

# [Representations of space in art movements](https://assignbuster.com/representations-of-space-in-art-movements/)

Spatial representation is a complex subject involving the scientific technique of perspective and incorporating different periods of art. Discussion of this topic allows for an analysis of both the random and deliberate forms of spatial representation, the ever-changing artistic conventions underlying this representation, and an examination of artists who have challenged this technique.

Representation, defined as, 'the description or portrayal of […] something in a particular way' is utilised by artists to produce works that resemble, to varying degrees, their chosen subject. The techniques of spatial representation can be seen in a large number of artworks, such as sculpture, painting, photography, and collage. Composition, defined as, 'the artist's method […] of deciding what to put in and what to leave out in order to make an effective picture' remains the most prevalent of these techniques. Both horizontal and vertical forms of composition provide the artist with a 'powerful means of communication with the spectator'. Size is also important in spatial representation and is exemplified in Duccio di Buoninsegna's The Rucellai Madonna , where ' […] la superposition ou l'alignement des figures correspondent à un ordre hiérarchique'. Evidently, the more important figure was depicted as larger in early works of art.

The varying scale of characters was used as an attempt at perspective. It has been said that 'the effect of space in a painting is […] the creation of the illusion of three dimensions on a flat surface'. Linear perspective, or single-point perspective, '[…]was adopted as the standard way of representing space'and works on the principle of 'orthogonal lines converging to a vanishing point'(see note 5 above), giving the illusion of depth, and thus three dimensions to a painting. Linear perspective was challenged by aerial perspective which utilises the principle of fading shades of colour and the increasing use of blue as the distance from the viewer increases. Aerial perspective can be observed in Turner's Lake at Brienz, which uses colour to portray misty distances. La perspective tordue is another technique where 'le bison est représenté le corps de profil ou les cornes de face […] qui réunit deux points de vue, deux perceptions dans une seule et même figure' .

Although perspective remains an important tool, the interior and exterior representation of space needs consideration. In their works, artists can choose how much of the subject they wish to expose to the viewer. The utilisation of interior and exterior space can be seen in Vincent Van Gogh's painting, La Chambre à Arles (1888). Here, Van Gogh has painted a window, leading the viewer's eye to the outside world. However, the viewer's only connection with the outside world is through a picture of a landscape on the wall of the bedroom. It is also interesting to note the unusual use of the laws of perspective; there is no single vanishing point.

Random spatial representation has long been a debatable subject. Frank Stella said, in 1986, 'the aim of art is to create space […] that is not compromised by decoration or illustration, space within which the subjects of the painting can live'. This quotation implies that space is represented in a very deliberate manner. However, the works of John Pollock were often said to represent space randomly as they appeared to have no degree of order to the viewer. It is also argued that when an artist chooses to create and represent space in an image, it creates another random space as a result. Although sculpture accommodates differing viewpoints, space can be represented randomly. For example, The Large Head, by Naum Gabo creates the illusion of a solid structure when viewed head on. However, when viewed from the side, space is represented differently, with the sheets of metal forming a random structure.

Whilst a completely random representation of a space is rare, and it has been said that 'tout point de vue est un choix signifiant: il correspond à une intention', implying that no art can ever be random, artists have often embraced the technique of Apparent Randomness. This technique is seen in Picasso's Guernica and involves the artist deliberately positioning certain objects to create the illusion of randomness. Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionist painting, Autumn Rhythm, highlights the chaotic atmosphere which led to an assumption of randomness. Due to the disorderly pattern, the public felt that Pollock's spatial representation was far from deliberate. However, a close analysis revealed an underlying pattern. This technique is also shown in Jean Miro's, The Dialogue of Insects, further emphasising how artists represent space deliberately.

A further artistic movement which utilises the apparently random positioning of objects is Cubism. Pioneered by Picasso and Braque, Cubism was concerned with the deliberate interaction between geometrical shapes to create planes and lines of vision. Despite its random appearance, each shape was specifically placed. Picasso also developed the technique of collage. Collage is perhaps one of the most interesting examples of how artists choose to represent space. It is quite possible that the random appearance of a collage may have been created by an equally random procedure. However, some thought and calculation is often evident. This can be seen in Raoul Hausmann's, A. D. C. D, where different objects of different materials have been layered on top of one another in a precise manner.

It is clear from the lines of an art work that some sense of order is displayed. Pierre Renoir's The Umbrellas shows how the use of repeated circles has created order within the crowd of people depicted. Line also gives rise to perspective. Alexander Rodchenko's Jeune fille au Leica demonstrates linear perspective, using the lines of shadows to lead the viewer to the vanishing point. Line and perspective are key examples of how artists represent space in a deliberate manner.

Photography appears to capture life randomly through a lens. However, when a photograph is taken, the photographer has to make very deliberate decisions about what he wants to depict. In Russell Lee's, Les mains d'une fermière de l'Iowa, we see only the hands and lower body of the subject. This is a very deliberate action on the part of the photographer. Photography also clearly demonstrates field of vision and the use of plongée and contre-plongée. The space being viewed is represented far differently when viewed from a different angle. Although this compositional technique can often appear to be random, artists often employ it to convey meaning. An illustration of the multiplicity of points of view can be seen in Holbein's, The Ambassadors. This technique is also known as anamorphosis.

The placement of objects must be decided very carefully to illustrate the passage of time in art. In Eugene Atget's 'Angle de la rue des nonnains d'Hyeres et de L'Hotel de Ville', the winding market street descending into fog, and the blurred figures in the foreground have been purposely captured in their positions. Artists must always work within frames, deciding what will be captured or depicted within them and what will be left unseen. This process appears to be far from the ideals of randomness.

The variety of artistic techniques used to represent space leads to the questioning of the deliberateness of an artist's work. Despite certain random spatial elements within a painting, sculpture, or photograph, it is evident that artists attempt to represent their chosen subjects with accurate spatial representation or deliberate attempts to illustrate randomness with geometric techniques. One can conclude that spatial representation has been used in a variety of ways to create works that appear both random and deliberate.

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