

The Elements and Principles of Design

Line

Shape

Color

Value

Form

Space

Unity

Texture

Balance

Emphasis

Contrast

Alignment

Pattern

Visual Movement

Variety

Repetition

Rhythm

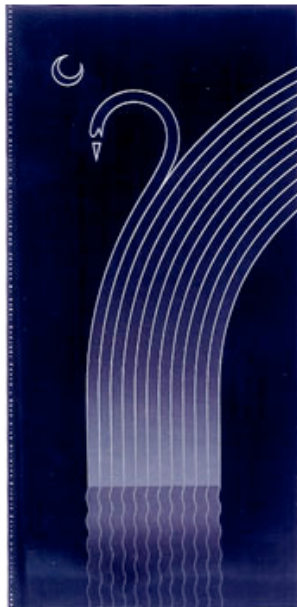
Proximity

Elements

Line in Graphic Design

This poster shows how just a few strokes of line can be used to effectively illustrate a swan. While the lines do not adhere to the anatomy of a swan, the image is unmistakable, and the simplicity and grace of the lines convey a feeling of tranquility.

There are no excess lines; the poster has just the number of lines needed to communicate this image. Particularly successful is the use of wavy lines to communicate a reflection on the water. Type is used sparingly (only along the left edge,) and only to provide needed information to the viewer.



Swan Poster
McRay Magleby
Magleby and Company

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Shape in Graphic Design

The union of unlikely combinations is probably the best way to create a concept. In this design, the hand combined with the dove creates an especially stark and powerful image. Had the images been more realistic, the poster would not have near the strength. What makes this poster great is the simplicity of the shapes.



Youth Violence Poster
Joel Templin
Templin Brink Design

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Form in Fine Art



Francisco de Zurbarán - "Still Life with Pottery Jars", 1600s

Space can be felt in de Zurbarán's painting because of the overlapping of forms (two of the vessels and the saucers they sit on, and the table under all of them.) Shading creates three-dimensional forms out of shapes.

Source: *Elements and Principles of Design: Student Guide with Activities*, published by Crystal Productions

Value in Graphic Design



Cyclone Self Promotion
Dennis Clouse, Traci Daberk
Cyclone Design

This poster is good example of both color and value. It is also an appropriate example of how proper texture can enhance a design. In fact, it uses type as texture.

But first, let's look at value. The poster is very colorful but low-key in value, meaning that except for black, the values are overall similar. Because of the color palette, it does not run the risk of being anywhere near monochromatic. Compare the original on top with a black-and-white version below it.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Color in Graphic Design

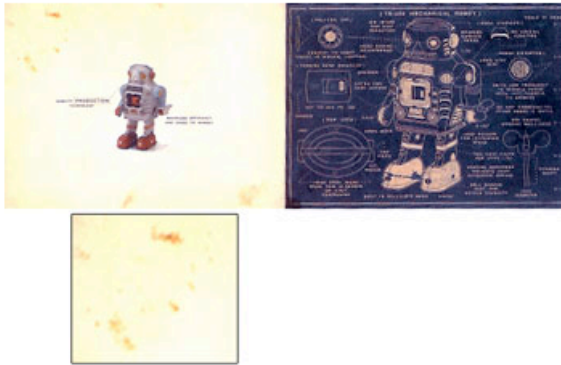


Black Cat Menu
Dennis Clouse
Cyclone Design

This menu is designed using all warm tones. Warm tones consist of any color on the warm side of the spectrum: yellows, reds, oranges and purples. The effect is great for a menu because it communicates a comfortable feeling and a compatibility with food. Could you imagine this same menu done in cool tones: blues and greens? The effect would be completely different. It is no coincidence that most fast-food restaurants use yellows and reds for their identities. These colors have been shown to be among the most appetizing.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Texture in Graphic Design



Fossil Annual Report
David Eden
Fossil

From cover to cover, this annual report from fossil uses texture to carry the design. Fossil, by nature, effectively relies on nostalgia to position their products. Thus the notion of old ledger paper and classic catalog art are entirely appropriate. There are at least a half dozen printed paper (actual) textures in this report. As in the pages above, upon each texture sits a wonderful collection of old toys, posters and memorabilia - each enhanced by the texture behind it. The designer who learns how to use texture to influence the mood of the design and consequently that of the reader, will have learned one reason that Fossil's design has been so successful for so many years.

