



# Principles of Design

The Principles of Design are the tools for how artworks are arranged.

- Balance
- Unity
- Variety/Contrast
- Emphasis
- Movement/Rhythm
- Pattern/Repetition
- Proportion

# Balance

Balance refers to how artworks are weighted compositionally.



Left:  
Maya, *Standing Ruler*, c. 600–800,  
ceramic with traces of paint.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Middle:  
Henry Raeburn, *The Allen Brothers*  
(*Portrait of James and John Lee*  
*Allen*), early 1790s, oil on canvas.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Hemba, *Warrior Ancestor Figure*,  
19th century, wood.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Balance

Balance can be **symmetrical**—meaning elements are similar or the same on each side of an artwork.



Conte Style, *Pendant: Twin Warriors*, c. 700–1200, gold. Kimbell Art Museum



Assyrian, *Pair of Winged Deities*, c. 874–860 BC, gypsum. Kimbell Art Museum

Balance

Balance can be **asymmetrical**—meaning there is a visual focus on one side.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of a Woman, Possibly of the Lloyd Family*, c. 1750, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum



Maya, *Presentation of Captives to a Maya Ruler*, c. AD 785, limestone with traces of paint. Kimbell Art Museum

# Unity

Unity is shown when one or more elements of art is repeated.



George Stubbs, *Mares and Foals Belonging to the 2nd Viscount Bolingbroke*, c. 1761–62, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

## Unity

Artworks can have unity because they use similar **lines** or **patterns** throughout.



Zapotec culture, *Urn in the Form of Cociyo, God of Lightning and Rain*, c. AD 400–500, ceramic. Kimbell Art Museum



Maori, *Standing Ancestor Figure*, c. 1800–1840, wood. Kimbell Art Museum

Unity

Unity can be created from application of the same **colors** throughout an artwork.



Roman, *Parrot*, c. AD 400, mosaic. Kimbell Art Museum



Korean, *Arhat and Deer*, late 17th century, hanging scroll. Kimbell Art Museum

Unity

Artworks might show unity through their use of **shape** and **space**.



Japanese, *Temples in Eastern Kyoto*, c. 1600, six-fold screen; mineral pigments on gold. Kimbell Art Museum

Unity

Unity can be depicted through **texture** and **value**.



Anne Vallayer-Coster, *Still Life with Mackerel*, 1787, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum



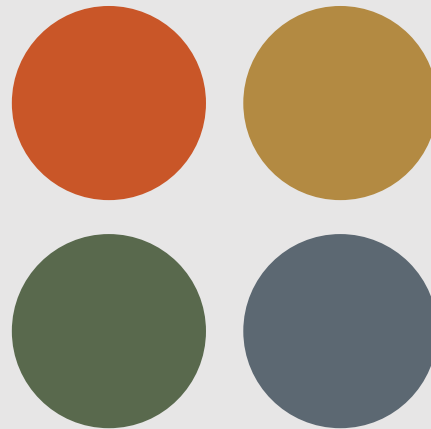
Thomas Gainsborough, *Going to Market, Early Morning*, c. 1773, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

# Variety/Contrast

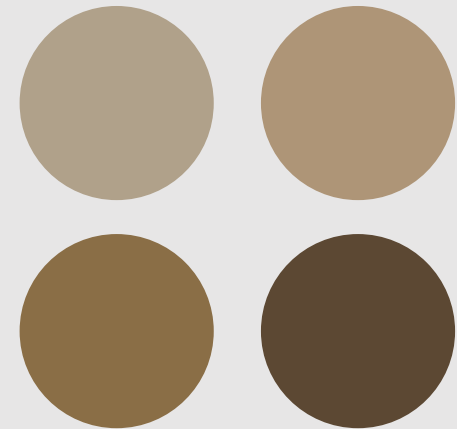
Variety is shown when there are contrasting elements.



The figures on the **left** wear **bright colors** and are grouped together.

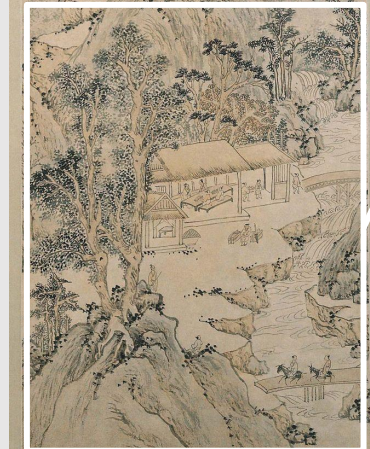


The figure on the **right** wears **neutral colors** and is isolated from the group.



