



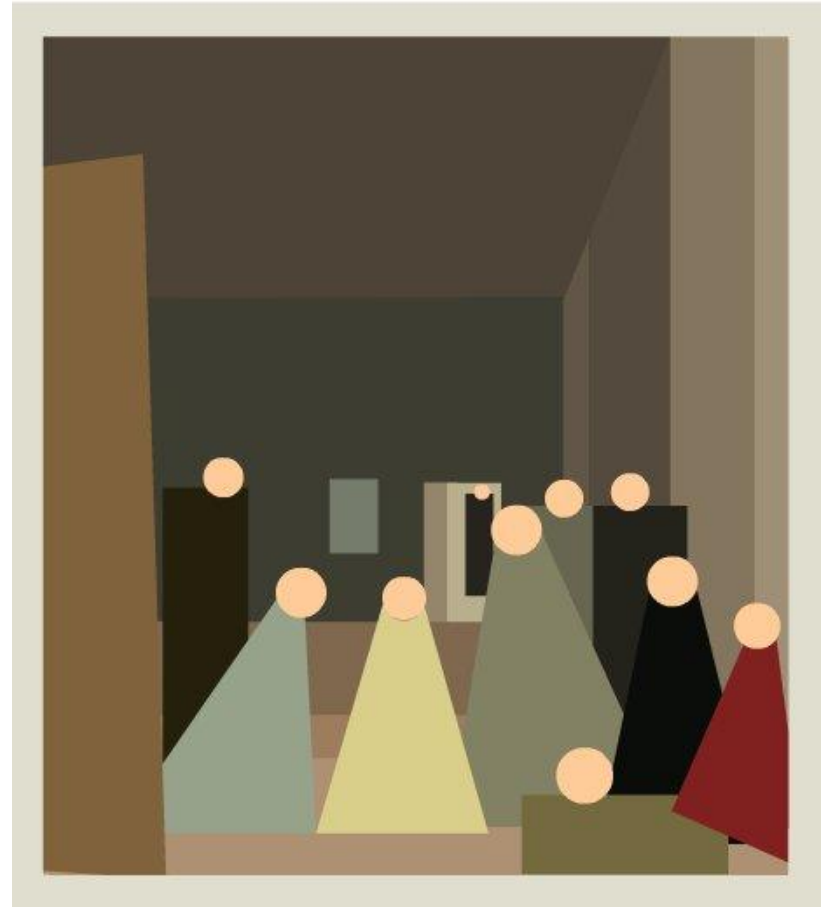
# Composition

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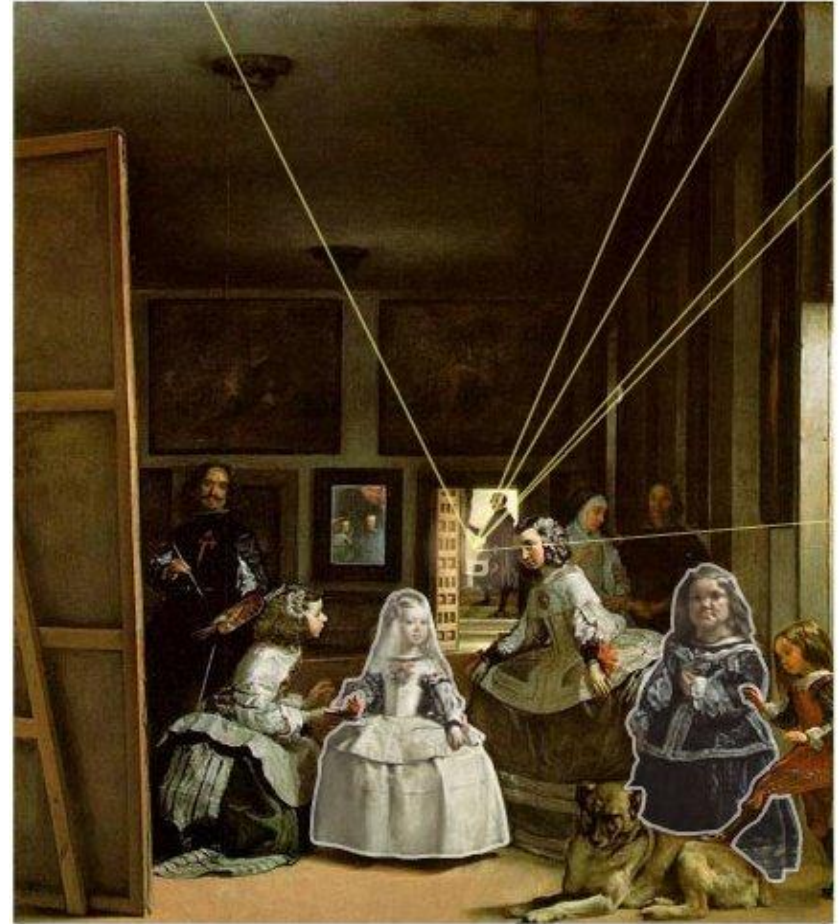
# 1. What is composition?

