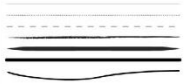
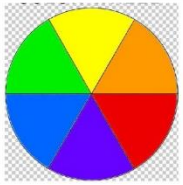
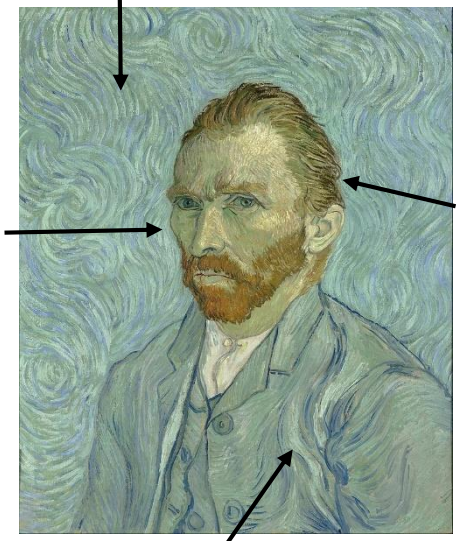
The Visual Elements

The seven **Visual Elements** are the building blocks of visual art. Every piece of art you make will use some (or possibly even all) of these elements.

ELEMENT:	DESCRIPTION:	EXAMPLE:
LINE	A continuous **mark**. **Line** is used to describe the edges of objects, **shapes** and spaces and can be used to produce effects of **tone**, **pattern** and **texture**.	
SHAPE	When a **line** joins up with itself, a **shape** is formed. **Shape** describes the **outline** of an object and the **space** inside and outside of it. **Positive space** is inside the object, **Negative space** is outside.	
TONE	The lightness or darkness of an image or **colour** (sometimes called **Value**). It shows the **shadows** and **highlights**. **Tone** varies from white through greys to black and can be used to make a **shape** look three dimensional.	
COLOUR	**Primary** colours: **red**, **blue** and **yellow**. **Secondary** colours: **green**, **orange** and **purple**. **Complimentary** colours (pairs of colours opposite each other on the colour wheel): blue and orange; red and green; yellow and purple.	
FORM	The physical **volume** of a **shape** in a **space**. Usually **3D** (like a sculpture), but can be the **illusion** of 3D (for example by using **tone**)	
PATTERN	A regular arrangement or repetition of an element (**line**, **shape**, **colour**, etc) or motif.	
TEXTURE	The feel of a **surface** or the **illusion** of how it appears it would feel. It might be smooth, rough, silky, furry, etc.	

The loose, swirling **pattern** in the background of the painting gives the impression of smoke, or of movement. Van Gogh's thick use of paint adds **texture** to the image.

The use of light and dark **tones** on the face help to show its **form**



Van Gogh's use of **complementary colour** make the orange of his hair and beard stand out against the blues in the painting.

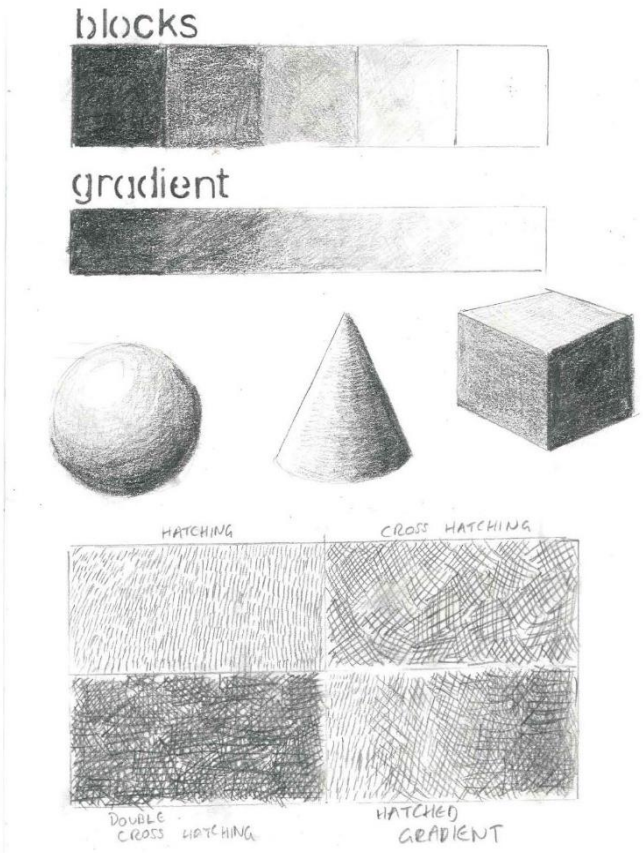
Van Gogh uses thick **lines** to describe his **shapes** – this is not realistic, but adds boldness to the painting.

