Elements of Visual Design

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Seven basic elements of visual design include lines, shapes, negative space, volume, value, color and texture.

Lines have a variety of properties that convey emotion, thickness, shape, width variance, and geometric or organic form. Shapes are self contained areas formed by lines and have length and width.

Shapes can be formed by using lines or by differences in color, texture or value.

Shapes are crucial elements designers use for quick and effective communication.

Negative/White space is the empty area around a shape. The relation between the shape and space is called figure/ground. The shape is the figure and the area around the shape is the ground.

Negative space defines the boundaries of the positive space and brings balance to a composition.

Volume applies to three dimensional visuals that have length width and depth. Volume is rarely used in visual design because most digital products are viewed on a two dimentional screen.

Value describes how light or dark something is. A design with high value contrast creates clarity, while using similar values creates subtlety. Value can also be used to simulate volume in two dimensions.

Color is an element of light. Color theory differentiates between colors that mix subtractively and colors that mix additively. In paint colors mix subtractively because the pigments absorb light while on screen colors mix additively as the screen shows light displayed of both mixed colors.

Color conveys emotion and adds variety

Texture is the surface quality of an object and can be tactile, where you can feel the texture, and implied, where you can only see it.