

# Art Glossary

## Non-Western Art History

**Abstract:** not realistic, though often based on an actual subject.

**Aesthetics:** the study of the beautiful in art; defined by the visual, moral, and social standards of the culture in which it was created; focuses on the nature of beauty, the nature and value of art, our responses to art, and how we define what is art.

**African Art:** the artworks from the many empires and tribes from the continent of Africa, generally below the Sahara Desert; also sometimes called Sub-Saharan Art; includes the modern nations of Nigeria, Congo, South Africa, Sudan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Angola and many more.

**Anatomy:** the study of the structure of the human body, especially the bones and muscles.

**Architecture:** the art and science of designing and erecting buildings.

**Art:** the making or doing of things that have form and beauty; usually creative and unique, art expresses human feelings and spiritual beliefs.

**Artist:** a person who creates art; in ancient times the artist created works for the religious or political powers; in Medieval and Renaissance times, the artist created works for the church and wealthy patrons; in modern times, artists create for themselves, businesses, patrons or churches.

**Asymmetrical:** different on either side of a central axis (a line drawn down the middle).

**Balance:** equilibrium in a composition, either symmetrical or asymmetrical.

**Belief:** spiritual ideas about something held to be true by a person or culture; generally about why or how something occurs;

**Bronze:** an alloy of copper and tin used for sculpture.

**Calligraphy:** beautiful or expert handwriting; often a special style created by artists.

**Caricature:** character studies that usually exaggerate one or more features, often with humorous or satirical intent.

**Carving:** a subtractive method of sculpture; taking away wood or stone.

**Cave Art:** prehistoric art found in caves underground.

**Central Asian Art:** artwork from the area above the Himalayan Mountains, stretching from present day Iran west to China; includes the modern nations of Mongolia, Afghanistan, Kyrgystan, Tadjhistan and Kazakhstan, as well as parts of southern Russia.

**Ceramic:** any object made of clay and fired (baked at high temperatures); pottery.

**Chinese Art:** art from the area of the present day People's Republic of China; the many Chinese dynasties stretch from 1,000 BC to 1911 AD.

**Collage:** a grouping of different textures, objects and materials glued down.

**Composition:** the manner in which the forms, lines and colors of an artwork are arranged.

**Contemporary Non-Western Art:** generally defined as art produced during the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1980 to the present in the areas beyond Europe and America.

**Contour drawing:** a drawing of an object or person showing only the outline, the edges along the outside of the shape.

**Cool Colors:** colors that recede (appear to go away from the viewer), such as blue, green and violet.

**Creative:** original, expressive or imaginative; the ability to put together lines, colors, forms and subjects in ways that are new and different.

**Decorative Art:** artwork using the elements and principles of design created on everyday objects such as clothing, jewelry and household goods.

**Design:** the organization of line, form, color, value, texture and space in an eye-pleasing arrangement; artists use repetition, emphasis, unity, proportion and/or contrast to organize their art works.

**Drawing:** usually a work in pen, pencil or charcoal on paper.

**Element:** artistic design considerations such as color, line, texture, shape or form and space.

**Emphasis:** a design principle that gives dominance to a particular area through color, size or repetition.

**Figure:** the human or animal form used in creating art; i.e. figure-drawing.

**Geometric:** any art or style primarily using the basic shapes – rectangles, squares, circles, triangles; often in a pattern.

**Illustration:** an artwork developed to accompany a story, advertisement, or written text.

**Indian Art:** artwork created on the Indian sub-continent from the Indus Civilization of 2,000 BC to the present; this includes the present modern nations of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

**Japanese Art:** artwork created on the islands of the modern nation of Japan from the Jomon Civilization of 3,000 BC to the present

**Landscape:** an outdoor scenery painting; also includes the cityscape or seascape.

**Marble:** a hard, crystalline limestone, white or variously colored, sometimes streaked, which can be carved then polished to a high shine.

**Medium:** the material that is used in an artwork; i.e. watercolor, oil, marble, bronze; plural media.

**Modeling:** in sculpture building up clay or wax into a form; in painting varying the colors to suggest a three-dimensional quality.

