

Elements of Art

AP 2-D Art and Design ■ Topic 1

AP 2-D Art and Design



What we will cover

- 1 Line
- 2 Shape & form
- 3 Value
- 4 Color
- 5 Texture
- 6 Space

1

Line

Line – a moving point the eye follows

The **elements of art** 艺术元素 are the visual building blocks. The first is **line** 线条.

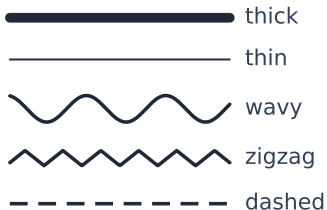
- it has **length and direction**
- it has **quality**: thick/thin, smooth/rough, continuous/broken
- **contour** 轮廓 traces edges; **gesture** 动态速写 captures movement
- **implied lines** 隐含线 are suggested, not drawn



Expressive line quality carries feeling

Line and shape

Line qualities



contour

AP Art 2-D · Elements · line qualities + geometric vs organic shapes

Shapes: geometric vs organic



geometric — regular, mechanical



organic — free, natural

Line varies in weight and character; shapes are either geometric (regular) or organic (natural)

A line has length and direction

Straight

Rigid and stable; verticals feel upright and formal, horizontals calm.

Curved

Flowing; the eye follows it, so a curve carries movement across the page.

Angular

Sharp changes of direction – energy, tension, sometimes conflict.

Freeform

Irregular and organic, closer to how things grow than how they are built.

Every line has **length and direction**. In a written response, name the type *and* say what its direction does to the viewer's eye.

Direction carries feeling



calm

horizontal



strong

vertical



active

diagonal

Artists use line to build shape, shade **value** (hatching), imply **texture**, and **lead the eye**.

2

Shape & form

Shape and form

A **shape** 形状 is a **flat** enclosed area; a **form** 形体 has the **illusion of three dimensions**.

Form is created on a flat surface with **value**, **overlapping** and **perspective**.

Learning to **see the negative shape** makes drawing far more accurate – draw the gap, not the thing.

Geometric 几何 –
regular, mechanical
vs **organic** 有机 – free, natural

Positive shape 正形 is the object
negative shape 负形
is the space around it

3

Value

Value – the most powerful tool for form

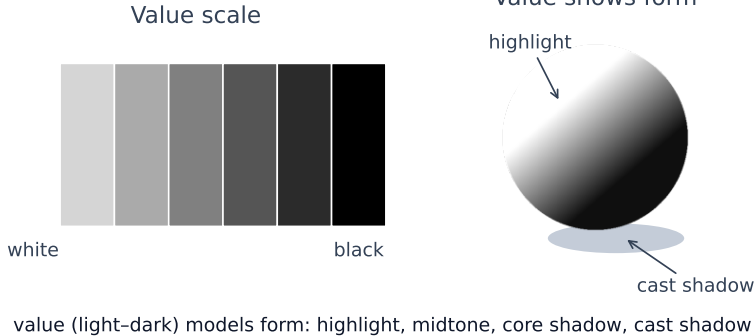
Value 明度 is the lightness or darkness of a tone. A **value scale** 明度阶 runs from white through greys to black.

Strong value **contrast** creates drama and a **focal point**.



Chiaroscuro models form with light and dark

A value scale runs in even steps from white to black



A value scale steps evenly from white to black; strong value contrast creates drama and a focal point

Light on a form – the five zones

highlight

高光

midtones

中间调

core shadow

明暗交界线

**reflected
light**

反光

cast

shadow 投影

Chiaroscuro 明暗对照法 is the bold use of light and dark to model form. **Squinting** removes colour and helps you judge value.

