



ELEMENTS

AND

PRINCIPLES

OF DESIGN

ELEMENTS / LINE

An element of art used to define shape, contours, and outlines; also to suggest mass and volume. It may be a continuous mark made on a surface with a pointed tool or implied by the edges of shapes and forms.

A line has a width, direction, and length. A line's width is sometimes called its "thickness". Lines are sometimes called "strokes", especially when referring to lines in digital artwork.

The use of lines in this photo is more subtle, with the intersecting lines of the fire escape and the diagonal lines of the brick wall helping to draw the gaze of the viewer to the center of the photo and then upward.



ELEMENTS / SHAPE



When a line crosses itself or intersects with other lines to enclose a space, it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional and has height and width, but no depth.

There are different categories of shapes, such as:

- Geometric** (circles, squares, rectangles, etc.)
- Organic** (Leaves, seashells, flowers)
- Positive** (shapes in a design space or sculpture)
- Negative** (the space around a positive shape)
- Static** (shapes that appear stable and resting)
- Dynamic** (shapes that appear active and moving)

This crop of the Starbucks logo shows the interplay of both positive and negative shapes.

ELEMENTS / TEXTURE

Texture is the surface quality of an object. A rock may be rough and jagged. A piece of silk may be soft and smooth, and your desk may feel hard and smooth. Texture also refers to the illusion of roughness or smoothness in a picture.

There are two types of texture:

