



# Visual Art Vocabulary & Terms

## Vocabulary & Terminology

Words are grouped together by topic. The mention of a brand name product is not intended to be an endorsement of that product or as a negative reference to a competing brand. This list is not meant to be all inclusive but as a starting point for basic visual art terms.

### Clay & Sculpture Terminology

Armature - a framework over which sculpture is created

Bisque - type of clay firing, it “bakes” the clay and turns it hard and ready to be glazed

Centering - process of getting clay to the center of the clay wheel so that all sides are equal from the center

Coil - clay technique, rolling pieces of clay (into snakes) and stacking them on top of one another

Clay - a media used for sculpting and throwing pots, a natural substance mined from the ground

Clay (Potter's) Wheel - a wheel used to “spin” or throw pots out of clay, can be powered by electricity or manually by kicking

Glaze - paint for clay objects, after clay has been fired once in the kiln (bisque fire), you paint it with glaze which is then kiln fired once again, the heat of the kiln causes the glaze to melt and fuse into a glassy surface

Kiln - the special oven that “bakes” (fires) clay, gets extremely hot (thousands of degrees Fahrenheit possible)

Loop Tools - clay tools that have metal loops on one or both ends of a handle, used in clay sculpting, loops can be different shapes and sizes

#Model Magic TM - type of clay that air dries, doesn't need a kiln, is easily colored with markers or paint, made by Crayola (Binney Smith)

Needle Tools - clay tools that are long, thin and pointy, used in clay sculpting

Pinch - clay technique, making clay pots by pinching and pushing with the fingers

Pottery - clay term, often used as the short term for functional pottery thrown on the wheel

Slab - clay technique where clay is rolled out to a flat, even consistency then the pieces are assembled together. Like rolling out sugar cookies and sticking them together

Slip - really wet clay that is sticky and like paste, used to bond clay pieces together

Sponge - a clay tool used for smoothing and removing excess water  
- a tool used for adding texture to paintings (usually watercolor)

Wire figure - a figurative work (sculpture) created out of a wire material

### **Computer Terminology**

Hardware - the machine parts of a computer system

Monitor - computer screen

Printer - a machine used to make a copy from a computer onto paper

Scanner - a machine used to copy an image from paper into a computer

Software - the programs used with a computer

### **Drawing/Painting Terminology**

Airbrush - a painting tool in which a stream of air is used to paint

Blending - mixing: it can be the mixing of colors (to create new ones), textures, media or values (to create shading and highlights)

Brush - painting tool, object with hair-like bristles on a handle, bristles can be soft, porous, and natural (like sable) or manufactured for watercolor paints or the bristles can be stiff and manufactured for oil paints

Canvas - cloth material used to paint on (usually acrylic or oil paints)

Charcoal - drawing medium, made from a dark natural material

Vine Charcoal - a light-weight charcoal that is really skinny, it has no covering

Compass - tool used to draw circles

Crayon - a drawing media that has color, waxy texture

Gesso - pasty material that is painted onto a canvas to prime and seal it before painting on it

Grid - a scale of squares that are used to enlarge an image for drawing or painting

Highlight - make something stand out

- the spot that is lighter in a drawing or painting that shows where the light is hitting it

Kneaded Eraser - eraser that is very soft, it can be stretched and manipulated (which actually cleans it), good for removing highlight areas by lightly touching the drawing

Marker - a drawing media that has color, can be water-based or permanent

Paint - a media that is used on canvas or other hard surfaces, has various colors, has various "formulas" such as tempera, watercolor, oil, or acrylic

Palette - a flat surface used to store paints on and to mix paints on  
- a term for all the colors used in a work

Palette Knife - a flat or slightly bent dull knife used to mix paint

Paper - a material made from fibrous pulp and rolled smooth and flat  
- used as a surface for drawing, painting, etc.  
- used as a sculpting media by scoring, embossing, collage and pulp methods

Pastel - drawing medium that is like chalk  
- the lighter version of a color (ex. pink is the pastel of red), same as the word tint  
Oil Pastels Ñ oil based drawing utensil, they are sort of like a crayon but softer and blendable

Pencil - drawing tool, piece of wood that contains a piece of graphite which leaves marks