Composition in Visual arts is the organization of the visual elements such as dots, shapes, lines, colours, or any other element that appears in artwork. Depending on the locations of every object or element the depiction can cause different visual impressions or moods.



# 1. What is composition?

Composition encloses some aspects, like the format, the rhythm, the compositional scheme and balancing the image. And there are also some rules that help to carry out a good composition.







The Triumph of Bacchus, Diego de Velázquez

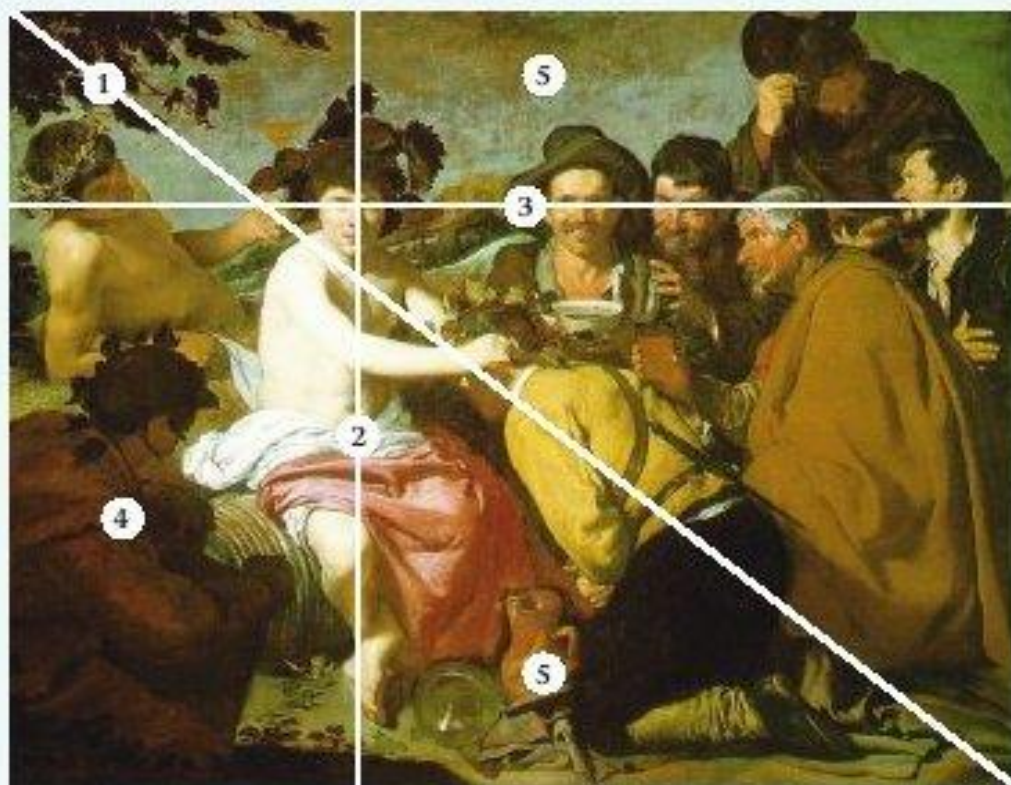
**1** Hay una línea virtual diagonal que recorre el cuadro desde la esquina superior izquierda a la inferior derecha, poniendo en relación a tres de los cuatro personajes tocados con la corona de pámpanos de vid. De este modo se rompe la monotonía de las líneas horizontales y verticales.

**2** La figura de Baco no se encuentra situada en el centro del cuadro, sino ligeramente a la izquierda. De forma extraordinariamente sutil, la palidez y la luminosidad de la piel de Baco consiguen compensar el peso visual que ejerce el cúmulo de figuras de la derecha.

**3** Los ojos del dios Baco y de los dos personajes que miran al espectador se encuentran situados en una posición muy alta del cuadro, aproximadamente a tres cuartos de la altura, llamando poderosamente nuestra atención y produciendo una clara sensación de elevación.

**4** La diagonal anteriormente señalada se refuerza con la enigmática figura del primer plano, la cual permanece completamente en sombras y no se aprecia con claridad. Gracias a ello consigue distraer la mirada hacia esta esquina y centra la atención en las figuras realmente interesantes.

**5** Junto a detalles de un realismo extraordinario, el pintor incluye de modo deliberado motivos que huyen por completo de la realidad. Fíjate, por ejemplo, en la sombra proyectada por el jarro o en la textura del cielo. La inclusión de estas referencias pictóricas nos recuerdan que nos encontramos ante un cuadro.



△ Diego Rodríguez de Silva VELÁZQUEZ (1599-1660). «La Fiesta de Baco», (1629).



## 2. Format

The format is the size, the shape and the disposition in the space of the surface on which an artwork is done.

When making a painting or a drawing the first thing to decide is the shape of the format that we are going to use.



△ Sandro BOTTICELLI (1445-1510).  
«Virgen del Magnificat», (1484).

