

Line

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Artists use lines in many ways in works of art. Each line can define shape and form differently. You will examine various different types of lines in this lesson, as well as examples of lines in various pieces of art. This lesson focuses on:



BIG IDEA

The line is an important element of composition and helps artists to define form and shape in a composition.

1. Contour Lines

Contour lines simply define the edge of a form. Another way to think of contour lines is that they are the outline of a drawing, or the line that defines the overall shape and dimensions of an object.

IN CONTEXT

In the example below, observe this work of art rendered using only contour lines.



Mutter mit Kind by Egon Schiele



TERM TO KNOW

Contour Line

A line drawn to indicate the edge of a form

2. Gestural Lines

Gestural lines are lines that emphasize movement in the gesture of the hand. Where contour lines are more deliberate and static, gestural lines are quick and timely. Their emphasis is on capturing movement rather than defining the outer contour of other shapes or forms.

IN CONTEXT

Below is a gesture drawing by Rembrandt. Note the lines that capture movement in this image. These are gestural lines.



Two Women Teaching a Child to Walk by Rembrandt



TERM TO KNOW

Gestural Line

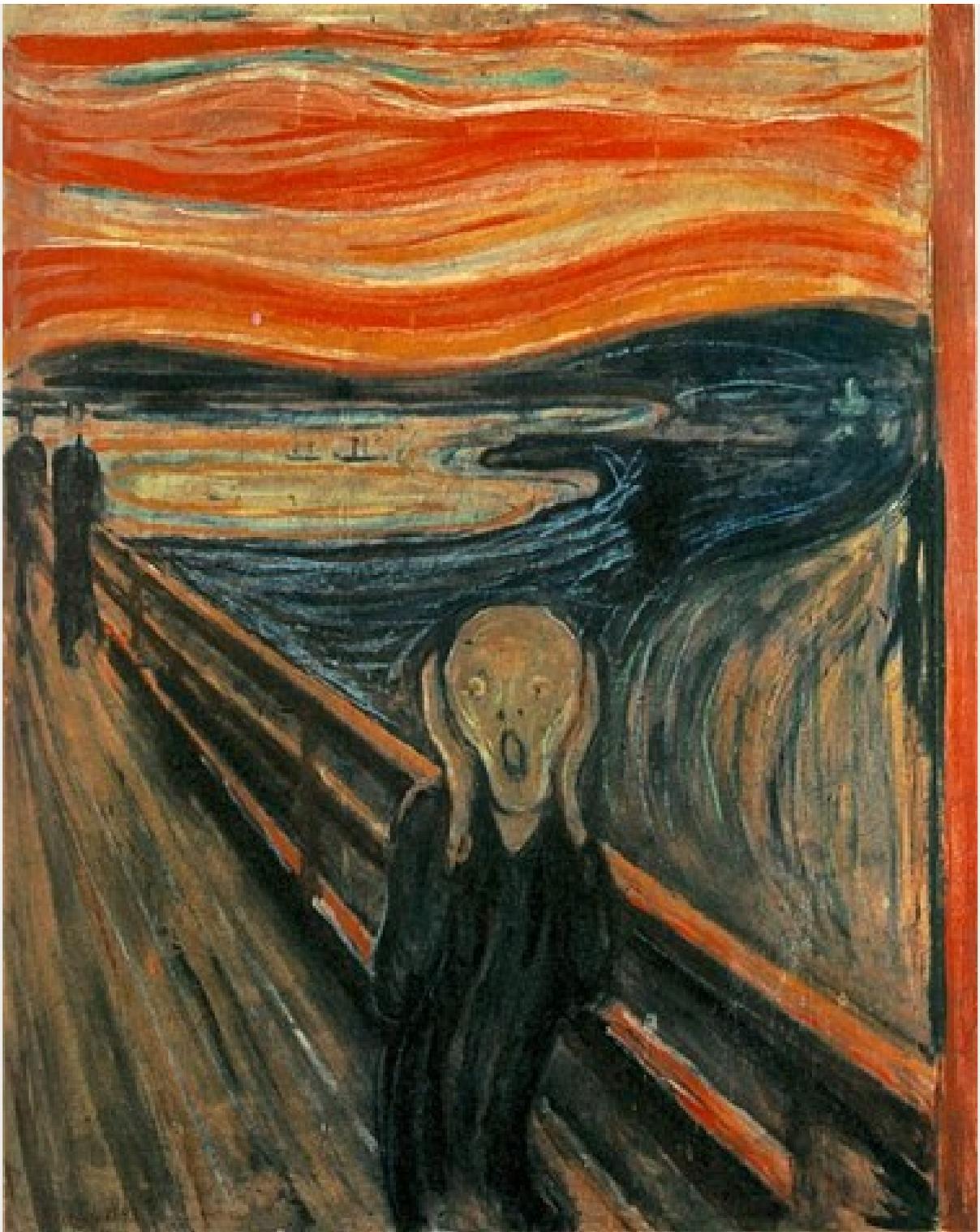
A line that emphasizes the gesture of the hand; it is often also expressive.

