



# Composition

**The way that visual elements are arranged  
to create meaning**

Artists and photographers are very sneaky...



They work hard to make you look at their work for as long as possible

R. B. 12

They do this by selecting and arranging parts of the image in a particular way to make you stop and notice it

There are limitless ways to do this, and that's what makes each artist different...

Creating a piece of art is simple maths...

## **Formal Elements**

LINE  
TONE  
SHAPE/FORM  
COLOUR  
SPACE  
TEXTURE  
PATTERN



## **Composition**

BALANCING ELEMENTS  
SYMMETRY & PATTERN  
DEPTH  
LEADING LINES  
FRAMING  
RULE OF THIRDS  
FILL THE FRAME



## **Visual Language Aka Meaning**

*How the formal elements and composition work together to create an overall feeling or message to the viewer*

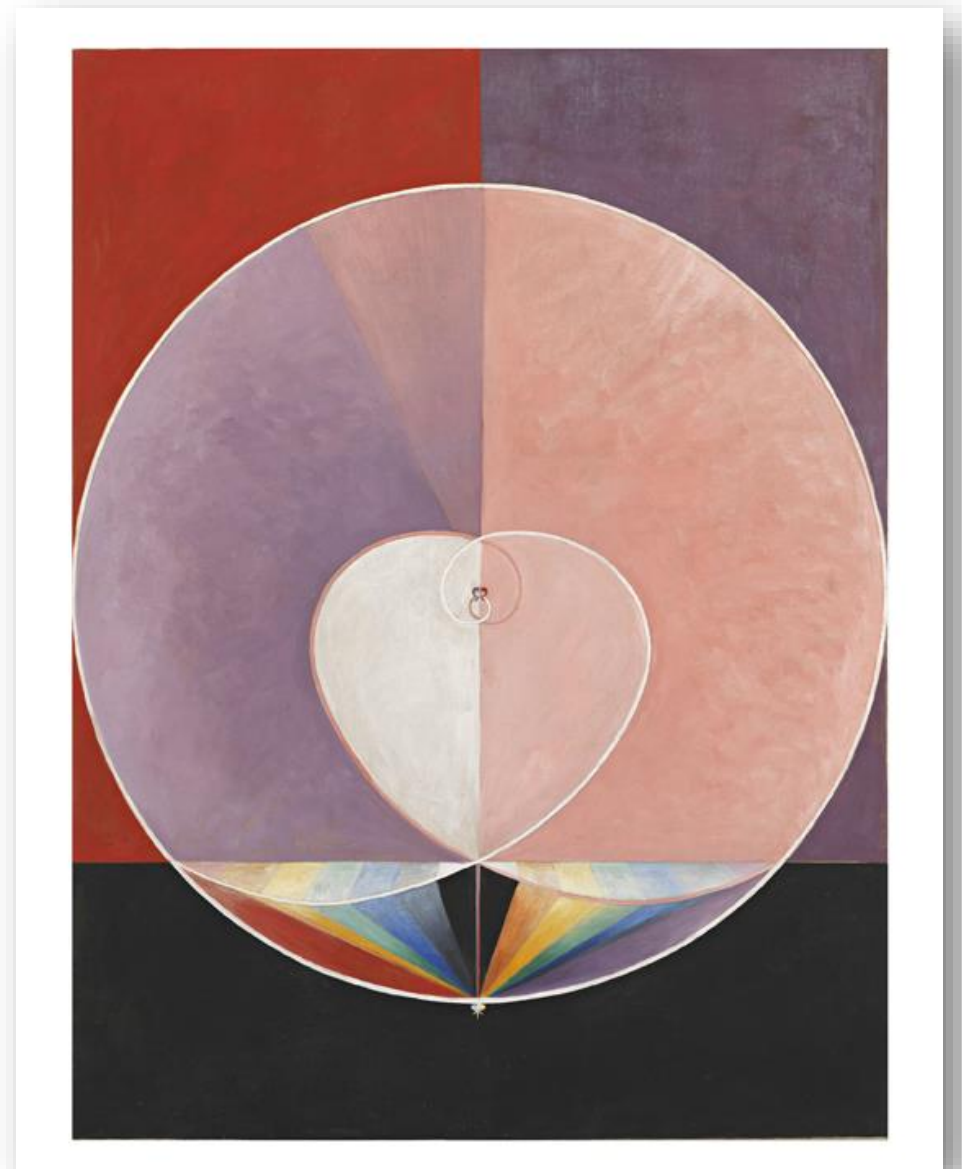
We're already comfortable playing around with creating different Formal Elements.

