



The Art Elements 1

Composition structure | project brief

Materials + Equipment(when working at home)

A3 or A2 paper, chalk pastels, oil pastels.

Still life of your choice

Project Brief

Compositional Structure

There are different approaches artists use to think about structuring or arranging the Art Elements within a composition.

- Rule of thirds
- Golden Ratio/section/mean/proportion
 - Mathematical ratio: 1.6180339887... (ratio of 1:618)
 - Found in nature (nautilus shell), paintings, architecture, sculpture
- Fibonacci sequence (similar to the Golden Ratio)
 - Each number is the sum of the preceding 2 numbers (0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21...)

There is a much more intuitive way we can learn about composition.

Compositional Categories

There are a number of accepted **categories** of compositional structure which is a handy short-cut to finding ways of structuring your composition. See my [Pinterest board](#).

1. Random
2. Frames
3. Spiral
4. Grid
5. Triangular
6. Cross
7. L-shape (any direction)
8. S – shape (any direction)
9. H – shape (any direction)
10. T - shape (any direction)

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Step 1

Aim: To learn about 'Compositional Structure' and understand how best to arrange all the Art Elements harmoniously into a picture.

- Refer to the following images on my [Pinterest board](#) titled;
 - 1 Composition example | 1 Thumbnail sketch
 - 2 Composition example | 2 Thumbnail sketch
 - 3 Composition example | 3 Thumbnail sketch
 - 4 Composition example | 4 Thumbnail sketch

Use a soft pencil (6B – 8B) to

- Draw a [thumbnail sketch](#) (about 8 x 10cm – click to see example) of each painting (keep it simple!!)
 - As you draw your thumbnail sketches link the strongest shapes in the paintings together into an interesting composition of 3 basic tones – dark, mid and white

TIP:

When simplifying the composition;

- link all the most dominant shapes together as either black or white
- By dominant I don't simply mean dark tones.
- Dominant means those shapes that attract your eye first – shapes, colour, scale, texture, directional shapes - to maintain a Visual balance/counterbalance

Can you see which category your thumbnail sketches fall into?

REMEMBER:

This exercise will help you order/structure your picture well because you have identified the **compositional structure** before you start. You can then keep an eye on it as you develop your picture into a finished painting or drawing.

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Step 2

Aim: To further develop your knowledge of 'Compositional Structure' to create your own harmoniously constructed still life in a Representational Naturalistic Semi abstract style.

See all the Art Element [Pinterest boards](#) for inspiration.

1. Set up a simple still life
2. Compose 3 thumbnail sketches (as you did in Part 1) to help you decide on the arrangement of shapes, tones and colour – watch out for how the shapes affect the Compositional Balance and how your eye is led around the picture..
3. Select your favourite thumbnail sketch
 - Use everything you have learnt about the Art Elements to develop your thumbnails into a finished composition
 - Complete your picture using colour – A2 or A3 size
 - Add – line, texture, shading, tone, form, patten, etc.....

Suggested materials are chalk pastel or oil pastels, but choose any of your favourite.

FINAL TIPS:

1. Identify your compositional structure right from the start and keep an eye on it throughout the development of your picture.
2. You can allow it to change and develop organically as your picture develops, however it's always a good idea to be continually aware what compositional category the underlying structure fits into.

This will help you create coherent well-balanced compositions, as you continue to develop as a creative and independent artist.

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Notes

- If you are working on this project after attending the Art Elements course remember to refer to your notes and remember all that you learnt in class.
- Remember you need to be thinking and applying all that you have learnt about the Principles of Art to help you create a coherent and visually strong 'finished' drawing or painting.
- Use the 'Leave a reply' form on my website to ask me any questions if you are working on this project at home, or sign up to attend the Art Elements course if you haven't already.

Good luck and enjoy!

**Please join and share your finished result
on my [Facebook group](#)**

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home and to share with your local group.**

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