

B B C BITESIZE

When consistent elements in a piece of art work well together, the composition is seen as a whole before the viewer notices the individual elements. This is known as unity and there are four techniques to achieve this.

When elements are close together or touch each other we see them as a group. This is proximity and it promotes a sense of unity.

Andrea Mantegna's 'The Court of the Gonzaga Family' shows unity through proximity because the people are close to each other.

Added unity comes from their outfits which are similar in colour value.

This creates a sense of simplicity. Simplicity can be achieved when similar sizes, shapes, colours or patterns are used.

In Theodore Gericault's 'The Raft of the Medusa', you see one mass of people before you notice the individuals. A sense of unity has been created by all the bodies sharing similar tones, size and shape.

When similar elements, such as lines, colours or shapes are repeated in art, the effect is to unify the piece. These elements can be repeated exactly to form a pattern or the repetition can vary, like in Robert Delaunay's 'Carousel with Pigs'.

Delaunay's composition seems almost chaotic because of the variety of lines and shapes he's crammed into his painting but the repetition of block colours and continuous circles brings the elements together and creates a unified feel.

Unity can also come from continuation, when something continues from one element to another.

In Constable's 'Flatford Mill', the viewer's eye follows the continuous line created by the path. It connects the horse in the foreground with the cottage in the background and unifies the entire picture. Trees and bushes line the path, increasing the sense of continuation. The limited palette - blues, greens and browns - all in a similar tonal range helps bring this painting together.

A piece of art or design that lacks unity can feel disjointed or unsettling so look out for when an artist uses simplicity, proximity, repetition or continuation and consider how this brings the piece of art together.