

# “Skull & Saddle”

*Still Life using Conte Crayon  
& the Rule of Thirds*

This **Skull and Saddles** Drawing will be the last in our unit on the Element of **“Value”**. We will continue working to master all art concepts and practices learned so far, including:

- *Full Range of Value*
- *Negative Space*
- *Flat Value & Gradient Value*
- *Cast Shadows, Core Shadow & Highlights*
- *Shading & Smudging*
- *Local Value*

# Lesson Objectives

- Create a Conte/Charcoal drawing using smudging techniques (to blend color & establish value range)
- Create a drawing that shows cast shadows, core shadows, highlights, and local value for contrast.
- Create a drawing using the “Rule of Thirds” as a tool for composition (w/ Viewfinder or Camera Grid).

# *What is Conté Crayon?*

*Conté, also known as Conté sticks or Conté crayons, are a drawing medium composed of compressed powdered graphite or charcoal mixed with a wax or clay base, square in cross-section.*

*They were invented in 1795 by **Nicolas-Jacques Conté**, who in response to the shortage of graphite caused by the **Napoleonic Wars**. They are now manufactured using **natural pigments** (iron oxides, carbon black, titanium dioxide), clay (kaolin), and a binder (cellulose ether).<sup>[1]</sup>*

# Conte Crayons



# **Conte Tips & Techniques:**

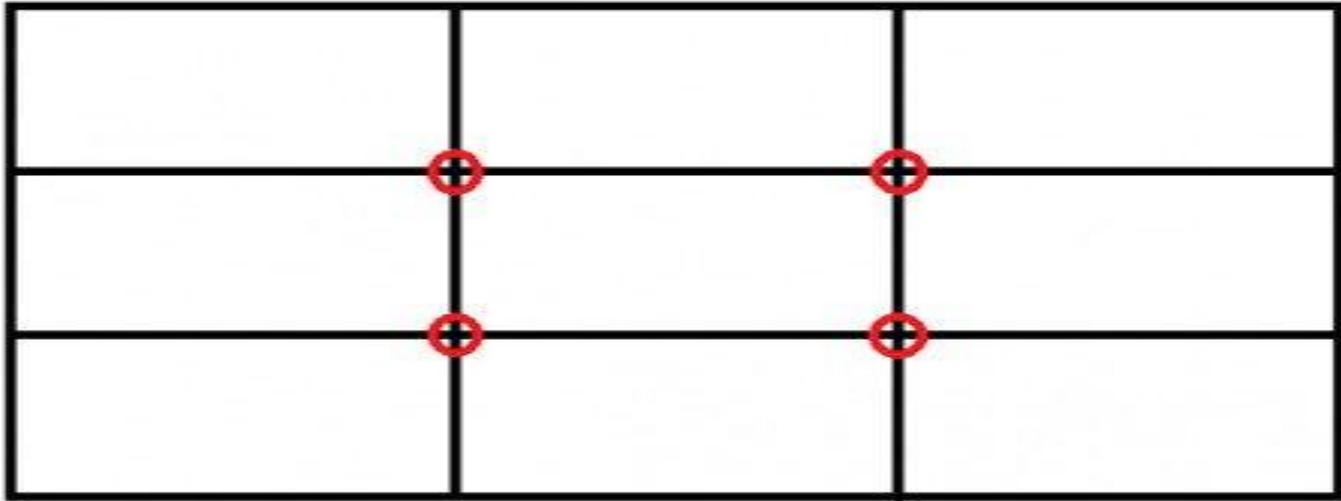
- **Similar to Charcoal but not quite as messy.**
- **Good smudging medium and able to blend colors easily.**
- **If using light colored paper, start by laying in darker values of your still life objects.**
- **If using darker toned paper start by laying in midtones and lighter shapes.**