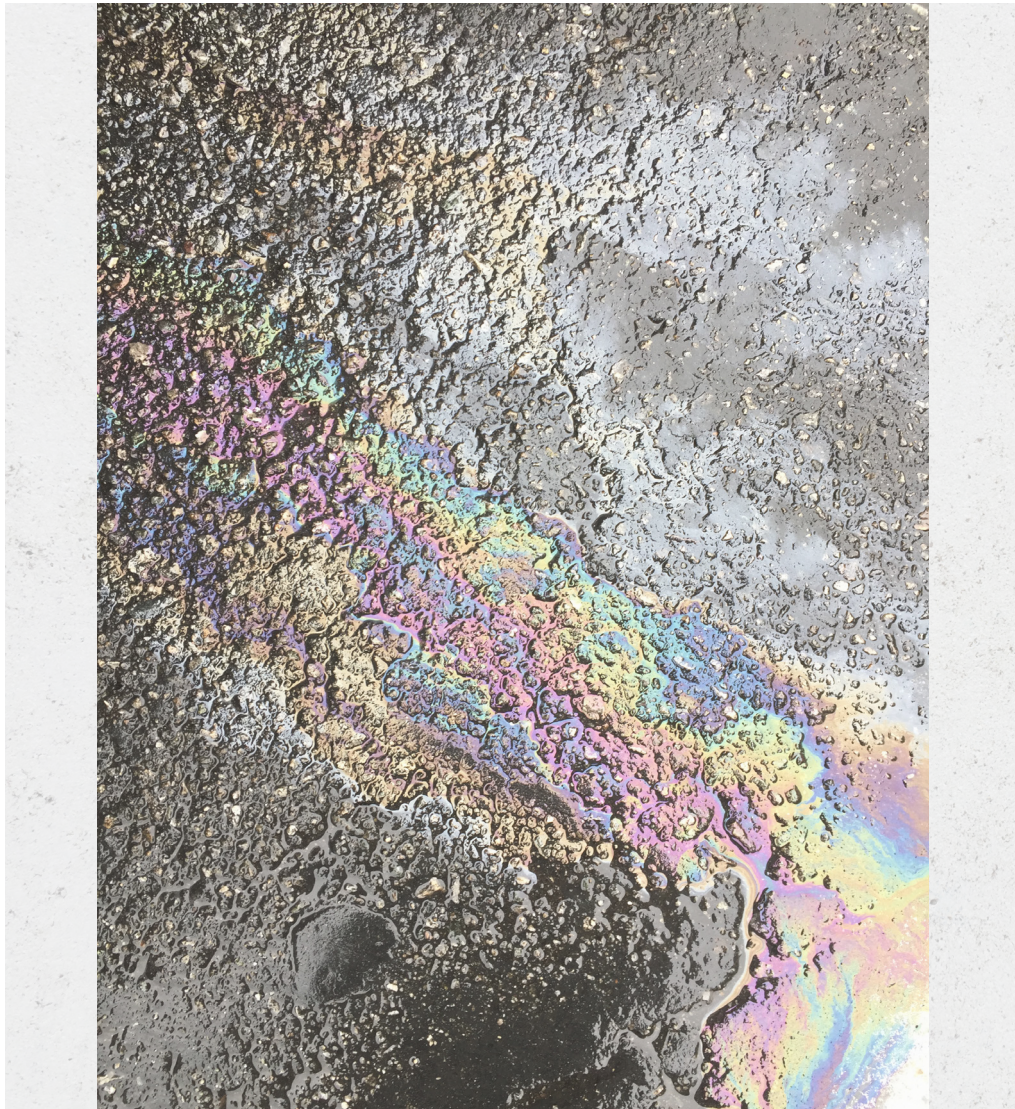
Real - the actual texture of an object

Implied - texture that is created by the artist in a two-dimensional artwork that gives the appearance of texture

Wallpaper is an interesting example of three-dimensional texture on a traditionally two-dimensional medium.



ELEMENTS / COLOR



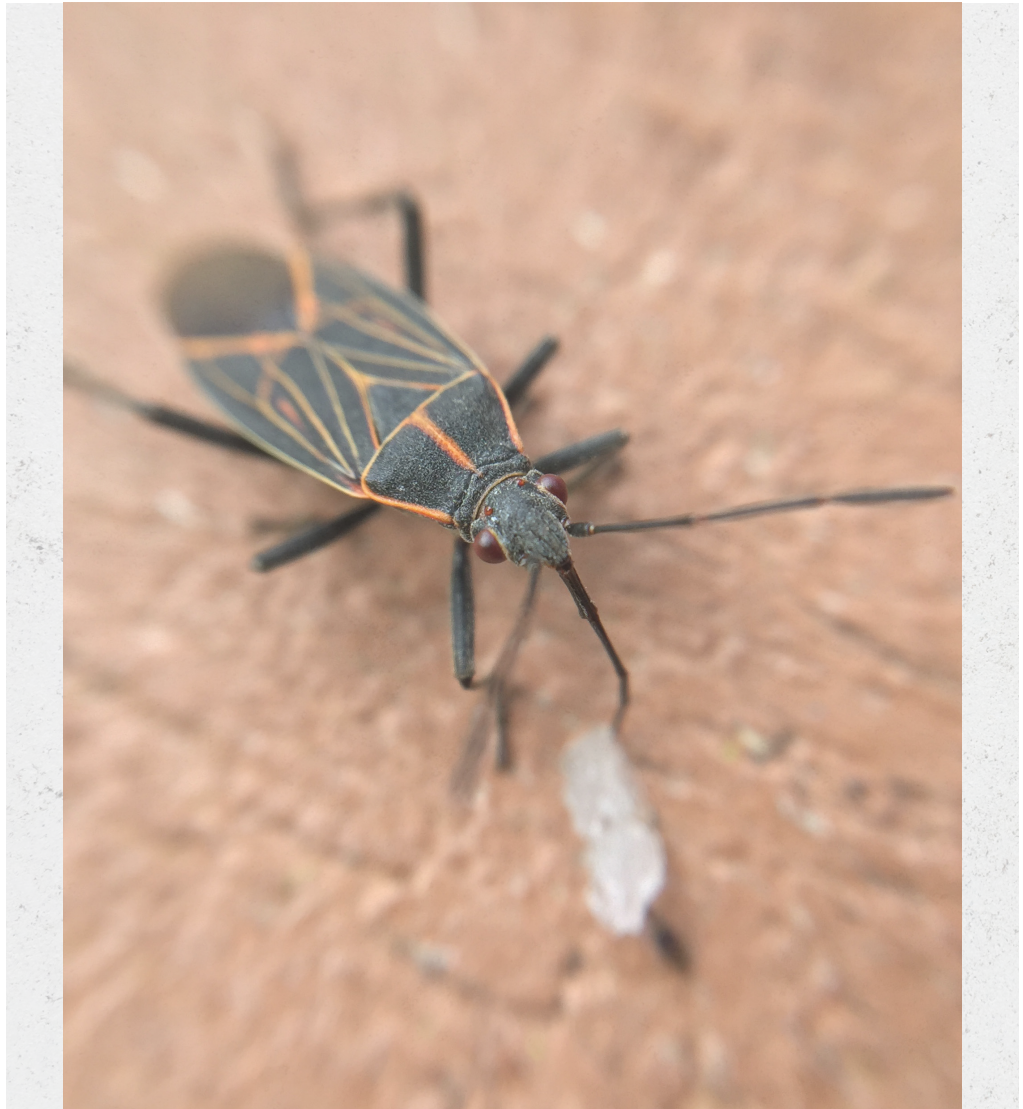
Color comes from light; if it weren't for light, we would have no color. Light rays move in a straight path from a light source. Within this light, rays include all of the colors in the spectrum or rainbow. Shining a light into a prism will create a rainbow of colors because it separates the color of the spectrum. When the light rays hit an object, our eyes respond to the rays that are reflected back and we see only the reflected color(s).