3. Expressive Lines

Expressive lines are lines that seem to be expressive of the artist's emotions.

IN CONTEXT

As you look below at Edvard Munch's *Scream*, notice how nothing in the painting has a crisp, hard edge to it. The middle and background, in particular, begin to blur into a chaotic swirl of line and color that really enhances the feeling of anxiety or impending doom.



Scream by Edvard Munch



TERM TO KNOW

Expressive Line

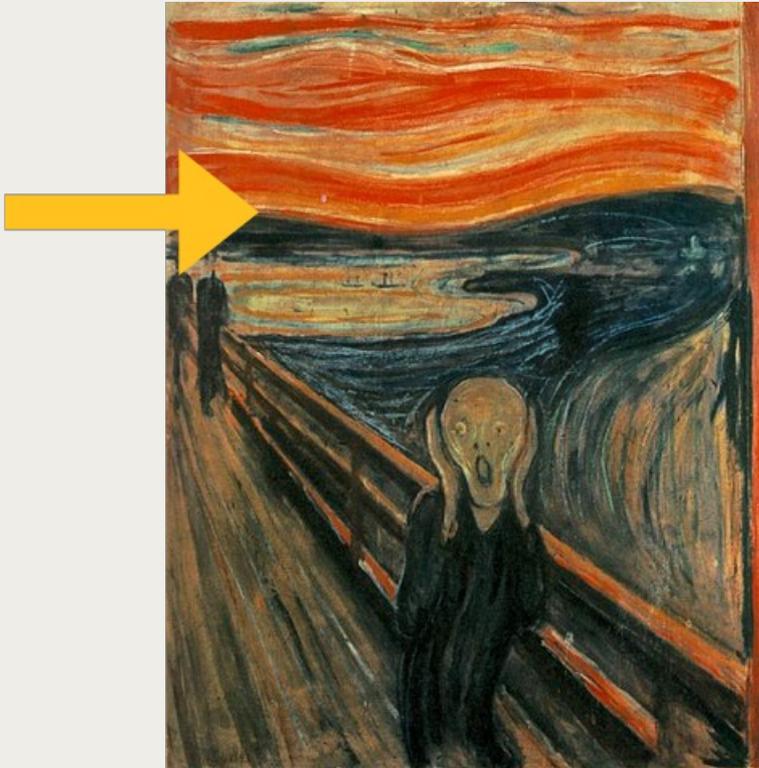
A line that seems to be an expression of the artist's emotions

4. Curvilinear Lines

This painting, *Scream*, also has a number of examples of curvilinear lines. **Curvilinear lines** are simply curved lines.

IN CONTEXT

Take a look below at the painting once again. Pay attention to the lines that are curved, or curvilinear, in this work of art by Edvard Munch.



DID YOU KNOW

Munch claims that *Scream* was inspired by an actual event where he was walking down a pier and noticed that the sky had turned a blood red color. Some suggested that the atmospheric distortion of light and resulting optical effects, particularly in the upper northern hemisphere, were ash debris from the massive 1883 eruption of mount Krakatoa in Indonesia. Edvard Munch lived in this region of Norway.



