

Design Theory

The Elements & Principles of Art and Design

Elements and Principles of Art and Design

- The elements and principles of art and design are the building blocks used to create a work of art.
- The Elements (**tools**) can be thought of as the things that make up a painting, drawing, design, photograph, etc.
- The Principles (**rules**) can be thought of as what we do to the elements.

Elements

- Line
- Shape
- Form
- Space
- Color
- Value
- Texture

Principles

- Rhythm
- Movement
- Pattern
- Balance
- Proportion
- Variety
- Emphasis
- Harmony
- Unity

Elements

Line

Point of a path

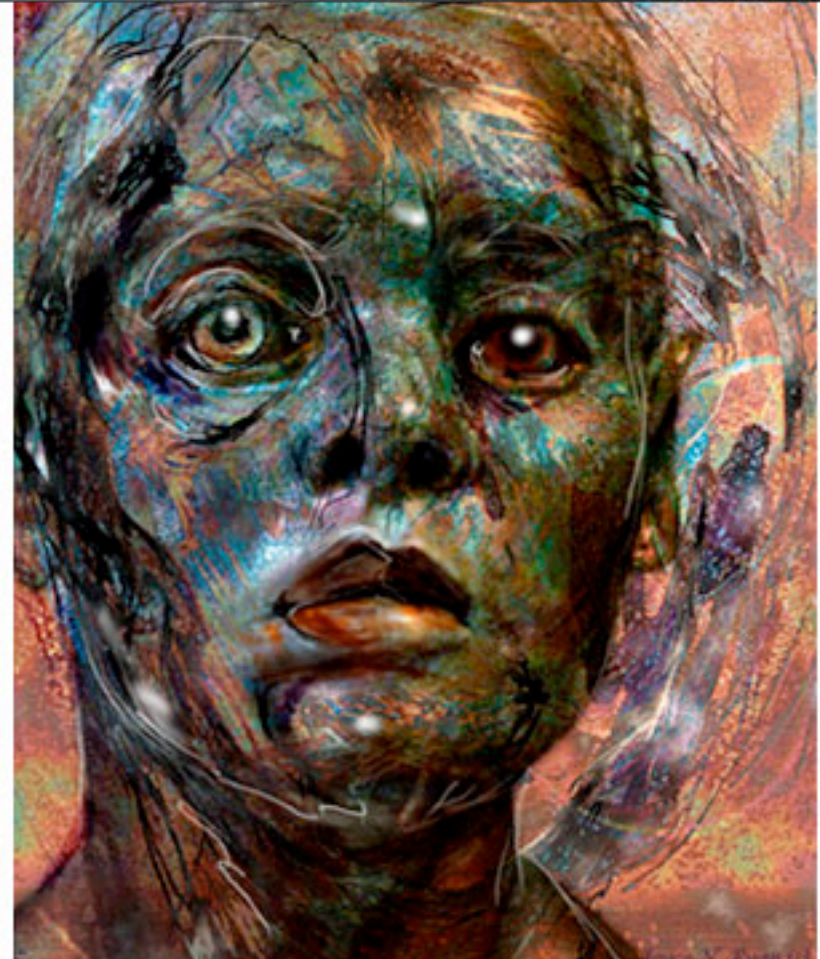
Line

In this image, hatching was used to define the woman's face. The line quality is controlled but sketch like.



Line

This image has the same subject. However, the artist has created a very different feeling by using a heavy, gestural line.



Shape

Perceivable two-dimensional area

Shape

Shapes can be created by line, or by color and value changes which define their edges. Shapes can either be geometric or organic. The shapes of the objects that you create or place in your images are positive shapes. The spaces around these shapes are the negative spaces.