Variety/Contrast

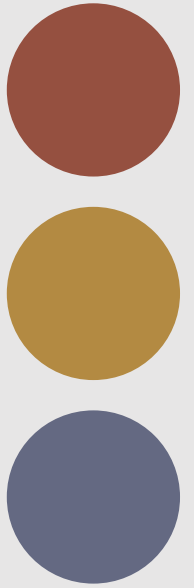
Different types of **lines** can create variety within an artwork.



Wen Jia, *Landscape in the Style of Dong Yuan*, 1577, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum

Variety/Contrast

Artworks can show variety by using differing **colors** for similar shapes.

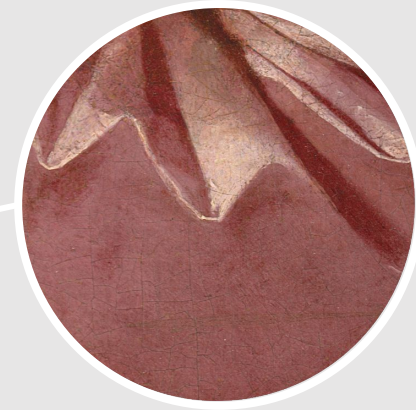


Left:  
Nicolas Poussin, *The Sacrament of Ordination (Christ Presenting the Keys to Saint Peter)*, c. 1636–40, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Jacques de Gheyn II, *Vase of Flowers with a Curtain*, c. 1615, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Variety/Contrast

Different **textures** within one artwork can create variety.



Georges de La Tour, *The Cheat with the Ace of Clubs*, c. 1630–34, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

# Emphasis

The area within an artwork that draws the viewer's attention.



Left:  
Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun,  
*Self-Portrait*, c. 1781, oil on canvas.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Titian, *The Madonna and Child  
with a Female Saint and the Infant  
Saint John the Baptist*, 1530s, oil on  
panel. Kimbell Art Museum

Emphasis

**Color** can catch the eye and draw emphasis.



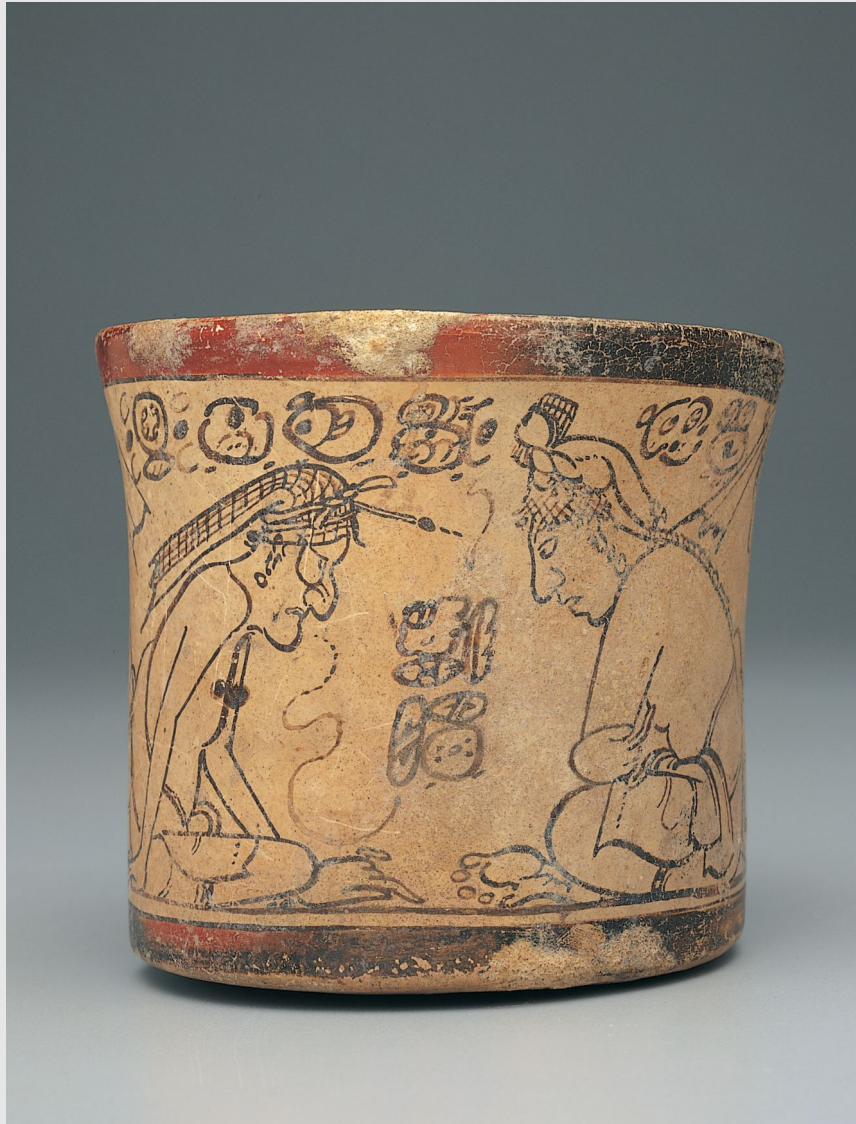
Left:  
Maya, *Tripod Vessel with Lid*, c. 400–500,  
ceramic with stucco and polychrome  
pigments. Kimbell Art Museum

