

*The brand names used in the ArtsEd Washington Visual Art Glossary are not product endorsements, but explanations of the qualities of art materials frequently used in the classroom.

abstract, abstraction – A work of art emphasizing design and simplified or systematic exploration of forms. The subject matter may be recognized or may be completely transformed into shape, color, or line.

acrylic medium – Liquid used to thin paints. Also, material used to make acrylic paintings.

acrylic paints – A synthetic, plastic resin paint whose qualities include pigments that can adhere to a wide variety of surfaces.

additive sculpture – A sculptural construction technique in multiple medias where materials are added to the sculpture as opposed to taking away.

aesthetic - The theory of the artistic or the beautiful; pertaining to work philosophically pleasing to the emotional nature of man; a pattern of thinking oriented with meaning.

analogous color – those colors closely related; colors that are neighbors or adjacent on the color wheel.

Analysis - A part of the artistic process that considers how art elements are organized and what decisions were made by the artist.

appropriation – Use of existing imagery to create a new work of art, often without permission.

architecture – The art and science of designing and constructing buildings.

armature – A framework used to support material being modeled in a sculpture.

atmospheric perspective – The illusion of deep space produced in art by lightening values, softening contours, reducing value contrasts, and neutralizing colors in objects as they recede.

attribute – A quality, characteristic, or distinctive feature.

axis – A straight, center line about which an image or object is symmetrical.

background – The part of the image that depicts what lies behind the subject or objects in the foreground.

balance – A principle of organization that refers to the visual equalization of elements in a work of art.

balance, informal – Balance achieved through approximate visual illusion of stability and unity in a work of art. Often relies on equilibrium established through use of positive and negative space.

beginning, middle, end – *In art and writing*, presentation of a series of events in a purposeful sequence to tell a story, either fictional or factual.

bisque – Clay fired at a low temperature to gain structural strength, prior to glaze application and glaze fire.

blend – Combining two or more colors in drawing media, often creating a third color.

bogus paper – A heavy, tough 80# gray paper principally used for crayon, charcoal, and tempera and watercolor paint.

brayer – A small hand roller used to spread ink or paint thinly and evenly over a flat surface.

broad palette – A wide range of colors selected for a work of art.

brushwork/brushstroke – The selected strokes and dabs used by an artist to create painted marks.

canvas – A fiber surface on which an artist applies a ground and paints; also any painting executed on such a material.

character/characterization – Qualities or attributes distinguishing one person or group from another; a person portrayed in an artistic piece (visual, dance, or theater).

cityscape – A work of art depicting a city scene.

collaboration – To work together in a joint effort.

collage – A technique in which the artist glues materials such as paper, cloth or found materials to some type of ground; actual textures may be found on the picture plane surface.

collagraph – A print made from a plate composed of other materials—papers, textiles, lace, or gesso, that is glued to a support material such as cardboard.

color – The response of vision to the wavelength of light reflected from a surface and identified as red, green, blue, etc.

color wash – A thin, transparent layer of paint.

column – A post; a support to beams or roof systems.

columnar form – A cylindrical three-dimensional form.

complementary colors = Any two colors that are located opposite each other on a color wheel.

composition – The art of organizing all of the elements of a work of art into a harmoniously unified whole.

Conté* – A blendable art crayon with rich, vibrant pigments used for brilliant color.

contour – A single line or lines that define the outside edge and often the inner description of objects or figures.

contour drawing – A single line drawing that defines the outer and inner forms (contours) of either figures or objects.

contrast – A difference in value, color, or texture that achieves emphasis or dominance.

converging lines – Used in perspective drawing, these lines represent the parallel edges of an object but are drawn to converge to a vanishing point.

cool colors – The hues on one side of the color wheel that contain blue and psychologically stimulate a cold, familiar reference or sensation.

craftsmanship – Skill and care in use of materials for a resolved, unified work of art.

criticism – The formal process of describing and analyzing a work of art leading to interpretation and valuing the art.

cross contour – A line that can define surface undulations between the contour edges of shapes or objects.

