

ELEMENTS & PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Lori Wolper

ITMD 121-376

2/22/23



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

The elements are the tools designers use to create, discuss, and evaluate good design in aesthetic, but functional spaces.

LINE

TEXTURE

SHAPE

PATTERN

FORM

COLOR

SPACE

LIGHT



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Credit source: All first paragraph definitions are from Interiors 2nd Edition, 2021 by Stephanie A. Clemons, The Goodheart-Wilcox Company, Inc.

LINE

As the most basic element of design, line exist in a single dimension and connects two points. There are four types of lines: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and curved.

In the photo you can see every type of line used connecting points in all areas of the interior. The lines in this picture are directional and give the impression of endless possibilities of movement in this space.



Curved Lines



Curved lines communicate movement but with a graceful feel. Curved lines are wavy and flowing; gentle and sometimes delicate. They give a design a sense of whimsy or energy.

The workers in this building seem to feel quite comfortable with communicating with each other showing a team speaking together. This open concept gives a large upward curve that suggests a feeling of gentle relaxation. This workspace has a nice energetic and bright look to it.

Horizontal Lines

Horizontal lines are parallel to the horizon, the perceptions of these lines include feelings of calmness, stability, solidness, restfulness, and security.

In this image, the floors are designed in a horizontal fashion. This has a sleek, open contemporary feel. It looks much bigger because the floor lines expand the space visually. The people are communicating, and it looks calm and secure. I feel like the lines are just enough and do not look uninteresting.



Microsoft Stock Images

Diagonal Lines



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

Diagonal lines suggest movement or action. They are angled, jagged, or zigzag lines.

The lines create a sense of drama and attention. The diagonal lines help move my eye across this interior more quickly than any other type of line. My eye directly looks up at the vaulted ceiling. The feeling I get when looking at this image is a grand and formal setting.

Vertical Lines

Vertical lines are perpendicular to the horizon. They communicate height, strength, and dignity. They are more formal than horizontal lines.

In this living room, the drapery is a good example of how vertical lines can lift the eye upward. It helps the perception of the room seem bigger than what it is. The high vertical lines add height and simplicity giving it a simple and formal feel.





SHAPE

When the beginning and end points of any line meet, a shape is created. Shapes are two dimensional, angular, sharp, curved and rounded. They become a pattern when repeated. There are several categories of shapes that include; circles, triangles, rectangles, and squares.

This staircase is pleasing to the eye because it combines repeated rectangular, circular, and square shapes. The stairs look solid and equal in size. The circular shapes attract attention in a downward movement showing unity and infinity. It looks very noble and reminds me of a curious eye watching over the stairs.

FORM

Form results from the combination of line, shape, and volume. When a two-dimensional shape (square) moves into the third dimension, it becomes a cube. Architects commonly call “forms” a “mass”.

The three kitchen lamp fixtures and island are 3D forms. The island is a solid object itself. I like the feeling of openness the space gives off. It is quite powerful; you get a sense of invitation into the kitchen. A place you can meet and interact with family and friends.



Microsoft Stock Images

SPACE



Space planning involves moving forms, such as walls and partitions, within a space. In the built environment, a physical space is an area defined by some type of enclosure.

I like the feeling I get from this work environment. It is well-planned and functionable. I can see the endless space on this floor. The definition of the glass offices creates enclosure but adjoins the spaces making the office feel as one unit.

TEXTURE

Texture exists in all natural and built environments. It is a surface characteristic that invites people to explore an object or material through touch. There are two categories: tactile and visual, that texture falls under.

The visual interest in this space has a layering of tactile textures. Every wall in this room has a different texture: wall coverings, wood, and drapery. It provides interest, comfort, and sleekness. The satin look of the drapery, sofa, and bed look polished and formal. It feels like a higher end location of business.



[Pixabay License](#) Free to use under the Pixabay license No attribution required

PATTERN



Microsoft Stock Images

Pattern is the repetition of a specific motif (artistic design) in an orderly manner. They can be large or small scale. There are three types of pattern motifs: geometric, naturalistic, and abstract. There are two ways to utilize it: surface and structural patterns.

The patterns in this interior seem to be on a larger scale. For example, the columns are repeated showing a structural pattern, but the repeated artwork on the column is on the surface. The windows have a geometric pattern on the surface and on the frames as well. The ceiling, floor, and carpets show geometric motifs. I think the wall coverings are trying to give a more naturalistic pattern making you feel like you are outside amongst the people.

