

Art Vocabulary Terms (full list)

1. Actual texture - A surface that *can be experienced* through the sense of touch (as opposed to a surface visually stimulated by the artist).
2. Aesthetic – Used to describe something as visually-based, beautiful, or pleasing in appearance and to the senses. Aesthetics is a term developed by philosophers during the 18th and 19th centuries and is also the academic study of beauty and taste in art.
3. Allegory - An image or story that refers to a related or overarching concept such as good or evil.
4. Appropriation - The act of borrowing imagery or forms to create something new.
5. Artifact - An object produced or shaped by human craft, especially a rudimentary art form or object, as in the products of prehistoric workmanship. Different and yet share the same commitment to questioning artistic conventions.
6. Atmospheric perspective - The illusion of depth produced in graphic works by lightening values, softening details and textures, reducing value contrasts, and neutralizing colors in objects as they recede.
7. Balance - A sense of equilibrium achieved through implied weight, attention, or attraction, by manipulating the visual elements within an artwork.
8. Cast shadow - The dark area that occurs on a surface as a result of something being placed between that surface and a light source.
9. Chromatic value - The relative degree of lightness or darkness demonstrated by a given color.
10. Classic Art - Referring to the art of ancient Greece and Rome (300–400 BCE) and characterized by its emphasis on balance, proportion, and harmony.
11. Collaboration - A working arrangement between an artist and another person, group, or institution. Present throughout art history, collaborations are considered unusual today when artists tend to be valued for their individual voice and contribution to society. Some artists even form long-term working partnerships with other artists—these are seen as distinct from collaborations, which are often temporary.
12. Collage - A technique of picture making in which real materials possessing actual textures are attached on the picture plane surface, often combining them with painted or drawn passages.

13. Concept - A comprehensive idea or generalization. An idea that brings diverse elements into a basic relationship.
14. Conceptual Art - Works of art in which the idea is equally if not more important than the finished product. Conceptual art can take many forms, from photographs to texts to videos, while sometimes there is no object at all. Emphasizing the ways things are made more than how they look, conceptual art often raises questions about what a work of art can be. Conceptual art is also often difficult to collect or preserve, as it can be the artist's own experience that is the work of art.
15. Consumption - The intake of objects, images, and popular ideas into one's home, body, or daily life. Be it in the form of food, furniture, art objects, or mass media advertising, consumption is rooted in the sale and purchase of goods in a modern, consumer society like the United States. Involving stuff in the world, from products to slogans, artists whose work deals with consumption are often concerned with what a thing is, how it looks, and how it came into existence.
16. Contemporary Art - Art made after 1970 or works of art made by living artists. A loose term that at times overlaps with Modern Art, many museums specialize in showing art by living artists in isolation while other institutions show contemporary art along with works dating back thousands of years. Unlike Modern Art, contemporary art is not defined by a succession of periods, schools, or styles.
17. Context - The location, information, or time-frame that informs how a work of art is viewed and what it means. Works of art often respond to a particular space or cultural climate. If the context for a work of art is changed or recontextualized, the way in which the work is understood may change as well.
18. Contour - The line that defines the outermost limits of an object or a drawn or painted shape. It is sometimes considered to be synonymous with "outline"; it indicates an edge that also may be defined by the extremities of darks, lights, textures, or colors.
19. Craftsmanship – Aptitude, skill, or quality workmanship in the use of tools and materials.
20. Dominance - The principle of visual organization that certain elements are more important than others in a particular composition or design. Some features are emphasized, and others are subordinated.
21. Economy - The distillation of the image to the basic essentials for clarity of presentation.
22. Elements of art - Line, shape, value, texture, color – the basic ingredients the artist uses to produce imagery. Their use produces the visual language of art.

23. Expression - The manifestation through artistic form of a thought, emotion, or quality of meaning; synonymous with the term content.
24. Form - The arrangement of elements in an artwork according to the principles that foster unity. The total appearance or organization.
25. Genre – A means of categorizing works of art based on style, form, and subject matter. History painting and landscape are genres of painting; horror and romantic comedy are genres of film; detective and science fiction are genres of literature.
26. Graphic - A description applied to flat, two-dimensional images or primarily graphic media such as fonts, comic books, and cartoons.
27. Harmony - The pleasing quality achieved by different elements of a composition interacting to form a whole. Harmony is often accomplished through repetition of the same or similar characteristics.
28. Hue - Designates the common name of a color and indicates its position in the spectrum or on the color wheel. This name is determined by the specific wavelength of the color in a ray of light.
29. Iconography - Symbols and images that have a particular meaning, either learned or universal.
30. Identity - How one views oneself, how others perceive you, and how a society as a whole defines groups of people. Important to one's identity are ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class, as well as education, childhood, and life experience. For many, being an artist is not just an occupation but also an ethical responsibility. Much art today deals with what it means to be an artist in today's rapidly changing world.
31. Illusion - A visually misleading or perceptually altered space or object.
32. Implied lines - Lines that dim, fade, stop, and/or disappear. The missing portion of the line is completed in the viewers mind.
33. Installation - A work of art created for a specific architectural situation, installations often engage multiple senses such as sight, smell and hearing. The placement of individual works of art in a gallery is also commonly referred to as an installation. Installations are generally temporary and stationary, but some installations travel to different locations and exist over longer periods of time.
34. Juxtaposition - The state or position of being placed close together or side by side, so as to permit comparison or contrast.
35. Kinetic - Having mechanical or moving parts that can be set in motion; art that moves.

