

Fine Art Vocabulary A - Z

A

'A' Paper Sizes and Dimensions

The system of 'A' paper sizes was created by the International Standards Organisation (ISO) to standardize the dimensions of paper. The smaller the number, the larger the sheet. So, for instance, an A1 sheet of paper is larger than an A2 piece, and A3 is bigger than A4.

Table of 'A' Paper Size -- size in millimeters -- approx inches

2A0 -- 1,189 x 1,682 mm -- 46.8 x 66.2 in

A0 -- 841 x 1,189 mm -- 33.1 x 46.8 in

A1 -- 594 x 841 mm -- 23.4 x 33.1 in

A2 -- 420 x 594 mm -- 16.5 x 23.4 in

A3 -- 297 x 420 mm -- 11.7 x 16.5 in

A4 -- 210 x 297 mm -- 8.3 x 11.7 in

A5 -- 148 x 210 mm -- 5.8 x 8.3 in

A6 -- 105 x 148 mm -- 4.1 x 5.8 in

A7 -- 74 x 105 mm -- 2.9 x 4.1 in

The height-to-width ratio of ISO A paper sizes is based on the square root of two (1.4142 : 1) and a sheet of A0 is defined as having an area of a square meter.

Put two A4 pieces in portrait format next to each other and you have the size of an A3 sheet in landscape and so on.

Acrylic paint

A type of paint made with synthetic resin as the medium (liquid) to bind the pigment (color), rather than natural oils such as linseed used in oil paints. It has the advantage of drying faster than oil paint and being water soluble.

The first acrylics were produced in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, with acrylic paints specifically produced for fine artists emerging in the 1950s. One of the first famous public artists to use acrylics was David Hockney. Also used by late modernists painters and even, 'thick paint, traditional artists' like Frank Auerbach.

Adjacent colours

Quite literally, the colors next to one another on the color wheel. So, for instance, red and orange, or orange and yellow. Blue and green, or blue and purple. Using adjacent colors as the main colors in a painting can create a harmonious and unified or sympathetic feel.

Analogous colors

These are colors that are adjacent or next to one another on a color wheel in sequences.

An analogous color scheme is one in which only three adjacent colors are used. The theory is that colors work well or harmonise together. Usually one of these colors is dominant, or used more than the other two, in the painting.

Abstract

This is viewed (retrospectively) by late modernists as the historic and heroic goal of modernist painting.

Abstract painting simply entails the painting of pictures which represent objects-brush strokes/the relationships of colours and shapes and so on and which bear no direct relationship or resemblance to anything which exists.

That is to say, an abstract painting doesn't portray any part of actual objects or people-places or the effects of nature and anything from the physical world of experience.

Aesthetic

This word basically means relating to a sense of 'beauty' or 'style/form of beauty'. When we look at a painting or listen to a piece of music, the emotions (or intellectual sensations) which are generated from the experience of contemplating that painting or piece of music is called 'the aesthetic response'.

This is the response of pure/mood or some other kind of awareness that is produced by looking at or listening to the artwork.

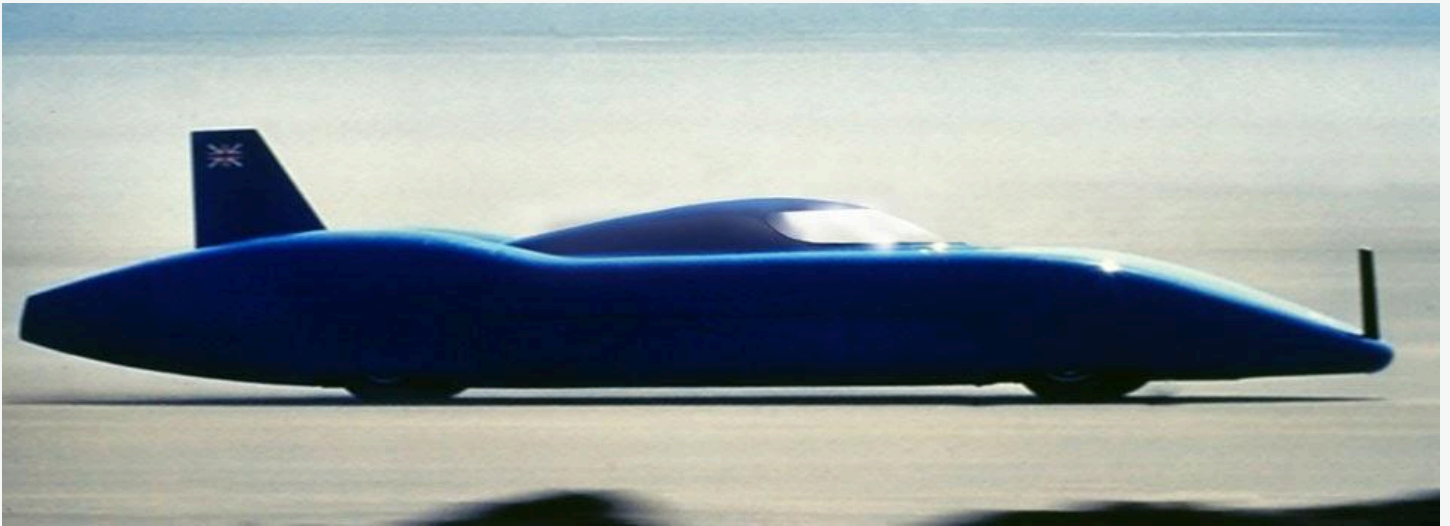
There is also a secondary meaning for aesthetic. The word 'aesthetic' can also be used to talk about the style or manner of an art object, for example, 'This painting has a Renaissance aesthetic running through it, it reminds me of the work of Raphael'.



For example, a painting like 'The Three. Comrades' by Leger (above) might be said to have a modern machine age aesthetic in it.

