Elements of Art and Principles of Design

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES
FULL-COLOR REPRODUCTIONS
DESCRIPTIONS OF EACH CONCEPT

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A **shape** is a flat, enclosed area that has two dimensions — length and width. We can see a shape because it is either surrounded by a line, or because a change in color or value allows you to see its edges. When we paint on a flat sheet of paper, we make shapes of many kinds.

The artist used both **geometric** and **organic shapes** in planning and creating this large collage. Most of the numbers are **organic shapes** and are placed on rectangles which are **geometric shapes**. The entire work is made of shapes. The bright colors make the collage seem like a festival banner — and she calls it *Octogenarian Celebration*.

**SHAPE** is an area that is contained within an implied line, or is seen because of color or value changes. Shapes have two dimensions, length and width, and can be geometric or organic.
Elements of Art: Shape

This painting is made of organic shapes — cliff shape, bird shapes, sun shape, rock shapes, water shapes, and cloud shapes.

Shapes in nature are usually organic such as flowers, people, trees or lakes. If you want to draw or paint them, you need to see their shapes. Line drawings and changes in color or value can define shapes.

This painting by Donna Barryhill called Don contains both positive and negative shapes — the figure is the positive shape and the background is the negative shape.
Intensity refers to the brightness of a color. If we want to dull a color, we mix in a little of its complementary color. If we add a little blue to orange, it dulls the orange; if we add we add a little orange to blue, it dulls the blue.

Value refers to the darkness or lightness of a color. If a bit of black is added to red, the color becomes darker and is called a shade. The more black that is added the darker the value gets. If white is added to a color, it becomes lighter and is called a tint.

There are no intense colors used in Morro Bay Morning above. The colors were muted or neutralized by mixing them with their complementary colors.

The azaleas are all the same color or hue. Shadows make the values darker in places — and sunlight makes the values lighter. Notice the variety of single color with its shades and tints.
Colors on the blue and green part of the color wheel are called *cool colors*. The painting above is made with *cool colors* (blues), but it has some *warm* (orange) accents.

**COLOR** depends on light because it is made of light. Hue, value, and intensity are the three main characteristics of color.

Colors on the red and orange part of the color wheel are called *warm colors*. This collage is made of warm colors and *cool* accents.
Value refers to dark and light. Paintings and drawings are made up of dark, light, and middle value areas. The difference between values is called value contrast. Colors have value also, and value contrasts help us see and understand a two-dimensional work of art.

A black and white copy of a painting helps us see the values of the colors. Yellow and orange are light values; blue and purple are dark values. Black added to a color will make it darker, a shade; white added to a color will make it lighter, a tint.
Dark and middle values are used in making low key paintings. There is very little value contrast.

Light and middle values are used to make high key paintings, with little value contrast.
Form describes objects that are three-dimensional — having length, width, and height. While a two-dimensional shape can be seen from only one side, a three-dimensional shape can be viewed from many sides. Forms take up space, whether they are natural or made by a designer. We are surrounded by forms.

This sculpture is an example of three-dimensional form. The birds take up space themselves, but the spaces under, above, and around the sculpture are also important.

*Form* describes objects that are three-dimensional, having length, width, and height.

Architecture is almost always made of geometric forms which are cubes, pyramids, cones, spheres, cylinders, etc. A building takes up space, but also has space inside it, which is called volume. Notice the contrast of geometric and natural forms in this photo.

A student created this three-dimensional natural form of papier-mâché.
Texture describes the feel of an actual surface. Sculptures, ceramic ware, or collages may have rough or grainy surfaces or actual textures you can feel. A drawing, print, or painting can be made to look like a textured surface and has implied texture because it may look like texture, but actually is on smooth, flat paper.

This colorful collage was created by building up many layers of paper material to make a richly textured surface. Because your hand can actually feel the textures of the original work, it is a surface that has actual textures.

TEXTURE refers to the surface quality, both simulated and actual, of artwork.

We can see many actual textures around us — rocks, trees, animals, and fabrics. Textured surfaces vary from rough to smooth and furry to crisp.
Look at the actual textures of your clothes. Cloth has a different texture than leather. Linen has a different texture than denim.

The surface of this sculpture is easy to see. Sculptures have surfaces of actual texture.
Sculptors, craftspeople, and architects work with actual space. Their forms have three dimensions — height, width, and depth. Painters work with two dimensions — height and width. To show depth in their flat work, they must create the illusion of depth.

In the painting above and the diagram at left, distance or space can be felt because of size differences. Buildings, people, and other objects appear smaller as they get farther away.

**SPACE** is a three-dimensional volume that can be empty or filled with objects.
When we look down a street, we notice a lot of space or depth. Things get smaller and less sharp as they get farther away. Forms overlap each other and colors become less intense in the distance. When straight lines and edges seem to come together at a distant point, we call that way of showing depth linear perspective.

If objects overlap, we can feel space between them.

If overlapping is combined with size difference, the sense of space is even stronger.
In this painting, the arches set up a rhythm. Emphasis is on the working women. There is movement on both dark and light value paths to the focal area. Unity is created with warm color dominance. Contrast is seen in the size and value differences. The large arch in the foreground balances the small, busy shapes of the women.
Balance
Principles of Design

As you walk, a sense of balance keeps you from falling over. In a work of art, balance refers to the arrangement of elements on either side of a center line. Shapes, colors, and values can be arranged to create a sense of comfort and balance.

In symmetrical balance, things on either side of a center line are almost alike. The two sides are visually equal. This student design is symmetrically balanced.

A wheel-thrown vase will naturally be symmetrically balanced. The artist added contrast and variety by decorating the surface with flower shapes.

**BALANCE** is the comfortable or pleasing arrangement of things in art.