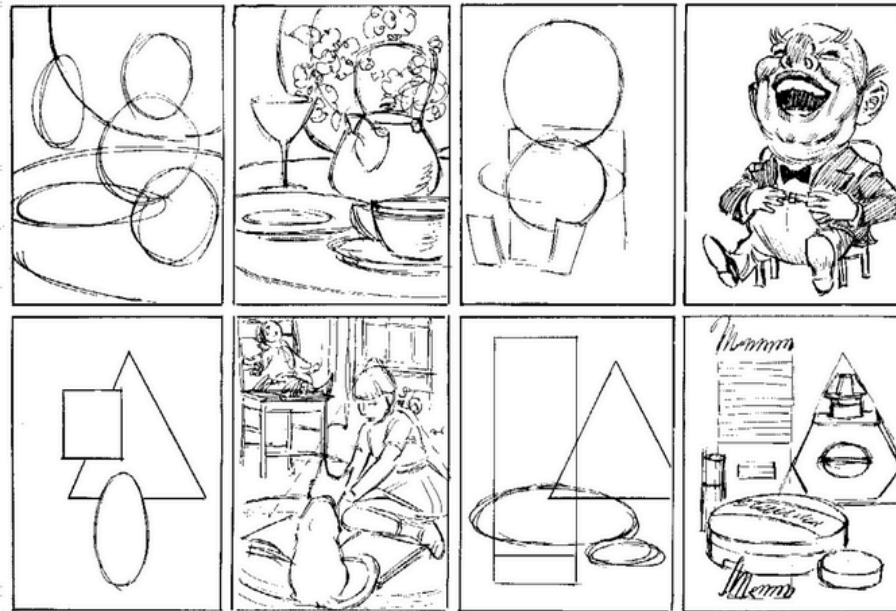


## WHAT IS COMPOSITION?

**“Composition:** is the term used for the arrangements of the elements in or the subject matter of a painting (or any work of art). Done successfully, it draws in the viewer and pulls their eye across the whole piece so that everything is taken in and finally settles on the main subject of the artwork.”

In other words - Composition is “the spatial property resulting from the arrangement of parts in relation to each other and to the whole.”



***“Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter's command to express his feelings.”***

**Henri Matisse**

## THE ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

In a discussion of the visual components of art, it is practical to begin with the basic elements that combine to make a visual work of art: line, shape, form, space, texture, color, and value. All works of art are composed of these basic elements, which are defined below.

**Space:** the visual or actual area within and around shapes and forms. Positive space defines the contents of a shape or form, and is bound by edges or surfaces. Negative space refers to the “empty” area surrounding a shape or form, and also helps to define the boundaries of a shape or form.

**Line:** the path of a point that moves through space. Line can be described in terms of width, direction, movement, length, curvature, and even color.

**Shape:** a distinct spatial form depicted in two dimensions and created by lines or a change in color, shading, or materials.

**Form:** a unit in an artwork that is defined or set apart by a definite contour; sometimes used synonymously with shape, or used to refer to a shape that is depicted in three rather than two dimensions.

**Texture:** the look and feel of a surface, which may be described in such terms as rough, smooth, hard, soft, scratchy, silky, fine, coarse, and so on.

**Value:** the relative lightness or darkness of tones or colors. For example, white and yellow have a light value; black and violet have a dark value.

**Color:** the hue, value, and intensity of an object. The primary colors are red, yellow, and blue; every color except white can be created from various blending of these three colors.

## **THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN**

The elements of design are the building block components of a work of art - the visual pieces that are put together to make a coherent whole. The principles of design are ways of organizing and arranging these elements so that an aesthetically successful composition can result. The principles of design – balance, variety, rhythm (movement), emphasis, proportion, contrast, and unity – are defined below.

**Balance:** the arrangement of elements in a work of art in one of three ways: perfect symmetry (formal balance), in which every element in the work is perfectly balanced against every other element; asymmetry (informal balance), in which there is no one to one, even correspondence of elements; and radial (from the center) in which elements are balanced around a center, as in a circular mandala design.

**Variety:** the assortment of lines, colors, forms, shapes, or textures in a work of art.

**Rhythm (movement):** regular repetition of lines, shapes, colors, or patterns in a work of art.

**Emphasis:** the accent, stress, or importance of a part of an artwork. Opposing sizes, shapes, and lines, contrasting colors, closer detail, and intense, bright color are all used to emphasize, or draw attention to, certain areas or objects in a work of art.

**Proportion:** the relationship of the distance of objects in a composition, as in, for example, close up and far away; the relationship of the size of one part to another or to the whole.

**Contrast:** significant degrees of difference between lines, colors, shapes, values, forms, and/or textures.

**Unity:** the interrelation, balance, and organization of all elements of an artwork to achieve a quality of oneness, or a pleasing sense. (Note: a composition can be pleasingly exciting, pleasingly disturbing, pleasingly tranquil and so on)