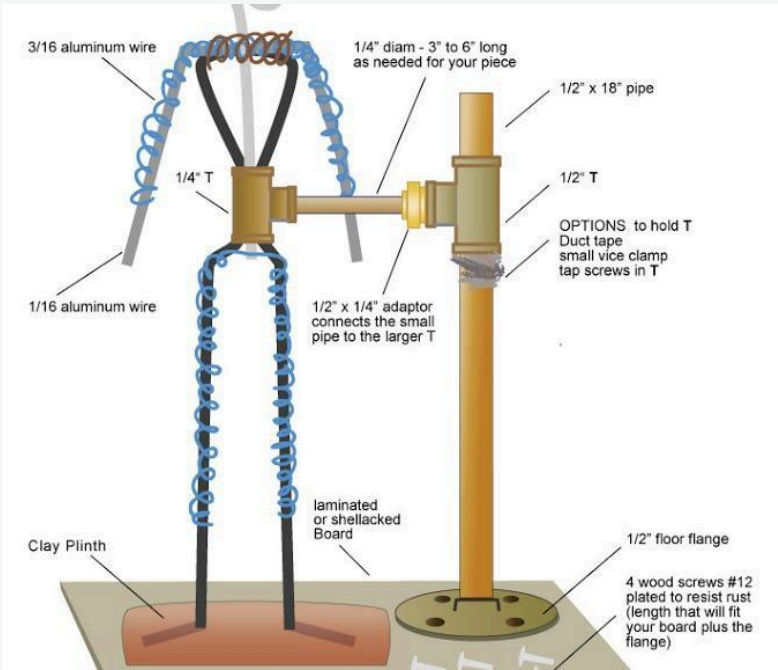
This means that the style of the painting, the way it is painted as well as the content of the painting (what the painting is of, what it depicts et cetera et cetera) declares an interest in the modern world.

Thus the shapes and the brushstrokes, the colours and the lines of the painting speak about the aesthetic of the modern age as much as does the subject matter of the picture.



This idea can be extended through designed objects as well, and so a 'sporty car' has an aesthetic of speed in all its details and a low-fat yoghurt has an aesthetic of health and fitness.

Armature



The structure which supports the mass and body of the sculpture.

Usually made of wire and wood, the armature of a traditional clay sculpture acts as skeletal support.

Aerial perspective

Aerial perspective doesn't use lines to draw in perspective (creating the illusion of three dimensions on a two dimensional surface) but does so using colour rather than lines (see file on Impressionism for more)

Asymmetry

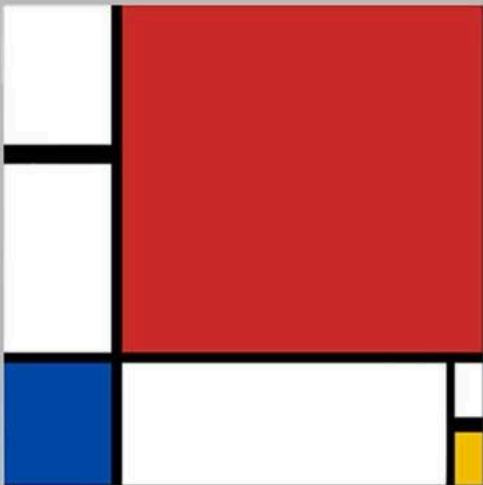


Figure 19. *Composition II; Composition I; Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow*, 1930. Fukuoka City Bank, Ltd.

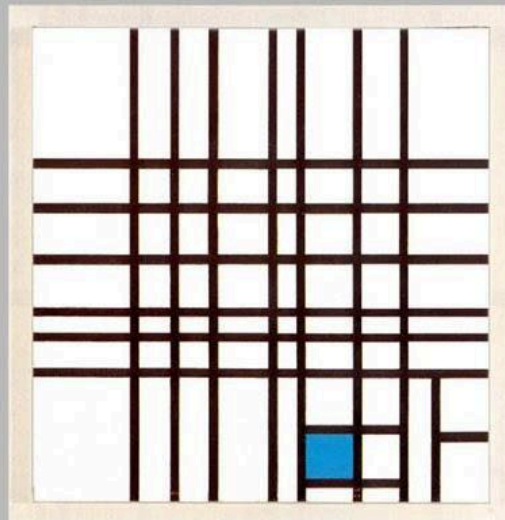


Figure 2. *Composition with Blue*, 1937-42. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The opposite of symmetry, i.e., the unbalanced and uneven arrangements of forms along with any axis.

A symmetrical arrangement is an arrangement where you can divide in half with a line which shows a mirror image.

You could say asymmetry is like a mirror which does not reflect back the same image.

Autonomous



An autonomous car - a car that drives itself without human guidance

A person or a subject who makes their own rules of self-government. An autonomous person is someone who is self-contained and therefore somewhat aloof or apart from the patterns of their surroundings.

These surroundings can be thought of as the everyday issues social class, race, gender and politics.



Richard Serra's work - one which opens itself to a formalist reading. A reading which proposes that the artwork is autonomous.

During the Modernist period, critics tried to identify art and to speak of it as being entirely 'autonomous', that is they tried to present art as being only and wholly concerned with the logic of art and unconcerned with any exterior content or storyline.

For these critics, art was only concerned with its formal values (flatness, colour, form, shape, the illusion of space etc in painting or mass, volume, surface, articulation of materials in sculpture etc).

Subsequently, these critics have been labelled 'right-wing' by other 'left wing' critics who want to impose a social history onto art.

Art which is defined in terms of social history (class conflict, discussion of oppression, racism, feminism etc) cannot be called 'autonomous' since the artwork has, in this interpretation, to have a context of race, class, gender, politics, war etc.



The Dinner Party is an installation artwork by feminist artist Judy Chicago. Widely regarded as the first epic feminist artwork, it functions as a symbolic history of women in Western civilisation. There are 39 elaborate place settings arranged along a triangular table for 39 mythical and historical famous women. Sacajawea, Sojourner Truth, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Empress Theodora of Byzantium, Virginia Woolf, Susan B. Anthony, and Georgia O'Keeffe are among the guests.

[\[Wikipedia\]](#)

Avant Garde

Avant Garde - The foremost elements of society, who march in advance of the great body of society and who discover and theorise about the route towards a utopian goal.



'Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge' by El Lissitzky 1919

The Avant Garde is formed from the leading artists, writers, philosophers, composers and scientists of the day.

B

Background

Made with scumbling (see below) to create a textured background. This allows the creation of further paint effects for other elements in the picture

Bohemian

The louche, wayward and extraordinary lifestyles, behaviour and general carrying-on of artists who refuse to conform to the narrow paths of society and its mediocre bourgeois values. Bohemian ways of living are perceived as involving free-love, a great deal of drinking, and keeping odd hours.