Oil stains on a blacktop parking lot is a good example of light hitting an uneven surface and reflecting back in an array of colors.

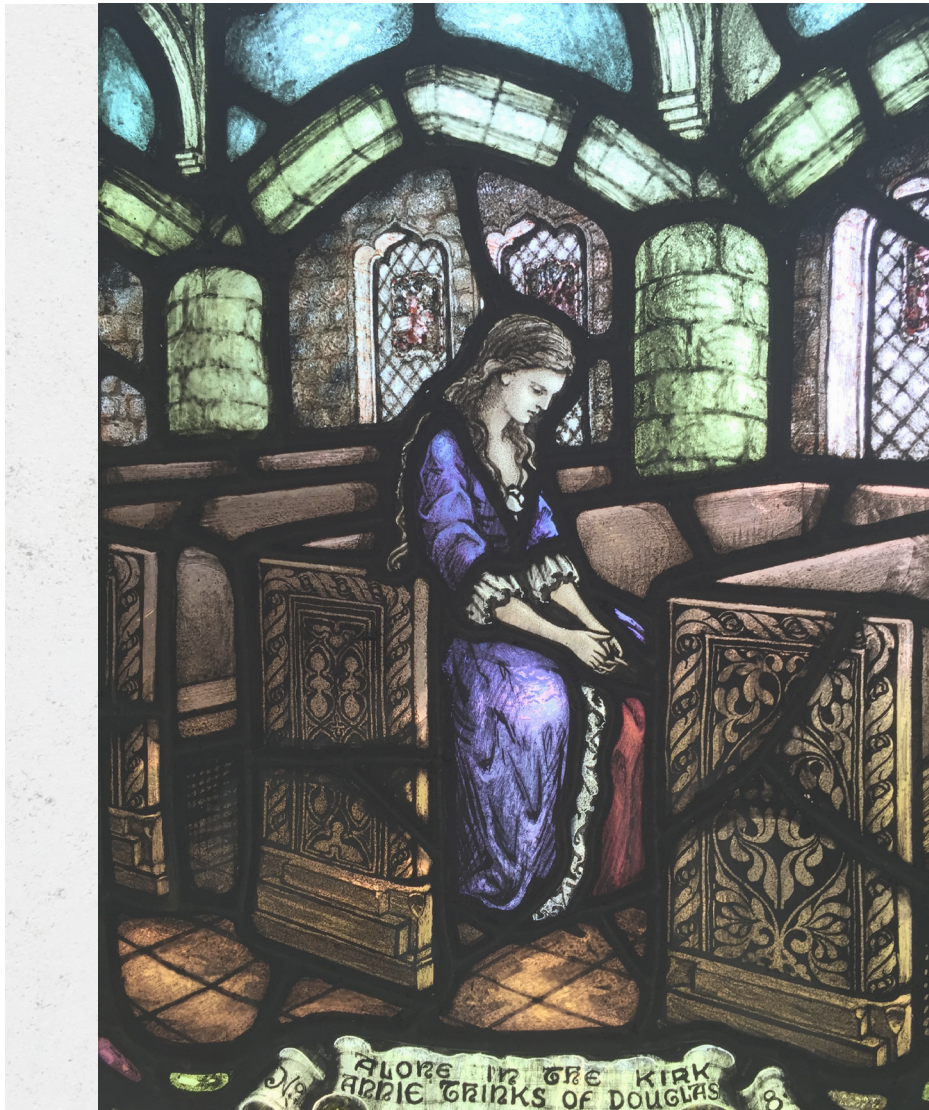
ELEMENTS / SIZE

Size is how big or little something is. In design, size can function, size can attract, and size can organize. Size plays an important role in making a layout functional. The organization of design elements by size is known as hierarchy. Using a hierarchy can help an artist organize a layout by giving priority to an element by increasing its size, therefore making it more attractive to the viewer.

This cropped photo was taken using a macro lens. The small focal point helps to bring attention to the subject of the photo, as everything else but the center of the photo remains out of focus.



PRINCIPLES / UNITY



Unity means the harmony of the whole composition. The parts of a composition made to work together as a total visual theme. Unity is the relationship among the elements of a visual that helps all the elements function together. Unity gives a sense of oneness to a visual image. In other words, the words and the images work together to create meaning.

The various elements of this photo of a stained glass window work together to create a unified feeling. The subdued color palette and the bold lines give off a somber mood.

PRINCIPLES / EMPHASIS

Emphasis is used by artists to create dominance and focus in their work. Artists can emphasize color, value, shapes, or other artistic and design elements to achieve dominance. Various kinds of contrast can be used to emphasize a center or point of interest.



The grille of this truck is placed front and center in this photo, helping to place emphasis on the bold design of this automobile. The lines from the curb and telephone pole, as well as the contrast between the pavement and sky, lead the eyes of the viewer back to the front of the truck.

