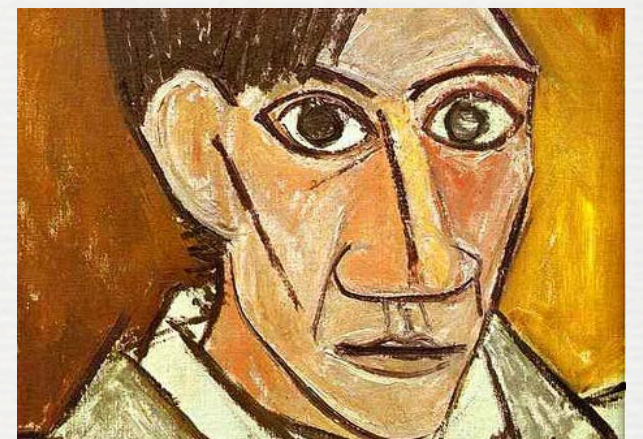
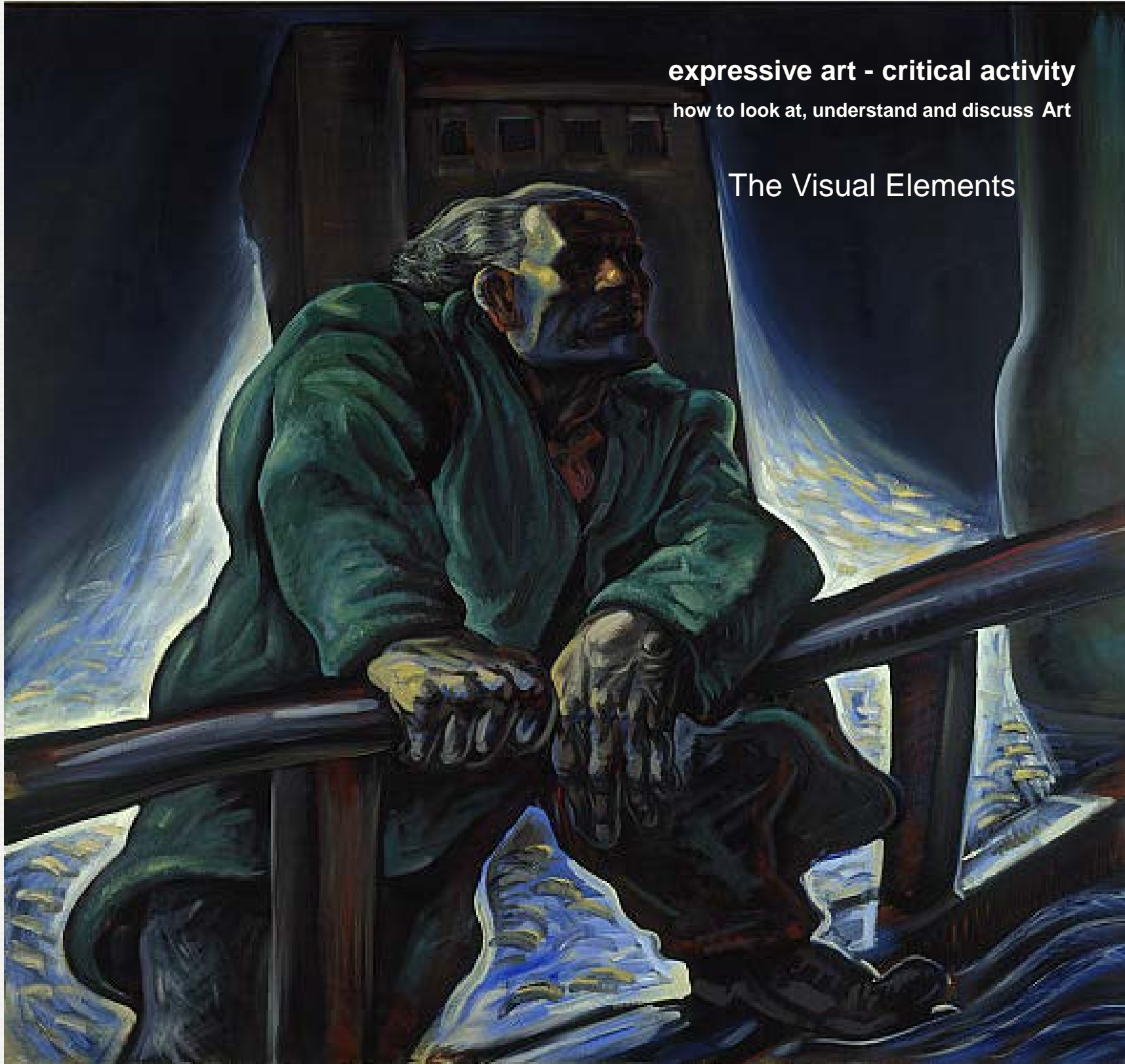


