

Rhythm

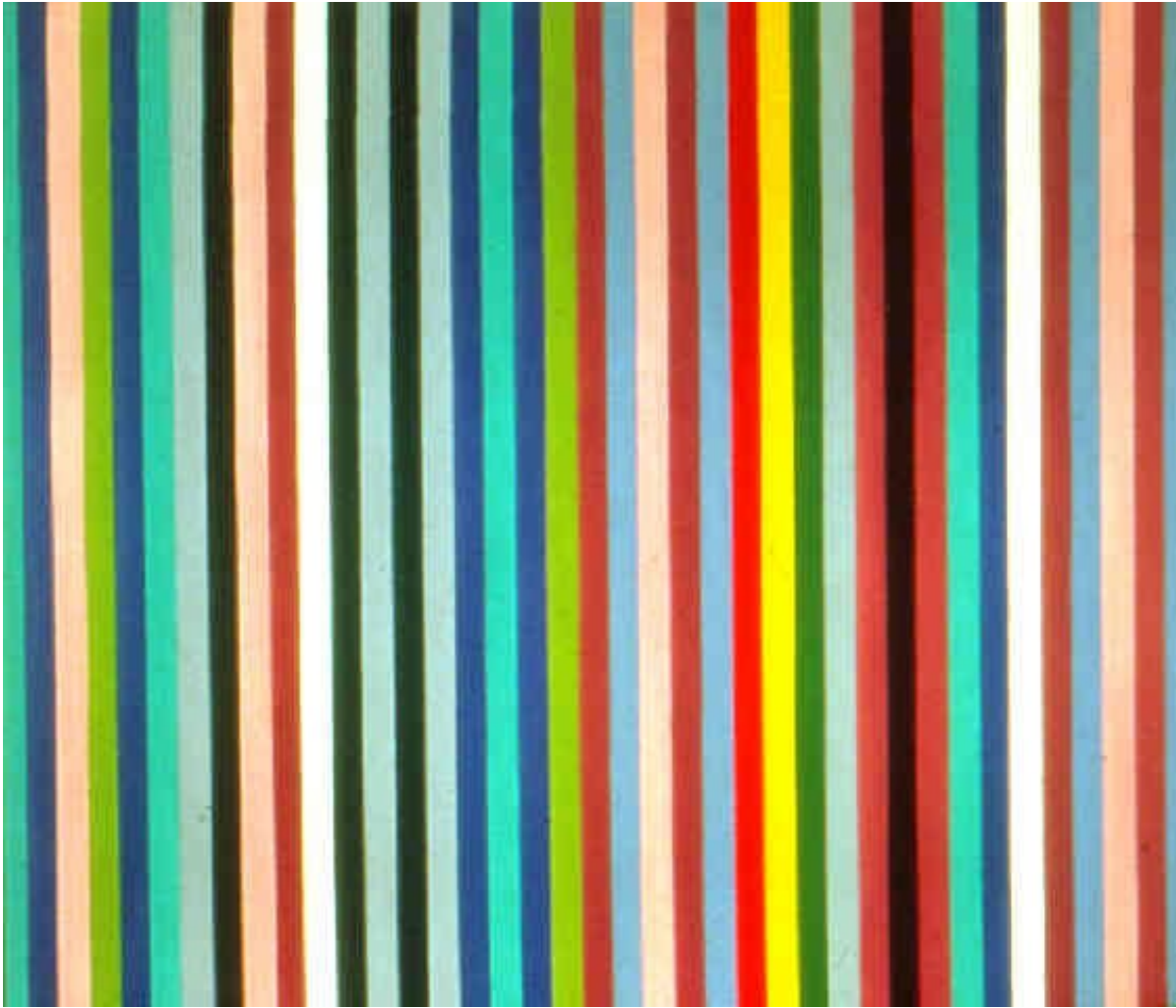
Rhythm is the basic characteristics of the nature. The successive pattern of the seasons, of day and night, of the tides, and even the movement of the planets in the universe all exhibits a regular rhythm.

