

Visual Harmony

Unity

- The presentation of a unified image, is perhaps as close to a 'rule' as art approaches.
- The artistic skill of organization (or design) produces a unified pattern.

Ways to Achieve Unity

- Proximity
- Repetition
- Continuation

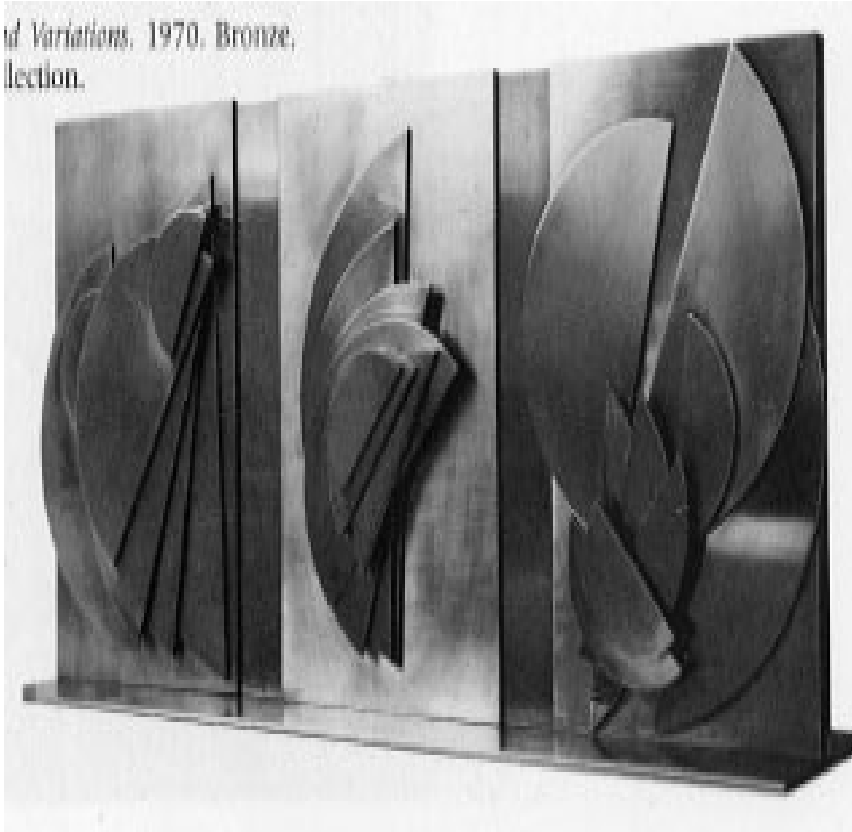
Unity

- Unity or harmony is an essential factor for any visual design which implies that a congruity or agreement exists among the elements in a design; as if, they belong together, as though some visual connection beyond mere chance has caused them to come together.
- The designer's job in creating unity is not necessarily difficult. In fact the viewers look for some organization, something to unify the different elements free from unrelated chaos and some coherent unity in a design
- The challenge is truly more in the organization of elements into a composition. The idea or theme, or even absence of one does not limit one.
- The artistic skill of organization (or design) produces a unified pattern.



The units of this design have characters in common despite obvious differences in appearance. Different sizes are obvious, but the shape remains consistent.

and Variations. 1970. Bronze,
collection.



Barbara Hepworth. Maquette, theme and
Variations. 1970. Bronze, 113/8: 261/8"

