▲ **FIGURE 11.1** Notice how the variety of colors and patterns in this painting create a harmonious whole. Observe how the artist emphasizes the baby's head by surrounding it with white and placing it at the top of the canvas.

Gustav Klimt. *Baby (Cradle)*. 1917. Oil on canvas. 111 × 110 cm (43⅝ × 43⅓″). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Otto and Franziska Kallir with the help of the Carol and Edwin Gaines Fullinwider Fund.

Variety, Emphasis, Harmony, and Unity

Art principles such as balance, rhythm, and proportion do not operate in isolation. They work as a team. In the pages ahead, you will learn about three additional principles: *variety, emphasis,* and *harmony.* You will also learn about *unity,* or "oneness." Unity is achieved when the elements and principles are used together to create a sense of wholeness.

In this chapter, you will:

- Describe variety, emphasis, harmony, and unity in your environment and in art.
- Compare and contrast the use of the art principles emphasis and unity in artworks.
- Explain how artists create unity through effective use of the elements and principles of art.
- Use variety, emphasis, and harmony to create unified artworks.

Focus on Art History Austrian painter Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) was a leader of the Art Nouveau school. Art Nouveau was a highly ornate, or decorative, art style. It found expression in both the fine arts and crafts such as glassmaking. Klimt's earliest works, theatrical murals, received little critical attention. He is best known for his portraits. Like his other mature works, these reflect an emphasis on rich patterns of curving lines. Notice the abundance of curved patterns in **Figure 11.1.**

Interpret. Notice that Figure 11.1 has two titles. Why do you think the artist gave the work a second title? Which title do you think best captures the main focus of the work?

◀ CONTENTS ▶

Variety, Emphasis, and Harmony

Variety is a principle of art that adds interest to an artwork. Emphasis is a principle of art that enhances variety because it creates areas that draw your attention. The eye-catching, or dominant, area is usually a focal point that first attracts the attention of the viewer. The viewer then looks at the less dominant, or subordinate, areas. Harmony makes variety and emphasis work together in a piece of art. Variety and harmony complement one another in the same way that positive and negative spaces complement each other. Variety adds interest to an artwork while harmony prevents variety from causing chaos.

Variety

People need variety in all areas of their lives. Imagine how boring it would be if daily routines were exactly the same every day of the week for a whole year. Imagine how visually boring the world would be if everything in it—everything—were the same color.

People put a great deal of time and effort into creating variety in their environment. They may buy new furniture or paint the walls, not because the furniture is old or the paint is peeling, but simply because they need a change. They add variety to other aspects of their lives as well. New clothes, new foods, new friends—people make endless changes to relieve the sameness or add interest to life.

Just as people must add variety to their lives to keep it interesting, so must artists add variety to their works. **Variety** is *the principle of art concerned with difference or contrast.*

◀ **FIGURE 11.2** The artist has used only one shape (an isosceles triangle) and two colors to create this print. How has he used variety to change these two elements of art into an interesting design that has the illusion of three dimensions?

Miroslav Sutej. *Ultra AB.* 1966. Color silkscreen. 49.2 × 45 cm (19^{1}/$_{3}$ × 17^{3}/$_{4}$″). Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Pennell Fund, 1970.

CONTENTS

A work that is too much the same can become dull and monotonous. For example, a work composed of just one shape may be unified, but it will not hold your attention. Variety, or contrast, is achieved by adding something different to a design to provide a break in the repetition **(Figure 11.2).** When different art elements are placed next to each other in a work of art, they are in contrast **(Figure 11.3).** This type of contrast, or variety, adds interest to the work of art and gives it a lively quality.

Almost every artist uses contrasting elements to balance unifying elements. Wide, bold lines complement thin, delicate lines. Straight lines contrast with curves. Free-form shapes differ from geometric shapes. Rough textures add interest to a smooth surface. Colors can contrast in limitless ways. The degree of contrast may range from bold to subtle. The amount of difference between the elements depends on the artist's purpose.

<table>
<tr><td>**Activity**</td><td>**Variety and Contrast**</td></tr>
</table>

Applying Your Skills. Look through *ArtTalk* and find works of art that show bold contrast of line, shape, color, value, and texture. List one work for each kind of contrast. Explain how the contrast was created.

