World War I and in part by a rejection of accepted canons of morality and taste. The anarchic spirit of Dada can be seen in the works of Duchamp, Man Ray, Hoch, Miro, and Picasso. Many Dadaists later explored *Surrealism*.

**depth of field** The area of sharp focus in a photograph. Depth of field becomes greater as the f-stop number is increased.

**design** Both the process and the result of structuring the elements of visual form; composition.

**De Stijl** Dutch for "the style," a purist art movement begun in the Netherlands during World War I by Mondrian and others. It involved painters, sculptors, designers, and architects whose works and ideas were expressed in *De Stijl* magazine. De Stijl was aimed at creating a universal language of form that would be independent of individual emotion. Visual form was pared down to primary colors, plus black and white, and rectangular shapes. The movement was influential primarily in architecture.

**drawing** (V) The act of marking lines on a surface and (N) the product of such action. Includes pencil, charcoal, pen and ink, conte crayon, markers, silverpoint, and other graphic media on paper.

**drypoint** An *intaglio* printmaking process in which lines are scratched directly into a metal plate with a steel needle. Also, the resulting *print*.

**earth art; earthworks** Sculptural forms of earth, rocks, or sometimes plants, often on a vast scale and in remote locations. Some are deliberately impermanent.

**easel** A stand or resting place for working on or displaying a painting.

**eclecticism** The practice of selecting or borrowing from earlier styles and combining the borrowed elements.

**edition** In printmaking, the total number of *prints* made and approved by an artist, usually numbered consecutively. Also, a limited number of multiple originals of a single design in any medium.

**elevation** In architecture, a scale drawing of any vertical side of a given structure.

**encaustic** A painting medium in which *pigment is* suspended in a *binder* of hot wax.

**engraving** An *intaglio* printmaking process in which grooves are cut into a metal or wood surface with a sharp cutting tool called a burin or graver. Also, the resulting *print*.

**entasis** In *classical* architecture, the slight swelling or bulge in the center of a column, which corrects the illusion of concave tapering produced by parallel straight lines.

**etching** An *intaglio* printmaking process in which a metal plate is first coated with acid-resistant wax, then scratched to expose the metal to the bite of nitric acid where lines are desired. Also, the resulting *print*.

**expressionism** The broad term that describes emotional art, most often boldly executed and making free use of distortion and symbolic or invented color. More specifically, Expressionism refers to individual and group styles originating in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See also *Abstract Expressionism*.

**eye level** The height of the viewer's eyes above the ground plane.

**facade** In architecture, a term used to refer to the front exterior of a building. Also, other exterior sides when they are emphasized.

**Fauvism** A style of painting introduced in Paris in the early twentieth century characterized by areas of bright, contrasting color and simplified shapes. The name *les Fauves* is French for "the wild beasts."

**figure** 1. Separate shape(s) distinguishable from a *background* or *ground*. 2. A human or animal form.

**fine art** Art created for purely *aesthetic* expression, communication, or contemplation. Painting and sculpture are the best known of the fine arts.

**folk art** Art of people who have had no formal, academic training, but whose works are part of an established tradition of style and craftsmanship.

**foreground** The part in a scene or artwork that seems closest to you. Objects appear larger and more detailed.

**foreshortening** The technique of representing a *three-dimensional* image in two dimensions using the laws of *perspective*.

**form** In the broadest sense, the total physical characteristics of an object, event, or situation. Three-dimensional objects (cone, cube, cylinder, sphere).

**formalist** Having an emphasis on highly structured visual relationships rather than on subject matter or nonvisual content.

**format** The shape or proportions of a *picture plane*.

**found object** (*Objet Trouvi*) A natural or manufactured object that is "found" by the artist and displayed as art or combined with other elements in a work of art. Found objects have gained increasing importance in art over the course of the twentieth century, with many art movements finding new freedoms of expression which had been stifled by the more stringent definitions of art previously used.

**fresco** A painting technique in which *pigments* suspended in water are applied to a damp lime-plaster surface. The pigments dry to become part of the plaster wall or surface.

