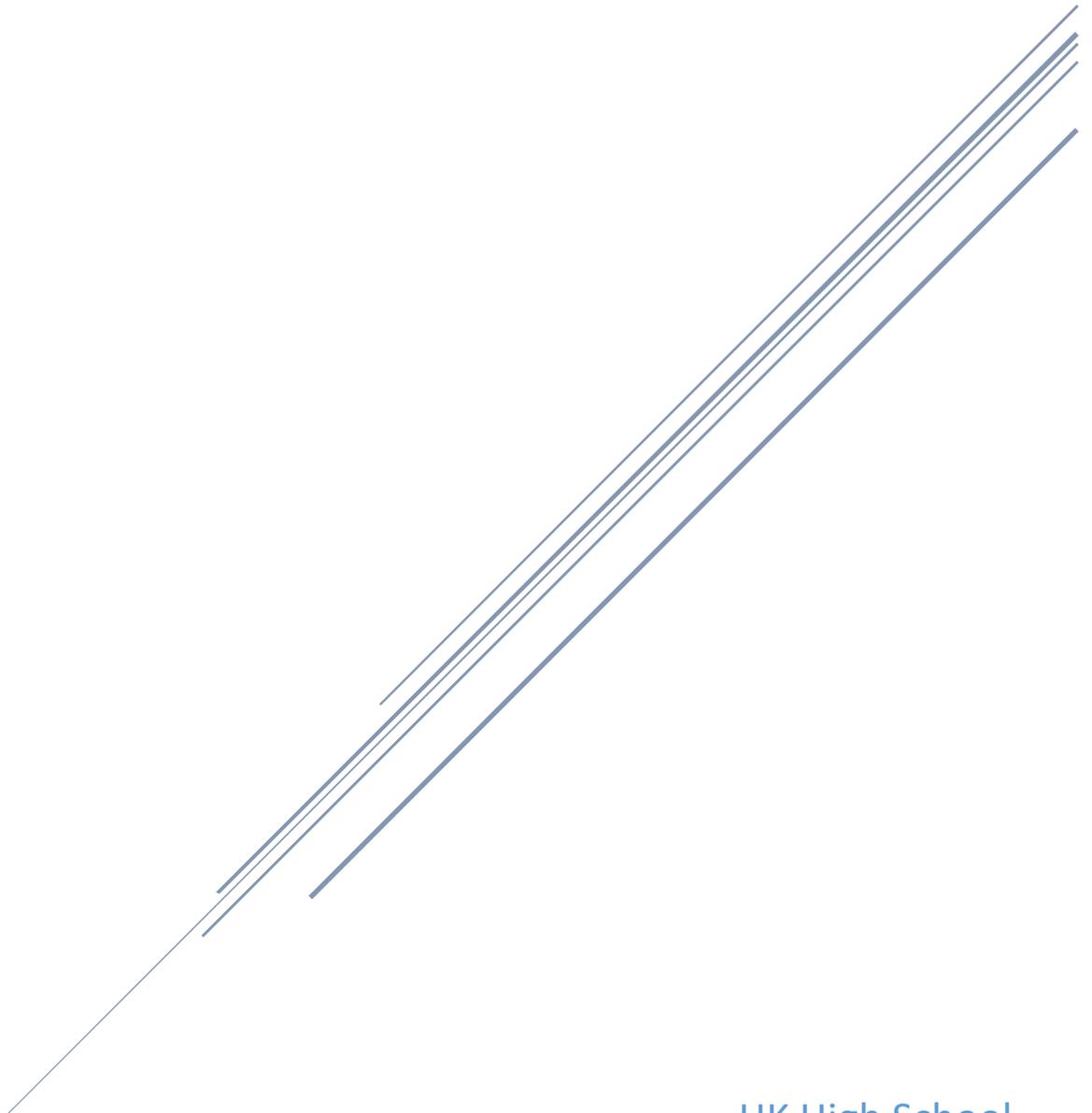


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# CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS

Midterm Exam Study Guide



HK High School  
Mrs. Martin

# Mosaics

## The history of mosaic art - Mosaics in the ancient world



The history of mosaic goes back some 4,000 years or more, with the use of terracotta cones pushed point-first into a background to give decoration. By the eighth century BC, there were pebble pavements, using different colored stones to create patterns, although these tended to be unstructured decoration. It was the Greeks, in the four centuries BC, who raised the pebble technique to an art form, with precise geometric patterns and detailed scenes of people and animals.