Computer Option. Make a simple design using five or six shapes. Overlap some shapes. Choose the Selection tool and Copy and Paste commands to make five copies of the design on the same page. Leave the original design unchanged but alter the rest to show a type of variety. Change color schemes, contrasts, and value as well as line thickness and textures. Use the Bucket fill or Selection tool to make changes quickly.

▲ **FIGURE 11.3** Which elements of art has Pereira used to create variety in this painting? Which element of art do you think shows the strongest contrast?

Irene Rice Pereira. *Pillar of Fire.* 1955. Oil on canvas. 145.7 × 94.9 cm (57³/₈ × 37³/₈″). San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas. Purchased with funds provided by Charles M. Knipe by exchange; 95.3.
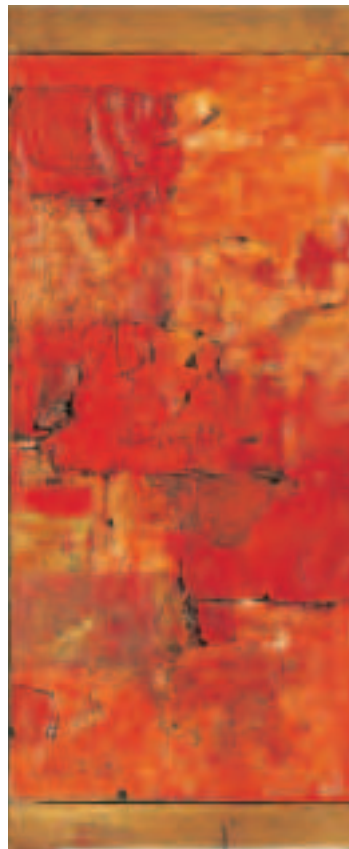
Emphasis

Have you ever underlined an important word or phrase several times in a letter? Have you ever raised the volume of your voice to make sure the person you were talking to understood a key point? These are just two ways that people use emphasis to focus attention on the main points in a message.

Robert Rauschenberg. *Red Painting.* 1953. Oil, cloth, and newsprint on canvas with wood. 200.6 × 84.1 cm (79 × 33¹/₈″). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York. Gift, Walter K. Gutman, 1963. © Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

In advertisements, music, news stories, your lessons at school, and your day-to-day communications, you see and hear certain ideas and feelings being emphasized over others.

Emphasis is *the principle of art that makes one part of a work dominant over the other parts.* Artists use emphasis to unify a work of art. Emphasis controls the sequence in which the parts are noticed. It also controls the amount of attention a viewer gives to each part.

There are two major types of visual emphasis. In one type, an *element of art* dominates the entire work. In the other type of emphasis, an *area* of the work is dominant over all the other areas.
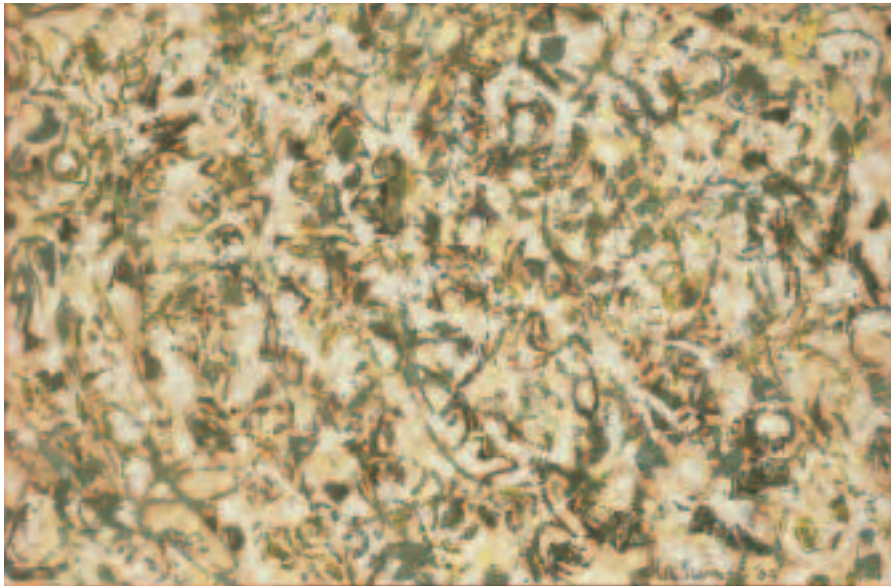
Emphasizing an Element

If the artist chooses to emphasize one element, all the other elements of the work are made *subordinate,* or less important. The *dominant,* or most important, element affects the viewer's perception of the total work. This element also affects the way in which all the separate items and elements in the work are perceived.