Bourgeoisie

This refers to the middle classes of society and to their values. The Bourgeoisie are generally pointed to as the enemy of modern art, as they are anti-progressive and therefore against the Historic destiny of society. Their values and ideas concerning the regulation of society are seen as an imposition on the lower classes.

Consequently, the lower classes are thereby submitted to the tyrannies of mediocrity, wage-slavery and the disadvantaged end of class relations.

Ironically, the bourgeoisie is often formed in part by the parents of the artists who stand so resolutely opposed to them and their values.

Bravura

- Most often referring to brushwork this means a virtuoso, expert passage of painting with great technical skill and brilliance

C

Calligraphic brush strokes

Are those which are produced in such an expressive and personal manner as to indicate the presence of the artist, in much the same way that handwriting is indicative of the actual person who writes a message as compares with typewritten text.

Caveat

A prior qualification or warning regarding a statement. For example, 'you can have this expensive object, largely for free, although I should warn, you there is one caveat, you will have to give me a little money later on each month for my kindness.

Centre/ edge

As the painting or picture moves away from the centre and the focal point of the subject, the marks lose their energy and become larger and less energised, more diffuse

The centre of the picture should be the most energised, cut up and diagonal

The edge of the picture should be larger, calmer and less 'choppy'

Chiaroscuro

- Light and shade
- Most important examples: Leonardo, Caravaggio, Georges de la Tour, Rembrandt

Collage

The method of creating pictures and pictorial arrangements by cutting and sticking together elements drawn from other pictures, patterned material or printed newspapers. Altogether, the elements which are stuck down in combination like this create a new picture and picture logic which is different from looking at all those elements on their own or one at a time. The best examples of collage and modern art can be seen in the works of the cubists Picasso and Braque, who are credited with the invention of collage, and also the surrealist Max Ernst.

Colour-field painting

This is the Late Modernist and Post Painterly Abstract painting tactic of using large areas or entire surfaces of paintings as single zones or fields of colour. Developing their ideas from the large paintings of artists like Barnett Newman (An American Abstract Expressionist), the colour-field painters dealt with the idea of the creation of illusionistic space with the most limited means (one or two colours). With these reduced means they tried to achieve the richest of results: (depth, all over sensation and the essential play of the figure/ground equation, which describes an object or a subject in front of a space or void.

Colour - Cool and warm, Local colours

Cool colours

The cool colour palette

The cool colours are the cold colours which seem to move away from the viewer into the background of the picture - they recede

These colours are the blues, purples and colder reds like Crimson, Scarlet, as well as green

Although technically a cold colour, Green is a difficult colour to work with as it is neutral in most contexts rather than warm or cold

Green can then 'float' off the surface of the picture if present in large and flat areas

Warm colours

The warm colour palette

Sometimes called the hot or friendly colours as these colours come forward - towards the viewer

These colours are typically the reds, yellows and oranges

Local colour

This is the the actual colour of a thing in ordinary daylight, uninfluenced by the proximity of other colours
In painting, local colour is the natural colour of an object unmodified by adding light and shadow or any other distortion. Local colour is best seen on a matte surface, due to it not being reflected, and therefore distorted.

Shadows

Ever since the impressionists and the start of popular colour theories evolving with artists, rather than referring to a set of standards called an 'orthodoxy', artists have used simple ideas like 'hot things throwing cool shadows'

Therefore, since Impressionism, shadows have often been painted as vivid blues to reflect the strong overhead Mediterranean sunlight, whereas in Britain with its colder Northern European sunlight, colours have been rendered as purples

European skin has often been given green shadows

You can see examples of this in Renaissance figure painting and Early Modernist (like Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff) figure and portrait painting

Warm up the dark tones - never use black for really dark areas unless you really know what you are doing, you will very likely produce a dead area in your painting - a hole

Conceptual/ Perceptual

This pair of complementary terms identifies one of The Great fissures or splits in modern art. The history of modern art is often seen as the gradual process of the eradication of perceptual art and its replacement with conceptual art.

Perceptual art found its chief representation in Impressionism and was later restated in Op art and Late Modernism.

Conceptual forms of art can be traced back to Manet, then to Post Impressionism, on through the various projects, of modernism such as Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism and so to Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism.

Perceptual art is the representation of the fleeting appearance of things under the fast changing conditions of light and local circumstance, like the images which are produced through photography.

Conceptual art, in contrast to perceptual art, is the representation of something by the rules of a mental logic. In this way, in conceptual art there is a likeness to maps, diagrams and cartoons. That is to say, things are shown, not as seen from one point of perspective, but as they exist in relation to one another. For example, if you stand on a street corner, you can see down the length of the street until another corner or bend in the road blocks the view. That is the way that a perceptual picture would work. By comparison, if you took a map out of your pocket, and looked at it rather than the street, you will be able to see what happens next after the next corner.

This is the way the conceptual art works. It shows us reality as a diagram or explains the world from more than one point of view. It makes associations and joins ideas together, like a map which shows you the path of underground railway systems even when you stand in the street.

Conceptual Art - Historical art movement

As above:

- Any art that represents an idea rather than a lived/ seen experience
- A diagram or a map is conceptual rather than perceptual
- A plan of an idea is conceptual whereas a photograph is perceptual
- A plan can show you the relationship between buildings that exist round the corner of a road. By contrast a photograph can only show you the appearance of buildings from a single position at a given moment in time. It can only show you what is visible from that single point, not what lies behind the corner or over the horizon
- The history of modern art is the continual movement to a more strong conceptual positioning of art over perceptual art.

The historic movement - Conceptual Art



Joseph Kosuth, one and three chairs

Conceptual Art with a capital 'C' and capital 'A' is the historic movement that began in the 1960s and which was an attempt to allow modern art to escape the confinement of the museum and the gallery collections of rich people.

Conceptual Art was a radical and revolutionary set of art forms

See the [spreadsheet of artists and movements](#)

See the [Conceptual Art mind map](#) - [The row in the spreadsheet](#) - related to Land Art, Body Art, Performance Art

Connotation (and denotation)

A connotation is the secondary meaning for an object place person or an idea. It is the Association of reference that reminds us of other things. By contrast, the primary meaning of an object, place, person or

idea is its denotation. A denotation is the primary meaning in the description or name of a thing, person, idea.

For example, a person might look at the Brighton Pavilion as only a building in Brighton.