El círculo, por su originalidad, se convierte en el protagonista de esta bella obra del Quattrocento italiano.

### Two-dimensional formats



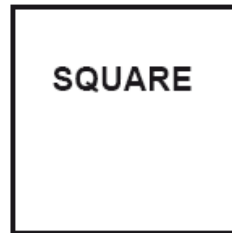
### Three-dimensional formats



## 2. Format

### Two-dimensional formats

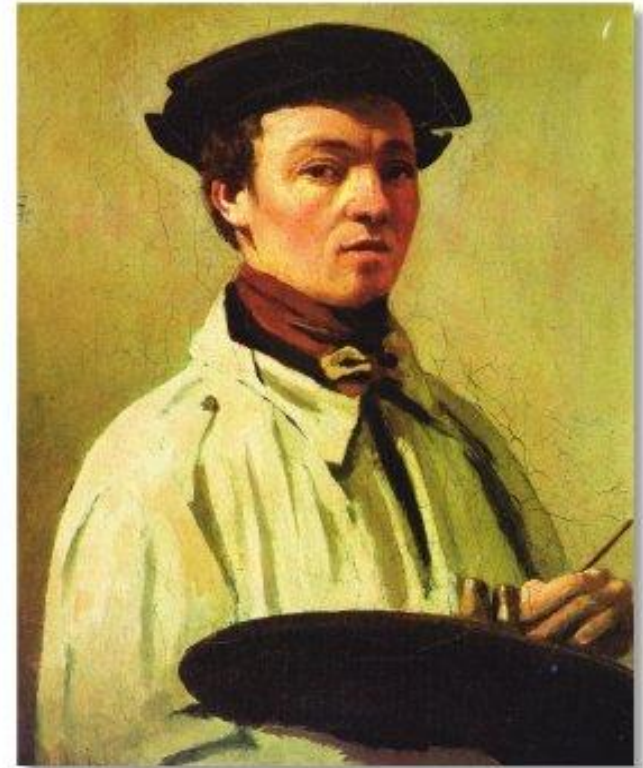
In two dimensions the format is usually a canvas, a board or any flat surface which are used as a medium to create the depiction.





# 1. Vertical format:

- Visual sensation of balance and elevation. It has been used for religious subjects because the sense of elevation and spirituality.
- It can be used for long raising elements such as human figure standing, trees or towers



△ Jean-Baptiste-Camille COROT (1796-1875).  
«Autorretrato», (1851).

El formato vertical es el más indicado para los retratos, como éste de medio cuerpo del artista francés Corot.

## 2. Horizontal format:

- It provides calm and stability. Very much used in areas of landscape and still life, which helps create the effect of order of its elements.
- They are more likely to be used in still life, lying people or landscapes.



△ Jan VERMEER (1632-1675). «Vista de Delft», (1661).  
El gran protagonismo del cielo nos introduce de tal forma en el cuadro que parece que nos encontrásemos dentro de la propia escena.

### 3. Triangular format:

- Provides great stability to the shapes placed on its base and limits the expansion of the forms on the top.





## 4. Circular format:

- Surrounding movement.
- They are called tondi (tondo in plural) which is an Italian word. Tondi were popular in the Renaissance period.



△ Miguel Ángel BUONARROTI (1475-1564).  
«La Sagrada Familia», 1508.

La estructura pentagonal, inscrita al formato circular, muestra la dirección de las líneas maestras de las que el genial artista se sirvió para organizar la composición de la obra.

