

COOKING UP A GREAT DESIGN

Just about any endeavor we engage in involves elements and principles. Be it playing a game, driving a car, getting dressed for work or... cooking. In fact, creating a successful design is just like cooking a good meal.

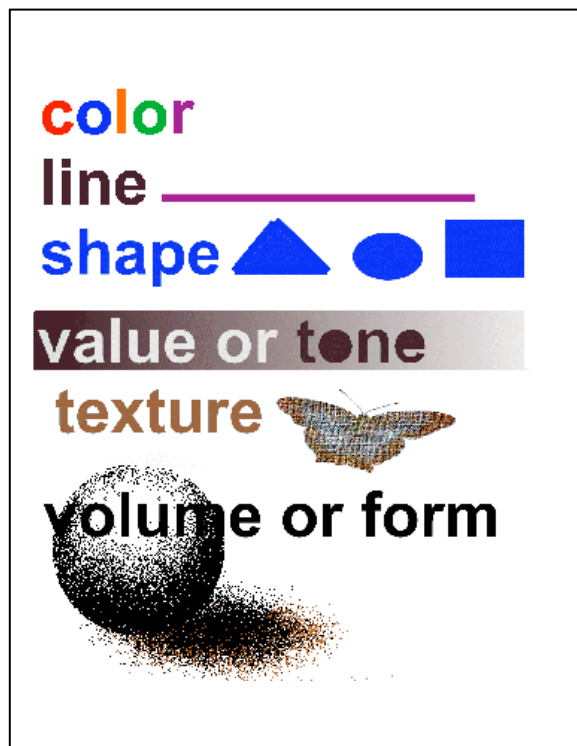
You can start with an idea for what kind of a meal it's going to be (a bar-b-que, French bistro, English pub-grub). Then you decide what dishes you will serve (grilled veg, crepes, fish and chips). Next you select the ingredients (corgettes, mushrooms in cream, potatoes). You combine and prepare the various ingredients (grill, steam, fry). Lastly, you assemble the prepared dishes and serve up your meal.

So it is with designing a piece of artwork be it jewellery, sculpture, or a painting. You start with the elements and manipulate them according to the principles and poof – you have a design.

The following are brief explanations of the elements of art and principles of composition. They are not rules but rather ideas and concepts to be mindful of while looking and working.

Elements of Art and Principles of Composition

Elements



- You can think of the elements as the basic visual material with which to make art.
- You can think of the principles as ways to work with and arrange the elements.
- All visual material contains the elements in some arrangement.

Principles

Principles are how the elements are **used** in a composition.

* Emphasis - also called "Center of Interest." It is about dominance or visual influence. Most artists put it a bit off center and balance it with some minor themes to maintain our interest. Some artists avoid emphasis on purpose.

* Harmony - pleasing visual combinations are usually read as harmonious. However, what constitutes pleasing can be greatly influenced by one's culture (age, ethnic, socio-economic).

* Unity – the feeling of stability resulting from the coordination of the various parts of a composition. Unity without variation can be uninteresting. Unity with diversity generally has more to offer in both art and in life.

* Contrast (sometimes referred to as opposition) – Degree of difference in an element. Contrasting visual concepts can be used to get emphasis.

* Balance - the consideration of visual weight and importance. It is a way to compare the right and left/top bottom of a composition. Most balance can be resolved down to symmetrical or asymmetrical.

* Variation - You create variety when elements are changed. Repeating a similar shape but changing the size can give variety and unity at the same time. Keeping the same size, but changing the color can also give variety and unity at the same time. In visual composition, there are many ways you can change something while simultaneously keeping it the same.

* Space - effects of depth, area, and projection toward and away from the viewer add dynamic interest. Linear perspective in the real world makes things look smaller in the distance. Position in a 2 dimensional plane can also define space in a composition.

* Repetition – when an element is used more than once in a design with no apparent changes in the element.

- Repetition can be used on all of the Visual Elements and is often used to inject motion and/or rhythm into a composition.