Tone

Tone describes the lightness and darkness of an image. When drawing with tone, you should aim for at least 5 different tonal values: White, Light Grey, Mid Grey, Dark Grey and Black.

Pencil Grades:

The different grades of pencil each have a different tonal value. Hard pencils (H) contain more clay, and are lighter. Black pencils (B) contain more graphite, and are darker. An HB (HARD/BLACK) pencil is in the middle of this range and will give you a mid grey (HB pencils are good for lightly sketching out your line work)



COLOUR

PRIMARY COLOURS

Red, **Blue** and **Yellow** are the three **Primary Colours**. They are called this because they cannot be made by mixing other colours together, but they combine to make other colours.

SECONDARY COLOURS

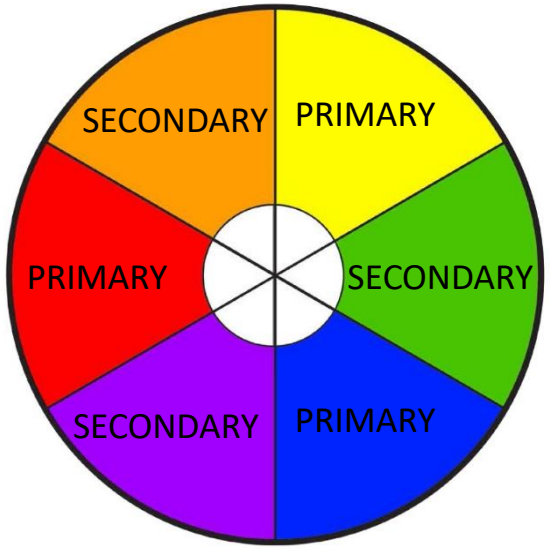
Green, **Purple** and **Orange** are **Secondary Colours**. These are made by mixing together two Primary Colours. You can see on the colour wheel below that each secondary colour sits in between the two primary coulours that make it:

Red + Blue = Purple,
Red + Yellow = Orange,
Blue + Yellow = Green.

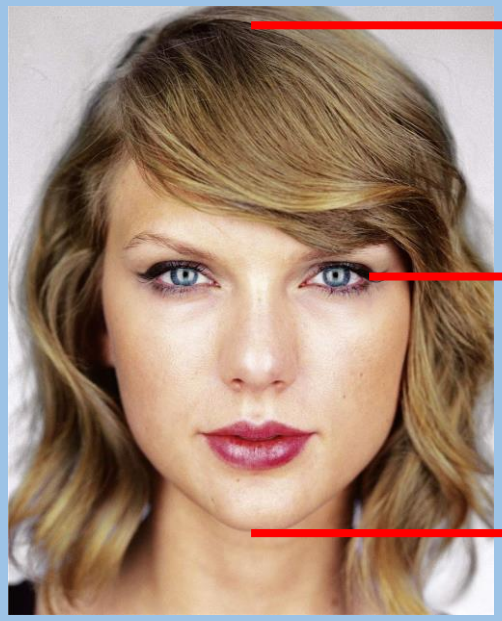
COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS

Colours that are **opposite** each other on the colour wheel are called **Complementary Colours**. Each secondary colour is directly opposite the primary colour that doesn't go into making it. So red is opposite green because red is the only primary colour that doesn't go into green - blue and yellow do.

