

# Compositional Structures of the Drawing

Ovidiu FELIPOV<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The study of drawing in higher education institutions represents a basic course in the instructional-educational process of the fine and decorative arts. At the base, making pre-chromatic or compositional sketches we are in direct contact with the drawing. The present study refers to the framing of the proposed subjects to be drawn and evolves with the analysis of the compositional theories that make a true monochrome harmony from the chosen subject.*

*In drawing, the composition represents the way of organizing the elements of artistic language in a balanced and homogeneous context that manages to convey the plastic message of the artist to the viewer. The plastic compositions can be static or dynamic, closed or open and they are based on various constructive structures: decorative composition, symmetrical composition, frieze composition, register composition, triangle composition, circular composition, border composition, spiral composition, radial composition, vertical composition, horizontal composition, diagonal (oblique) composition. All these rules for composing plastic language elements acquire dynamism using rhythm and cadence. This study explicitly defines each type of composition by providing examples from the history of the fine and decorative arts and applied schematic examples that may be useful to those who wish to study the Study of Drawing.*

**Key-words:** *composition; study; circular; harmony; drawing.*

## 1. Introduction

The study of drawing in higher education institutions is a basic course in the instructive-educational process of fine and decorative arts. Even when we make chromatic or compositional preliminary sketches at the base, we still have contact with the drawing. Most of the drawing courses are structured in two modules. The first module focuses on the basic elements of drawing theory, on the study of simple shapes, on less complex formulas of composition and pagination. The second module of the drawing course focuses on the study of the elements of monochrome artistic language, on complex composition formulas, on plastic synthesis processes starting from figurative to abstract.

Composition is an element of fundamental importance in fine arts. It represents the art of expressively organizing a plastic space with the help of plastic language elements. The binding of the shapes in the image is made to highlight a content, to impose a plastic structure, to create tension or peace in the work. By ordering and organizing the essential relations of the elements of plastic language, a total form, a unitary whole, a configuration called plastic composition is born.

## 2. General presentation

This article refers to the basics of framing the subjects proposed to be drawn and evolves with the analysis of compositional theories that make the chosen subject a true monochrome harmony.

The composition in the drawing represents the way of organizing the elements of plastic language in a balanced and homogeneous context, a context that ends up transmitting to the viewer the message of the artist. Plastic compositions can be static or dynamic, closed or open

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Arts of the University "Ovidius" from Constanta, felipovvidiu@gmail.com.

and are based on various constructive structures: frieze composition, register composition, triangle composition, circular composition, spiral composition, radial composition, vertical composition, horizontal composition, composition on the diagonal (oblique).

I noticed such a square composition in an article by professor Romanescu Sînziana and it represents Mithras killing a bull. The composition is a closed dynamic structured on a diagonal of ascending force that emphasizes the victorious character.



Fig. 1. *Mithras killing a bull*

Source of image: Laura Sînziana Cuciuc Romanescu. 2019. "Symbolism and Artistic Representations of the God Mithras in Greek-Roman World". in. *Education Research Creation Symposium, București: Ed. Muzicală*, p.255.<sup>2</sup>

In the contemporary era, the artistic composition can be seen as a specific model to combine constructive elements of a two-dimensional image (or of a work of art) in a satisfactory formula, starting from the acceptance that in artistic language the whole (whole) is much more important than the sum of the component parts.<sup>3</sup>

The easiest definition of composition is to organize the elements of plastic language into a unitary whole. In the case of the plastic arts, the composition implies the fluent structuring of the elements of plastic language in the work surface. Depending on the way of use and the assigned destination, a composition can be plastic or decorative.

In making a plastic or decorative composition we must take into account the following work steps: Pagination, Structure, Proportion, Contrast and Rhythmicity. Going through these steps in the systematization of the artistic space is necessary in achieving a balanced and harmonious composition. These five steps define the skeleton on which all the components of the final work are harmonized.

