

Basic Elements & Principles of the Visual Language

The elements are the alphabet of the visual world and the principles are the words and sentences of the visual world. Elements often times create the principles. Artists use the Elements and Principles to communicate their ideas and feelings.

Element: Line

The edge of a shape or form or the direction followed by anything in motion.

Implied Line is a line that doesn't really exist, but appears to be present.

Actual Line is a line that is actually present.

Element: Value

Shadows from lightness to darkness

- Value variation gives a sense of space and depth to an object--emphasizing its 3 dimensionality.
- Strong contrast in value can create emphasis.

Element: Color

Color is Light reflected from a surface. It can create emphasis, harmony, emotions, unity, and movement.

■ Color has 3 distinct qualities:

1. **Hue- color**
2. **Value- lightness to darkness of a color**
3. **Intensity- brightness to dullness of a color**

- Mixing its complimentary color can dull intensity.

Element: Texture

Quality related closely to our sense of touch. It can create emphasis, movement, pattern, emotion.

- **Implied texture** is texture that appears to be present but it is an illusion. It is not really present.
- **Actual texture** is texture that really exists & it can be felt.

Element: Shape

Shape encloses a 2 dimensional area. Shape can create most of the elements and many of the principles.

- Types of shapes: Organic-curved edges, continuous Geometric-sharp edges, angles

Element: Form

Form encloses a volume or three-dimensional area.

- Light and dark value variations and space are used to emphasize form.

Element: Space

Space: Illusion of depth and space.

- Ways to create space:
 1. Overlapping -- Shapes or forms in front of each other
 2. Holes & cavities

Principle: Balance

The equalization of elements in a work of art. There are 3 kinds of balance:

1. **Symmetrical** formal, divided in half same
2. **Asymmetrical** informal, divided in half not same
3. **Radial- circular**, design starts from center > out

Principle: Unity/Harmony

Relates to the sense of oneness, wholeness, or order in a work of art. Combining similar colors, shapes, lines, textures, and patterns in an artwork can create harmony.

Principle: Movement

Refers to the arrangement of parts in a work of art to create a slow to fast action of the eye.

Pattern, contrast, line can create this.

Principle: Rhythm

It is a type of movement in an artwork or design often created by repeated objects. There are different types of rhythm:

1. **Regular**- Example: 9s9s9s9s9s9
2. **Irregular**- Example: qqeeqqeyyy

Principle: Emphasis

Refers to placing greater attention to certain areas or objects in a piece of work.

- Emphasis can be created through sudden and abrupt changes in opposing elements. (Example: bright yellow dot in large black area)

Principle: Proportion

Refers to the relationship of certain elements to the whole and to each other.



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Principle: Pattern

Is created by repetition of (not limited to) shape, line, color, or texture.

Principle: Gradation

Refers to a way of combining elements by using a series of gradual changes.

Examples of **Gradation**:

1. Gradually from small shapes to large shapes
2. Gradually from a dark color to a light color
3. Gradually from shadow to highlight

Principle: Variety

It is achieved through diversity and change. Using different line types, colors, textures, shapes.....



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