# *What is the “Rule of Thirds?”*

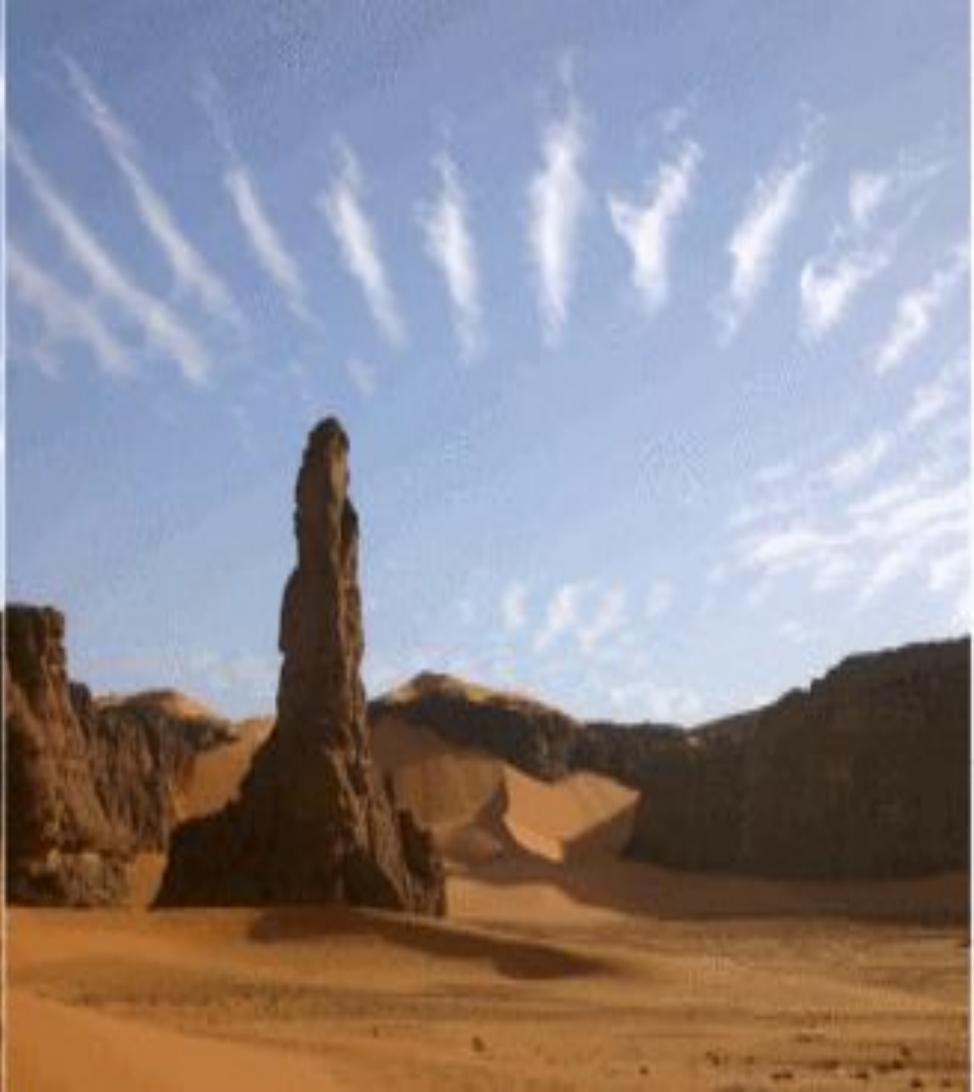
*The rule of thirds is a “rule of thumb” or guideline that Visual Artists and Photographers use to **divide the compositions** of their drawings, paintings, and photos to make them more dynamic.*