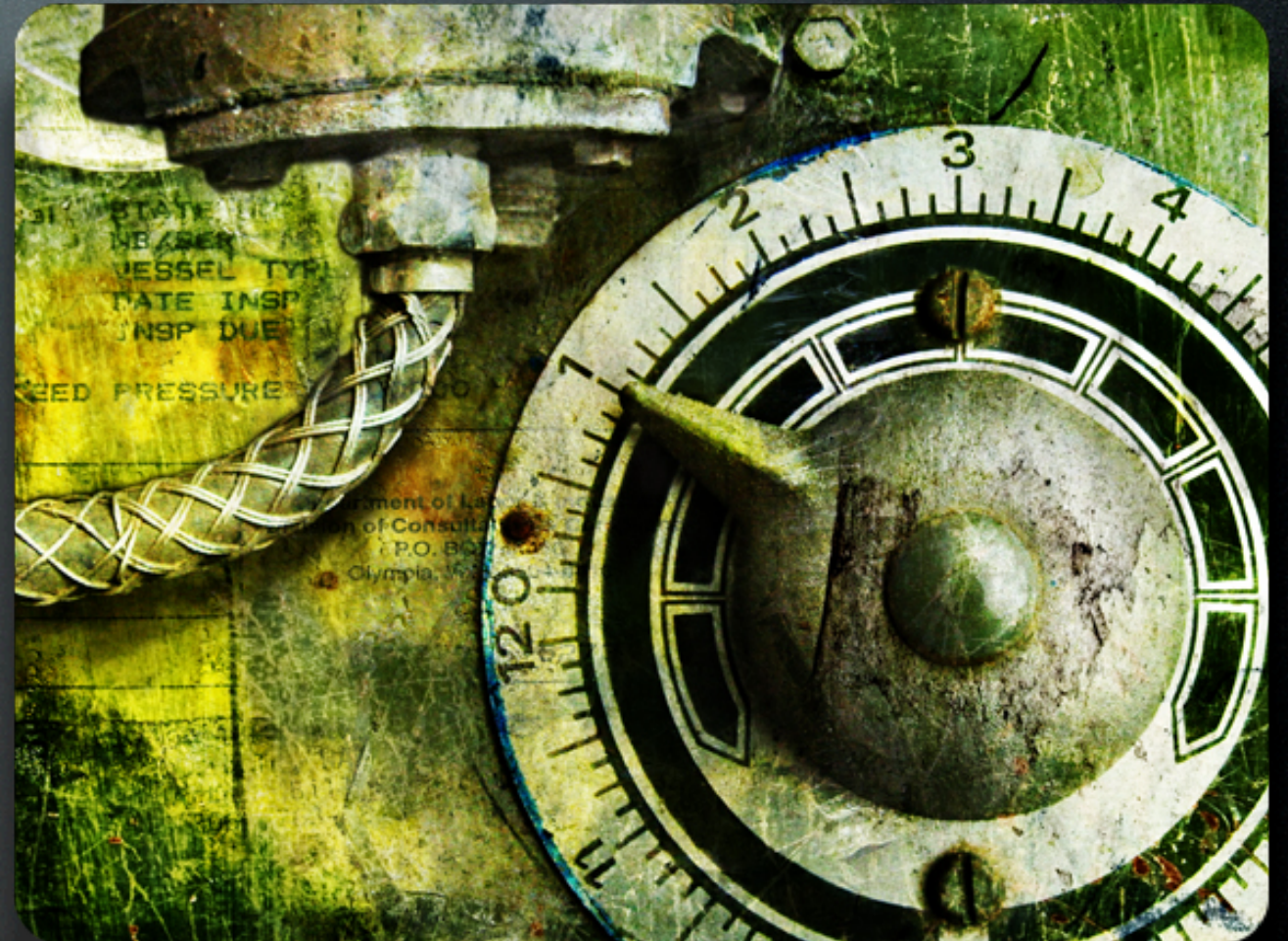


Form

Three-dimensional shapes: length, width, & depth

Form

Like shapes, forms can also be geometric or free-form. Artists create both shapes and forms. In two-dimensional works, they can use lines and shapes to represent forms.



Space

Height and width

Space

A monitor display has two actual dimensions -height and width. In addition, an artist can create an illusion of depth, using overlapping, diminishing scale, atmospheric perspective, vertical placement, warm and cool colors, diagonals and linear perspective.