By 200 BC, specially manufactured pieces ("tesserae") were being used to give extra detail and range of color to the work. Using small tesserae, sometimes only a few millimeters in size, meant that mosaics could imitate paintings. Many of the mosaics preserved at, for example, Pompeii were the work of Greek artists.

The mosaic here shows the god Neptune with Amphitrite (on the right) and is in Herculaneum, Italy. It is a wall mosaic which uses pieces of glass to give the vivid colors and reflect light. Glass was not suitable for floor mosaics. Here, the tesserae were mainly small cubes of marble or other stone. Sometimes bits of pottery, such as terracotta, or brick were used to provide a range of colors.



The expansion of the Roman Empire took mosaics further afield, although the level of skill and artistry was diluted. If you compare mosaics from Roman Britain with Italian ones you will notice that the British examples are simpler in design and less accomplished in technique.

Typically Roman subjects were scenes celebrating their gods, domestic themes and geometric designs. The inter-twined rope border effect here is called "guilloche".



This mosaic is in the museum at Winchester, Hampshire, UK.

## Byzantine mosaics



With the rise of the Byzantine Empire from the 5th century onwards, centered on Byzantium (now Istanbul, Turkey), the art form took on new characteristics. These included Eastern influences in style and the use of special glass tesserae called smalti, manufactured in northern Italy. These were made from thick sheets of colored glass. Smalti have a rough surface and contain tiny air bubbles. They are sometimes backed with reflective silver or gold leaf.

The mosaic below is from the ceiling of the baptistery in Florence, Italy. Other spectacular examples can be found in Ravenna, Venice and Sicily and in Istanbul.



Whereas Roman mosaics were mostly used as floors, the Byzantines specialized in covering walls and ceilings. The smalti were ungrouted, allowing light to reflect and refract within the glass. Also, they were set at slight angles to the wall, so that they caught the light in different ways. The gold tesserae sparkle as the viewer moves around within the building.

Roman images were absorbed into the typical Christian themes of the Byzantine mosaics, although some work is decorative and some incorporates portraits of Emperors and Empresses.

## Islamic mosaic art



In the west of Europe, the Moors brought Islamic mosaic and tile art into the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th century, while elsewhere in the Muslim world, stone, glass and ceramic were all used in mosaics. In contrast to the figurative representations in Byzantine art, **Islamic motifs are mainly geometric and mathematical**. Examples can be seen in Spain at the Great Mosque at Cordoba and the Alhambra Palace. In Arabic countries a distinctive decorative style called zillij uses purpose-made ceramic shapes that are further worked by hand to allow them to tessellate (fit together perfectly to cover a surface).

## Mosaic history, part 2 - Medieval to modern



In the rest of Europe, mosaic went into general decline throughout the Middle Ages. However a flourishing tile industry led to mosaic tiling patterns in abbeys and other major religious buildings, for example. These tiles from Prior Crauden's Chapel at Ely Cathedral date from around 1320. The floor of

the Chapel features a detailed tiled scene of Adam and Eve. As well as the interlocking patterns of tiles, there are some other mosaic techniques, including pseudo mosaic and opus sectile



In the 19th century there was a revival of interest, particularly in the Byzantine style, with buildings such as **Westminster Cathedral** (left) and Sacre-Coeur in Paris. In Britain, this was fueled by the concentration of wealth that the Victorian era brought, with increased domestic and public building projects. New techniques for mass-producing tiles meant a renewed of interest in decorative floors. The Gothic Revival in architecture and design looked back to medieval themes – and this was reflected in the way tiles and mosaic were used.

