Composition:
The organization of lines, shapes, colors, and other art elements in a work of art. More often applied to two-dimensional art.
The term “design” is applicable to both two-dimensional and three-dimensional works.
# Chapter Five

## Principles of Design

- Unity and Variety
- Balance (Symmetrical, Asymmetrical)
- Emphasis and Subordination
- Scale and Proportion
- Rhythm
**Unity:**
The sense of oneness, of things belonging together and making up a coherent whole.

**Variety:**
Differences that provide interest and contrast.
Unity and Variety

The Great Figure
Among the rain
and light
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city.

Poem by William Carlos Williams
**Balance**

**Visual Weight:** The apparent “heaviness” or “lightness” of the forms arranged in a composition, as gauged by how insistently they draw the viewer's eye. When visual weight is equally distributed to either side of a felt or implied center of gravity, we feel that the composition is balanced.

Symmetrical Balance: A design in which the two halves of a composition on either side of an imaginary central vertical axis correspond to one another in size, shape and placement.
Balance: Symmetrical Balance

Symmetrical Balance

Architects: Louis Le Vau and Jules Hardouin-Mansart

Landscape Architect: André Le Nôtre

Versailles Palace and Gardens. 1661-1710, France. (Under Louis XIV)

http://youtu.be/9tS94tgdpK
0:43

http://youtu.be/O8MaDMxzMfU
Latona Fountain with the Grand Canal in the background
Jean-Baptiste Tuby
Fountain of Apollo at the head of the Grand Canal
1668-1671, originally gilded
Reflecting Pool and the Washington Monument. Washington D.C.
Khafre, Builder of 2nd pyramid, from Gizeh, Egypt, ca. 2520–2494 BCE. Diorite, approx. 5′ 6″ high.
The Luo Brothers,  
*Welcome the World's Famous Brands*  
Beijing, China
Balance

Relieved Symmetry or Approximate Symmetry:
Slight differences between axial areas of a work.

Frida Kahlo, 
*The Two Fridas*. 
1939. Oil on Canvas. 5’8” square.
Frida Kahlo, 
The Two Fridas. 
1939. Oil on Canvas. 5’8” square.
Kahlo was influenced by Mexican folk art; this is apparent in her use of fantastical elements and bold use of colour, and in her depictions of herself wearing traditional Mexican, rather than European-style, dress.
Balance

Radial Balance:
A circular composition in which the elements radiates outward from a central core.

Rose window. Chartres Cathedral. c. 1215.
John Feodorov (the artist is part Navajo and part Euro American).
15 x 12 x 3 in.
Asymmetrical Balance: Two sides that do not correspond to one another in size, shape, and placement.

- Although asymmetrical balance may appear more casual and less planned, it is usually harder to use because the artist must plan the layout very carefully to ensure that it is still balanced. An unbalanced page or screen creates a feeling of tension, as if the page or screen might tip, or things might slide off the side.
1. A large form is visually heavier than a smaller form.
2. A dark form is visually heavier than a light form of the same size.
3. A textured form is visually heavier than a smooth form of the same size.
4. A complex form is visually heavier than a simple form of the same size.
5. Two or more of small forms can balance a larger one.
6. A smaller dark form can balance a larger light one.
Visually heavier shapes near the center of the artwork can be balanced by lighter shapes farther away.

**Balance through Position**

Visually heavier shapes near the center of the artwork can be balanced by lighter shapes farther away.
Using only abstract shapes, draw one example of each:

1. Symmetrical balance
2. Relieved symmetry
3. Radial balance
4. Asymmetrical balance

- Did you achieve a balance in the composition?
Gustav Klimt
Death and Life Finished 1915. 5’10”X6’6”
Nonomura Sotatsu. *The Zen Priest Choka*. Edo Period, late 16th-early 17th c. Hanging scroll, ink on paper; 37X14”.
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

• Unlike physical balance, visual balance can be created through absence as well as presence.
Balance through Color and Value:
Warm colors (red, magenta, yellow) tend to advance and/or have more visual weight than cool colors (blue, green, cyan). Our eyes are drawn by color. Small areas of vibrant color can be used to balance larger areas of more neutral colors.

