



319 S. Naperville Road Wheaton, IL 60187 www.questionsgalore.net
Phone: (630) 580-5735 E-Mail: info@questionsgalore.net Fax: (630) 653-8666

STUDY GUIDE:
ART TERMS

Abstract - This type of art is the opposite of representational, which aims to reproduce reality. In abstract art, objects do not look like they really appear. Cubism is one form of abstract art. Often there is no identifiable subject at all, as in "non-objective" art.

Achromatic - This is a term for artwork done in black, white, or gray. Lead pencil sketches and charcoal drawings are achromatic.

Acrylic - This water-based paint has a "plastic" quality and is thicker than watercolors and tempera.

Acrylic Solution - This type of binder, formed by placing acrylic resin in a solvent, causes an acrylic paint to behave more like an oil paint than one made with acrylic emulsion binders.

Adjacent colors- Colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. They are also called analogous colors. There are three or more colors that are included in an "adjacent run."

Aesthetics - Aesthetics refers to one's personal philosophy or idea of beauty in art.

Analogous colors - These related colors sit next to each other on the color wheel because they have a color in common. They are also called adjacent colors.

Anhydrous - This term indicates that something is without water.

Armature - The framework or structure on which a sculpture is built.

Art Deco- This art style was popular during the 1920's and the 1930's. Artists used decorative motifs from other cultures, such as the French, African, Aztec, or Chinese.

Art Nouveau- An 1890's style of art that used asymmetrical decorative elements derived from objects found in nature.

Artist Proof - This is a print that the artist has pulled from a set of limited editions for his or her own personal use. They are marked with an AP and are highly prized by art collectors.

Asymmetry - Asymmetry is the opposite of symmetry. An asymmetrical picture does not have bilateral or radial symmetry.

Avant Garde- A descriptive term for art that departs from the norm and is different from the other art of the time.

Balance - Elements in a work of art are arranged or designed either symmetrically or asymmetrically according to this principle of art.

Baroque - This 17th century style of expression involved flamboyant ornamental forms. Nobles commissioned this type of art because it showed off their wealth. Catholic authorities encouraged painters to use this style, hoping ornate portrayals of religious icons would foster a renewal of Catholicism. Rembrandt and Rubens were two notable artists who frequently utilized this style.

Bas-relief - Figures project outward from the background in this form of sculpture or art

Batik - Paraffin or beeswax is applied to paper or fabric in an interesting design. The paper or fabric is then dipped into paint or dye, which covers the part that contains no wax.

Binder - This adhesive substance in paint affixes the pigment and the paint film to the canvas.

Bisque - Bisque is clay that has been fired in a kiln and can no longer become malleable by the adding water.

Black - Black is the absence of light, or the absorption of all light.

Bleeding - Bleeding occurs when a dark color penetrates through a lighter color. When we talk about bleeding, we say one color “runs” into another color.

Blending - This is the process of smoothing the separation between two colors on a painting, so that they flow gradually into each other.

Brushes - These tools are used to apply paint. There are several different varieties of brushes: 1) flats, which have a long bristle and a square edge 2) brights, which have a flat, square edge, and long sable 3) rounds, which have pointed bristles 4) longs, which have a long sable and a square edge and 5) filberts, which have a flat, but oval edge and a long fiber.

Brushwork - The stylistic way a particular artist applies paint to canvas.

Bust - A sculpture that shows only the shoulders, neck, and head of the subject.

Calligraphy - The art of fancy handwriting.

Canvas - The fabric surface on which painters paint. It is sold by the yard, on frames, and in panels.

Capital - The top portion of an architectural column. There are three main types of capitals: Corinthian, Doric, and Ionic. Sculptured leaves are found on a Corinthian capital. The Doric capital is very plain, and the Ionic capital has scroll shapes.

Caricature - A sketch that exaggerates a physical trait of a person to make the quality appear ridiculous.

Casting - Casting requires plaster to be mixed with water and poured into a mold where it hardens and is removed as a solid piece.