**frontal** An adjective describing an object that faces the viewer directly, rather than being set at an angle or *foreshortened*.

**Futurism** A group movement that originated in Italy in 1909. One of several movements to grow out of *Cubism*. Futurists added implied motion to the shifting planes and multiple observation points of the Cubists; they celebrated natural as well as mechanical motion and speed. Their glorification of danger, war, and the machine age was in keeping with the martial spirit developing in Italy at the time.

**geodesic** A geometric form basic to structures using short sections of lightweight material joined into interlocking polygons. Also a structural system developed by R. Buckminster Fuller to create *domes* using the above principle.

**genre** A category of artistic work marked by a particular specified form, technique, or content.

**genre painting** The depiction of common, everyday life in art, as opposed to religious or portrait painting for example.

**gesso** Ground plaster, chalk or marble mixed with glue or *acrylic medium*, generally white. It provides an absorbent surface for oil, acrylic, and tempera painting. Gesso can also be built up or molded into *relief* designs, or carved.

**glaze** In *ceramics*, a vitreous or glassy coating applied to seal and decorate surfaces. Glaze may be colored, transparent, or opaque. In oil painting, a thin transparent or translucent layer brushed over another layer of paint, allowing the first layer to show through but altering its color slightly.

**Gothic** Primarily an architectural style that prevailed in Western Europe from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, characterized by pointed *arches*, ribbed *vaults*, and flying *buttresses*, that made it possible to create stone buildings that reached great heights.

**gouache** 1) Watercolor painting technique using white and opaque colors. 2) A water-based paint, much like transparent watercolor but made in opaque form. Traditionally used in illustration.

**ground** The background in two-dimensional works—the area around and between *figures*. Also, the surface onto which paint is applied.

**Happening** An event conceived by artists and performed by artists and others, usually unrehearsed and without a specific script or stage.

**hard-edge** A term first used in the 1950s to distinguish styles of painting in which shapes are precisely defined by sharp edges, in contrast to the usually blurred or soft edges in *Abstract Expressionist* paintings.

**hatching** A technique used in drawing and linear forms of printmaking, in which lines are placed in parallel series to darken the value of an area. *Cross-hatching* is drawing one set of hatchings over another in a different direction so that the lines cross.

**Hellenistic** Style of the last of three phases of ancient Greek art (300-100 B.C.), characterized by emotion, drama, and the interaction of sculptural forms with the surrounding space.

**hierarchic proportion** Use of unnatural *proportion* to show the relative importance of figures.

**high key** Exclusive use of pale or light *values* within a given area or surface.

**horizon line** In linear *perspective*, the implied or actual line or edge placed on a *two-dimensional surface* to represent the place in nature where the sky meets the horizontal land or water plane. The horizon line matches the *eye level* on a two-dimensional surface. Lines or edges parallel to the ground plane and moving away from the viewer appear to converge at *vanishing points* on the horizon line.

**hue** The pure state of any color or a pure pigment that has not had white or black added to it.

**humanism** A cultural and intellectual movement during the *Renaissance*, following the rediscovery of the art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome. A philosophy or attitude concerned with the interests, achievements, and capabilities of human beings rather than with the abstract concepts and problems of theology or science.

**icon** An image or symbolic representation often with sacred significance.



**iconography** The symbolic meanings of subjects and signs used to convey ideas important to particular cultures or religions, and the conventions governing the use of such forms.

**impasto** In painting, thick paint applied to a surface in a heavy manner creating thick textured layers of paint with obvious brush strokes and having the appearance and consistency of buttery paste.

**Impressionism** A style of painting that originated in France about 1870. Paintings of casual subjects, executed outdoors, using divided brush strokes to capture the mood of a particular moment as defined by the transitory effects of light and color. The first Impressionist exhibit was held in 1874.

**India ink** 1) A black pigment made of lampblack and glue and shaped into cakes or sticks or 2) an ink made from this pigment.

