

The Elements & Principles of Design



Elements

The **Elements of Design** are the individual building blocks of our visual language and design expression.

Principles

The **Principles of Design** use the elements in different combinations to create visually satisfying design solutions.

Imagine the **Elements** as the Ingredients in a cake, the **Principles** as the recipe to make the cake, and the **Design** as the final cake.



ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

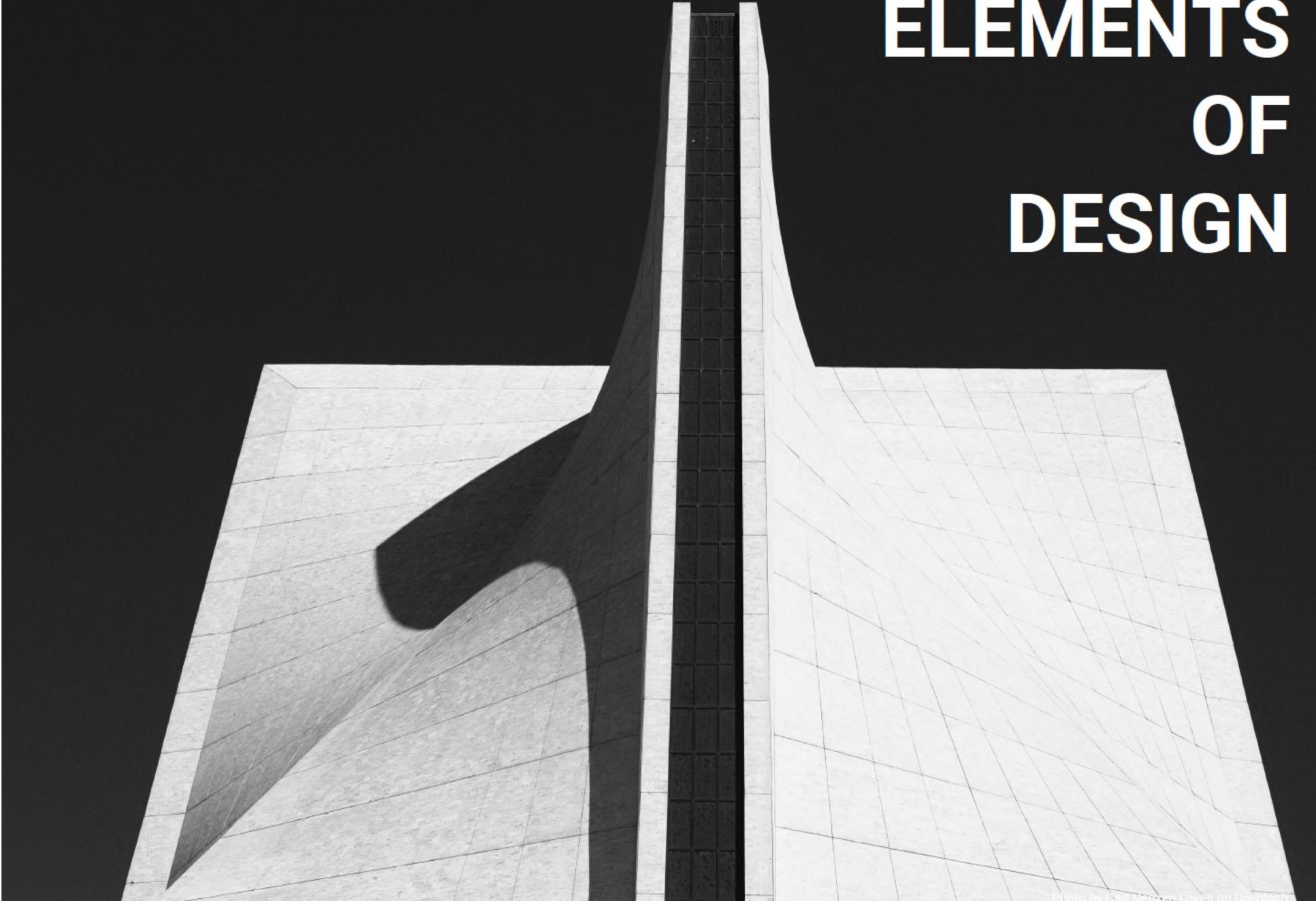
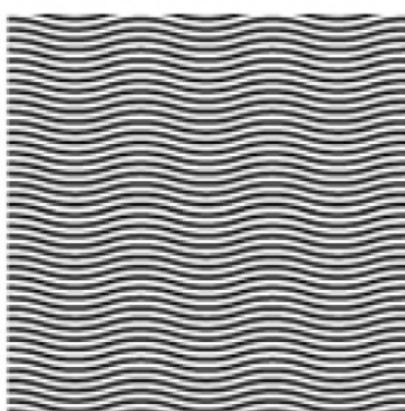
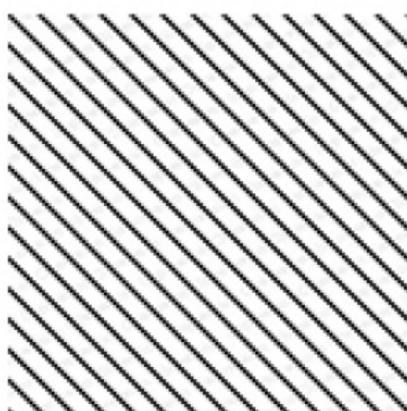
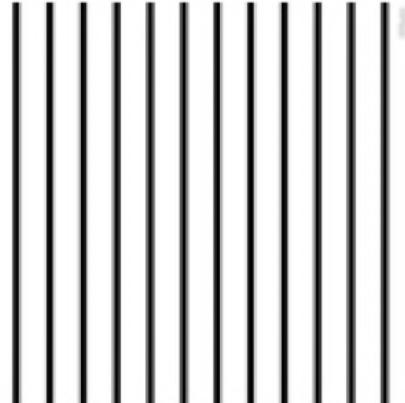