In the situation of a study in drawing we have 3 steps to follow so that the result is a harmonious one: Appropriate Format, the Center of Interest with clear organizational paths and the Impression of Depth given by the rhythmicity of the evaluation. The authors of the Complete Drawing Guide for Beginners rely on the same study idea, saying: Creating a good composition for a static nature involves arranging the elements so as to form a harmonious scene, pleasing to the eye. It's easy if you have a few landmarks to follow. The most important things to remember are: 1) choosing a format according to the subject; 2) establishing a center of interest and a guideline to guide the eye in and around the image and 3) creating an impression of depth by overlapping objects, by varying values and by placing elements in

<sup>2</sup> Laura Sînziana Cuciuc Romanescu. 2019. "Symbolism and Artistic Representations of the God Mithras in Greek-Roman World". In *Education Research Creation Symposium*, București: Ed. Muzicală, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Zamfir Dumitrescu. 2002. *Ars Perspectivae [The art of perspective]*. București: Editura Nemira, p. 45.

different planes. As in the other cases, the more you study and practice attractive compositions, the better you will become.<sup>4</sup>

Composition means the harmonization of the elements of plastic language and their distribution on the artistic composition by arranging them on vertical, horizontal or diagonal axes on a symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangement, with the elements placed in groups or dispersed on the plastic surface.

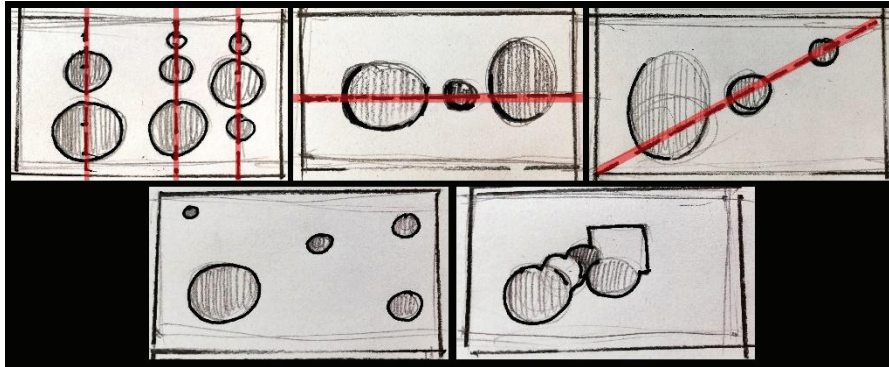


Fig. 2. Compositional Structures

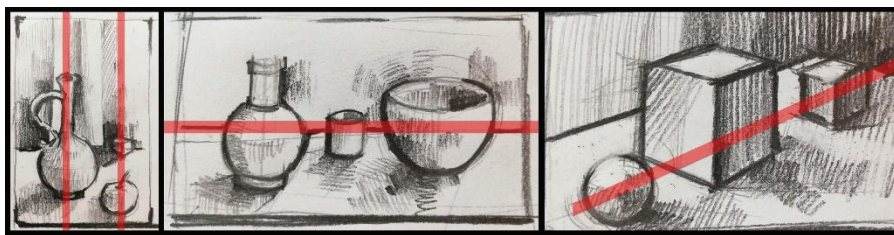


Fig. 3. Compositional Structures

Throughout the history of plastic and decorative arts, we find these ways of arranging the composite elements on vertical, horizontal, diagonal, grouped or dissipated frames in the presentation surface.

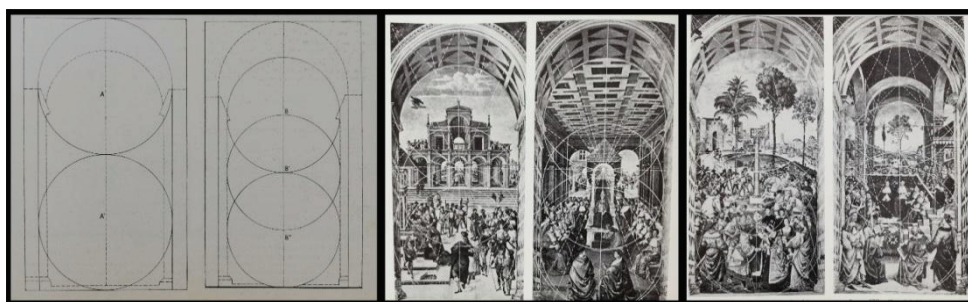


Fig. 4. Pinturicchio: *The life of Enea Silvio Piccolomini*.

