

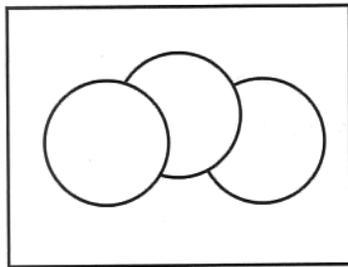
## Visual Elements - Space

### **I. Term:** Space

**II. Definition of the term:** The extent of an area that is or may be occupied in a three-dimensional region. Implied space is the visual illusion of depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

**III. Examples of the term:** The following are techniques that may be used to create the illusion of depth in a painting, drawing, print or other type of flat artwork.

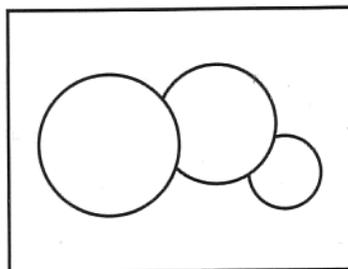
**OVERLAPPING:** Overlapping is created when a component in the composition covers part of another component. The covered portion appears to be behind whatever extends over it.



Jacques-Louis David *Death of Socrates* 1787

- The full figures wearing red seem close to us. They overlap the bed and other figures in the painting. Most of the figures seem to be in front of the wall because they block our view of the lower part of the wall.

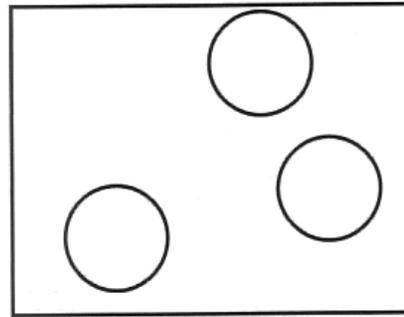
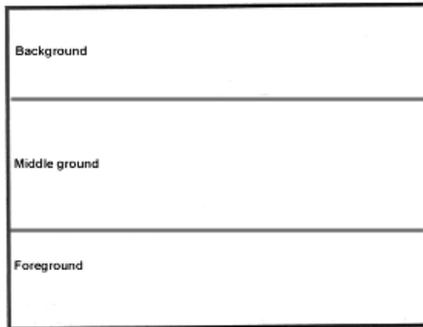
**DIMINISHING SCALE:** Objects in the distance appear to diminish in size. Large objects appear to be close to the viewer and smaller objects appear more distant.



Gustave Caillabotte *Paris Street; Rainy Weather* 1877

- The people on the right are larger in size and appear closer than the smaller figures on the left.

**VERTICAL PLACEMENT:** Objects placed low on the picture plane appear closer to the viewer than objects placed higher on the plane.

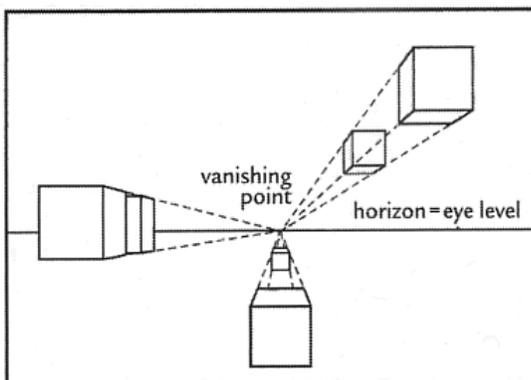


(Henri Matisse *Music* 1909-10)

- The seated figure in the lower right seems closer than the figures to the left, located higher on the picture plane.

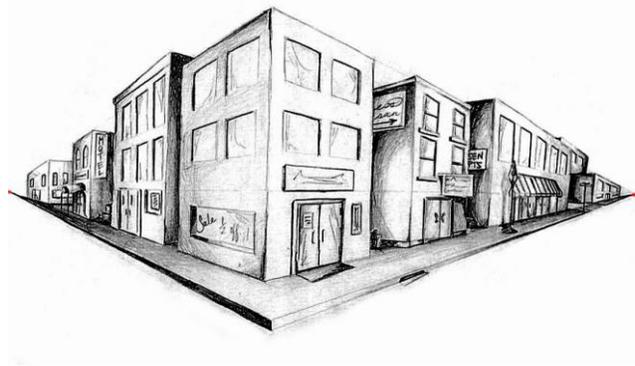
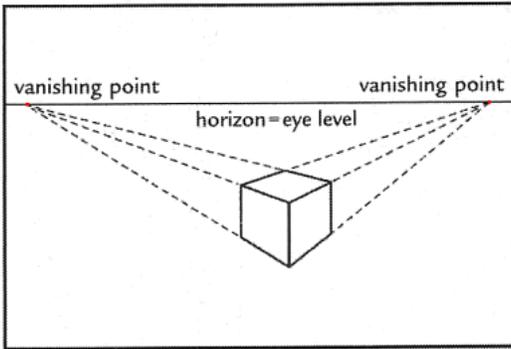
**LINEAR PERSPECTIVE:** A system for representing space in which parallel lines are represented as converging so as to give the illusion of depth and distance.

