

Visual and Performing Arts Glossary

ab - A two-part compositional form with an “a” theme and a “b” theme. The binary form consists of two distinct, self-contained sections that share either a character or quality (e.g., the same tempo, movement, quality, or style).

aba - A three-part compositional form in which the second section contrasts with the first section. The third section is a restatement of the first section in a condensed, abbreviated, or extended form.

alignment [skeletal alignment] - The relationship of the body’s skeleton to the line of gravity and base of support.

Analysis - Comparing, contrasting, classifying, and/or taking apart information.

art form - A particular field or genre within the visual arts.

artist - A student, a peer, a teacher, an amateur, or a professional who creates in dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts.

Blocking - The planning and working out of the movements of actors on stage.

body part isolation - Movement done with one body part or a small part of the body (e.g., rolling the head, shrugging the shoulders, and rotating the pelvis).

call and response - A structure that is most often associated with African music and dance forms. One soloist/group performs with the second soloist/group entering “in response” to the first.

Canon - A choreographic form that reflects the musical form of the same name, in which individuals and groups perform the same movement/phrase beginning at different times.

common arts activities - Activities such as attending a concert, play or theatre performance, going to a museum, or participating in community visual and performing arts activities.

composition

Dance: The creation and choreography of dances by arranging or inventing steps, movements, and patterns of movements.

Music: The creation of original music by organizing sound.

Visual Arts: The organization of elements in a work of art.

composition form - The organization or plan for patterning movement; or the overall structure of a dance such as “ab”, “aba”, call and response, theme and variation, canon, and the interrelationships of movement within the overall structure.

compound meter - A type of meter in which the beat is divided into threes or sixes.

Concept - A basic unit of thought. In art, it is the idea of what the final work will be.

creative problem solving - A process for solving problems that includes identifying a problem, defining it, generating unique solutions, implementing, and evaluating solutions.

dance movement - The building blocks of many dances. More complex dance moves are called dance patterns, dance figures, or dance variations.

dance phrase - Movements that are linked in a single choreographic sequence.

dynamics

Dance: The expressive content of human movement, sometimes called qualities or efforts. Dynamics manifest the interrelationships among the elements of space, time, and force/energy.

Music: The varying degrees of volume or intensity in the performance of music

elaboration - The adding of details or of greater detail.

elements of art - The visual language the artist uses, such as line, shape, color, value, texture, and space.

Color depends on light because it is made of light. Color has three properties; hue, intensity, and value.

Form describes the volume and mass or three dimensional aspects of objects that take up space.

Line is a mark made by a pointed tool, brush, pencil, stick, pen, etc. and is often defined as a moving dot. It has length and width but its width is very tiny compared to its length.

Music: The varying degrees of volume or intensity in the performance of music is an area that is contained within an implied line, or is seen and identified because of color or value changes.

Shapes have two dimensions, length and width and can be geometric and free form.

Music: The varying degrees of volume or intensity in the performance of music is a three dimensional volume that can be empty or filled with objects. It has width, height and depth.

Music: The varying degrees of volume or intensity in the performance of music that appears three dimensional in a painting is an illusion that creates a feeling of actual depth.

Texture refers to the surface quality, both simulated and actual, of artwork.

Value refers to dark and light. Value help us to create the illusion of depth on a two dimensional surface.

energy

An element of dance characterized by the release of potential energy into kinetic energy. It utilizes body weight, reveals the effects of gravity on the body, is projected into space, and affects emotional and spatial relationships and intentions. The most recognized qualities of movement are sustained, percussive, suspended, swinging, and collapsing.

flexibility

Using materials and ideas in ways that are different from their common usages.

fluency

The use of many ideas relevant to a given artistic work.

form

Music: The organization and structure of a composition and the interrelationships of musical events within the overall structure.

Visual Arts: A three-dimensional volume or the illusion of three dimensions (related to shape, which is two-dimensional); the particular characteristics of the visual elements of a work of art (as distinguished from its subject matter or content).

genre

Dance: A type or kind of musical work (ballet, modern, jazz, folk, square, etc.).

Music: A type or kind of musical work (opera, jazz, mariachi, etc.).

