

Module 1

Design Principles

Overview

The first module introduces you to the foundational principles of design—the grammar of visual communication. These principles govern how visual elements interact within a composition, influencing the arrangement, balance, and overall impact. Through this module, you will develop a vocabulary to articulate and analyze visual interactions. The process will involve observation, experimentation, and rigorous application of design principles to translate abstract concepts into compelling visual compositions. By engaging in iterative design processes, you will refine your ability to craft thoughtful and impactful visuals.

Phase objectives

- 1 Identify and apply design principles across different mediums.
- 2 Exercise precision and creativity in both analogue and digital design processes.
- 3 Communicate ideas through verbal, graphic and material representation.
- 4 Demonstrate rigor, diligence and curiosity in all phases of the design process.

Deliverables

Exercise 1.a: Patterns in the Everyday /25pts

Photograph examples from your daily life that represent the following eight paired design principles:

Density / Sparsity
Continuity / Discontinuity
Static / Dynamic
Symmetry / Asymmetry

Print each pair of photographs on an A4 sheet, formatted into 12x12 cm squares, two per page, labeled with the principle pair. Be prepared to verbally explain your rationale for each principle during a class critique session.

Submission Guidelines: 4 A4 sheets (each featuring one pair of principles), printed in full color on high-quality photo paper.

Labeled with your name and principle pairs.

Exercise 1.b: Dots and Lines /30pts

Create abstract compositions representing the same paired principles using only dots and lines (sized may vary). Work by hand on 10x10 cm white Bristol paper using a black Uni-ball pen. Dots and lines can vary in size, weight, and spacing to effectively represent each principle.

Develop three sketches for each principle.

After creating your six sketches per principle, compare and contrast them to identify areas for refinement. Select the strongest pair for each principle and refine them into final compositions.

Submission Guidelines: Mount the final 8 compositions (4 pairs, 10 x 10 cm) on black museum board, ensuring precise alignment and leaving a 2 cm margin around the edges. Labeled with your name and principles.

Final Project: Visual Song

Select a favorite song and analyze its emotional, rhythmic, and structural qualities. Identify key moments or themes (e.g., crescendos, interludes) and translate these elements into a visual narrative using abstract shapes **only**. Focus on layout principles such as balance, rhythm, hierarchy, and unity. Explore how texture, shape, color and composition can visually convey sound.

Step 1: Song Analysis – Break down the song into a timeline of events, highlighting emotional and rhythmic shifts.

Step 2: Initial Sketches – Create small thumbnail sketches in your sketchbook to test different possible abstract representations of song elements.

Step 3: Outline Composition – Translate the thumbnails into a full-size draft on white bristol paper 30x100cm focusing on rhythm, hierarchy, and unity.

Step 4: Adding Color –after our discussion on color theory, experiment with palettes that reflect the mood and tone of the song.

Submission Guidelines: Final composition on white Bristol paper, 30 cm x 100 cm. Label the back of the paper with your name, project title, and date.

Grading Criteria:

Concept /20: Originality, successful translation of song elements

Process /15: Experimentation range

Craft /10: Precision, neatness

Schedule + Due Dates

*subject to change

R Jan 15	Design Principles+ Ph1 Brief
T Jan 20	Group Crit Due: Ex. 1.a
R Jan 22	Working Session
T Jan 27	Group Crit Due: Ex. 1.b
R Jan 29	Input: Color Theory + Working Session
T Feb 03	Group Crit Due: Visual Song Draft
R Feb 05	Due: Final Project

Grade Distribution

Phase 1 is worth **20%** of your overall semester grade.

/25 Patterns in the Everyday
/30 Dots & Lines
/20 Final Project Concept
/15 Final Project Process
/10 Final Project Craft

Grades are **non-negotiable**. You may request to discuss the basis of the evaluation, your work, and your progress.

Materials List

- Metal cutting ruler
- Cutter / X-Acto knife
- Glue
- White bristol paper
- 1.5 mm museum board