

The Formal elements in Art

The Formal Elements are the parts used to make a piece of artwork. The art elements are **line, shape, form, tone, texture, pattern, colour and composition.**

Different elements can express qualities such as movement and rhythm, space and depth, growth and structure, harmony and contrast, noise and calm and a wide range of emotions that make up the subjects of great art.

Line

Line is the path left by a moving point.

A line can be horizontal, diagonal or curved. It can also change over its length, starting off curved and ending up horizontal.

Line can be used to show many different qualities, such as:

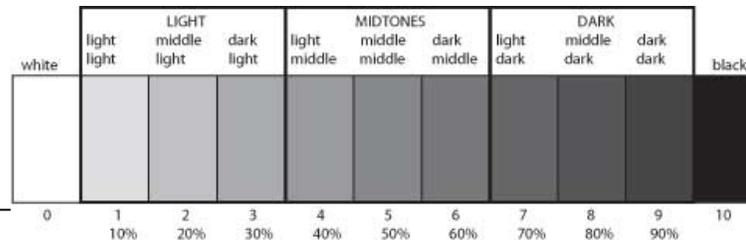
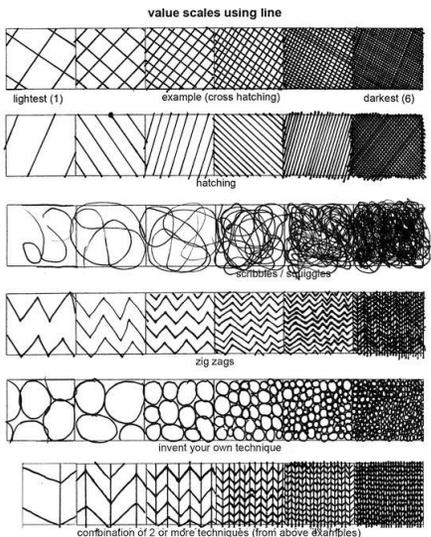
- contours – showing the shape and form of something
- feelings or expressions – a short, hard line gives a different feeling to a more flowing one
- movements

Texture

This is to do with the **surface quality** of something, the way something feels or looks like it feels.

Actual texture really exists, so you can feel it or touch it. You can create actual texture in an artwork by changing the surface, such as sticking different fabrics onto a canvas.

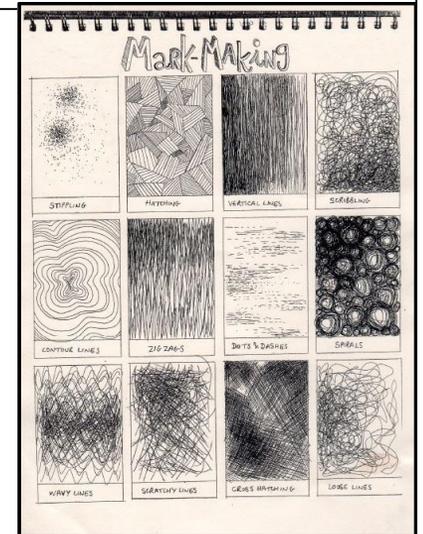
Visual texture is created using mark making techniques. It gives the illusion of a texture or surface but if you touched it, it would be smooth. You can create visual texture by using different lines, shapes, colours or tones.



Tone

This refers to the lightness or darkness of something. This could be a shade or how dark or light a colour appears.

Tones are created by the way light falls on a 3D object. The parts of the object on which the light is strongest are called **highlights** and the darker areas are called **shadows**. There is a range of tones in between the highlights and shadows.



Colour

Red, yellow and blue are **primary colours**, which means they can't be mixed using any other colours. In theory, all other colours can be mixed from these three colours. Two primary colours mixed together make a **secondary colour**.

Tertiary colours are created by mixing a primary colour and the secondary colour next to it on the colour wheel.

Colour wheel

- Colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel are called **harmonious**.
- Complementary colours are colours that are **opposite** each other on the colour wheel. When complementary colours are used together they create **contrast**. Adding a colour's complimentary colour will usually make a darker shade. This is often preferable to adding black.
- Warm colours are colours on the red side of the wheel. These are red and include orange, yellow, browns and tans. These are known as advancing colours.
- Cool colours are colours on the blue side of the wheel. These are blue and include green, violet and most greys. These are known as receding colours.

