THE VISUAL ELEMENTS OF AN IMAGE

Observe next image carefully.
What’s your opinion? Do you like it? Do you like colours, or the composition? According to your point of view ... What does it express? What do you think the artist try to show us?

Yellow, red and blue (Wasily Kandinsky)

*The artist express his feelings through visual elements (dots, lines, planes) and bright colours.*
Azul III (J. Miró)

La torre Eifel (G. Seurat)

El árbol de la vida (Gustav Klimt)

DOTS

Composición en oval con colores planos (Piet Mondrian)

TEXTURES

LINES, PLANES
DOTS

It is the smallest visual element of a drawing. There are two types of dots: the geometric dot and the graphic dot (or graphic symbol).

1967 fashion illustration by Antonio Lopez, from the New York Times

Domingo por la tarde en la isla de la Grande-Jatte (Geoge Seurat)

Pointillism/Puntillismo
The point of interest. there is always one element that draws our attention more than the others. It is called the point of interest

This attraction might be caused by:
• **Position** – Place it in a **prominent position**.
• **Converging Lines** – Different **lines converge in that dot**.
• **Light contrast** – The dot is **highlighted** because it has more or less light than the elements surrounding it.
• **Contrasting colours** – Using **contrasting colours** can also be a way of **setting your point** of interest apart from its surroundings.

**Texture** – **Contrasting textures** can make a subject **stand out**

La Venus del espejo. Diego Velázquez, 1647-1651

La familia de Carlos IV, año 1800. Francisco de Goya.
Oil on canvas, 280 × 336 cm
La familia de Carlos IV, año 1800. Francisco de Goya.

Oil on canvas, 280 × 336 cm
Dots have expressive value

What can we do with dots?

• Express complex feelings

• Shade images to give them a sense of volume.

• Create abstract or realistic images

André Derain, *Waterloo Bridge*, 1906 (Pointillism)

Using dots for colouring

Using dots for shading
The point of interest / Punto de interés

Tension lines / Líneas de tensión
THE LINE

In the image the line might seem to be the most important element of the photograph (the main character). It might also be formed by the proximity of different dots. It is an imaginary line our mind creates while we are reading the image.

The cars create imaginary lines.


When a dot moves, it leaves a trace that we see as a line. A line is the graphic representation of a dot in motion. Lines can be: straight, curved, broken, wavy, open, closed, etc.
Tension lines
All images have a hidden internal structure. Tension lines help us discover the different areas in which a space is divided. Tension lines are imaginary lines that unite the most prominent points of an image.
The expressive value of the line.

Lines give shape to images
Fine lines are used to give detail. Thick lines are used to show fullness. Sometimes, the same line can have thick and thin parts to highlight the most important areas of a drawing. A broken line suggests a shape instead of defining it.

Lines for shading
Dark areas: drawing parallel lines close together
Light areas: spacing the lines further apart.
A combination of different types of overlapping lines gives images dynamism and expression.

Coloured lines
Parallel lines drawn at an equal distance create a surface. We can make new areas changing the direction of a line or alternate lines of two or three colours.

Ingres. Portrait of Mme. Pussielgue. 1834

Schmidt-Rottluff. Plant in Black Jar. 1956

In this painting, the artist uses lines to define the contours of the objects and to create movement.
The line could be **straight** or **curved**:

1. **STRAIGHT OR SHARP LINES** and also the oblique ones give us the idea of something *dynamic* and *lively*.

A. **HORIZONTAL lines**: calm and balance.

B. **VERTICAL lines**: instability or tension.

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Example of photography of horizontal lines. Sarah Deane


2. CURVE LINES give us the idea of slowness, harmony and softness.

National Geographic. Photograph by Nagaraju Hanchanajal
•THE PLANE

The plane is an expressive element of visual language that we use to draw shapes. In order to draw objects with planes, we need to define shapes with a contour. Therefore, we can define the plane as the area of a surface within a closed line.

Planes, sometimes also called figures, are defined by the shape of the closed line.

Types of planes (depending on their shapes):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geometric figures: they have a regular shape</th>
<th>Organic figures: they are freer and have an irregular shape.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Planes as a supports**

The surface we draw on is called a support. A plane used as a support can have different shapes (square, rectangular, round, ...) and can be placed horizontally, vertically or at an angle.

Size and position influence the final effect of a composition. A rectangular plane that is placed vertically produces greater tension lines than one that is horizontal.

• A rectangular, horizontal plane produces to the composition stability, tranquility and continuity.
• A rectangular, vertical plane produces balance, elevation and seriousness to the composition.
• A square plane focuses our vision and balance the visual tension.
• A round plane creates an enveloping, suspension movement.
• A triangular plane creates a surrounding of concentration and tension.

![Image](image5.png) ![Image](image6.png) ![Image](image7.png)
The plane: How planes organise space

- The rule of balance
- The rule of compensation

*The rule of balance* dictates that the most important elements should be in the centre of the support and the least important ones should go evenly to the left or right of the composition.

*The rule of compensation* tells us that, in order to balance a composition, the bigger an element is, the closer it should be to the centre of an artwork.
Figura 2.25. Jan Toorop, *Las tres novias*, 1893. La novia más importante se ha colocado en el centro.

The expressive value of the plane.
It depends on its contour, size and arrangement in space to provide expression.

- **Planes can create shapes and objects.** To draw a house, we need only draw a triangle for the roof, a square for the front wall and rectangles to show doors and windows.
- **The shaded plane.** We can separate areas of light and shadow by placing lighter planes next to darker ones. In this way, the objects and shapes can represent volume and depth.
- **The coloured plane.** We can colour planes with different materials. A plane’s colour helps us identify the objects and forms we create.

**TEXTURES**
Texture is the visual and tactile quality of all the surfaces around us. Surfaces are made of different materials and each has its own characteristics. They can be smooth, rough, hard or soft, etc.

![Juan Genovés. The prisoner, 1965](image)
![Natural textures](image)
![Artificial textures](image)
UNIT 2: THE VISUAL ELEMENTS OF AN IMAGE