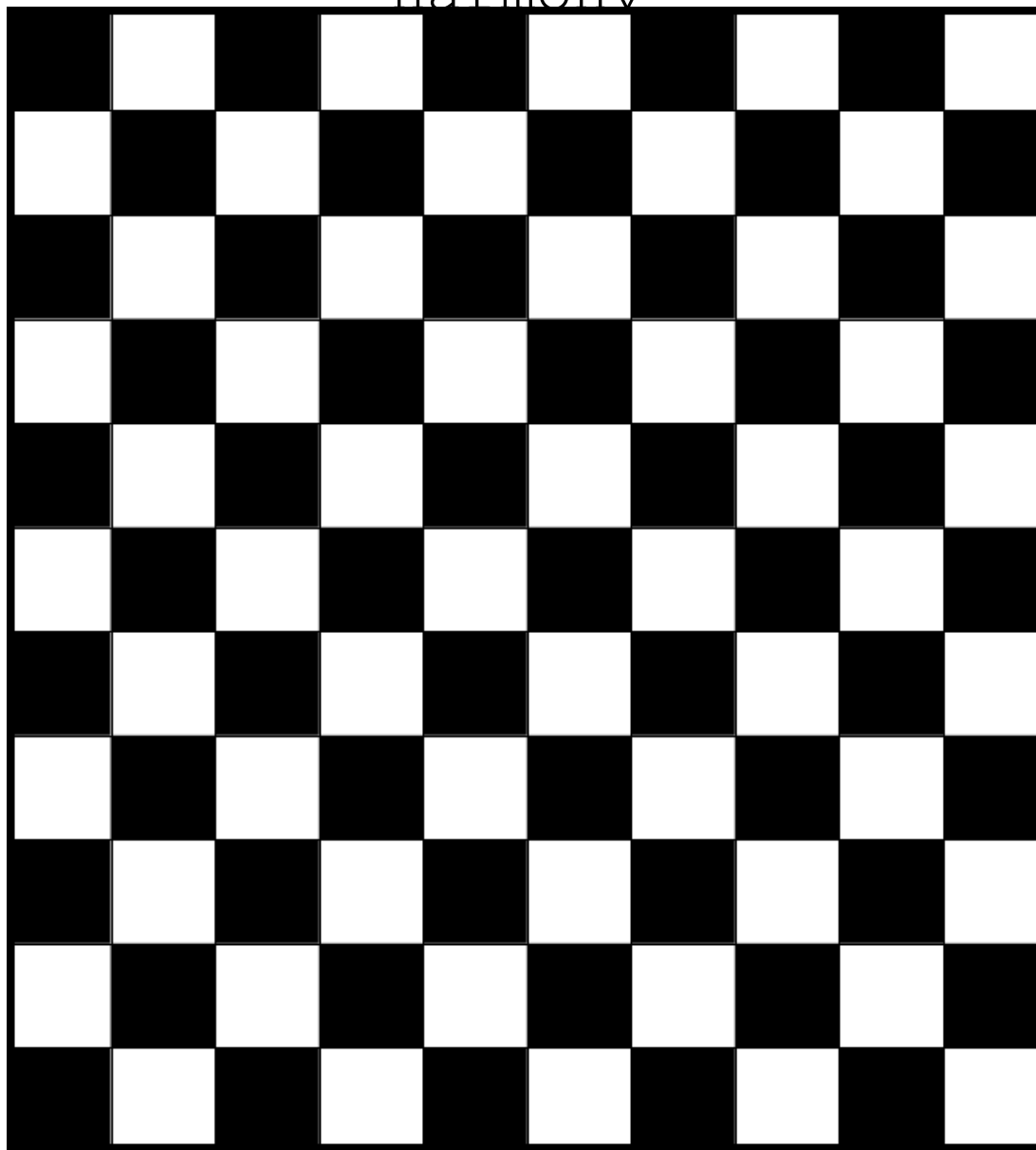
Shapes that have no literal meaning to the viewer but all
of them contain the same half circle shapes.

- An important aspect of visual unity is that the whole must be predominant over the parts; one sees the whole pattern before the individual elements in a design unit. Each item may have a meaning and certainty add to the total effect, but viewer sees the pattern as a whole rather than simply a collection of unrelated bits and pieces.
- Do not confuse intellectual unity (conceptual unity) with visual unity.
- Visual unity denotes some harmony/consistency/agreement between the items that is apparent to the eye. To say that a bulletin board is unified because all the items pinned up in it have a common theme, is unity of idea and not observable by the eye. A unifying idea will not necessarily produce a unified pattern.