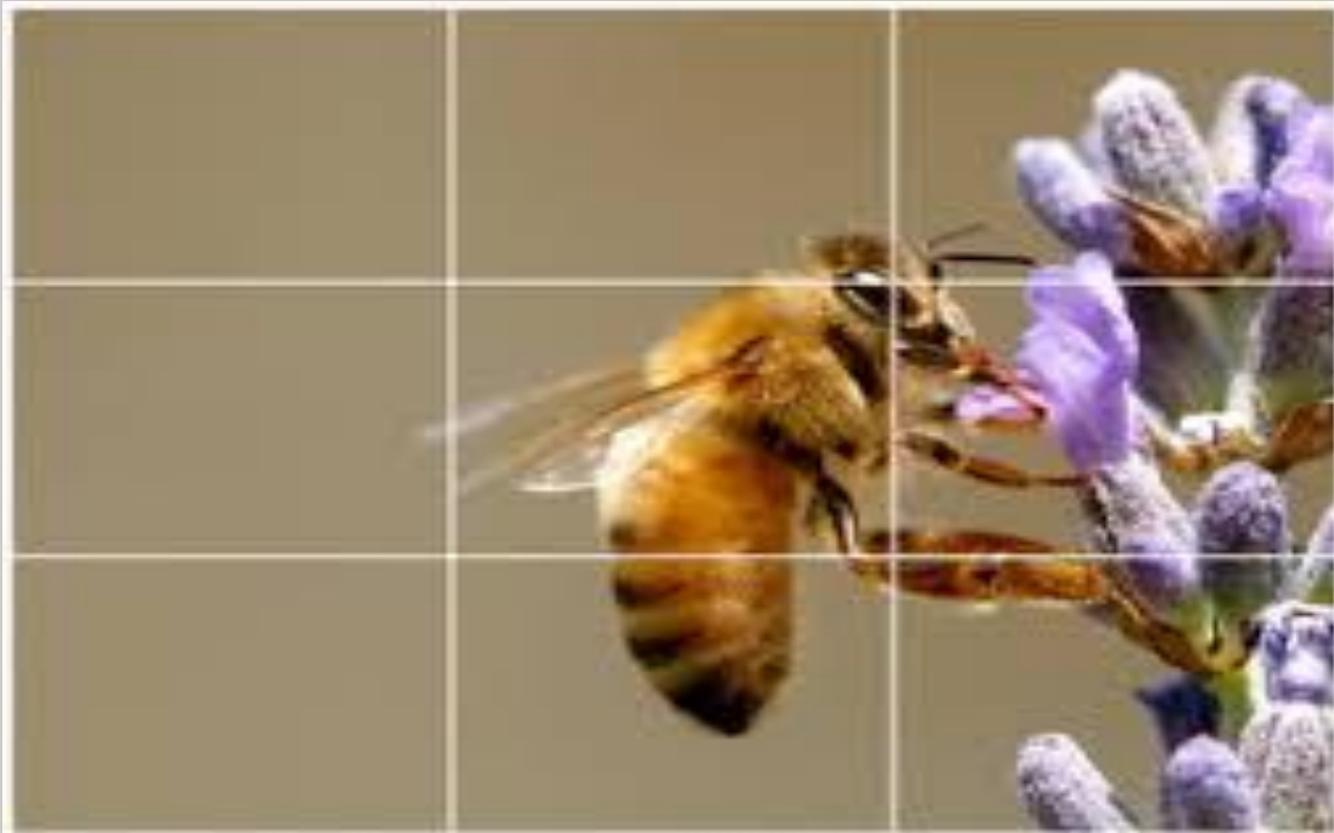
*Those who use the technique claim that aligning a subject with the “power points” of intersection creates more tension, energy and interest in the composition than simply centering the subject.*

