

Elements of Art

Line

path of movement
active - passive
bold - delicate
flowing - light
straight - curved
thick - thin
dark - light
broken - continuous
geometric - organic
implied - actual
precise - irregular
contour - outline
calligraphy
caricature

Shape/Form

2D-3D
solid - void
concave - convex
positive - negative
figure - ground
ambiguous - complete
organic - geometric - free-form
circle - sphere
square - cube
triangle - pyramid-cone

Space

2D-3D
positive - negative
open - closed
filled - empty
actual - implied
interior - exterior
scale
orientation
spacing
illusion of space
systems of perspective

Light/Color/Value

Visible color spectrum
Color wheel
value
shading
contrast
chiaroscuro
tint
shade

hue
pigment
primary
secondary
intermediate
neutral
color interactions
simultaneous contrast
color schemes
warm
cool
neutral
monochromatic
analogous
complementary
split complementary
triad
intensity
bright - dull
high key - low key
local
optical (or atmospheric)
symbolic

Texture

actual (tactual) - visual
simulated - invented
matte - semi-gloss - glossy
techniques
impasto
rubbings
frottage
grattage
decalcomania
tromp l'oeil

Principles of Design

Balance

symmetrical
asymmetrical
radial

Rhythm, Movement

types
regular
alternating
progressive
flowing
jazzy
dominant path of movement
vertical
horizontal
diagonal
curving

Proportion

life-size
monumental
miniature
Golden Section or Mean
scale
caricature
normal - exaggerated - idealized

Emphasis

by dominance
by focal point
by center of interest
by isolation
by size
by contrast
by converging lines

Pattern

repetition
motif (2D)
module (3D)
allover

Unity and Variety

by repetition
by simplicity
by harmony
by theme and variation
by proximity
by continuity
by contrast

Here are a few descriptive words to use in the formal analysis of art.

Line

blurred
broken
broken
controlled
curved
diagonal
freehand
fuzzy
horizontal
interrupted
meandering
ruled
short
straight
thick
thin
vertical
wide

Value

dark
light
medium

Colors

brash
bright
calm
clear
cool
dull
exciting
garish
grayed
multicolored
muted
pale
polychrome
primary
saccharine
secondary
subdued
sweet
war

Shape/Form

amorphous
biomorphic
closed
distorted
flat
free-form
full of spaces
geometric
heavy
light
linear
massive
nebulous
open
organic

Space

ambiguous
deep
flat
negative/positive
open
shallow

Texture

actual
bumpy
corrugated
flat
furry
gooey
leathery
prickly
rough
sandy
shiny
simulated
smooth
soft
sticky
tacky
velvety
wet

Some questions to answer when CRITIQUING art

What stands out the most when you first see it?

Explain the reason you notice the thing you mention in number 1.

As you keep looking, what else seems important?

Why does the thing you mention in number 3 seem important.

How have the elements of art been use?

What leads your eye around from place to place?

What tells you about the style used by this artist?

What seems to be hiding in this composition?

Why do you think this was partially hidden?

Imagine the feelings and meanings this artwork represents?

What other things interest you about this artwork?

Is it well crafted? Has there been attention to detail?

Is it functional? If does it function well? Why or why not?

Has typography been used in an interesting way?

What is the overall concept?

Does the imagery and iconography support the idea of the piece?