

Design

[Design](#)



An artist can emphasize focal points through the use of line, implied line, value, color-? in fact, any of the elements of art can help focus our interest on specific areas. Like the bull's-eye on a target, focal points concentrate our attention. Even though our field of vision is fairly wide, at any given moment we can only focus our vision on a small area. The physiology of vision underlies the principle of focal point. Emphasis and focal point usually accentuate concepts, themes, or ideas the artist wants to express: they signal what the artwork is about. The opposite of emphasis is subordination: subordination draws our attention away from certain areas of a work.

Artists choose carefully-? in both two- and three- dimensional works-? which areas to emphasize or subordinate. We can see how emphasis works in 1 . 141: a double-chambered vessel with mouse, by an ancient Peruvian artist. The mouse on the top left side of the work attracts our attention because it is so detailed, both in its three-dimensional modeling and its painted pattern. (Its eyes are a particularly strong focal point; in fact, eyes are primal focal points that fascinate us from early infancy.) The spout of the vessel also stands out, not only because of its color but also because of its geometric simplicity, which fourth areas of emphasis in the 1 . 141 Double-chambered vessel with mouse, Recurs, Peru, 4th-8th century. Ceramic, 6" high.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Emphasis and Subordination When an artist emphasizes different elements in a work of art, he or she creates visual relationships and connections between them. The artist activates our visual and conceptual linkages and connects up new thoughts for us; he or she expands the scope of the work and highlights its main ideas. This is the essence of emphasis. 136 FUNDAMENTALS with the optical effects of color. In <https://assignbuster.com/design/>

his work *Tin Leslie Green, Elitist* frames our attention on the color field in the center of the work with three colored dots on the eight, red horizontal strokes on the top and bottom, and a tan-colored stroke on the left (1 . 142). These color shapes support the real focus of this work, which is the blue-green color in the center.

Elitist surrounds this with other colors so that we repeatedly alternate our view from the edges to the center and back again. The artist emphasizes the central area and subordinates the edges through the use of contrast between the positive shapes on the edges and the negative space of the center. When a work does not have areas of emphasis, that changes the way we respond. For example, the painting *Blue Interior* by Mark Toby (1890-1976) has an overall implied texture so uniform that we are hard-pressed to find places where our eye can rest (1 . 143). Toby, who grew up in the Pacific Northwest, was inspired by the landscape near his native Seattle.

He wishes to provide us with a sense of the Puget Sound area, with (as the artist says) its Marginal winds, air currents, and intermingled seasons. " He is especially interested 1 . 142 Jules Elitist, *Tin Leslie Green*, 1964. Acrylic and oil/wax crayon on canvas, 10'10" x 6'10". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts 1 . 43 (right) Mark Toby, *Blue Interior*, 1959. Tempera on card, 44 x 28" decorations on the two chambers of the vessel. Although these areas have a great deal of variety, they connect because they share common shapes, coloration, and texture that draw our attention away from the undecorated-? subordinated-? areas of the vessel.

The playful variations of emphasis create a sense of humor and imagination. Because abstract works can never directly evoke our memories of things or people, they frequently rely on compositional principles, such as emphasis.

The American color field painter Jules Elitist (1922-2007) was primarily concerned EMPHASIS AND FOCAL POINT 137 Composition: the overall design or organization of a work areas of emphasis, we are free to roam visually in his painting, without encumbrance. We can immerse ourselves in the work, as if it were an ocean. Focal Point In any composition, a focal point is that specific part of an area of emphasis to which the artist draws our eye.

He or she can do so by using line, implied line, or contrast. These techniques focus our gaze on that point in the work (see Gateway Box: Gentiles). In the painting Landscape with the Fall of Cirrus the artist diverts our attention so that we barely notice Cirrus plunging to his doom (1 . 144): a fine example of subordination. Flemish artist Pitter Burgle the Elder (c. 1525-69) illustrates a story from Greek mythology. Cirrus and his father Deals had been imprisoned on the island of Crete by its ruler, Minis. In order to escape, 1 . 144 Pitter Burgle the Elder, Landscape with the Fall of Cirrus, c. 1555-8. Oil on canvas, mounted on wood, 29 x BIBB".

MussSE Rosary des Beaux-Arts De Belgium, Brussels, Belgium Deals fashioned two sets of wings from feathers and wax. As father and son flew away from their prison, Cirrus became overly exuberant. Although his father had warned him not to, Cirrus, recklessly enjoying his new wings, flew too high and close to the sun. The wax in his wings melted, and he fell to his death in the sea below. In Brussels version of this story our attention is drawn to the figure in the foreground, plowing his field, unaware of the <https://assignbuster.com/design/>

tragedy. Several other areas of emphasis-? the tree on the left, the sunset, the town in the distance, the fanciful ships-? also capture our interest.