Visual Arts: The representation of people, subjects, and scenes from everyday life; a type of art work that has a tradition or history and is identifiable by specific characteristics (e.g., portrait, landscape, still life, abstract).

locomotor

Movement that results in travel from place to place, usually identified by weight transference on the feet. Basic locomotor steps are the walk, the run, the leap, the hop, and the jump, and the irregular rhythmic combinations of the skip (walk and hop), slide (walk and leap), and gallop (walk and leap).

man-made environment

An environment built by humankind such as a city, a town, a park, and including such structures as buildings, gardens, bridges, and monuments.

media

Material or materials commonly used to make art works. They include two-dimensional media (e.g., graphite, ink, paint, cut paper, photographic paper, canvas), three-dimensional media (e.g., fibers, clay, wood, metal, glass, bone, plastic), and time-based media (e.g., film, videotape).

meter

The grouping of beats by which a piece of music is measured.

motif

A distinctive and recurring gesture or design used to provide a theme or unifying idea.

movement challenges

A dance problem, situation, or question to be considered, and which serves as a point of departure for exploration, composition, and improvisation.

narrative

Structure that follows a specific story line and intends to convey specific information, either imaginary or factual, through that story.

non-locomotor
[axial movement]

Any movement that is anchored to one spot by a body part using only the available space in any direction without losing the initial body contact. Movement is organized around the axis of the body rather than designed for travel from one location to another.

non-verbal techniques

The use of gestures, signs, and body language cues.

notation

Written music for performance, indicating pitch and rhythm.

originality

The independent thinking ability that results in the generation of unique ideas, processes, and products. These may be unique to the world and/or to the student's experience.

palindrome

A choreographic structure used with a phrase or longer sequence of movement in which the phrase is first performed proceeding from movement 1 to movement 2. When the last movement of the phrase is completed, the phrase is retrograded from the penultimate movement to the first movement. (A commonly used example in prose is "Able was I ere I saw Elba." In this example, the letters are the same forward to the "r" in "ere" as they are backward to the "r.").

parts of the stage

Stage left is the left side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.

Stage right is the right side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.

Upstage is the stage area away from the audience.

Downstage is the stage area toward the audience.

Center Stage is the center of the acting area.

physicality

The use of the body as the primary means of performance and communication.

principles of design

The elements of a work of art involving the way in which the work of art is arranged: balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity.

Balance refers to the distribution of visual weight in a work of art.

Contrast refers to differences in values, colors, textures, shapes, and other elements.

Emphasis refers to the dominance and focus an artist creates in their work.

Movement refers to the effect created by the artist to direct viewers through their work, often to focal areas.

Pattern refers to the art elements presented in planned or random repetition to enhance surfaces of works of art.

Rhythm refers to the repetition of visual movement-colors, shapes, or lines.

Unity refers to the cohesive quality that makes an artwork feels complete and finished. When all the elements in a work of art look as though they belong together, the artist has achieved unity.

processes

Operations involving a number of methods or techniques, such as the addition and subtraction processes in sculpture, the etching and intaglio processes in printmaking, or the casting or constructing processes in making jewelry.

retrograde

The act of taking a sequence of choreography and reversing the order from back to front.

rhythmic acuity

The physical, auditory recognition of various complex time elements.

rondo

A musical form in which a section is repeated, with contrasting sections in between, such as “abaca”.

school-to-school	The time and energy one places in the learner role
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	immediately following high school, such as going to a community college or four-year college or vocational program.
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school-to-work

The time and energy one places in the worker role immediately following high school, such as obtaining an entry-level job to earn income.

skeletal alignment
[alignment]

The relationship of the body's skeleton to the line of gravity and base of support.

space

The emptiness or area between, around, above, below, or contained within objects. Shapes and forms are defined by the space around and within them, just as spaces are defined by the shapes and forms around and within them.

stage business

A piece of unscripted or improvised action, often comic in intention, used to establish a character, fill a pause in dialogue, or to establish a scene. An author may simply suggest "business" to indicate the need for some action at that point in the play.

stage directions

Directions in the script about how the playwright intends actions or arrangements to be carried out.

strike

The time immediately following the last performance when all cast and crew members dismantle sets, props, or other equipment.

style/tradition

The characteristic manner and appearance of the works of an individual artist, school

or period.

technique

A process in which art materials and media are used to produce works of visual art, such as carving, drawing, painting, printing, rendering, etc. Also, a particular way or method of using tools or materials to achieve special effects (e.g., using the point of a pencil to create light and dark tones).

theme and variation

An underlying “thread” seen throughout a work that appears with slight changes but retains the basic character of the theme.

timbre

The character or quality of sound that distinguishes one instrument, voice, or other sound source from another.

time

An element of dance involving rhythm, phrasing, tempo, accent, and duration. Time can be metered, as in music, or based on body rhythms, such as breath, emotions, and heartbeat.

time management

The ability to manage or control how time is used for the purpose of completing a visual or performing arts project.

tools

Instruments and equipment used to create and learn about art (e.g., brushes, scissors, brayers, easels, knives, kilns, cameras).

variation

A quantity or range of different things. To maintain audience interest, the choreographer must provide variety within the development of the dance. Contrast in the use of space, force, and spatial designs, as well as some repetition of movements and motifs, provide variety.