TERM TO KNOW

Curvilinear Line

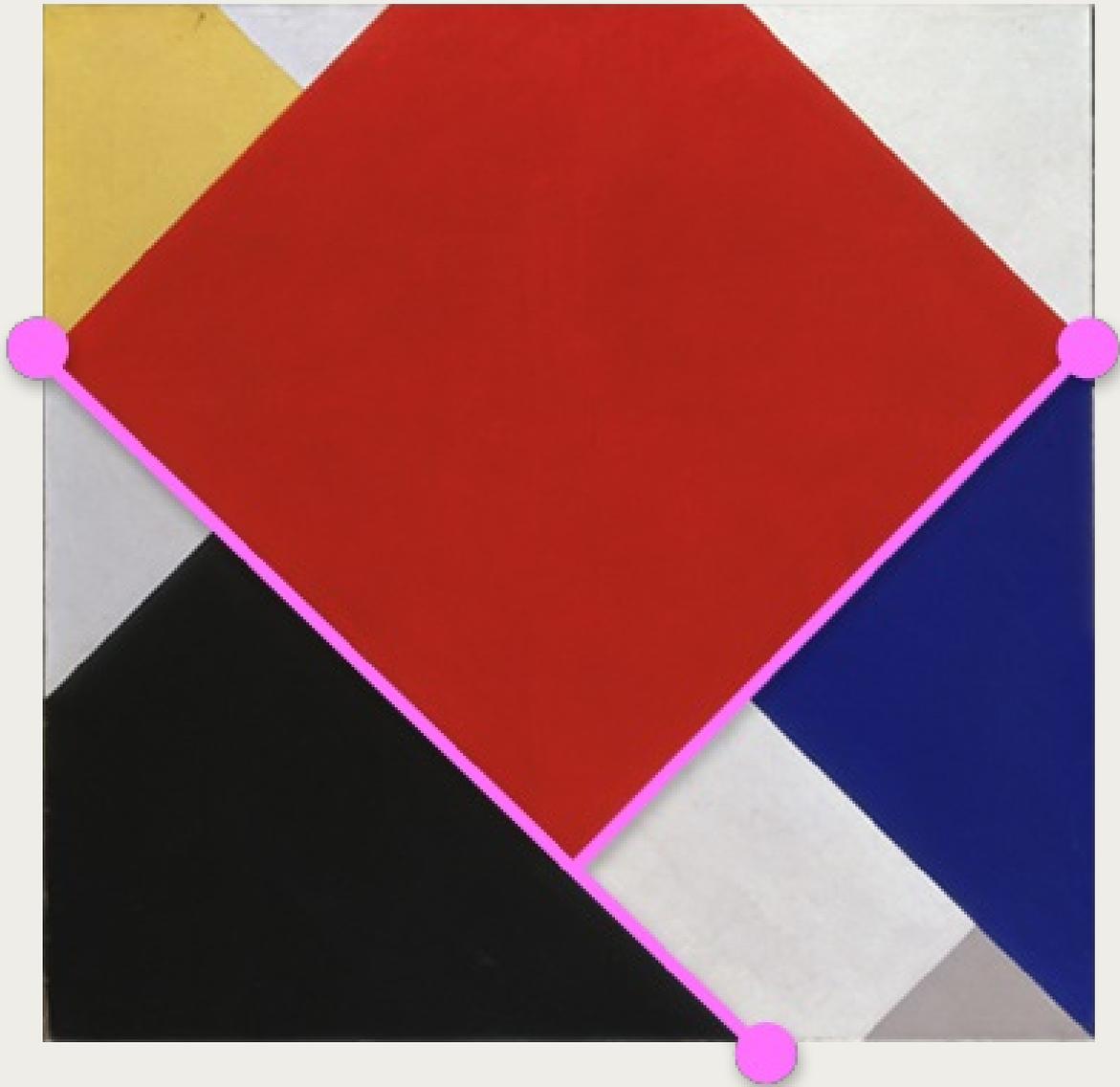
Lines in art that are curved

5. Rectilinear Lines

Rectilinear lines are simply straight lines. The steel movement of the early 20th century, which falls under the umbrella of abstract art, produced works of art that utilized only geometric shapes, primary colors, and rectilinear lines.

IN CONTEXT

Here is an example of a work of art from this movement. Note the highlighted lines. They are rectilinear.



Counter Composition V by Theo van Doesburg



TERM TO KNOW

Rectilinear Line

A straight line



SUMMARY

Lines can help an artist define shape and form in various ways in composition. In this lesson, you

learned about **expressive lines**, which an artist uses as an expression of emotion. **Gestural lines** are also slightly expressive at times, but these lines emphasize the gesture of the hand. You also learned about **contour lines**, which indicate the edge of a form. Finally, you learned about **curvilinear lines** and **rectilinear lines**. Remember, curvilinear lines are curved, and rectilinear lines are straight.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Contour Line

A line drawn to indicate the edge of a form.

Curvilinear Line

Consisting of curved lines.

Expressive Line

A line that seems to be an expression of the artist's emotions.

Gestural Line

A line that emphasizes the gesture of the hand, it is often also expressive.

Rectilinear Line

Consisting of straight lines.