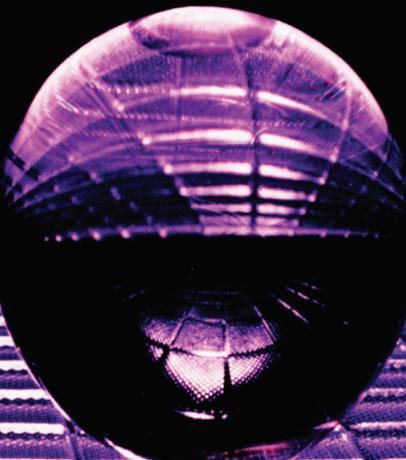


# The Components Of Design



Janet Yoder

# The Design Process

The term design is usually used to refer to one of two concepts. The first has to do with planning the construction of some new thing, such as a house, a bridge, or a piece of software. In this instance, the purpose of the design is to create something that fulfills certain needs, and a part of the design process is to plan ways in which the new thing will meet those needs. More often than not, this new thing is a communication. That is, the designer is using visual elements and design in the artistic sense to make something that can convey an idea to other people.

Just like the engineer who begins the planning of an aircraft, the designer must take into consideration additional needs that the creation will have to meet.

Instead of being concerned with the problems of weight or fuel capacity, the designer will be dealing with issues such as who will be receiving the message and how that message will meet a client's needs.

Visual design is one of the most effective ways to communicate. Each element of visual design can be broken down into building blocks that can be combined with other elements to produce effect layouts and graphics. These elements of design are the same used in graphic design and fine art. The following elements are the basic fundamentals of any graphic or illustration. They include the use of space, line and shape as well as value and texture.



# Three Kinds of Space

When someone says the word space most people think of rockets, planets, and telescopes, but when it comes to design and visual communication, space is actually something even bigger. Space is the universe of which a design exists. A good designer will use space in a way that dramatically enhances the communication. Space will become so much a part of the design that any change in it will alter the piece entirely.

The term space, as it applies to design, is often difficult to define because several different visual elements are lumped together under this same term. Space could refer to the actual presentation of a piece of work. This includes the scale or size of the work and how it relates to its surrounding. Space could also refer to the area of a design that surrounds the main objects. The word space could also be used to discuss an artificial or illusionary space that has been created in an image through the use of certain visual techniques. Three different approaches to using space as an element of design are:

- Format (space and size, scale, and presentation)
- Positive and negative space (the relationship between the objects of focus and the area around them)
- Illusionary space (perceived third dimension)

# What is a Line?

Among the different graphic elements, the use of line as a design tool is probably the most diverse and very likely the strangest. A line can be one of the simplest elements used in visual communication, and it can also be the most expressive of all in a designer's vocabulary of visual elements. Line can convey a great deal of information, or it can be very subtle. It can define the visual details of an image, or it can be used to convey emotion and other psychological concepts within a design.

In reality, lines rarely occur in nature. They are more of a construct of the way humans see things. In short, we interpret the world as being made up of lines even though they are only a construction of perception. We may see a twig as a line, but it is a three-dimensional object that has volume. Because we are so accustomed to visually interpreting the things around us as lines, a few simple marks with an ink pen can easily be seen as a drawing of the same twig.



# What is Shape?

When it comes to shapes, we have names and descriptors for nearly every kind and variation. A shape with three sides is called a triangle. A shape with four sides is called a rectangle. If the four sides of a rectangle are of equal length, that shape is called a square. The list of names goes on and on.

Every object has a shape, but it is rarely limited to the neat mathematical ones that we are taught about as children. In its simplest definition, shape is the basic outline of an object formed by a line (real or imagined) and the area enclosed by that line. In essence, shape can be thought of as the combination of line and space.



# The Nature of Value

When we look at something, we usually tend to assign a general color to the entire object without taking the time to observe any subtle variations. For example, if a person asks, “What color is that car?” We might simply respond, “Red.” But if we looked at the car with more attention to detail, we would see that it appeared to be several different reds because of the lighting around it. On the parts of the car that were well lit, the color of red would be somewhat lighter than in other areas. On parts of the car that received less light, the red would appear to be darker. This variation of the same basic color is called value.

In its simplest definition, value can be thought of as the variation of light and dark areas within a design. This concept can be applied to a monochromatic image (an image that uses only a single color) or to an image that uses many colors.



In the case of a monochromatic image, areas of different values are lighter or darker variations of the same color. If the image uses more than one color, the same rule applies with the exception that each colored area uses a lighter or darker version of itself to convey value.

# The Magic of Texture

In the physical world, we generally think of texture as something that is felt by our sense of touch. The texture of an actual object may be rough or smooth, soft or hard, and how it feels to the touch is how we classify it. Design can also include texture, but since the viewer will be unable to feel the texture, the designer must rely on visual information to convey how it might feel.

As an element of design, texture can be used in some remarkable ways. It can transform a plain image into one that is full of richness and detail, or, without altering the composition of the piece, texture can be used to fill empty areas of an image. It can add depth to space, create detail in an illustration, or define the style of an entire project. There is so much that texture can do as a design tool that it almost seems to be magic.

# Visual Design

Space

Value

Lines

Shape

Texture