The Colour Wheel



Proportions of the Face

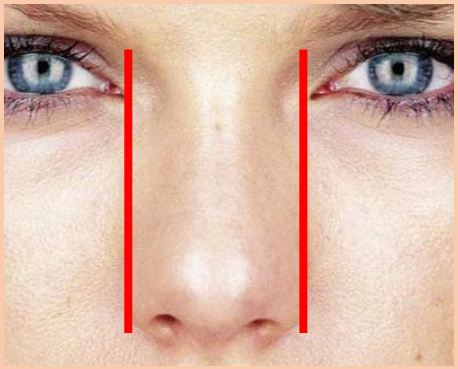


The **eyes** are HALF WAY between the top of the head and the chin

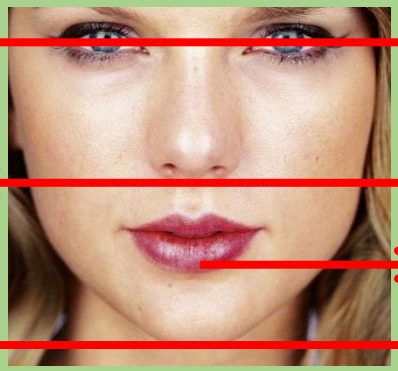
The **space between the eyes** is about the same as the size of **one eye**.

About 4 – 5 eyes could fit across the head

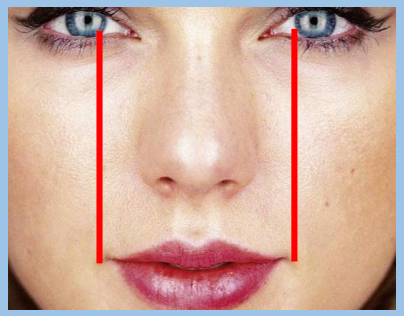
The **edges of the nose** line up with the **inside of the eyes**



The base of the nose is HALF WAY between the eyes and the chin



The base of the bottom lip is <u>half way</u> between the <u>nose</u> and the <u>chin</u>

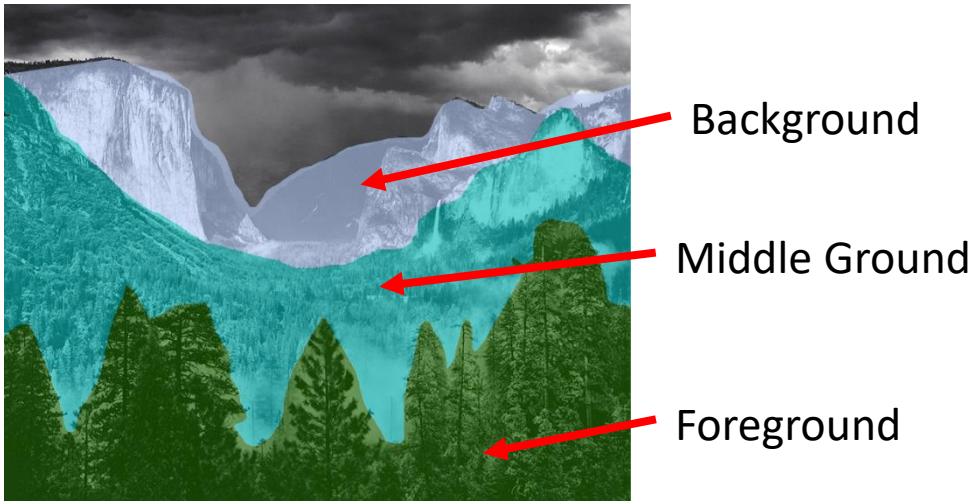


The edges of the **mouth** line up close to the <u>middle of the eye</u>

Parts of a Landscape

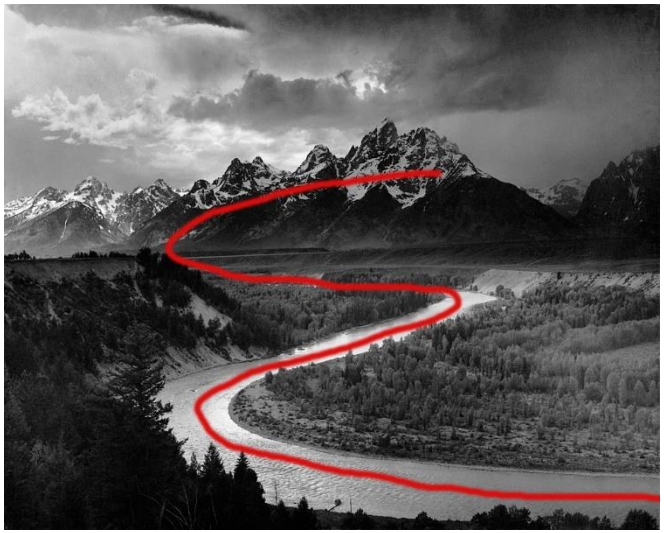
Foreground, Middle Ground and Background

The foreground of a scene is the part which is closest to the person viewing it. In the example to the right, it is the trees at the bottom of the image.
The middle ground is the part of the image in between the foreground and background – the hills in the centre of the example.
The background is the parts furthest away from the viewer (this would include the sky). In the example, it is the distant mountains.



