

Painterly

We hear this word often from judges when they are attempting to categorise an image. I felt that perhaps they were using the word to describe anything which had been manipulated, and perhaps not always correctly.

So I searched for it on the web and here is what I found.

This extract is quoted with thanks from “Your guide to Art History” by Shelley Esaak.

*“Loosely now, **PAINTERLY** is a descriptive word meaning “this has the attributes of a painting”. What’s that? Not clear enough?*

Try this then; “Shapes in a painterly composition aren’t sharply defined and the whole piece may be showing obvious brushwork”.

*The easiest way to get a bead on **painterly** is to visualize it as the opposite to **Linear**.*

*Think of any Van Gogh which you may have seen. It’s full of areas of colour which blend into one another, and Vincent obviously did not care if his brushwork was showing. It’s up to your eyes to fill in the blanks and define shapes. That’s **Painterly**.*

*A **linear** composition, on the other hand, does all that work for you. Think of a colouring- in book, which is as about as **linear** as things can get.”*

Painterly



Linear



Images by Fran Cross PSQA