See the square at the bottom to get a better view of the simulated texture on the paper, making it look aged.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Space in Fine Art



Robert Henri - "Snow in New York", 1902

Henri painted this snow scene in New York City with careful attention to the feeling of space. Henri uses several basic techniques to show space: perspective, values, overlapping, and size of shapes.

White Space in Design

White space is the part of the design that "isn't" there. It is the space *between* visual elements — it's an integral part of the message. White space tells you where one section ends and another begins.

Also Know As:

- Negative Space
- Background

What is it?

As important as the elements that are there. The unified background [color\(s\)](#), [textures](#), effect or image make up the white or negative space.

Why is important?

- White or negative space help frame and contain the design.
- It avoids visual clutter, looks "clean"
- It can also help to focus the viewer on something specific.
- Helps keep [flow](#) going.

How to achieve it

- Empty space
- Blurred backgrounds
- [Patterns](#)

Note:

- In regards to [balance](#), it's usually the case that you want more negative (or white) space than positive space despite the principle of balance.
- White Space is also important in page [layout](#).

Next Page—Elements...

Elements

Balance in Graphic Design

At first glance, an observer may wonder how this cover could possibly represent a good example of balance. Think of this design not in terms of balancing two mirrored sides (symmetrical balance), but of two different elements—type and shape—offsetting each other. The illustration on the left side is basically built of shapes, while the right side of the design is primarily type. The two are placed in the



How to Be a Wicked Witch Book Cover
Dennis Clouse
Cyclone Design and Illustration

way as to create a sense of near-perfect balance. The dark vignettted border and the tail of the cat coming up to the right edge of the cover do wonders to stabilize the design.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Further Definition

Balance is the attainment of optical and psychological equilibrium in a design.

What is it?

The visual weight of an image. Balance can relate to symmetry, asymmetry or radial balance.

- **Symmetrical Balance** is an even placement of visual weight in the design.
- **Asymmetrical Balance** creates uneven spaces, a sense of imbalance making tension and a dynamic suggestion of visual movement. Asymmetrical balance refers to a psychological or "felt" balance. Space and shape don't need to be evenly dispersed on the page
- **Radial Symmetry** relates to images emitting from a point like spokes on a wheel or ripples from a pebble tossed into a pond.

Why is important?

People like balance; we are creatures of symmetry and appreciate it in everything. A design is like a real world building: it needs to be balanced or it doesn't work.

How to achieve it

- **Color:** Colors have weight (Red = Heavy, Baby Blue = Light)
- **Shape:** Squares can be heavier than circles
- **Lines:** Thin vs. thick
- **Size:** larger=heavier
- Use elements to create stability or a sense of dynamic space.

Notes

- Balance is vital. A design can be ruined by poor balance
- Balance should not be 50/50 in a boring mathematical sense. Different elements should add up to balance.

Rhythm in Fine Art



Marcel Duchamp - "Nude Descending a Staircase (No.2)", 1912

Duchamp painted this painting to show the rhythmic movement of a figure coming down the stairs. The effect is like stop-action or strobe-light photography, because the repeated shapes and angles of the abstracted figure move diagonally across the canvas. Try to feel the rhythm the next time you walk down some stairs.

Source: *Elements and Principles of Design: Student Guide with Activities*, published by Crystal Productions

Movement in Fine Art



Diego Rivera - "Liberation of the Peon", 1931

Rivera's painting is charged with emotion and filled with history. The naked slave (peon) is being cut free from political tyranny as well as physical enslavement by the liberating soldiers. All movement leads to the focus, where a knife is cutting the binding ropes. Notice how emphasis is placed on the act of liberation rather than on the liberating heroes. Movement is also created when we observe the direction in which the human eyes are looking—directly at the peon. This causes our eyes to follow theirs, creating visual movement toward the focus. The horses look directly at us, which draws us *into* the grouping of figures and horses.

Source: *Elements and Principles of Design: Student Guide with Activities*, published by Crystal Productions

Pattern in Fine Art



Jasper Johns - "Numbers in Color", 1958-1959

The pattern in Johns' painting is regular, consisting of 121 rectangles stacked in eleven rows, each with eleven rectangles. The numbers (0-9) seem irregular because of the irregular use and application of color. There is no focal area in many patterned paintings.

Source: *Elements and Principles of Design: Student Guide with Activities*, published by Crystal Productions

Movement in Graphic Design

In graphic design, movement is also known as **flow**.

Flow is the combination of elements to guide the viewer around the design in the correct direction. Flow begins and ends with the dominant element to help keep the eye moving constantly around the design. You never want the eye to stop.