Ceramics - This art form is used when molding and firing clay.

Charcoal - This stick crayon produces a dark line on a drawing, and smudges easily.

Chiaroscuro - This was originally a 16th century technique of wood-cutting that involved various blocks that printed various tones of the same color. It can also refer to the print that results from this technique. Now, the word also refers to the use of light and shadows to create a mood or focal point for a painting.

Chroma - This is the purity of a color. Paint that is applied directly from the tube would be in the state of "full chroma".

Cityscape- A painting or picture of a city.

Closed - In a closed sculpture, the subject's arms are folded or held close.

Collage - In this art technique, pieces of random materials such as magazines and other everyday items are overlapped and glued onto a picture to create an interesting design or abstract art creation.

Color - Color is a function of light. White light consists of all the colors of the spectrum mixed together. An object's color depends on whether it reflects or absorbs light. The color an object appears is the color of the wavelength it reflects. If it absorbs all wavelengths of light, it will look black. If it reflects them all, it will look white.

Commission - This is the ordering of a work from an artist and the agreement to pay for it.

Complementary Colors - These color pairs do not share common colors, so they are found across from each other on the color wheel. Red is a complement of green. Blue is a complement of orange, and yellow is a complement of purple.

Composition - The way in which line, color, and form are arranged.

Contour drawing - This is the outline of an object's edge.

Contrast - This refers to variations, opposites, and differences between areas in a work of art. It is the juxtaposition of two dissimilar textures or lights.

Cool Colors -This family includes the greens, blues, and violets.

Crackle glaze - Spindly decorative cracks in the glaze of ceramics into which color is often inserted.

Cubism-This art movement used geometric designs to represent ideas or subjects. Pablo Picasso was one of the more famous Cubist painters.

Decoupage - This art form entails cutting out shapes of paper and applying them to a surface as a collage. The paper pieces are then covered with a shellac or varnish to seal and protect them.

Designer Colors – These high quality paints are usually used for commercial work.

Dilutents – These liquids are used to dilute a paint. Oil paints are diluted with turpentine, and waterbased paints are diluted with water.

Dominance - The figure or color that stands out, because it is the most obvious thing in comparison with the rest of the painting.

Dry Brushing - This method of painting uses a greater percentage of pigment than water.

Dry Mount - In this framing method, a painting is mounted and glued directly to a stiff background with a dry adhesive to prevent buckling.

Earthenware - This type of clay is not waterproof, and must therefore be glazed.

Easel - A three-legged stand that holds the canvas while the artist paints.

Edition - The number of prints of a painting that have been reproduced from an original, excluding artist proofs or special editions.

Elements of Art – There are 10 elements of art. They are: color, value, line, shape, form, texture, direction, scale, dimension, and space. These elements are the building blocks an artist uses to create a work of art.

Encaustic - This word refers to an ancient technique in which paint was blended with wax and literally burned onto a wall with the assistance of an iron-like tool.

Expressionism- A style of art based upon the artist's emotions. Vincent Van Gogh was one of the first artists to use this style and Henri Matisse also used it extensively.

Film - A thin layer of paint.

Firing -The process of hardening clay in a kiln by subjecting it to a high temperature.

Fixative Spray - This solution made of alcohol and shellac is sprayed onto drawings to prevent them from smudging, or to make medium particles stick to the canvas or surface.

Flying Buttress- These external arched supports for a wall or church were commonly found in Greek architecture.

Focal Point - The part of the painting or artwork that first draws the viewer's eye.

Form - This includes three-dimensional objects, such as cubes, cones, spheres, prisms, pyramids, or cylinders.

Free-standing - This refers to a piece of sculpture or artwork that stands by itself and can be viewed from all sides.

Fresco - In this relatively permanent method of wall decoration, paint was applied directly to moist plaster. It was commonly used in early art murals. Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Lord's Supper" is one of the most famous frescos.

Fugitive Colors - Pigments that fade when exposed to light.