2B, 4B, 6B etc. Pencils - the "B" refers to the type of graphite ("lead") in the pencil, B meaning soft (as compared to "H"), the bigger the number attached the softer the graphite and the darker it writes (ex. 6B is softer and writes darker than 2B)

2H, 4H, 6H etc. Pencils - the "H" refers to the type of graphite ("lead") in the pencil, H meaning hard (as compared to "B"), the bigger the number attached the harder the graphite and the lighter it writes (ex. 6H is harder and writes lighter than 2H)

Colored Pencil - drawing media, color in a pencil form, blendable

Pointillism - drawing technique using dots or small hatches to show value

Ruler - tool used to measure distances and make straight

Sketchbook - a book or collection of drawings, a place an artist works out ideas

Sketching - practice before drawing the actual picture

Sponge - a clay tool used for smoothing and removing excess water  
- a tool used for adding texture to paintings (usually watercolor)

Stretched Canvas - cotton/linen fabric stretched over a wooden frame used to paint on

Vanishing Point - perspective tool, the point which all angles go to meet

Wash - painting technique, thinning the color down with lots of water to create a transparent, fluid color

## **Element & Principle Terminology**

2-d - (two-dimensional) flat shapes, only have height and width

3-d - (three-dimensional) forms, have height, width and depth

Abstract Shape - distorts an natural shape

Color Wheel - the representation of all the colors and how they fit together, shows how primary colors work together to create secondaries and so on

Contour - outline of a shape, type of drawing style

Contrast - difference, usually a difference between light and dark

Curved - refers to lines and shapes, uses semi-circular patterns

Depth - the perception of space

Diagonal - refers to a direction, an angled line of any degree

Geometric Shape - man-made, sharp edges

Horizontal - refers to a direction, flat like the horizon line

Hue - the name of a color

Implied - type of line where the eye completes the unfinished line in a shape

Length - how tall something is

Modeled - shading technique that makes the shape look 3-D

Monochromatic - a color scheme that uses just the variations of one color, the lights (tints) and darks (shades)

Natural Shape - organic shapes, inspired by or comes from nature

Negative - the space around an object

- photography tool, processed film from which photos are developed

Pattern Ñ something that repeats

- image that is copied

Perspective - technique used to show depth

Positive - the space an object takes up

Sphere - a ball or 3-d circle

Symmetry - equal balance on either side of a point

Tone - has to do with color, shades of a hue

Value Scale - a scale that shows the range of values from lightest to darkest

Vertical - refers to a direction, up and down

Width - how wide something is

### **General Terminology**

Bevel - matting term, cut at an angle, used on the inside window opening

Brainstorm - thinking of ideas in a process form

Collage - piecing and gluing images together to create a piece of art

Critique - evaluating someone's art work, discussion of art work

#Exacto™ Knife - a small, sharp edged knife, the blades can be changed and are usually pointed

Figurative - use the figure of the human body

Glass Etching - making a frosted image on glass using a chemical process

Mat board - used to frame a picture, comes in many colors but the most commonly used are black, white and gray

Non-Objective - way to describe the shapes in a work, shapes have no relation to the object

Origami - the Asian art of folding paper into 3-d sculptures

Pen Nibs - end points of calligraphy pens used for writing or drawing, different sizes and styles

Portfolio - folder used to keep art in  
- a collection of an artists' best artwork

Quill - calligraphy pen holder

Realistic - something that is not made up

Scissors - tool used for cutting, can come with straight or decorative edges, comes in different sizes

Stained Glass - colored glass that is arranged together and fused together by either lead-ing or copper foil method

Stencil - tool that is traced to make a shape or letters, can be used with different drawing or painting media

Thumbnail Sketches - rough sketches of ideas, usually small (thus the size of a thumbnail)

Tie Dye - a process of dyeing cloth by binding areas to remain the original fabric color

### **Printing Terminology**

Brayer - printing tool, used to roll out ink

Ink - colored liquid used to write or draw with

Screen Printing - printing process, using a stencil process on a silk/nylon porous screen and pushing ink through the openings

Squeegee - usually a rubber object used in screen printing to press ink or paint through the screen openings

U-gouge - tool used for carving (usually printing blocks),  
blade point is shaped like a "U"

Veiner - tool used for carving (usually printing blocks),  
blade point is shaped like a "V"

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