PRINCIPLES / BALANCE



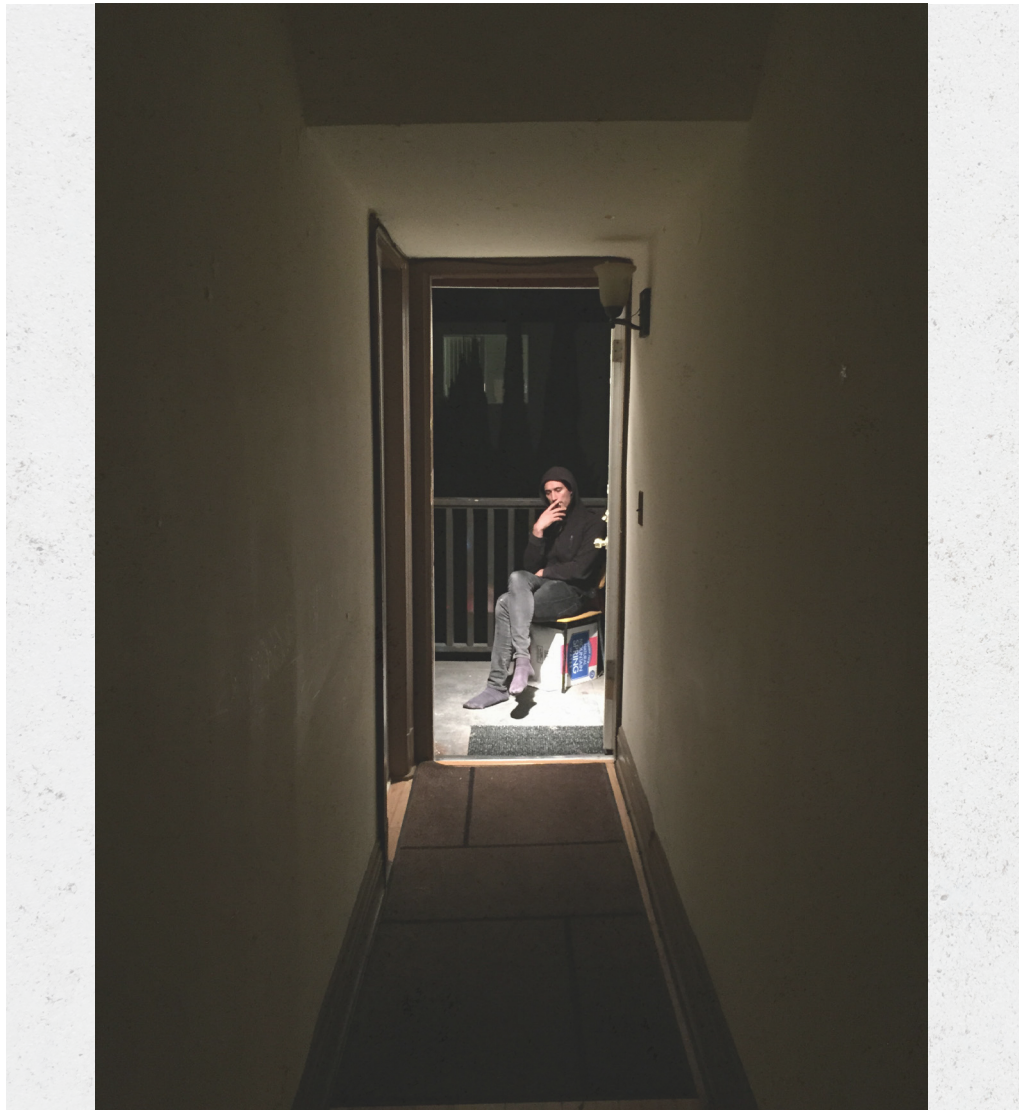
Balance is a psychological sense of equilibrium. As a design principle, balance places the parts of a visual in an aesthetically pleasing arrangement. In visual images, balance is formal when both sides are symmetrical in terms of arrangement. Balance is informal when sides are not exactly symmetrical, but the resulting image is still balanced. Informal balance is more dynamic than formal balance and normally keeps the learner's attention focused on the visual message. There are three main types of balance, horizontal balance, vertical balance, radial balance.

The composition of this photo uses the rule of thirds to balance the foreground, the water and the sky.