Photo by Carl Neira - Unsplash



Elements

Line

Direction of line includes:

Vertical – represents, dignity, formality, stability and strength

Horizontal – represents calm rest and ease

Diagonal - represents action, activity, excitement and movement

Curvilinear – represents, freedom, playfulness and softness

Image source: <https://www.pixlis.com/background-image-horizontal-lines-and-stripes-seamless-tileable-22hcbv.htm>
<http://www.franticstamper.com/assets/images/products/impression%20obsession/io-clg-cc148.jpg>
<http://www.stanleywilliamhayter.com/fig%2036.gif>

Elements

Shape

Shape is a two-dimensional element that suggests outline or silhouette. Primary shapes include the square, circle and triangle. Irregular shapes are organic and include natural, stylistic and abstract form.



Photo by [Scott Webb](#) on [Unsplash](#)

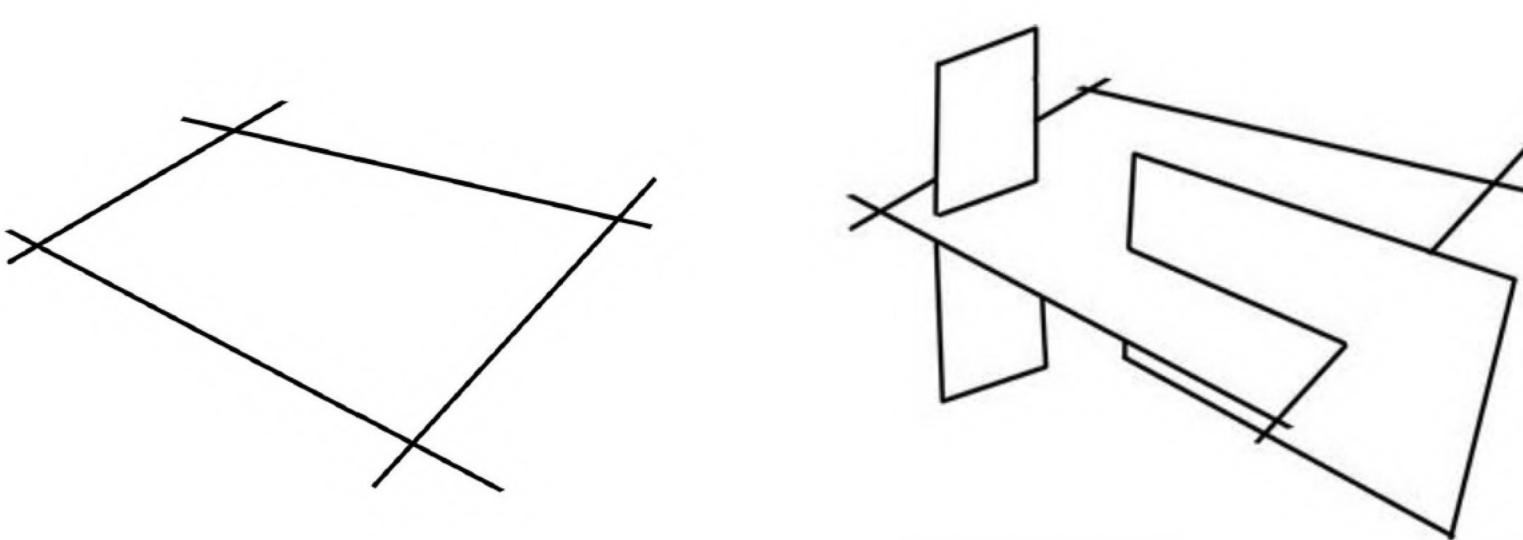


Photo by [Simone Hutsch](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Plane

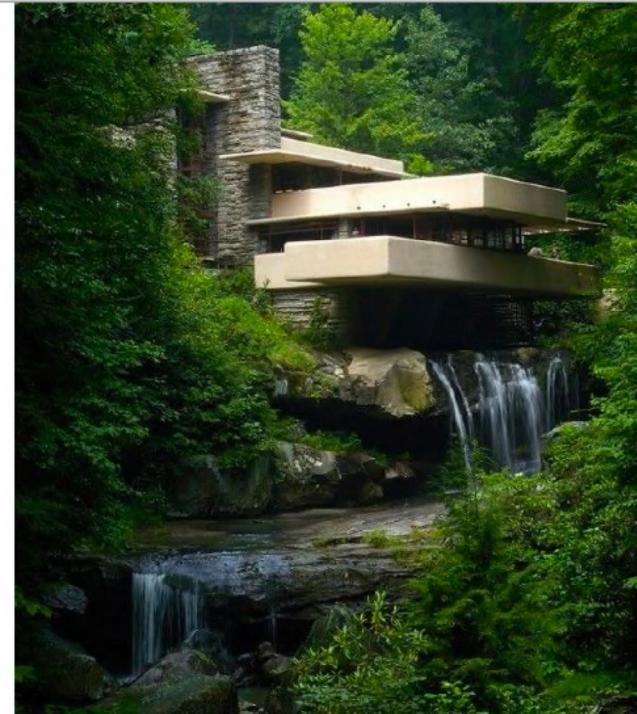
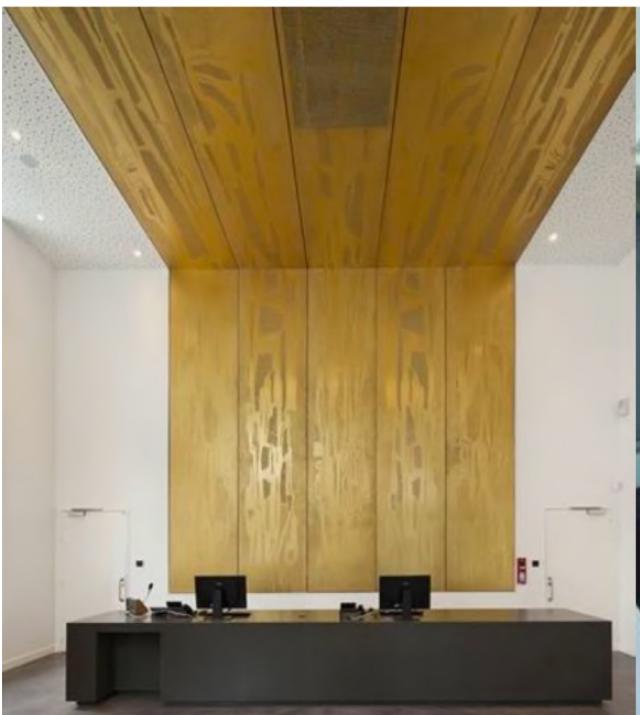
Conceptually, a plane has length and width but no depth. Planes are formed by walls (vertical divisions), ceilings (overhead planes) and floors (base plane). Planes can act in a similar way to lines – a horizontal plane is restful and at ease, a vertical plane is stable, strong and uplifting, a curved plane is playful, suggesting movement, and a diagonal plane also suggests movement but it has more dynamic force.