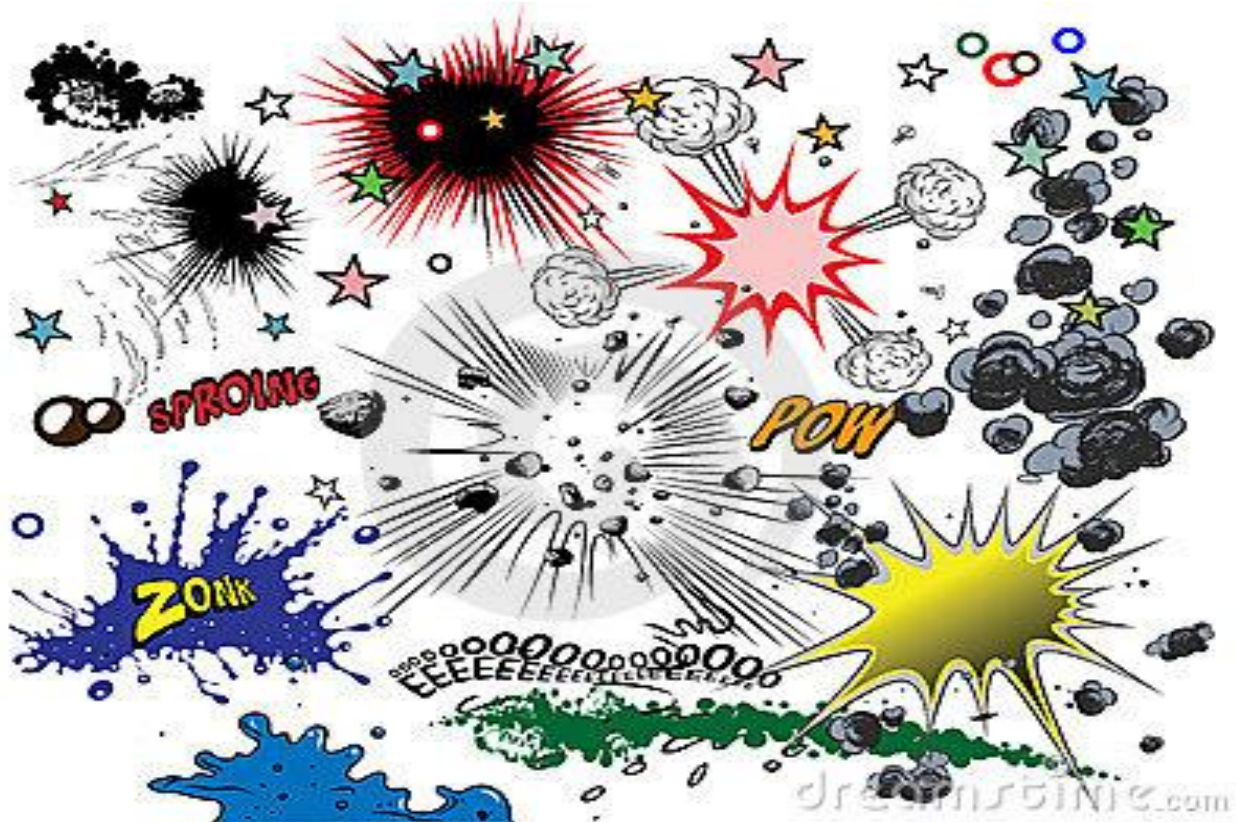
## 5. Square format:

- Focuses vision and balances visual tensions.



## 6. Irregular format:

- An irregular format can be found in comic frames





# 2. FORMAT

## Three-dimensional formats

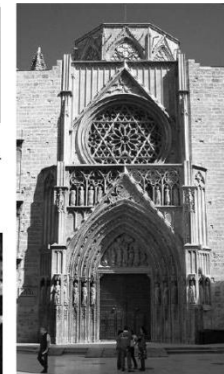
- When a format is three-dimensional it means it has to be related to any volumetric figure such as buildings objects or rooms.
- Greek temples' facades show a triangle on the top. These triangles are called pediments and usually hold sculptures.
- Domes are spherical roofs for some buildings like churches and on their inner face they usually show murals. And most churches access doors have a tympanum over them that also hold sculptures.



Sagrario dome.  
Granada's Carthusian monastery.  
Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>



Neoclassical Pediment.  
Greek National Academy, Athens.  
Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>



Apostles' Gate.  
Valencia Cathedral.  
Source:  
<http://www.foroxerbar.com/viewtopic.php?t=7467>



Oma's forest. Agustin Ibarrola  
Source: <http://www.traveleer.es/>

In [this webpage](#) you can learn about Alarcon's murals, a good example about three-dimensional formats.

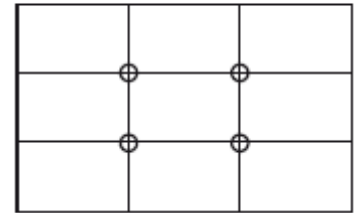


# 3. COMPOSITION RULES

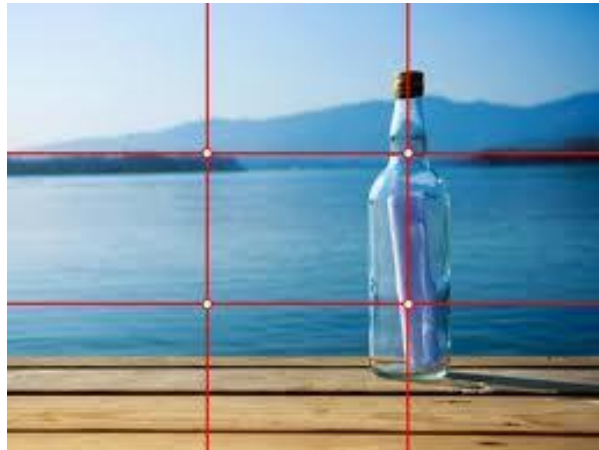
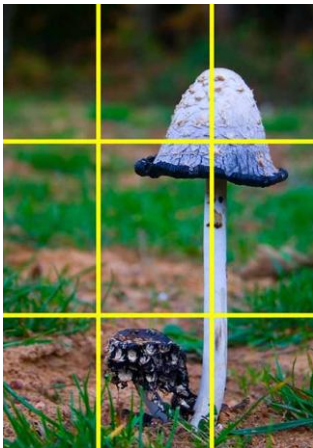
## 1. The rule of thirds

It is mainly used in photography and graphic design, it consists on tracing a grid dividing the main rectangle sides in three equal parts and drawing two horizontal and two vertical axes through these divisions.

