

# The Principles of Design

## What are The Principles of Design?

The Principles of Design are the ways that artists **use** the Elements of Art to create good Compositions (artwork)

## There are 11 Principles of Design

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Balance	Contrast
Emphasis	Variety
Unity/Harmony	Proportion
Rhythm	Movement
Pattern	Repetition

## Balance:

This principle of design refers to the visual equalization of the elements in a work of art.

There are three major forms of balance

## The three major forms of balance:

- ***Asymmetrical balance:*** where equilibrium is achieved by the balance differences in the art elements within a composition.
- ***Symmetrical balance:*** where the art elements in a composition are balanced in a mirror-like fashion (it does not have to be exact but close).
- ***Radial balance:*** a kind of balance where the elements branch or radiate out from a central point.

What kind of **balance** is illustrated in this painting *Oriental Poppies*, by Georgia O'Keefe?



If you said symmetrical balance, you are correct!

If you could visually divide the paper in half. There would be a poppy on both sides. No one side dominates the pictures. Neither poppy appears to be more important than the other.



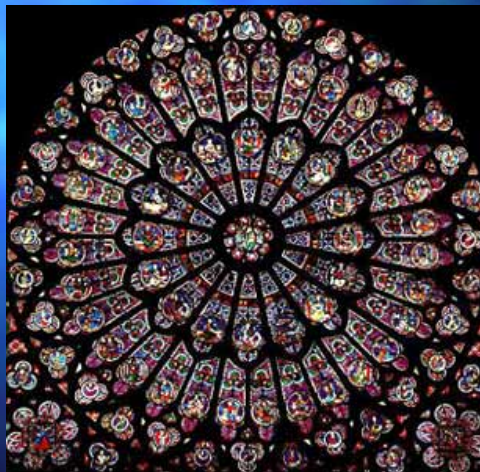
What type of **balance** is shown in this painting, *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* (commonly known as *Whistler's Mother*), by James Whistler?



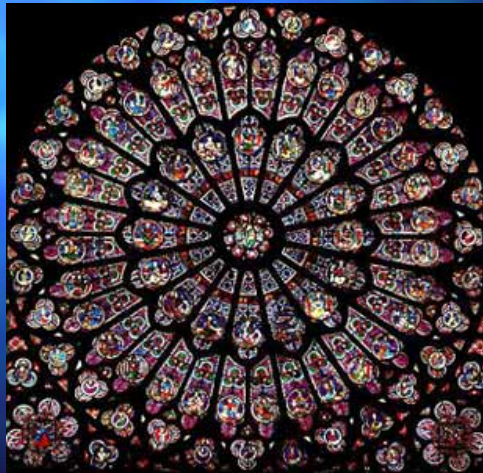
If you said, **asymmetrical balance**, you were right! The large form of the woman is "visually equal" to the black curtain and white painting on the wall. This makes the painting appear **balanced**.



What type of **balance** is shown in this stained glass artwork, *Rose Window*?



**Radial Balance!** Look at the spiral or spinning effect of the pattern. The axis is the center point and the design or pattern appears to "radiate" from that point.



What type of **balance** is shown here?



George Seurat, (French) 1859-1891, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*

Here the larger figures to the right are balanced by the many smaller figures to the left. Also, Seurat added additional "light" to the left. How does this add balance to the painting?

What type of **balance** is shown here?



The monkey and the the cat balance each other out on either side of the woman.

Frida Kahlo, *Autorretrato con Collre de Espinas y Colibri*,

## Contrast

A design principle that emphasizes differences between the art elements.

For example, a painting may have bright colors that contrast with dull colors or angular shapes that contrast with rounded shapes.

Sharp contrast draws attention and can direct a viewer to a focal point within a work of art.

In *Spiral of Emotion* by Joseph Perkins we see a sharp **contrast** between darks and lights which he has balanced out with some middle tones.



In this work we see sharp lines and shapes against softer lines and shapes. We also see sharp **contrast** between colors.