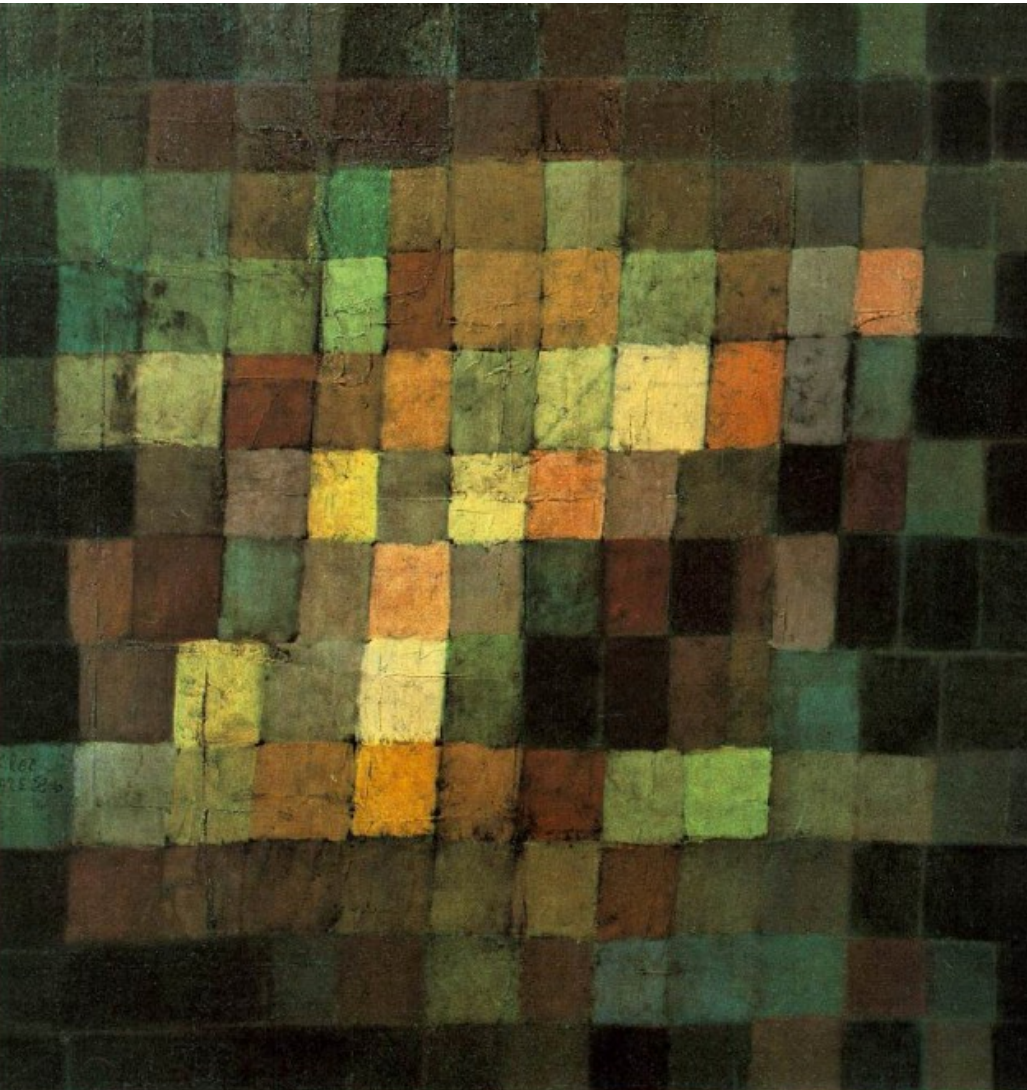
Unified Idea & Unified Visual Pattern



Visual Rhythm & Harmony



Unity with Variation



Paul Klee, Composition

Director's Office
Walter Gropius (1883-1969) →
1923, The Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany



The Gestalt Principles

Gestalt is a psychology term which means "unified whole". It refers to theories of **visual perception** developed by German psychologists in the 1920s. These theories attempt to describe how people tend to organize visual elements into **groups** or *unified wholes* when certain principles are applied. These principles are:

Similarity

- *Similarity* occurs when **objects look similar** to one another. People often perceive them as a group or pattern.



- The example above (containing 11 distinct objects) appears as a **single unit** because all of the shapes have **similarity**.
- Unity occurs because the triangular shapes at the bottom of the eagle symbol **look similar** to the shapes that form the sunburst.
- When similarity occurs, an object can be emphasized if it is *dissimilar* to the others. This is called **anomaly**.



- The figure on the far right becomes a focal point because it is **dissimilar** to the other shapes.

Continuation

- Continuation occurs when the eye is compelled to **move through** one object and **continue** to another object.



- Continuation occurs in the example above, because the viewer's eye will naturally follow a line or curve. The smooth flowing crossbar of the "H" leads the eye directly to the maple leaf.

Closure

- Closure* occurs when an object is *incomplete* or a space is not *completely enclosed*. If enough of the shape is indicated, people perceive the whole in the missing information.



- Although the panda above is not complete, enough is present for the eye to complete the shape. When the viewer's *perception completes a shape*, **closure** occurs.

Examples



Figure and Ground

- The eye differentiates an object from its surrounding area. a form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as **figure** (object), while the surrounding area is perceived as **ground** (background).
- Balancing figure and ground can make the perceived image more clear. Using unusual figure/ground relationships can add interest and subtlety to an image.

Figure

- The word **ambiguity** is **early perceived** with the surrounding space ground.



- In left image, the figure and ground relationships **change** as the eye perceives the form of a shade or the silhouette of a face.

Ways to Achieve Unity

- Proximity
- Repetition
- Continuation

Proximity

To make separate elements look as if they belong together – or simply putting these elements close together.



El Greco. The Vision of St. John. 1608-14

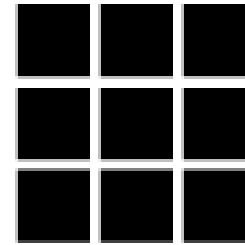
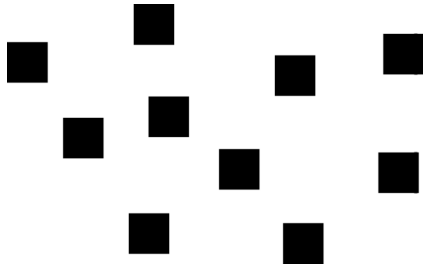
- There is a large amount of stormy, though essentially negative, empty space.
- The smaller nude figures however do not float haphazardly in the turbulent background. Instead, they are grouped together; making a horizontal unit across the painting.
- Arms and legs reach out to touch adjoining figures so that the bodies come together .
- The drapery on the ground also unites the saint's figure with those behind.