COLOR

Color is one of the most powerful, exciting, and life-shaping elements of design. Dependent on light, color can alter the shape and size of an object producing different sensations on the eye. The object reflects light enabling us to see hues. Attraction and interest in color grows as people mature and develop personal preferences. It can transform spaces. Color impacts our moods and modifies the world we see.

Color has transformed this room into a fascinating and exciting place to be. People identify with this room as a casino. The color scheme in this photo gives off bright possibilities with hues of color reaching long and wide into a continuous walkway. Your emotion here is driven by curiosity and endless possibilities.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

LIGHT



The vision process begins when light enters the pupil-the opening of the iris of the eye. The human eye takes in light and the image of an object. Light, both manufactured and natural, is and often overlooked and trivialized element of design. It is an exceptionally powerful element of design. Its quantity, quality, and color control people's behavior, mood, and ability to function on the most basic level. Natural light comes from directional light beams emitted by the sun.

In this office, light pours in. The large windows on the back wall illuminate the whole room even behind the conference table. The hanging fixtures add an extra layer of light. It makes the space feel open, airy, and light. The space looks longer than what it really is. Real estate agents use wide lens cameras to help the spaces look larger.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Principles of design are the guidelines that govern the choices and actions of designers take to achieve good design.

PROPORTION

RHYTHM

EMPHASIS

HARMONY

SCALE

VARIETY

BALANCE

UNITY



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Credit source: All first paragraph definitions are from Interiors 2nd Edition 2021 by Stephanie A. Clemons, The Goodheart-Wilcox Company, Inc.

PROPORTION

Proportion simply describes the relationship of the area occupied by one shape to that of another. It is the relative size and scale of elements in a design. A whole can be one object, person, or an entire composition within a two or three-dimensional space.

Proportion of the human body greatly impacts the design of a space. In Grand Central train station in New York City, you can see the size of one area to the size of another area. As you get closer to the bottom level you can see variations in people's proportions or body size starting to look very different from one another.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND

EMPHASIS

Emphasis is created when a dominant feature for a space or composition is the first to demand your attention. The focal point is the center of attention or activity to which the eye goes first when looking at a design.

In this image, the emphasis is on the fireplace/mirror in the room. When I look at the room, I feel like it is the focal point that catches my eye first. It provides a hierarchy when viewing and is pleasing to the eye to look at. I think the furniture in the room does not suit the size of the focal point or window.



SCALE

Scale refers to the size of an object or building relative to a known constant. The known constant is usually the human body. Scale identifies external internal relationships. It shows function and perceived beauty as well. Scale in interiors often relates to the function of space. There is visual scale and human scale.

This image shows both. Visually you can compare the two people, one object to another with your eyes. When looking at the artwork the humans here must feel small in contrast. This human scale perception shows the experience within a space. The human scale can feel too tight as well if you are crowded in an elevator.



BALANCE



Balance is the equilibrium of elements in a space. There are two major categories of balance: physical and visual. Physical balance is an actual weight of an object which depends on gravity and equilibrium. Visual balance is an illusion that relates to perceived relative weights of objects in space. There are three types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.

Symmetrical Balance

The arrangement of objects on both sides of a center point or line (either vertical axis or horizontal axis) that results in a mirror image. They are often exact mirror images that form when using identical elements on either side of the center point, or visual axis. Designers use symmetrical balance to emphasize a focal point.

In this image the carpet is used as the center point or vertical axis or line. I can see the mirror image of both sides. I find the visual image very predictable and shows a good balance between the items and colors used. Even though the colors are very different and bright it somehow works to show a formal balanced image.



Asymmetrical Balance

This occurs when objects on both sides of the central visual axis are dissimilar yet appear to have identical visual weight. In nature, you see this type walking in a forest or flower garden. People perceive asymmetrical interiors as informal and flexible.

This image uses a balance of grouping of smaller objects (two chairs) with a larger object (one sofa). The central axis is the coffee table. It is interesting to view because of the wood and neutral color combination with splashes of warm colors on the wall and throw pillows.



Microsoft Stock Images

Radical Balance

Radical balance occurs when all elements radiate out from one center point in a circular fashion like spokes on a wheel. The petals of a daisy or the ripples that appear after throwing a rock on water are examples of radical balance in nature.

In this image radial balance is visible in the ceiling details having a circular shape and meeting in the center or middle point. It feels very glamorous and formal. The half circle on the back wall shows a beautiful center piece that radiates as the center piece. The tables and lamps show radial balance.



Microsoft Stock Images

RHYTHM

Rhythm is a creative, repetitive blend of movement and visual form in a conscious, regular arrangement. It often attracts attention and always develops visual unity that enhances beauty within a space.

