**What Are the Elements of Art?**

The elements of art are sort of like atoms in that both serve as "building blocks" for creating something

A **line** is a basic [element of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/reference/f/elements.htm), referring to a continuous mark, made on a surface, by a moving point.

A line is long relative to its width. It can define a space, create an outline or pattern, imply movement or texture and allude to mass or volume. Absolutely essential in creating ar

A shape is one of the [seven elements of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/reference/f/elements.htm). When defining it within the study of art, shape is an enclosed space, the boundaries of which are defined by other elements of art (i.e.: lines, colors, values, textures, etc.).

Shapes are limited to two dimensions: length and width. **Geometric** shapes -- circles, rectangles, squares, triangles and so on -- have the clear edges one achieves when using tools to create them. **Organic** shapes have natural, less well-defined edges (think: an amoeba, or a cloud)

**Form** is one of the seven [elements of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/reference/f/elements.htm). At its most basic, a form is a three-dimensional geometrical figure (i.e.: sphere, cube, cylinder, cone, etc.), as opposed to a shape, which is two-dimensional, or flat.

In a broader sense, form, in art, means the whole of a piece's visible elements and the way those elements are united. In this context, form allows us as viewers to mentally capture the work, understand it and attempt to analyze it.

Finally, form refers to the visible elements of a piece, independent of their meaning.

space refers to distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. Space can be positive (white or light) or negative

 (black or dark), open or closed, shallow or deep and two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Sometimes space isn't actually within a piece, but the illusion of it is

**Texture**, another [element of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/reference/f/elements.htm), is used to describe either the way a three-dimensional work actually feels when touched, or the visual "feel" of a two-dimensional work.

Take rocks, for example. A real, 3-D rock might feel rough or smooth, and definitely feels hard when touched or picked up. A painter, depicting a rock, would create the illusions of these qualities through use of color, line, [shape](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/glossaries/g/s_shape.htm), etc.

"value" can be a technical term related to color, or it can be a more subjective term related to either the importance of a work or its monetary worth. Below you'll find a discussion of these different definitions of value.

### ****Value as an Element of Art:****

As an [element of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/reference/f/elements.htm), **value** refers to the visible lightness or darkness of a color. Value is synonymous with luminosity in this context, and can be measured in various units designating electromagnetic radiation. Indeed, the science of [optics](http://physics.about.com/od/lightoptics/) is a fascinating branch of physics, albeit one to which visual artists typically devote little to no thought.

Value is relevant to the lightness or darkness of any color, but its importance is easy to visualize in a work with no colors other than black, white, and a gray scale. For a great example of value in action, think of a black and white photograph. You can easily visualize how the infinite variations of gray suggest planes and textures.

Color is the [element of art](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/glossaries/g/e_elements.htm) that is produced when light, striking an object, is reflected back to the eye.

There are three (3) properties to color. First is hue, which simply means the name we give to a color (red, yellow, blue, etc.).

The second property is intensity, which refers to the strength and vividness of the color. For example, we may describe the color blue as "royal" (bright, rich, vibrant) or "dull" (grayed).

The third and final property of color is its value, meaning its lightness or darkness. The terms [shade](http://painting.about.com/od/artglossarys/g/definition-shade.htm) and tint are in reference to value changes in colors

### Definition of Abstract Art:

**Abstract art** can be a painting or sculpture (including [assemblage](http://arthistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/a_assemblage.htm)) that does not depict a person, place or thing in the natural world. Note that works of art that represent the world in exaggerated or distorted ways (such as the Cubist paintings of Paul [Paul Cézanne](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/namescc/p/cezanne.htm) and [Pablo Picasso](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/namespp/a/picasso.htm)) are not abstract, for they present a type of conceptual realism. With abstract art, the subject of the work is based on what you see: color, shapes, brushstrokes, size, scale and, in some cases, the process.

Vocabularies

ACRYLICS-Almost like oils but more durable, quicker to dry and you can paint on any unprimed surface and will not crack over time.  
ASYMMETRICAL BALANCE-A Kind of balance in which the 2 sides

of the design are very different.