crosshatching line – Parallel, crossed lines drawn in more than one direction gradually creating a denser and denser pattern; often used to create a darker value in drawings or printmaking.

cylinder – A mathematical form related to a can or a tube.

dabs – To apply with short, light strokes.

deep space – Perceived space that extends far backward from front to rear in a two-dimensional work of art.

depth – Perception of spatial distance between objects in a two-dimensional work of art.

description – A formal part of the artistic process using art vocabulary to describe what is seen referencing the elements of art.

descriptive language – Use of language to expand the reader's understanding through detail; use of language to produce mental pictures and appeal to the senses.

design – A framework or scheme of construction on which artists base the organization of their work.

detail – A small or particular part of a work of art.

diagonal – A slanted line obliquely running at an angle to the vertical and horizontal planes.

direction – *In writing*, understanding that most text moves from front to back, left to right, and top to bottom; *In art*, the use of line, color, pattern, shapes or space to lead the viewer's eyes through the composition.

dominance – The principle of compositional organization that suggests one element is more important than others in the same composition.

draft/redraft – To create a preliminary drawing for a proposed work of art and the artistic process of refinement; writes.

drafting tools – Tools used for technical drawing: protractor, compass, rulers, etc., and sometimes discrete drawing tools.

dry on dry – A watercolor technique painting with a dry brush on dry ground (paper).

edge – A linear separation between two color areas, shapes, or forms.

elaboration – A principle of organization in art using high detail or more information.

elements of art – Six basic optical units used to communicate or express creative ideas: color, line, shape, space, texture and value.

elevation – In architecture, a scale drawing from the side, front, or rear of a particular structure.

emphasis – A means by which an artist uses contrasting colors, shapes, or value to draw attention to certain areas or objects in a work of art.

exaggeration – To increase or enlarge to an abnormal degree; to distort through overstatement.

expository writing – Writing that explains an idea and informs the reader.

expression – To communicate strong personal and emotional feelings to the viewer.

fibers – A natural or synthetic woven material.

figure – A human shape or form.

focal point – That part of an image that first draws the attention of the viewer.

foreground – The part of the image that appears to be closest to the viewer.

form – *In art*, arbitrary organization or arrangement of all the visual elements in a total work of art. *In writing*, organization of specific types of writing within a general category of purpose/mode.

formal organization – A composition dependent upon approximately symmetrical balance based on perceived weight of colors, shapes, and lines.

geometric shape – A shape that appears related to geometry, such as the square, triangle, circle, etc.

gesture drawing – A loose, scribble-like, continuous line in loops or free movement that captures the pose of an active figure.

glaze watercolors – A transparent (can be seen through) layer of paint, applied on top of a dry area, that allows the underpainting to show through and sometimes creates colors other than those originally painted.

gradation/range of value- Values or shades that move gradually from one value to the next.

graphite – A soft steel-gray to black crystallized carbon substance used in drawing pencils.

hard-edged shape – A shape with a crisp defined edge, usually requiring the painting technique of painting to an edge.

harmonious – The effect achieved by repetition of characteristics that are the same or similar.

horizon – The division between earth and sky, as seen by an observer.

horizontal balance – A type of balance created in a composition on a horizontal axis.

horizontal line – A line that is laid down parallel to the top and bottom edge of the paper or surface used to make art.

Illusion – A response by the eye to lines, shapes, and colors arranged in art.

image/imagery – *In art*, an envisioned object or plan given concrete appearance through the use of an art medium; the general appearance of a work. *In writing*, figurative language used to produce mental pictures and appeal to the senses.

impression – The act of pressing an object into clay to create texture; creating a dent or imprint in a surface.

imprint – To make or impress upon a surface.

in the round – A three-dimensional view of a sculpture.

incising – A printmaking technique for creating a linear impression.

intensity – The saturation or strength of a color.

interior – A representation of the inside of a room or structure.

interpretation – A part of art criticism where the viewer reaches an understanding about the meaning of art, supported by objective criteria.

interrupted line – A line that includes a break or breaks in the continuity of the line, but the linear intent or direction continues in the viewer's eye.

juxtaposition – Two objects placed side by side for contrast or an object placed in contradiction to the expected context.

kiln (*kill*) – An oven capable of controlled high temperatures in which clay objects are fired or baked.