Another industrial influence was Antonio Salviati, who is credited with breathing new life into the Venetian glass industry. He saw the business opportunity in matching the ancient skills practiced in Venice with the Victorian demand for glass mosaic.

The Art Nouveau movement also embraced mosaic art. In Barcelona, **Antoni Gaudi** worked with Josep Maria Jujol to produce the stunning ceramic mosaics of the Guell Park (below) in the first two decades of the 20th century. These used a technique known as *trencadis* in which tiles (purpose-made and waste tiles) covered surfaces of buildings. They also incorporated broken crockery and other found objects, a revolutionary idea in formal art and architecture.



Found objects have been used as mosaic materials in a range of ways, for example in Victorian shell grottoes and "putty pots", where china and other items (buttons, toy figures etc) are stuck to a base with linseed putty. This kind of collage of personal objects with connections to everyday life is also sometimes called "memoryware".



A very influential site has been La Maison Picassiette (in Chartres, northern France), the idiosyncratic work of Raymonde Isidore between 1938 and 1964. As a middle-aged manual worker, he covered his entire house and garden with intricate mosaics of broken crockery. His nickname ("Picassiette") came from a French expression meaning a "scrounger": This expression - "pique assiette" - is the name given today to this very popular style of mosaic.

# Shibori An Ancient Japanese Dye Technique

Shibori is known to be one of the oldest Indigo dyeing techniques in Japan, most popular in the early Edo period when lower class people were forbidden from wearing silk. For Shibori, the cloth can be bound, stitched, folded, twisted, clamped and compressed. Each method that is used is done in harmony with the type of cloth to create beautiful surface designs. Fabrics have all different characteristics so the method must be chosen wisely to achieve the desired effect. The results are endless and can be as simple or as elaborate as you please. To become a true indigo craftsman a person must take at least a five year apprenticeship under a master craftsman to learn the full dyeing processes. There are six major known Shibori techniques; Kanoko, Miura, Kumo, Nui, Arashi and Itajime.

**Kanoko** is the closest technique to the western version that we know today as Tie-dye. This technique involves binding sections of cloth and securing with thread to achieve the desired pattern. To do it traditionally you would use thread to do the binding but nowadays it is not uncommon to use elastic bands. The final pattern depends on how tight you bind the fabric and whether or not you fold the cloth first. Most commonly Circular shapes are achieved with this technique.

**Miura** is a technique that involves looping and binding. A hook and needle is used to pluck sections of cloth and a thread is looped around each section twice. Tension is only used to hold the thread in place it is not knotted. This is the easiest of all Shibori techniques.

**Kumo Shibori** uses found objects as the resists. The cloth is to be wrapped around these objects and held in place with thread. This technique can achieve very specific designs and is the easiest to control.

**Nui** is a stitching technique that involves simply stitching the cloth and pulling the threads tight to gather the fabric. Wooden dowels are used to pull the thread very tight and to secure it in place when dyeing. This technique allows the most accurate and variety of pattern to be achieved.

**Arashi** is also known as pole wrapping Shibori. Arashi involves twisting, wrapping and binding of the cloth around wooden or copper poles. The fabric is twisted and wrapped diagonally around the pole, then bound. It always gives a diagonal pattern that is recognizable with this technique.

Finally **Itajime Shibori** is a shape resistant technique where the fabric is folded and sandwiched between two pieces of wood. The fabric is folded several times in differing tensions to give different effects. Wood is traditionally used but modern interpretations of using clamps and pieces of plastic are being employed.

# Soft Sculpture

Be familiar with the style of painting of the following artists.

- Pablo Picasso
- Kasimir Malevich
- Paul Klee
- Agnes Martin
- Henri Matisse
- Franz Marc
- Roy Lichtenstein
- Frank Stella

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# Printmaking

Find definitions of the following terms using [artlex.com](http://artlex.com) and study them.

- Monoprinting
- Linoleum Block Printing
- Ghost Print
- Brayer
- Bench Hook
- Printing Press