Elements

Plane

The properties of each plane – their size , shape, colour, texture and the spatial relationship between one another will ultimately determine the visual attributes of the three- dimensional **form** they define and the qualities of the **space** they enclose.

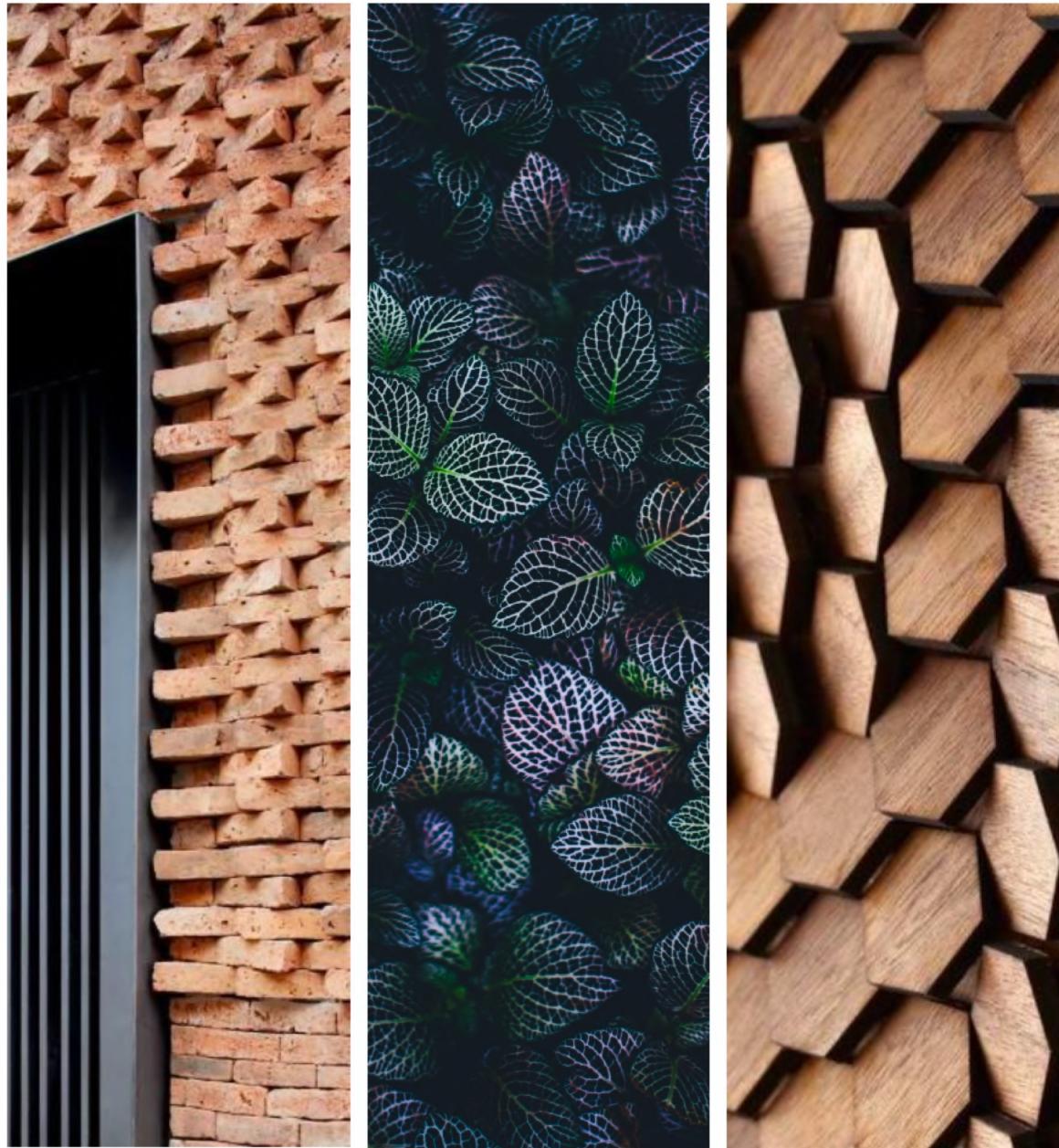


<http://hatchdesign.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Vertical-Line.jpg>
www.archdaily.com/586524/drolet-residence-naturehumaine/ Eilkhaneh /
[SHIFT] Process Practice
<https://au.pinterest.com/pin/408983209885190475>

Elements

Texture

Texture refers to the surface quality that is either tactile, 3-D (actual) or visual, 2D which looks textured but is actually smooth. Texture can be classified as being either natural, deliberate or consequential