Color

Reflected light

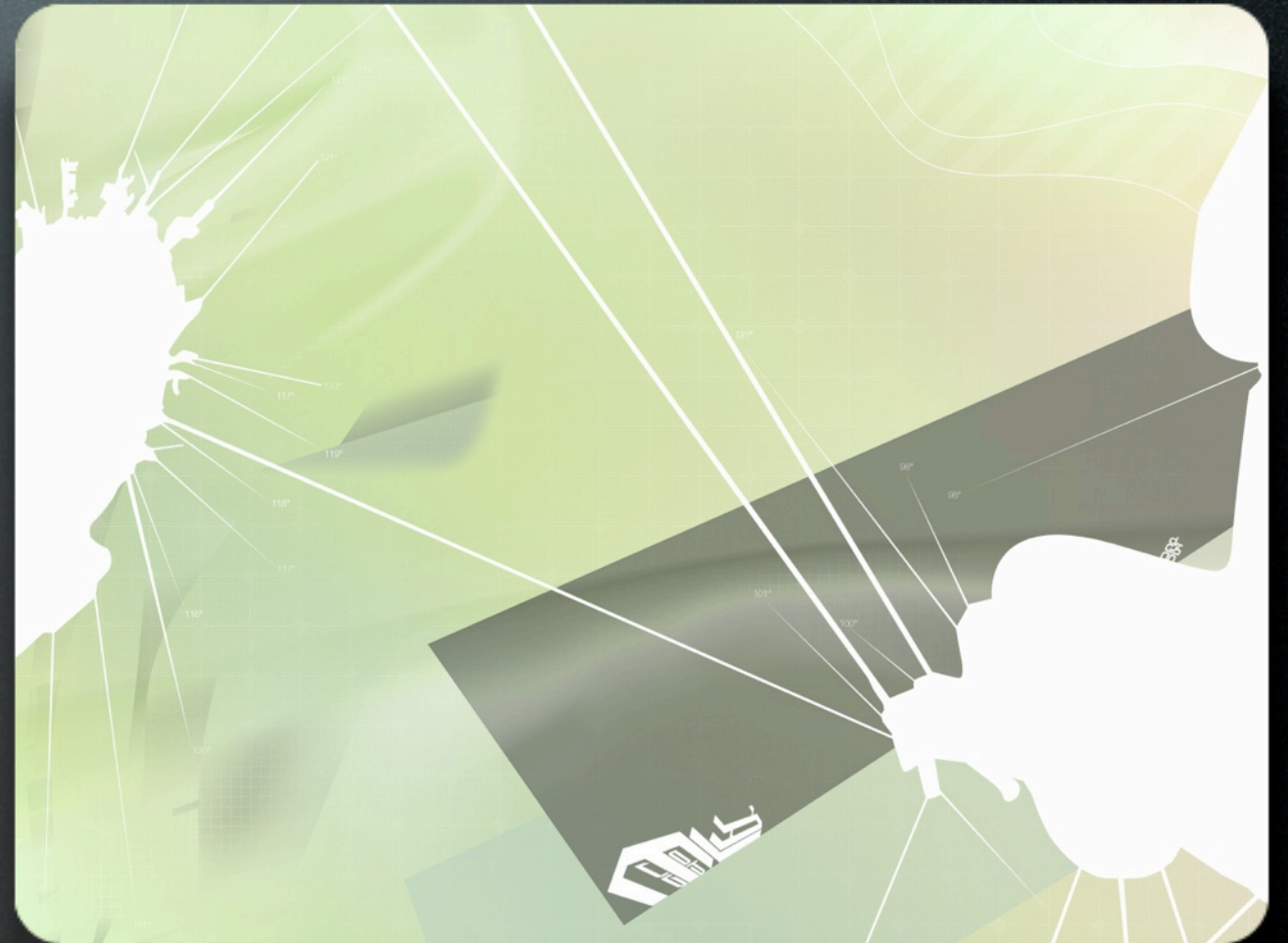
Color

The image to the right has intense, complimentary colors that equate to strong conflicting emotions.



Color

This image uses subdued, analogous color to create a very different feeling.



Value

Relative light and darkness

Value

The black & white image at the right conveys a sense of drama between the trees and the clouds. The dramatic mood is created, in large part, by the high contrast of light and dark values.



Value

Value also describes the lightness or darkness of color. This image has a strong value change from light to dark giving it a dramatic mood.



Texture

Surface quality

Texture

Visual texture is the illusion of a three-dimensional surface. There are two kinds of visual texture: simulated and invented. Simulated textures imitate real or tactile texture, the texture you feel, such as when vinyl flooring is made to look like stone.

Invented textures are two-dimensional patterns that do not represent real surface qualities but evoke memories of unusual textures.



Principles

Rhythm

Movement by the repetition of objects

Rhythm

You can hear rhythm in music and poetry. In visual rhythm, you receive through your eyes rather than through your ears. Visual rhythm is created by repeated positive shapes separated by negative spaces. The repeated shapes are like the beats in music. Visual rhythms create a sensation of movement—like the real action of a bouncing ball—and your eyes bounce from one shape to the next.



Movement

Guides your eyes thru an image

Movement

Visual movement is used to create the look and feeling of action and to guide the viewer's eyes throughout the work of art.



Pattern

Decorative surface design

Pattern

Pattern can be described as a repeating unit of shape or form, but it can also be thought of as the "skeleton" that organizes the parts of a composition.