expressive art - critical activity

how to look at, understand and discuss Art

The Visual Elements





LINE

Although line is a simple visual element indicating direction, length and defining shapes, the artist can also introduce tension and weight using line.



tone

Tone, or the use of light and dark can be a powerful element in the creation of atmosphere and mood. It also creates the illusion of three-dimensional solidity.



COLOUR

The element of colour creates excitement and mood as well as temperature, harmony, dischord. etc.



TEXTURE

Texture describes surfaces, but can also communicate emotion, tension and other psychological aspects of the art.



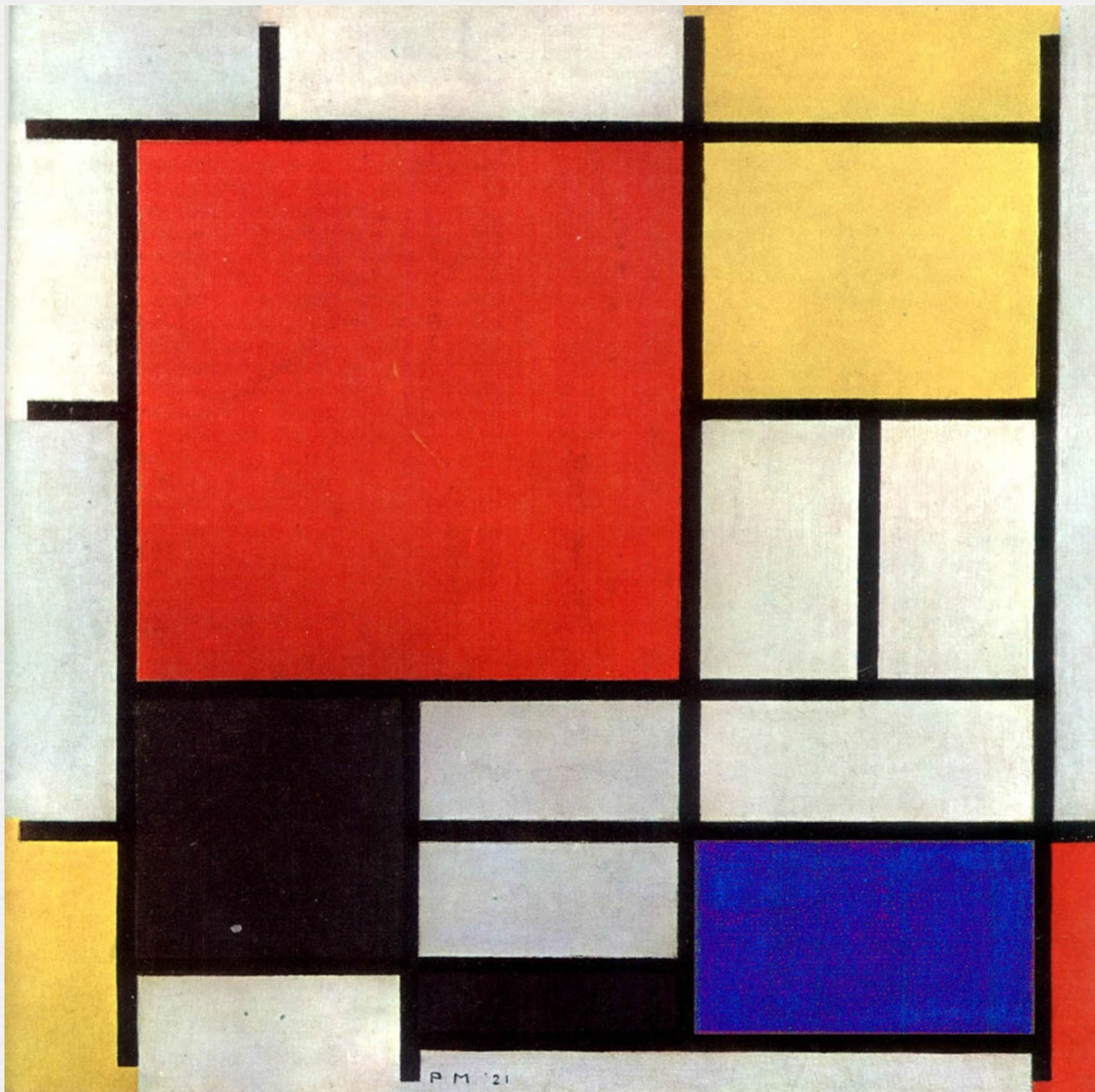
COMPOSITION

composition is a device used to direct the viewer's eye. It also creates balance or dischord in the artwork.



PATTERN

