

# Blocks of Art: Exploring Visual Principles with Lego

**Grade Level:** 10

**Subject:** Visual Arts / Art Appreciation

## Introduction (15 mins):

What makes a piece of art visually interesting? What makes a design work? It often comes down to the 'Principles of Art'. Think about your Lego creations – whether you realize it or not, you're already using some of these ideas! Today, we're going to explore these principles intentionally using Lego as our artistic medium. Just like painters use paint and sculptors use clay, we'll use bricks to understand balance, contrast, emphasis, rhythm, unity, and proportion.

## Activity 1: Principles in Bricks (45-60 mins):

Let's define some key Principles of Art and build a quick model for each:

- **Balance:** The visual weight distribution. It can be symmetrical (same on both sides) or asymmetrical (balanced but different). *Task:* Build two small Lego structures on separate baseplates (or areas): one demonstrating symmetrical balance, one showing asymmetrical balance.
- **Contrast:** Creating difference to make things stand out (e.g., light/dark colors, smooth/bumpy textures, large/small shapes). *Task:* Build a small Lego model showcasing strong contrast (think color, size, or texture).
- **Emphasis:** Creating a focal point – the part your eye is drawn to first. *Task:* Build a small Lego scene where one element clearly stands out as the focus.
- **Rhythm/Movement:** Creating a sense of flow or direction, often using repetition or patterns. *Task:* Build a Lego structure that suggests movement or uses a repeating pattern to create rhythm.
- **Unity:** Making all the parts of the artwork feel like they belong together, creating harmony. *Task:* Build a small Lego creation where the colors, shapes, and sizes feel cohesive and unified.
- **Proportion/Scale:** The relationship of sizes between different parts of an artwork or between the artwork and the viewer. *Task:* Build a simple Lego object (like a chair or tree) and then build another version right next to it that is intentionally out of proportion (either much larger or smaller than expected relative to other potential elements).

Briefly discuss each build. How did using Lego help (or hinder) demonstrating each principle?

## Activity 2: Elements & Synthesis Sculpture (60-90 mins):

Now, let's remember the 'Elements of Art' – the building blocks artists use: Line, Shape, Form (3D shapes!), Color, Texture (actual or implied), and Space (positive/negative). Lego naturally involves Form, Color, Shape, Line (edges), Texture (studs, smooth tiles), and Space.

**Your Challenge:** Create a single, original Lego sculpture or scene. It can be abstract or representational (a building, a creature, a pattern, etc.). Your goal is to thoughtfully incorporate several Elements of Art while clearly demonstrating at least THREE of the Principles of Art we explored (Balance, Contrast, Emphasis, Rhythm/Movement, Unity, Proportion/Scale).

Think about:

- What do you want to communicate or express?
- Which principles will best help you achieve that?
- How will your choice of bricks (color, shape, texture) enhance the elements and principles?

Take your time, experiment, and have fun! This is about the process of thinking like an artist/designer using a familiar tool.

### **Reflection & Assessment (20-30 mins):**

Once your masterpiece is complete:

1. Take a few clear photos of your Lego creation from different angles.
2. In your sketchbook or on paper, write a brief 'Artist Statement' addressing the following:
  - What title would you give your creation?
  - Which three (or more) Principles of Art did you focus on incorporating? Describe where we can see them in your sculpture.
  - Which Elements of Art (Form, Color, Texture, etc.) are most important in your piece? Why?
  - What was the biggest challenge you faced while building, and how did you overcome it?
  - What connection do you see between designing with Lego and other forms of visual art or design (like architecture, graphic design, or traditional sculpture)?

**Discussion:** Review the sculpture and the artist statement together. Discuss the choices made, the successful application of principles, and the student's insights from the reflection questions.

### **Optional Extension:**

Research a famous sculptor (like Alexander Calder, Barbara Hepworth, or Henry Moore) or a famous piece of architecture (like the Sydney Opera House or Fallingwater). Discuss which principles of art are evident in their work. Can you build a small, simplified Lego model inspired by their style or a specific piece, focusing on capturing the essence of its design principles?