

Design Principles

Chapter Summary/Notes

Chapter 4: Scale/Proportion

Introduction

Scale and Proportion

Scale – Size

Proportion – relative size, the size of an object as measured in comparison to another object or against some mental norm or standard.

Using Scale and Proportion for Emphasis

→ Large scale can make for a very obvious focal point, or create visual emphasis.

Montage – a dramatic juxtaposition in scale.

→ Can do this with cut and paste of photographs, or digitally.

Hieratic Scaling – in the past, visual scale (how big something is in a painting) was often directly related to the importance of the subject.

Example: A king, Jesus, or the Pope would be bigger than surrounding people.

I. Scale of Art

1. Human Scale Reference

Fresco - A mural painting technique in which pigments mixed in water are used to form the desired color. These pigments are then applied to wet lime plaster, thereby binding with and becoming an integral part of a wall.

The Power of Unusual Scale

Large Artworks

→ Size does impress

→ “Unusual or unexpected scale is arresting and attention-getting”

→ “Naturalistic images blown up to monumental scale cannot be ignored, and they alter the urban environment.”

Small Artworks

→ Very small artworks impress with the attention to detail.

Example: A particular culture was forbidden to create statues of their god. In order to hide them they began making them smaller and smaller until subsequently they were creating art out of rice. Sculptures so small they could only be seen under a magnifying glass. Small enough to display on the head of a needle. (Look it up true story, and truly an amazing art display.)

2. Context

Earthworks – can only be experienced fully from high up, mounding dirt to create an image over large areas. They are unique in the grandeur of their scale.

Examples:

The creations of the Nazca Picture A, and also in the large scale work of Andrew Goldsworthy.

→ Magnify simple objects to provide a new way of looking at them.

Consider Location

→ Use size in proportion to setting.

Where will it be displayed?

II. Scale Within Art

1. Internal Proportions

→ You can also consider the scale of objects in relations to one another inside of the composition. Also know as *Proportion*.

→ Regular placement and geometric repeating elements give a feel of calm and quiet order.

→ Large figures crowded together can impart a feeling of claustrophobia and chaos.

→ When things are out of proportion it is negative. However, if this is the intent of the artist, they can use it to create a particular effect.

Using Scale to Effect

→ An artist can use scale and proportion to create an emotional effect in the viewer.

For example: By placing large scale figures close together like the image *The Last Supper* by Nolde the artist creates a feeling of crowded claustrophobia.

2. Contrast of Scale

Unexpected or Exaggerated Scale

→ Scale can be used to draw our notice to the unexpected or exaggerated

→ When you magnify a small object the viewer has to look at the object differently.

Example: Georgia O'Keefe used a close up view of the interior of flowers to create a new way of looking.

Or

→ Reduce a very large object to a much smaller size to create a reaction.

→ A sudden change in scale surprises us and gets our attention.

→ Large and small scale can be combined for dramatic contrast and visual interest.

III. Scale Confusion

Surrealism and Fantasy

→ Paintings often use change of scale

Surrealism—an art form based on paradoxes; images that cannot be explained in rational terms.

→ Magritte called surrealism a “crisis of the object”.

In other words the viewer has to stop and think about the object and what they know and expect about that object.

Enigma – a mystery or unknown.

Examples of surrealist artists include Rene Magritte and Salvador Dali.

IV. Proportion

1. Notions of the Ideal

→ Proportion is linked to ratio.

Proportion is Width/ Height = %

→ Average Adult is 7 and 1/2 heads tall

→ Average model and fashion illustration is 10 head tall

→ Beauty is Subjective

Subjective - Reflecting a personal bias.

Golden Rectangle - Width is to length as length is to length plus width

(w:1 as 1:l + w)

→ Influenced art throughout the ages

→ Found in natural growth patterns. Trees, shells, etc...

→ Use in the creation of the Parthenon.

Golden Mean – *The ratio of the golden rectangle.*

Fibonacci Sequence

→ A counting sequence in which each new number is the sum of the previous 2.

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34,...

→ In art the proportion of 3:5 is often used for landscapes and portraits.

2. Root Rectangles

→ Root Rectangles are derived from the square.

Examples of root rectangles include; root 2, root 3 and root 5.

→ Roots offer artist new methods for exploration

→ Roots also often result in agreeable proportions. (They look nice.)

Façade - The face or frontal aspect of a form.