

# The Principles of Design

Many artists need to plan their artwork or think about how they want people to react to it. The Principles of Design are the ways that artists use the Elements of Art to create good Compositions (artwork).

**Composition:** the most common element of art is the arrangement of individual parts to form a whole work of art. It is the order or organization in which an artist has arranged the artwork. In a two-dimensional piece of art, the artist arranges shapes, lines, and colors to form a symmetrical or asymmetrical composition. Sometimes it is difficult to tell what the composition is; it helps to step back from the piece or squint at it to see its true composition.

There are 11 Principles of Design

**Balance**  
**Unity/Harmony**  
**Pattern**

**Contrast**  
**Proportion**

**Emphasis**  
**Rhythm**  
**Repetition**

**Variety**  
**Movement**

**Balance:** This principle of design refers to the visual equalization of the elements in a work of art. **Balance** describes how the artist creates a visual weight. An artist thinks about the elements of line, shape, and color when balancing his or her artwork. There are three ways to balance artwork:

1) Symmetrical balance, also called formal, is when both sides of an imaginary line are the same.



2) Asymmetrical balance, also called informal, is when each side of an imaginary line is different, but equal.



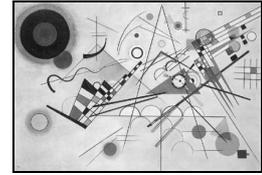
3) Radical balance means the shapes or lines grow from a center point.

**Contrast:** Two things that are very different create a contrast. For example, black and white is the biggest contrast. Contrast helps to create interest in artwork. When an artist wants something to show up, he or she uses contrast.



**Emphasis:** The principle of design that is concerned with dominance; the development of a main idea or center of interest (also called focal point).

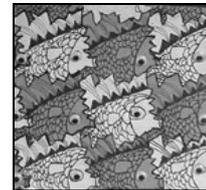
**Variety:** is achieved when the art elements are combined in various ways to increase visual interest. (For instance, an assortment of shapes that are of a variety of sizes attracts more attention than an assortment of shapes all the same size). What if every sculpture or every painting looked exactly the same? Art would be pretty boring if we didn't have the principle of variety! Variety is when there is something that looks different from other elements. An artist can use variety to make the viewer look at a certain part or to make the artwork more interesting.



**Unity/Harmony:** This principle refers to the visual quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through effective use of the elements of art and principles of design. Unity gives the artwork the feeling that everything fits together. Artists try to achieve unity in their artwork by using related elements like color, repeating lines and shapes, as well as themes.

**Proportion:** The relationship in size of one component (part) of a work of art to another. Proportion describes the size, location, or amount of an object compared to another or the size, location, or amount of one piece of an object in relation to the rest of it.

**Rhythm:** Repeating art elements to make a pattern creates a visual rhythm. When you think of rhythm, you might think of dance or music, like a drum beat. To an artist, rhythm shows movement and repetition of certain elements like color or lines that are repeated over and over



**Movement:** Movement is the design principle that uses some of the elements of art to produce the look of action or to cause the viewer's eye to sweep over the art work in a certain manner.



**Pattern:** Repetition of an element of art (i.e., shapes, lines, or colors) to achieve decoration or ornamentation.

**Repetition:** A way of combining art elements so that the same elements are used over and over to achieve balance and harmony



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End of lecture 3