Sometimes the dominant element is so strong that the whole work seems to be drenched in that element. Rauschenberg's *Red Painting* **(Figure 11.4)** is saturated with the color red. Even though he has used a variety of textures to create different areas, the redness takes on a meaning all its own. It affects the viewer's perception of the painting as a whole. It also affects the viewer's perception of the separate parts of the work.

Emphasizing an Area

Sometimes a specific area in a work of art is emphasized. This area, called the **focal point,** is *the first part of a work to attract the attention of the viewer.* The other areas are subordinate to the focal point. Beaux used value like a spotlight to emphasize one important area—a focal point—in her painting *Ethel Page* **(Figure 11.5).**

▲ **FIGURE 11.5** This artist has used value contrast to create a strong focal point. Compare and contrast the use of emphasis in this work to Rembrandt's painting, Figure 5.36 on page 124.

Cecilia Beaux. *Ethel Page (Mrs. James Large).* 1884. Oil on canvas. 76.2 × 63.8 cm (30 × 25¹/₈″). National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

CONTENTS

It is possible for a work of art to have more than one focal point. Artists must be careful about this, however. Too many focal points cause the eye to jump around and will confuse the viewer. Artists must also determine the degree of emphasis needed to create a focal point. This usually depends on the purpose of the work.

Of course, a focal point is not necessary. Many artists don't create a focal point in their works **(Figure 11.6).** When artists do create focal points, they are usually careful not to over-emphasize it. They make certain that the focal point is unified with the rest of the design.

Artists use several techniques to create a focal point in a work of art. Following are some examples of these techniques.

Contrast. One way to create a focal point is to place an element that contrasts with the rest of the work in that area. One large shape, for example, will stand out among small ones. One angular, geometric shape will be noticed first among rounded, free-form shapes. A bright color will dominate low-intensity colors, while a light area will dominate a dark design **(Figure 11.7).** An object with a smooth texture becomes a focal point in a design filled with rough textures.

◀ **CONTENTS** ▶

► **FIGURE 11.8** This was painted after the artist's father died. Wyeth said that the hill represents the father and the boy represents himself. The arm floating aimlessly in the air was his free soul trying to find something to hold on to. Wyeth eliminated all details so that the viewer sees the jagged shape of the boy against the smooth, lonely background.

Andrew Wyeth. *Winter 1946.* 1946. Tempera on composition board. 79.7 × 121.9 cm (31³/₈ × 48″). North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Isolation. Artists sometimes use isolation to create a focal point and thereby emphasize one part of their work. They do this by putting one object alone, apart from all the other objects **(Figure 11.8).** This draws the viewer's eye to the isolated object.

Location. Location is another method used to create a focal point for emphasis. A viewer's eye is normally drawn toward the center of a visual area. Thus, something near this center will probably be noticed first. Because the exact center is a predictable location, most artists place the objects they wish to emphasize a bit off center. They select a location a little to the left or right of center and a little above center **(Figure 11.9).**

◄ **FIGURE 11.9** The 12-year-old subject looks as if she were standing in the center of the painting. If you measure, you will find that the artist, Anguissola, has placed most of the face and body left of the center of the work.

Sofonisba Anguissola. *Portrait of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia.* c. 1578. Oil on canvas. 115.9 × 101.9 cm (45⁵/₈ × 40¹/₈"). Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain.

Convergence. When many elements in a work seem to point to one item, that item becomes the focal point. This technique, called convergence, can be created with a very obvious radial arrangement of lines. It can also be achieved through a more subtle arrangement of elements **(Figure 11.10).**

