

The Elements of Art and The Principles of Design

Compiled by pARTners artist Melissa Malm

Overview

The elements and principles listed here are intended to compliment TCSD #1 Art curriculum and enhance internal consistency across pARTners projects. These terms are taught and used by district Art teachers in the classroom. There exists many other lists with similar terms that accomplish the same artistic end result but these are the ones used in the school district.

Elements of Art are the specific ingredients for making art. How one uses or arranges those ingredients in a composition are called the *Principles of Design*. These art and design elements are inextricably linked and dependent on each other; it would be impossible to make art using one exclusively, since once you draw a line you've made a shape, once you've made a shape you've created movement and so on.

Elements of Art (tools or ingredients)

- 1. Line** refers to a continuous mark made on a surface by a moving point. It can define shape, space, create pattern, imply movement or texture and allude to mass or volume.
- 2. Shape** is an enclosed or defined space created using other art elements. They are either organic or geometric.
- 3. Texture** is the tactile quality of a surface either real (3 dimensional as in sculpture) or suggested (2 dimensional as in drawing or painting)
- 4. Color** refers to specific hues and has the characteristics of chroma, intensity and value. The color wheel is a way of showing the chromatic scale in a circle using all the colors made with the primary triad. There are primary, secondary, complementary and tertiary colors. Color can create mood and there are warm and cool colors.

5. Value is the range of lightness to darkness of a color. It is useful for creating contrast and the illusion of form of an object.

6. Form is the three dimensionality of an object. It can be implied visually in 2 dimensions of height and width, as in a sphere drawn on paper or in 3 dimensions of height, width and depth as in sculpture.

7. Space is the area between, within, around and above objects, referred to as positive and/or negative space. The illusion of 3 dimensional space can be created by using a variety of visual effects to form a fore, middle and background in a composition such as overlapping, perspective and size.

Principles of Design (how elements are used – the recipe)

1. Balance is the visual equilibrium of elements in a composition- symmetry, asymmetry, radial symmetry and approximate symmetry.

2. Contrast is achieved by using elements in opposition to create visual impact, such as light and dark or proportional differences in objects.

3. Emphasis is the focal point, that which draws the viewer's attention.

4. Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the composition.

5. Pattern is the repeated use of decorative design units, often used in fabric design.

6. Rhythm is achieved by using art elements to create motion or action, such as in gesture drawing.

7. Unity is the visual harmony of the elements in a composition, with variety adding interest.