

## ELEMENTS OF ART ANALYSIS

### General Objective

The aim of this Practical Sheet is to present the different elements of art analysis: which are these elements and why they differ from one another. Additionally, we will see how they can help us to analyze art and why they are relevant.

In this practical sheet, you will:

- ✓ learn more about art analysis in general;
- ✓ learn the different elements of art analysis and how they relate one another;
- ✓ learn the individual steps to approach an art analysis.

### You will need:

- ✓ access to artworks;
- ✓ for the second activity, you can re-use the structure of the *Guess Who?* game, or alternatively a separator to put between two people;
- ✓ it is not something that you really need, but it could be interesting and enriching to have previous knowledge on the practical sheet about mind maps and their use for art analysis.

### Challenges and settings

The Elements of Art are the key components of a work of art. It is the artist's decision on how they want to put them to use. Each element is very important to a piece of art, but some are stressed more than others. When looking at a work of art, which elements do you notice? What kind of mood does it create?

While restricting our attention only to a description of the formal elements of an artwork may at first seem limited or even tedious, a careful and methodical examination of the physical components of an artwork is an important first step in “decoding” its meaning. It is useful, therefore, to begin at the beginning. There are four aspects of a formal analysis: **description, analysis, interpretation,** and **evaluation.**

Elements of art analysis are really important both for artists, to create art, and for viewers, to understand and/or appreciate it.

The elements of art are the essential parts of creating any art work. It is difficult to make the best art work without utilizing minimum one of the all elements of art. So in order to create the perfect piece of art, an artist must have the capacity to astutely utilize the art's elements. Any art work can likewise be analyzed depending upon the utilization of the elements in it.

A risk could be the fact of putting too much information, mainly descriptive, and stopping there. Without delving deeper.

But what is art analysis?

There are four levels of formal analysis, how we said before, which you can use to explain a work of art:

- **Description:** pure description of the object without value judgments, analysis, or interpretation.  
It answers the question, "What do you see?"
- **Analysis:** determining what the features suggest and deciding why the artist used such features to convey specific ideas.  
It answers the question, "How did the artist do it?"
- **Interpretation:** establishing the broader context for this type of art.  
It answers the question, "Why did the artist create it and what does it mean."
- **Judgement:** Judging a piece of work means giving it rank in relation to other works and of course considering a very important aspect of the visual arts; its originality. Is it a good artwork?



Terry Barrett has theorized a list of principle of interpretation, namely:

1. Artworks have "aboutness" and demand interpretation.
2. Interpretations are persuasive arguments.
3. Some interpretations are better than others.
4. Good interpretations of art talk more about the artwork than they talk about the critic.
5. Feelings are guides to interpretations.
6. There can be different, competing, and contradictory interpretations of the same artwork.
7. Interpretations are often based on a worldview.
8. Interpretations are not so much absolutely right, but more or less reasonable, convincing, enlightening, and informative.
9. Interpretations can be judged by coherence, correspondence, and inclusiveness.
10. An artwork is not necessarily about what the artist wanted it to be about.
11. A critic ought not to be the spokesperson for the artist.
12. Interpretations ought to present the work in its best rather than its weakest light.
13. The objects of interpretation are artworks, not artists.
14. All art is in part about the world in which it emerged.
15. All art is in part about other art.
16. No single interpretation is exhaustive of the meaning of an artwork.
17. The meanings of an artwork may be different from its significance to the viewer. Interpretation is ultimately a communal endeavor, and the community is ultimately self- corrective.
18. Good interpretations invite us to see for ourselves and to continue on our own.

## Adaptation

Elements for art analysis are really important in order to approach the world of art. To better understand it, we propose two different activities, but before

doing so, we have to highlight the main elements of art analysis, that you will use for activities and for the analysis of artworks.

### **There are seven main elements of art:**

#### **1. Line:**

A line is one of the basic elements of art. In simple words, we can describe a line in a way that a line can be seen as a point that moves. The most widely recognized utilization of line is demonstrating where an object has ended. This sort of line is known as a shape line. Shape lines are most normally called outlines. Line can be of any thickness and by changing the quality, any artist can create an artwork by just using a line.

#### **2. Shape:**

A shape is made when a line is encased. Shape is one of the seven elements of creating an art and it has an assortment of uses in the making of any art work. Shapes can assume vital parts in the formation of art works. They help to make complex illustrations and artworks, influence compositions, and add to the balance within an art work.

#### **3. Form:**

Form alludes to objects that are 3 Dimensional, or contain some length, width, as well as height. The world in which we live is made up completely of forms. Artists have a good comprehension of form and how to make the deception of form in paintings or drawings.

#### **4. Value:**

Value of the art manages the softness or dimness of any color. Since we see some objects and comprehend them on account of how dim or light they are, value is very essential in art works. We see things due to the reason that light reflects off of items and falls on us. Our mind forms the light and defends what we are seeing. Without light, we can't see anything. So, it is an important element in all the art work.

#### **5. Space:**

With regards to the art works, space is the whole area around, above as well as inside of an item or object. With regards to the paintings and sketches, any good artists can make the illustration of space.

## 6. Texture:

It is a component of art work that alludes to the way a thing feels when we touch. A 3D object alludes to the way it feels when we touch while the 2D Texture alludes to the way it looks as it might feel. There are other textures also such as matte, rough, smooth and visual etc.

