Elements & Principles of Design

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

LINE

Spatial: create distance and the illusion of 3 dimensions

Decorative: create patterns

Expressive: evoke feelings

SHAPE

Created by a line that defines the boundaries of a form (a closed area)

COLOUR

Hue:
a pure colour that is not mixed with black, gray or white.

Intensity:
the brightness or dullness of a colour.

Warm and Cool:
warm colours are inviting or energizing and are associated with warmth; cool colours evoke a feeling of distance.

Complimentary Colours:
are opposites on the colour wheel and have the effect, when placed side by side, of making one another appear brighter.

Tertiary Colours:
Colours that are related to each other and appear side by side on the colour wheel—especially visible on an extended colour wheel (ex: red, red-orange, orange red & orange).

VALUE

Is the measure of the lightness or darkness of an image.

TEXTURE

Texture is the description of a surface and how it may feel.

SPACE

Space is divided into three areas:

Real space is 3 dimensional.

Illusory space has the appearance of 3 dimensions.

Pictorial space is defined by positive (occupied) and negative (unoccupied) space.
Often associated with 2 dimensions.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Balance

Balance refers to the distribution of interest; symmetrical balance occurs when the viewer has an equal interest in all parts of the image where as asymmetrical balance occurs when one area holds more interest than all of the other areas.

Movement

Related to balance, Movement is how the viewer's eye moves around the image.

Gradation

Related to both value and colour, Gradation is the visual transition between colours or value (most commonly in a linear or radial fashion); some of the effects of this principle can be used to create movement, define space or generate dominance.

Size

Refers to the relationship of elements and the area or space that they occupy.

Variety

Variety is the mix of ideas and technique.

Repetition

Repetition is when an element is duplicated. Often used with variety to generate interest vs monotony.

Contrast

The use of opposing elements of design.

Harmony

The combination of similar and related elements to create a visually satisfying effect. (for example the use of a tertiary colours palette and similar shapes).

Unity

Unity is the harmony of all the elements and should extend beyond the visual components to include elements such as subject matter and emotional intent (an example would be Van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Crows* which combines various elements and principles to enhance the intention and reception of the painting; as Van Gogh has put it "...these canvases will tell you what I cannot say in words…").

Unity

Unity is the harmony of all the elements.

Dominance

Dominance can be created through the use of one or more of the elements of design and provides focus &/or interest to the design which can alleviate both confusion and monotony.