

Elements and Principles of Design

Elements of Design

Line is a mark on a surface that describes a shape or outline. It can create texture and can be thick and thin. Types of line can include actual, implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal and contour lines.

Color refers to specific hues and has three properties—chroma, intensity and value. The color wheel is a way of showing the chromatic scale in a circle using all the colors made with the primary triad. Complimentary pairs can produce dull and neutral color.

Form is a 3-dimensional object having volume and thickness. It is the illusion of a 3-D effect that can be implied with the use of light and shading techniques. Form can be viewed from many angles.

Shape is a 2-dimensional line with no form or thickness. Shapes are flat and can be grouped into two categories, geometric and organic.

Texture is about surface quality either tactile or visual. Texture can be real or implied by different uses of media. It is the degree of roughness or smoothness in objects.

Value is the degree of light and dark in a design. It is the contrast between black and white and all the tones in between. Value can be used with color as well as black and white. Contrast is the extreme changes between values.

Principles of Design

Rhythm is a movement in which some elements are repeated regularly. Like a dance it will have a flow of objects that will seem to be like the beat of music.

Balance is a feeling of visual equality in shape, form, value, color, etc. Balance can be symmetrical or evenly balanced or asymmetrical and un-evenly balanced. Objects, values, colors, textures, shapes, forms, etc., can be used to create balance.

Contrast offers some change in value creating a visual discord in a composition. Contrast shows the difference between shapes and can be used as a background to bring objects out and forward in a design. It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.

Directional Movement is a visual flow through the composition. It can be the suggestion of motion in a design as you move from object to object by way of placement and position. Directional movement can be created with a value pattern. It is with the placement of dark and light areas that you can move your attention through the format.

Center of Interest is an area that first attracts attention in a composition. This area is more important when compared to the other objects or elements in a composition. This can be by contrast of values, more colors, and placement in the format.

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Name _____

Elements and Principles of Design

Discuss how the artist uses the elements and principles of design (Refer to the “Elements and Principles of Design” definitions.)

Name of Painting _____

Artist _____

Elements of Design

1. Find the lines in the painting. Are they mostly thick or thin? Are they mostly implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal or contour? What are the main colors?
2. Discuss the form in this painting. How is light and shading used to create the form? Are the shapes mostly geometric or organic?
3. Describe the texture. Is it rough or smooth?
4. Discuss the value—the light and dark in the painting. Is it mostly light or mostly dark?

Principles of Design

1. Discuss the use of rhythm in the painting. What are some of the repeated elements? If the painting were a dance or a kind of music, what kind of music would it be?
2. Describe the balance in the painting. Is it symmetrical or asymmetrical? What elements (objects, values, color, texture, shape, form, etc.) are used to create balance.
3. Identify any contrast you find in the painting. What different shapes do you see in the background? How do they bring other objects forward.
4. Describe the movement in this painting. What objects are used to create the movement?
5. What is the painting’s center of interest? What makes it the center of interest?