Pattern is the repetition of shapes or colours to create rhythm and flow or decorative effects to artwork. This may be created simply by the use of brushstrokes.



PROPORTION

Proportion is the relative size or quantity of one element in the artwork to another. This can be used as a compositional device to create balance and harmony.



SCALE

The element of scale can be determined by the location where the artwork is to be viewed, but it can also be used to awesome effect in shocking the viewer with the unexpected.



PERSPECTIVE

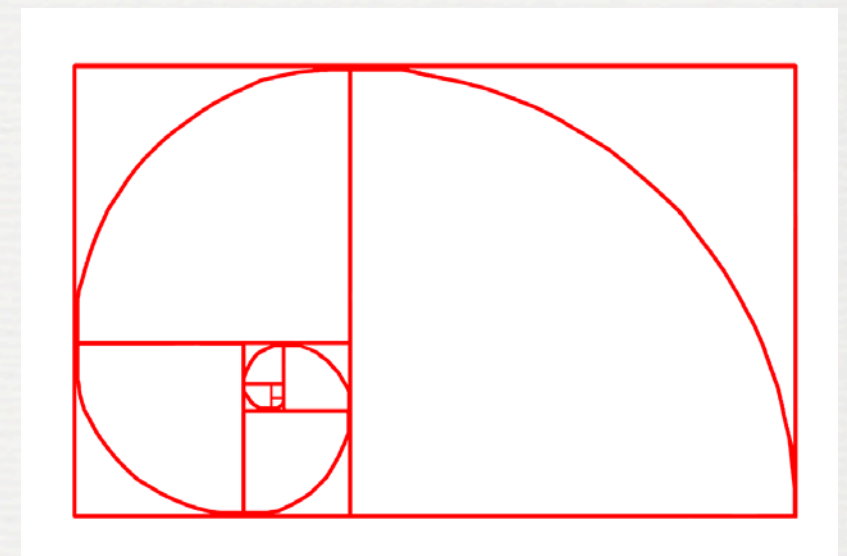
Perspective is an element used in art to create the illusion of distance by altering the scale of objects as they seem to recede towards the back of the picture- plane. As well as creating the illusion of depth, perspective lines can draw the eye to the focus of the artwork.