Middle:  
Frederic Leighton, *Portrait of May Sartoris*, c.  
1860, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Rekisentei Eiri, *Beauty in a White Kimono*, c.  
1800, hanging scroll; ink and mineral  
pigments on paper. Kimbell Art Museum

Emphasis

**Lines** can direct the viewer's eye to an area of emphasis.



Far Left:

Lu Zhi, *The Canying Hall*, 1572, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum

Left:

Maya, *Codex-Style Vessel with Two Scenes of Itzam Instructing Young Pupils*, c. 700–750, ceramic with monochrome decoration. Kimbell Art Museum

Above:

Claude Monet, *La Pointe de la Hève at Low Tide*, 1865, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Emphasis

High contrasting **value** draws emphasis.



Shibata Zeshin, *Waterfall and Monkeys*, 1872, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum



Gerrit Dou, *Dentist by Candlelight*, c. 1660–65, oil on oak panel. Kimbell Art Museum



Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Portrait of Monsieur G. Giving His Daughter a Geography Lesson*, 1812, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Emphasis

**Proportion** also creates emphasis. Larger shapes and forms catch the eye.



Left:  
George Romney, *Portrait of Mrs. Andrew Reid*, c. 1780–88, oil on canvas.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Middle:  
Nok, *Male Figure*, c. 195 BC–AD 205, terracotta.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Japanese, *Haniwa Seated Man*, c. AD 500, low-fired clay with cinnabar pigment.  
Kimbell Art Museum

# Movement/Rhythm

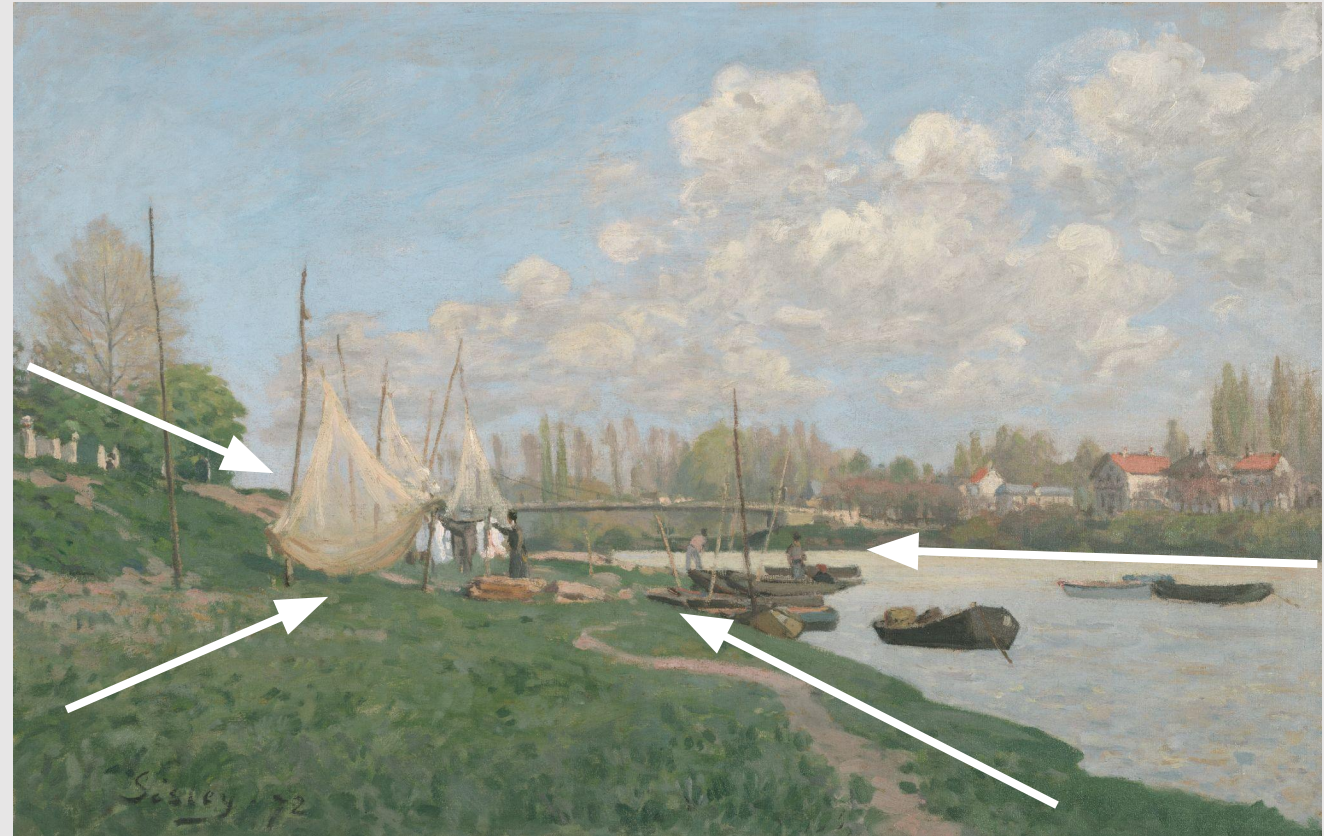
The path the viewer's eye follows through an artwork.