An example of rhythm in nature is the wind blowing or the lapping of the waves in the ocean. Rhythm is important for the human comfort in a space.

There are four types of rhythm interior designers use: alternation, progression, repetition, and transition. When used properly, rhythm is a recurrence of successive elements in a pattern of repetition.



Microsoft Stock Images

Alternation



This type of rhythm uses a repeated pair of contrasting elements such as the dash and dot of Morse code. An example is a parquet floor or a checkered board floor. It moves a viewer's eye around the room and adds variety and interest.

This kitchen has the same wood cabinet color which does not have any contrasting colors. The black and white colored tiles make it look more interesting and give it a modern look that it would not otherwise have. When I look at this floor, my eye notices the other parts of the kitchen as well, the sleek stainless-steel appliances.

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Progression

Progression is known as gradation, is a gradual increase or decrease in size of a design element, typically as an identical form, color, or shape but in a different scale.

Designers often create this effect with accessories with placing series of objects in a succession of increasing or decreasing sizes.

This image is a good example of showing progression of the plant sizes at this point and time. This looks interesting sitting on a mantel or console table giving the living space a warm and well-maintained home.

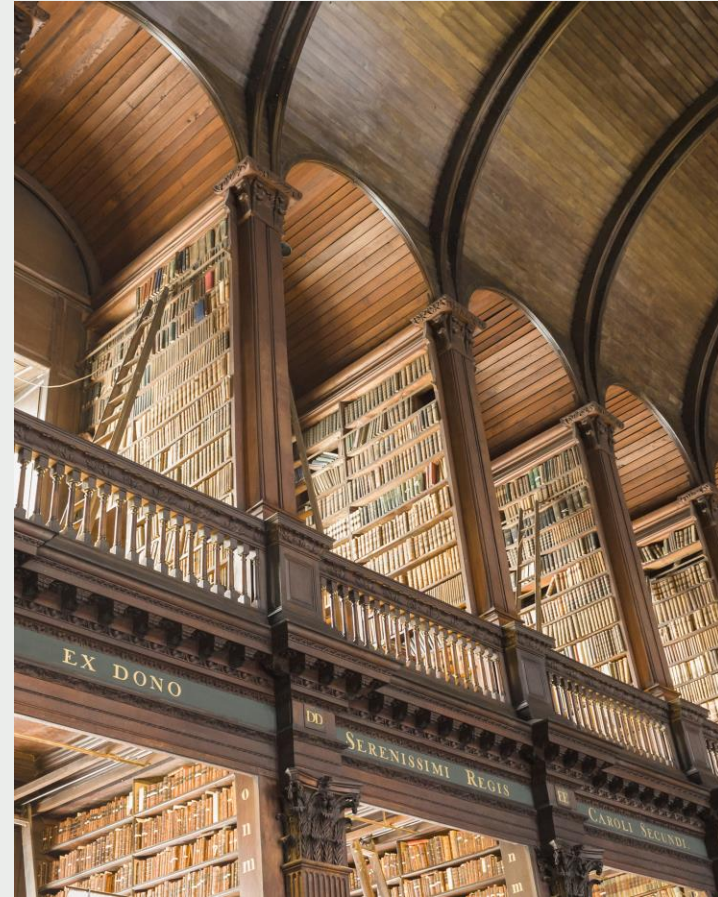


Microsoft Stock Images

Repetition

As the simplest type of rhythm, it controls the eye movement by repeating a single element again and again. The elements are in similar size and length.

This wooden library shows repetition with the various sections that look identical. It has the same color and shape creating harmony. The repetition of the arch gives it a sense of balance throughout.



Microsoft Stock Images

Transition

This type of rhythm uses a line that carries the eye easily and without interruption from one point to another.

Transition is an architectural element such as the arched door in the image. The space between the upper arch around the cobalt blue door shows reoccurrence and makes the pattern more interesting. The interior has arched doorways as well. It leads the eye to move easily or transition from one room to another.