***Kraft™ paper** – A brand of intensely-colored all-purpose, paper appropriate as a replacement for construction paper – accepts silk-screening, water-based paints, collage, and oil pastel; *Fadeless® paper adds qualities of fade resistance and the ability to not crack to Kraft™ paper.

landscape – A work of art that shows the features of the natural environment.

layers – The technique an artist uses to lay one color of paint or drawing medium on top of another to create depth or to make a color more complex.

leather hard – Clay in the semi-dry state, similar to leather in consistency. The clay is no longer flexible, yet it is still soft enough for carving and joining.

line – The path of a moving point, a mark made by a tool or instrument across a surface. It may be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, or implied.

linear perspective – A pictorial system for creating the illusion of three-dimensional space and objects on a two-dimensional surface; refers to the drawing of objects in line to suggest their three-dimensionality and effect of existence in space.

local color – The characteristic value of an area or surface determined by its particular pigmentation.

***Lyra® pencils** – A brand of colored pencils with extra-soft, long-lasting pigments.

mark making/paint marks – The stylistic notations made by or techniques used by individual artists when they draw.

mask in watercolor – To apply tape or liquid masking material to save the undercolor of the painting surface; to create a specific shape edge by creating a taped line that can be painted over for a crisp edge.

medium, media – The materials and tools used by the artist to create the visual elements perceived by the viewer of the art.

metaphor – *In writing*, a figure of speech indirectly comparing two essentially dissimilar things; used to create new connections for the reader (e.g., *My love is a red, red rose.*) *In art*, a symbol or image comparing two essentially dissimilar things.

middle ground – A representation of space or point of view mid-way between the extremes of front and back.

midline – A symmetrical line of axis in a proportional drawing.

mixed media – A two-dimensional art technique that uses more than one medium (material).

Model Magic® – A Crayola® modeling compound that is soft, pliable, and lightweight for easy manipulation. Dries to a firm consistency.

modeling – A sculptural term used to describe the process of working with a pliable material.

monotype – A printmaking technique where the intent is to make one primary or unique image, though secondary images (*ghosts*) may be printed as well.

movement – A principle of organization in reference to the travel of one's eye through a work of art.

multiple views – Considering something from more than one viewpoint.

mural – A usually large-scale work of art applied either directly to a ceiling or wall, or attached to the wall.

narrative – Presentation of a series of events in a purposeful sequence to tell a story, either fictional or factual.

narrow palette – A limited range of colors selected for a work of art.

negative shapes – The unoccupied or empty spaces left after the positive shapes have been laid down by the artist; negative spaces can function as shapes in the picture plane; sometimes called the background.

negative space – The unoccupied or empty spaces left after the positive shapes have been defined by the artist; negative spaces can function as shapes in the picture plane; sometimes called the background.

newsprint paper – A very inexpensive paper usually used for preliminary drawings.

nib – The fine point on a pen.

non-representational – Works of art that have no forms reminiscent of actual objects or things.

observation – The artistic process of gathering information.

opaque – The quality of a material that will not allow light to pass through it.

open composition – Forms in painting and drawing that are made incomplete at the edge of the composition with an emphasis on and the illusion that these objects proceed beyond the picture plane edge.

organic shapes – Free forms or shapes that represent living things with irregular edges.

painting – An image composed of applied colors; the art of producing such works.

palette – A group of colors used by an artist or school of art; a flat surface on which a painter places the supply of paint to be used.

pattern – The obvious emphasis on visual form relationships and certain directional movements within the picture plane. Pattern also refers to the repetition of art elements or the combination of elements in a readily recognizable systematic organization.

perception – Knowledge gained through the senses.

