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Defining the Principles of Design Through Metaphor or Allegory

Principles of Design Lesson 1

Generally, all the principles of design apply to any piece you may create. How you apply those principles determines how effective your design is in conveying the desired message and how attractive it appears. There is seldom only one correct way to apply each principle.

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Balance

Try walking a long distance with a 2 pound bag of rocks in one hand and a 10 pound bag of marbles in the other. After awhile you'll be wanting to shift your load around, putting a few marbles in the rock bag to balance your load, make it easier to walk. This is how balance works in design. Visual balance comes from arranging elements on the page so that no one section is heavier than the other. Or, a designer may intentionally throw elements out of balance to create tension or a certain mood.

Proximity / Unity

Observe a group of people in a room. You can often learn a lot about who is listening intently to another person, which are strangers, or who

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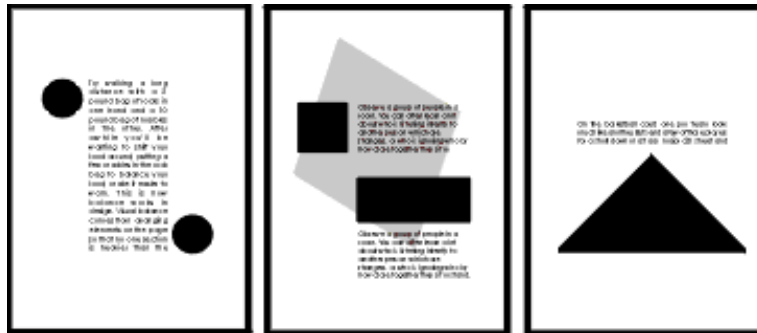
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is ignoring who by how close together they sit or stand. In design, proximity or closeness creates a bond between people and between elements on a page. How close together or far apart elements are placed suggests a relationship (or lack of) between otherwise disparate parts. Unity is also achieved by using a third element to connect distant parts.

Alignment

Can you imagine how difficult it would be to find your car in a crowded parking lot if everyone ignored the parking lot stripes and parked in every which direction and angle? Imagine trying to get out of there! Alignment brings order to chaos, in a parking lot and on a piece of paper. How you align type and graphics on a page and in relation to each other can make your layout easier or more difficult to read, foster familiarity, or bring excitement to a stale design.



Repetition / Consistency

What if Stop signs came in pink squares, yellow circles, or green triangles, depending on the changing whims of a town and a few of its residents? Imagine the ensuing traffic jams and accidents. Repeating design elements and consistent use of type and graphics styles within a document shows a reader where to go and helps them navigate your designs and layouts safely.

Contrast

On the basketball court, one pro team looks much like another. But send a few of those players for a stroll down most any major city street and something becomes apparent — those players are much taller than your average guy on the street. That's contrast. In design, big and small elements, black and white text, squares and circles, can all create contrast in design.

White Space

Did you ever participate in that crazy college pasttime of VW Beetle stuffing? Were you ever the guy on the bottom struggling for a breath

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of fresh air or the last one in trying to find a place to stick your left elbow so the door will close? It wasn't comfortable, was it? Imagine trying to drive the car under those conditions. Designs that try to cram too much text and graphics onto the page are uncomfortable and may be impossible to read. White space gives your design breathing room.

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