Leading Lines

When composing a landscape image, artists sometimes use leading lines.
These are lines which lead the viewer's eye into and around the image.
In the example on the right, the river leads into the picture like a snake, and then the eye carries on with the pattern to go over the mountains.



Atmospheric Perspective

As objects in a landscape get further away:

1) They get SMALLER
2) They get LIGHTER
3) They get LESS DETAILED
4) They get LESS COLOURFUL
5) They have LESS CONTRAST

This is known as **ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE** – it is sometimes called Aerial Perspective.

This happens when particles in the atmosphere (like water molecules, or dust) get in between the viewer and the object, making it appear more HAZY the further away it is.

This also works on the SKY – which FADES and becomes LESS BRIGHT and COLOURFUL as it reaches the HORIZON.

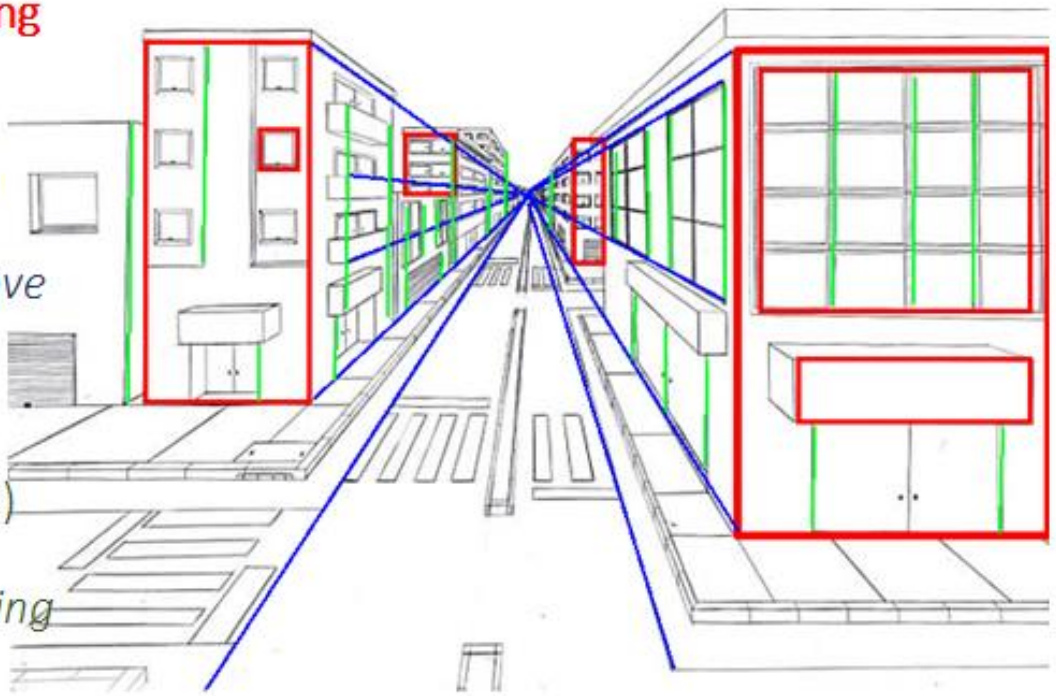
Also, objects often get a greyish/bluish TINT as they get further away. These mountains are all the same colour really, but the ones in the distance look *fainter* and *bluer*.

Linear Perspective

One Point Perspective

Linear perspective uses lines in a particular way to portray the world in 3D. In one point perspective, lines which appear as if they are travelling away from the viewer all point towards a single point on the horizon (known as the VANISHING POINT). In the example shown below, the blue lines all point towards this vanishing point. The other lines stay horizontal or vertical.