One could point to it and say 'that is the Brighton pavilion', in so doing would be to denote it. The specific naming of a specific subject is denotation. However, it is possible to go on, in addition, one could say of the Brighton Pavilion, 'it reminds me of India, the romance of the Far East and 18th century ideas about pleasure and distraction.' That would be a connotation.

One could go on further into more connotations: 'Also, the waste of the idle rich, the limitations of the intellect and purpose of the British Royal Family, their disregard for the conditions of the poor etc etc, those are, for me, it's connotations'.

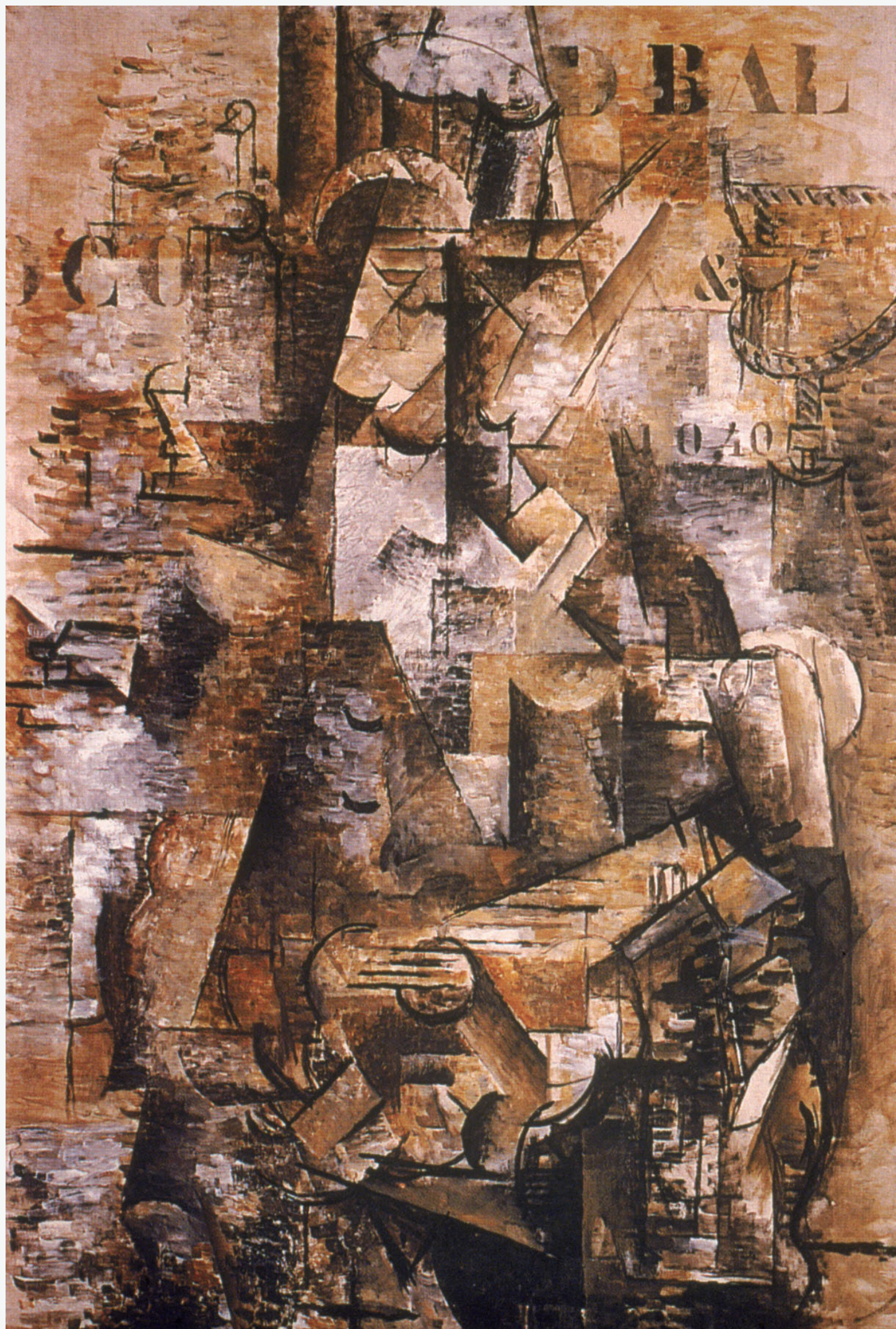
D

Dialectics

This means the art of discussing, using the rules and modes of logical reasoning. There is a history of dialectical thought which runs back through western culture to the period of the ancient Greeks and the philosopher Socrates. Dialectics as a term is most often used to describe the ideas and working practices of Marxist and Hegelian (relating to Hegel) thinkers.

The idea is, simply put:

1. First idea (thesis)
2. From that the counter idea or reaction (antithesis)
3. Then the new thing which is made out of the conflict between the thesis and the antithesis, this is called the synthesis



For example, in 1910, Cubism was becoming so fragmented that it ran the risk of falling into abstraction as no realistic image could be made out from highly fragmented and faceted cubist paintings. Therefore the initial idea (thesis) of a new form of realism in Cubism, had its opposite drawn out of it as abstraction (antithesis) and this had to be resolved in a new move which brought in an alien element, collage, to produce the papier colle.

Papier Colle allowed Picasso and Braque to use newspaper text and wood grain effects to reintroduce recognisable realism and realistic forms into Cubist painting. Papier Colle, was though, a new element in the development of Cubism.



Papier Colle is a [French term which translates as pasted paper, papier collé is a specific form of collage that is closer to drawing than painting](#)

Much of modern art followed this idea of the structure of the dialectic for development. This is possibly why modern art is rounded up with leftwing politics such as communism in the minds of rightwing conservatives who want to resist it and the idea of social progress.

Drama

Hatching to describe backgrounds

Open and broken hatching can be used to create airy and atmospheric effects

Dry on dry

This is the use of stiff or undiluted paint, straight from the tube or tin which is thick and not runny or watery. Stiff, thick or dry paint is worked over other dry layers to create thick impasto effects like these by Gerhard Richter.

E

Euphoria

The word which derives from Greek which means a state of all-consuming joy or well-being. To be euphoric is to be extremely and extraordinarily blissful.

