

Elements and Principles of Art and Design

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Elements of Art and Design

Line
Shape
Colour
Texture
Tone
Value
Form
Space

Principles of Art and Design

Contrast
Balance
Pattern
Movement
Unity / Harmony
Centre of Interest / Emphasis / Focal Point
Repetition
Rhythm

Concepts related to each Element

Line: line is the path of a moving dot

- there are many kinds of lines: straight – curved, jagged – smooth, thick – thin, actual- implied
- lines vary in width, length and direction
- lines can be vertical, horizontal, diagonal
- change of direction of a line can be a corner or a curve
- lines can be used to divide space, show shapes, create tonal areas, simulate texture
- lines can express mood and emotion.

Colour: everything has colour, which is the most persuasive element

- Primary colours: red, yellow, blue, Secondary: orange, green purple, etc....
- Cool Colours: predominance of blues or greens
- Warm Colours, predominance of reds, orange, yellow
- Complementaries: opposites on the colour wheel, red-green, blue-orange, purple-yellow
- Tints: colours made lighter by the addition of white, sometimes called pastels
- Shades: colours made darker by the addition of black
- Monochromatic: use of variations of one colour
- Analogous: colours closely related on the colour wheel
- Intensity: the brightness or dullness of a colour

Shape: an area set off by a closed line, when a line begins and ends at the same point, a shape is made

- shape has two dimensions, length and width
- shapes can be geometric, circle, square, oval, triangle etc.
- shapes can be organic, free form
- shapes can be representative of something known, such as a box, apple, face
- shapes can be abstract, not representative of anything
- shapes are positive (the actual shape) and negative (the space around the actual shape)

Form: shape becomes form, when the third dimension, depth, is added, it becomes three-dimensional

- form can be geometric, cube, cone, sphere, cylinder
- form can be organic, free form
- form can be representation or non-representational
- form can be actual or implied (eg a drawing of a person on a 2-D paper)

Texture: the way something feels, tactile characteristic of the surface

- all surfaces have texture, even smooth
- there are many kinds of textures: rough-smooth, prickly-soft, furry-pebbly, gritty-velvety
- actual texture can be seen and felt
- simulated texture can be seen, but not felt
- texture will affect light reflection, and therefore highlights

Space: the real or illusionary representation of space and depth

- a sculpture has actual three-dimension, it exists in space
- the illusion of space is created on a 2-D surface
- implied space is achieved with natural perspective: size, colour intensity, overlap
- implied space is also achieved with linear perspective: vanishing point, converging lines

Tone: the darkness and lightness of an object or subject

- cast shadows, dark areas, and highlights are the components of tone
- these are dependent on the light source
- representing tone gives a 2-D drawing a sense of form and depth

Value: the darkness and lightness within an image, and of colours

- colours can be darkened or made lighter with the addition of black or white
 - colours can be neutralized to form grey or brown
 - the value of an image is the use of dark areas and light areas within the entire image
 - dark areas appear to recede and light areas appear to come forward.
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Concepts related to each Principle

Contrast: juxtaposes strongly different aspects of an element

- there are many kinds of lines: straight – curved, jagged – smooth, thick – thin, actual- implied
- contrast is created when two unlike qualities are placed together
- can be used to dramatize, surprise, add variety to an image, create a focal point
- there is low and high degrees of contrast

Balance: concerned with the arrangements of the elements to give a sense of equilibrium

- is achieved when parts of an image have the same visual weight
- formal or symmetrical balance has the parts equal
- in informal or asymmetrical balance, items are not identical, but still balanced
- radial balance revolves around a real or imaginary central point
- balances gives a sense of comfort
- imbalance can create a sense of tension or discomfort

Pattern: several elements are repeated in a planned way to form a pattern

- a sequence: (red circle, blue box, 2 black line) repeated will form a pattern
- variations of one element, such as size or colour, can result in a pattern
- pattern can be form and organized, or can be random
- repeated patterns can create rhythm.

Movement: the creation of actual or sense of movement in an image

- movement is achieved by the manipulation of the elements, such as the gradation of tone, or repeated lines
- actual movement is moving parts in an artwork
- implied movement shows an activity in “stop action”, such as running or skating
- the signs of movement can be included in an image, such as wind blowing hair
- compositional movement is created by placement of lines or objects to lead the viewer’s eyes through the image, and typically to the focal point.

Unity / Harmony: the use of the elements to create a coherent whole

- is achieved when the elements work together to produce a sense of order
- can be achieved by the combination of similar elements: colour, shapes, etc.
- unity produces harmony, completeness, order
- lack of unity produces disorder, dissonance, disharmony
- unity without contrast can be uninteresting

Centre of Interest / Focal Point / Emphasis: making an element stand out and appear important

- is used to draw attention to a specific area in an image
- implies both dominance and subordination
- can be achieved by juxtaposing differences: large-small, dark-light, bright-dull, etc.
- can also be achieved through a distorted shape, greater detail, placement in the composition

Repetition: one or more element is repeated for an effect

- achieved when elements that have something in common are repeated
- either regular or irregular repetition
- regular repetition results in formal rhythm
- repetition in an image tends to hold the overall image together
- repetition can increase the power of a part of the composition

Rhythm: created by the regular repetition and movement of an element

- the natural environment has many examples of rhythm, grasses blowing, waves
- rhythm is the progressive continuity of an element
- can be created by increasing or decreasing the elements in a series, such as small to large,

❁ These elements and principles are the vocabulary, the language of art.

❁ The only way to can create images is by using these elements and principles.

❁ The only way you can talk about art is by using these elements and principles.

❁ ‘Composition’ is the image you create to form your artwork

❁ Using the elements and principles in creative ways allows you to create unique and distinctive compositions / images.

❁ Happy Creating!