## 7. Colors:

Color is the element of art that alludes to reflected light. Color has an effect over how we feel about items, how we carry on, and how our bodies respond to conditions. It is one of the most important elements in paintings.

## Practical examples and inspiration

In order to better understand how we can use these elements, we can try different activities.

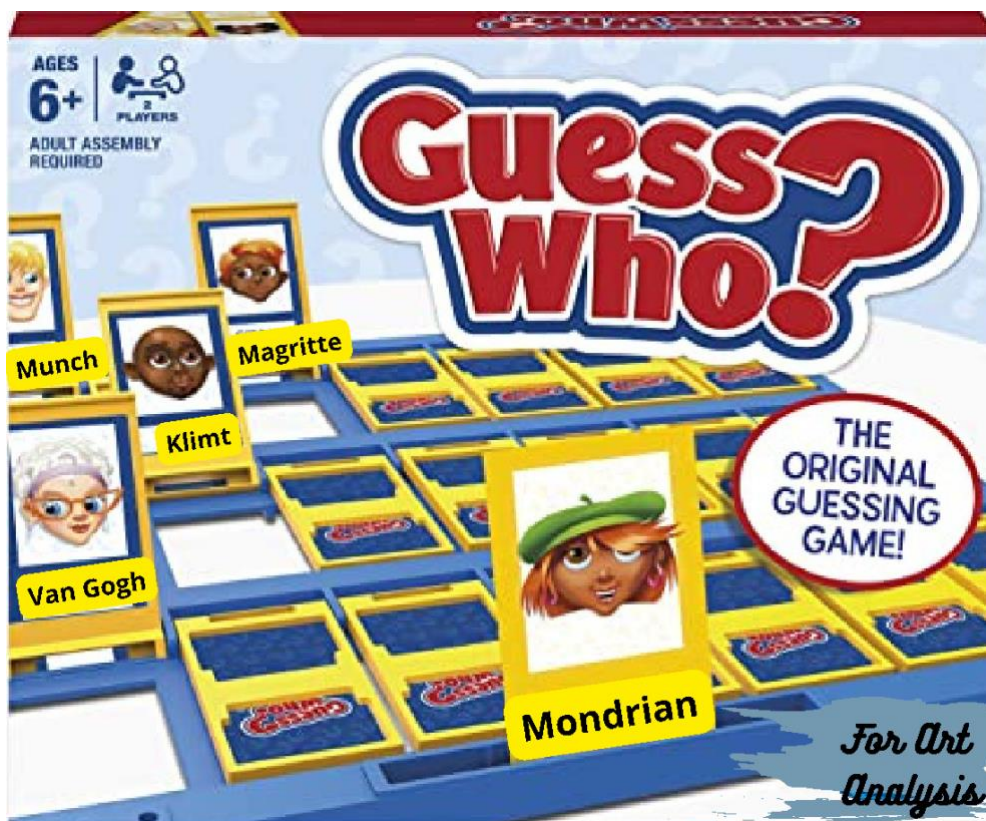
The first activity is an individual activity, in which each person chooses an artwork, and for each element of analysis – the seven main elements of art – he has to write at least three characteristics. The one who writes the most and the one who writes the most detailed and precise wins.

For example the painting from Renoir titled “The Umbrellas”. We have color and the use of three colors azure, green and orange in the painting. We also see mainly on the left side the use of lines to indicate shapes and clear outlines of facial characteristics and object. On the left side of the painting we also see the element of form. The woman’s dress is drawn in such a way that it appears three dimensional.



For the second activity, it consists in a game designed for two people, or two rival teams. You should have a base like the one of *Guess Who* play structure. Alternatively, a separator to put between two people. The board game “*Guess Who?*” is a two-player game where players each guess the identity of the other's chosen character. In this case, instead of characters, players have to guess the other player's painting. Both opponents will have a series of artworks in front of them. Each will choose one artwork, without telling it to the other opponent. The game is about guessing which artwork your opponent has chosen, by asking questions about the elements of art analysis.

Here is an example of the *Guess Who* game in an art analysis version:



## Additional resources

- It could be interesting to go deeper with Terry Barrt's principles of interpretation:
  - Barrett, Terry. (1994) *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
  - [http://www1.udel.edu/art/rmarquez/416/barrett\\_criticizing\\_art.pdf](http://www1.udel.edu/art/rmarquez/416/barrett_criticizing_art.pdf)
- Six Ways to Think About Shape
  - <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/05/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-with-the-times-six-ways-to-think-about-shape/>
- Four Ways to Think About Form
  - <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-four-ways-to-think-about-form/>
- Five Ways to Think About Color
  - <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/09/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-five-ways-to-think-about-color/>
- Six Ways to Think About Texture
  - [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/learning/lesson-plans/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-seven-ways-to-think-about-texture.html?ref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Flearning-ell-arts&action=click&contentCollection=learning&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pg\\_type=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/learning/lesson-plans/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-seven-ways-to-think-about-texture.html?ref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Flearning-ell-arts&action=click&contentCollection=learning&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pg_type=collection)
- Four Ways to Think About Value
  - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/03/learning/lesson-plans/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-four-ways-to-think-about-value.html>
- Five Ways to Think About Space
  - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/03/learning/lesson-plans/analyzing-the-elements-of-art-five-ways-to-think-about-space.html>