Existential

Existentialism takes into account only physical and earthbound relations (as opposed to the metaphysical perspective). Therefore an Existential analysis excludes any sense of the soul, God, heaven or any other absolute values in favour of the play of existence in the physical world and the certainty of oblivion and death after it. Existentialism places an emphasis on the freedom of the individual to act and to decide. In the 20th century many philosophers were interested in this as a development.

Thinkers ranging from Nietzsche to Heidegger and Sartre followed this line of thinking.

In practice, for many people, artists and writers, this existential approach can lead to problems of doubt and uncertainty when, in place of a god, the highest authority who can be called on to make a judgement is the individual. These doubts can be grouped together under the German word for fear which is 'Angst'. Angst can be best represented by the phrase 'the chasm between what is and what might be'. That is to say, angst is the fear of recognition that someone has when they realise that the state of affairs which exists and which they experience is worryingly less than what might be in an ideal situation.

There is a great deal of angst and existential terror to be found in early Twentieth Century Modernist painting. Most notably in the work of painters like Van Gogh, Edvard Munch and the German Expressionists.

F

Figure/ ground

Non descriptive marks

These are marks which do not describe a particular surface or an object or a form in the painting. Non descriptive marks have no part to play in the strict image-only aspect of the picture but are instead concerned with the surface and the intention of the artist

On the surface, non descriptive marks could be used to create calligraphic effects (see above)

They can be thought of as part of the ground (the rough or textured surface which forms part of the language of the picture rather than the description of one of its elements.)

Non descriptive marks can also be used to state the surface or the style of the picture - they form part of the design and are to be considered like an abstract patterning element

They are therefore not figurative (they are not forms or figures in a picture)

Focus and edges

Depth of field

Even though these elements are the subject of the image they will still move in an order of focus to the most important part.

If the image is a portrait painting, the most important part is likely to be the eyes which are in focus and everything else becomes slightly more out of focus as it moves away in space (backwards or forwards).

A good example is by Botticelli in the National Gallery with this painting.

Look at the tip of the nose and the hair and compare their focus to that on the eyes. or as it goes away towards the edge of the painting.

Softened edges

Even the highlights of a painted image will have slightly softened edges

Background elements are out of focus and so their edges must be softer and less detailed or less precise than the important foreground elements.

Think of a painting working like depth of field in a photograph.

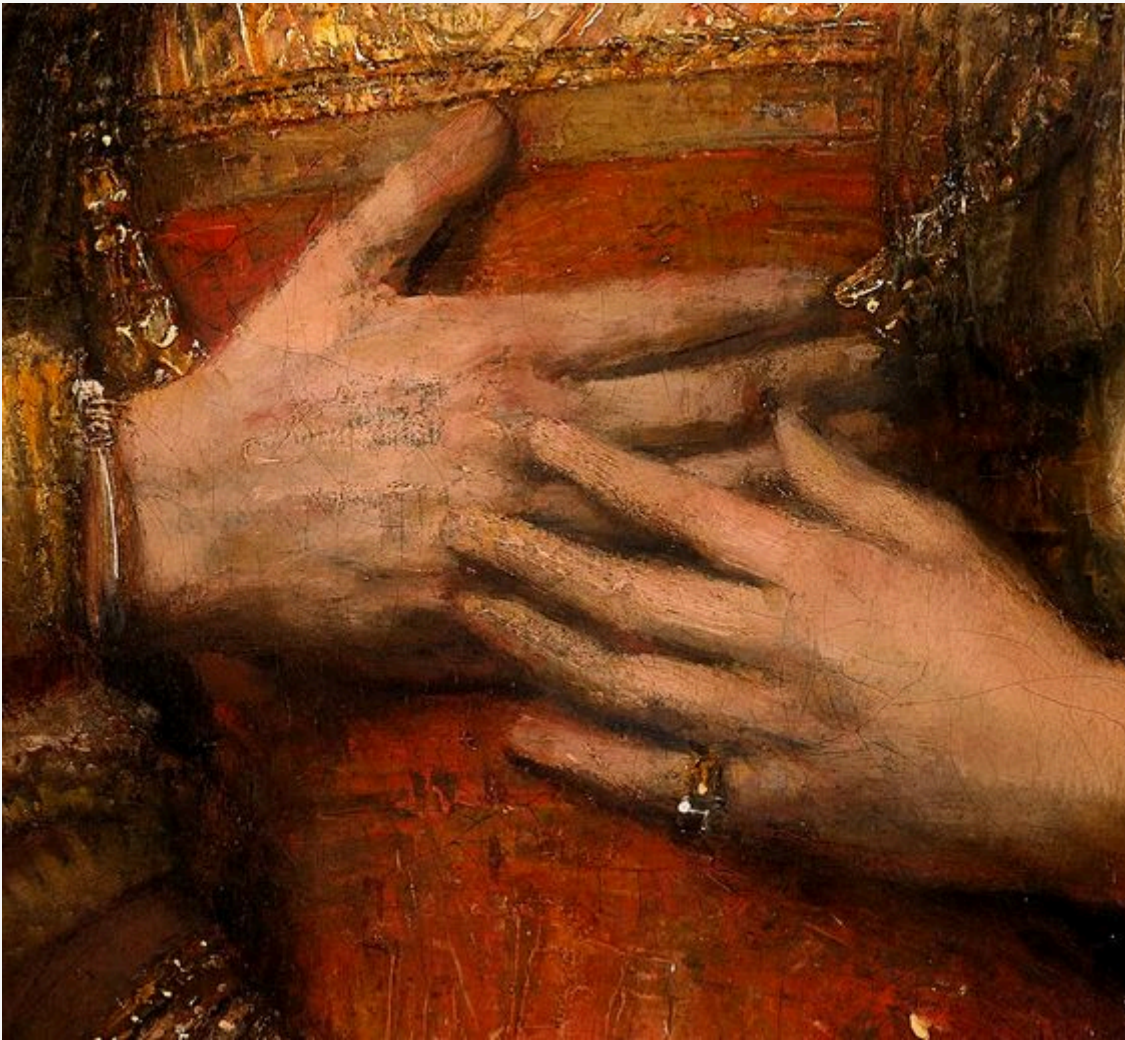
Background elements are out of focus and must have soft, loose or rough edges.

Broken edges - not separated but integrated

Edges can still be broken or blurred. You can still see other edges breaking through and overlapping or coming from behind.

