

B B C BITESIZE

If you draw a simple circle, triangle or square the resulting lines create a flat, two-dimensional shape. Adding shadow, reflection and light can make them appear as a sphere, a cube and a cone. They seem three-dimensional, because they have height, width and depth. In other words we have changed shapes into forms.

Form is an element of art that is three-dimensional. It can be either real or implied.

In this still life by Willem Heda we see the leftovers of a feast. One-point perspective establishes the depth of the table top. The use of tone suggests form and volume.

See how the lemon rind spirals down. Highlights show where light hits and casts shadow on the tablecloth.

Dark, intense colours give physical weight to the ham and heavy dishes, whilst the tablecloth and lemon peel are brighter and show more variety of tone. This suggests they are delicate, softer and lighter forms. Overlapping creates a sense of space between objects.

With three-dimensional work, form is real rather than implied. Rodin's 'The Thinker' is a real form because the sculpture exists in three-dimensions. We can move around Rodin's sculpture and see the form differently from different angles.

'The Thinker' can be described as an organic form. This is a realistic representation of a human we recognise the lines as flowing and natural like a real body.

In contrast, this Chokwe sculpture from Angola takes a human face and stylises it, making it more geometric than organic. The features are like mathematical solids, such as the oval eyes and the straight lines of the nose. The rigid form of the mask is accentuated by geometric patterns made by the studs.

As one of the elements of art, form refers to three-dimensional objects whether they are real or implied. Form can be organic to depict something realistic and natural or geometric for a more stylised look. It's another way for the artist or designer to tell their story.