Antoine Bourdelle, *Penelope*, 1909, cast bronze, dark green patina. Kimbell Art Museum



Wang Zhao, *The Three Stars of Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity*, c. 1500, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum



Alfred Sisley, *Drying Nets*, 1872, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Movement/Rhythm

Movement can be created by showing a subject **in motion**.



Left:  
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Torment of Saint Anthony*, 1487,  
tempera on panel. Kimbell Art  
Museum

Right:  
Maruyama Okyo, *Crows*, 1766,  
pair of six-fold screens; ink and  
gold on paper. Kimbell Art  
Museum

Movement/Rhythm

Movement can be implied through **pose**.



Left:  
Gian Lorenzo  
Bernini, *Angel with  
the Superscription*  
and *Angel with the  
Crown of Thorns*,  
1668, terracotta.  
Kimbell Art Museum

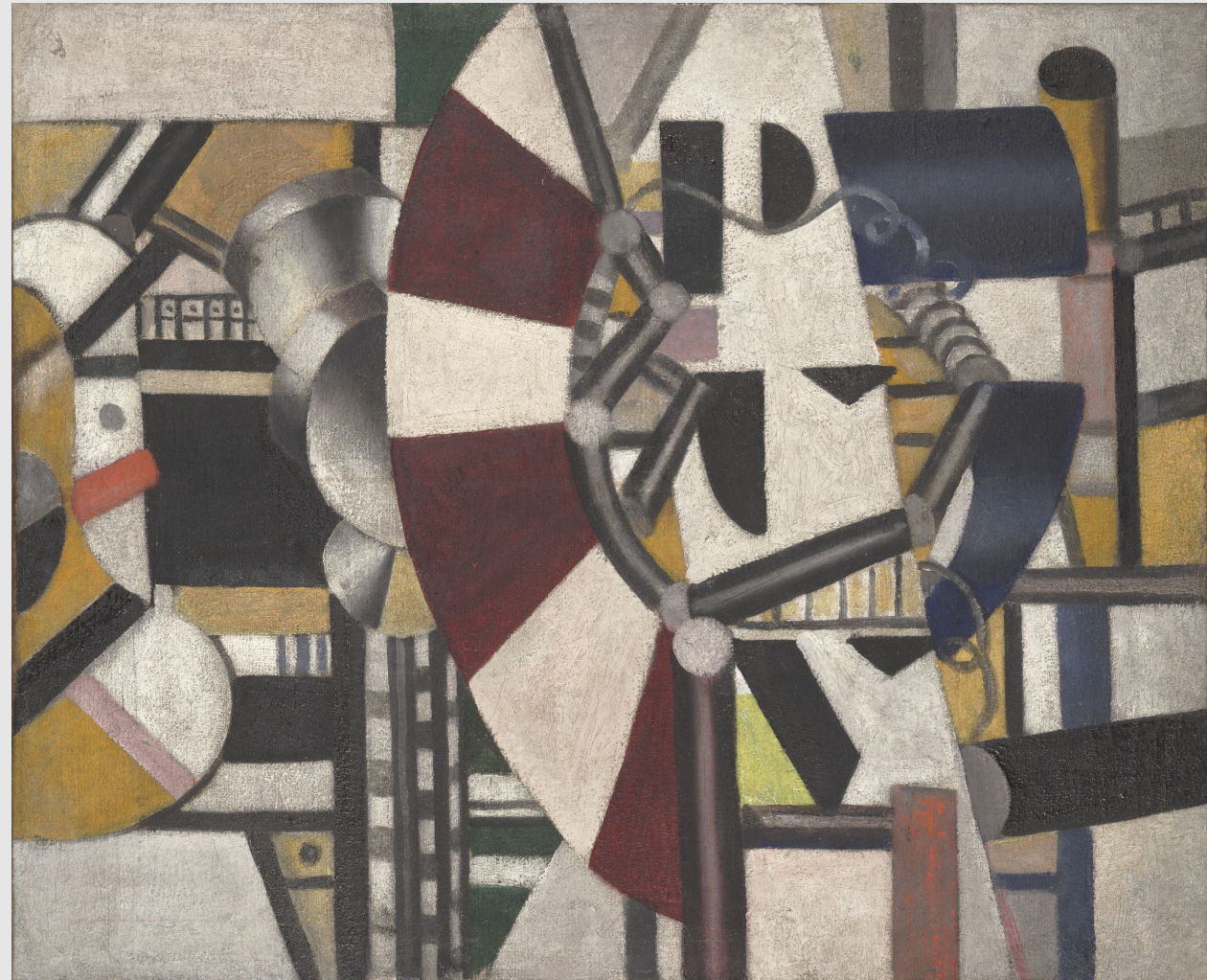
Right:  
Chokwe, *Chibinda  
Ilunga*, mid-19th  
century, wood, hair,  
and hide. Kimbell  
Art Museum

