

Distortion and Abstraction

Artists use distortion or abstraction to convey feelings or moods rather than to realistically represent things.

Distortion

In the art world, the term distortion is used to describe any change made by an artist to the shape, size or visual character of a form to express an idea, convey a feeling or enhance visual impact.



This painting, by Paul Klee, is called *Senecio (Old Man)*. The shape and colour of the face have been distorted, but it is still recognisable as a face.

Abstract art

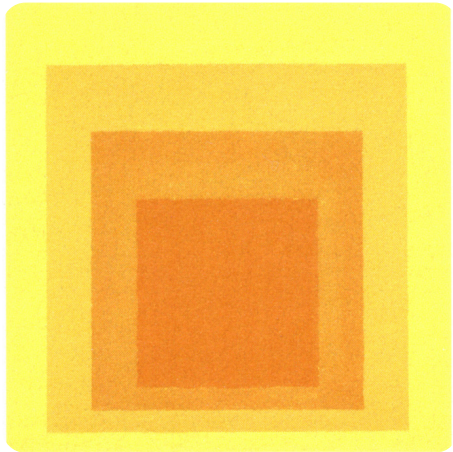
Abstract art takes recognisable objects or forms and changes them until they no longer look realistic. Abstract art allows artists to freely communicate their ideas in a way that is not limited by reality. The artist may leave out details, change the point of view, exaggerate the size, distort the shapes and colours or twist and simplify forms.



This painting, by Hilma af Klint, is called *The Swan No. 17*. The subject matter has been reduced to pure shape and colour. Without knowing the title of the piece, the viewer would not know that the painting represents a swan.

Abstraction by colour

Some artworks use pure colour to evoke a mood or a feeling.

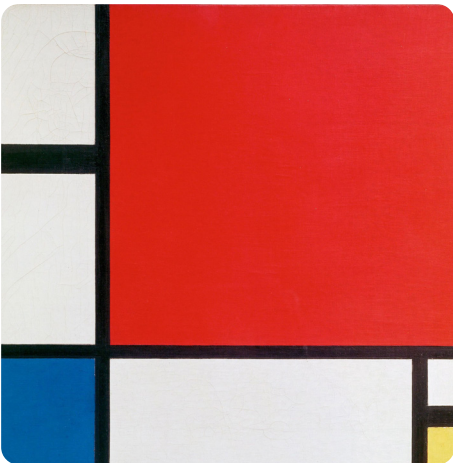


This painting, by Josef Albers, is called *Homage to the Square*. This artist believed that when colours are placed next to each other, their intensity changes.

Abstraction by shape



Some artworks reduce their subject matter to basic shapes, such as *The Woodcutter* by Kazimir Malevich.



This artist, Piet Mondrian, is famous for his geometric artworks. Mostly based on squares and rectangles, his work was about balance and proportion. This artwork is called *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow*.

Guernica

Guernica is an abstract painting by Pablo Picasso. It reflects the artist's painful thoughts and feelings about the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. The figures are flat and abstract in style, and their expressions and body shapes are distorted to create a feeling of terror and desperation.



Orphism

Orphism was an abstract painting style developed by married artists Robert and Sonia Delaunay around 1912. It was based on Cubism but pioneered a new emphasis on bright colours and abstract shapes to create energy and movement.



This painting, by Robert Delaunay, is called *Endless Rhythm*. It represents the movement of music through endlessly connected circles and loops.

Glossary

geometric	A pattern or arrangement made up of shapes.
intensity	Extreme degree of strength, force, energy or feeling.
proportion	The relationship between the sizes of objects.
subject matter	The object that is being painted.