



The Principles of Art

“The fundamental thing in art is freedom! In art, there are millions of paths—as many paths as there are artists.”

—Rufino Tamayo (1899–1991)

Quick Write

Identifying Connotations. In the above quote, the artist refers to paths. He was not using the word in its strict dictionary sense. Tell what you think he meant by restating the quote in your own words.



◀ Rufino Tamayo. *Fruit Vendors*. 1952. Oil on canvas. 150.8 × 200.8 cm (59³/₈ × 79¹/₁₆”). Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1954.



▲ **FIGURE 8.1** The quilt shown here is unique in that the images in the center have been painted by hand. Can you find a pattern in this quilt? What objects or figures are repeated?

Faith Ringgold. *The Men: Mask Face Quilt #2*. 1986. Acrylic on canvas with fabric borders. 177.8 × 157.5 (70 × 62"). © 1986 Faith Ringgold.

Rhythm, Pattern, and Movement

Life is full of rhythmic events and patterns. Think about the yearly cycle of the seasons. The regular routines or patterns of daily life create a sense of stability and security.

In this chapter, you will:

- Identify rhythms and patterns occurring in the world around you.
- Observe the relationship of motif to pattern.
- Compare and contrast the use of the art principles rhythm and pattern to organize the art elements in artworks.
- Create visual solutions that use the principles of rhythm and pattern.

Focus on Art History

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930) is known for her colorful painted story quilts (**Figure 8.1**). She grew up in a close-knit family in Harlem, New York. Her early oil paintings focused on civil rights issues of the 1960s. Then in 1980, she was invited to make a quilt for a special exhibit. Her mother, who was a seamstress, helped her make *Echoes of Harlem*, a quilt of painted faces and fabrics. She has been creating quilts that combine storytelling and painting ever since. Her story quilts have also been used as illustrations in children's books that focus on the achievements of African Americans.

Analyze. Look again at Figure 8.1 to form a conclusion about the use of pattern. Can you find a repeated pattern in this quilt? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

rhythm
visual rhythm
pattern
motif
module

Rhythm and Pattern

Rhythm is the principle of art that indicates movement by the repetition of elements or objects. The principle of rhythm is found in all the arts: music, dance, poetry, and theatre. In music, rhythm is created by the measure of time between musical sounds. Beats are followed by rests. In poetry, the repetition of words, sounds, and phrases creates rhythm. The visual arts combine repetition and pauses to create rhythm.

Visual Rhythm

Visual rhythm is rhythm you receive through your eyes rather than through your ears. Visual rhythm is created by repeated positive shapes separated by negative spaces. Everywhere you look you can see visual rhythms. Books lined up in a bookcase and cars in a parking lot are examples of visual rhythms. A line of people in the cafeteria has visual rhythm. Each person is a positive shape, and the space between each person is a negative space.

In **Figure 8.2**, Chief Black Hawk has used visual rhythm to suggest the movements of a dance ceremony. The repeated images of the six Crow men are the major beats, or positive shapes, of the rhythm. The spaces between the men are the rests, or negative spaces, in the rhythm.



▲ **FIGURE 8.2** In the winter of 1880–81, Chief Black Hawk, a Lakota man, supported his family by selling drawings to a trader on the reservation. He was unknown until 1994, when a book of his drawings emerged on the auction market. Chief Black Hawk's book shows natural history drawings, hunting and ceremonial activities of the Lakota, and many pictures of Crow ceremonies.

Chief Black Hawk. *Crow Men in Ceremonial Dress*. 1880–81. Ink and pencil on paper. 26 × 41.9 cm (10¼ × 16½"). Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York.

MEET THE ARTIST

ROSA BONHEUR



French, 1822–1899

Rosa Bonheur (**roh-zah bah-nur**) was born in Bordeaux, France in 1822. When she was seven years old, her family moved to Paris. Her father, Raymond Bonheur, was a landscape artist and painting teacher. He trained Rosa and her three siblings. As a member of the religious group called Saint-Simonians, he believed in the equality of women. This attitude allowed Rosa Bonheur to develop unrestrained by traditional women's roles.

When she was ten years old, she refused to be apprenticed to a dressmaker, preferring instead to sketch animals in nearby woods and to draw scenes from the balcony of the family apartment. This lifelong love of animals would inspire her later art. She painted huge compositions in which horses and other animals played a major role. She visited slaughterhouses to learn the anatomy of animals. She also traveled to livestock markets. *The Horse Fair* (**Figure 8.3**) is a painting that depicts one of these scenes. Bonheur became a famous, well-known artist. In 1865, she became the first woman to be awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor.



▲ **FIGURE 8.3** Bonheur, a lifelong animal lover, often created large-scale artworks with horses and other animals as the subject matter. In this painting Bonheur has used the horses as a motif. The rhythm the horses create pulls your eyes through the painting. Where does the movement start? From which direction does the viewer get drawn through the art?

Rosa Bonheur. *The Horse Fair*. 1853–55. Oil on canvas. 244.5 × 506.7 cm (96¼ × 199½"). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Gift of Cornelius Vanderbilt, 1887. (87.25).



In visual rhythm, a beat may be one element or a combination of elements. Look at the photograph in **Figure 8.4**. The strongest beats are the big, tall buildings. The lighted windows are secondary rhythms. The streets and the spaces between the buildings create negative, empty space—the rests between the beats.

