BBC BITESIZE

Rhythm is most familiar to us through the patterns and beats of music. When music is written down, it can reflect that rhythm visually. Don't confuse rhythm with pattern.

Pattern is the regular repetition of a motif - like a constant beat in music. But with rhythm we see the motifs but repetition can change or vary.

In art and design, rhythm refers to recurring elements such as lines, shapes and colours that can produce the look and feel of movement.

Anni Albers experimented with repetition of geometric shapes to create something precise. Here she used a grid to create a regular rhythm that evoked the industrial and scientific themes that inspired her work. Although the order the elements are used in is varied, the fact that the shapes, colours and values are consistent through the textile maintains the regular rhythm.

This is 'Tree of Life' by Gustav Klimt, which also uses regular rhythm in the repeating triangle and oval shapes that adorn the human figures on each side of the painting.

However, the tree itself is a great example of flowing rhythm. The tree is made entirely from swirling, spiralling organic lines. Klimt created a complex composition from these curling branches. But the image seems natural and unified because they all flow from the same central trunk.

'The Starry Night' is one of Van Gogh's masterpieces. The still town below is overwhelmed by the contrasting motion in the sky above. Van Gogh introduced progressive rhythm with very deliberate brushstrokes and exaggerated colours that awaken the night sky.

He repeated swirling lines and shapes that lead us from left to right. It is the fact that these elements gradually change through the composition that makes the rhythm progressive.

Artists use rhythm to move us through space drawing our attention to something important, creating a mood or atmosphere, implying movement or conveying ideas.

Rhythm isn't always present in artists' work but it can be a powerful tool that has the potential to bring compositions to life.