persuasive – *In art and writing*, that which convinces the designated audience to support a point of view, make a decision, or take an action.

picture plane – The imaginary flat surface or plane in which the artist references and organizes images.

planar – A sculpture made by constructing more than one flat surface or plane.

point of view – The position from which something is considered.

portrait – The image of a person's face.

pose – The human figure in a particular position, i.e. sitting, standing, stretching.

positive space – Objects in a work of art as opposed to the background or space around the objects.

prewrite – The thinking and planning the writer does before drafting, which includes considering the topic, audience, and purpose; gathering information; choosing a form; determining the role of the writer; and making a plan.

primary colors – the hues from which all other spectrum colors can be made: red, yellow, and blue (painting).

print – a multiple impression made from a master plate or block, produced and printed by the artist (or under his/her supervision).

printing plate – The planar surface on which an impression or incision is made, produced and printed by the artist.

proportion – The comparison of elements one to another in terms of their properties of size, quantity, and degree of emphasis.

quadrilateral shapes – Four-sided mathematical shapes.

quill – The hollow- main shaft of a feather.

radial balance – A system of balance based on a circle with components radiating from a central point.

random shape – A shape that does not relate to mathematical shapes or recognizable ideas.

ratio – The relationship in number or degree between two things.

realistic – An approach to art in which a subject matter is shown without any idealization, and retains the basic impression of visual reality and surface appearance.

rectilinear shapes – Those shapes considered quadrilateral in math.

register – One of a series of horizontal bands placed one upon another and found in many different artistic forms from a variety of cultures (Greek vases, Native American pots, Egyptian tombs, medieval sculptures and manuscript illuminations).

registration – Correct alignment or positioning of paper in a printing press to allow a series of prints to match in configuration.

relief print – Printmaking techniques in which the image is printed from the raised areas of the printmaking block, usually created by cutting away areas of the block. Wood and linoleum as well as collagraph prints are considered relief prints.

repetition – The use of the same visual element a number of times in the same composition. Repetition can accomplish a dominance of one visual idea, a feeling of harmonious relationship, an obviously planned pattern, or a rhythmic movement.

representational – Any artistic style in which objects or figures are easily identified.

resist – A painting technique that relies on wax or oil to resist water, causing water media to adhere in clean areas.

resolution – *In art*, the completion of a work of art to the artist's satisfaction and for artistic unity. *In writing*, the ending of a story where conflict are resolved and loose ends are tied together.

revise/revision – The process of reworking or re-seeing *writing or art*, which includes: considering changes in audience, purposes, focus, organization, style; elaborating, emphasizing, clarifying, or simplifying text and images (adding, deleting, reordering, or substituting).

rhythm – A principle of organization that indicates a type of movement in art or design, reinforced by repeated shapes, lines, or colors.

scale – The relative size of one object to another, to its environment, or to humans.

score – To scratch both surfaces of clay that will be adhered together.

scratchboard – Pre-inked clay surface or student-grade cardboard that provides the artist the ability to lift off the ink and reveal a high contrast underneath, usually black on white.

sculpture – A three-dimensional work of art.

secondary colors – Orange, green and violet; hues produced by the mixing of equal parts of two primary colors.

setting – The context or environment in which something occurs: time, place, scenery, images.

shape – An element of art representing enclosed space, having only two dimensions.

simile – A figure of speech directly comparing two essentially dissimilar things; the comparison is signaled with *like* or *as*; used to make writing more vivid, fresh, or interesting (e.g. *as fresh as bread from the oven*).

simplification – To make less complex; without embellishment or unnecessary detail.

slab – A formation of clay into a sheet of uniform thickness, made prior to construction or manipulation.

slip – Clay in a water state, usually similar to the thickness of sour cream.

space – An element of art that indicates areas in work of art (positive and negative); also, the feeling of depth in a work of art.

stencil – Images produced by using openings in another material (such as tagboard) and tracing or painting through the openings to the material beneath.

still life – A group of inanimate objects arranged to be painted or drawn.