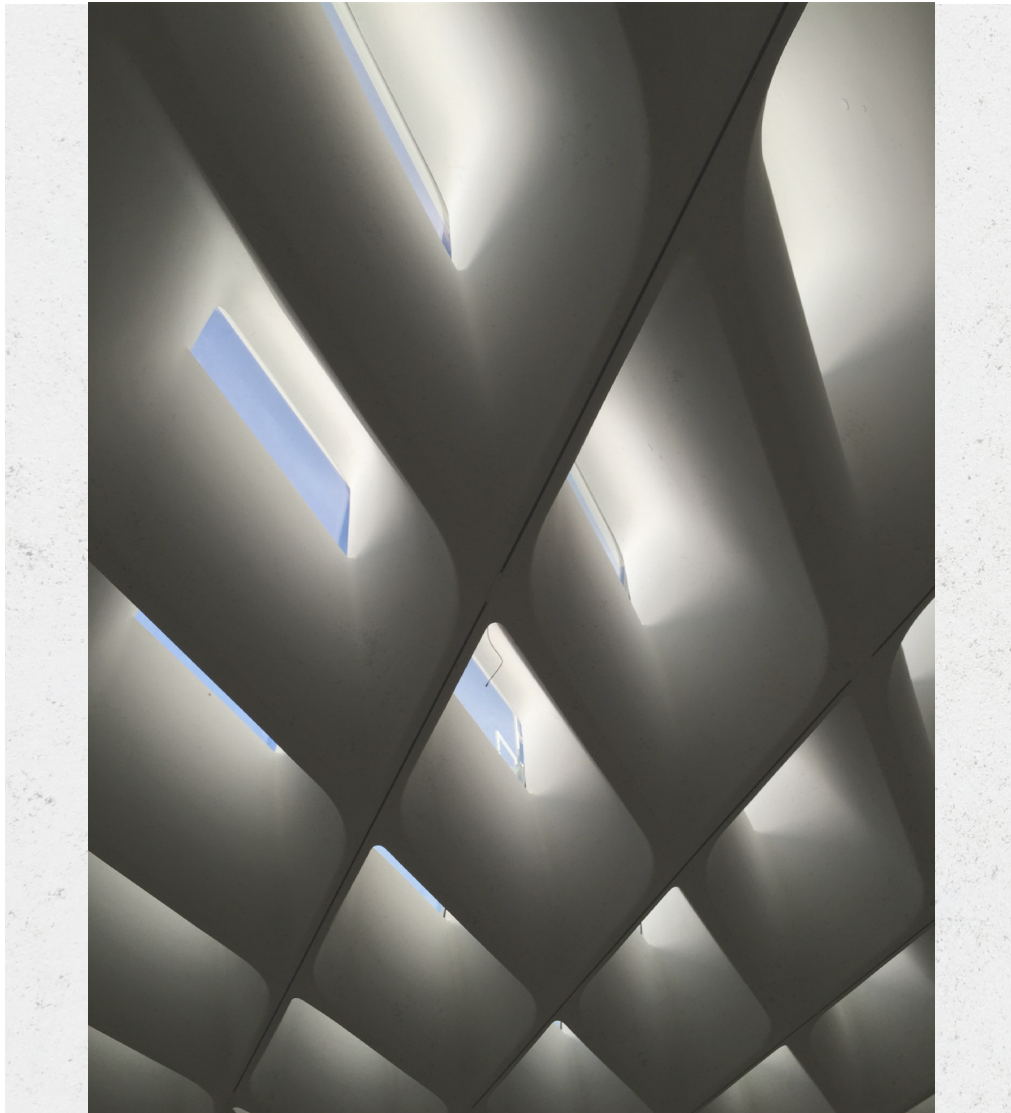
PRINCIPLES / CONTRAST

Contrast is one of the key principles within composition and layout. Contrast in design is an accentuation of the differences between elements in a design. Most people think of contrast as it applies to colors but contrast can work with any design element, such as size, texture or shape. Contrast creates focus and helps the viewer notice what is important in a design by attracting their attention.

The darkness of the shadowy hallway help to provide contrast to the subject, who is seated under a light source. Usually, the foreground is lit while the background is darker to provide better emphasis on the subject.



PRINCIPLES / RHYTHM



Rhythm is the repetition of visual movement of the elements: colors, shapes, lines, values, forms, spaces, and textures. Variety is essential to keep rhythms exciting and active, and to avoid monotony. Movement and rhythm work together to create the visual equivalent of a musical beat, helping to draw the attention of the viewer

The decorative structural design of this ceiling is also functional, letting in massive amounts of natural light to the floor below. The visual rhythm also helps to give the illusion of a larger physical space.