Source of image: Charles Bouleau.1979. *Geometria Secretă a Pictorilor [The Secret Geometry of Painters]*. București: Ed. Meridiane, p. 125-126.

At the same time we notice combinations of compositional frames with frames in geometric shapes that are the service of the artist in order to amplify the visual message.

<sup>4</sup> Ghid Complet de Desen pentru Începători [Complete Drawing Guide for Beginners]. 2018. București: Editura Litera, p. 202.

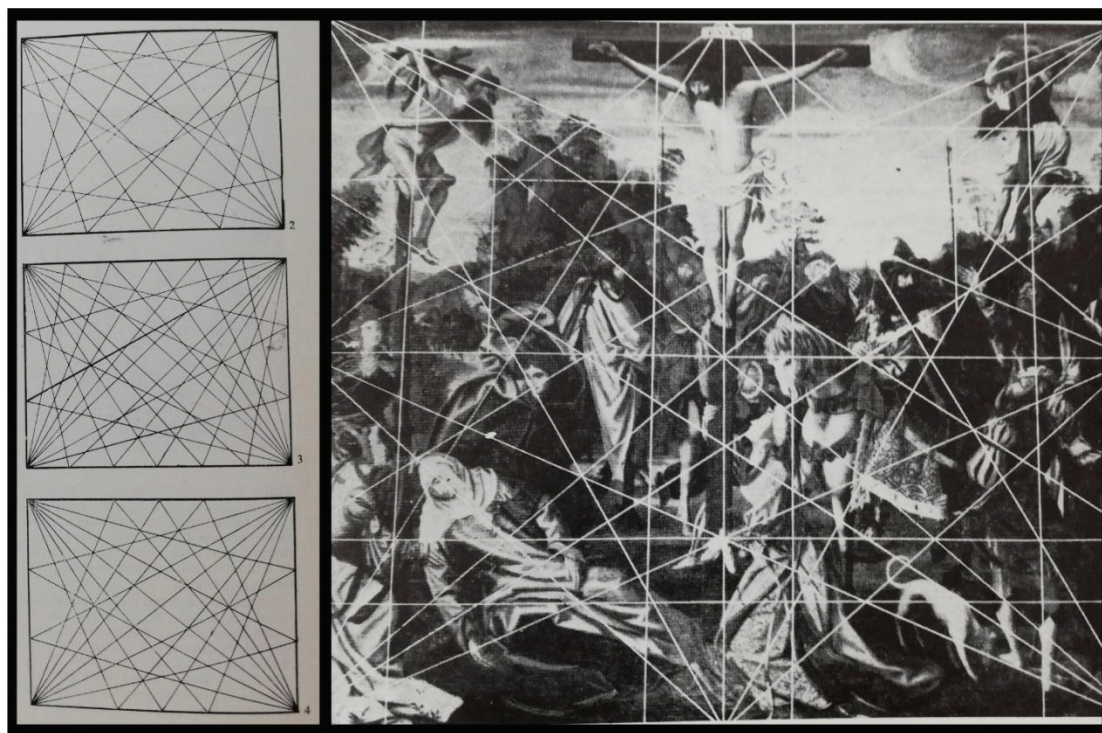


Fig. 5. *Anonymous, from Anvers, Calvary*  
 Source of image: Charles Bouleau.1979. *Geometria Secretă a Pictorilor*  
 [The Secret Geometry of Painters]. București: Ed. Meridiane, p. 42-43.

An opinion that nuances the composition and the plastic surface as well as possible can be found in Traian Bradean's book *Drawing Course: The surface is the scene of real magical shows, manifested by coded plastic elemental, put in relation with the neighbors in order to achieve the optical effect. bearer of human affections and intelligence.*<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Closed composition

The closed composition is a structure where the action takes place inside an artistic space, with a strong center of interest. In this case the elements are ordered on compositional schemes in the shape of a triangle, square, circle, oval. The closed composition is organized so that all the elements of plastic language inside the painting (moon, dots, spots) are oriented towards the inside of its frame. These elements converging towards the same center of interest have a common goal. Symmetry in the case of closed compositions, be it relative, accentuates its closed format.