- Paul Worner's painting is an interesting collection of still-life objects that are essentially isolated from each other.
- Notice how the very careful placement and the strategic use of shadows visually tie the elements together by proximity. The viewers' eyes move smoothly from one item to the next.

Proximity

- *Proximity* occurs when elements are placed close together. They tend to be perceived as a group.



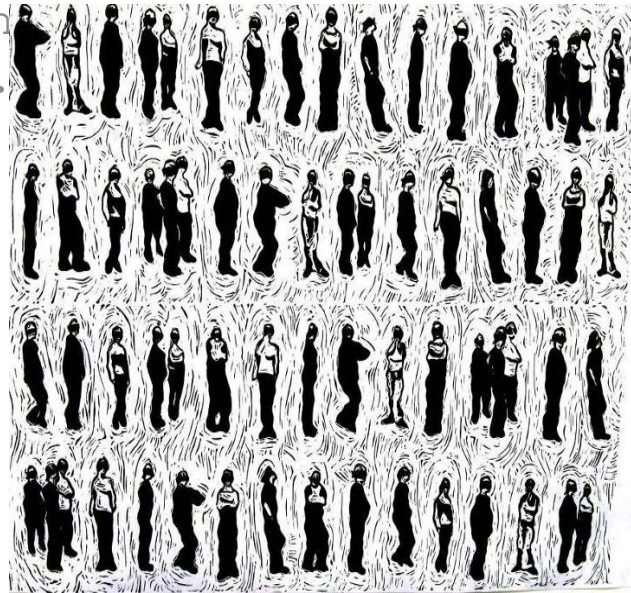
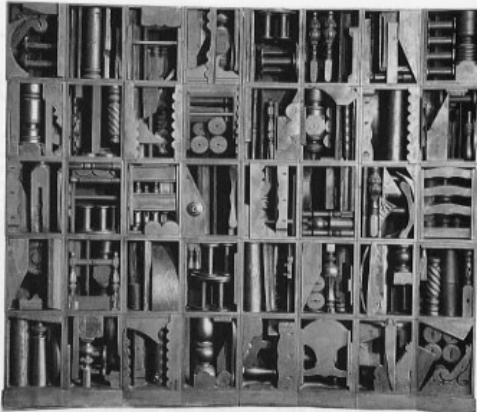
- The nine squares above are placed without proximity. They are perceived as **separate shapes**. When the squares are given close proximity, unity occurs. While they continue to be separate shapes, they are now perceived as **one group**.



- The fifteen figures above form a *unified whole* (the shape of a tree) because of their **proximity**.

Repetition

- A most valuable and widely used device for achieving visual unity is repetition.
- As the term implies, some thing simply repeats in various parts to each other. The element that repeats may be almost anything—a colour shape, a texture, a direction or angle.
- When we look beyond the subject matter in art, we begin