**Mosaic:** images formed by small colored stones, glass or clay pieces, fixed to a hard, stable surface; in modern times other materials such as wood and paper have been used.

**Motif:** a main element, idea or feature, specifically in art, literature or music; a repeated figure in a design.

**Mural:** a continuous painting made to fill a wall.

**Mythology:** a collection of traditional stories from a preliterate society (before writing is invented) about the origin and history of a people, its gods, ancestors and heroes.

**Narrative Art:** an artwork that tells a story.

**Native North American Art:** artwork created on the continent of North America, including modern day Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize and Costa Rica; includes the ancient civilizations of the Mayas and Aztecs from over 1,500 years ago.

**Native South American Art:** artwork created on the continent of South America, including modern day Panama, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina and Chile; the earliest known civilization was the Incas about 1,000 years ago.

**Oceanic Art:** artwork created on the many islands of the western Pacific Ocean, including modern day Australia, Indonesia, Borneo, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (USA protectorate).

**Painting:** the act, art or occupation of picturing scenes, objects, persons, etc. with paint.

**Patron:** a person, usually wealthy and influential, who sponsors and supports a person, activity etc.; for example, a patron commissions an artist to create a work of art.

**Pattern:** an overall design that repeats the same lines or shapes.

**Perspective:** a formal method of creating a three-dimensional effect on a two-dimensional surface. There are three kinds: visual perspective – making distant objects smaller; aerial or atmospheric – colors in the distance are hazier or bluer; linear perspective – having lines converge to meet at a single point on the horizon.

**Pigment:** powdered earth, minerals and chemicals, ground and mixed with a binder such as oil.

**Portrait:** a painting, photograph or other likeness of a person, especially one showing a face.

**Prehistoric Art:** created before a culture develops a written language; the period of time depends upon the culture.

**Primary Colors:** red, yellow and blue; may be mixed to make other colors but cannot themselves be mixed from other colors.

**Print:** a work of art, usually on paper, created from a “plate” that has been transformed through a technique such as engraving, etching or woodcut and then inked and the image is transferred to paper.

**Relief:** in sculpture and architecture the projection of figures and forms from a flat surface so that they stand partly free.

**Religious Artwork:** artwork that shows religious images or is used in religious ceremonies.

**Secondary Colors:** green, purple and orange; the colors obtained by mixing the primary colors.

**Sculpture:** the art of carving wood, chiseling stone, casting and welding metal, modeling clay or wax, or assembling these materials into three-dimensional representations, such as statues, figures, forms, etc.

**Shade:** any color mixed with black; it makes the color darker.

**South East Asian Art:** artwork created in the area of modern day Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Singapore; this includes the ancient kingdom of Khmer about 900 – 1200 AD.

**Spiritual:** relating to the nature of the spirit – the unseen force that gives life; concerned with the soul or a supernatural being, for example, gods or God.

**Symbol:** something that stands for or represents another thing; especially an object to represent something abstract, as a dove represents peace.

**Symmetrical:** the same on either side of a central axis (a line drawn down the middle).

**Tapestry:** multi-colored pictorial or decorative weaving meant to be hung on a wall or placed on furniture.

**Textile:** cloth, fabric; especially one that is woven or knitted.

**Texture:** the tactile quality of a surface; smooth, rough, slick, sticky.

**Tint:** any color mixed with white; it makes the color lighter.

**Value:** a social principle, standard or quality considered worthwhile or desirable; common values are compassion, freedom, honesty, justice, peace, respect, responsibility, tolerance.

**Visual Arts:** a broad category that includes the traditional fine arts such as drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture; communication and design arts such as film, television, graphics, and product design; architecture and environmental arts such as urban, building, interior and landscape design; folk arts; and other works of art such as ceramics, fibers, jewelry, works in wood, paper and other materials.

**Unique:** being the only one of its kind; being without an equal or equivalent.

**Warm Colors:** colors that advance (appear to come towards the viewer), such as red, red-orange, orange and yellow.