The Elements of Art: Photography Edition

Directions: Copy the notes in red. The notes in blue are art terms for the back of your handout.
The **elements of art** are a set of 7 techniques which describe the characteristics of art. They are combined with the **principles of design** in the creation of artwork.

The elements of art include the following:

- Line
- Shape
- Form
- Space
- Value
- Colour
- Texture
Line

• A line is the most simple element of art.

• Often its purpose in a *composition is to lead the viewers eye through the work of art.

• Notice how your eye follows the line of the sidewalk in the photograph on the right.

*composition: The arrangement of elements in a work of art.
• Lines can be long or short, straight or curved.
• Lines can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal. Lines in art can be thin, solid, dashed, thick, dashed or a variable width.
Implied Lines

- Sometimes lines are made of a series of dots or marks that the eye naturally follows. Implied lines do not physically exist in the image.
- *Subject:* the focal point of a picture, the most important part

*In the picture to the left, we visually “connect the dots” on the street which lead us to the *subject.*
Curved Lines

Curved lines tend to be elegant, graceful and sensual.
Diagonal lines

• This is a view of a looking up at a hydro tower.

• *Diagonal (or zigzag) lines create tension and energy, like a bolt of lightning.*
• **Straight Lines** tend to create a sense of rigidity or stiffness.

• They are less active, creating less visual movement than other lines.

Notice the difference between the motion of the curved and straight lines in the photograph above.
• **Shape is an area enclosed by line.**

• *It is 2 dimensional (flat) and can be geometric or organic.*

• **Geometric shapes** are usually angular and appear frequently in man-made objects.

• **Organic shapes** are usually more rounded and appear most often in nature.
Geometric Shapes

• This photograph is all about geometric shapes, specifically squares and rectangles. This includes the spaces between the shapes as well.

• Notice how the hard light and strong shadows also create shapes of their own.
Organic Shapes

• *Organic shapes are also called “freeform” shapes.*

• Note the curved, flowing edges of the shapes in this famous photograph by Edward Weston.

• *Do these shapes remind you of anything else?*
Form

- While a shape is a 2 dimensional object (having height and width), a form has 3 dimensions (height, width and depth).
- The object to the left appears as though it is solid, therefore it is considered a form.
• Light creates the illusion of form in photographs.
• All photographs are two dimensional, but light and shadow trick the eye into seeing depth.
How an artist uses Space or chooses NOT to use Space adds a great deal to a work of art.

**Space** is the area in or around the objects in an image. Space is so important, that we have names for the types of Space in a work of art: Positive Space and Negative Space.

- **Positive Space** is the space created by an image or object.
- **Negative Space** is the space around and between parts of an image or object.
• The two men are the subject in the photograph on the right, therefore, they occupy the positive space.

• The building and more importantly, the line between them would then be the negative space.

• How does the negative space between them create visual tension?
• **Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a colour.**

• The benefits of knowing how to manage Value are very important to artists who work two-dimensional striving to make their subjects, or the objects in their work, "look" three-dimensional.

• Light effects a true three-dimensional object in unique ways. Artists work hard to reproduce these light effects in their works.
• The values, or tones of this photograph by Minor White range from bright white highlights to deep, rich shadows.
• **Do the values seem realistic to you?**
• If not, it is because this image was made using infra-red film which captures radiation outside of the visible spectrum.
High Key Vs. Low Key

• Both photographs on the left have a limited range of values.

• *The top image is white on white, or high key.*

• *The bottom image is black on black, or low key.*

• How do the range of tones affect the feelings conveyed by the two images?
• The visible spectrum is the portion of the electromagnetic spectrum that is visible to the human eye.

• Electromagnetic radiation in this range of wavelengths is called visible light or simply light.
• **Additive Primary Colours of Light: RGB**
• In light, the primary colours which create white light are Red, Green and Blue.
• **Subtractive Primary Colours of Light: CMYK**

• When printing, the primary colors used are often Cyan, Magenta and Yellow.

• What do you think “K” stands for?
The Primary Colours of Pigment
Red, Yellow & Blue

• In colour theory, these are the 3 pigment colours that can not be mixed or formed by any combination of other colours.

• All other colours are derived from these 3 hues.
The **Secondary Colours of Pigment**
Green, Orange and Purple/Violet

- These are the colours formed by mixing the primary colours.

- Notice that the secondary colours are located between the two primary colours that made them.

- For instance, blue and yellow make green, and red and blue make violet.
The Analogous Colour Scheme

(An analogy is a similarity between like features of two things)

- Analogous colours are any 3 or 4 colours which are side by side on a 12 part colour wheel.
Complementary colours are any two colours which are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel, such as red and green and purple and yellow.
Monochromatic Colour Scheme

(Mono = One)

• The photograph on the right was made with one colour.
• The shadows and highlights were made by mixing that colour with white and black.
• This is referred to as changing the value of a colour.
There are three properties of colour: 
    Hue
    Intensity/ Saturation
    Value
Hue

- Hue is a synonym for colour.

- On the left there are two hues, red and green.
Intensity/ Saturation

- **Intensity or purity is the saturation of a specific hue.**
- A highly saturated hue has a vivid, intense colour, while a less saturated hue appears more muted and grey.
- With no saturation at all, the hue becomes a shade of grey.
Value

- As we saw earlier in the monochromatic teacup painting, value is changed by adding white or black to a single colour.
- When white is added to a colour it is called a *tint*.
- When black is added to a colour it is called a *shade*. 
Warm Vs. Cool Colours

- "Warm" colours describe daylight or sunset and the "cool" colours relate to a gray or overcast day.
- Warm colours are hues from red through yellow, browns and tans included. Cool colours are the hues from blue green through blue violet, most grays included.
Texture

• **Visual Texture is the illusion of a three-dimensional surface. It refers to the way something feels or appears to feel.**

• We use our hands to feel real Texture. Think about what you feel when you run your hands over the bark of a tree. Now think about what the surface of a piece of sandpaper feels like.

• These objects have real Texture, texture you can feel as well as see. Artists strive very hard to imitate the look and feel of real Texture in works of art.
• Side Lighting
• **When light hits an object from the side it enhances its texture.**
• Look at how the dimples on the golf ball are exaggerated by the lighting.
• **When would side lighting be inappropriate?**
Can you identify the ELEMENTS OF ART?
CHOOSE from WARM and COOL color sets
The End