Paintings, when printed out are called 'continuous tone' images because they don't have flat, sharp edges of shapes or pools of colour like logos and signs.

[The Jewish Bride](#) | [Detail](#)



Take this painting by Rembrandt, (called The Jewish Bride) then look at this foreground detail..

The detail is at the centre of the picture and expresses the meaning of the painting in a summary. It is arguably the most important part of the painting and yet edges are indistinct and broken with different forms folding and 'bleeding' into each other

Rembrandt does not cut out shapes with hard and sharp edges. Ask yourself 'why?'

G

Geometric

In painting, any hard—edged shape (straight sided shape) such as a square or rectangle and is referred to as being geometric. From this the term 'geometric abstraction' is used to describe in the abstract arrangement square and/or rectangular elements as for example, in a painting by Mondrian, Ad Reinhardt or Peter Halley.

Gestural

Painting made with a movement of the body or the hand. Usually this refers to visible brushstrokes that manipulate the paint in a way that reminds the viewer of the physical body of the artists and the physical movement of the body, arm or hand

Glazes

These layers should be applied over clean and dry surfaces and should never mix with underlying paint but should colour or tint those layers optically.

A really good exponent of glazing is the portrait work of Thomas Gainsborough who applied lots of glazes to his paintings to give them a fresh and luminous, limpid quality (limpid means clear, transparent, glassy, glass-like, crystal clear, crystalline, see-through, translucent, pellucid, unclouded).

There should be no discernible edge to any glazed element - you should apply soft tints of colour with a sponge or very big soft brush so that glazes cover all of the painting or fade out when they only cover part of it.

A ground

A ground or primer, is the background surface on which you paint.

Or it is a thicker background body of the acrylic or oil paint which you work over.

H

homogeneous

of the same kind; alike.

synonyms:

[similar](#), [comparable](#), [equivalent](#), [like](#), [analogous](#), [corresponding](#), [correspondent](#), [parallel](#), [matching](#), [kindred](#), [related](#), [correlative](#), [congruent](#), [cognate](#)

In painting we think of this as making the picture into one vision - unifying the image and making all the separate elements fit together so that they can be seen as parts of one continuous and contained picture.

heterogeneous

Broken up into clearly different pieces.

Made up of separate parts.

Made up by dissimilar parts.

One collection of distinct elements which do not fit together seamlessly but retain their distinct and unique identities even when taken together or thought or seen in one go.

I

Ideology

Simply means the belief system of a person, group or relating to an object. Thus, a modernist painting has an ideology of (an interior logic of) the ideal of progress and criticism.

This idea of the ideological content of an object can be transferred to design, where for example, a sports—centre might be said to be to run on an ideology of 'health and efficiency'.

It can most easily be applied to the various philosophies of different political parties, so that for example, the Nazi party ran itself on the ideology of race hate and fascism whereas the Conservative party was merely founded on an ideology of greed and the pursuit of profit.

Idyll

An idyll is a scene in a painting, story or poem that presents a strong sense of the harmony of existence. Usually idylls are set in beautiful countryside as a very pleasing time of day, with lovely lighting. This then is called a 'pastoral' surrounding. (Pastoral means to be associated with country life, either in the first signs of farming with animals, or in the second of generally enjoying nature.)

Illusionistic space

This is the invented depth of the painting which, through the use of colour and line, creates the illusion of space which recedes into the background of the painting. Literally, it means using lines and colours to create the illusion of space or depth in the picture.

The illusionistic space of the painting can be divided into three separate areas: the foreground at the illusory front of the picture; the middle ground in the mid space; and the background in the deep or recessional space of the painting.

The term 'illusion' itself merely means a trick or deceit which fools the senses.

Therefore, the 'illusion of painting' is to create the appearance of space within the picture which is made on a flat surface.

Impasto

Impasto is a technique used in painting, where paint is laid on an area of the surface very thickly, usually thick enough that the brush or painting-knife strokes are visible.

When dry, impasto provides texture, the paint appears to be coming out of the canvas.

Impasto - Impasto - Wikipedia

J

Juxtaposition

The setting of one object against another to create a contrasting effect. As well as objects, juxtapositions can be created by contrasting ideas, moods or visual appearances.

For example, placing a small thing close to the big thing can create a juxtaposition of scale; placing the dark thing against a light background can create a juxtaposition of tonality and painting a picture of a large angry man in the middle of a children's party dress of juxtaposition of mood or emotion.

K

L

M

Marks

Broken marks

short notation can help to create distinct areas

Calligraphic marks

'Calligraphy' the study of handwriting. Calligraphic brushstrokes are like those of the handwriting of the artist.

Calligraphy brushstrokes are an extreme use of style for the picture. They help to make the painting or drawing more personalised, more subjective, more unique.

With calligraphic brushstrokes, like recognising an individual person's handwriting, you recognise the unique style of the artist.

Density of marks

make compact or spaced out lines and marks to create tone

Directional marks

use lines and angles or directional marks to demarcate areas

Expressive marks

Expressive marks are used to describe the gesture, the movement, the style of the artist more than describing a shape, form or space in the picture. In this way expressive marks are about the visual style or approach of the painting rather than performing a pictorial function.

This means that expressive marks are more focussed on the way the painting was made, rather than helping to show what it is about

Open and broken marks

can create atmosphere and mood and drama

Negative and positive marks

Positive

Positive marks are marks you make with a pencil, charcoal, pen or brush using ink or paint

Negative

Negative marks are the marks you make with a rubber or eraser which subtract marks previously drawn pencil or charcoal, etc

Repeating marks

use repeating patterns and notations to create areas of tone

You can also use repeating areas of marks to divide up the picture and create a strong clear overall design, for example, Van Gogh's drawings of fields with different fields shown filled with dots, lines and squiggles.

Melodrama

This is the overly dramatic acting or playing out of the story. In theatrical terms, a melodrama is excessively dramatic and therefore crude or cliched.

We often think of melodrama as being an overstated scene which is the product of poor writing or bad acting. For example, see 'Eastenders'.

In terms of visual art, melodrama is often seen as acceptable since it is the proper way to portray the vision of an extremely subjective viewpoint. In painting a melodramatic approach can result in shocking colour combinations, in churning paint and agitated and laboured paint surfaces.