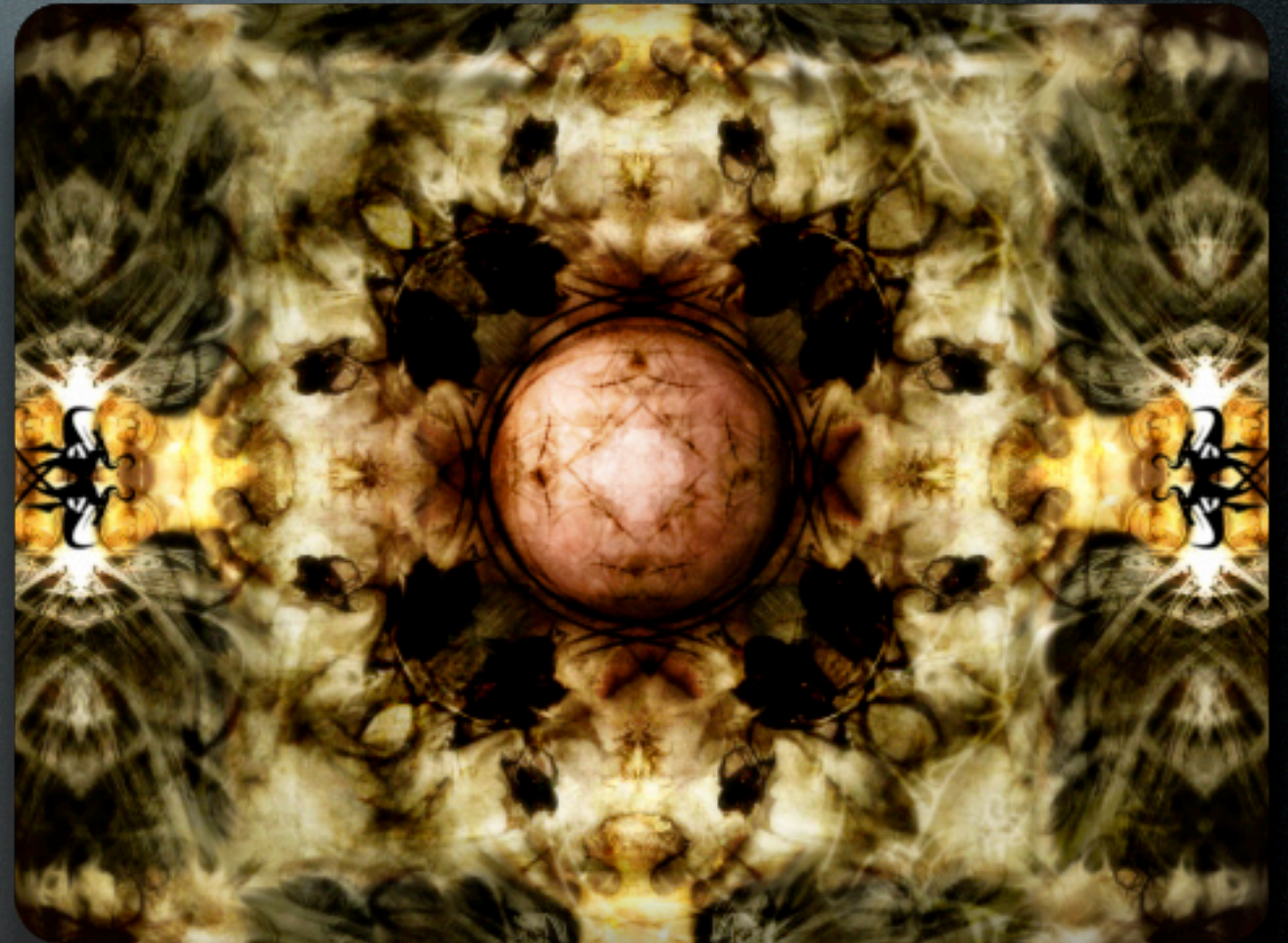


Balance

Equalizing the visual weight of elements

Balance

The image on the right is
symmetrically (formally) balanced -
one half mirrors the other.



Balance

This image uses **asymmetrical** (informal) balance. Asymmetrical balance seems more realistic than formal balance because it is closer to what appears in nature. Rather than consisting of equal halves or sides, it relies on the artistic arrangement of objects to appear balanced. To achieve informal balance, artists must consider the visual weight, or attraction, that elements in a work of art have to the viewer's eyes.



Proportion

Relative size within the work

Proportion

Variations in scale within a work can change the work's total impact. This image uses exaggeration and distortion—deviations from expected, normal proportions—to create works with unusual expressive qualities.



Variety

Concerned with difference or contrast

Variety

When a certain element predominates in a design, contrasting elements can be added. Light against dark, scale changes, informal balance, etc. Another way to add variety is by adding emphasis.



Emphasis

Focal point

Emphasis

Emphasis refers to the object or element which first catches our attention. An artist needs to create an area of emphasis - a focal point that begins the path our eyes will follow as we take in the whole art work. In this image, our eye is first drawn to the red eye. Color contrast between this element and the rest of the image is used.



Harmony

Creates unity by stressing the similarities
of separate but related parts.

Harmony

Color can produce harmony as can repetitions of related shapes. Even space can create harmony when the spaces between shapes in an artwork are uniform.



Unity

Quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through the effective use of the elements and principles of art.

Unity

To create unity, an artist adjusts the parts of a work so they relate to one another and to the whole work. One way to create unity is through simplicity. By limiting the number of variations of an element, a design will seem more unified. Repetition of objects and elements is also an effective way to create unity. In a work where there are many different objects, the same elements can be used to represent them. Proximity, or closeness, is another way of unifying shapes in work. Limiting the negative space between unlike objects, and adding an area of negative space around a cluster of objects, suggests coherence.