Paul Gauguin
*Femmes de Tahiti OR Sur la plage (Tahitian Women OR On the Beach)* 1891
Balance through Eye Direction

Your eye can be led to a certain point in a picture depending on how the elements are arranged. If the people in a picture are looking in a certain direction, your eye will be led there as well. Elements in a picture, such as triangles or arrows, will also lead your eye to look to a certain point and maintain the balance of a picture.
**Emphasis**: The viewer’s attention will be centered more on certain parts of the composition than on others.

**Focal Point**: A specific spot to which one’s attention is directed.

**Subordination**: A less visually interesting area.
Henry Ossawa Tanner.  
*The Banjo Lesson.* 1893. Oil on Canvas, 49X35”. Hampton University Museum.
A work of art can be afocal.
Class Assignment 12

Find in your book two examples for the use of emphasis and subordination in a work of art. Describe and explain your examples.
Scale
Size in relation to “normal” or constant size.

Proportion
Size relationships between parts of a whole or between two or more items perceived as a unit; also, the size relationship between an object and its surroundings.
A royal altar to the hand (ikegobo). Benin, 18th c. Brass, height 18”.
The British Museum

Hierarchical Scale:
The representation of more important figures as larger than less important figures.
Palette of King Narmer (back)

From Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, ca. 3000–2920 BCE. Slate, approx. 2’ 1” high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.
Palette of King Narmer (front) from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, ca. 3000–2920 BCE. Slate, approx. 2’ 1” high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.
Palette of King Narmer (front)
Detail
Claes Oldenburg
*Clothespin*, 1976
Cor-Ten and stainless steels
height 45’
Centre Square Plaza, Philadelphia

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.
*Plantoir*: 2001. Stainless steel, aluminum, plastic;
height 23’11”
Rene Magritte. *Delusions of Grandeur II.*
1948. Oil on Canvas, 39x32”
"I'll paint what the flower means to me—but I'll paint it big and people will be surprised into taking time to look at it." Georgia O'Keeffe.
El Greco. *Resurrección*

C. 1600-05. Oil on Canvas, 9x4’. Museo del Prado, Madrid.
The search for the “perfect proportions” in art and architecture

**Fashion Model Size Requirements**
How tall? 5'9" to 5'11"
Thin - 108 to 130lbs
Desired figure - around 34B-24-34”.
Age - 13-19 and if you have not made it by twenty it is over 😊
Menkaure and Queen Khamerernebty (?) from Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2490–2472 BCE. Graywacke, approx. 4’ 6 1/2” high. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Polykleitos, *Doryphoros* (*Spear Bearer*). Roman marble copy from Pompeii, Italy, after a bronze original of ca. 450–440 BCE, 6' 11" high. Museo Nazionale, Naples.
The navel is naturally placed in the centre of the human body, and, if in a man lying with his face upward, and his hands and feet extended, from his navel as the centre, a circle be described, it will touch his fingers and toes. It is not alone by a circle, that the human body is thus circumscribed, as may be seen by placing it within a square. For measuring from the feet to the crown of the head, and then across the arms fully extended, we find the latter measure equal to the former; so that lines at right angles to each other, enclosing the figure, will form a square.

**Vitruvius** (Roman Architect, 1st c. BCE)
**Golden Section:** A mathematical proportion where the ratio between a small section (A-B) and a larger section (B-C) is equal to the ratio between the larger section (B-C) and both sections (A-C) put together.
Golden Ratio - 1.61803…:1 (Phi, pronounced "fee")

A Golden Rectangle is a rectangle with dimensions which are of the golden ratio, 1 : φ (i.e., 1.61803…). It has been claimed to be the most aesthetically pleasing shape of a rectangle.

The large rectangle BA is a golden rectangle. If we remove square B, what is left, A, is another golden rectangle.

Donald in Mathmagic Land:
http://youtu.be/YVODhFLe0mw
Le Corbusier, *The Modulor*

The **Modulor** is a scale of proportions devised by Le Corbusier. He used the golden ratio in his Modular system for the scale of architectural proportion.
Can you find the Golden Ratio?