Musical beats, poetry, dance, movements displayed by athletics, performing workers are none the less the extension of the natural rhythm we love and enjoy.

The same quality of rhythm can be applied to the visual too.

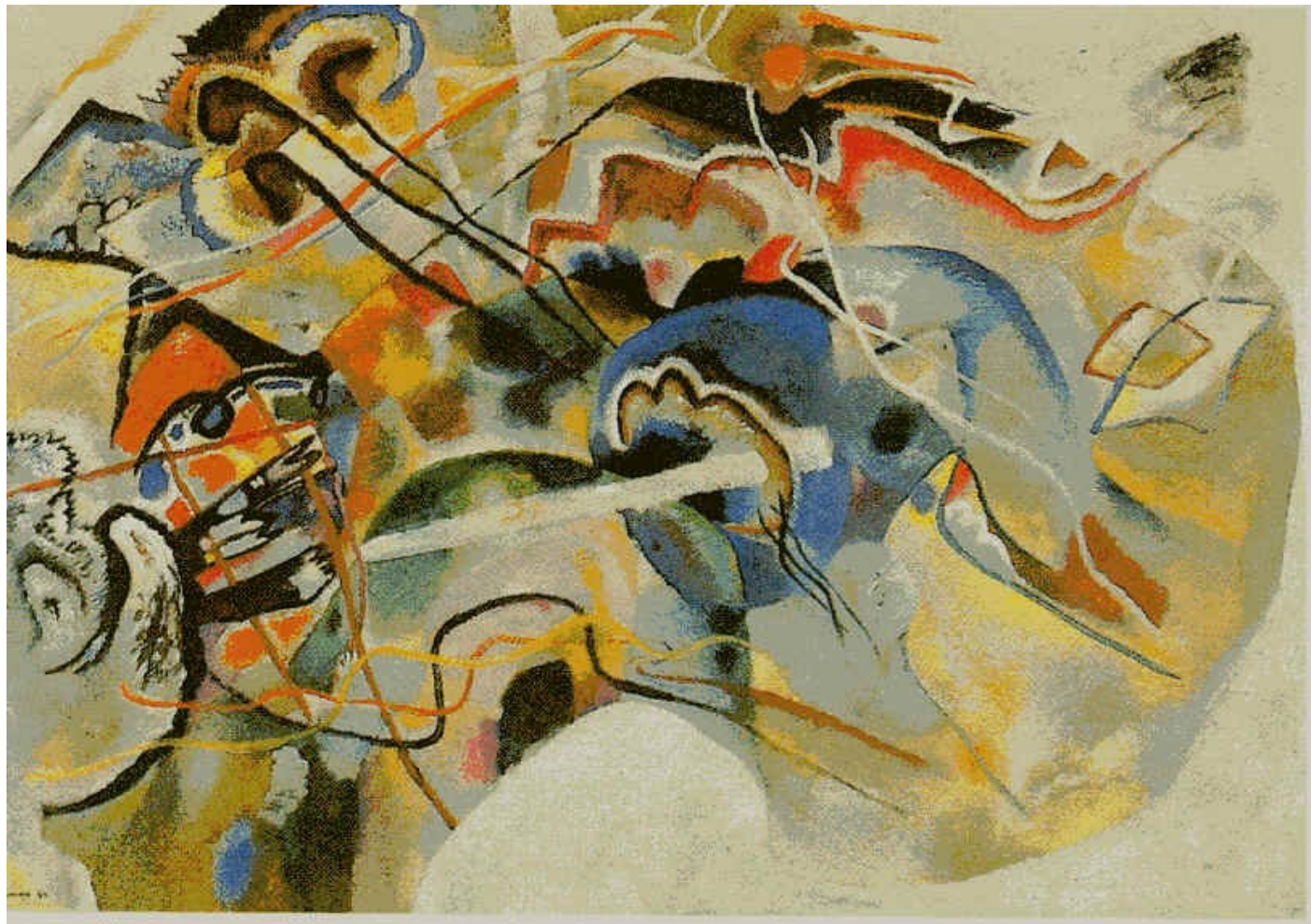
Here **the idea of rhythm is basically related to movement**, as well as the movement of the viewer's eye, as how it is operated by the artist.