The key now is to COMPOSE them in a way that has the most impact on the viewer!

# BALANCING ELEMENTS

Imagine your art work is a massive set of scales... everything has to balance in some way

We tend to find balanced compositions more visually pleasing and comforting. Unbalanced compositions can make us feel uneasy



*Hilma Af Klint's work here balances the red and purple tones on each side*

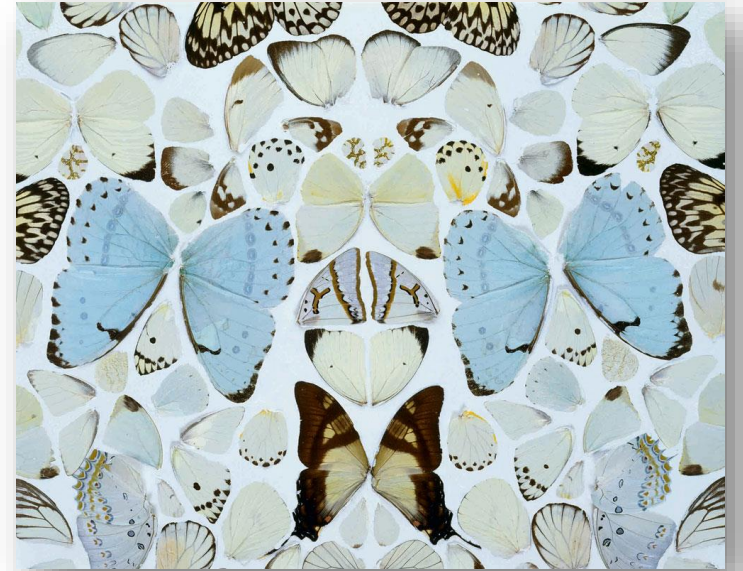
# SYMMETRY & PATTERN

Horizontal and vertical lines of symmetry can create a calming sense of balance in your art work, but there is also the risk of it being boring.

Symmetry is often used in wallpaper to help create a repeating pattern.

Patterns use a repetition of the same shape, motif or formal element and repeat/rotate it to create pattern.

If using symmetry and pattern in your designs, consider using more complicated/detail motifs to keep it interesting.



*Damien Hirst uses unusual objects to create an eye-catching piece using pattern and symmetry*



*Alexis Diaz uses symmetry in very detailed pieces of work*

*MC Escher repeats detailed patterns to create optical illusions*



# DEPTH

Creating depth in a piece of art means to give the impression you could peel away layers of the work. Overlapping is the main tool here and makes a piece of art much more interesting to look at. Try overlapping shapes in your work rather than leaving spaces between them. I promise it will look more interesting!



*Wassily Kandinsky overlaps his shapes to create a sense of depth. It's one of the things that makes you look at his work for longer...*



*Patrick Caulfield's work not only balances colour and fills the frame, but he overlaps shapes to create a sense of depth. It's as if you could walk into the field of pottery...*

# LEADING LINES

This is a classic technique artists use to make you move your eye around the image.

The shapes and lines which stand out the most force your eye on a journey around the image.

One shape, colour or line will lead you to the next and then the next, until your eye has noticed all the elements in the picture.

I told you artists were sneaky!



*This classic Fauvist painting uses the shape of the river to guide your eye up towards the horizon*

*Roy Lichtenstein loved a good swoosh for leading lines!*



*HR Giger uses the long arm and fingers of his alien creature to guide your eye up the image towards the face which is emerging from the shadows*



# FRAMING

Framing is a great technique for forcing the viewer to focus on an area of the work you want them to notice the most.  
It's also a great photography tip!