IKTINOS and KALLIKRATES, Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Parthenos
Reconstructed model of the west facade. Acropolis, Athens, Greece, 447–438 BCE.
IKTINOS and KALLIKRATES, Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Parthenos Acropolis, Athens, Greece, 447–438 BCE.
Rhythm is the repetition or alternation of elements, usually shapes, often with defined intervals between them. Rhythm can create a sense of movement, and can establish pattern and texture. There are many different kinds of rhythm, such as random rhythm, regular rhythm and alternating rhythm.
Peit Mondrian,
*Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, 1942-43.
Oil on Canvas, 50X50”. Museum of Modern Art, NY

Boogie-woogie is a style of piano-based blues that became very popular in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, 1930, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 50.8 cm.
Leon Battista Alberti. Façade of Sant’Andrea, Mantua. Designed 1470
Chapter Four: The Visual Elements
- Line
- Shape and Mass
- Light
- Color
- Texture and Pattern
- Space
- Time & motion

Chapter Five: Principles of Design
- Unity and Variety
- Balance (Symmetrical, Asymmetrical)
- Emphasis and Subordination
- Scale and Proportion
- Rhythm

Class Assignment 13
Choose one work of art from the textbook and analyze it based on the visual elements and principles of design.
Pieter Bruegel the Elder. *The Corn Harvest (August).*
1565. Oil on panel. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.
Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Hunters in the Snow
1565. Oil on Panel. H 117 cm, W 162 cm
Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre: afternoon, sunshine.*
1897. 74 x 92.8”, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Pissarro. *Boulevard Montmartre: rainy weather, afternoon*. 1897. 52.5 x 66”
Gustave Caillebotte. *The Floor Scrapers*
1875. Oil on canvas 102x146cm. Musee d'Orsay
Degas. *The Tub*, 1886. Pastel Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France
Antonio da Correggio.  
*Assumption of the Virgin*  
1526-1530. Fresco.  
Cathedral of Parma

Di sotto in sù means "seen from below" or "from below, upward" in Italian.  
A type of illusionism in painting, achieved by means of sharp foreshortening, in which the figures and architecture seem to be high above and receding from the spectator.
Antonio da Correggio. 
*Assumption of the Virgin*
1526-1530. Fresco. 
Cathedral of Parma
Antonio da Correggio.  
*Assumption of the Virgin.*  
Detail: Virgin and angels.  
1526-1530. Fresco.  
Cathedral of Parma
Peter Paul Rubens. *The Sacrifice Of Isaac*. 1620

Sketch for the Jesuit ceiling. Oil on panel 19 3/8 x 25 3/8
Frida Kahlo. *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*. Oil on canvas. 1940
24 1/2" x 18 3/4". University of Texas, Austin
Kahlo Frida
Self Portrait with Monkeys
Oil on canvas 1943
Frida Kahlo. *Diego in my Thoughts.* 1943 Oil on masonite. 11 5/8” X 8 13/16”
Edouard Manet, *Olympia*. 1863. Oil on canvas. 1 3/8 x 74 ¾”. Musee d'Orsay, Paris
ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1863

Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1540s

Ingres, *La Grand Odalisque*, 1814
Yasumasa Morimura *Portrait (Futago)*, 1988; photograph; chromogenic print with acrylic paint and gel medium, 82 3/4 in. x 118 in.; SFMOMA

ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1863
Edouard Manet. *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere.*
1881-82. Oil on Canvas, 37x51".
Stop. Edouard Manet, Une Marchande de Consolation aux Foliex-Bergere. Wood engraving from Le Journal Ausant, May 27, 1882
Auguste Rodin, The Burghers of Calais

1884-86

Bronze

82 1/2 x 95 x 78 in.
Dorothea Lang. *Migrant Mother* 
(Florence Owens Thompson) 
1936. Library of Congress, 
Washington D.C.
El Greco. *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, 1586-88. Oil on canvas, 480 x 360 cm. Santo Tomé, Toledo

According to the legend, at the time he was buried, Saint Stephen and Saint Augustine descended in person from the heavens and buried him by their own hands.