Therefore, in the visual arts, the term 'melodrama' isn't necessarily a negative one. Good examples of melodrama might be found in the German Expressionist painters in the early 20th century or the large

heavily worked and painterly surfaces of the abstract expressionist artists in America in the mid century (The 1950s).

Modular

A single element or group of elements which form a unit within the whole body of an artwork or object and which could theoretically be detached in some way.

A good example of modular design is the Lloyds building in London designed by Sir Richard Rogers. This building is fabricated from modular elements which can be added or subtracted as the occupation and use of the building swirls and subsides. The bigger, busier and more successful Lloyds becomes, the larger and more complicated the building gets, whereas, in lean and difficult times, when the business contracts, so too does the building.

The structure of the building thus allows for the incorporation of extra rooms, services and so on to meet the changing needs over the lifetime of the building.

N

O

P

Painterly

Painterly painting can be any style or manner of painting which can be identified as having some quality which is native only to painting I was refers to the physical process of painting.

These are the qualities such as visible brushstrokes the dripping a smashing of paint and so on.

Pastiche

A reworking of an object or a stylised copy of an object or artistic movement which is shallow, superficial or carried out only in the visual appearance of the original but which actually lacks all the courage and conviction of the original. For example, we could consider the intentions were to lay behind the building and use of the Taj Mahal in India, and contrast it with the impulses which prompted its brilliant pastiche in the Brighton Pavilion.

Pastoral

This simply means relating to the countryside, is contemplation or appreciation, not dear of all things 'rustic' and any vision of nature. Sometimes, this can go on to mean 'simplified' as well, so that we can talk of 'rustic charm' and mean that things are made and presented in a simple, direct fashion.

Plastic values

Plasticity means the 'mold—ability' of a physical substance. By this we could mean that rubber or glue have a plasticity since they can be stretched, bent and twisted and pushed into place. However, in the context of modernism, it means the physical embodiment of an aesthetic idea, for instance, the physical substance of paint which portrays an illusion of space or of light and so on.

Alternatively, and specifically, in modernism, plasticity refers to the concrete and interlocking forms of De Stijl and the neoplasticist painters the 1920s, for example, Leger and Mondrian.

Precursor

A forerunner, or someone or something who precedes the main topic. For example, we could say that the Barbizon painters were a precursor of impressionism.

Pseudonym

An assumed or false name. Marcel Duchamp sometimes used the pseudonym *Rose C'estlavie*.

Primer

It is the foundation of a painting, applied onto the raw canvas, paper, or other support.

It helps to seal and protect the support, for example keeping linseed oil from seeping into the support when oil painting, and it also provides a better base surface for subsequent layers of paint.

Examples of primers are:

- Size - Rabbit skin glue
- PVA - PolyVinyl Acetate
- Gesso

See this presentation for more detail:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1JQJlhna9NnffvTEcTb7codax3PpYclqZ2TFZ2IVgp7k/edit?usp=sharing>

Q

R

Recessional space

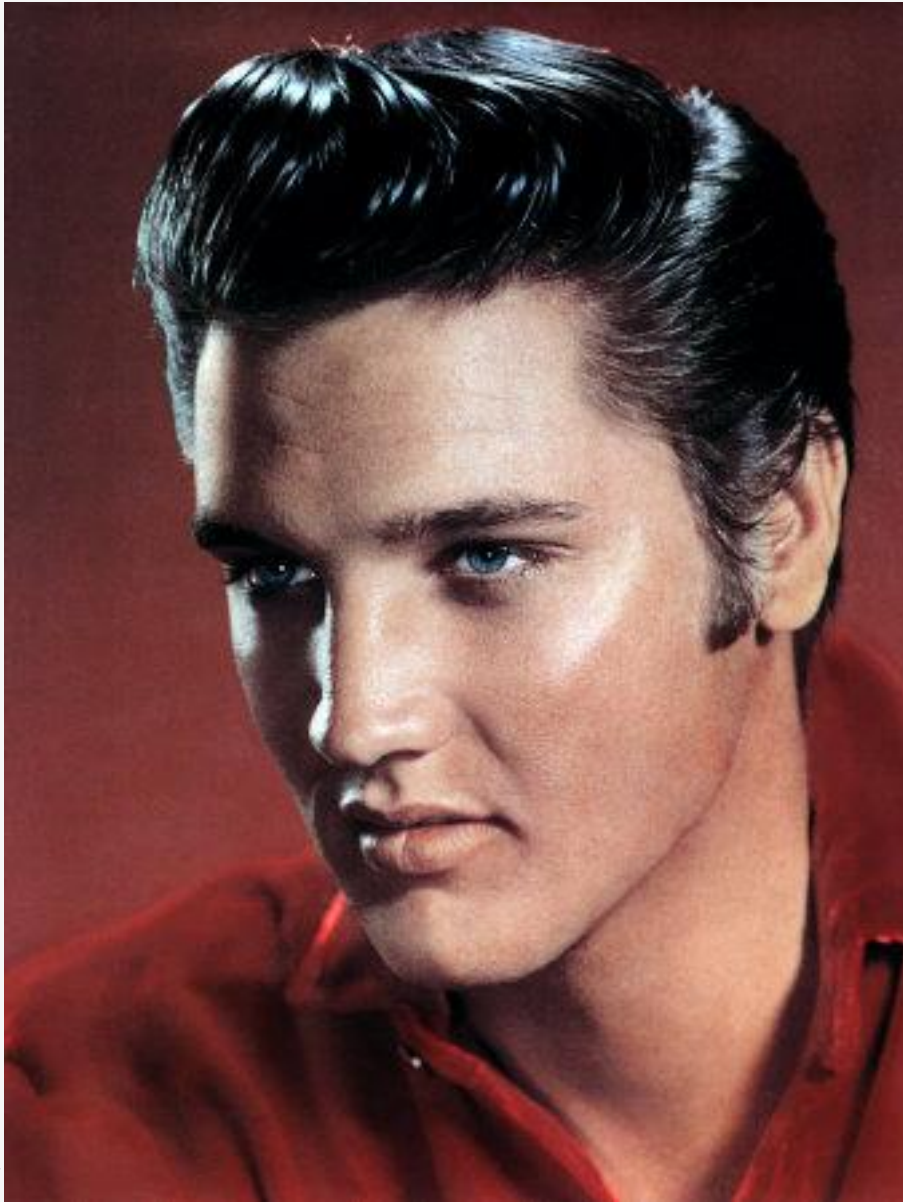
Renaissance pictorial space is often called recessional space. Recessional means 'going back' going away from the viewer and so recessional space is the creation of the illusion of space which moves back the further into the picture the viewer moves their gaze