Rhythm is a design principle, based on repetition. Repetition as an element of visual unity. Consistency.



Gene Davis. Billy Bud. 1964

A series of vertical elements extends across the design, almost regular variations in light and dark provide a visual pattern of stress and pause, almost like the sound of a drum beating a rhythmic sequence.

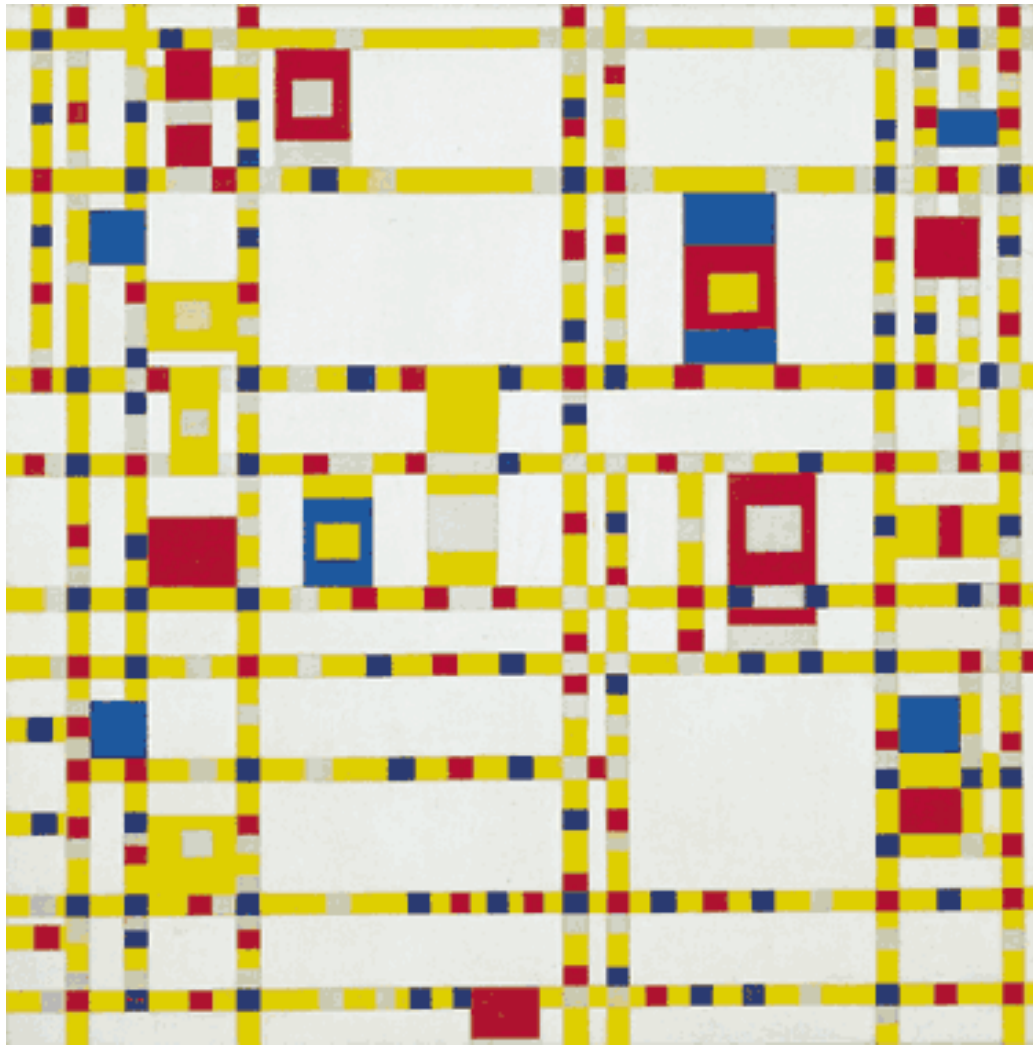


Wassily Kandinsky, 1931

Gene Davis's regularity of rhythm may not be present in Kandinsky's but the eye again moves quickly through repeated circular elements, but the points of emphasis are now in a very irregular pattern. We are pushed and pulled in various directions, creating an exciting, unsettling rhythm.