storyboard/story frame – *In writing and art*, a graphic organizer used to plan the development of a story, visual, or presentation.

strokes – A mark made by a marking instrument, either a paintbrush or drawing tool.

study – A preliminary drawing used to inform a final, resolved drawing.

stump – A tightly rolled paper tool used to smooth or blend areas of pastel or charcoal.

stylus – A plastic or wooden pointed tool used to lift the ink from scratchboard, sometimes a one-piece wooden handle with a steel point, or sometimes a plastic handle with a separate knife-like blade.

subtractive – A sculptural construction technique in multiple medias where materials are taken away or removed.

sulfite paper – A heavy white drawing paper with special sizing to accept a variety of drawing media.

surface – The outer layer upon which a two-dimensional work of art is made.

Surrealism – A style of twentieth-century painting in which the artists relate normally unrelated objects and situations. Often the scenes are dreamlike or set in unnatural surroundings.

symbol – A form, image, word, icon, or subject that represents an idea or meaning other than its outward appearance.

symmetry, symmetrical – A formally balanced composition.

technical line – A line drawn with precision, often using drafting tools.

technical writing – A type of expository writing (or sometimes persuasive writing) most often used to convey information (or to convince others) for technical or business purposes.

technique – The manner and skill with which artists employ their tools and materials.

tempera paint – An opaque water-based paint.

template – A pattern used as a guide to transfer or draw an image accurately.

tertiary color – *In art*, a color resulting from the mixing of two secondary colors.

tertiary sources – *In writing*, third level sources (e.g. research summaries).

textile – Fabric, fiber, or yarn in a woven format.

texture – The element of art that refers to the quality of a surface, both tactile and visual.

three-dimensional – Having height, width, and depth.

tile – A thin, flat, slab or materials such as baked clay, laid in rows to create a larger surface.

tints – A light value of a hue made by adding white to the original color.

tones/shades – The modification of a color (hue) through the addition of neutrals.

two-dimensional – Having height and width.

unity – A principle of organization that relates to the sense of oneness or wholeness in a work of art.

value – An element of art that relates to the lightness or darkness of a color or tone.

vanishing point – An imaginary point or points on the eye level toward which parallel lines recede and will eventually meet in a perspective drawing.

vertical balance – A type of balance created in a composition on a vertical axis.

vertical lines – Lines that are upright and parallel to the sides of the paper or drawing surface.

viewfinder – A tool used to isolate a compositional image.

viewpoint – A selected point of view from the artist's or viewer's perspective.

volume – A three-dimensional shape that occupies a quantity of space.

warm colors – The hues on one side of the color wheel that contain red and psychologically stimulate a warm, familiar reference or sensation.

wash – A thin, transparent layer of paint.

water soluble colored pencils – Dry drawing media in pencil form which can be loosened or diluted with water for transparent watercolor effects.

watercolor paint – A paint that uses water as a medium.

wet on wet watercolor – A watercolor technique using fluid color on a wet ground or paper.

WetSet® clay – A modeling clay that sets to a firm consistency when set in water.

whisper lines – Use of light drawing lines so that they do not necessarily show in the final drawing or painting.

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ArtsEd Washington endorses the use of art materials certified for use in the classroom and with children (AP and CP).

The Glossary for the ArtsEd Washington Visual Art Glossary was written in reference to the following sources. These resources could be used in tandem to supplement the above list of art vocabulary terms:

Robert O. Bone, Otto G. Ocvirk, Robert E. Stinson, Phillip R. Wigg, *Fundamentals: Theory and Practice*. Dubuque, Iowa, Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1990.

Gerald F. Brommer, *Discovering Art History*. Worcester Massachusetts: Davis Publications, 1997.

Gerald F. Brommer, *Exploring Drawing*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis Publications, Inc., 1988

Jack Hobbs & Richard Salome. *The Visual Experience*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis Publications, Inc., 1995.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Writing Frameworks Glossary*.

Tacoma School District Visual Art Curriculum; *Common Concepts: Art and Math Lessons*

Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995.