

Aesthetic Elements of Modern Painting

1. **Line**, visible or invisible, is used to create directionality, compositional focus, and/or dimension. It may be **regular**, i.e., dotted, vertical, spiral, or **lines in relation to one another**, i.e. converging or parallel, or **irregular**, i.e., an uneven wave.
2. **Shape** is **regular two dimensional geometric**, i.e., an oval or triangle, or **irregular or biomorphic two dimensional**, i.e. organic. **Shape** may be **open** or **closed**, and used to represent known objects, express emotions or ideas.
3. **Color** is light at differing wave lengths. **Hue** is full or diffused light and most often refers to a change in a **primary color**, red, yellow, and blue, or the **seven principal colors** on the visible spectrum—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo (or blue-violet) and violet.
4. **Light Value** is the comparative lightness or darkness of an object, i.e., the amount of light reflected on its surface. **Light Value** is used in **achromatic works**, consisting of black, white, or grey, and **chromatic** ones, those having color. **Light Source**, showing a source of light and shading, may also influence **Light Value**.
5. **Space** is primarily divided into **foreground, middle ground, and background**.
6. **Plane** is a flat surface having a direction in space; the direction is often diagonal.
7. **Subject matter** is the actual thing, figure, or scene represented.
8. **Media** is stone, wood, canvas or any material to which oil paint, dye, pigment can be applied and layered. Included in **media** is the **texture** of the surface.
9. **Balance** or **Composition** is the overall arrangement of the above formal elements. **Balance** is **symmetrical**, where an axis or line divides an exact correspondence of parts on either side, or **asymmetrical**, where an equilibrium exists between each side, or has **radial symmetry**, equidistant parts of a circle emerging from a center point.
10. **Emotional Intensity or Passion** is the emotion, mood, or tone the viewer feels and receives directly before the work. The feeling may be joy, sorrow, wonder, etc.
11. **Iconology** is the implied and universal meaning, and reveals the *Weltanschauung*, or world vision and beliefs of the time of the modern period. It addresses these questions: "What does this work communicate about modern society?" "What does this work communicate about the experience of human beings in modern society?"
12. **Value** is the importance of the work. It can be historic, i.e., the first of its kind, critical, or of primary importance to critics and other artists, or religious or spiritual, psychological, social, or political.
13. **Style** is the use of key elements, and the omission of others, to form a unique and recognizable composition. Modern styles include Impressionism, Cubism etc.
14. **Artistic Unity** is the harmonizing of the above elements into a work of visual beauty.