

# The Formal Elements and Principles of Art and Design

## Principles of Design

**Balance** is the equilibrium of formal elements in a work of art. Broad categories include symmetry, asymmetry, overall balance, and radial balance.

**Scale** is the size of an object in relation to things around it. Proportion is the size relationship of parts belonging to one object or figure.

**Unity** refers to a coherent total effect that creates a sense of harmony in a work of art. Variety refers to diversity or difference which acts as a visual counterpoint to unity.

**Emphasis** is the principle that states that the viewer's attention will be drawn to some parts of the composition more than others. Those points of attention are called focal points.

**Rhythm** is the measured repetition of accented elements that move the eye through a composition.

## Elements of Art

**Line** is the path of a moving point that provides direction and detail to a work of art. An implied line is a series of points that the eye connects.

A **shape** is a two-dimensional area that stands out from the surrounding space because of an identifiable boundary. The shape itself occupies positive space, while the surrounding area is the negative space. Likewise, a **form** is a three-dimensional area that stands out from the surrounding space because of an identifiable boundary. The form itself occupies positive space, while the surrounding area is the negative space.

A **mass** is usually solid, and a **volume** is usually hollow.

**Space** is the implied or real sensation of two or three dimensions.

**Texture** is the tactile surface qualities of a work of art that appeal (vicariously) to the sense of touch. These can be actual or visual.

**Value** is the light and dark in a work of art independent of color. **Light** is the measure of illumination or shadow in a full range of colors.

**Color** is a property of light determined by specific light wavelengths, known as the hues. A color will have a hue, a value, and a saturation/intensity.