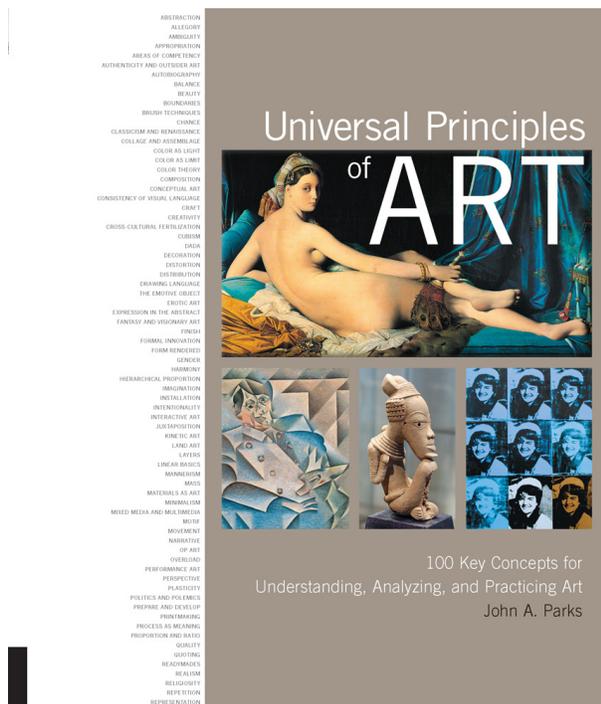


## Universal Principles of Art: 100 Key Concepts for Understanding, Analyzing, and Practicing Art

by John A. Parks, Rockport, November 2014, 208 p., ill. ISBN 9781631590306 (cl.), \$35.00.

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Organizing visual information into words can challenge a writer to define and evaluate artistic choices, media, and techniques. John Parks' book expands and incorporates standbys of formal visual analysis such as the building blocks known as the elements of art (color, form, line, shape, space, texture) under the banner of universal principles applicable to all art regardless of media and historical era.

The author is well placed to translate the visual into the verbal, bringing his experience to the forefront in this well organized and visually elegant book. He is a professionally trained and exhibited artist (Royal College of Art, London) whose paintings are represented in museum collections and a published author on a variety of art-related subjects encompassing technique and

technicians and historical figures. In addition, he teaches at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Structured and arranged alphabetically with the appealing clarity of a well-designed compendium of pages contained with a website, one hundred definitions are generously illustrated by one hundred facing pages (some have multiple images) enhancing the text defining each principle. As a result, words and images are laid out in a manner going beyond generally accepted reference works where simple definitions may be found in one volume and catalogued presentations of images in another. The writing is clear and focused from principle to principle. Organized in a format and structure attentive to the vocabulary of the discipline of art, the design of the book perhaps reflects the author's background as a working artist and

teacher. At times the author includes bulleted points and "see also" to further understand the principle being defined. Subjects run the gamut from techniques to art movements to universal concepts. The absence of narrative flow is a plus since this book reads as a reference work/dictionary to which the user can dip into at will. The book begins with a brief preface and introduction. Locating image credits in the back of the volume creates a faster way to access ownership of some individual works of art as opposed to within pages where the images are located. What the author presents is intentionally (as the introduction notes) and largely the history of western art. The use of up-to-date and leading-edge terminology will allow it to become a standard reference work.

Art is provocative. In the preface Parks asks "What is it that has driven so many people throughout history to keep on making art?" The book amply and thoughtfully illustrates this question yet at the same time allows readers whether they are students, teachers practicing artists, or dilettantes not only to discover but begin to answer this question for themselves.