Principles of Design

Design is the arranging and organizing of visual elements in a way that effectively conveys an expression or message. Design is the creative endeavor to solve a problem.

Design is an instrument of organization, a medium of persuasion, a means of relating objects to people, and a method for improving safety and efficiency. Design responses to human needs. it is the optimum use of different tools around you to create a better solution to life and the problems which confront us. It is an urgent requirement, not necessarily a cosmetic addition.

Design is all around us, in many things and many elements come together to create design. These elements include line, form, value, size, shape, texture, color, space, unity, and balance.

Perhaps the most basic of all elements of design is the line. A line has two dimensions: length and width. The characteristics of line include direction, thickness, value, texture, and color. Lines have purpose. They can enclose space, suggest mass, create illusion of movement, and express an idea, emotion, or mood.

Shape is an area enclosed by a line or that stands out from its surroundings by strong contrasts. When the area is a different color, shape is created. When the area is a different value, such as light or dark, shape is created. Differences in texture can create shape, as well. There are many different types of shapes: Organic, curvilinear, rectilinear, geometric, and calligraphic.

Unity is a measure of how the elements of a page seem to fit together ñ to belong together. A unified work of art represents first a whole, then the sum of its parts. A unified composition is one in which all of the lines bear a relationship to one another, and are not isolated. Another method often used to promote unity is the use of repetition. Repetition of color, shape, texture, or object can be used to tie a work together. The simplest method of making objects appear to belong together is to group them closely together. This allows us to see a pattern.

To understand balance, think of the balance beam. When objects are of equal weight, they are in balance. If you have several small items on one side, they can be balanced by a large object on the other side. Visual balance works in much the same way. It can be affected not only by the size of objects, but also their value. Value is the lightness or darkness of an object, and is sometimes called visual weight. There are three main types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.

Formal, or symmetrical, balance is mirror image balance. If you draw a line down the center of the page, all the objects on one side of the screen are mirrored on the other side. They may not be identical objects, but they are similar in terms of numbers of objects, colors, and other elements. Symmetrical balance generally lends itself to more formal, orderly layouts. They often convey a sense of tranquility, familiarity, elegance, or serious contemplation.

Asymmetrical design is typically off-center or created with an odd or mismatched number of disparate elements. Asymmetrical balance creates tension by intentionally avoiding balance. Asymmetrical layouts are generally more dynamic and by intentionally ignoring balance the designer can create tension or express movement. The designer can also convey a mood such as anger, excitement, joy, or causal amusement.

Radial balance is the third type of balance, where all elements radiate out from a center point in a circular fashion. It is very easy to maintain a focal point in radial balance, since all the elements lead your eye toward the center.

Color draws attention, leads the eye, and adds emphasis. It can be used to show continuation and relatedness, or it can differentiate. Color often generates emotions and cultural associations:

Red is for excitement, passion and sex, danger, velocity, and power.
Yellow is great for grabbing attention. It is sunshine, warmth, and happiness.
Blue represents reliability, trust, security, and technology. It is also coolness and belonging.
Black is sophistication, strength, elegance, and seduction.
Green is a cool, fresh color that represents nature and spring.
Purple is royalty, dignified, and refined.
Pink is soft and feminine, security and sweetness.
White stands for cleanliness, purity, and youthfulness.
Gold is expensive and high class.
Silver is prestigious, and also represents cold and science.
Orange conveys playfulness; it is autumn leaves, warmth, and vibrancy.