Art in Two Dimensions: Line, Shape, and the Principle of Contrast
Elements and Principles

Ten Elements
Line
Shape
Form
Mass
Volume
Color
Space
Value
Texture
Time/Motion

Elements of art are the vocabulary of art

Ten Principles
Balance
Proportion
Unity
Variety
Contrast
Emphasis
Focal Point
Pattern
Rhythm
Scale

Principles are the grammar of art-rule to organize design
Two-Dimensional Art

- Two-dimensional art
  - Is flat or with very low relief
  - Has height and width, but not physical depth
- Here is discussion of three elements
- Line    Shape    Contrast
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Pb5WV1RnXQ
- Mission Impossible
## Definition and Functions of Line

- Connects two points
- Defines the boundaries between planes
- Defines shapes
- Directs the viewer’s eye
- Conveys a sense of movement and energy
- All types of lines, **contour**, **graduated**, **implied**, **gestural**, **mark-making**, **irregular**, and **regular**
Contour Surface lines without outside contour lines. Note the graduated line implies form, even color.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gC1DGxff6no

30 second gesture

Gestural lines give an ease to an image-an intimate, immediate quality
CLAMP, page from the Tsubasa RESERVOIR CHRONICLE, volume 21, page 47
Here line communicates direction and movement

Directional lines converge in the image, focusing our attention to the area the artist intends

The strong diagonal lines enhance feeling of movement
Lines to Regulate and Control

- Regular lines express control and planning
- Regulated line communicates objectivity and accuracy

Lines to Express Freedom and Passion

- Lines can be irregular, reflecting the wildness of nature, chaos, and accident
- Such lines—free and unrestrained—seem passionate and full of feelings that are otherwise hard to express
André Masson,
*Automatic Drawing*

- These lines reflect Masson’s drawing and thinking process expressing the subconscious.
- Masson would go for days without food or sleep, thinking this would allow him to explore deep-rooted sources of creativity and truth.
- The drawings are free, spontaneous expressions.
Regular and Irregular Lines

- Most works use both regular and irregular lines

George Bellows, *Woodstock Road*
PART 1
FUNDAMENTALS

Chapter 1.1
Art in Two Dimensions: Line, Shape, and the Principle of Contrast

Saul Steinberg
Irregular lines convey humor, texture and emphasis

Note the contour line
Line Expressing Form
Albrecht Durer
Crosshatched line, contour line, surface contour line, graduated line all working in concert 1471-1528
Implied Line

- Line can be implied by a series of marks
- Implied line gives us the impression we are seeing a line where there is no continuous mark—so no actual solid line is present; just the idea of a line is created
Francisco Goya, *The Third of May, 1808*, 1814. Oil on canvas, The Prado, Madrid, Spain
Goya uses implied line to direct the viewer’s gaze

Directional (actual & implied) line is used in these instances:

- (A) Actual line directs the viewer from left to right where sky meets the lighted hillside
- (B) An implied line created by the feet of the soldiers leads right to left
- (C) A shadow at the bottom continues the same direction
- (D) and (E) Direct the viewer upward toward (A)

The strong horizontal of the rifles draws attention to victims
Communicative Line

- The directions of lines both guide our attention and suggest particular feelings
- Vertical lines tend to communicate strength and energy
- Horizontal lines can suggest calmness and passivity
- Diagonal lines are associated with action, motion, and change
Vertical lines communicate strength, stability, and authority

Horizontal lines communicate calm, peace, and passiveness

Diagonal lines communicate movement, action, and drama
Diagonals can express the excitement of athletic activity
Conveys action with a shape comprising a stylized, diagonal line
A shape is a two-dimensional area the boundaries of which are defined by lines or suggested by changes in color or value.

Shapes can be classified into two types: geometric and organic.

- Organic shapes are made up of unpredictable, irregular lines that suggest the natural world.
- A geometric shape is mathematically regular and precise.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWa5rzEOumQ
97 in. x 97 1/2 in.
Organic Shapes

Georgia O’Keeffe,
*Music—Pink and Blue II*, 1919

Geometric Shapes

Piet Mondrian
*Broadway Boogie Woogie*
1943
Georgia O’ Keeffe,
*Music—Pink and Blue II*

- Shapes derived from organic objects
- O’ Keeffe’s paintings use landscape and flower shapes to make associations with the female body
- The interplay of positive and negative space becomes symbolic of the erotic and life-giving nature of womanhood
- Mondrian used music and “bare bones” shapes and colors to convey his musical rhythms in the work.
Implied Shape

- Implied shapes are shapes we can see where no continuous boundary exists
- Just as line can be implied, so too can shape
Uses horizontal lines to imply a sphere or globe

The image is simple, creating an appropriately meaningful and readily recognizable symbol for a global company.
Contrast

- When an artist uses two noticeably different states of an element, he or she is applying the principle of contrast.
- Strong differences in the state of an element can be a very useful effect for an artist to use.
- It is especially effective to use opposites.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-GQCb1nMGY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-GQCb1nMGY) film noir clips
CARAVAGGIO – Oil, 1600 The Calling of Saint Matthew
Tenebrism
Shepard Fairey, *Obey*

- Black features and the blank white space contrast with and complement each other
- The contrast between positive and negative shapes draws our attention
  - Fairey wants strong impact because he needs to catch his audience’s attention quickly as they pass by
  - Fairey posted these images in public spaces as an act of street theater and guerrilla marketing
Conclusion

- Artists use line, shape, and contrast to communicate in two dimensions in combination with other elements like color.
- Shape and line are the “bones” that govern and add structure to other elements in art as well as meaning and beauty in their own right.
- Within two dimensions we can communicate nearly every interaction in mankind’s history of understanding.
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oag5NVFwyfQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oag5NVFwyfQ)
- Student morphing project.