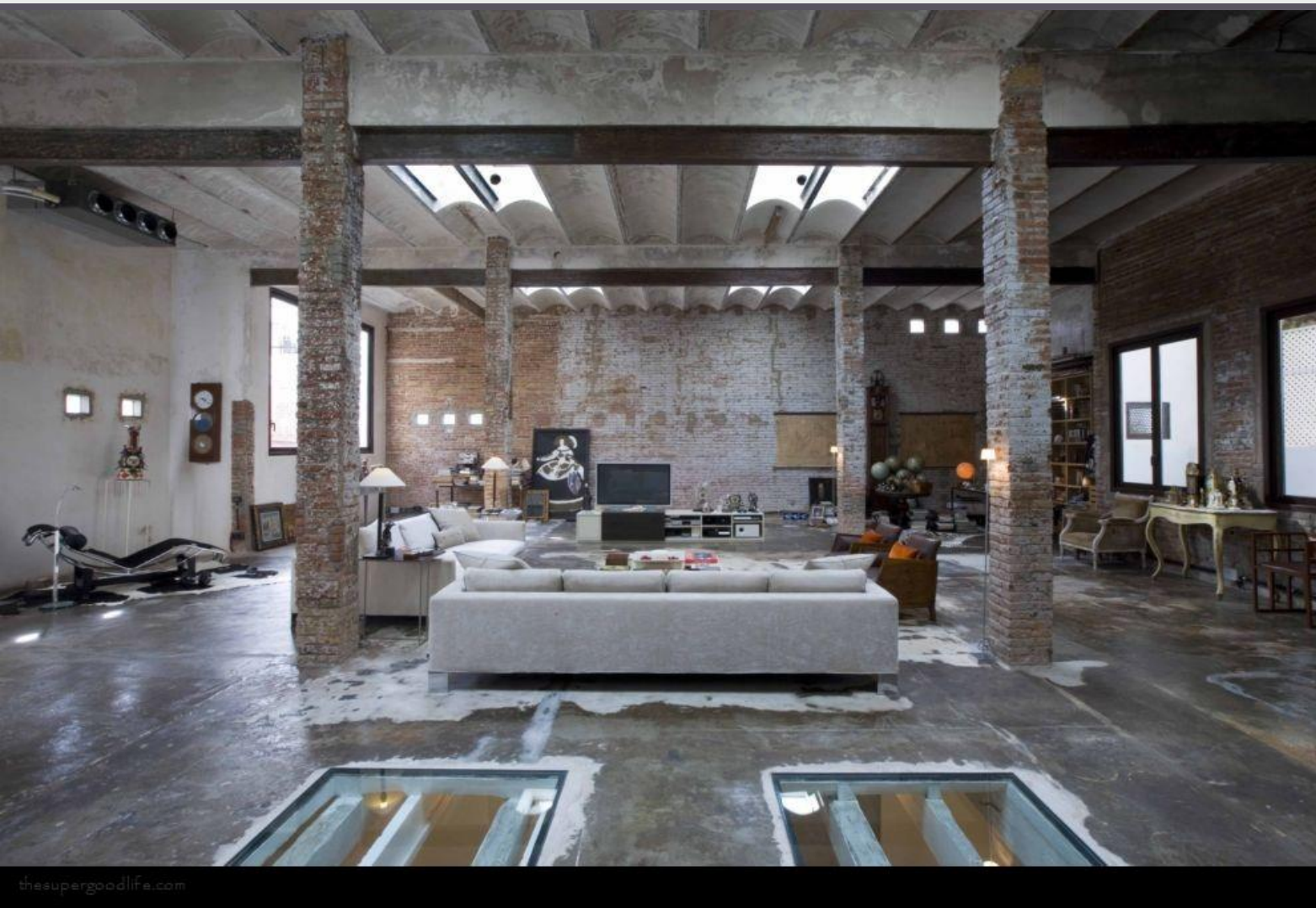


Microsoft Stock Images

HARMONY

The combination of design elements and principles in an aesthetically pleasing or orderly whole. It is the hallmark of good design and results when all design elements-such as the architectural features and furnishings-work together in an interesting composition of belonging.

I like the modern harmonic feeling in this apartment. The brick and sky lights give it a sense of even balance. The square columns, openness, and high ceiling work nicely together to give an orderly feel and features a unique architecture vibe.



thesupergoodlife.com
This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-ND
Microsoft Stock Images

Proximity

Proximity is organizing distinct elements into groups that are near each other. Designers use it by placing elements next to each other, such as accessories on a sofa table or pictures on a wall. This develops relationship between objects and is the easiest way to achieve unity.

In this open concept, there are several examples of proximity. The pillows on the sofa, the picture on the wall, and dining room chairs have close relationship. I feel like it ties in well together giving the rooms unity and clarity.



Repetition

This is repeating the same color, texture, pattern, or shape throughout a space or building. This creates harmony through unity. Repeating a geometric pattern, such as a square, is an example.

