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5 STAR RATING



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## DESIGN AND COLOUR

The elements and principles of design are the building blocks used to create a work of art. The elements of design can be thought of as the things that make up a painting, drawing, design etc. Good or bad - all paintings will contain most of if not all, the seven elements of design.

The Principles of design can be thought of as what we do to the elements of design. How we apply the Principles of design determines how successful we are in creating a work of art.

note - the hyperlinks within the text of this page will open information in a new browser window. After you have read that information the window can then be closed leaving this window open.

## THE ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

### LINE

Line can be considered in two ways. The linear marks made with a pen or brush or the edge created when two shapes meet.

### SHAPE

A shape is a self contained defined area of geometric or organic form. A positive shape in a painting automatically creates a negative shape.

### DIRECTION

All lines have direction - Horizontal, Vertical or Oblique. Horizontal suggests calmness, stability and tranquillity. Vertical gives a feeling of balance, formality and alertness. Oblique suggests movement and action  
see notes on direction

### SIZE

Size is simply the relationship of the area occupied by one shape to that of another.

### TEXTURE

Texture is the surface quality of a shape - rough, smooth, soft hard glossy etc. Texture can be physical (tactile) or visual.  
see notes on texture

### COLOUR

Also called Hue  
see notes on colour

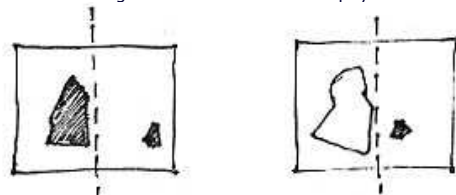
### VALUE

Value is the lightness or darkness of a colour. Value is also called Tone  
see notes on tonal contrast

## THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

### BALANCE

Balance in design is similar to balance in physics



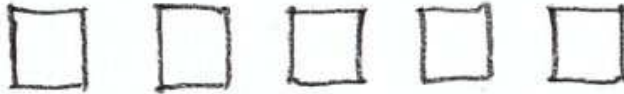
A large shape close to the center can be balanced by a small shape close to the edge. A large light toned shape will be balanced by a small dark toned shape (the darker the shape the heavier it appears to be)

**GRADATION**

Gradation of size and direction produce linear perspective. Gradation of of colour from warm to cool and tone from dark to light produce aerial perspective. Gradation can add interest and movement to a shape. A gradation from dark to light will cause the eye to move along a shape.

**REPETITION**

Repetition with variation is interesting, without variation repetition can become monotonous.



The five squares above are all the same. They can be taken in and understood with a single glance.



When variation is introduced, the five squares, although similar, are much more interesting to look at. They can no longer be absorbed properly with a single glance. The individual character of each square needs to be considered.

If you wish to create interest, any repeating element should include a degree of variation.

**CONTRAST**

Contrast is the juxtaposition of opposing elements eg. opposite colours on the colour wheel - red / green, blue / orange etc. Contrast in tone or value - light / dark. Contrast in direction - horizontal / vertical.

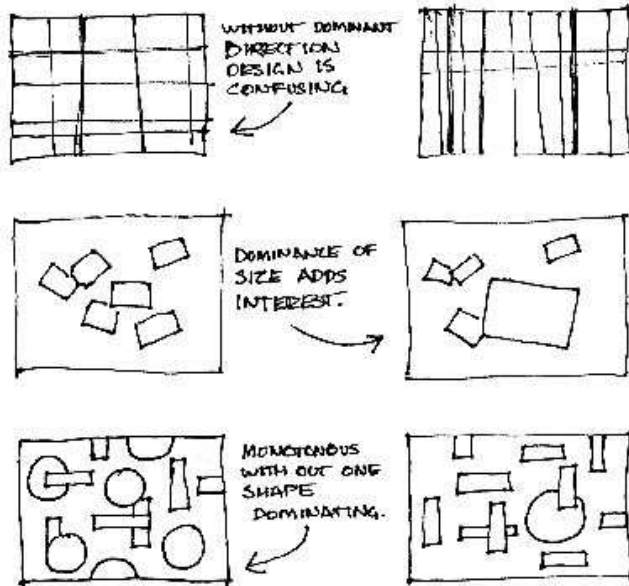
The major contrast in a painting should be located at the center of interest. Too much contrast scattered throughout a painting can destroy unity and make a work difficult to look at. Unless a feeling of chaos and confusion are what you are seeking, it is a good idea to carefully consider where to place your areas of maximum contrast.

**HARMONY**

Harmony in painting is the visually satisfying effect of combining similar, related elements. eg. adjacent colours on the colour wheel, similar shapes etc.

**DOMINANCE**

Dominance gives a painting interest, counteracting confusion and monotony. Dominance can be applied to one or more of the elements to give emphasis



**UNITY**

Relating the design elements to the the idea being expressed in a painting reinforces the principal of unity. eg. a painting with an active aggressive subject would work better with a dominant oblique direction, course, rough texture, angular lines etc. whereas a quiet passive subject would benefit from horizontal lines, soft texture and less tonal contrast.

Unity in a painting also refers to the visual linking of various elements of the work.



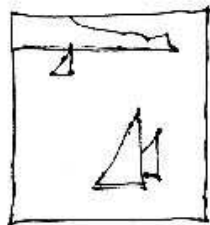
IN THIS EXAMPLE THE EYE HAS TO MAKE AN UNCOMFORTABLE JUMP TO LINK THE TWO GROUPS OR BUILDINGS.



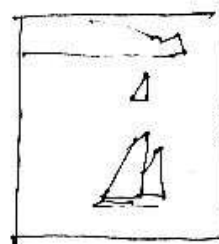
BY INCLUDING A ROAD THE LINK IS MORE COMFORTABLE. THE PICTURE HAS BETTER UNITY.



THE LINE COULD ALSO BE MADE WITH A DARK MASS OF TREES.



WHERE THERE IS NO LINEAR OR TONAL LINK BETWEEN TWO SHAPES, THEIR PLACEMENT & SIZE RELATIONSHIP IS VITALLY IMPORTANT FOR A COMFORTABLE VISUAL LINK TO BE MADE.



AVOID MAKING A VERTICAL VISUAL LINK. IT ALWAYS FEELS AWKWARD.

After studying these notes on the elements and principals of design, try this exercise

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