**intaglio** Any printmaking technique in which lines and areas to be inked and transferred to paper are recessed below the surface of the printing plate. *Etching, engraving, drypoint, and aquatint* are all intaglio processes. See also *print*.

**intensity** The relative purity or saturation of a *hue* (color), on a scale from bright (pure) to dull (mixed with another hue or a *neutral*.) Also called *chroma*.

**intermediate color** A *hue* between a primary and a secondary on the color wheel, such as yellow-green, a mixture of yellow and green.

**International Style** An architectural style that emerged in several European countries between 1910 and 1920. Related to purism and *De Stijl* in painting, it joined structure and exterior design into a noneclectic form based on rectangular geometry and growing out of the basic function and structure of the building.

**kiln** An oven in which pottery or *ceramic* ware is fired.

**kinetic art** Art that incorporates actual movement as part of the design.

**kore** Greek for "maiden." An Archaic Greek statue of a standing clothed young woman.

**kouros** Greek for "youth." An Archaic Greek statue of a standing nude young male.

**lens** The part of a camera that directs light reflected from the subject to the film plane and focuses the image.

**line** A mark with length and direction, created by a point that moves across a surface.

**linear** A composition in which line is the dominant element in defining form as opposed to mass. Linear is considered the opposite of painterly.

**line-of-action** Designates the movement or action of a character in a drawing.

**lithography** A planographic printmaking technique based on the antipathy of oil and water. The image is drawn with a grease crayon or painted with *tusche* on a stone or grained aluminum plate. The surface is then chemically treated and dampened so that it will accept ink only where the crayon or *tusche* has been used.

**local color** The actual color as distinguished from the apparent color of objects and surfaces; true color, without shadows or reflections.

**logo** Short for "logotype." Sign, name, or trademark of an institution, firm, or publication, consisting of letter forms borne on one printing plate or piece of type.

**loom** A device for producing cloth by interweaving fibers at right angles.



**low key** Consistent use of dark *values* within a given area or surface.

**lumina** The use of actual light as an art *medium*.

**Mannerism** A style that developed in the sixteenth century as a reaction to the classical rationality and balanced harmony of the *High Renaissance*; characterized by the dramatic use of space and light, exaggerated color, elongation of figures, and distortions of *perspective*, *scale*, and *proportion*.

**mass** *Three-dimensional* form having physical bulk. Also, the illusion of such a form on a *two-dimensional surface*.

**mat** Border of cardboard or similar material placed around a picture as a neutral area between the frame and the picture.

**matte** A dull finish or surface, especially in painting, photography, and *ceramics*.

**medium** (pl. media or mediums) 1. Most commonly, an artist's method of expression, such as ceramics, painting or glass. 2. A particular material along with its accompanying technique; a specific type of artistic technique or means of expression determined by the use of particular materials. 3. Medium can also refer to a liquid added to a paint to increase its ability to be worked without affecting its essential properties.

**middle ground** The part of a composition that appears between the foreground and background.

**Minimalism** A *nonrepresentational* style of sculpture and painting, usually severely restricted in the use of visual elements and often consisting of simple geometric shapes or masses. The style came to prominence in the late 1960s.

**mixed media** Works of art made with more than one *medium*.

**mobile** A type of sculpture in which parts move, often activated by air currents. See *also kinetic art*.

**modeling** 1. Working pliable material such as clay or wax into *three-dimensional* forms. 2. In drawing or painting, the effect of light falling on a three-dimensional object so that the illusion of its *mass* is created and defined by *value* gradations.

**modernism** Theory and practice in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century art, which holds that each new generation must build on past styles in new ways or break with the past in order to make the next major historical contribution. Characterized by idealism; seen as "high art," as differentiated from popular art. In painting, most clearly seen in the work of the *Post-Impressionists*, beginning in 1885; in architecture, most evident in the work of *Bauhaus* and *International Style* architects, beginning about 1920.

**module** A standard unit of measure in architecture. The part of a structure used as a standard by which the rest is proportioned.

**monochromatic** A single color (*hue*) and its *tints* and *shades*.

**montage** 1. A composition made up of pictures or parts of pictures previously drawn, painted, or photographed. 2. In motion pictures, the combining of separate bits of film to portray the character of a single event through multiple views.

