

Visual Archaeologists™

Practice visual reading

“Seeing through”

artifacts

To

Excavate and narrate content

(Visual Literacy training, © Susan Mareneck, 2006)



VISUAL LANGUAGE for Active Viewing

DISCOVER OR CREATE?

In order to interpret and find meaning through observation, to contextualize information or to initiate visual communication, we need conceptual tools to analyze what is seen. Two aspects of what is seen are **content** and **form**. Content is subject matter, narrative or information communicated. Form is the purely visual aspect, named by the various elements and principles of design. Content is **what** you want to say, form is **how** you say it.

The Elements and Principles of Design provide language to describe the form of what we see whether it is person, place, thing or phenomenon.



The Design Vocabulary of Elements and Principles consists of:

- **Elements** –

- Line
- Shape and Form
- Value
- Color
- Space
- Texture

- **Principles** –

- Balance
- Contrast
- Unity
- Emphasis
- Pattern
- Movement and Rhythm

Close reading (describing form) leads us into relationship with that which we are observing and helps to decipher content and meaning.

The Design Vocabulary

ELEMENTS

LINE - a path between two points.

Categories:

Straight (Vertical and Horizontal)

Diagonal

Curved

Types:

Structural

Outlines

Contour

Gesture

Calligraphy

SHAPE AND FORM - Shape - an enclosed two-dimensional space with one boundary and a single surface. (height & width, but no depth)

Form - an object with three-dimensions. (length, width and depth) It usually has weight and solidity (volume) and may have one or many surfaces (for instance, a pinecone).

Categories:

Geometric and Organic

Curved and Angular

Positive and Negative

Qualities:

Light and Heavy

Smooth and Textured

Static and Dynamic

Form is defined by light.

VALUE – Range of lightness and darkness of grays and colors.

Types:

Light values = “**High-key**”

Dark values = “**Low-key**”

Value **contrast** (strong light/dark contrast attracts the eye).

COLOR – is the separation of the spectrum of light. One of the most exciting and powerful aspects of our environment is **color**. It **appeals directly to our senses and emotions.**

Properties:

Hue: the name of the color (or wavelength). **Primary:** red-blue-yellow; **Secondary:** orange- green- violet; **tertiary:** yellow-orange-blue-green- red-violet.

Value: Adding white to a color produces a **tint**; adding black produces a **shade**.

Intensity: Quality of light in a color. Mixing gray with a color produces a “**tone**”. **Simultaneous contrast** (complements next to each other) increases intensity.

Color Harmonies: Monochromatic; Analogous; Complementary (split); Triadic; Disharmony

Warm and Cool Colors.

SPACE – refers to the three-dimensionality of sculpture and architecture or the illusion of depth in two-dimensional artwork.

Three-dimensional Space

Positive and Negative

Flowing

The Illusion of Space/ Devices to Show Depth

Composition: organization of elements/placement (*Position, Overlapping, Color, Aerial perspective: Size and/ or Value*)

Point of View = Perspective: *Linear (mechanical) perspective: One-point, Two-point*

Subjective Space

Cubism

Abstract/ nonrepresentational

TEXTURE - the physical surface structure of a material

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Qualities:

Real

Implied

PRINCIPLES

Balance

Unity

Contrast

Emphasis

Pattern

Movement and Rhythm