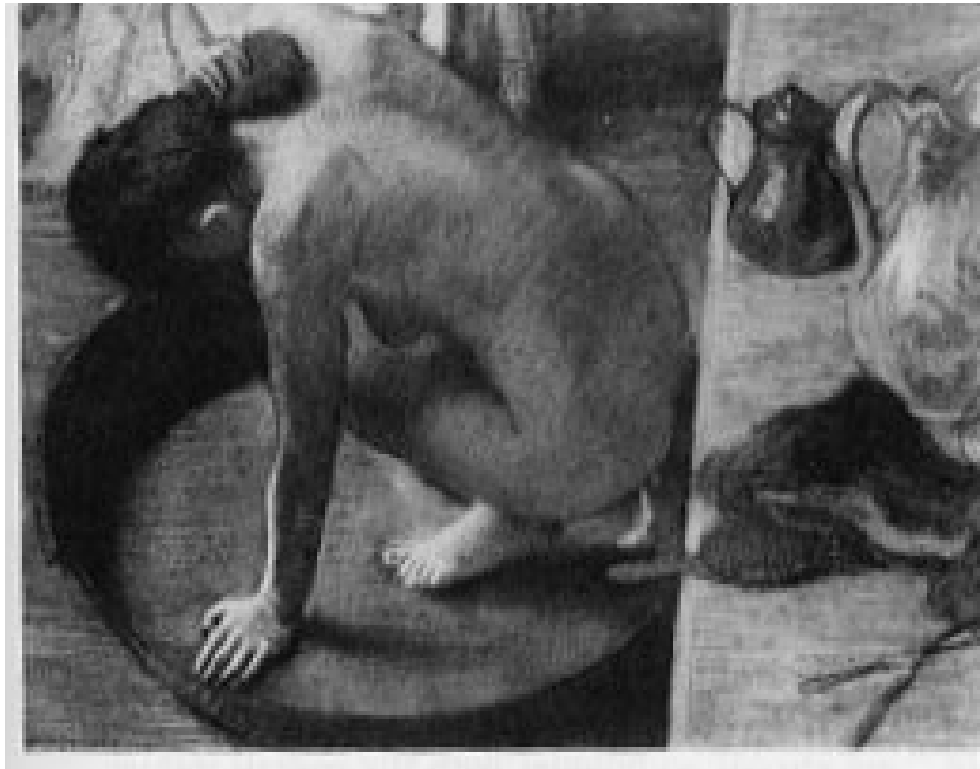


Repetition of shapes/images welds the entire pattern into a coherent composition



Continuation

- A more subtle device than proximity or repetition, which are fairly obvious in a visual design otherwise.
- Continuation – means something maybe a line, an edge or a direction from one form to another. The viewer's eye is carried smoothly from one to the next.



The circular shape of the bather's hips is divergent to the same shelf edge, that at the first glance the arrangement seemed casual and unplanned only adds to our admiration of the artist.

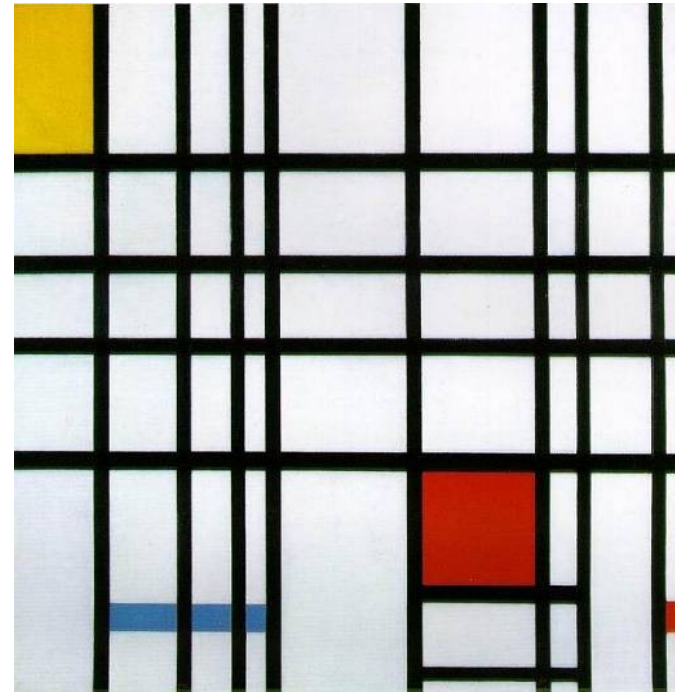
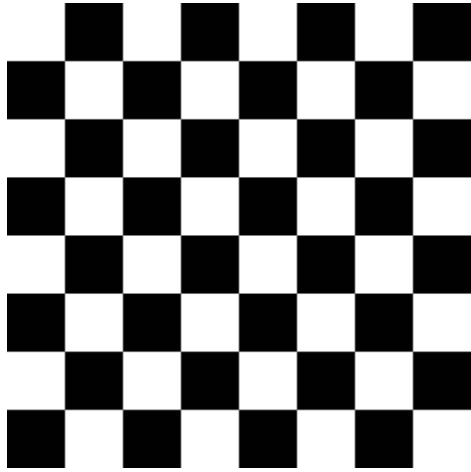


- Continuation is a standard device employed by the graphic designers planning layouts for books, magazine editorial pages, advertisements browsers, and so on.
- In each case the artist must somehow create a sense of visual unity from the very dissimilar elements of printed headlines, blocks of copy, photographs, and trademarks.
- Lining up various shapes with a continuation of edges is the most practical and satisfactory solution.

Unity with Variety

- Unity without variety can result in a monotonous design. A harmonious pattern or order established among the various elements. However, it is possible to make a pattern so highly unified that the result, instead of being visual satisfaction, rather quickly becomes visual boredom.
- **Emphasis on Unity**
- **Emphasis on Variety**

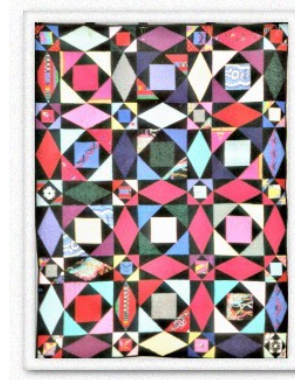
Unity with Variety



- Mondrian's painting in many ways resembles the checkerboard, but how much more visually interesting it is for an application of the unity with variety principle.

Observe:

- the varying sizes and shapes of the rectangles
- the subtle changes in the thickness of the backlines
- the irregular placement of a few coloured shapes
- the delicate variations of horizontal and vertical emphasis.



Notice how the lines of stitching reinforce the units theme and in effect, create countless other shapes.

Is the principle of unity with variety a conscious, planned ingredient supplied by the artist or designer, or is it something that a confident designer produces automatically?

