



Chiaroscuro describes the range of tone from the darkest shadow to the brightest light to create high contrast in an artwork.

Chiaroscuro, a technique of using strong contrasts between light and dark, creates several effects in painting: it enhances the three-dimensionality of objects, directs the viewer's attention, and adds drama and emotional impact. By manipulating light and shadow, artists can simulate volume, highlight focal points, and evoke specific moods within a composition. It comes from the Italian word for 'clear' or 'bright' – chiaro – and 'dark' – oscuro.

A good synonym for "chiaroscuro" is tenebrism. Both terms describe a technique that uses strong contrasts between light and dark areas to create dramatic effects, often emphasizing the subject while diminishing the background. Other related terms include "light-and-shade" or "painterly".

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

- **Tenebrism:**

While chiaroscuro uses light and shadow to create depth and volume, tenebrism emphasizes stark contrasts, often with deep, dark shadows and intense highlights, sometimes to the point where forms in the shadows are barely discernible.

- **Light-and-shade:**

This term is a more general descriptor for the visual effect of using light and shadow and can be used as a synonym for chiaroscuro in a broad sense.

- **Painterly:**

This term refers to a style of painting where the brushstrokes are visible and create a sense of texture and movement. It can be related to chiaroscuro in that the technique can be used to enhance the painterly qualities of a piece.



These two paintings by Thomas Schaller are perfect examples of Chiaroscuro.



Other examples –
Leonardo da Vinci –
The Virgin of the Rocks
Caravaggio's –
The Entombment of Christ