MARLENE HEALY SECTIONS OF MY DESTINY



## Emphasis

The principle of design that is concerned with dominance; the development of a main idea or center of interest (also called **focal point**)

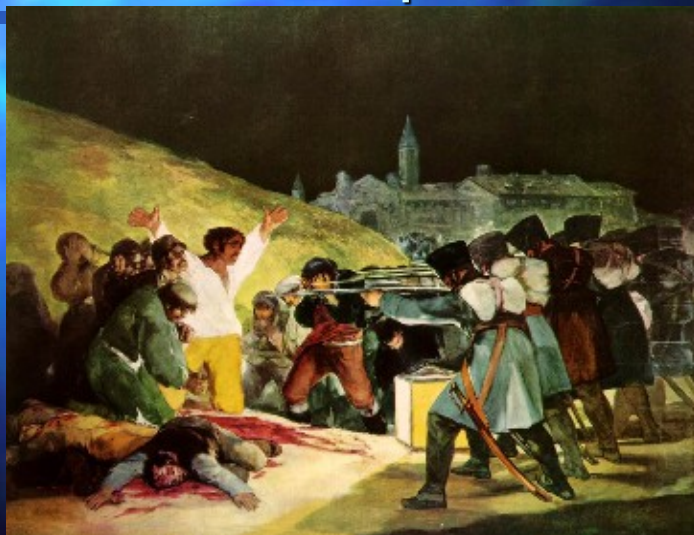
Where is the **focal point** in Wassily Kandinsky's, *Composition VII*?



Kandinsky emphasized the large black circle in the upper left corner of his work. The object is different from everything else in the painting and therefore it "stands out".



In Francisco Goya's, *The Shootings of May Third 1801*, where is the area of **emphasis**?



Goya "lights" up the painting in much the same way a spotlight lights up the actors on a stage. Goya creates a very light value around the area he wants you to see. The man in the white shirt is the **focal point** of the painting. He uses value contrast to emphasize this area.



## Variety

Variety is achieved when the art elements are combined in various ways to increase visual interest.

For instance, an assortment of shapes that are of a variety of sizes attracts more attention than an assortment of shapes all the same size.

Let's look at Kandinsky's painting again. How is the artist showing **variety** in this work?



Kandinsky used a **variety** of lines, shapes and colors to give this painting interest. He also overlapped some of those elements.



## Unity/Harmony

This principle refers to the visual quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through effective use of the elements of art and principles of design

What do you think Cezanne used to keep this painting, *Mt. Victoria*, unified or working together?



Cezanne used blues, yellows and greens. By using related colors (remember blue and yellow make green), the piece appears to work as a whole.



## Proportion

The relationship in size of one component (part) of a work of art to another

How is this artist, John Zacchea, showing correct **proportion** in *Wine Bottle and Cheese*?



When comparing the size of the objects in the composition, you see that the objects are not too large or too small for each other. They are of a realistic size.

Sometimes artists chose to distort or exaggerate the **proportions** of the subjects involved.



In this case the artist chose to use these "puffed up forms" to exaggerate the size of the people. By showing the figures larger than life size, he is attempting to celebrate the life within, and perhaps to mock their role in the world.

Fernando Botero, *A Family*

## Rhythm

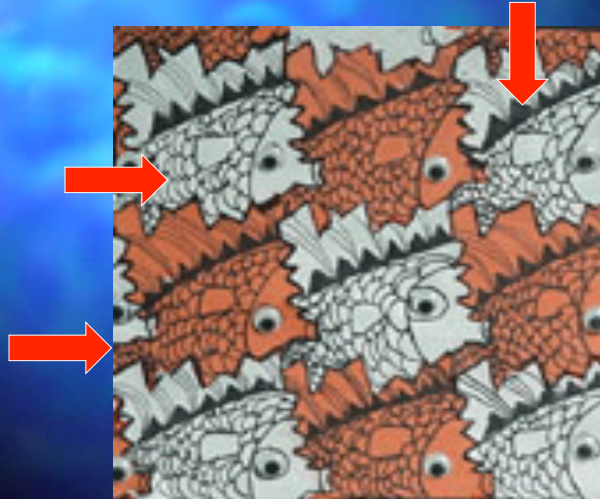
Rhythm refers to a way of utilizing the art elements to produce the look and feel of rhythmic movement with a visual tempo or beat

Here is an example of a cut paper tessellation design. What is used to create the appearance of **rhythm** in this work?





Possible answers could be:  
The fish design is repeated over and over.  
The colors white and orange appear as a pattern.  
The lines that form the scales of the fish.  
The black triangles that decorate the backbone of the fish.



## Movement

Movement is the design principle that uses some of the elements of art to produce the look of action or to cause the viewer's eye to sweep over the art work in a certain manner.

In *Starry Night*, famed artist Vincent Van Gogh creates **movement** in his sky. How does he show us this?



The swirling motion of the colors in the sky showing the artist's interpretation of wind.

The repetition of the brushstrokes and paint dabs.

The stars are all yellow and round, vary in size and placement, and have "halos" of light encircling them.