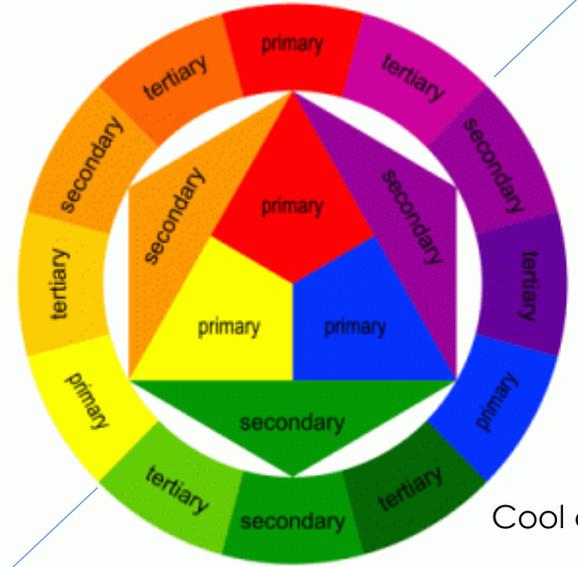
Monochromatic

Monochrome means one colour. Artwork can be created that explores the **tone** and **intensity** of a selected colour.

You can change the tone of a colour by adding its complementary colour or by adding black or white to it. Adding white to a colour creates a tint, and adding black creates a tone.

You can also alter the tone of a colour with **saturation** techniques. This means adding either more paint or more water. The more water that is added the lighter the tone and the more paint the darker.

Warm colours



Cool colours

Primary

Secondary

red + yellow

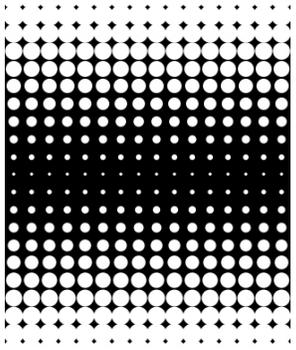
= orange

red + blue

= purple

blue + yellow

= green



Pattern

A design that is created by repeating lines, shapes, tones or colours. The design used to create a pattern is often referred to as a **motif**. Motifs can be simple shapes or complex arrangements.

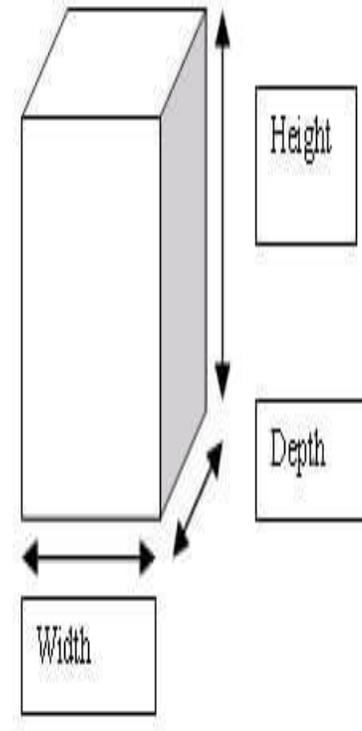
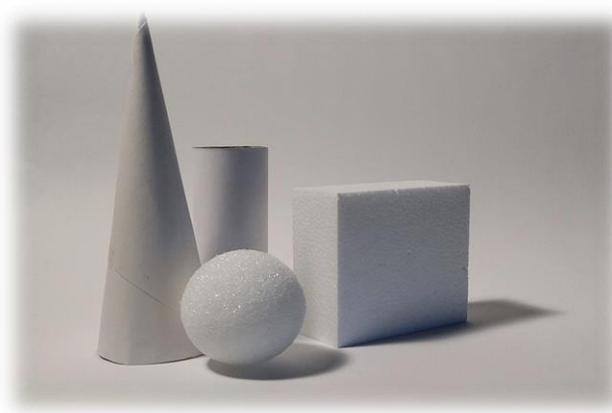
Patterns can be man-made, like a design on fabric, or natural, such as the markings on animal fur.

Shape

A shape is an area enclosed by a line. It could be just an outline or it could be shaded in.

Shapes can be either **geometric**, like a circle, square or triangle, or **irregular**.

When drawing shapes, you must consider the size and position as well as the shape of the area around it. The shapes created in the spaces between shapes are referred to as **negative space**



Form

Form is a **three dimensional shape**, such as a cube, sphere or cone. Sculpture and 3D design are about creating forms. In 2D artworks, tone and perspective can be used to create an illusion of form. In 3D design you may use an isometric drawing to show the form.