Art Definitions / Vocabulary

Art History, Design & Painting Classes

Shape: a visually perceived area created either by an enclosing line or by color & value changes defining the outer edges.

Form: When referring to objects, it is the shape and structure of a thing. When referring to 2-D artworks, it is the visual aspect of the composition, structure, and work as a whole. On a flat 2D surface it can be the illusion of a 3D object.

Volume: the appearance of height, width, and depth in a form.

Mass: three-dimensional volume.

Positive Shapes: any shape or object distinguished from the background.

Negative (space) shapes: unoccupied areas or empty space surrounding the objects or figures in a composition.

Positive/Negative Shapes: (integration) Positive/Negative Shapes (confusion).

Rectilinear: composed of straight lines

Curvilinear: rounded and curving forms that tend to imply flowing shapes and compositions.

Abstraction: a visual representation that may have little resemblance to the real world. Abstraction can occur through a process of simplification or distortion in an attempt to communicate an essential aspect of a form or concept.

Nonobjective: a type of artwork with absolutely no reference to, or representation of the natural world. The artwork is the reality.

Idealism: an artistic theory in which the world is not reproduced, as it is, bas it should be. All flaws accidents and incongruities of the visual world are corrected.