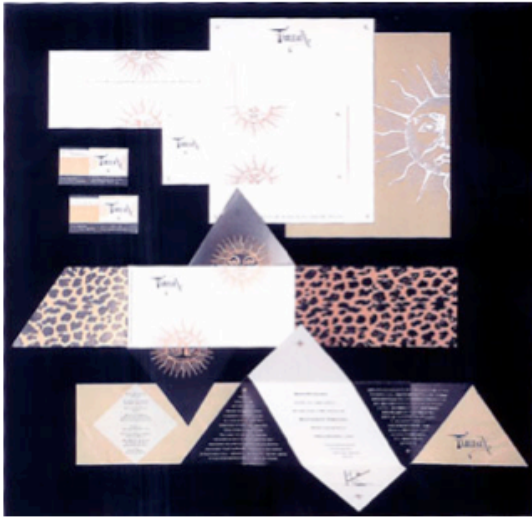
Why is important?

You want the viewer to see everything in the correct order and you want the viewer to look at your design for as long as possible. Flow can achieve this.

How to achieve it

- **Lines:** The eye will naturally follow lines from start to end
- **Abstracted arrows**
- **Text:** headlines; people read from left to right

Contrast in Graphic Design



Tableaux Restaurant Promotion
Petrula Vrontikis
Vrontikis Design Office

This elegant solution to promoting Tableaux Restaurant uses contrast and variety to create a sophisticated yet lively look. The mailer, especially, is the epitome of this approach, with its use of different yet complementary images and elements, including a leopard-skin pattern, stylized sun images, metallic bronze with olive green, Chinese type and English with calligraphic flourishes.

The address side of the mailer has a high-key value, while the opposite side is low-key. This piece is given special appeal by the use of an unusual shape and die-cut black flaps that lift up to reveal more information printed on a light screen of olive green.

The mailer, along with the rest of the identity system, uses three common colors—black, olive green and a metallic bronze—to unify the elements and give a common identity to the campaign.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson

Emphasis in Graphic Design

Emphasis is also known as **dominance** in graphic design.

What is it?

- The first thing the eye sees on a design.
- Traditionally this was the central part of the design, from which all other parts radiated.

Why is important?

- Design is to manipulate the viewer; dominance is where the viewer is to start looking
- There is an order in a design. You want the viewer to follow the correct direction, getting information in the correct order. To do this you need to force them to a specific start point on the design.
- It gets the viewer's attention.

How to achieve it

Through the use of some elements:

- Color (*Red being the best.*)
- Image
 - Shocking

- Weird
- Controversial
- Sexual
- Text or Words
 - Shocking
 - Weird
 - Controversial
 - Sexual
- Contrast (Contrasting colors, e.g. black on white)
- Size (Bigger image vs. smaller)



What is dominant here?

Variable Factors

A number of design components affect or modify what we see, but are not constant because they represent changeable relationships between the viewer and the scene. These relationships are called variable factors. Such factors as scale, proportion, distance, observer position, atmospheric conditions, light, seasons, and motion are important considerations which the designer should be aware of and which may be used effectively in proposed designs.

- scale
- proportion
- distance
- observer position
- atmospheric condition
- light
- seasons
- motion

Notes

- Be careful that your dominant element doesn't overwhelm the whole image. Too much dominance and the viewer will see nothing else.
- A view may contain more than one dominant feature: two objects of equal visual influence are said to be **codominant**. Many dominant features in a view tend to be distracting; the eye is drawn from one to another without the opportunity to focus on one major element.

Unity in Graphic Design



Target Ad Campaign
Gaby Brink
Templin Brink Design

Nowhere is unity more important than in an ad campaign. Creating unity is a form of branding: you must establish a look and attitude that are recognizable even before the content of the ad is read. This particular campaign for Target works quite well in this way. The design is fresh and attention-getting.

As simple as the idea is—combining related objects with images of the products the ads feature—it is sure to get noticed because it is also playful. Too often, the tendency is to take our assignments so seriously that we forget the value of whimsy and entertaining design in making customers feel good about the products we are endeavoring to sell.

Another nice feature of these ads is the treatment of the type. Not only are the headlines clever but the type is tastefully applied to the ad. It is interesting that the Target nameplate does not exist anywhere on the ads. The symbol is enough to identify the store.

Source: *Design Basics for Creative Results* by Bryan L. Peterson