**RULE OF THIRDS**



The four middle intersections correspond with the image elements that have more visual weight or importance in the composition.



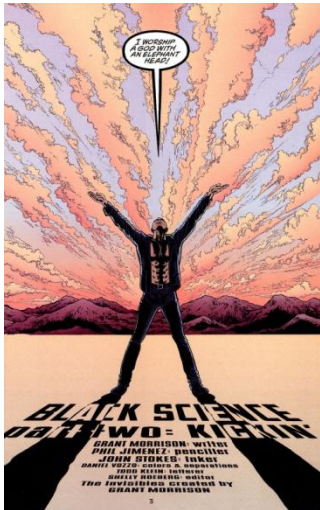
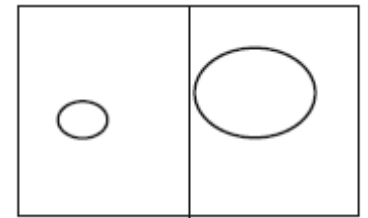
# 3. COMPOSITION RULES

## 2. The rule of the balance

It is a simple way to compose an image. When using it the visual weights, shapes and colors are spread to both sides of an imaginary middle axis.

So the most important element is located towards the center while the other elements, not as important, towards the edge.

**RULE OF BALANCE  
OR COMPENSATION**





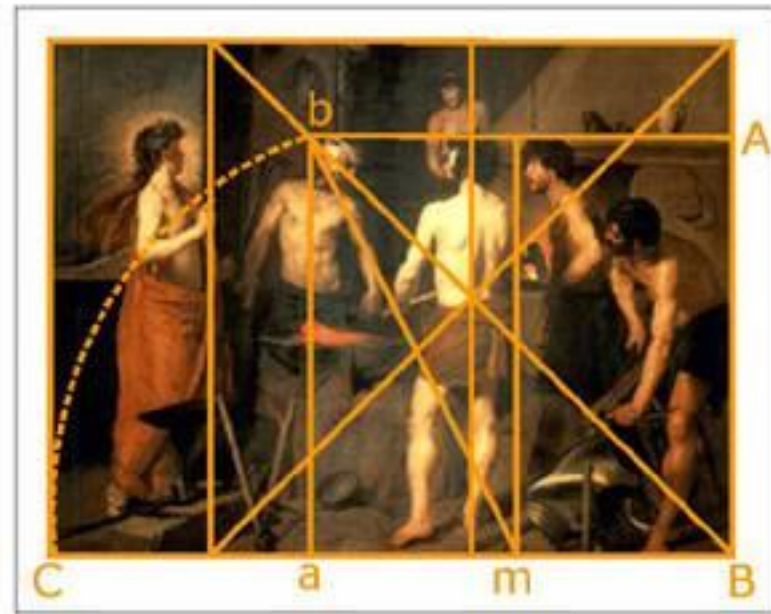
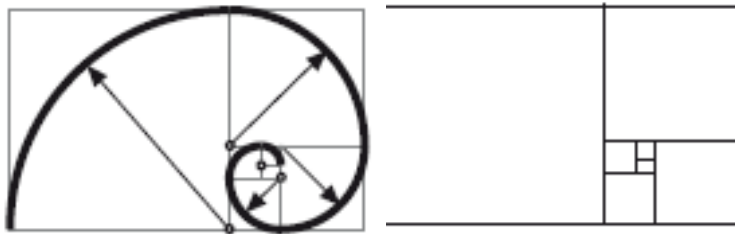
# 3. COMPOSITION RULES

## 3. The golden rectangle

The Golden rectangle is structured by the golden ratio which is 1,618, this number is the result of dividing its long side by the short one.

Artists, architects and designers have been using this rectangle as a pattern for composition since centuries before Christ.

A golden rectangle can be divided in a square and another rectangle, over and over, getting smaller and smaller golden rectangles and squares inside that is also golden. This operation can lead to inscribe a spiral in the main rectangle.





The Forge of Vulcan, 1630, Diego de Velázquez

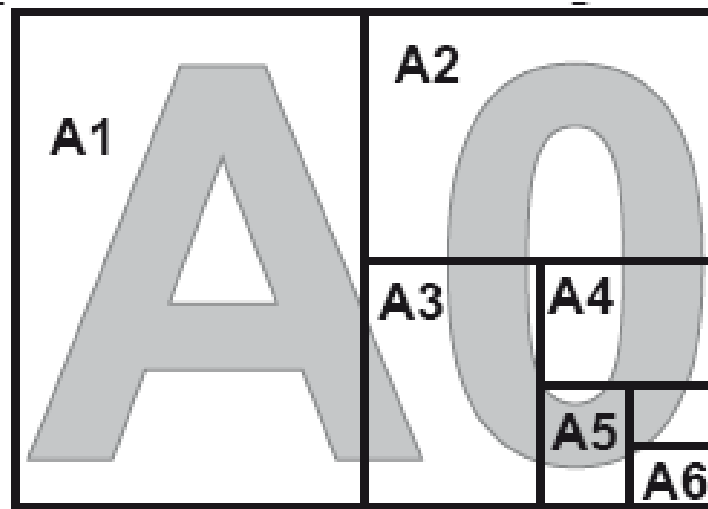
# 3. COMPOSITION RULES

## 4. The silver rectangle

The Silver rectangle has the property that if its cut by the middle of its long side it originates two similar rectangles to the first one, but half of its size.