DISCUSSING COMPOSITION

layout

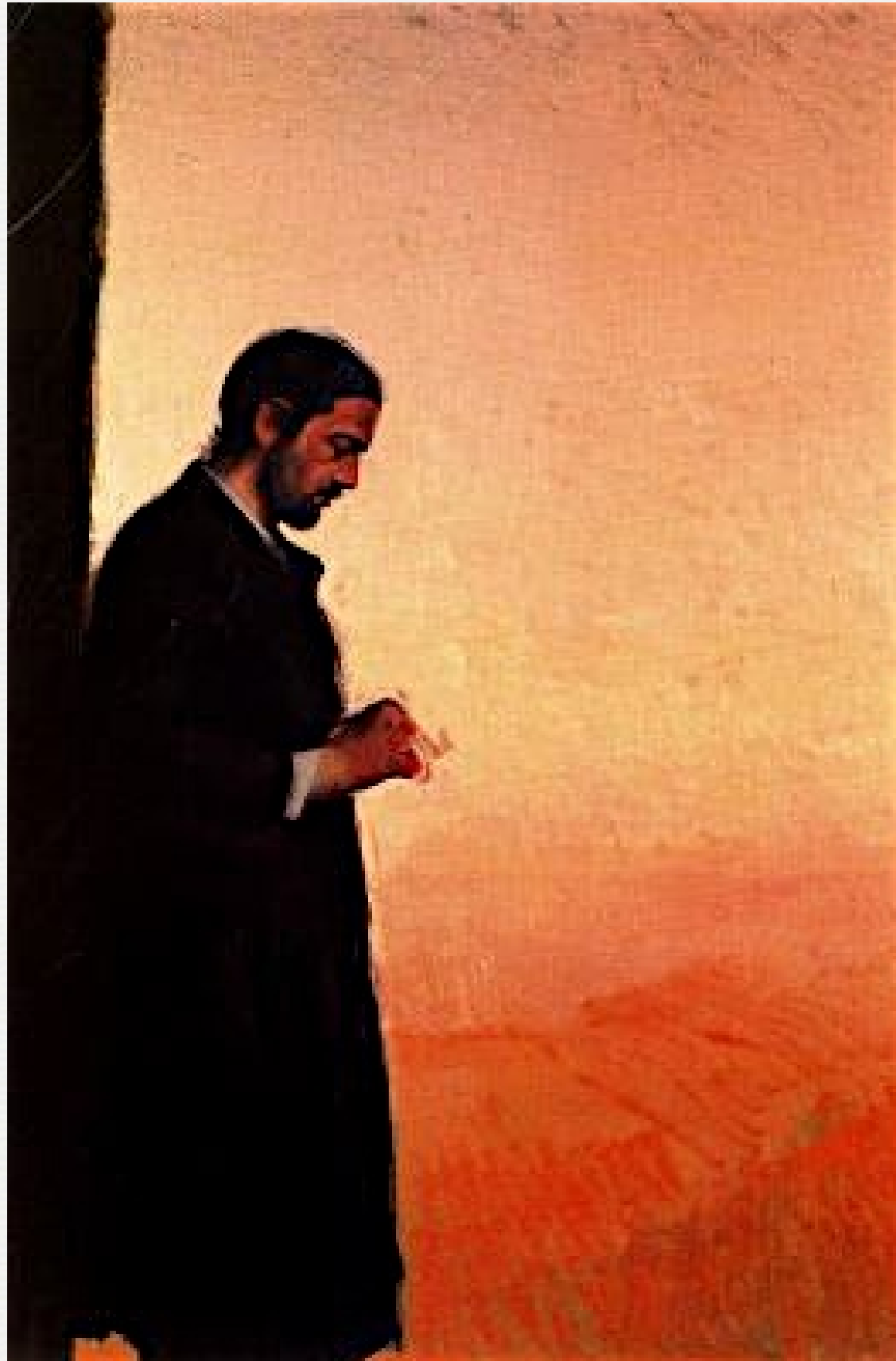
Composition is the physical layout of the artwork. The artist places each element in the work to create the balance, or symmetry, or tension depending on his/her intended effect. Often this is simply a balancing act to make the viewer comfortable but sometimes it is a powerful device in the creation of tension or discomfort to unsettle the viewer.