The principal can be seen in art and design every different period, culture, and geographic area.

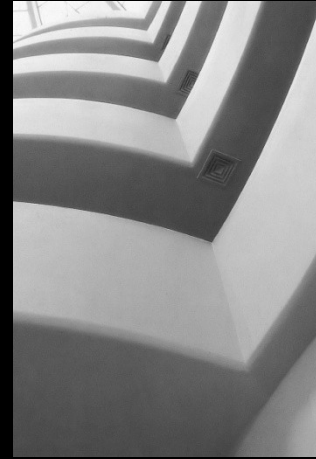


- Kandinsky's painting is titled Several Circles.
- The decision to create a composition unified by the repetition of circles was clearly an initial and deliberate choice by the artist.
- The changes in size and tone of various circles must also have been purposeful because these changes provide the interest of variety to the painting.

Unity with
Variety

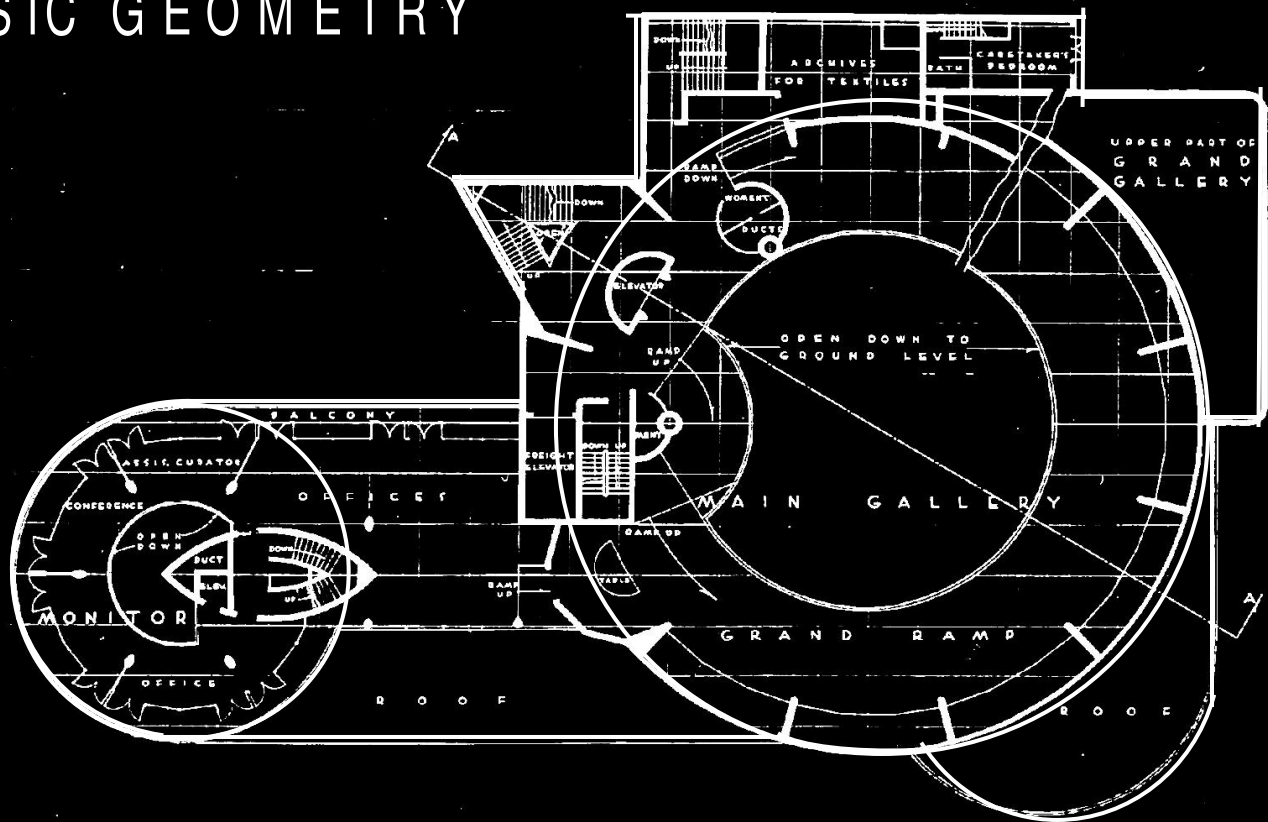


Wassily Kandinsky. Several Circles.
1926



THE SOLOMON R.
GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM
AN ANALYSIS