This rectangle is used as a standard for paper sheets and industry and it is called formally DIN, UNE OR ISO.

Depending on the size they are called DIN A0, the biggest, DIN A1, A2, A3, A4...

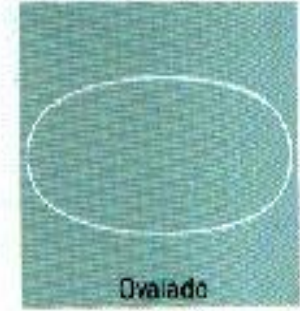




# 4. COMPOSITIONAL SCHEMES

The set of lines and basic geometric shapes on which the image is supported. Sometimes the composition can be guided by modular patterns.

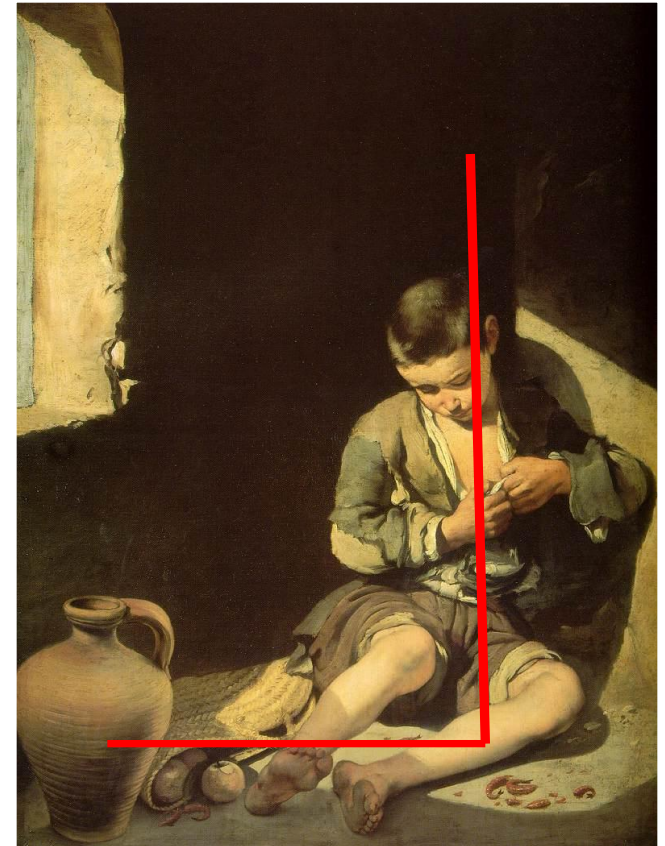
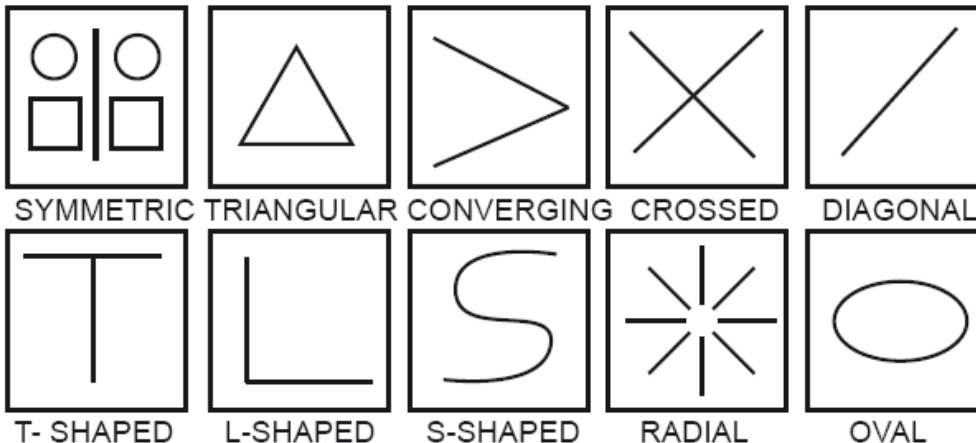
The compositional schemes can be classified in simple or composed depending on their complexity.



# 4. COMPOSITIONAL SCHEMES

## 1. Simple compositional scheme:

They are normally formed by one or several basic geometric figures or lines. The most common are: symmetrical, triangular, two converging lines, cross, diagonal, forming an "S" or "L", radial, circular, oval, spiral, etc.