<http://hatchdesign.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Vertical-Line.jpg>
www.archdaily.com/586524/drolet-residence-naturehumaine/ Eilkhaneh / [SHIFT] Process Practice
Photo by [Annie Spratt](#) on [Unsplash](#)/

Elements

Light

Light allows us to see our world either from natural or artificial sources. Natural light includes the sun (sunrise, noon light, sunset), stars, moon and fire light. Natural light occurs in different qualities and is essential for our life and well-being.

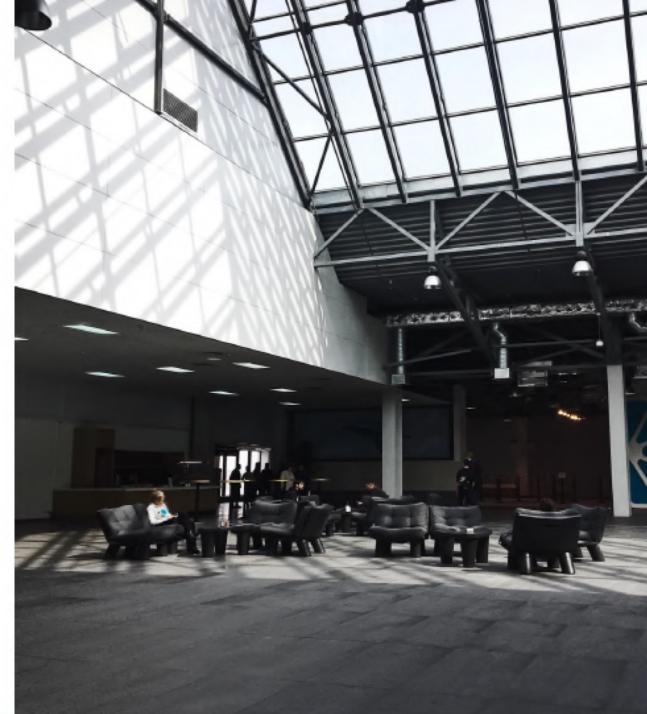
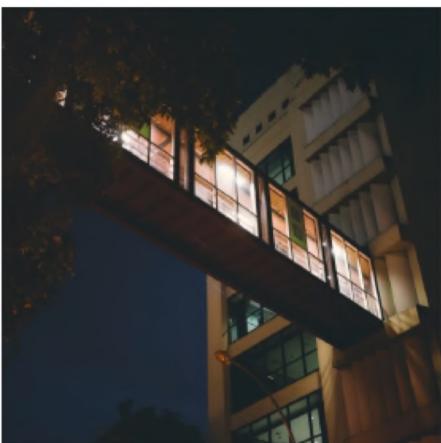


Photo by [Stacy Heideschar](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Elements

Light

Artificial light is manmade and includes LED, halide, fluorescent lamps, etc. to provide us with night light in the home, at work or in our urban environment.