The golden mean

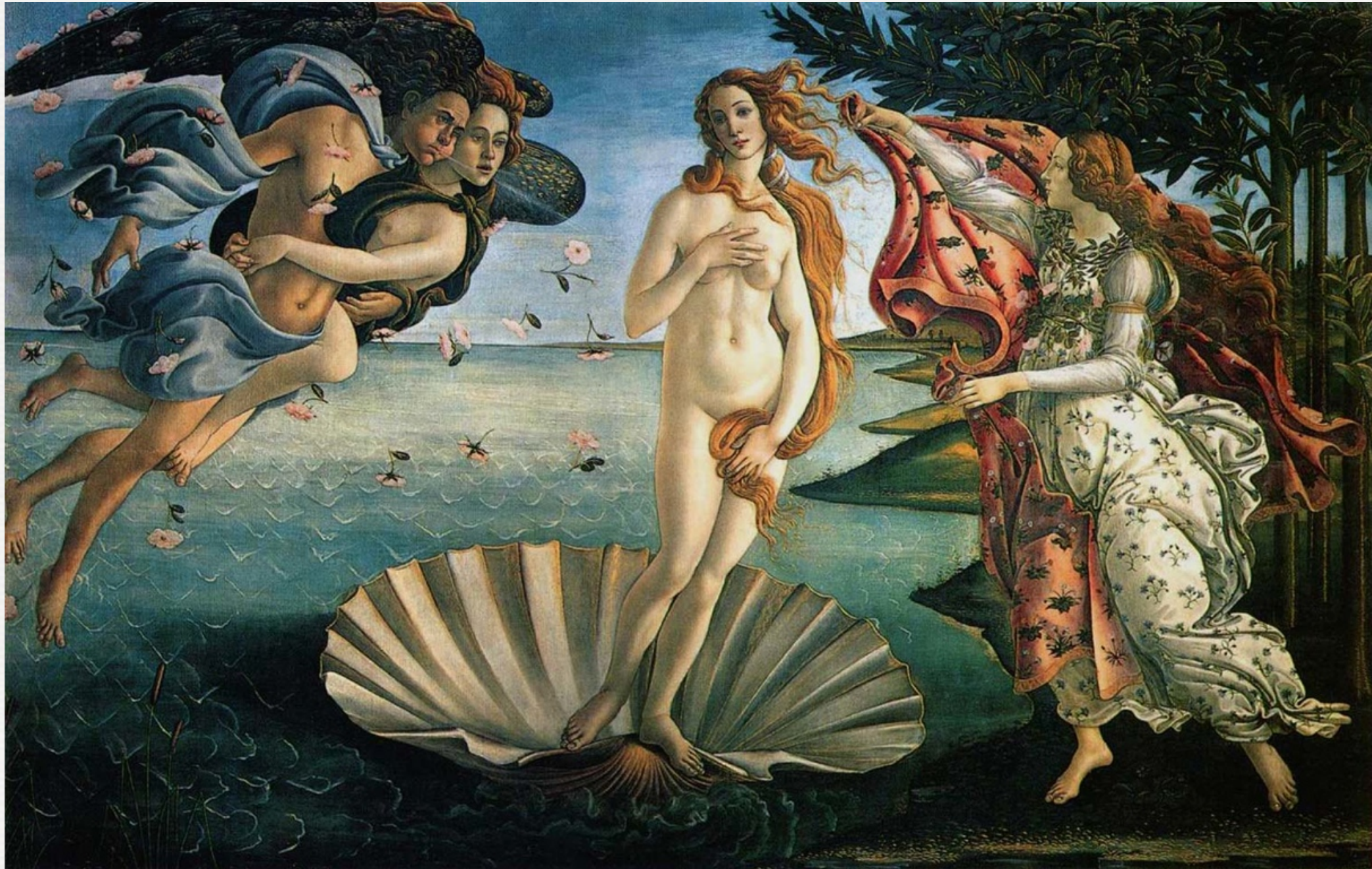
or Golden ratio is a proportion ratio of about one third to two-thirds which has been historically considered to be aesthetically pleasing.

This painting by VanGogh illustrates this ratio approximately, by dividing the painting horizontally on the skyline and vertically using the tree, drawing the viewer's eye to the bright star on the intersection of the two lines.