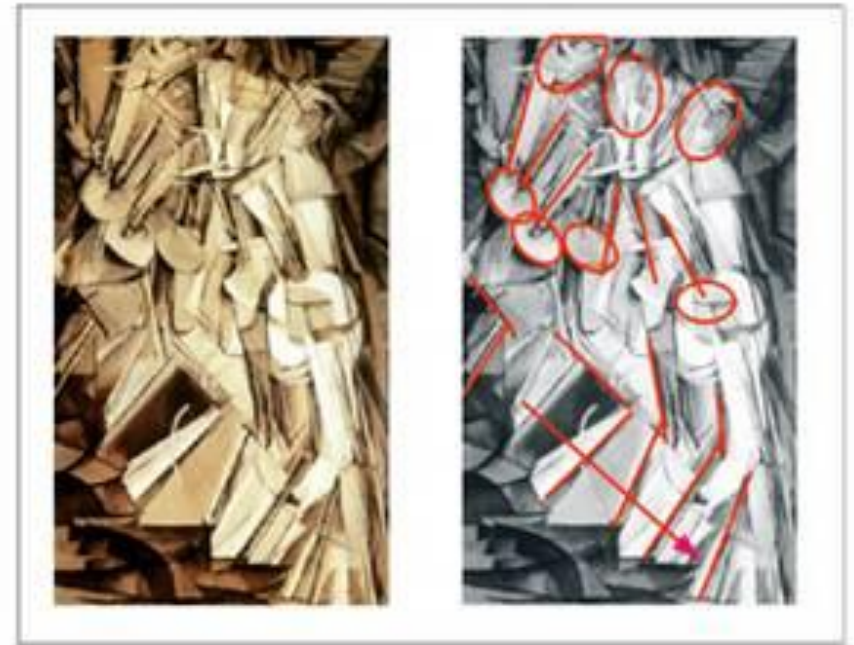


Murillo, 1650, *Beggar child*

# 4. COMPOSITIONAL SCHEMES

## 2. Composite compositional scheme:

The compositional schemes can vary depending on the observer that performs the analysis, they can be met such as the gaze directions, the positions of the different principal elements of the artwork, and the orientations of the elements or movement of the characters.





# 5. RHYTHMS

## 1. Rhythms regarding the shapes:

Rectilinear: Express seriousness and order.

Broken: Transmit nervousness, tension, dynamism and aggressiveness.

Curved: express little movement.

Wavy: Enhance the sense of movement.



## 2. Rhythms for the disposition in space:

Continuous: They are monotonous.

Alternate: Give feeling of controlled movement.

Discontinuous: express freedom of movement

Increasing: enhance the effect of depth.

# 6. THE VISUAL BALANCE

- We get the visual balance with the right compensation and distribution of the visual weight and direction of shapes.

Wassily Kandinsky



# 7. VISUAL WEIGHT

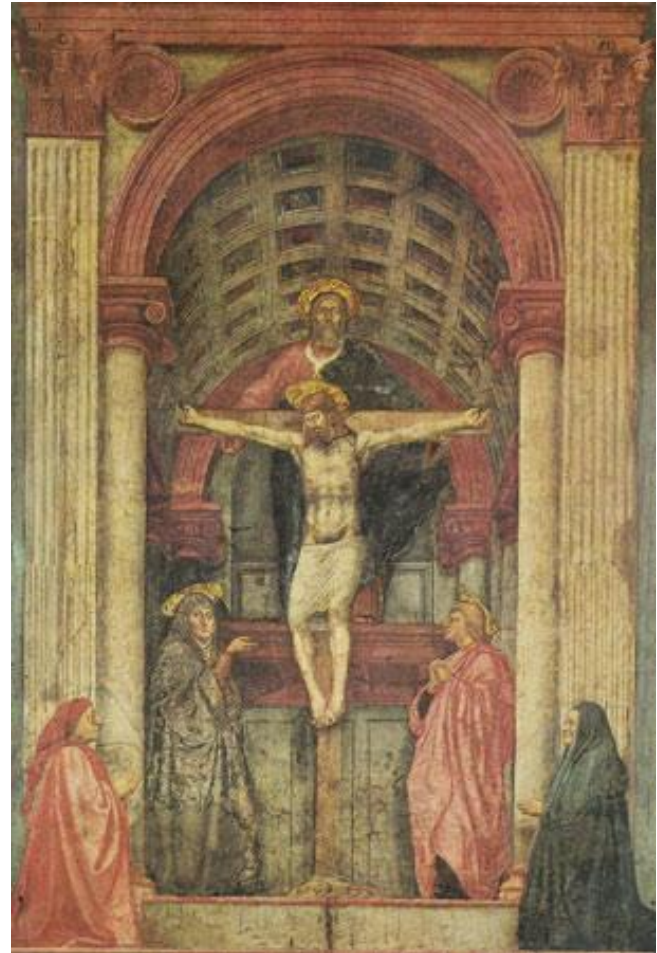
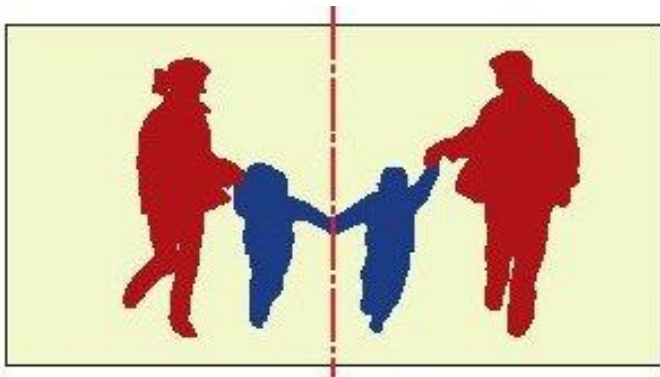
- The visual weight is the focus of interest of the composition, shapes or colors that attract attention, to which we turn our gaze.
- In the painting of Edgar Degas the eye is immediately drawn to the right side of the painting.