<sup>5</sup> Traian Bradean. 2010. *Curs de Desen [Drawing Course]*. București: Editura Polirom, p. 21.

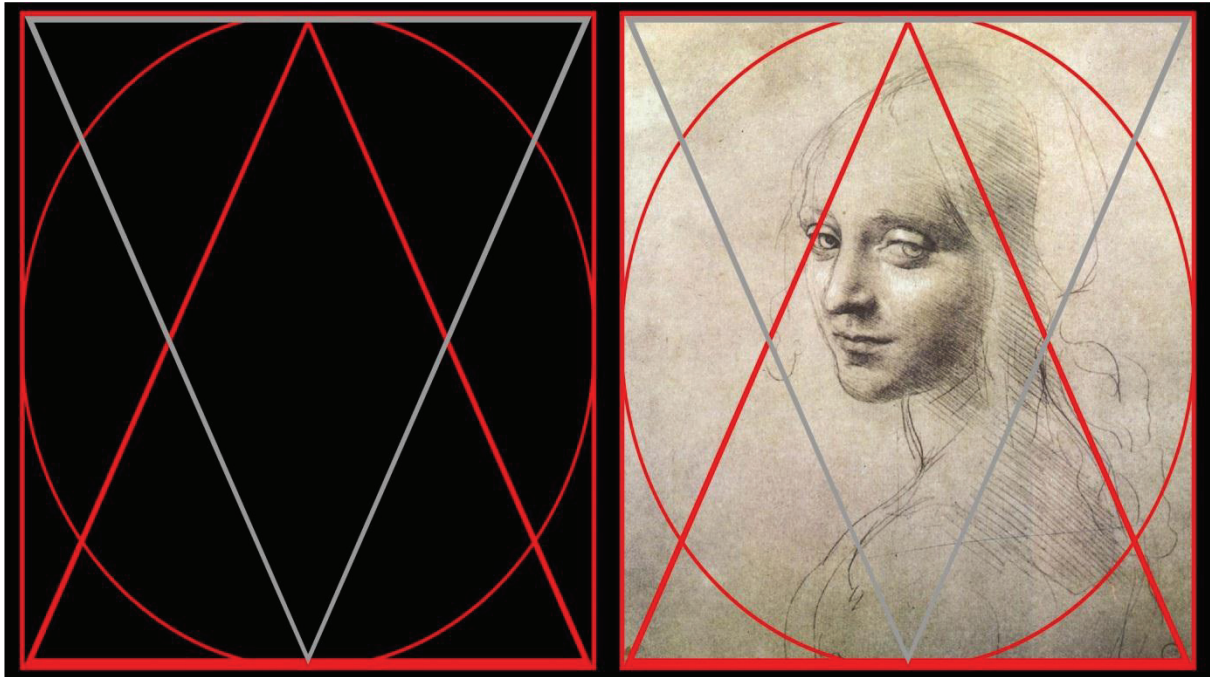


Fig. 6. *Head of a Young Woman (Study for the Angel in the “Virgin of the Rocks”)*, about 1483-85, Leonardo da Vinci

Source of image: <http://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/2047-%E2%80%9Cmost-beautiful-drawing-in-the-world%E2%80%9D-and-recently-discovered-sel>

#### 4. Open composition

The open composition shows us an action that takes place inside the plastic space but continues outside it and has one or more centers of interest. The center of interest, whether it is one or more, is the point of congruence of several elements of plastic language with the role of attracting the viewer's attention. Line modulations (thin-thick), concentration of details, formulation of strong contrasts (small-large, dark-open, crowded-clean) represent the crowding of these elements of plastic language that define the center of interest. Whether we are talking about open or closed composition, another term that requires attention is rhythm. The unique structure of the rhythm can be given by the way in which the artist harmonizes the elements of plastic language. This is how static and dynamic compositions are born.