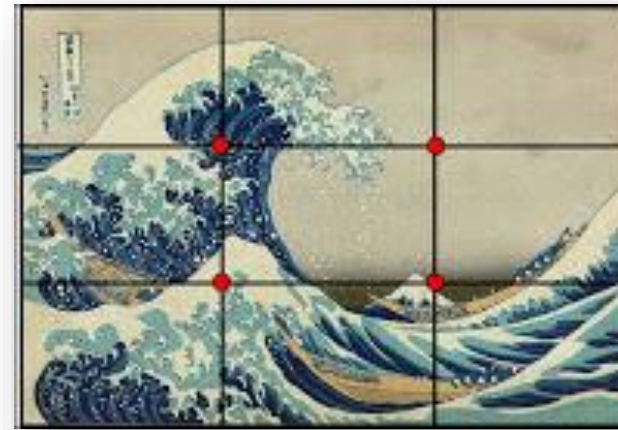
*Claude Monet frames the river using the bridge and foliage either side*



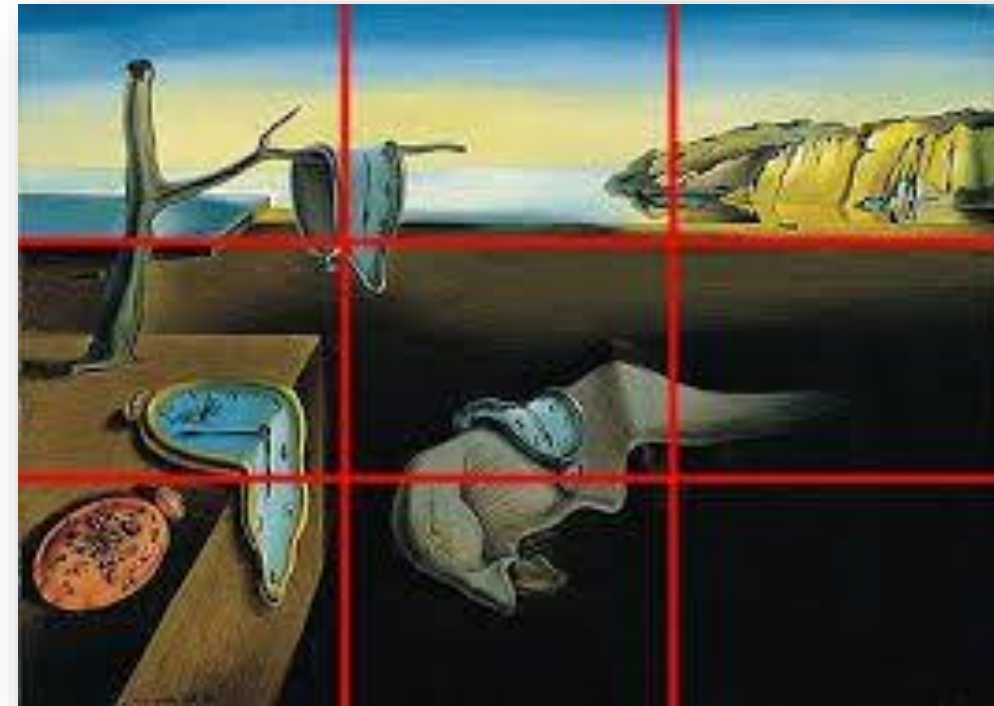
*These photographs have all used the framing technique to compose the image in a way that forces you to notice a particular element*

# RULE OF THIRDS

The idea here is that if the main element is placed centrally, our eyes dismiss it quickly and move on. By placing the main elements off-centre, we are forced to look at the art for longer.



*When designing, always use odd numbers, and never put something dead centre!*



# FILL THE FRAME

The thing that makes this technique so effective, is that by going 'off the edge', it makes the viewer think there is more going on. It makes the content of the image a bit more 'in your face'. Artists crop sections to make us focus on the most interesting parts, or to create a bit of mystery...



*Georgia O'Keeffe makes the bone go off the edge of the canvas, so that we focus on the more interesting section.*



*Carl Beazley*



*Clara Lieu*

Most artists don't just use one technique to compose their work... *which techniques can you identify here?*



So the combinations of Formal elements and composition are infinite, *which will you choose?*

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