Photo by [George Kedenburg III](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Form

Form is 3 dimensional – it has visual form i.e. shape, mass, volume, weight and dimension. Form has a sense of scale i.e. human, modular, structural, and has a visual quality i.e. it has texture, light and shade.

Reference: Ching, F. Form Space and Order pg 92





Photo by Denys Nevezhain on [Unsplash](#)

Elements

Form

Form can be classified as:

Structural – timber columns and beams

Complying – stairs, handles, balustrade, sink, tap handle

Enclosing – form creating internal space, tap, pipes, cabinets, walls, etc.

Expressive – selected 'style' and characteristic expression of materials.



Elements

Space

Space is also three dimensional - it has shape, volume and direction able to create separation and connection. Different types of spaces have different physiological and psychological effects – spaces can be claustrophobic and uncomfortable, cosy and intimate, generous and roomy, empty and oppressive, etc.



Photo by [Jason Leung](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Elements

Colour

COLOUR refers to the aspect of objects which can be described in terms of hue, lightness and saturation.

View this Video:

https://youtu.be/_2LLXnUdUlc

Create a colour wheel!

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN



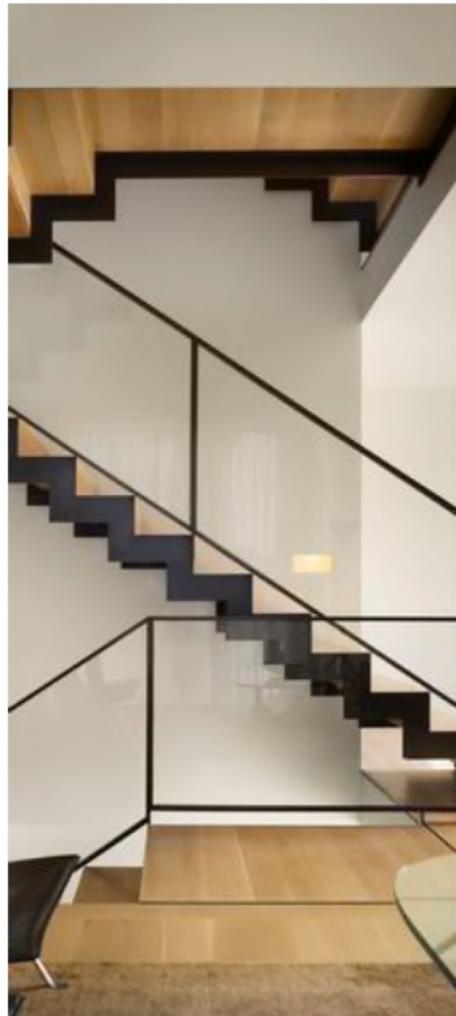
Photo by [Simone Hutsch](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Principles

Contrast



Photo by [Sergii Bozhko](#) on [Unsplash](#)



https://st.hzcdn.com/simgs/5bb121a701dd7ec0_4-6495/modern-living-room.jpg
<https://designartlovestory.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/contrast.jpg>



Photo by [Boudewijn Huysmans](#) on [Unsplash](#)