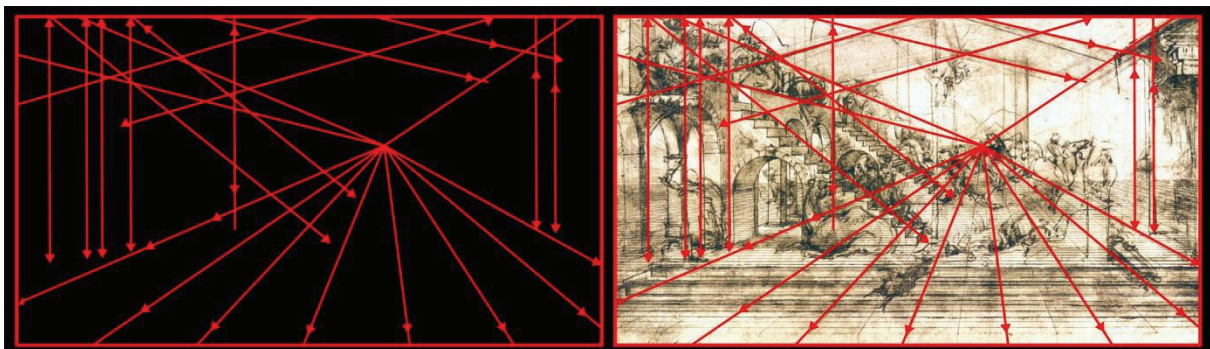


Fig. 7. *Leonardo da Vinci: The Adoration of the Magi.*

Source of image: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/435230751471687969/>

## 5. Static composition

Static composition is the plastic formulation that is based on organizational structures that are placed on stable geometric shapes (triangle, square, rectangle). The lines of force, compositional, are often horizontal or vertical. The static composition suggests lack of movement and provides balance to the work. This balance is given by the construction of the work based on stable geometric figures. This static genre can be composed in both closed and open format. We can also talk about the balance between full and empty, between lines and shapes.

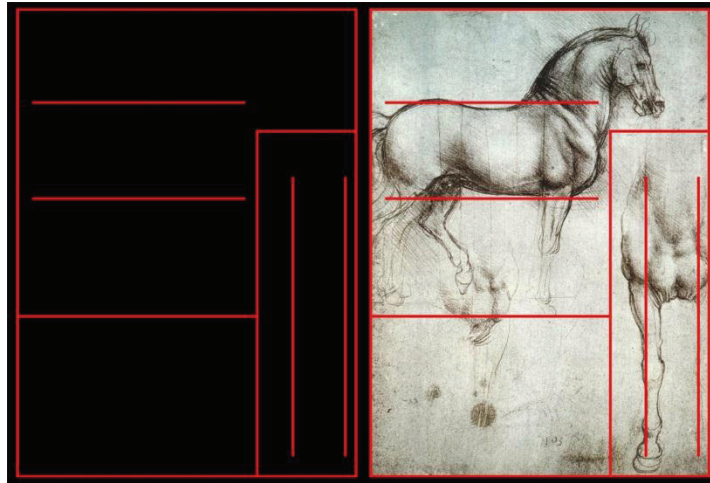


Fig. 8. Leonardo da Vinci: Study of horses.

Source of image: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1-study-of-horses-leonardo-da-vinci.html>

## 6. Dynamic composition

The dynamic composition is based on the structuring of the plastic elements in a balanced but unstable form by using curved, spiral, oblique, diagonal, intertwined lines that give the whole ensemble dynamism, movement. If the static composition has a single center of interest, the dynamic composition has in most cases several centers of interest. It is important that between these centers of interest and all the elements of plastic language there is harmony, unity in composition, constructive logic between the component parts and the whole.



Fig. 9. Leonardo da Vinci, Drawing.

Source of image: <https://www.list.co.uk/event/1114110-leonardo-da-vinci-a-life-in-drawing/>

## **7. Conclusion**

During the evolution of plastic and decorative arts, from the first drawn sign to contemporary art, we noticed the four compositional genres also in fine and in decorative painting. There are no construction structures for the care of plastics, based on one of the mentioned compositions or associations between them. The four structural genres were enriched and developed by the great artists, reaching today complex mathematical formulas of page and harmonization of a plastic space. Thus it is concluded that the skeleton of care is formed the artistic act is the composition itself.

## **8. References**

### **Book**

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### **Article (in book)**

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