Gesso - Similar to ground, this mixture of chalk, white pigment, and glue is the bottom layer applied to support a painting.

Glaze - This clear protective coating is applied to a painting or to ceramics at the bisque stage before the work is refired.

Graffiti- A 1970's art form that was initially done by street teens in the New York Subways. Today the term refers to any writing or illustrations that appear on walls or in other public places.

Greenware - This is the stage of clay before it has been fired. At this point, the clay is hard, but can be made malleable again with the addition of water.

Ground - This is a bottom coat of paint applied to a canvas to prepare it for the paint.

Gum - This substance is derived from plants, is soluble in water, and is used in watercolors.

Highlights - The areas in a piece of art that reflect the most light.

Hue - The color of an object.

Illustration - A drawing or sketch that often accompanies words.

Image - A picture within a work of art.

Impasto - In this style of painting, the paint is applied so thick that a relief texture is created.

Impressionism - This late 19th century art style entailed dabbing unmixed primary colors to simulate light. Monet, Degas, and Renoir were important Impressionist painters.

Intensity - The dullness or brightness of colors or artwork.

Intermediate Colors - These are formed from the mixture of one secondary and one primary color. When blue is mixed with the secondary color green, an intermediate color of blue-green is created.

Interpretation - This is the viewer's idea of what they see in a piece of art.

Ionic - This ancient Greek style of architecture was characterized by column tops composed of two spirals rotating in opposition.

Kiln - The oven in which ceramics are fired.

Lake - A type of dye that won't bleed because it is chemically attached to a particle.

Landscape – A painting that shows scenery.

Leaching - The technique whereby excess liquid is extracted from a work of art by using a porous material.

Lean - This type of paint has been thinned with a spirit, so it has a very low oil content.

Lightfast - This adjective describes something that cannot be altered by light, or will not fade.

Line - This continuous path can be linear or curvilinear, horizontal or vertical, and angled or diagonal.

Linear Perspective - This mathematical technique arose during the Renaissance to create the illusion of depth in a painting. The artist establishes a vanishing point on the horizon by using slanted lines that lead to it.

Linseed - Linseed is used as a binder in oil paints.

Lithograph - In this popular printing method, the publisher photographs an original, which is then burned into four plates for a full-color inking process. Lithography also refers to a more primitive printing style that was done on stone or metal.

Loom State - A canvas that has not been prepared or primed.

Louvre- A huge art museum in Paris, France. Many famous pieces of art are housed here, including "The Mona Lisa," "Whistler's Mother," and "Venus de Milo."

Madonna – A synonym for The Virgin Mary when she is portrayed in paintings.

Marouflage – These mural-size paintings are done on fabric or paper and then attached to a wall or other vertical surface with glue.

Mat – A stiff window-frame piece of cardboard that is used to protect a print when framing. It creates a border between the frame and the piece of art.

Matte - This surface is dull or flat, as opposed to glossy.

Media - This is the plural of medium.

Medium - The material that is used to create a piece of art. Popular media are paint, clay, bronze, marble, or charcoal.

Metropolitan Museum of Art- A major art museum in New York City.

Migration - The movement of a pigment through a dried film that's been applied either under or over it.

Mixed Media – The artist has employed several different materials to create his work of art.

Mobile - Alexander Calder is credited with the invention of this free-moving, suspended, three-dimensional piece of art that consisting of a variety of shapes. Mobiles can hang from the ceiling, stand by themselves, or be affixed to the wall.

Monochromatic- An adjective that describes a work done in only one color. Thomas Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" is a monochromatic piece of art.

Mosaic – An artwork in which miniature pieces of glass, tiles, marbles, or other assorted materials have been inserted into cement to form a picture or abstract design.

Mural - Any painting done directly on a wall.

Naturalism- An attempt to recreate nature as it really is.

Negative Space - The area around an object in a piece of art.

Neutral Colors – These are the earth tones such as white, gray, black, tan, and beige. They rarely appear on a color wheel. They can be created by combining black and white, complementary colors, or all three primaries added to black or white.