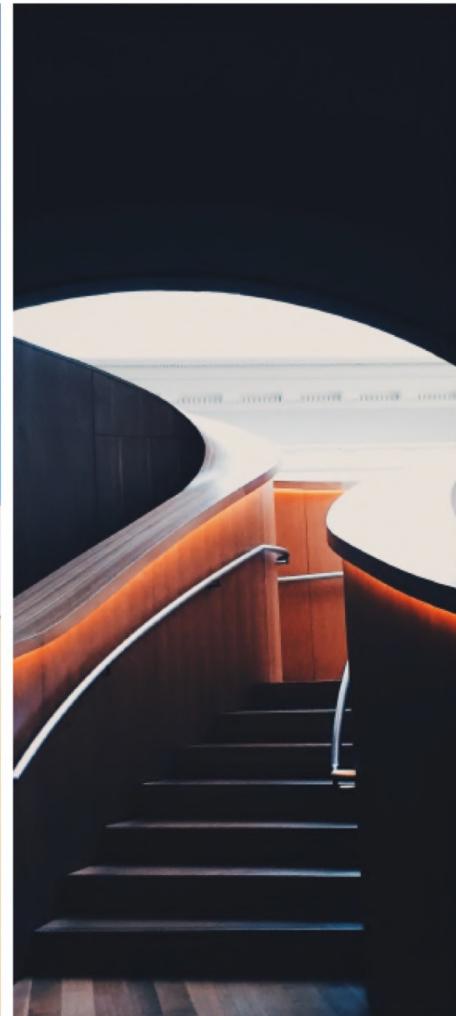


Photo by [Arturo Castaneyra](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Principles

Contrast

Contrast is using opposing qualities next to each other – black and white or complimentary colours, large and small, smooth and rough, thick and thin, old and new, etc. The greater the contrast, the more something will stand out and call attention to itself. Variety can add interest and break the monotony of simple repetitions.



Photo by [Simone Hutsch](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Simone Hutsch](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Samuel Zeller](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Principles

Repetition

The repeated use of a shape, colour, or other element.

Repetition is ordered and regular that can unify the different parts into a whole. Too much repetition can become monotonous. Variety within repetition can create patterns, movement and rhythm to produce a more visually appealing composition.

Principles

Rhythm

Rhythm has a beat and sequence and
creates a sense movement



Principles

Gradation

Gradation is progressive rhythm showing a progression of lines or forms to create a sense of moving forward or up. It is a gradual change of the elements from light to dark, small to big, smooth to rough, etc.



Photo by [Pierre Châtel-Innocent](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Céline Haeberty](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Efe Kumaz](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Principles

Emphasis

Dominance (also known as emphasis) is concerned with the visual weight of an element by size, colour, texture, shape, etc. The dominant part of a composition is the one that stands out the most or appears closest to you. There are 3 stages of dominance: dominant, sub-dominant and subordinate.



HIGHLIGHT

Breaking the visual hierarchy using form to lay emphasis



COLOUR

To distinguish between elements in a series of similar forms



SIZE

Elements of different sizes focus the viewers attention accordingly

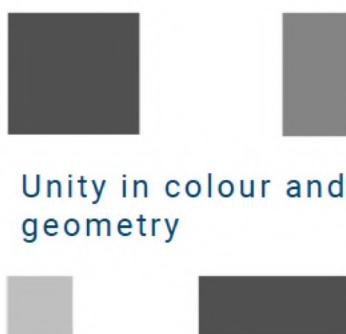
Principles

Unity

Unity refers to the relationship or connection between the various parts within a composition and their relationship or connection to the composition as a whole. Compositions without unity are visually awkward and create unease.



Unity in proximity

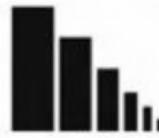


Unity in colour and geometry



Principles

Proportion



SIZE

Elements of different sizes in relationships with each other



RATIO

Elements related to each other in a ratio appear together in visual harmony



DIVISIONS

These create focal points that automatically give a sense of the relationships

The relative size, scale or weight between elements in the design composition. It relates to our physical size (human scale), building/material sizes that are modular and interlocking or proportioning systems like golden mean and the Fibonacci numbers, etc.



Principles

Balance

Balance refers to the arrangements of design elements within a composition, how they relate to each other and the overall composition. Elements can have different visual weights dependent on their size, shape or colour and if positioned poorly they can unbalance a composition. There are three types of balance – symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial. (Cahill, 2016)



SYMMETRY

Elements on either side of the axis are arranged similarly



ASYMMETRY

Elements on each side differ in shape but still are in visual equilibrium



RADIAL

Elements are arranged around a circular form

Principles

Balance

SYMMETRICAL



ASYMMETRY



The visual balance is equal – it is a mirror image.

The visual balance shifts to accommodate the even distribution of weight.