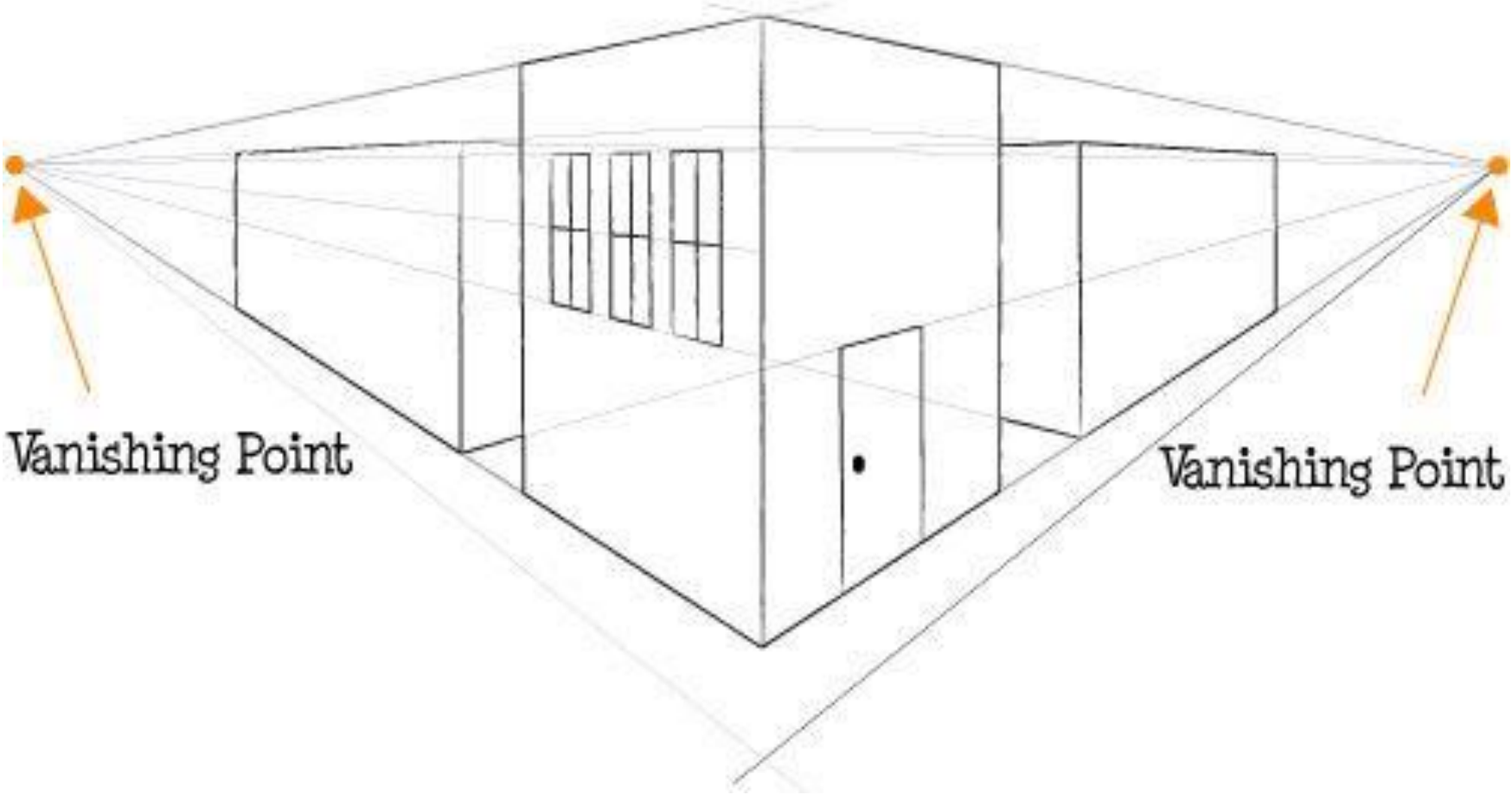
Rule 1:
If the side of the object is **facing you**, show its **true shape**
Rule 2:
All lines facing away from you point to the **vanishing point** (*below horizon = up to VP, above horizon, down to VP*)
Rule 3:
All **vertical lines** (sides of buildings, windows, doors, etc) **Remain perfectly vertical**, *no matter which side of the building they're on*



Linear Perspective

Two Point Perspective

In two point perspective, the scene contains TWO vanishing points, both on the horizon. This gives the impression that you are facing the corner of the building or object, and the lines travelling off into the distance go to one of the vanishing points. All other lines remain vertical.