Creating a Focal Point

Many lines lead your eyes toward the brightly lit, yellow area of the café. Notice the ruts in the cobblestones, the edge of the awning, and the top of the blue door frame all point to the yellow area. How many more objects can you find that point to that area?
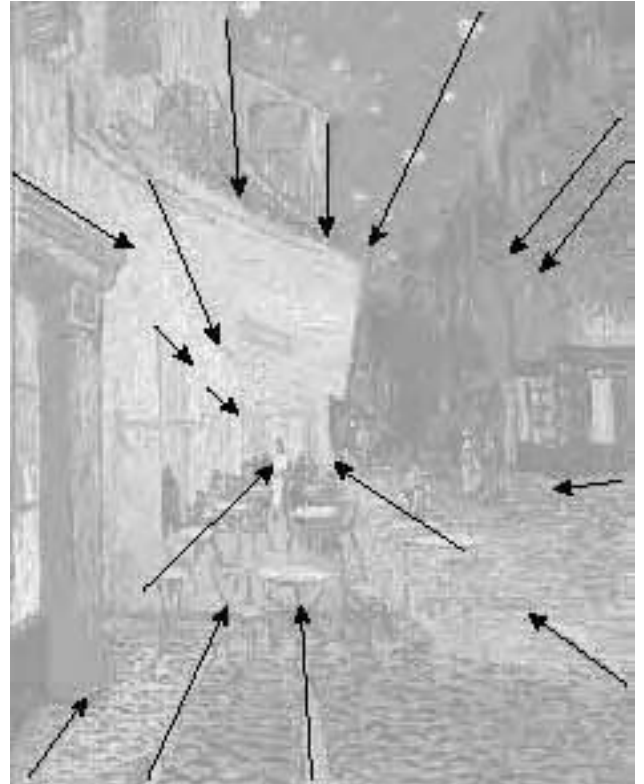
◀ **FIGURE 11.10**

Vincent van Gogh. *Café Terrace at Night.* 1888. Oil on canvas. 81 × 65.5 cm (31⁷/₈ × 25³/₄″). Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo, the Netherlands.

▲ **FIGURE 11.11** At first glance, you might think you are looking at an ordinary painting of a Mexican figure. The clothes are depicted with realistic pleats and folds. The smooth skin of the hands and woven texture of the sombrero are also painted realistically. However, when you look at the face, it seems to be wearing a wooden Olmec mask. The mask is the unusual focal point of this work.

David Alfaro Siqueiros. *Ethnography.* 1939. Enamel on composition board. 122.2 × 82.5 cm (48^{1}/$_{8}$ × 32^{1}/$_{2}$″). Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. © Estate of David Alfaro Siqueiros/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY/SOMAAP, Mexico City.

◀ **CONTENTS** ▶

The Unusual. In a work of art, an object that is out of the ordinary can become the focal point **(Figure 11.11).** In a row of soldiers standing at attention, the one standing on his head will be noticed first. The unexpected will always draw the viewer's attention.

Harmony

Harmony is *the principle of art that creates unity by stressing the similarities of separate but related parts.* In musical harmony, related tones are combined into blended sounds. Harmony is pleasing because the tones complement each other. In visual harmony, related art elements are combined. The result looks pleasing because the elements complement each other.

Used in certain ways, color can produce harmony in a work of art. Repetition of shapes that are related, such as rectangles with different proportions, produces harmony **(Figure 11.12).** A design that uses only geometric shapes appears more harmonious than a design using both geometric and free-form shapes. Even space used in a certain way can produce harmony. If all the parts in a work of art are different sizes, shapes, colors, and textures, the space between the parts can be made uniform to give the work a sense of order.

▲ **FIGURE 11.12** Scully has used related shapes and colors to create harmony in this work. What has he done to introduce variety?

Sean Scully. *White Robe.* 1990. Oil on linen. 243.8 × 304.8 cm (96 × 120″). High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia. Purchase in honor of Richard A. Denny, Jr., President of the Board of Directors, 1991–94, with funds from Alfred Austell Thornton Sr. in memory of Leila Austell Thornton and Albert Edward Thornton Sr. and Sarah Miller Venable and William Hoyt Venable, 1992.5 a-b.

Check Your Understanding

1. Describe the principle of variety.
2. What is a focal point?
3. Name the five ways emphasis can be created.
4. What is harmony?
5. Compare and contrast the use of emphasis for the central figure in Figure 11.7 on page 291 and Figure 11.8 on page 292.

Activity — Using Emphasis

Creating Visual Solutions Using Imagination. Draw from your imagination to make a series of small designs with strong focal points. Use each of the following: contrast of shape, contrast of color, contrast of value, contrast of texture, isolation, location, convergence, and the unusual.

Computer Option. Use the drawing tools of your choice to create a series of small designs with strong focal points, using each of the following: contrast of shape, contrast of color, contrast of value, contrast of texture, isolation, location, convergence, and the unusual.

You will be able to transform some designs to others by using the Fill Bucket tool. Others can be changed by using the Selection tool and rearranging the shapes. See if you can create all seven designs by starting with only three designs and making alterations to them. Save your work.