Movement/Rhythm

**Lines** can be used to move the eye around an artwork.



Paul Cézanne, *Maison Maria with a View of Château Noir*, c. 1895, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum



Fernand Léger, *Composition*, c. 1920, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

# Pattern/Repetition

Pattern is shown by repeating elements of art.



Left:  
Egyptian, *Kneeling Statue of Senenmut, Chief Steward of Queen Hatshepsut*, c. 1473–1458 BC, gray green schist. Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Isoda Koryusai, *Courtesan Playing the Samisen*, c. 1785, hanging scroll; ink and gold on silk. Kimbell Art Museum

Pattern/Repetition

Patterns are often depicted by repeating **lines**.

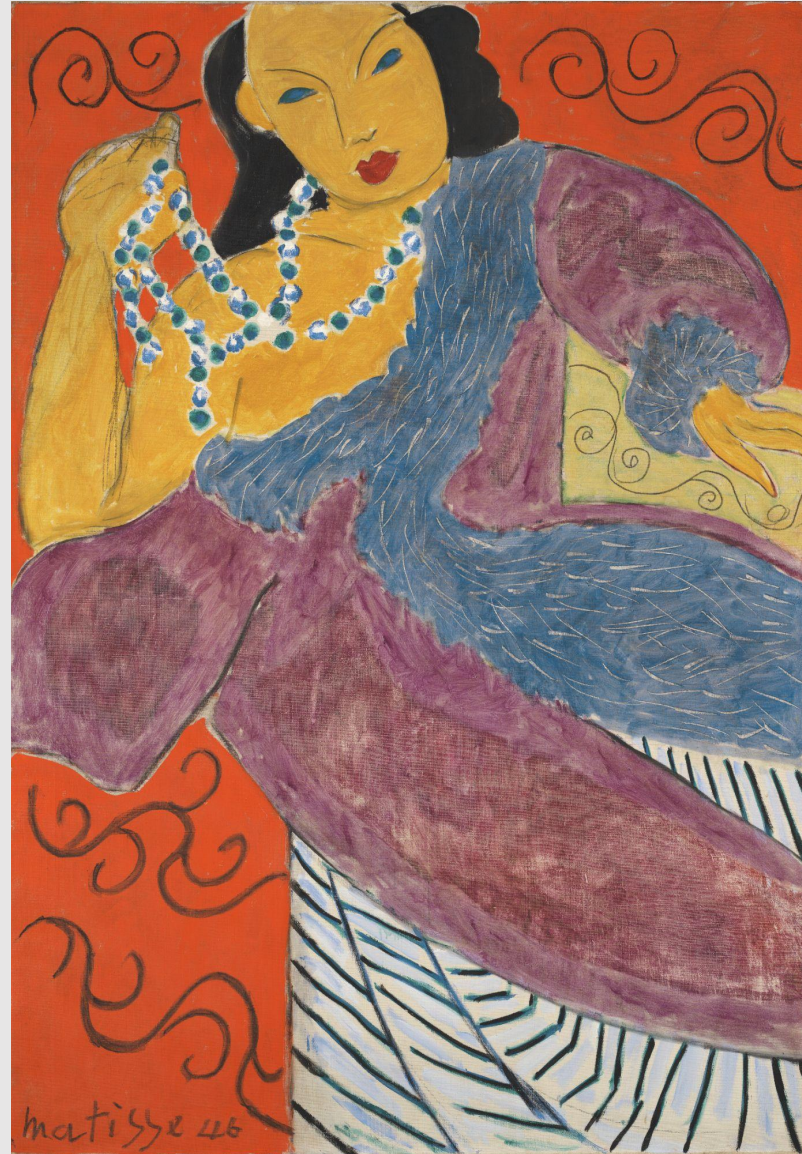


Left:  
Chinese, *Dish with a Melon Design*, early  
15th century, blue-and-white ware,  
porcelain, cobalt oxide pigment. Kimbell  
Art Museum

Right:  
Mixtec style, *Rain God Vessel*, c.  
1100–1400, polychromed ceramic.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Pattern/Repetition