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Key Words

Linear Perspective	A method of drawing which uses lines and vanishing points to make a scene appear 3D
Single Point Perspective	A form of linear perspective which shows all distance lines pointing to a Vanishing Point.
Two Point Perspective	A form of linear perspective which uses two Vanishing Points.
Three Point Perspective	A form of linear perspective which uses three vanishing points.
Vanishing Point	A point on the horizon of a perspective drawing where all distance lines meet.
Atmospheric Perspective	The effect of the atmosphere on objects in a scene. The further away an object appears, the lighter it gets with less contrast and detail.
Leading Lines	Lines which are made by elements in the image which lead the viewer's eye into, and sometimes around the image (e.g. a path, road or river).

Primary Colour	Colours which can't be made by mixing other colours – Red, Yellow and Blue
Secondary Colour	Colours made by mixing two primary colours – Green, Purple and Orange
Complementary Colour	Colours which are opposite on the colour wheel – Red/Green, Blue/Orange, Yellow/Purple
Harmonious Colour	Colours that sit next to, or near each other on the colour wheel – e.g. Blue, Green, Yellow
Gradient	A gradual change in tone or colour, without stops between
Contrast	The difference between two things when compared. In art, used to describe tones or colours that are very far apart e.g. black and white have the most contrast, mid grey and light grey the least.
Composition	The combination of parts (or elements) to form a whole. The structure of art, music or even writing.
Medium/Media	The materials a work of art is made from – e.g. pencil, paint, chalk, ink, photography
Mixing	With paints, inks or other wet media, combining two or more colours to create a third.
Blending	Similar to mixing, but with dry media. The colours are combined on the paper or canvas.
Abstract	Art that does not attempt to represent reality – colours, tones, lines and shapes.
Figurative	Art that does try to represent reality, showing figures or objects that exist in real life.
Subject	The main focus of a work of art. The person, object or scene that is the focal point of the image.
Proportion	In art, the relationship between one thing and another in terms of size and distance
Symbolism	Using an object or word to represent or show something else (e.g. a book to represent knowledge)

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Alfred Stieglitz

Eugene Atget

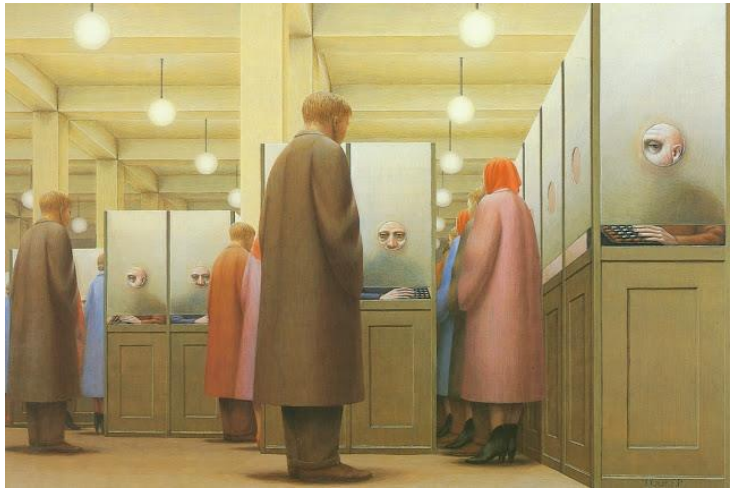
Nigel Henderson

Vivian Maier

Deanna Petherbridge (b 1939)

Robert Rauschenberg (1925 - 2008)

Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)



George Tooker (1920 - 2011)

Claes Oldenburg (b 1929)

Christo (1935 - 2020) and
Jeanne-Claude (1935 - 2009)

Rachael
Whiteread
(b 1963)

Banksy
(b ?)

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Dain

Cept
aka Mike Ballard (b 1972)

Os Gemeos
aka Otavio and
Gustavo Pandolfo
(b 1974)

JR (b 1983)