Look at the painting and concentrate on how your eyes bounce from one star to another. This is an example of how an artist can create **movement** in a work of art.



## Pattern

Repetition of an element of art (i.e., shapes, lines, or colors) to achieve decoration or ornamentation.

What elements has the artist used in this mask to create **pattern**?



This decorative wall plaque is a great example of how an artist uses lines and shapes to create **patterns**.

Artist Unknown, Indonesian, Wall Plaque,

## How has the artists use of **pattern** enhanced this piece?



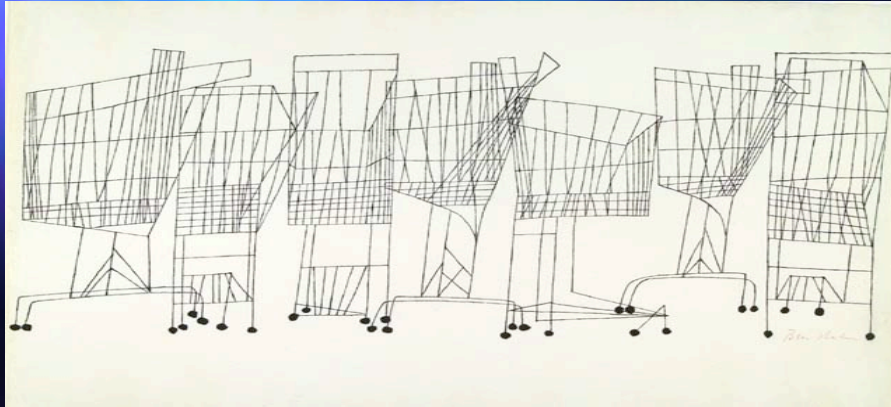
Would this piece be as interesting if the artist had used a solid background rather than this patterned one?

*Riffs* by Florene

## Repetition

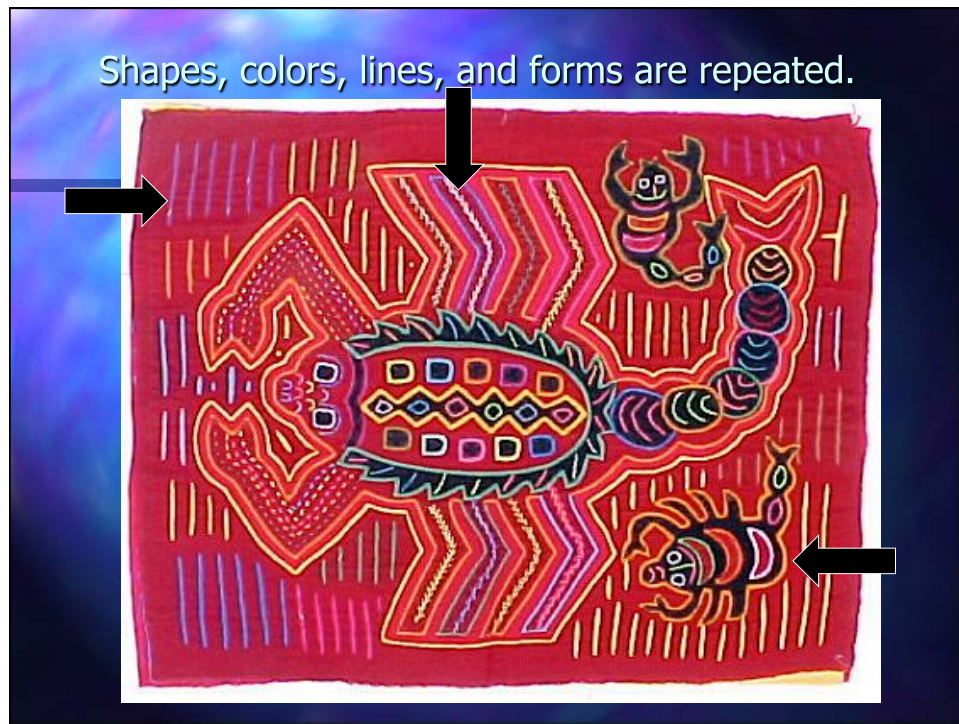
A way of combining art elements so that the same elements are used over and over to achieve balance and harmony.

Ben Shahn has shown **repetition** in his work, *Supermarket* by repeating the same subject over and over to create an interesting composition. He used the same type and thickness of line and the same shapes



This beautiful *Scorpion Mola*, by an unknown artist, from the Panama Canal Kuna Indians shows **repetition** of what elements of art?





## The Principles of Design in Review

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Emphasis

Variety

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