

Brief Explanation of Design Elements & Art Principles

Elements of design and principles of art are the core vocabulary to art. Think of them like a recipe to create your work. The elements are like the ingredients and the principles are the instructions. By using elements, you create principles, such as ‘By repeating lines I created rhythm.’

Most works use the majority of the elements or principles in some way in the exhibit, but they don't have to use all of them. When discussing what you did and learned, go beyond listing which ones were used and explain how they were used. For example, explain “I used a bright intensity of the color red and sharp diagonal line to express anger in my painting.” Focus on using the most relevant terms for your specific exhibit.

Design Elements: Design has individual elements which are part of every item. These include:

1. **Line** - horizontal, vertical, dotted, zig-zag, curved, straight, bold or fine. These show direction and lead the eye.
2. **Shape** - such as circle, square, triangle, and freeform. Objects can be one shape or a combination of shapes.
3. **Color** - hue, value, and intensity. This refers to the color, the lightness/darkness, and the brightness/dullness respectively.
4. **Texture** - the surface quality of an item. How it feels or would feel if touched. (Smooth, slick, shiny, rough, raised, bumpy, fuzzy, grainy, soft, hard)
5. **Space** - this refers to the area that a shape/form occupies and the background in which we see it. Positive space is made of the shapes and forms. Negative space is the background.

Art Principles: These are the directions or guidelines for mixing the design elements. They include:

1. **Rhythm** - how the eye moves from one design point to another. (i.e. Repeating color, shape, texture, line, or space. Varying size of objects, shapes, lines. Using progression of colors from tints to shades.)
2. **Proportion** - the relationship between one part of a design and another part or the whole design. It is a comparison of sizes, shapes, and quantities.
3. **Emphasis** - the accent or point of interest. Created by using a contrasting color, using a different or unusual line, making shapes very large or very small, using a different shape, using a plain background.
4. **Balance** - gives a feeling of stability. 3 Types:
 - a. Symmetrical – the same on both sides.
 - b. Radial – has a center point like a tire, a pizza, or a daisy.
 - c. Asymmetrical – creates a feeling of equal weight even though the sides do not look the same.
5. **Unity** - a feeling that all parts belong together or look right together.

Questions to Consider in Evaluating the Exhibit – There is seldom only one way to evaluate and improve a design, so don't be surprised if different people have different ideas about your work. Be prepared to answer questions like these:

1. Where did you get your idea for your design?
2. Describe one of the design elements and how you used it in your exhibit?
3. What do you like about the way your design looks?
4. What might you change another time?
5. What is your emphasis or first thing you see in this exhibit?
6. How do the parts relate to each other in this exhibit?

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