

Glossary of terms – Fine Art

Blending It implies the softening of hard edges between colours

Charcoal Charcoal is a black crumbly drawing material made of carbon and often used for sketching and under-drawing for paintings, although can also be used to create more finished drawings

Collage Collage describes both the technique and the resulting work of art in which pieces of paper, photographs, fabric and other ephemera are arranged and stuck down onto a supporting surface

Colour Wheel A colour wheel is a circular chart which is divided into segments, each showing the main primary and secondary colours. The colours which are least alike in terms of hue (complementary colours), such as blue and orange are on opposite sides of the wheel. Colours which are similar (analogous), such as blue and violet, are next to each other.

Complementary These colours are those which are least alike. They appear opposite each other on the colour wheel.

Composition Composition is the arrangement of elements within a work of art

Cross-hatching A technique for making depths of tone in pen and ink and pencil drawings, also in etching and engraving. Regular lines are drawn in series, first one way and then across each other.

Dry brush The brush should be loaded with the minimum of colour and then lightly dragged over the surface of the canvas or paper. A bright or flat brush will give the best results.

Foreshortening Foreshortening refers to the technique of depicting an object or human body in a picture so as to produce an illusion of projection or extension in space

Form In relation to art the term form has two meanings: it can refer to the overall form taken by the work – its physical nature; or within a work of art it can refer to the element of shape among the various elements that make up a work

Gouache Gouache is a type of water-soluble paint that, unlike watercolour, is opaque so the white of the paper surface does not show through

Graphite Graphite is a metallic grey writing and drawing material most commonly used in pencil form – though graphite powder is also used by artists as a drawing material

Hue a colour or shade

Iconography The iconography of an artwork is the imagery within it

Impasto Impasto refers to an area of thick paint or texture, in a painting

Ink-and-Wash painting Type of water-based painting process popular in China and Japan

Landscape Painting Scenic views with no significant human figures or activity

Line Lines are used by artists and designers to describe objects, add detail or create expression.

Masking fluid A product made from gum, used to mask or cover a surface that needs to be protected from receiving paint

Mixed media One or more medium used in the same picture. Thus, pastel and ink, pastel and water-colour, tempera and water-colour, etc

Monochromatic An artist may decide to create a piece of artwork which is monochromatic. This means that the artist uses tints, shades and tones of a single colour

Oil Paints Non water soluble paints with a rich, dense and opaque finish

Palette A palette is a smooth, flat surface on which artists set out and mix their colours before painting, often designed to be held in the hand

Paper sizes – A5, A4, A3, A2, A1, A0 = smallest-largest

Pastels A method of painting or drawing with sticks of dry colour which have the minimum of binder

Perspective The term perspective refers to the representation of objects in three-dimensional space (i.e. for representing the visible world) on the two-dimensional surface of a picture

Portrait A painting or drawing of a human or animal often showing just the head and shoulders.

Primary colour Red, Blue and Yellow are the primary colours in art, they cannot be mixed from other colours.

Prime To prime a canvas or other surface is to make it suitable for painting upon by providing a base which gives the right amount of absorbency.

Secondary Colour In colour theory, secondary colours are orange, green and purple, they can be mixed from two primary colours. Mixing red and yellow will make orange; blue and yellow will make green; and purple can be made from mixing blue and red.

Still Life Painting Arrangements of domestic objects, such as kitchen utensils, foods, flowers, plants and animals

Shade Shades are created when black is added to any hue found on the colour wheel. This process darkens the hue and creates a more intense colour

Stencil A stencil is a thin sheet of metal, cardboard, paper or plastic in which a design is cut. The uncut areas act as a mask.

Stipple Applying small dots of colour with the point of a brush, which is often held at right angles to the support. William Holman Hunt was one who experimented with the manner, as was also Georges Seurat when working in the Pointillist manner.

Tone A tone is where an artist adds grey to a colour

Vanishing point A vanishing point is the point where imaginary lines which recede from objects converge on the eye level.

Wash The application of dilute water-colour to a support

Watercolour painting In the purist sense this implies working only with transparent colours on white paper