**mosaic** An art medium in which small pieces of colored glass, stone, or ceramic tile called tessera are embedded in a background material such as plaster or mortar. Also, works made using this technique.

**motif** A term meaning "subject." Flowers or roses can be a motif, as an example.

**mural** A large wall painting, often executed in fresco.

**naturalism** Representational art in which the artist presents a subjective interpretation of visual reality while retaining something of the natural appearance or look of the objects depicted. Naturalism varies greatly from artist to artist, depending on the degree and kind of subjective interpretation.

**naive art** Art made by people with no formal art training.

**negative shape** A *background* or *ground* shape seen in relation to *foreground* or *figure* shapes.

**negative space** 1. The area around an object. 2. The areas of an artwork that are NOT the primary subject or object.

**Neoclassicism** “New classicism” A revival of classical Greek and Roman forms in art, music, and literature, particularly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and America. It was part of a reaction to the excesses of *Baroque* and *Rococo* art.

**neutrals** Not associated with any single *hue*. Blacks, whites, grays, and dull gray-browns. A neutral can be made by mixing complementary hues.

**nonobjective** See *nonrepresentational* and *abstract art*.

**nonrepresentational** Refers to art that does not depict recognizable figures or elements of the natural world. Nonrepresentational art can be abstract, non-objective, and decorative.

**offset printing** Planographic printing by indirect image-transfer from photomechanical plates. The plate transfers ink to a rubber-covered cylinder, which “offsets” the ink to the paper. Also called photo-offset and offset lithography.

**oil paint** Paint in which the *pigment* is held together with a *binder* of oil, usually linseed oil. Oil paint is the most flexible and luminous of all paint mediums.

**opaque** Impenetrable by light; not transparent or translucent.

**open form** A form whose contour is irregular or broken, having a sense of growth, change, or unresolved tension; form in a state of becoming.

**optical color mixture** Apparent rather than actual color mixture, produced by interspersing brush strokes or dots of color instead of physically mixing them. The implied mixing occurs in the eye of the viewer and produces a lively color sensation.

**organic** Natural, or referring to nature in shape or form. Organic is the opposite of synthetic.

**painterly** Painting characterized by openness of form, in which shapes are defined by loose brushwork in light and dark color areas rather than by outline or contour. Photographs and drawings where form is defined more by blocks of color than line are also often described as such.

**palette** The selection of colors an artist chooses to work with or the board or surface on which a painter mixes his or her colors.

**panorama** A panorama is any wide view of a space.

**pastels** Ground pigments, chalk, and binder formed into sticks for colored drawing. Can also mean subdued colors.

**performance art** Dramatic presentation by visual artists (as distinguished from theater artists such as actors and dancers) before an audience, usually apart from a formal theatrical setting.

**perspective** Representing three-dimensional objects and space in two dimensions in a way that imitates depth, height and width as seen with your eyes. Usually refers to linear perspective, which is based on the fact that parallel lines or edges appear to converge and objects appear smaller as the distance between them and the viewer increases. Atmospheric perspective (aerial perspective) creates the illusion of distance by reducing color saturation, value contrast, and detail in order to imply the hazy effect of atmosphere between the viewer and distant objects. *Isometric perspective* is not a visual or optical interpretation, but a mechanical means to show space and volume in rectangular forms. Parallel lines remain parallel; there is no convergence.

**perspective rendering** A view of an architectural structure drawn in linear *perspective*, usually from a three-quarter view or similar vantage point that shows two sides of the proposed building.

**photorealism** A style of painting that became prominent in the 1970s, based on the cool objectivity of photographs as records of subjects.

**pictorial space** In a painting or other *two-dimensional* art, illusionary space which appears to recede backward into depth from *the picture plane*.

**picture plane** The *two-dimensional* picture surface.

**pigment** Any coloring agent, made from natural or synthetic substances, used with a binder in paints or drawing materials. Pigments are derived from both natural and artificial sources. The earliest pigments were mined from colored clays of earth (ochers and umbers), but minerals and plants were also early sources for pigments.