One-point perspective: A form of linear perspective in which parallel lines converge at one vanishing point on the horizon line.



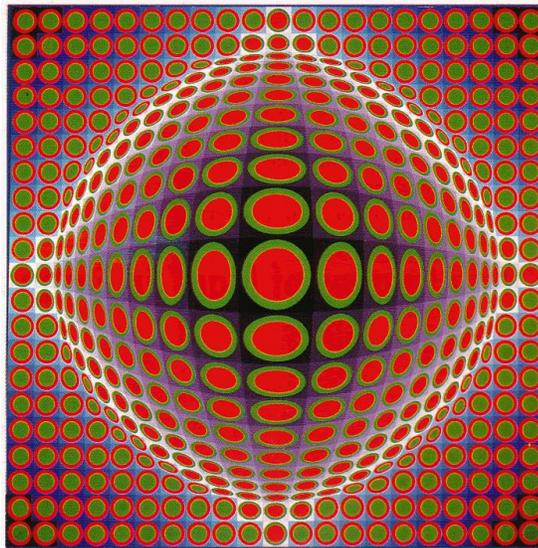
Raphael, *School of Athens*, c. 1510

Two-point perspective: A form of linear perspective in which parallel lines (orthogonal) converge on two vanishing points on the horizon line.



- Notice the how the lines in the architecture converge on two vanishing points. In the drawing, the vanishing points are on the far sides of the picture.
- In the painting, the vanishing points are not visible. They would be located past the borders of the work.

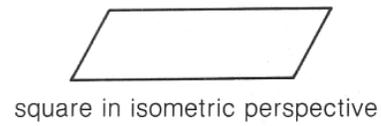
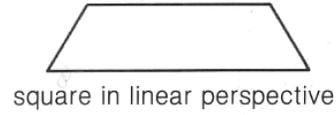
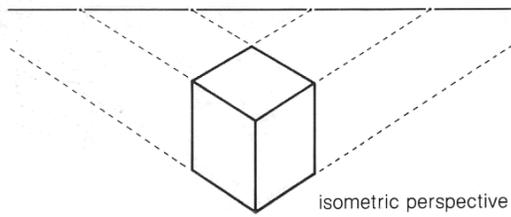
FORESHORTENING: When linear perspective is applied to objects (that are not parallel to the picture plane) their normal vertical height is reduced in order to enhance the illusion of depth.



Victor Vasarely *VEGA PER* 1969

- The artist used foreshortening to create the illusion of a bulging object. Notice that not all of the shapes are perfect circles. Some of them are foreshortened and look like they have been squashed! (Light, color, and scale add the optical illusion.)

**ISOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE:** In this type of mechanical perspective, there is an equality of measurements and regularity of scale/size. Parallel lines stay parallel and do not converge.



*Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala*

(Source: Hagiwara Tatsuo, *Miko to Bukkyō-shi*, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, Tokyo, 1983, frontispiece)



*Ise Sankei Mandala & the Image of the Pure Land*  
Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 33/2: 223–248

- Notice that this type of perspective uses vertical placement rather than diminishing scale to demonstrate spatial depth.

**ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE:** The visual alteration of objects by the appearance of haze or moisture in the air. As the distance increases, the object becomes washed out, paler in color/value, and less detailed.



- Ma Yuan's painting *Bare Willows and Distant Mountains* (Southern Song dynasty, 1200s) shows a landscape with atmospheric perspective.
- In the foreground are dark, detailed trees. Individual roots and branches are visible. The trees in the middle ground (higher on the picture plane) are not as distinctive or detailed.
- In the background there is a large mountain surrounded by mist. Pale gray lines suggest mountains in the far distance.



- Asher Brown Durand painted a similar landscape. (*Pastoral Landscape* 1861) which demonstrates color alteration in atmospheric perspective.
- Colors become washed out or paler in the distance.

**To Summarize:** These are some modifications for making something look . . .

Close

larger size  
lower placement on the picture plane  
parallel lines far apart  
overlapping other forms  
sharp definition  
intense colors  
rough textures  
more detail

Far Away

smaller size  
higher placement on the picture plane  
parallel lines closely converging  
overlapped by other forms  
blurred  
pale colors  
soft textures  
less detail