We hardly notice poor Cirrus, whose legs are disappearing into the sea just in front of the large ship on the right. Because Burgle has gone to such lengths to draw attention away from the plight of his subject, art historians think he is illustrating the Flemish proverb, " No plough stands still because a man dies. " Or, as we might say, " Life goes on. " Either way, it is a brilliant example of using emphasis to divert the viewer's attention away from a particular point in the work. 138 FUNDAMENTALS Gateway to Art: Gentiles, Judith Decapitating Holystones Emphasis Used to Create Drama 1 . 145 Artemisia Gentiles, Judith Decapitating Holystones, c. 1620.

Oil on canvas, 6'63'8" x 5'33'4". Fizz Gallery, Florence, Italy Artists often take advantage of the strength of a single focal point to force us to give our attention to the crux or pivot of the work. Although a composition can have several focal points, the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentiles uses just one in her Judith Decapitating Holystones (1 . 145). Through Genteelness's use of directional line and contrasting values we are drawn irresistibly to the point where the climax of emphasizes Jujitsu's arms and those of her maidservant (visually connected to the sword itself) as they stretch toward the dark values of their victim's head.

The light values of the five bare arms create strong directional lines that lead to the focal point where blood spurts from the violent attack on Holystones' neck. This double emphasis (contrast of values and directional line) freezes our stare upon the fatal blow, even as it obscures it in darkness. EMPHASIS

AND FOCAL POINT 139 Rhythm: the regular or ordered repetition of elements in the work Emphasis and Focal Point in Action Artists can use direction, dramatic contrasts, and placement relationships to organize the elements in a work and draw our attention to areas of emphasis and focal points. Line 1 . 46 The Emperor Baber Overseeing his Gardeners, India, McHugh period, c. 1590.

Tempera and gouache on paper, 834 x 558". Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England Line is an effective way to focus our attention in an artwork. In McHugh India (the period from 1526 until the mid-nineteenth century), a garden was considered a work of art, one that symbolized the promise of paradise. Chair du-Din Muhammad bin Omar Sheikh, nicknamed Baber, founded the McHugh Empire in India when he conquered most of Central Asia and northern India. In 1546, the gardener/artist Baber is pointing to a feature that channels water in four directions. The life-giving properties of water and the four cardinal directions were important symbols of life and eternity.

Because the garden was based on the perfect geometry of a square, it could be expanded an infinite number of times without disturbing the original plantings. In this image of the garden, water is the focal point both conceptually and visually. We tend to notice diagonal lines because they appear to be more visually active than either horizontal or vertical lines. The strong diagonal of the channel draws our attention to the water as it runs toward us. The central cross- heaped confluence of the waters in the middle of the garden becomes the focal point of the composition. Contrast Artists

look to create effects of contrast by positioning elements next to one another that are very different, for example areas of different value, color, or size.

Value is an effective and frequently used means of creating emphasis and focal point. It also has the advantage that it can be used in subtle ways. In *The Funeral of SST. Bonaventure*, a painting by Spanish artist Francisco De Curran (1598-1664), most of the lightest (1 . 147). They create a central focal point that stands out in contrast to the surrounding dark values. We are drawn to the whiteness (symbolic of Bonaventure chaste and spotless reputation) before we look at the surrounding characters. Enough light value is distributed to the other figures to allow our eyes to be drawn away from Bonaventure body, making the composition more interesting.

Placement The placement of elements within a composition controls rhythm and creates multiple focal points. 140 FUNDAMENTALS In the print "*Riverside Bamboo Market, Kooky -abash*," the Japanese artist And Hiroshige (1797-1858) has oriented three shapes; all of them are visually independent of each other (1 . 148). The positions of the moon, the bridge, and the figure in a boat form three separate focal points. Each shape commands our attention and draws more of our focus to the right side of the work. Even though the bridge is the largest shape, and so naturally catches our attention, the light value and hard geometry of the moon divert our gaze, and the moon becomes a secondary focal point.

We look at the figure under the bridge because of its careful placement under the moon, and because it has a definite outline that contrasts strongly with the flat color of the water. The varying distances between the

placements of the three focal mints also create rhythm that adds visual interest. Hiroshige, a master of woodcut printing, uses placement to emphasize specific points in the work and enliven the composition.

Conclusion 1 . 147 (above) Francisco De Curran, The Funeral of SST.

Bonaventure, 1629. Oil on canvas, 8'2" x 74". Musée du Louvre, Paris, France

1 . 148 (left) And Hiroshige, " Riverside Bamboo Market, Kasbah," from One Hundred - Famous Views of Edo, 1857. 15 x 1038". James A.

Machinery Collection, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii Outline: the outermost line of an object or figure, by which it is defined or bounded

Woodcut: a print created from an incised piece of wood Actual and Implied

lines: actual lines are solid lines. Implied lines are impressions of lines

created from a series of points that orient our gaze along a visual path

Emphasis and focal point give a work of art punch. They announce important

content in an artwork and call attention to the concepts the artist wishes to

communicate. Artists rely on emphasis and focal point to give their work

visual and conceptual impact. All the elements and principles of art can

serve to create emphasis.