**plan** In architecture, a *scale* drawing in diagrammatic form showing the basic layout of the interior and exterior spaces of a structure, as if seen in a cutaway view from above.

**plastic** 1. Pliable; capable of being shaped. Pertaining to the process of shaping or modeling (i.e., the plastic arts). 2. Synthetic polymer substances, such as *acrylic*.

**pointillism** A system of painting using tiny dots or “points” of color, developed by French artist Georges Seurat in the 1880s. Seurat systematized the divided brushwork and *optical color mixture* of the *Impressionists* and called this technique divisionism.

**polychromatic** Poly = many, chrome or chroma = colors. Having many colors; random or intuitive use of color combinations as opposed to color selection based on a specific color scheme.

**Pop Art** A style of painting and sculpture that developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in Britain and the United States; based on the visual clichés, subject matter, and impersonal style of popular mass-media imagery.

**positive shape** A *figure* or foreground shape, as opposed to a *negative* ground or background shape.

**positive space** 1. The area an object occupies. 2. The area of an artwork that IS the primary subject or object.

**Post-Impressionism** A general term applied to various personal styles of painting by French artists (or artists living in France) that developed from about 1885 to 1900 in reaction to what these artists saw as the somewhat formless and aloof quality of *Impressionist* painting. Post-Impressionist painters were concerned with the significance of form, symbols, expressiveness, and psychological intensity. They can be broadly separated into two groups, *expressionists*, such as Gauguin and Van Gogh, and *formalists*, such as Cezanne and Seurat.

**Post-Modern** An attitude or trend of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, in which artists and architects accept all that *modernism* rejects. In architecture, the movement away from or beyond what had become boring adaptations of the *International Style*, in favor of an imaginative, eclectic approach. In the other visual arts, Post-Modern is characterized by an acceptance of all periods and styles, including modernism, and a willingness to combine elements of all styles and periods. Although modernism makes distinctions between high art and popular taste, Post-Modernism makes no such value judgments.

**prehistoric art** Art created before written history. Often the only record of early cultures.

**primary colors** One of the three colors (red, yellow, and blue) that are the basis for all other color combinations. *Pigment* primaries are red, yellow, and blue; light primaries are red, green, and blue. Theoretically, pigment primaries can be mixed together to form all the other hues in the spectrum.

**prime** In painting, a first layer of paint or sizing applied to a surface that is to be painted.

**print (artist's print)** A multiple-original impression made from a plate, stone, wood block, or screen by an artist or made under the artist's supervision. Prints are usually made in *editions*, with each print numbered and signed by the artist.

**process colors** Cyan, yellow, magenta and black. Used for photographic reproduction.

**proportion** The size relationship of parts to a whole and to one another.

**realism** The depiction of figures, objects or scenes with minimal distortion or stylization. Realist artists depict subjects with objectivity and accuracy, rather than interpretation.

**Realism** The mid-nineteenth-century style of Courbet and others, based on the idea that ordinary people and everyday activities are worthy subjects for art.

**receding color** Colors that appear to be in the background.

**registration** In color printmaking or machine printing, the process of aligning the impressions of blocks or plates on the same sheet of paper.

**relief** The apparent or actual (impasto, collage) projection of three-dimensional forms.

**relief printing** A printing technique in which the parts of the printing surface that carry ink are left raised, while the remaining areas are cut away. Woodcuts and linoleum prints (linocuts) are relief prints.

**relief sculpture** Sculpture in which *three-dimensional* forms project from a flat background of which they are a part. The degree of projection can vary and is described by the terms high relief and low relief (bas-relief.)

**Renaissance** Period in Europe from the late fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, characterized by a renewed interest in human-centered *classical* art, literature, and learning. See also *humanism*.

**representational** The term refers to art that depicts recognizable figures or elements of the natural world; unlike abstract art.

**reproduction** A mechanically produced copy of an original work of art; not to be confused with an original *print* or art print.