4

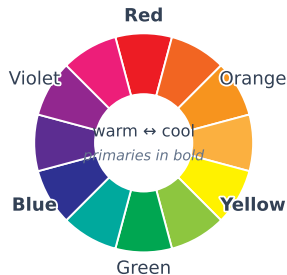
Color

The colour wheel

Colour 色彩 is light reflected from a surface. Its three properties:

- **hue** 色相 – its name
- **value** 明度 – light or dark
- **saturation** 饱和度 – dull to vivid

Primary 三原色 (red, yellow, blue) mix to **secondary** 间色, then tertiary;
complementary colours sit opposite.



primaries mix to secondaries · complements sit opposite
(high contrast)

Colour schemes and temperature

Complementary 互补色 – opposite
on the wheel; side by side they
intensify; mixed they **neutralise**

Analogous 邻近色 – neigh-
bouring; they **harmonise**

Warm 暖色 (red, or-
ange, yellow) **advance**
cool 冷色 (blue, green, violet) **recede**

A **tint** adds white;
a **shade** adds black



Warm colour choices set emotional temperature

5

Texture & space

Texture – how a surface feels, or seems to

Actual texture 实际肌理 can be **physically touched**; **implied texture** 视觉肌理 is an **illusion** of surface.
Techniques: stippling, hatching,
impasto 厚涂, dry-brush.

Contrasting **smooth** and **rough** areas adds interest – and can **direct the eye**.



Fabric texture: implied surface through marks and value

Two kinds of texture

Actual (tactile) texture

Can be physically touched: thick paint, collage, rough paper, fabric worked into the surface.

Implied (visual) texture

The *illusion* of a surface, built with marks, value and pattern – the drawn look of fur, rust or glass.

Making it

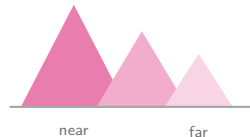
Stippling, hatching, **impasto** 厚涂 (thick paint), dry-brush. Contrasting smooth against rough directs the eye.

Say which kind you mean: **actual (tactile) texture** is felt, **implied (visual) texture** is only seen.

Space and the illusion of depth

Space 空间 is the area within, around and between the parts of a work.

- depth from **overlapping** 重叠, size, placement, detail
- **linear perspective** 线性透视: parallel lines converge at a **vanishing point** 灭点
- **atmospheric perspective** 空气透视: distant things go **paler, bluer, less detailed**



near is big & dark, far is small & pale The **format** and **cropping** of the picture plane shape how the space is read.

Three planes of depth

Foreground

Nearest the viewer: largest, lowest on the page, sharpest detail, strongest contrast.

Middle ground

The linking zone – where the subject often sits and where overlapping does most of its work.

Background

Farthest away: smaller, higher, paler and softer (atmospheric perspective).

Depth on a flat surface comes from **overlapping**, size, placement and detail – not from perspective lines alone.

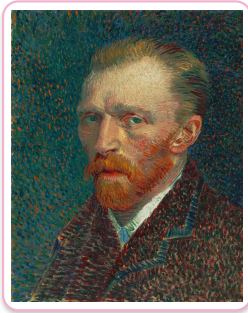
Worked example – writing about an element

“Describe how *line* creates meaning in this portrait.”

A strong answer names the **element**, its **quality**, and its **effect**: *“The artist uses thick, jagged diagonal lines in the background, and their restless, active direction makes the calm horizontal lines of the sitter’s shoulders feel even more still.”*

Naming the element **and** linking it to a **feeling** is what portfolio written evidence and analysis questions both reward.

Line



Van Gogh's self-portrait: restless diagonal strokes behind calm horizontal shoulders – the same two directions doing opposite jobs in one picture

Exam tips

- Name the **element** precisely – line, shape or form, **value**, colour, texture, space – in any analysis.
- Justify how **form** is modelled with a **value scale** and a single light source.
- Read the **colour wheel**: identify **complementary** versus **analogous** schemes and warm or cool temperature.
- Separate **shape** (2-D) from **form** (3-D) and **actual** from **implied texture**.
- Explain depth with **overlap**, size, **linear perspective**, and **atmospheric perspective**.

6

Recap

Topic 1 – key takeaways

1

Line

quality and direction carry feeling:
calm, strong, active

2

Value

models form; five zones under one
light; squint to judge it

3

Colour

hue, value, saturation;
complementary vs analogous

4

Space

overlap, size, linear and
atmospheric perspective

Check yourself

- 1 What is the difference between shape and form?
- 2 Which colours sit opposite on the wheel and intensify each other?
- 3 Name two cues that make distant things read as far away.
- 4 Actual or implied texture: thick impasto paint?

Answers 1. shape is flat (2-D), form reads as solid (3-D) 2. complementary
3. paler/bluer, smaller, less detail, overlapped 4. actual