Newsprint - This is an inexpensive type of art paper that eventually turns yellow.

Numbered - This is the number of the print and the size of the edition. Originally, the earlier prints were higher quality, but that is no longer the case with modern printing technology.

Oil Paint - Jan van Eyck invented this type of paint. It contains a resin that is derived from vegetable oil, dries slowly enough to capture details, and is thick enough to create some texture.

Open- In this type of sculpture, the subject's arms are raised or held outwards.

Open Edition - An unlimited quantity of prints made of a piece of art.

Origami- The Japanese art of paper folding.

Original - The one and only actual painting or artwork from which reproductions are made.

Palette - This is the selection of colors from which an artist chooses, or the surface on which he mixes them. Artists are often pictured standing in front of an easel with a paintbrush in one hand and a palette in the other.

Paper Mache - In this medium, glue, paste, or another binder is mixed with strips of paper to form a mulch that is applied to a surface to create thickness or shape.

Pastels - Pastels are color sticks, either oil or chalk-based, that are used for drawing. Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas both employed many pastels in their work.

Patina - Although it originally referred to the green that appeared on bronze over time, it now means the effect of exposure or age to a surface.

Patron - The person who commissions an artwork.

Pencils - These drawing or sketching tools are grouped according to the type of lead. The harder the lead, the sharper the line.

Pens - These instruments produce lines in various colors or widths.

Pentimento - Old paintings were done with pigments that contained lead. Over the years, the bottom layers have become visible below the top layer, which grew transparent.

Perspective - This technique uses converging lines to create the illusion of depth or three-dimensionality. It can be **linear**, meaning objects get smaller as they retreat, or **aerial**, meaning that objects in the background appear blurry or indistinct.

Pieta – Michelangelo painted a picture of the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Jesus and entitled his work Pieta. The term generally refers to any painting or drawing that shows the Virgin Mary mourning over Jesus' dead body.

Pigment - This is the part of paint that provides the color. Pigments were originally derived from the powder of plants, clay, or minerals, and mixed with a "binder" such as egg, oil, water, or resin. One color of red contained sulfur and mercury, and a certain blue required a stone called lapis lazuli. Gold required the use of real gold. Pigments are engineered chemically today.

Pinch Pot - This is a ceramic or earthenware pot formed by pinching a ball of clay to create the interior hole.

Plaster – A powder that's mixed with water to create solid sculptures.

Pop Art - This vivid movement started in Britain and influenced American artists of the 1960's. Artists incorporated popular culture into their art, borrowing comic book styles or advertising elements. Roy Lichtenstein's comic book prints and Andy Warhol's paintings of Marilyn Monroe and of soup cans are representative of this style.

Porcelain - Special materials such as kaolin, silica, and feldspar, that are shaped and fired. Once they are fired, they resemble glass.

Portrait - A work of art depicting a person. It can be done with the model facing the front, the side (called a profile), or in three-quarters which is halfway between the two.

Precipitate - Dyes can be attached to this type of particle without bleeding.

Primary Colors – The colors red, yellow, and blue, from which the other colors are derived.

Primer - This preparatory coat of paint is usually white.

PVA - This acronym stands for Polyvinyl acetate, a manmade resin that's contained in varnishes.

Relief - In this type of sculpture, forms and figures are projected outward from the surrounding plane. This term can also refer to the sharpness of a contrast. High relief designates a three-dimensional effect attained by deep cuts. Low relief entails shallow cuts.

Remarque - The artist's original sketch. Collectors consider these as very valuable.

Renaissance - This European period between the 14th and 17th centuries in Italy was marked by great intellectual and artistic advances. The word literally translates as "rebirth," and also refers to the architectural style of this period.

Resins - These transparent polymers are the basic components of paints.

Rhythm - This repetition of elements suggests motion in a piece.

Rococo - This 18th century art movement came out of the Baroque movement and was prevalent in luxurious architecture, tapestries, and decorative ceramics as well as paintings. Subjects included beauty and nature, and classical mythology, but the presentation was subtler than Baroque.