Visual rhythms create a sensation of movement. Rhythms cause the viewer's eyes to follow the visual beats through a work of art. Visual movement is different from real action, which involves a physical change in position. For example, a ball bouncing across a room is real action. Visual movement simply suggests movement. In an artwork, round shapes separated by negative spaces can create the visual sensation of the movement of a ball. Your eyes bounce from one round shape to the next. In **Figure 8.6** on page 203, the artist has used rhythm to pull your eyes through the work. Notice how the curved figures and the slanted hoes give a sensation of visual movement.

Pattern

Pattern is the principle of art that is concerned with decorative surface design. It is usually a two-dimensional visual repetition. Blue stripes on a shirt are a pattern. Ten blue striped shirts arranged in a store window create a visual rhythm that in turn creates visual movement.

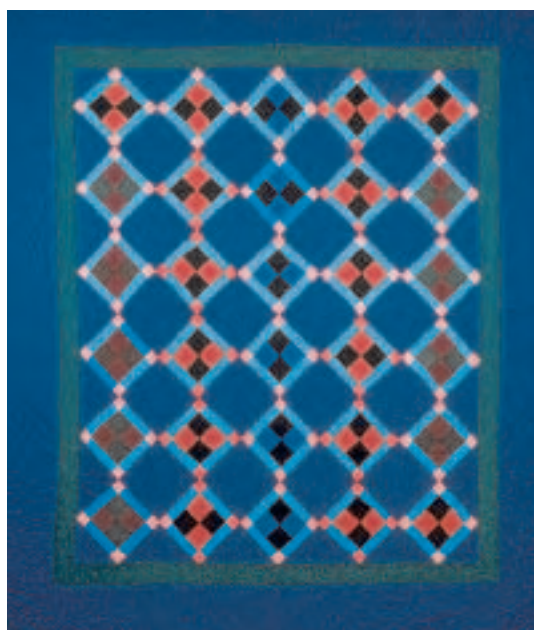
The unit that is repeated in visual pattern is called a **motif**. Sometimes, every motif is an exact duplicate of the first unit; sometimes, the repetitions vary from the original (**Figure 8.5**). Look around, and you will find examples of patterns created by the repetitions of one or more motifs. You can discover patterns in furniture, rugs, clothing, or the line of lockers in the hallway.

▲ **FIGURE 8.4** In this unusual night view of New York City, you can see examples of rhythms made by the buildings and the lit windows. Notice how the value changes also create a sense of rhythm.

Berenice Abbott. *The Night View*. 1936. Photograph. Museum of the City of New York, New York. Gift of Mr. Todd Watts.

▶ **FIGURE 8.5** There are two major motifs in this design. One is a solid blue square set on its point. The alternating motif is bordered with a light blue band and divided in the center into four smaller squares.

Annie M. Peachey. *Four in Block Work Quilt*. 1925–35. Cotton, rayon, and synthetics. 216 × 184 cm (85 × 72½"). Collection of the Museum of American Folk Art, New York, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Wigton.



LOOKING CLOSELY

Visual Rhythms Create Visual Movement

Woodruff has used many random visual rhythms in this work to create the feeling that the workers are singing and working to the rhythm of the song as they hoe the cotton. In the diagram you can see how he has used repeated shapes to move your eyes through the work. How many visual beats can you find in this painting?



◀ **FIGURE 8.6**

Hale Woodruff. *Poor Man's Cotton*. 1944. Watercolor on paper. 77.5 × 57.2 cm (30½ × 22½"). The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey.



▲ **FIGURE 8.7** This elevator grille is a delicate pattern of lines and round forms. It was once part of a large bank of elevators in the 1893 Chicago Stock Exchange Building. The building was torn down in 1972, but parts of it, such as this grille, have been saved and housed in various museums.

Louis Sullivan. *Grille of Elevator Enclosure Cage from the Chicago Stock Exchange Building*. 1893–94. Painted cast and wrought iron and bronze. 185.4 × 78.7 cm (73 × 31"). High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia. Virginia Carroll Crawford Collection, 1982.291.

In sculpture and architecture a *three-dimensional motif* is sometimes called a **module**. Modular furniture is composed of standard matching units.

A pattern of lines can decorate a piece of fabric or wallpaper. **Figure 8.7** shows a pattern decorating an elevator grille. These are decorative patterns meant to be visually appealing. Other patterns are functional. A bricklayer places bricks in a certain pattern in order to build a sturdy, durable wall. The bricklayer may make the pattern more complex in order to create a finished work that is very decorative, but the main purpose is still functional.

Activity

Analyzing Motifs and Patterns

Comparing and Contrasting the Use of Pattern. Make a collection of decorative patterns. You may use photographs, clippings from magazines, scraps of fabric, and original drawings. Compare and contrast the use of pattern in your work and identify the motif in each pattern by drawing a circle around one. Organize your pattern collection into a poster, a bulletin board, a booklet, or some other type of presentation.

Computer Option. Start with a rectangle and design a simple motif. Use three colors or three original textures in black and white. Create a variety of pattern with that motif. Print your patterns. If your printer is black and white, you can add color with other media such as colored pencil after the design is printed out.



Check Your Understanding

1. Define *rhythm*.
2. What is visual rhythm?
3. What is pattern? How do motifs relate to pattern?