Patterns are often depicted by repeating **lines**.



Left:  
Chinese, *Standing Dog*, c. 1st century AD,  
earthenware with lead-fluxed glaze. Kimbell  
Art Museum

Right:  
Henri Matisse, *L'Asie (Asia)*, 1946, oil on  
canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Pattern/Repetition

Patterns can also be formed from repeating **shapes**.



Left:  
Jacques-Louis David, *The Anger of Achilles*, 1819, oil on canvas.  
Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Chinese, *Jar in the Shape of a Stupa*, late 6th or early 7th century AD, earthenware with traces of painted polychrome pigment. Kimbell Art Museum

# Proportion

The relationship of one part to another within an artwork.



Indian, *Four-Armed Ganesha*, 5th–6th century AD, terracotta relief. Kimbell Art Museum



Ito Jakuchu, *Two Gibbons Reaching for the Moon*, c. 1770, hanging scroll; ink on paper. Kimbell Art Museum

## Proportion

One figure that is larger than the others will stand out.



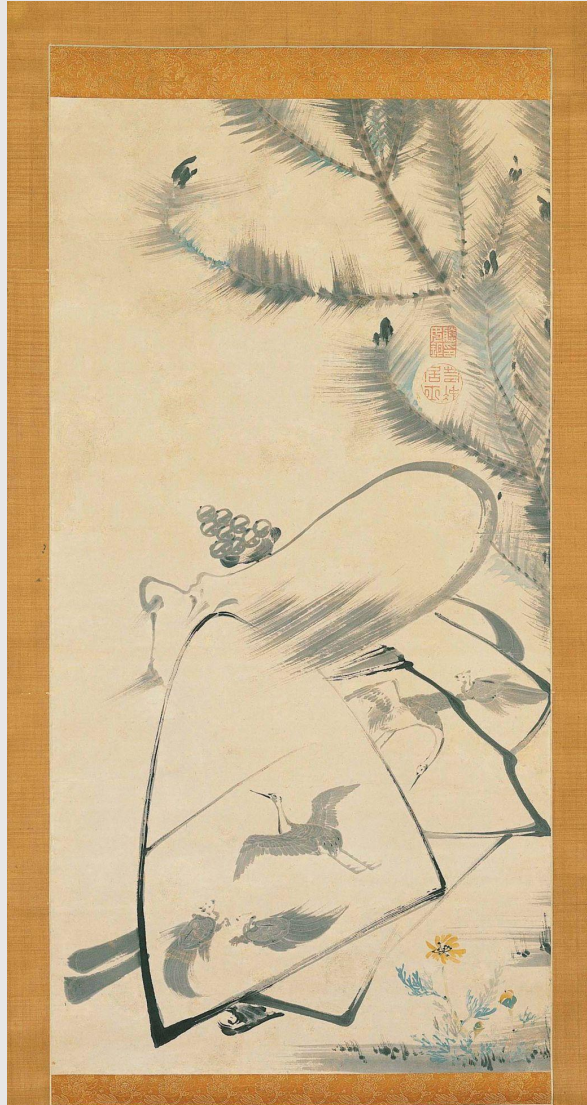
In these examples, the largest figure signifies importance.