# 8. SYMMETRY

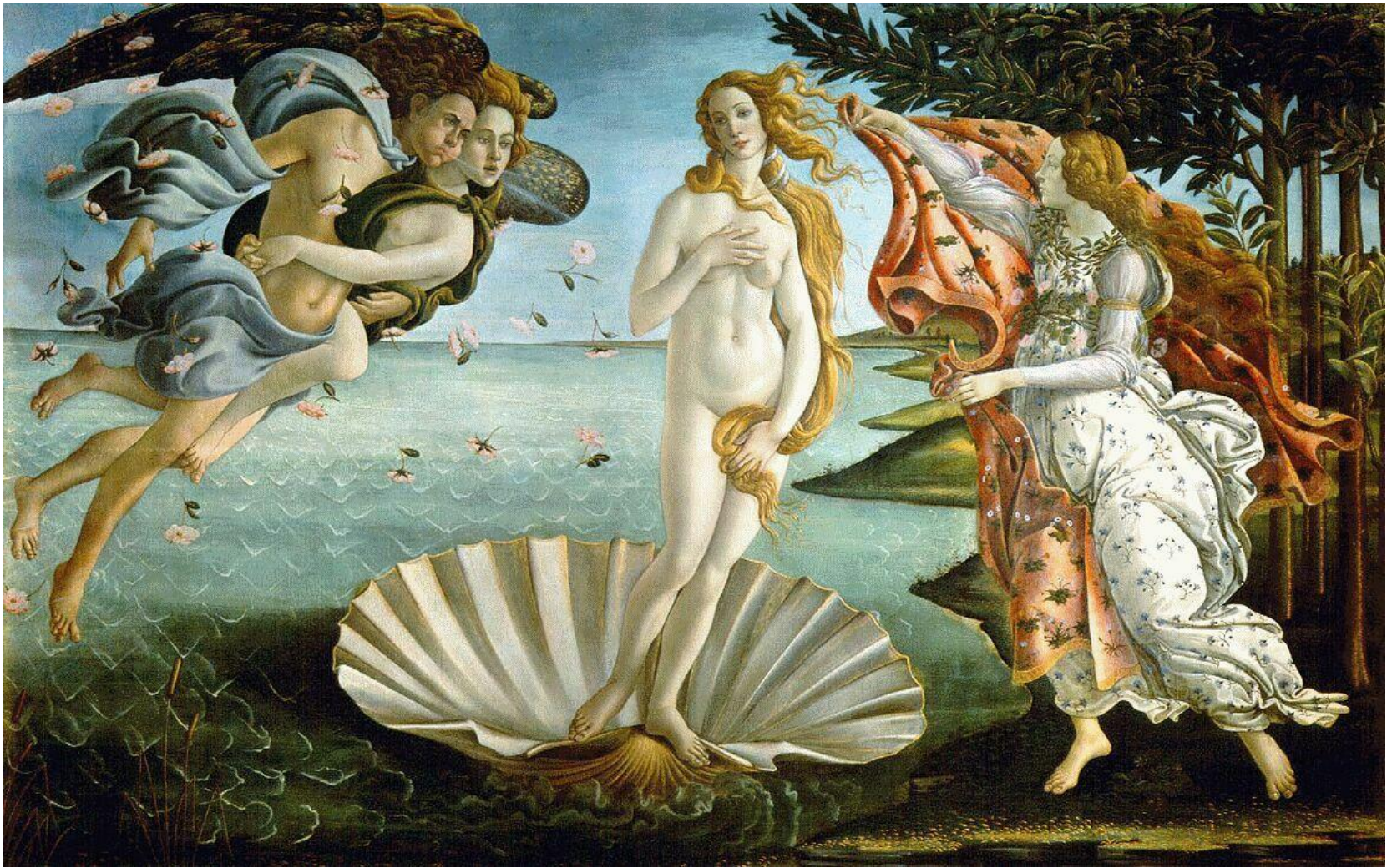
- Shapes are arranged in respect to a central axis.
- Symmetrical balance and stable.
- Static compositions



Masaccio, Trinity



# 8. SYMMETRY



The Birth of Venus , 1485, Botticelli