# *“Rule of Thirds” Grid:*

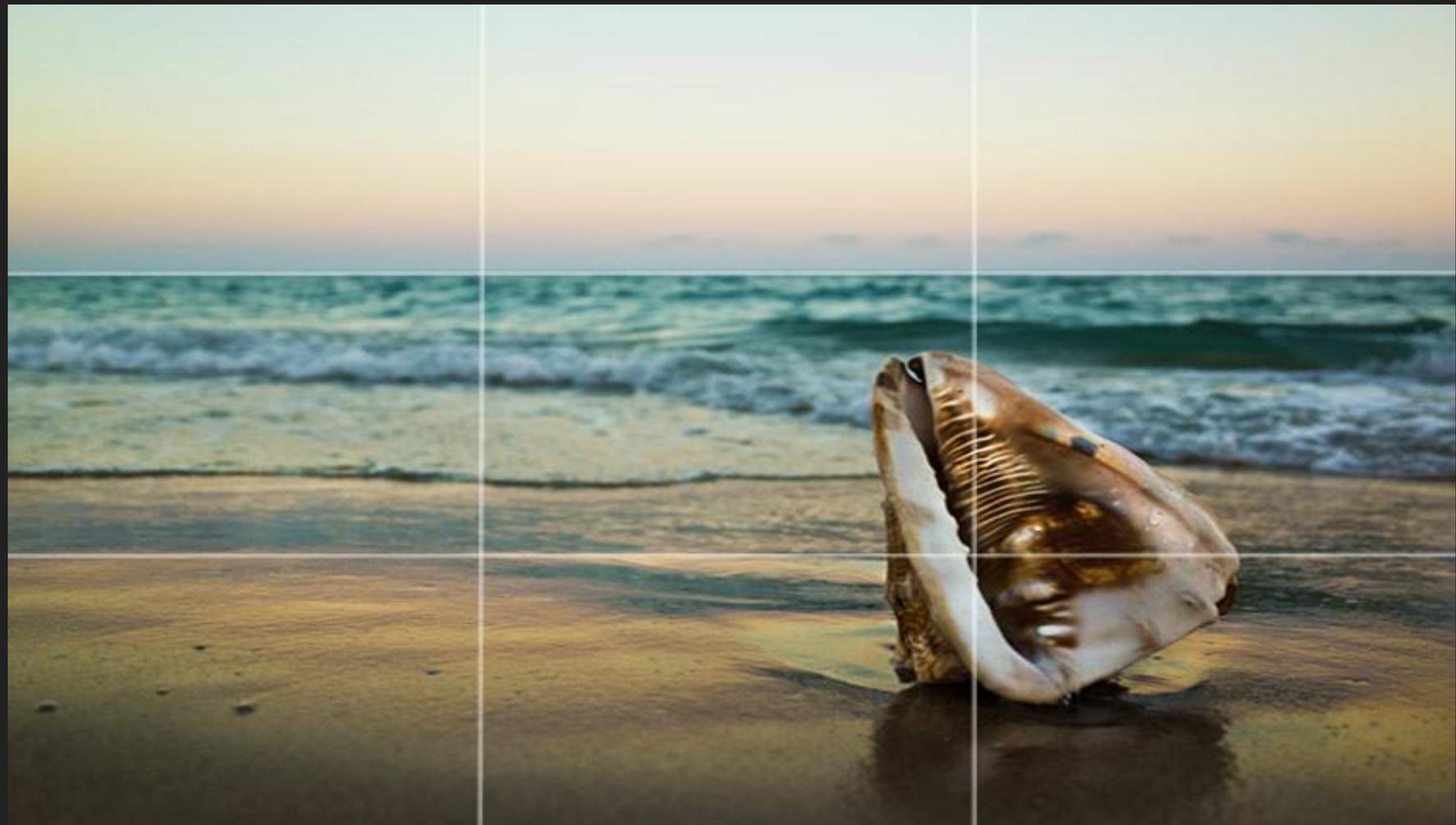


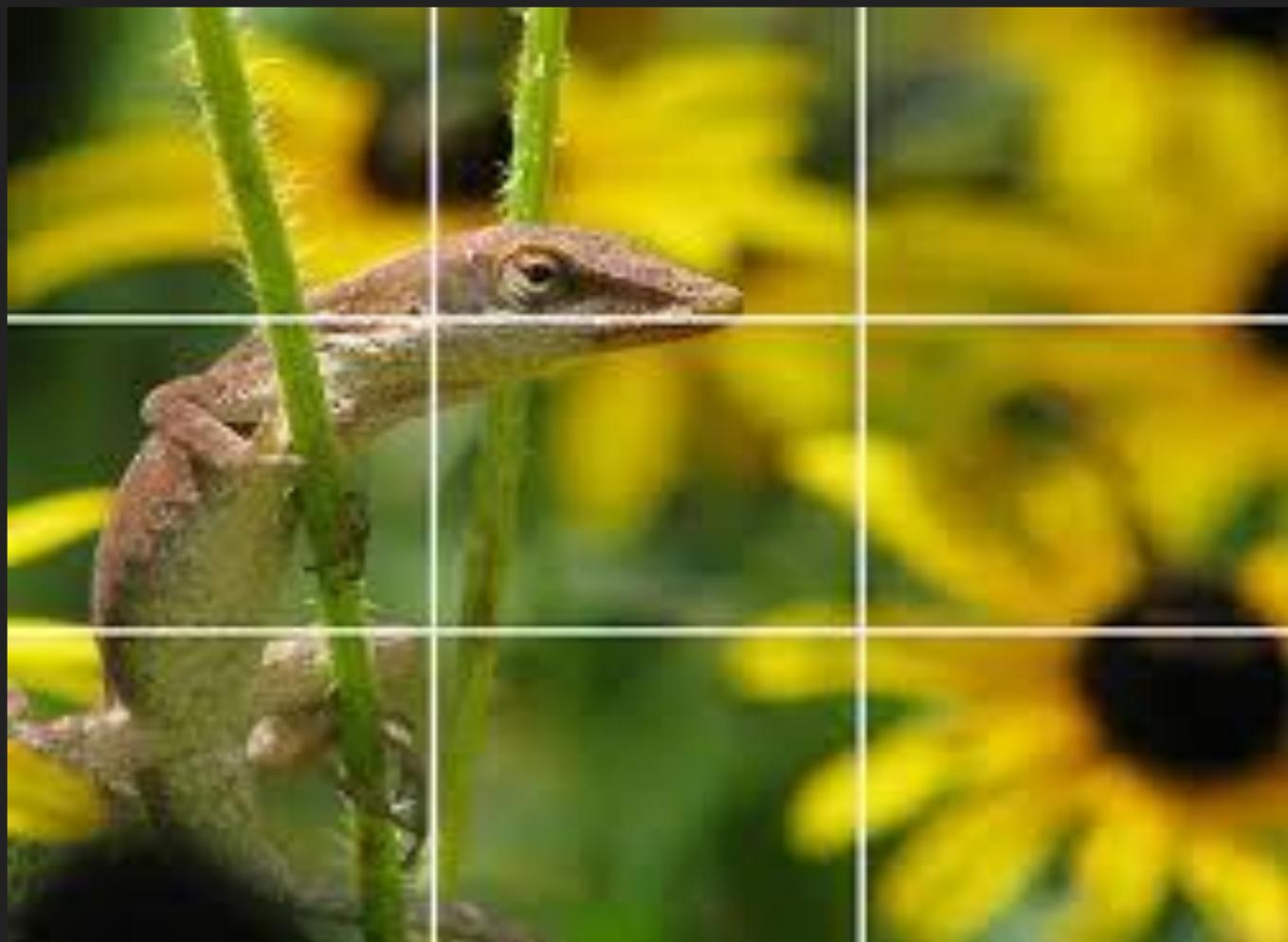
**Rule of Thirds**





***The rule states that your picture plane should be divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically.***

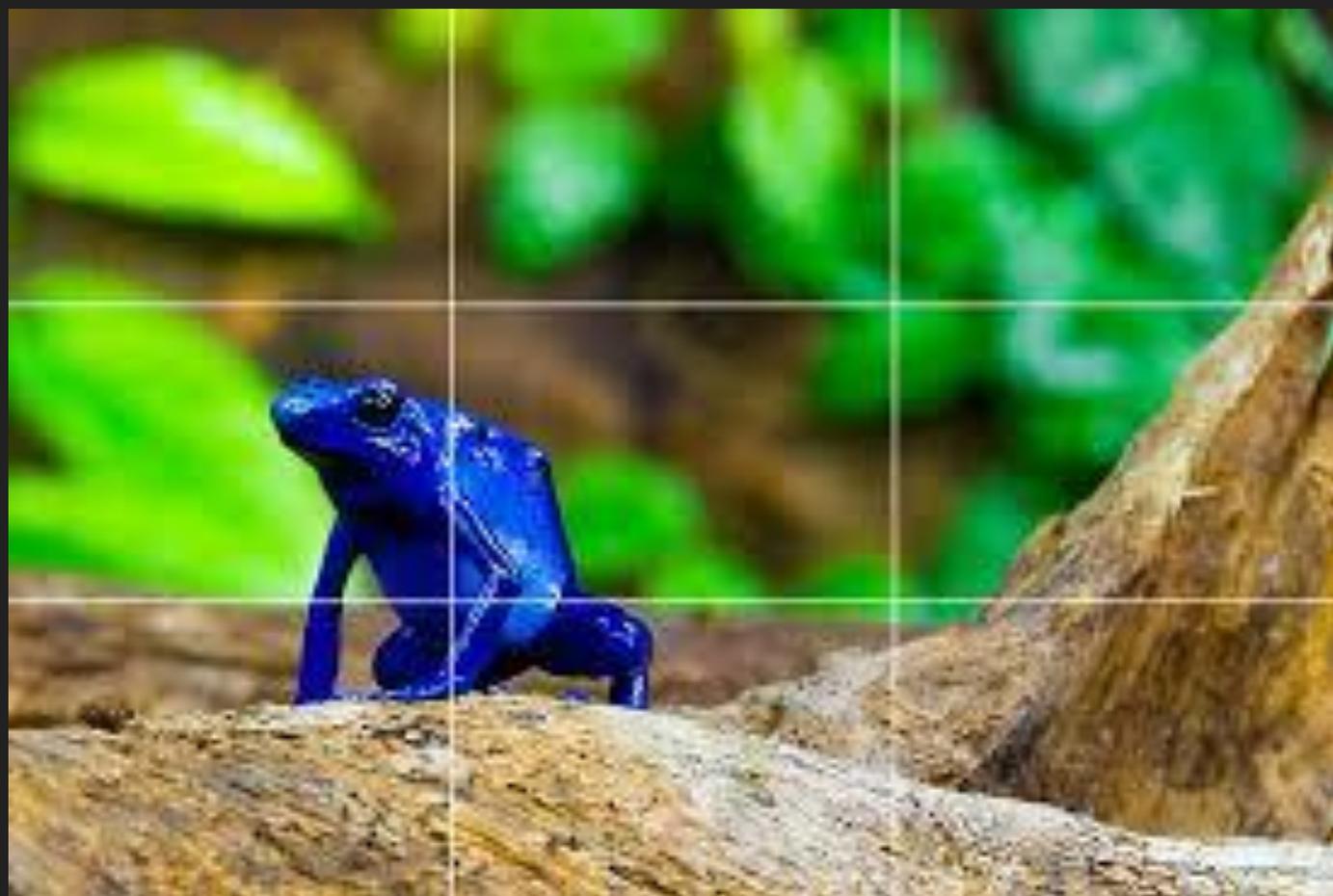


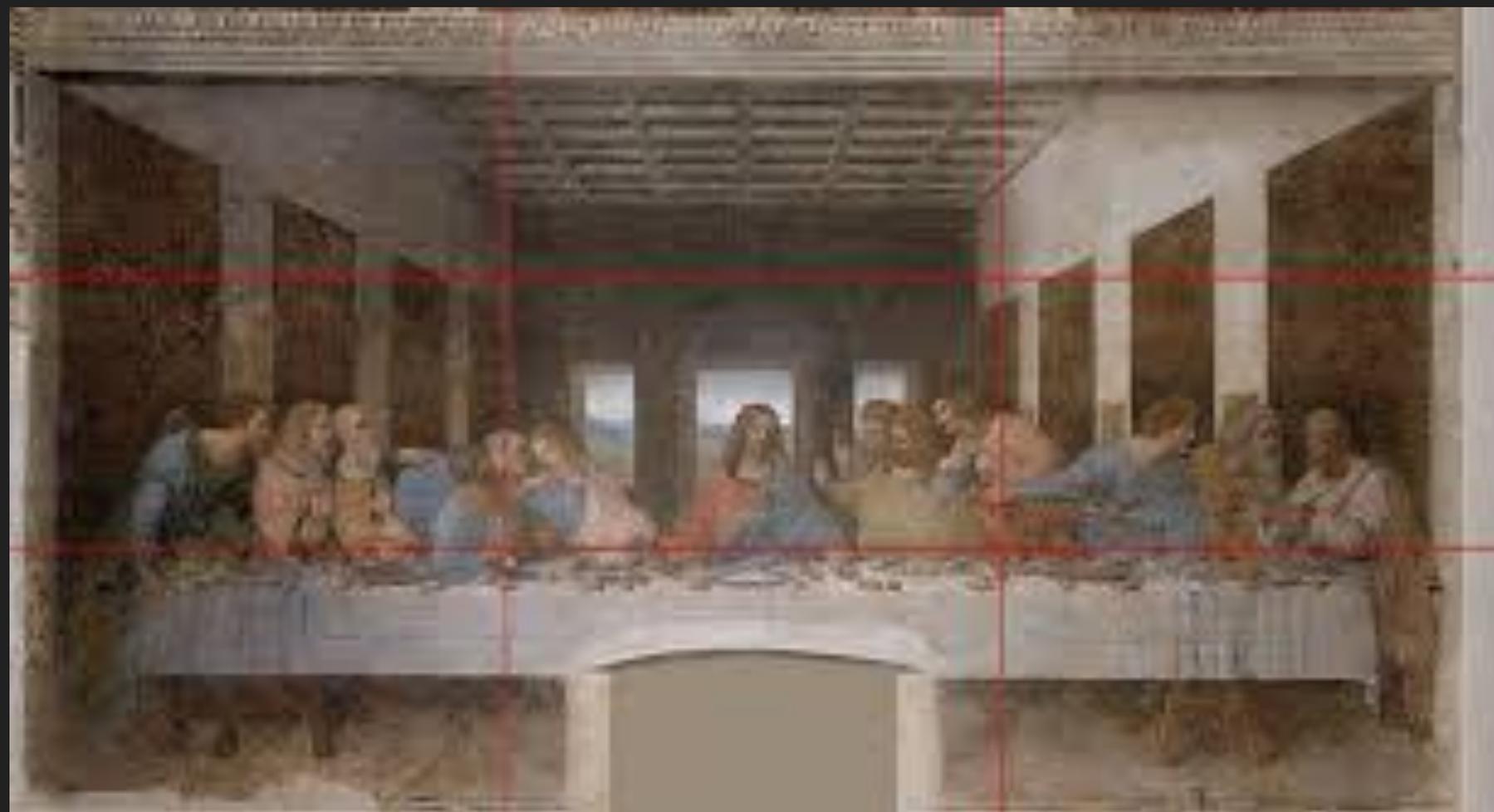








