

Describing the formal
elements of line, light,
form, and space
before you begin



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Pine Trees by Japanese artist Hasegawa Tohaku is a six-fold ink on paper folding screen painting. The artist's use of formal elements in this painting contributes largely to the spatial illusion created by the artists using simple lines and shadings. Hasegawa Tohaku's effective use of lines, forms, light and space provide a sense of depth between the trees as well as distance of the trees from the viewer. To understand how these formal elements played key roles in creating an illusion of space, each formal element of the artwork should be examined in detail. Next to the most basic element of an artwork are lines and in analyzing an artwork, it would be best to start distinguishing lines used by the artist to determine the mood. Hasegawa Tohaku dominantly used lines in his painting particularly vertical, contour and diagonal lines. Although lines are dominant in this painting, the artist produced a three-dimensional illusion in his painting. The lines are more of the romantic or expressive than analytic because the lines are not precisely straight but are soft and more of an impression. The use of vertical lines in the painting can visibly be seen as tree trunks and the expressive nature of the lines used helped in giving an impression of the texture and form of the trunk of pine trees which are not actually precise straight lines. The diagonal lines in the painting are perceptible in some of the tree trunks and the branches of the trees. These lines give an impression of movement among the branches and helps in providing a spatial illusion between the trees and the branches. In producing the three-dimensional effect in Hasegawa Tohaku's painting, aside from lines the artist also employed the element of light. Since the medium used on the painting Pine Trees is ink, the artist skilfully produced a feeling of space, distance and the scene that depicts the trees as though under the moonlight or probably at dawn because of the <https://assignbuster.com/describing-the-formal-elements-of-line-light-form-and-space-before-you-begin/>

impression of fog among the trees. Space and distance is achieved by painting the trees in lighter value so it would appear to be far from the viewer while trees painted with darker value appear to be upfront of the scenery. The use of light in the painting also helps establish a tranquil mood to the viewer. Producing a three-dimensional effect in this painting also involves the use of form, space, shapes, mass and volume. Form in Hasegawa Tohaku's painting is seen in the overlapped shapes of trees and the trees which were painted in varying sizes to create an illusion of distance and spaces between the trees as well as an apparent bulk of tree branches. The shape of trees alone without overlapping of the branches and trees as well as the shading would not produce a three-dimensional illusion for the painting. Thus, the bulk of the tree branches which is achieved by dark shading and overlapping of the shapes is an example of Mass in a painting while the space surrounding the tree branches characterizes the Volume in the painting and mass and volume enhances the shapes to create a three-dimensional image. The type of perspective of this painting that uses overlapping of shapes and shading techniques is aerial or atmospheric perspective. This kind of perspective shows the effect of the atmosphere on the color or clarity of an object from a distance. In Pine Trees, the light colored images appear to be far from the viewer. After reading the history of the artist and the painting, I appreciated the artwork better after learning that the painting is one of Japan's National Treasures and that it dates back to the 1600s because employing the techniques discussed to produce a painting using only ink on paper but still create an illusion of depth and distance is truly remarkable considering the time the painting was created.

CITED WORK Tohaku, Hasegawa. Pine Trees. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo.
Tokyo National Museum. Web. 27 January 2011.