Left:  
Egyptian, *Group Statue of Ka-nefer and His Family*,  
c. 2450 BC, limestone with traces of original painted  
decoration. Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Indian, *Seated Buddha with Two Attendants*, c. AD  
131, red sandstone. Kimbell Art Museum

## Proportion

A body part on a figure that is large will draw the eye.



In Chinese culture, Fukurojin has a large forehead due to his superhuman intelligence and wisdom.

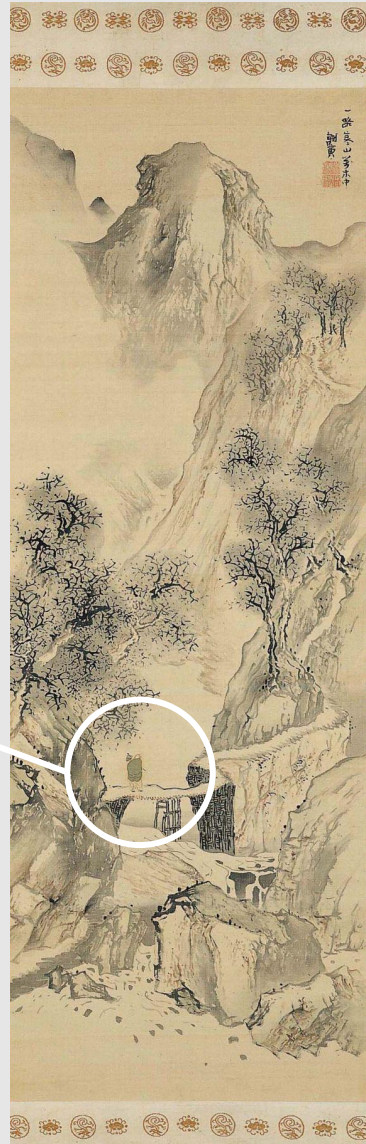
For the Maya peoples, large eyes indicates a supernatural being.

Left:  
Ito Jakuchu, *Fukurojin, the God of Longevity and Wisdom*, c. 1790, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum

Right:  
Maya, *Censer Stand with the Head of a Supernatural Being with a Kan Cross*, c. AD 690–720, ceramic with traces of pigments. Kimbell Art Museum

## Proportion

A space that is large will emphasize its significance.



Yosa Buson, *Landscape with a Solitary Traveler*, c. 1780, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum



Pieter Jansz. Saenredam, *Interior of the Buurkerk, Utrecht*, 1645. Oil on panel. Kimbell Art Museum

## Art in order of appearance:

Japanese, *Seated Nyoirin Kannon*, c. 1230–50, wood with traces of gilt and pigment. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1985.15

Maya, *Standing Ruler*, c. 600–800, ceramic with traces of paint. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1984.03

Henry Raeburn, *The Allen Brothers (Portrait of James and John Lee Allen)*, early 1790s, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2002.05

Hemba, *Warrior Ancestor Figure*, 19th century, wood. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1979.03

Conte Style, *Pendant: Twin Warriors*, c. 700–1200, gold. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1979.23

Assyrian, *Pair of Winged Deities*, c. 874–860 BC, gypsum. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.04 a,b.

Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of a Woman, Possibly of the Lloyd Family*, c. 1750, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, ACF 1946.04

Maya, *Presentation of Captives to a Maya Ruler*, c. AD 785, limestone with traces of paint. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1971.07

George Stubbs, *Mares and Foals Belonging to the 2nd Viscount Bolingbroke*, c. 1761–62, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2024.01

Zapotec culture, *Urn in the Form of Cociyo, God of Lightning and Rain*, c. AD 400–500, ceramic. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1985.09

Maori, *Standing Ancestor Figure*, c. 1800–1840, wood. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1984.04

Roman, *Parrot*, c. AD 400, mosaic. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1972.21

## Art in order of appearance:

Korean, *Arhat and Deer*, late 17th century, hanging scroll. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1995.06

Japanese, *Temples in Eastern Kyoto*, c. 1600, six-fold screen; mineral pigments on gold. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1986.10

Anne Vallayer-Coster, *Still Life with Mackerel*, 1787, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APg 2019.01

Thomas Gainsborough, *Going to Market, Early Morning*, c. 1773, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2023.01

Duccio di Buoninsegna, *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1310–11, tempera and gold on panel. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APx 1975.01

Wen Jia, *Landscape in the Style of Dong Yuan*, 1577, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1980.01

Nicolas Poussin, *The Sacrament of Ordination (Christ Presenting the Keys to Saint Peter)*, c. 1636–40, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2011.01