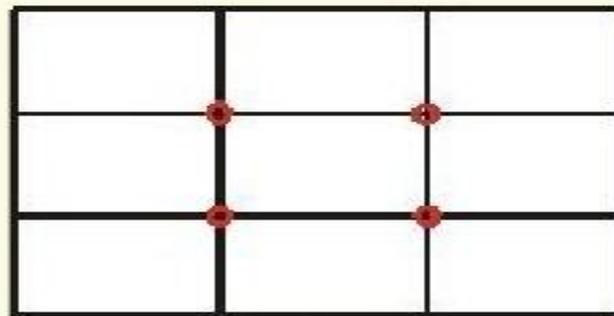




# the Rule of Thirds?

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Quite simply, divide a canvas in thirds both horizontally and vertically, and place the focus of the painting either one third across or one third up or down the picture, or where the lines intersect (the red circles on the diagram).



RULE OF THIRDS

A still life painting featuring a collection of western-themed objects. In the foreground, a large, light-colored animal skull with prominent horns is the central focus. To its left, a brown cowboy hat with a wide brim and a decorative band is visible. Behind the skull, a brown leather saddle with intricate stitching is partially shown. The background is filled with various other items, including more hats and what appears to be a wooden surface, all rendered in a soft, painterly style with a muted color palette of browns, tans, and greys. The overall composition is balanced and detailed.

# “Skulls & Saddles”

A “Western Themed” Still Life using  
Conte Crayon & Rule of Thirds



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