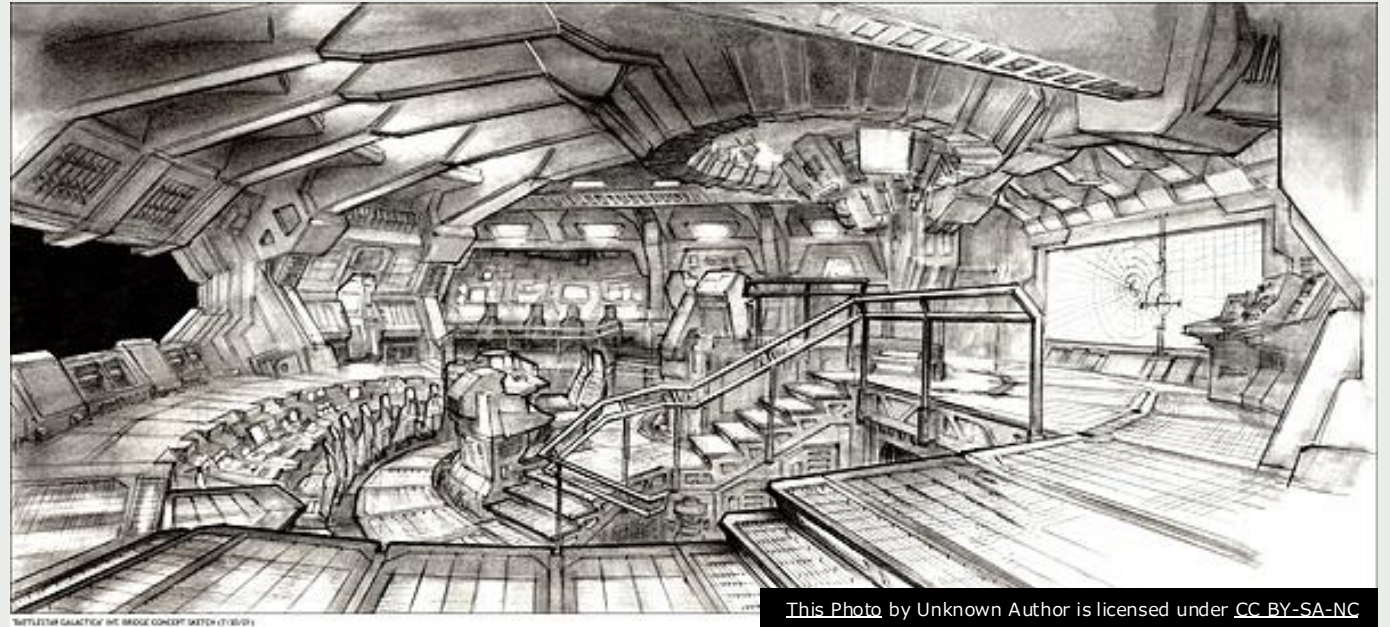
These lounge chairs are a good example of repetition. This creates a clean, inviting look. The spa is creating harmony by using the same lounge chair repeatedly. The chair is not the only example of repetition: the pillows and striped towels are repeated as well. This gives a feeling of equality or unity. People want to feel apart of this relaxing and personal oasis.



Continuation

Continuation is used as a line or edge to transition from one form to another, it moves the eye through the visual composition or space. This is most difficult way to achieve harmony.

This photo is designed in a futuristic form. When I study the picture, I see edges moving from the upper level and bottom part of the interior. The walkway around the outer edge shows a continuation of steps.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Alignment



Alignment lines up forms or images to organize and create groups. For example, creating clusters of furniture around a focal point. I feel like the focal point in this living room is the massive window front. The living room furniture is situated in a cluster of sofas or groupings that divide the room in half. There needs to be division in the room to have an orderly function or alignment between the living and dining room. This view is based on the alignment of the windows.

VARIETY

Variety is absence of monotony or sameness. It adds vitality, interest, and diversity to a design.

This shopping area uses historic furniture such as the clock, railings, and dark carpets. The roof and white arches above the stores give a light contemporary look. This variety is helpful when getting both old and young generations excited about their comfortable shopping experience.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

UNITY



Unity is a set of conscious choices to tie the composition together, a sense of order, oneness, and uniformity. It has a sense of belonging to each other such as colors that mesh and complement each other like furnishings used from similar periods. Unity, coupled with variety, develops an interesting cohesive design. This is a traditional style that has an order and uniformity. The furnishings complement each other in a beautiful slate blue. The dining chairs, drapery, carpet, and wall coverings merge as one. This is unity at its grandest!

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

THANK YOU



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

Lori Wolper
Elements and Principles
of Interior Design
ITMD 121 2/22/23