36. Local color- The color as seen in the objective world (green grass, blue sky, red barn, and the like).
37. Metaphor - A relationship between disparate visual or verbal sources where one kind of object, idea, or image is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. Artists use metaphor to bridge differences between seemingly dissimilar images and ideas.
38. Modernism – A historical period and attitude from the early to mid-20th century, characterized by experimentation, abstraction, a desire to provoke, and a belief in progress. Modern art is oriented towards developing new visual languages (rather than preserving and continuing those of the past) and takes the form of a series of periods, schools, and styles.
39. Monochromatic color - A color that has only one hue but has the complete range of value of that color from white to black.
40. Motif - A recurrent or dominant theme in a work of visual or literary art.
41. Movement - Eye travel directed by visual design in a work of art.
42. Mythology - An allegorical narrative often incorporating legendary heroes, gods, and demi-gods of a particular people or culture.
43. Narrative - The representation in art, by form and content, of an event or story. Whether a literal story, event, or subject matter—or a more abstract relationship between colors, forms and materials—narrative in visual art applies as much to the work as it does to the viewer's "story" of what they see and experience.
44. Nonrepresentational Art - Artwork encompassing non-recognizable imagery, ranging from pure abstraction (non-recognizable but derived from a recognizable object) to nonobjective art (not a product of abstraction, but derived from the artist's mind).
45. Objective - That which is based, as nearly as possible, on physical actuality or optical perception. Such art tends to look natural or real.
46. Palette - A particular range of colors or a tray for mixing colors.
47. Perspective - A visual formula that creates the illusion of depth and volume on a two-dimensional surface. Perspective also infers a particular vantage point or view.
48. Picture plane -The actual flat surface on which the artist executes a pictorial image. In some cases, this acts merely as a transparent plane of reference to establish the illusion of forms existing in a three-dimensional space.

49. Place - A geographic or imaginary location, landscape, origin, or relation in space. Artists are influenced by their surroundings and their works are often in response to a site or historical situation. In American history, places such as the antebellum South or the Wild West are mythic in their hold on the public imagination. Today, artists are continually drawn to the conceptual landscapes of cyberspace, television, and mass media.
50. Plastic value - Value (lights and darks) used to create the illusion of volume and space.
51. Popular Culture - Literature, broadcasting, music, dance, theater, sports, and other cultural aspects of social life distinguished by their broad-based presence and popularity across ethnic, social, and regional groups.
52. Principles of organization - Seven principles that guide the use of the elements of art in achieving unity: harmony, variety, balance, proportion, dominance, movement, and economy.
53. Process - An artist's investigation, or the steps the artist takes to make a work of art, processes differ widely from artist to artist.
54. Proportion - The comparative size relationship between the parts of a whole. For example, the size of the Statue of Liberty's hand relates to the size of her head. (See **scale**.)
55. Public Art - Works of art that are designed specifically for, or placed in, areas physically accessible to the general public.
56. Realism - The realistic and natural representation of people, places, and/or things in a work of art; the opposite of idealization.
57. Repetition - The use of the same visual effect a number of times in the same composition. Repetition may produce the dominance, harmony, pattern, or rhythm.
58. Representational - Works of art that depict recognizable people, places or things—often figures, landscapes, and still life.
59. Rhythm - A sense of movement achieved by the repetition of visual units; the use of measured accents.
60. Scale - The comparative size of a thing in relation to another like thing or its 'normal' or 'expected size.' Scale can refer to an entire work of art or to elements within it.
61. Silhouette - An outline drawing of a shape. Originally a silhouette presented a profile portrait filled in with a solid color.
62. Site specific - Works of art that are tied to a unique place, site-specific art is sometimes impermanent. For people unable to visit site-specific works, an

experience of the piece is often limited to photographic documentation and word-of-mouth.

63. Stereotype - A generalized type, or caricature of a person, place or culture, often negative in tone. Visual as well as verbal, stereotypes tend to be reduced or oversimplified images.
64. Stylized - Used to describe works of art which conform to imagined or invented visual rules. Work that is stylized tends to be less spontaneous or visually responsive to changes in subject matter.
65. Subjective - That which is derived from the mind reflecting a personal viewpoint, bias, or emotion. This type of color tends to be inventive or creative.
66. Symbolism - The practice of representing things by an image, sign, symbol, convention, or association.
67. Symmetry - The mirror-like repetition of appearances on both sides of an imaginary central axis.
68. Tactile - A quality that refers to the *sense of touch*.
69. Technique - The manner and skill with which artists use their tools and materials *to achieve an expressive effect*.
70. Two-dimensional - Possessing the dimensions of height and width, especially when considering the flat surface or picture plane.
71. Value pattern - The arrangement or organization of values that control compositional movement and create a unifying effect throughout a work of art.
72. Vantage Point - A point of view, or a place from which subject matter is viewed.
73. Variety - Differences achieved by opposing, contrasting, changing, elaborating, or diversifying elements in a composition to add individualism and interest; the counterweight of harmony in art.
74. Volume - A measurable area of defined or occupied space.
75. Voyeur - An observer who derives pleasure viewing sensational subjects at a distance.