**rhythm** The regular or ordered repetition of dominant and subordinate elements or units within a design.

**Rococo** From the French *rocaille* meaning “rock work.” This late *Baroque* (c. 1715-1775) style used in interior decoration and painting was characteristically playful, pretty, romantic, and visually loose or soft; it used small *scale* and ornate decoration, *pastel* colors, and asymmetrical arrangement of curves. Rococo was popular in France and southern Germany in the 18th century.

**Romanesque** A style of European architecture prevalent from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, with round *arches* and barrel *vaults* influenced by Roman architecture and characterized by heavy stone construction.

**Romanticism** 1. A literary and artistic movement of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, aimed at asserting the validity of subjective experience as a countermovement to the often cold formulas of *Neoclassicism*; characterized by intense emotional excitement and depictions of powerful forces in nature, exotic lifestyles, danger, suffering, and nostalgia. 2. Art of any period based on spontaneity, intuition, and emotion rather than carefully organized rational approaches to form.

**Rule of Thirds** A way of breaking down a composition mathematically, focusing on thirds.

**salon** A general term for a group art exhibition in France.

**saturation** See *intensity*.

**scale** The size or apparent size of an object seen in relation to other objects, people, or its environment or *format*. Also used to refer to the quality or monumentality found in some objects regardless of their size. In architectural drawings, the ratio of the measurements in the drawing to the measurements in the building.

**school of art** A group of artists whose work demonstrates a common influence or unifying belief. Schools of art are often defined by geographic origin. When the term is applied to a particular artist, it may refer to work done by the artist’s pupils or assistants or to work that imitates the artist’s style.

**screenprinting (serigraphy)** A printmaking technique in which stencils are applied to fabric stretched across a frame. Paint or ink is forced with a squeegee through the unblocked portions of the screen onto paper or other surface beneath.

**secondary colors** One of three colors created by mixing equal parts of two primary colors (red, blue, and yellow); the secondary colors are violet, orange, and green.

**section** In architecture, a *scale* drawing of part of a building as seen along an imaginary *plane* that passes through a building vertically.

**serigraphy** See *screenprinting*.

**setback** The legal distance that a building must be from property lines. Early setback requirements often increased with the height of a building, resulting in steplike recessions in the rise of tall buildings.

**shade** A *hue* with black added.

**shape** A *two-dimensional* or implied two-dimensional area defined by line or changes in value and/or color.

**shutter** In photography, a curtain inside the camera that that opens to expose film to light coming through the lens when a picture is taken.

**silk screen** See *screenprinting*.

**simultaneous contrast** An optical effect caused by the tendency of contrasting forms and colors to emphasize their difference when they are placed together.

**site-specific art** Any work made for a certain place, which cannot be separated or exhibited apart from its intended environment.

**size** Any of several substances made from glue, wax, or clay, used as a filler for porous material such as paper, canvas or other cloth, or wall surfaces. Used to protect the surface from the deteriorating effects of paint, particularly oil paint.

**smudging** Using an object to blend values.

**spectrum** All the colors in the color wheel.

**still life** A painting or other *two-dimensional* work of art representing inanimate objects such as bottles, fruit, and flowers. Also, the arrangement of these objects from which a drawing, painting, or other work is made.

**study** A comprehensive drawing of a subject or details of a subject that can be used for reference while painting.

**stupa** The earliest form of Buddhist architecture, probably derived from Indian funeral mounds.

**style** A characteristic handling of *media* and elements of form that gives a work its identity as the product of a particular person, group, art movement, period, or culture.

**stylized** Simplified or exaggerated visual form which emphasizes particular or contrived design qualities.

**subtractive color mixture** Combining of colored *pigments* in the form of paints, inks, pastels, and so on. Called subtractive because reflected light is reduced as pigment colors are combined. See *additive color mixture*.

**subtractive sculpture** Sculpture made by removing material from a larger block or form.

**support** The physical material that provides the base for and sustains a *two-dimensional* work of art. Paper is the usual support for drawings and prints; canvas and panels are supports in painting.

