

Principles of Design Notes

The photographer uses the Principles of Design as major organizing forces in their photographs. It's like the elements are the ingredients and the principles are the recipes. Properly applied Principles of Design will result in images that are pleasing and interesting to look at.

Balance

This principle is achieved when an image has a pleasing sense of equality between the two sides. This can happen when the two sides are mirrors of one another, when something on one side is similar to what is on the other side, or when something on one side (ie - a person) is balanced by something else to look at on the other side (ie - a tree).



Emphasis/Focal Point

This is the center of interest. It 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



Proportion

This principle is all about relative size. We can use proportion to get more accurate information about the size of something, such as a person standing in front of an enormous tree. Or we can use proportion into fooling the viewer, like when someone appears taller than a building because of the perspective used.



Movement

Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the artwork, often to a focal area. It can be directed along lines, edges, shapes and color. Movement is closely tied to rhythm.



Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the regular repeating occurrence of elements in the scene just as in music it refers to the regular occurrence of certain musical notes over time. In photography the repetition of similar shapes sets up a rhythm that makes seeing easier and more enjoyable. Rhythm is soothing and our eyes beg to follow rhythmic patterns. To be effective, rhythm also requires some variability - rhythm that is too similar or perfect may be boring. Therefore when composing your images look for repetition with variation.



Repetition

Look for a lot of anything - bicycles, tires, flowers, people, dice, eyeglasses, candies, old cars, mailboxes, hats, frogs, dogs, etc. Keep your eyes out for unusually large groupings.



Pattern

There are patterns all around us if we only learn to see them. Emphasizing and highlighting these patterns can lead to striking shots – as can high lighting when patterns are broken.



Unity

This principle is all about harmony, similarity, and usually happiness. Holding hands, looking in the same direction, everyone smiling, hugging, celebrating, wearing fancy hats. It can also be unhappy, such as everyone crying, holding weapons, wearing black, or everything broken, abandoned, rusting, dirty.



Variety

This refers to a way of combining Element of Art in involved ways to achieve intricate and complex relationships. Variety is often obtained through the use of diversity and change by artists who wish to increase the visual interest of their work. An artwork which makes use of many different hues, values, lines, textures, and shapes would reflect the artist's desire for variety. Unity is the principle which is its variety's opposite; but when there is too little variety, the result is monotony.



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Perspective

Looking up, looking down, worm's eye view, bird's eye view, angles. We are so used to looking at the world from the height of our eyes, gazing straight ahead. Images can become so much more interesting when we find a different perspective.