Jacques de Gheyn II, *Vase of Flowers with a Curtain*, c. 1615, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2008.01

Georges de La Tour, *The Cheat with the Ace of Clubs*, c. 1630–34, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.06

Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1781, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, ACK 1949.02

Titian, *The Madonna and Child with a Female Saint and the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, 1530s, oil on panel. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1986.07

Maya, *Tripod Vessel with Lid*, c. AD 400–500, ceramic with stucco and polychrome pigments. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1997.01

## Art in order of appearance:

Frederic Leighton, *Portrait of May Sartoris*, c. 1860, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, ACF 1964.03

Rekisentei Eiri, *Beauty in a White Kimono*, c. 1800, hanging scroll; ink and mineral pigments on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.10

Lu Zhi, *The Canying Hall*, 1572, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.15

Maya, *Codex-Style Vessel with Two Scenes of Itzam Instructing Young Pupils*, c. AD 700–750, ceramic with monochrome decoration. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2004.04

Claude Monet, *La Pointe de la Hève at Low Tide*, 1865, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1986.07

Shibata Zeshin, *Waterfall and Monkeys*, 1872, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1984.12

Gerrit Dou, *Dentist by Candlelight*, c. 1660–65, oil on oak panel. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2002.01

Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Portrait of Monsieur G. Giving His Daughter a Geography Lesson*, 1812, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1990.01

George Romney, *Portrait of Mrs. Andrew Reid*, c. 1780–88, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, ACF 1957.03

Nok, *Male Figure*, c. 195 BC–AD 205, terracotta. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1996.03

Japanese, *Haniwa Seated Man*, c. AD 500, low-fired clay with cinnabar pigment. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1972.02

Antoine Bourdelle, *Penelope*, 1909, cast bronze, dark green patina. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1969.03

## Art in order of appearance:

Wang Zhao, *The Three Stars of Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity*, c. 1500, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1985.06

Alfred Sisley, *Drying Nets*, 1872, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APx 1977.01

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Torment of Saint Anthony*, 1487, tempera on panel. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2009.01

Maruyama Okyo, *Crows*, 1766, pair of six-fold screens; ink and gold on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1969.11 a,b

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Angel with the Superscription* and *Angel with the Crown of Thorns*, 1668, terracotta. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1987.02 a,b

Chokwe, *Chibinda Ilunga*, mid-19th century, wood, hair, and hide. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1978.05

Paul Cézanne, *Maison Maria with a View of Château Noir*, c. 1895, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1982.05

Fernand Léger, *Composition*, c. 1920, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1985.11

Egyptian, *Kneeling Statue of Senenmut, Chief Steward of Queen Hatshepsut*, c. 1473–1458 BC, gray green schist. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1985.02

Isoda Koryusai, *Courtesan Playing the Samisen*, c. 1785, hanging scroll; ink and gold on silk. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1984.23

Chinese, *Dish with a Melon Design*, early 15th century, blue-and-white ware, porcelain, cobalt oxide pigment. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1970.03

Mixtec style, *Rain God Vessel*, c. 1100–1400, polychromed ceramic. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APx 1974.02

## Art in order of appearance:

Chinese, *Standing Dog*, c. 1st century AD, earthenware with lead-fluxed glaze. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1995.01

Henri Matisse, *L'Asie (Asia)*, 1946, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APg 1993.01

Jacques-Louis David, *The Anger of Achilles*, 1819, oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1980.07

Chinese, *Jar in the Shape of a Stupa*, late 6th or early 7th century AD, earthenware with traces of painted polychrome pigment. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1994.06 a,b,c

Indian, *Four-Armed Ganesha*, 5th–6th century AD, terracotta relief. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.11

Ito Jakuchu, *Two Gibbons Reaching for the Moon*, c. 1770, hanging scroll; ink on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2005.01

Egyptian, *Group Statue of Ka-nefer and His Family*, c. 2450 BC, limestone with traces of original painted decoration. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2005.03

Indian, *Seated Buddha with Two Attendants*, c. AD 131, red sandstone. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1986.06

Ito Jakuchu, *Fukurojin, the God of Longevity and Wisdom*, c. 1790, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, APx 1986.02

Maya, *Censer Stand with the Head of a Supernatural Being with a Kan Cross*, c. AD 690–720, ceramic with traces of pigments. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 2013.02

Yosa Buson, *Landscape with a Solitary Traveler*, c. 1780, hanging scroll; ink and light colors on silk. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1981.18

Pieter Jansz. Saenredam, *Interior of the Buurkerk, Utrecht*, 1645, oil on panel. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 1986.09