Principles of Design

Balance, Emphasis, Proportion, Rhythm, Pattern, Movement, Unity, and Variety

Guidelines that artists use to organize the elements of design in a composition
Balance is the arrangement of the parts of an artwork to give a sense of overall equality in visual weight.

Artists have three ways to balance artwork:

- **Symmetrical**: when one half matches the other half – identical from a central axis. *Also known as formal balance.*

- **Asymmetrical**: when the two halves are not identical but carry same visual weight. *Also known as informal balance.*

- **Radial**: when lines or shapes spread out in a regular pattern from a center point – like a bicycle wheel.
Emphasis is the importance given to certain objects or areas in an artwork. Where one element of design dominates (dominance) the artwork.

The area of emphasis is called the focal point.

Using Emphasis in artwork:

- **Contrast**: when one element stands out from the rest
- **Isolation**: when an object is placed alone and away from the other objects in the artwork
- **Location**: occurs when the eyes are naturally drawn towards the center of an artwork.
Proportion is the relation of the parts of an artwork to each other and to the whole with regards to size, placement, and amount.

Types of Proportion

- **Standard Proportion**: when an object or person seems to have appropriate height, width, and depth compared to its surroundings. Artist will use scale to show the size of one object verses an object.

- **Altered Proportion**: proportions have being changed or distorted

- **Distortion**: is used to express feelings or ideas in a work of art
Rhythm is the repetition of visual elements, such as line, shapes, or colors that create a feeling of motion.

Types of Rhythm

- **Regular Rhythm**: repetition of an element without any variation.
- **Alternating Rhythm**: the repetition of two or more elements in an even pattern.
- **Progressive Rhythm**: created by showing regular changes in a repeated element.
Pattern is repeated colors, lines, shapes, forms, or texture in an artwork – repeated surface decoration.

Motif: unit of objects or elements that can be repeated.

Types of Pattern:

- **Random**: occurs when the motif is repeated in no apparent order – like leaves covering the ground.
- **Regular**: occurs when the motif is repeated with equal amount of space between each unit – like lines creating parking spaces or the windows on a skyscraper.
- **Alternating**: repeat a motif but change position, alter spacing, or adding a second motif – like laying down stone or brick on a driveway.
Movement leads a viewer’s eyes throughout the artwork.

Artist use visual movement in art by repeating art elements or objects. Used in two dimensional works of art.

Visual Movement is created by repeating the elements or object in a work of art.

Kinetic Movement is actual or real movement. Used in three dimensional works of art.
Variety and Unity

- **Variety** is the use of different elements to add interest to a work of art.
  - Works hand in hand with unity to create a pleasing composition or to add emphasis and meaning.

- **Unity** is the quality of seeming whole, complete, or harmonious.
  - All parts look right together.

- **Harmony** in artwork reflects how all the elements and principles work together.