

# Contrast

Contrast is a principle of design and refers to the arrangement of opposite elements and effects. For instance, an artist might use light and dark colors, large and small shapes, or rough and smooth textures to create variety, visual interest, and drama in their work.

Look at the artwork on the right and close your eyes. When you open your eyes, what do you notice first? Many people will notice the red circle first. That's because the red circle stands out against the silver background. It contrasts with the other elements in the artwork and becomes a focal point—the part where we focus the most attention. Artists can use contrasting colors, values (light and dark colors), sizes, and textures when creating a focal point.

Where else do you see red in the artwork? The red numbers and dots at the left don't stand out as much as the red circle, but the color gets our attention and helps us notice the left side of the artwork. It helps make the entire artwork interesting to look at.

Sometimes artists use contrast in more than one part of their artwork. Notice the dots (holes) along the top and right edges of the artwork. They give us something to look at, too. Can you find any other examples of contrast in this artwork?



Antoni Clavé, **Hommage a Miró**, 1973. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James F. Smith, 1977.3

*Contrast warm to cool. Make color sing, ring like a bell. Work from big to small.*

Sergei Bongart



**Flint Institute of Arts**  
MUSEUM + ART SCHOOL

Flint Institute of Arts  
Education Department  
1120 E Kearsley Street, Flint MI 48503  
810-237-7314 • flintarts.org

# Where Do You See Contrast?

## Materials

Pencil

## Instructions

Visit the Flint Institute of Arts and find an artwork in which the artist uses contrast to create variety, visual interest, or a sense of drama. Draw the artwork below.