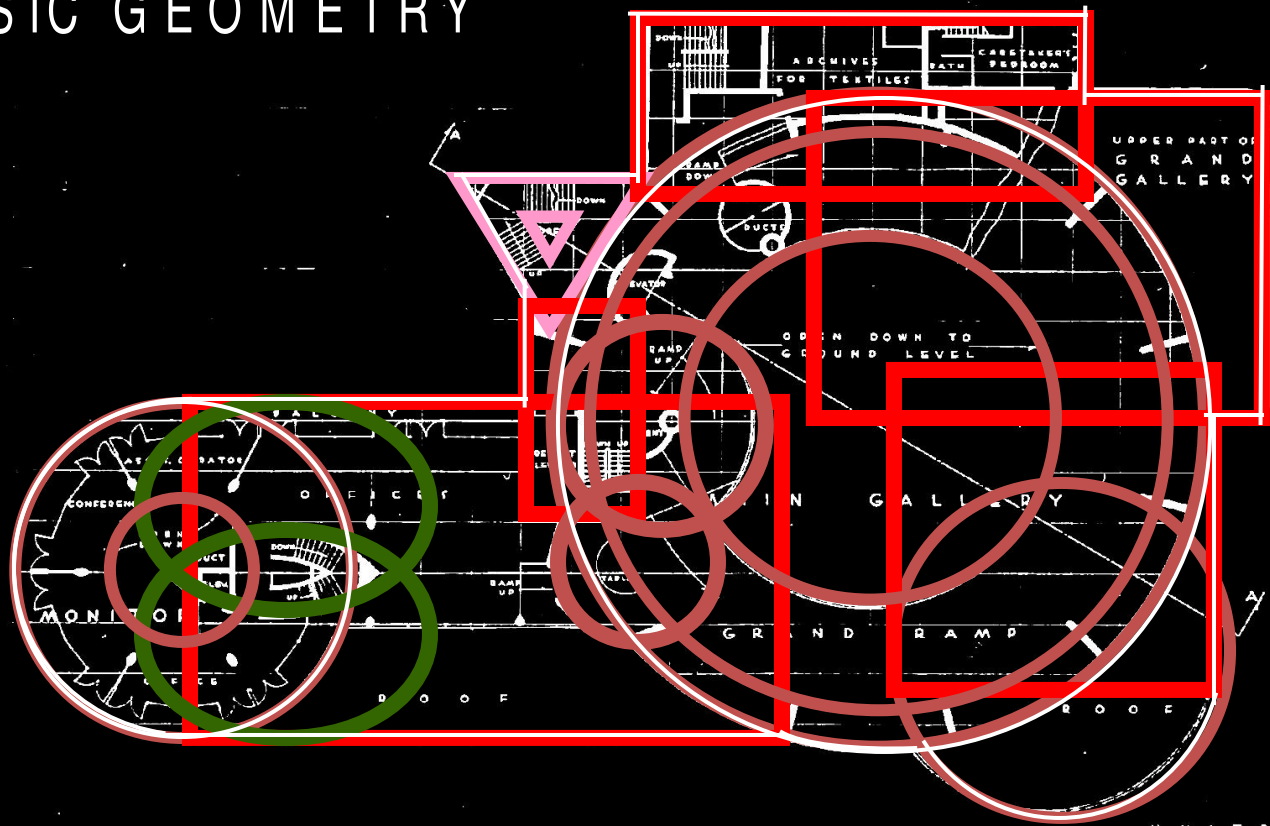
BASIC GEOMETRY



PLAN OF SECOND LEVEL

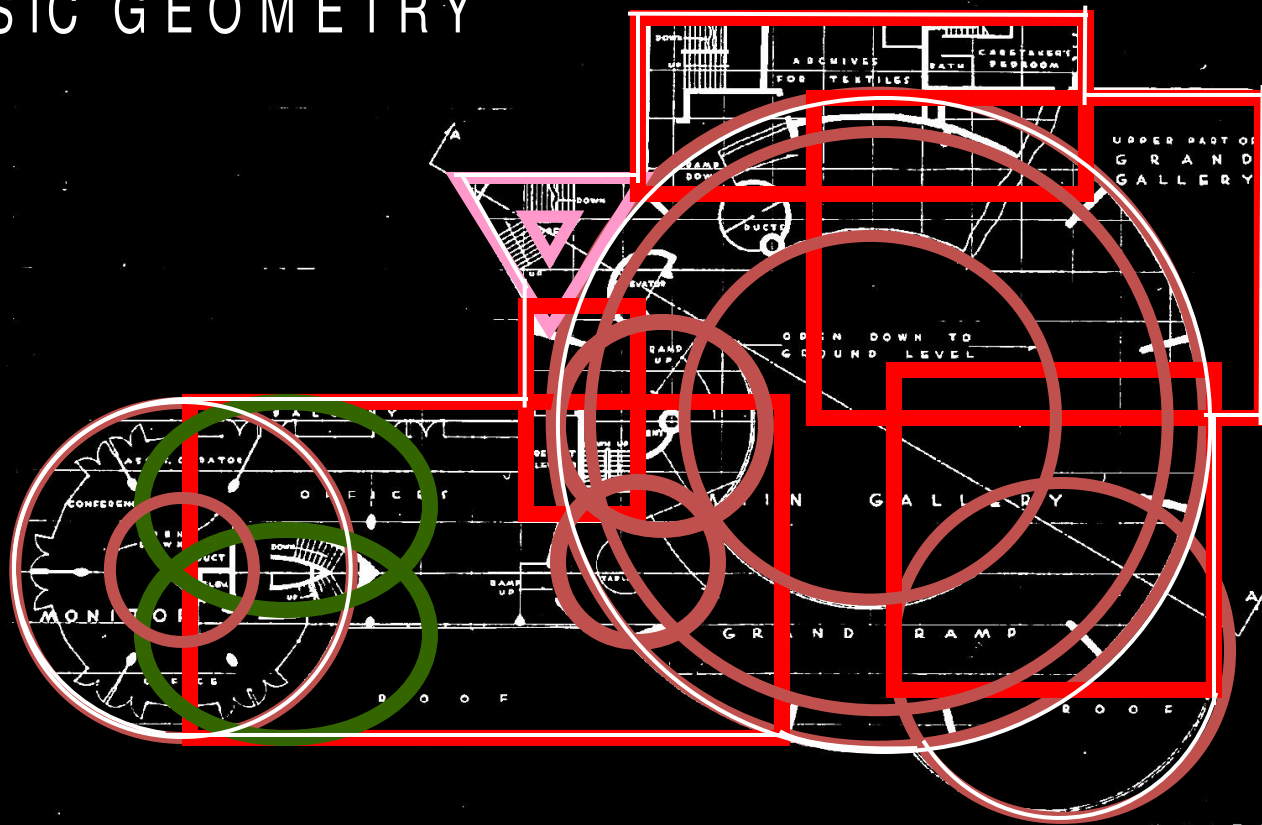
UNITS
8'-0" x 8'-0"