Scumbling - The application of a thin coat of see-through or somewhat translucent paint over other paint to change the look without completely obliterating it.

Secco - A painting that is done on dry plaster.

Secondary Colors - This term indicates the combination of two primary colors to create a new color. The new color is called the secondary color, and the three secondary colors are violet, orange, and green. Red and blue are combined to form violet. Blue and yellow create green. Red and yellow create orange.

Shade – Any color that has been mixed with black to create a darker color.

Shape - This includes any two-dimensional figure created with lines, such as circles, squares, triangles, ovals and other forms. Shapes can be **geometric**, meaning they appear to have been made with a drawing tool, or **organic**, meaning they are **free-form** or irregular. They can also be **biomorphic** (living) or **geometric** (nonliving).

Shellac - This yellow resin is obtained from insects and used in varnishes.

Silicate - This material is formed from metal, oxygen, and silicon. Sand is a silicate.

Sketch – A quick pencil drawing.

Slip – A form of liquid clay that is sometimes used to join pieces of clay together or to fill in gaps.

Space - This can be **negative** or **positive**. Negative space refers to the area around the figure, while positive space refers to the figure itself.

Spectrum - When a beam of white light is broken up into hues by a prism, a band of colors called the spectrum appear. The colors in the spectrum are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. These colors can be remembered in order by remembering the name of a man called ROY G. BIV. A rainbow is a spectrum that has been created by the passage of light through water droplets in the air.

Squaring Up – A technique that is used when changing the size of an image.

Stencil - A cut-out pattern used when transferring the pattern to fabric or other surfaces.

Still life- A painting in which the subjects are non-moving objects, such as fruit, vases, or flowers.

Stoneware- A sturdy type of waterproof clay.

Study - A detailed drawing or examination of a portion of a composition.

Subject - The message conveyed by a work of art.

Subtractive - The opposite of additive. This term refers to a type of creation in which art is formed by carving away, as in a marble sculpture.

Symbolism - This is the deeper meaning found within a picture or image.

Symmetry - One side of a symmetrical figure appears equal to its other side.

Tapestry - This handwoven textile featured complicated designs or pictures and was common in the 15th century. It was often displayed on walls.

Tempera - This term applies to the oldest form of paint, in which powdered pigments from plants, clay, or minerals were mixed with eggs to create a rapidly-drying paint. Because it dried so quickly, it discouraged experimentation and change. This term also refers to the binder that's added to pigment to create paint. Today the term is also used to refer to the opaque paints used by youngsters in elementary schools.

Terra Cotta - This clay is typically brownish-orange in color.

Tertiary Colors – The colors that result when secondary colors are mixed.

Texture – A term that describes how a piece of art feels to the touch.

Tint - The addition of white to a color to make it appear lighter. Tint is an antonym for shade.

Toner - This type of dye can bleed through dried paint film.

Traction - This is the movement of one layer of oil paint over a second layer.

Turpentine - This solvent is used to clean brushes or to thin paints.

Underpainting - The process of "laying in" a base of monochrome before doing a painting in oils.

Urn - An ornamental vase.

Value – The degree of darkness or lightness that is obtained by mixing shades and tints.

Vanishing point- The place in a drawing where the slanted perspective lines seem to come together in the distance.

Varnish – A protective coat of liquid that covers wood or a piece of art and dries to form a protective film.

Volume - The space filled by a figure in a composition.

Warm Colors - The family of colors that include red, orange, and yellow.

Wash -This highly diluted layer of paint is applied with a broad stroke, and may leave a transparent finish.

Watercolor – A water-based paint, or a painting done with water-based paints.

Wet on Wet – Paint is applied to a painting that is still wet.

Wheel Thrown – Wheel thrown describes the process by which ceramic objects are formed from clay, placed on a potters' wheel, and shaped as they spin.

White Spirits – An oil paint thinner that has replaced turpentine.