**Surrealism** A movement in literature and the visual arts that developed in the mid 1920s and remained strong until the mid 1940s, growing out of *Dada* and *automatism*. Based upon revealing the unconscious mind in dream images, the irrational, and the fantastic, Surrealism took two directions: *representational* and *abstract*. Dali's and Magritte's paintings, with their uses of impossible combinations of objects depicted in realistic detail, typify representational Surrealism. Miró's paintings, with their use of abstract and fantastic shapes and vaguely defined creatures, are typical of abstract Surrealism.

**symbol** A form or image implying or representing something beyond its obvious and immediate meaning.

**symmetry** A design (or composition) with identical or nearly identical form on opposite sides of a dividing line or central *axis*; formal *balance*.

**Synthetic Cubism** See *Cubism*.

**technique** An artist's skillful manipulation or application of materials. Also describes an entire process associated with a particular method, such as watercolor.

**tempera** A water-based paint that uses egg, egg yolk, glue, or *casein* as a *binder*. Many commercially made paints identified as tempera are actually *gouache*.

**tertiary (intermediate) color** Red-orange, yellow-orange, blue green, etc.

**tessera** Bit of colored glass, ceramic tile, or stone used in a *mosaic*.

**texture** The actual or virtual representation of different surfaces.

**three-dimensional** Having height, width, and depth.

**throwing** The process of forming clay objects on a potter's wheel.

**thumbnail sketch** A very small, simple sketch usually done before a painting to try out design or subject ideas.

**tint** A *hue* with white added.

**tone** A *hue* with gray added.

**transparent** Penetrable by light; materials or colors that you can see through.

**triadic color** Colors that create a triangle on the color wheel.

**triptych** A three-paneled artwork. Historically, triptychs were hinged together so that the two side wings could close over the central panel.

**trompe l'œil** French for "fool the eye." A *two-dimensional* representation that is so naturalistic that it looks actual or real (*three-dimensional*.)

**tusche** In *lithography*, a waxy liquid used to draw or paint images on a lithographic stone or plate.

**two-dimensional** Having the dimensions of height and width only.

**typography** The art and technique of composing printed materials from type.

**unity** The appearance of similarity, consistency, or oneness. Interrelational factors that cause various elements to appear as part of a single complete form.

**value** The lightness or darkness of tones or colors. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. The value halfway between these extremes is called middle gray.

**vanishing point** In linear *perspective*, the point on the *horizon line* at which lines or edges that are parallel appear to converge.

**vantage point** The position from which the viewer looks at an object or visual field; also called observation point or viewpoint.

**vault** A masonry roof or ceiling constructed on the principle of the *arch*. A tunnel or barrel vault is a semicircular arch extended in depth: a continuous series of arches, one behind the other. A groin vault is formed when two barrel vaults intersect. A ribbed vault is a vault reinforced by masonry ribs.

**vehicle** Liquid emulsion used as a carrier or spreading agent in paints.

**video** "Video" emphasizes the visual rather than the audio aspects of the television *medium*. The term is also used to distinguish television used as an art medium from general broadcast television.

**visualize** To form a mental image or vision; to imagine.



**volume** 1. Space enclosed or filled by a three-dimensional object or figure. 2. The implied space filled by a painted or drawn object or figure. Synonym: *mass*.

**warm colors** Colors whose relative visual temperature makes them seem warm. In color theory, warm colors are those that contain a large amount of yellow, as opposed to cool colors, which contain more blue. See also *cool colors*.

**warp** In weaving, the threads that run lengthwise in a fabric, crossed at right angles by the *weft*. Also, the process of arranging yarn or thread on a *loom* so as to form a warp.

**wash** A thin, transparent layer of paint or ink.

**watercolor** Paint that uses water-soluble gum as the *binder* and water as the *vehicle*. Characterized by transparency. Also, the resulting painting.

**weft** In weaving, the horizontal threads interlaced through the *warp*. Also called *woof*.

**woodcut** A type of *relief print* made from an image that is left raised on a block of wood.