BALANCE-An arrangement of parts so that they have equal force.  
  
BACKGROUND-The shapes that appear behind the foreground.  
BAROQUE-Art that was ornately decorated, dynamic and was filled with emotion.   
BATIK-A method of dyeing cloth, originated in Indonesia, where you use wax to repel (resist) the dye on parts of the design where you do not wish to use dye.

BLOT- When you take an absorbent material to soak up or dry excess paint or water.  
BRUSHES- Tools used to apply paint and ink to a surface, consisting of hairs, or bristles held in place by a metal ring or cap attached to a handle. The hair may be from several sources or synthetic (man made) materials. Brushes for acrylic and polymer paints generally have nylon bristles. Names of the shapes of some brushes are bright, filbert, flat, and round.  
  
BYZANTINE-This art was very religious and mostly created for the Eastern Orthodox Church.   
  
CANVAS- A prepared cloth surface used for painting.

CERAMICS- Referring to the technique of shaping and firing clay.

CHROMA-Chroma is the quality that distinguishes a strong, dark color from a weak one. The intensity of a color.  
  
COLLAGE- The technique of building up a picture in two-dimensional form by using newspaper, magazines, wallpaper, and wood. Sometimes drawn or painted sketches where done over a collage background.

COLOR VALUE-The color value is the position in reference to the amount of white and black.    
  
COMPOSE - To create and arrange the elements of art in an artwork

DEPTH-How deep or three-dimensional an artwork looks. The illusion of space can be created using color, line, and shape.  
  
DESIGN- To create or plan in an artistic manner an idea in a decorative pattern.   
  
DIMENSION- A measure of spatial extent, especially width, height, or length.   
  
DISPLAY- To present or hold up to view so as to exhibit artwork.   
  
DYE- A substance used to color materials.

FOCAL POINT (or center of interest)-The part of an artwork you look at first.   
  
FOREGROUND-The first shapes that appear in front of a picture.

FREEHAND- Drawn by hand without the aid of tracing or drafting devices.  
  
FRESCO-Wet plaster put onto a wall then pigment is applied directly onto the wet plaster, mixing and spreading it quickly.  
  
GALLERY- A place where artists can exhibit their works of art and sell them

GEOMETRIC-Shapes such as circles, cylinders, spheres, ovals, triangles, cones, pyramids, cubes, squares and rectangular forms.  
  
GLAZE-Used by puting a transparent color over anathor dry color.  
  
GLOSSY- Having a smooth, shiny, lustrous finish.   
  
GRAPHIC-ART- The art of drawing and printmaking.

HORIZON LINE-The line where the earth meets the sky.  
  
HUE-The name of the color.  
  
IMPLIED LINES-Lines you cannot see

INK-A pigmented liquid or paste used especially for writing or printing.  
  
INTENSITY-The brightness or pureness of a color. A bright color is at its highest intensity while a dull color is at its lowest.  
  
INTERMEDIATE COLOR-A color made by mixing a secondary color with a primary color.  
  
ILLUSTRATION- The artistic interpretation of an idea, scene, or writing, used to better describe text in books, magazines, and posters.  
  
IRREGULAR SHAPE-Not geometric as most shapes in nature

MEDIA-The material used to make the artwork was made such as oils, water color, acrylic, inks, to name a few.  
  
MEDIUM-The kind of material from which an artwork is made.

MOOD-The feeling created by an artwork.   
  
MODEL-A person who poses for a work of art.

NONOBJECTIVE-Having no subject matter nor definable objects.  
MURAL- A very large image, such as a painting or an enlarged photograph, applied directly to a wall or ceiling.   
  
OILS-A mix of ground pigments and linseed, poppy or walnut oil. Dries slowly so artists could take more time to work on details and capture textures.  
OPTICAL ART - Optical Art is about distorted shapes and vibrating colors that challenge and manipulate the eye to perceive the illusion of movement.