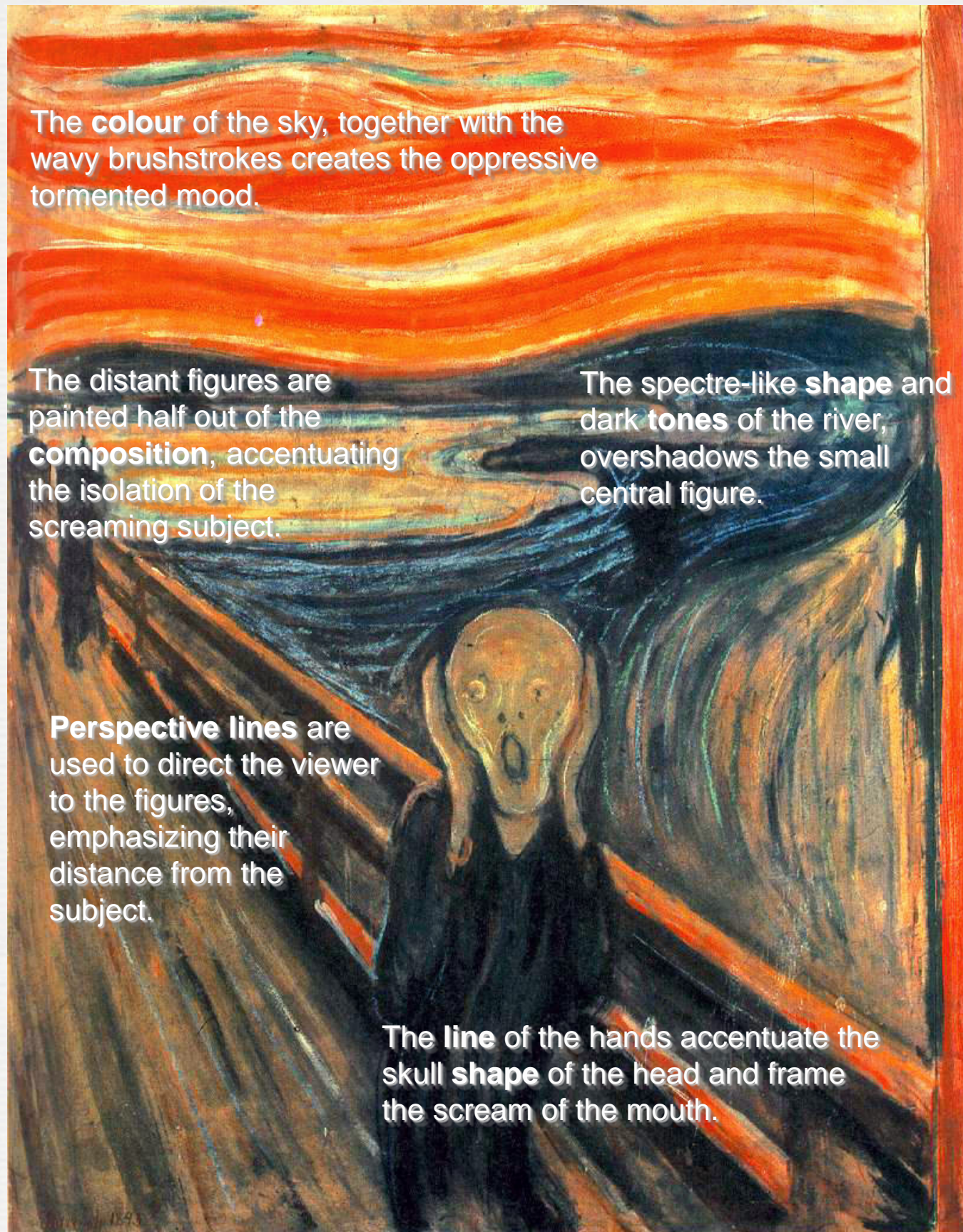
eccentric

In this painting by Conroy the subject is positioned to the extreme left of the painting. He has achieved equilibrium by using the background as an element to counter-balance the figure. This is a difficult composition to achieve successfully as the background must be as powerful as the subject. In this case the artist has used strong colour to give the background enough weight to balance the composition.



symmetrical

In this painting by Botticelli balance is achieved simply by dividing the picture vertically with the figure of Venus and balancing each side using the figures and trees. This type composition is difficult to achieve successfully, as it can look too obvious.



The **colour** of the sky, together with the wavy brushstrokes creates the oppressive tormented mood.

The distant figures are painted half out of the **composition**, accentuating the isolation of the screaming subject.

The spectre-like **shape** and dark **tones** of the river, overshadows the small central figure.

Perspective lines are used to direct the viewer to the figures, emphasizing their distance from the subject.

The **line** of the hands accentuate the skull **shape** of the head and frame the scream of the mouth.

Discussing a painting - the visual elements

In this painting, "The Scream", the artist Edward Munch has created a painting of isolation and paranoia.

This painting's subject matter is psychological and presents the artist with the difficulty of representing this **visually**. Munch has therefore employed various **visual elements** to achieve his desired effect.

The **composition** swirls around the subject creating the confusion the subject is feeling. The dark **tones** and **colours** in the water around the figure suggest the subject is drowning in depression. The **perspective** lines on the bridge exaggerate the distance between the figure and other the people painted off to the right, increasing his feeling of alienation from society. The sky is painted in a fiery, flowing red, creating a hostile atmosphere which is reflected on surfaces around the painting. Finally the subject is drawn as a gaunt, screaming skull exaggerated by the hands framing the face and the stretched oval of the mouth.

We can almost hear the whole painting scream.