

## ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN THESE DEFINITIONS BRING SUCCESS TO KEN SCHWAB

### **Composition**

An orderly arrangement of elements using the principles of design

The principles of design help you to carefully plan and organize the elements of art so that you will hold interest and command attention. This is sometimes referred to as visual impact.

In any work of art there is a thought process for the arrangement and use of the elements of design. The artist who works with the principles of good composition will create a more interesting piece of art it will be arranged to show a pleasing rhythm and movement. The center of interest will be strong and the viewers will not look away, instead, they will be drawn into the work. A good knowledge of composition is essential in producing good artwork. Some artists today like to bend or ignore these rules and therefore are experimenting with different forms of expression. We think that composition is very important. The following will assist you in understanding the basics of a good composition:

### **Elements of Design**

**Line** - is a mark on a surface that describes a shape or outline. It can create texture and can be thick and thin. Types of line can include actual, implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal and contour lines. (note: Ken does not list "psychic line" - that was "new term" to me)

**Color** - refers to specific hues and has 3 properties, Chroma, Intensity and Value. The color wheel is a way of showing the chromatic scale in a circle using all the colors made with the primary triad. Complimentary pairs can produce dull and neutral color. Black and white can be added to produce tints (add white), shades (add black) and tones (add gray).

**Texture** - is about surface quality either tactile or visual. Texture can be real or implied by different uses of media. It is the degree of roughness or smoothness in objects.

**Shape** - is a 2-dimensional line with no form or thickness. Shapes are flat and can be grouped into two categories, geometric and organic.

**Form** - is a 3-dimensional object having volume and thickness. It is the illusion of a 3-D effect that can be implied with the use of light and shading techniques. Form can be viewed from many angles.

**Value** - is the degree of light and dark in a design. It is the contrast between black and white and all the tones in between. Value can be used with color as well as black and white. Contrast is the extreme changes between values.

**Space** - refers to variations in the perspective, and proportions of objects, lines or shapes. There is a variation of sizes in space of objects either real or imagined. (some sources list Proportion/Scale as a Principle of Design)

These elements are used to create the Principles of Design. **Principles are the results of using the Elements.** When you are working in a particular format (size and shape of the work surface) the principles are used to create interest, harmony and unity to the elements that you are using. You can use the Principles of design to check your composition to see if it has good structure.

### Principles of Compositional Design

The principles of design are the recipe for a good work of art. The principles combine the elements to create an aesthetic placement of things that will produce a good design.

**Center of interest** - is an area that first attracts attention in a composition. This area is more important when compared to the other objects or elements in a composition. This can be by contrast of values, more colors, and placement in the format.

**Balance** - is a feeling of visual equality in shape, form, value, color, etc. Balance can be symmetrical or evenly balanced or asymmetrical and un-evenly balanced. Objects, values, colors, textures, shapes, forms, etc., can be used in creating a balance in a composition.

**Harmony** - brings together a composition with similar units. If your composition was using wavy lines and organic shapes you would stay with those types of lines and not put in just one geometric shape. (Notice how similar Harmony is to Unity - some sources list both terms)

**Contrast** - offers some change in value creating a visual discord in a composition. Contrast shows the difference between shapes and can be used as a background to bring objects out and forward in a design. It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.

**Directional Movement** - is a visual flow through the composition. It can be the suggestion of motion in a design as you move from object to object by way of placement and position. Directional movement can be created with a value pattern. It is with the placement of dark and light areas that you can move your attention through the format.

**Rhythm** - is a movement in which some elements recurs regularly. Like a dance it will have a flow of objects that will seem to be like the beat of music.

The Principles of design are the results of your working with the elements of art. Use them in every piece of art you do and you will be happy with the results.

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Rohrer, Ken, Ed. "Visual Arts: Elements and Principles of Design." *Incredible Art Department*.

[incredibleart.org/files/elements2.htm](http://incredibleart.org/files/elements2.htm). Accessed 13 November 2019.