Rhythm and Motion

We speak of rhythmic repetition of colours or textures, but most often we think of rhythm in the context of shapes and their arrangement.



Piet Mondrian, Broadway Boogie-Woogie

Mondrian's expression in its most abstract visual terms not only gives the feel of the on and off pattern of Broadway's neon landscape but also the rhythmic sounds of 1940's instrumental blues music.



These examples in contrast have a calm rhythm; establish an emotional response in the viewer.

Alternating Rhythm

Alternating Rhythm involves repetition in a slightly different way.



When we look at a colonnaded Grecian temple with its repeating pattern of light column and darker negative spaces, we say that the visual pattern is rhythmic.

Two motifs alternate with one another to produce a regular sequence.

We do not take this predictable quality as a demerit, as long as the repetition is not considerably obvious.



The repetitive effect of the knobby vertical linear elements in Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*, shows the similar rhythm in a less rigid way.

Here the alternate areas are not simple negative spaces. Instead, these areas are filled with incredibly busy, complicated patterns of dribbled, spattered paint so typical of Pollock's work.

If vertical poles continued from top to bottom of the format, they probably would function as negative, rather than positive, elements.



The same quality can be seen in a painting by Jacob Lawrence. In this work the tall vertical, triangular shapes of the train seats move rhythmically across the painting, alternating with the abstracted, generally drooping, tired figures of the train passengers.

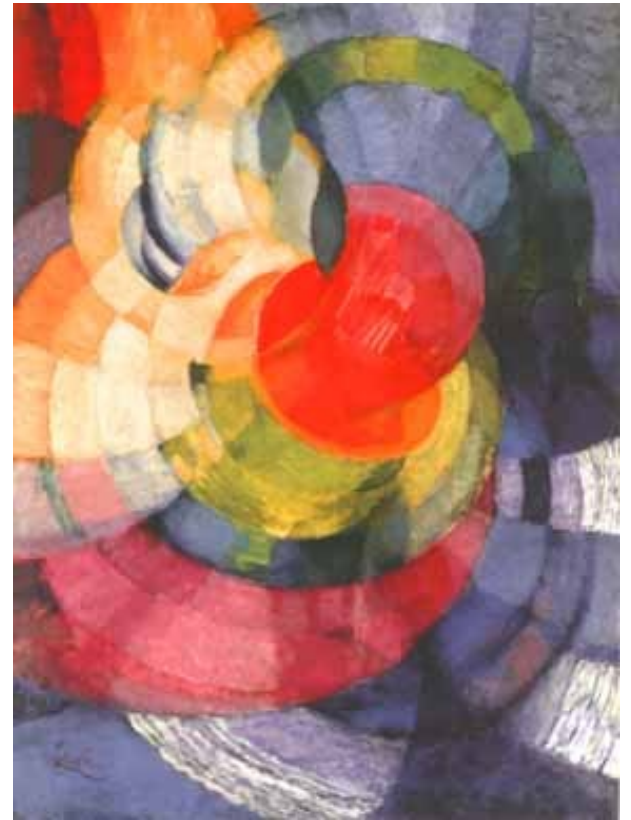
Progressive Rhythm

Again the rhythm involves repetition, but repetition of a shape that changes in a regular manner.

There is a sense of a sequential pattern. This type of rhythm is most often achieved with a progressive variation of the size of a shape, though its colour, value, or texture could be the varying element.



The progression of concentric shapes in Hundertwasser's *Der gross Weg* (The Big Road) establishes a rhythmic pattern. Radiating from a small black irregular square in the centre, the shapes not only grow larger but subtly change to become more curvilinear and rounder as the size increases. The entire brushstroke repeats this same rhythmic pattern.



In Francis Celentano's sequence of shapes horizontal movement across the format follows an obvious orderly rhythm.

Frantisek Kupka's is similar but the increasingly larger circles are arranged in a freer, non concentric pattern.

The rhythmic progression in size is still clear.