Renaissance

Renaissance marks the period of 'rediscovery' which took place in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. In Italy, this is famously characterised by the *Renaissance man* who could turn his hand to anything, whether it was painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry or any other 'learned art'. It is still a common phrase to call someone a Renaissance man today when they can do more than one thing well. The examples of Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci together form the zenith (zenith—highest point) of this process and consequently, their works form what is called the 'High Renaissance'. The Renaissance also took place in Northern European painting with the replacement of the angular and stylised forms of the Gothic style giving way to the successful rendering of perspective and illusionistic space. The Renaissance is typically identified as being filled with an air of optimism, humanism, clarity and the light of rational solutions as opposed to the darkness and murky superstitions which had possessed medieval mankind.

Retro (retrospective).

A backwards looking mannerism much loved by post modernists. Retro style takes the look of images and styles from previous years because it enjoys the connotations they generate. For example, the popularity of retro 1950s style 'quiff' haircuts in the 1980s and the taste for 1970s clothes in the mid 1990s.



Y

1950s Elvis original



1980s fashion retro pastiche (pastiche means copy/ reworking)

Rigour

This simply means extreme strictness. The rigorous argument is one which has been thoroughly thought through. A painting which displays rigour is one which has a strict logic of colour relations, the construction of space and drawing which is entirely consistent throughout its surface.

S

Scumbling



Definition from Painting techniques on About.com

Scumbling is a painting technique in which a layer of broken, speckled, or scratchy colour is added over another colour so that bits of the lower layer(s) of colour show through the scumbling. The result gives a sense of depth and colour variation to an area.

Sfumata

- “to evaporate like smoke”
- Edges without lines

The blurring effect along high contrast edges in High Renaissance painting by artists like Leonardo da Vinci

Shading

Contained shading

helps to make objects look more solid and concrete

Shading which is contained by drawn lines creates the appearance of solid objects and their surfaces capturing light or falling into shadow

Smudge and smear

Smudge

Some media such as pencil and charcoal, can be used to draw marks and then you can rub what you have drawn with you finger or a wet or dry cloth.

You can do the same with wet media using a second brush or sponge which is wet to soften and blur different strokes

Smear

Smearing is the process of applying wet media over other wet media.

This can be thin layers (called a glaze) or thick ([impasto](#)) applied over thin layers or thick layers

If the layer underneath is still wet then the process is called 'wet on wet'

Most often, [wet on wet](#) suggests that the top layer will be at least medium thick

[Glazes](#) are generally applied as thin layers onto previously dry layers

Sonata

A classical structure for a piece of music. Sonata form was developed in the music of Haydn and Mozart. It reached its highest point in the work of Beethoven.

Sonatas are often written for one or two instruments such as the piano or the piano and violin.

Space

Deep space



This is the space in the far background of the picture
foreground, mid ground and background.

Darker and thicker, heavier things exist in the foreground to pull the foreground space towards the viewer;
the mid ground is established with midtowns to push it back

and the background is lighter and more ethereal to push it back into the deep space at the back of the picture

Subjectivity

This is the unique perspective or opinion which a person draws from a situation using their moods, feelings and impressions. As each individual possesses their own unique understanding of events (subjective sensibility), no two people will interpret any event exactly the same way.

This concept of subjectivity is highly prized by traditional artists

T

Tones

Light and shade

Tones and 'tonal values' simply means light and dark values.

Light tone is white or near white and called 'the highlights'

Mid tone is the areas that are not very light or dark in the middle

These are the areas that would appear grey if you had a black and white print out of your picture

Three clear values

You must always try to establish three clear tonal values in your pictures:

Highlight

Mid tones

Dark tones or shadows

A classic error is to try to have a lot of variations of mid tones but no clear highlight value and no clear dark tone. This makes your picture look muddy and weak and inconsequential because we like to see contrasting tones in images.

High contrasts give impact and drama. Having clear highlights, mid tones and shadows makes the picture look more plausible and realistic to us.

Order of tones

An order of tones is established by making darker and heavier things sit in the foreground space at the bottom of the picture

Then, in the mid ground, elements are made a little lighter and less resolved than the foreground
In the background, forms (shapes, elements and items) are made lighter still and less concrete or solid.
They appear misty and etherial.
You can use a repeating structure of marks to build up tones, for example, hatching and with cross hatching built up to create darker tones

Transcendental

The mystical proclamation of a 'reality' which lies beyond the context of the material and physical circumstances of life as it is lived in time and space on planet Earth.
Transcendental reality is often cited and invoked as a term of reference by Buddhists, Zen—chanters and Hari—Krishna worshippers as well as various others of their kinds.

U

Utopia

A future perfect society. This is the idea of the goal of a harmonious society, in which everyone would live in good relations with one another.
In Utopia Humankind will be liberated from the drudgery of work and consequently, able to enjoy their lives in peace. The underlying resolve of modernism is to work towards the establishment of this utopian society.
Utopia is also the name of a book written by Sir Thomas More in 1516.
The polar opposite of Utopia is 'dystopia'.

V

Volumetric space

Another specific term for an aspect of Renaissance pictorial space
Volumetric means 'having volume' that is the 3D-ness of the illusion of space in the picture

W

Wet on wet

The process of applying wet paint onto a layer of paint which is still wet and which has recently been applied or is not dry

Wet on wet paint tends to be thicker than effects like glazing

You can paint wet on wet with a brush or a palette knife

You should never mix paint on the picture but only ever on the palette before you apply it.

The foreground or main subject elements represent the part of the painting where the paint will be the most substantial.

Painters like Franz Hals, Edouard Manet and Lovis Corinth are famous for doing this but so too is Vincent Van Gogh.

Wet on wet can be carried out with brush strokes or with a palette knife. When this creates a build up of thick paint, it is called impasto.

Lighter colours will be made using thicker paint as the physical thickness of darker colours can make them appear to 'float' away from the rest of the painting. (Unless you use really thick paint which is inches thick where this reverses, for example, see the work Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff or Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer)

X

Y

Z