BASIC GEOMETRY



PLAN OF SECOND LEVEL

BASIC GEOMETRY



PLAN OF SECOND LEVEL

UNITS
8'-0" x 8'-0"



- The use of unity with variety displayed by the piece of ***Tapa cloth*** done by the native of Samoa suggests a more intuitive approach.
- Since many such designs employ traditional motifs, the method was undoubtedly “learned” but not at an art school or from a textbook. Yet the design illustrates the principal so clearly.
- Each horizontal band contains similar linear elements, with triangles and arrows repeated over and over.
- But sizes vary, and each area combines the elements in a different manner.
- The idea of related variations seems to provide a basic visual satisfaction that can be arrived at without theoretical discussion of aesthetics.



- In the Prayer Hall; Santiniketan Ashram, or the Little Moreton Hall, England, which are considered to be visual delights, a very obvious use of principal is not a drawback either.
- Each steps of the structure, gives us new patterns, new motifs, and slight but definite variations.
- This unity didn't just happen; it was certainly carefully planned, and the result is magnificent.

Emphasis on Unity

- A design must contain both the ordered quality of unity and the lively quality of variety
- Unifying element of repetition can be emphasized.
- Variety could be present but admittedly in a subtle, understated way.

The correct balance between control and spontaneous freedom-varies with the individual artists, with the theme or purpose, and eventually with the viewer.



British School. *The Cholmondeley Sisters*, 17th.C
Such perfect repetition is unexpected, so we proceed to search for the tiny differences and the variety we know exist in nature and, hence, in art.



- The repetition in Warhol's painting is constant; there are a hundred repetition of precisely the same image.
- But the repetitive, unrelieved quality is basic point and dictates the design.
- Work contains a serious comment on our taken for granted daily life.
- The design reflects life today, where we are bombarded with insistent repetition of the same commercial images over and over.

AndyWarhol.100 soupCans.1962

Emphasis on Variety

- Life is not always orderly and rational. Often life brings surprise, the unexpected, and experiences that seem chaotic and hectic.
- To express this phase of life, many artists have purposely chosen to underplay the unifying aspects of their work and let the elements appear, at least superficially, uncontrolled and free of any formal design restraints.
 - **The examples in the following slides show works where the element of variety is paramount.**



Richard Hamilton. *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* 1956

- The immediate impression of Richard Hamilton's *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* is one of the haphazard conglomeration of incongruous images.
- The collage is as widely eccentric as the disjointed, fragmented images we see each day (and take for granted) on our newspapers.
- The many commercial image included mock the importance of such elements in our society .Again, the theme has dictated the design.



Chaim Soutine.1921

The subject matter could be anything but this particular painting creates almost a non objective image of pure tone and texture, uniform and moreover consistent in its language.



Jackson Pollock 1950

Jackson Pollock's conveys similar texture and tonalities but makes no pretense of relating to a natural scene.

Conclusion

1. Without unity a visual design is chaotic and not quickly readable or communicative.
2. Without some elements of variety, a design is lifeless.
3. Neither utter confusion nor utter regularity is visually desirable.
4. Beyond general guideline, the options of the visual designer are very broad.