The Principles of Design
Balance, Proportion/Scale, Contrast, Rhythm, Emphasis, Repetition, Unity/Variety, and Figure-ground Relationship
The Principles of Design are the ways that artists use the elements of art to create interesting compositions (artwork).
Principles of Design in Film

- Balance
- Proportion/Scale
- Contrast
- Rhythm or Movement
- Emphasis
- Repetition or Pattern
- Unity or Harmony / Variety or Interest
- Figure-ground Relationship
Balance

- Balance refers to the visual equalization of the elements of art.
- The three major forms of balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.
Balance

✦ Symmetrical: Where the art elements in a composition are balanced in a mirror-like fashion. It does not have to be exact.

✦ Asymmetrical: where equilibrium is achieved by the balance differences in the art elements within a composition.

✦ Radial: Where elements in the composition branch or radiate out from a central point.
What kind of balance is shown?

Wine Cellar By Keith Pickering-Walters, 2011
Symmetrical balance is correct

If you could visually divide the paper in half, there would be equal amounts of visual weight on both sides. Neither side dominates the photo.
What kind of balance is shown?
Asymmetrical balance is correct

Optimus Prime is much larger on the left, but has been balanced asymmetrically by the multiple, smaller characters on the right.

Transformers: Dark Of The Moon (2011)
What kind of balance is shown?

For The Birds (2000)
Symmetrical balance - you can cut it vertically down the middle.
What kind of balance is shown?

A Bugs Life (1998)
Asymmetrical balance is used.

A Bugs Life (1998)
What kind of balance is shown?
Radial is correct

The lines of the firework all come from a bright central point.

Rocket’s Red Glare By Deb Bailey, 2012
What type of balance is shown here?

A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte by Georges Seurat, 1884
Asymmetrical balance is correct

The larger, shadowed figures on the right are balanced by the smaller, lighter figures to the left. Both shape and value contribute to balance in this work of art.

A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte by Georges Seurat, 1884
Proportion/Scale

- The relationship in size of one component (part) of a work of art to another.
- Some artists choose to show correct proportion in their work.
- Some artist choose to distort or exaggerate the proportions of the subjects involved.
How large is the platform (circle) compared to the planet?

Star Trek (2009)
Really Small!

Star Trek (2009)
How can one tell how large the tree is?

Sycamore Swing By Uzair Mohammad, 2011
The swing

It may seem obvious, but the swing tells the viewer that the tree is large with lots of sturdy branches.

Sycamore Swing By Uzair Mohammad, 2011
What element is used to show scale?
The element of space is used to show scale. The house, street, hills and windmills appear small. This is due to an effect called Tilt-shift. This can be achieved by lenses or by blurring specific areas of the photos.

Altamonte Home By Andrew Edwards, 2011
How large are the piranhas?
Bigger than her head!
Because we know how large her head is (approximately), we can see that they’re huge!

Piranha 3D (2010)
What is this and how large is it?
This is a very small part of a campfire photo.

This is a photo of pine sap burning in a campfire. The photographer cropped most of the photo away to create this dramatic shot.

Churning By Aleks Soto, 2010
Contrast

- Contrast emphasizes the differences between art elements.
- Sharp contrast draws attention and can direct a viewer to a focal point within a work of art.
What elements are contrasted?

Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
Texture:
Because the shape of the silhouette of each character is almost the same, their texture is used to tell them apart..

Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
What elements are contrasted?

Tron Legacy (2010)
Color - Blue and Orange are complimentary colors and contrast.

*Tron Legacy (2010)*
Rhythm

- Rhythm is sometimes referred to as movement.
- 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.
- Lines or colors cause the viewer’s eye to sweep over the artwork in a certain direction.
What element helps to show rhythm?

*Princess Mononoke* (1997)
The lines (on the ground) achieve a sense of movement/rhythm.
What element shows rhythm?

Churning By Aleks Soto, 2010
Line and Color

The line starts wide on the left and gets more narrow as it moves to the right. The repetition of color keeps the viewer’s eye moving around the photo.

Churning By Aleks Soto, 2010
What elements show rhythm in this clip (listen and watch)?

Psycho (1960)
The music provides an audio element that provides rhythm and changes that rhythm.

_Psycho_ (1960)
What elements help to create rhythm?

¡Todos afuera!

Piranha 3D (2010)
Really, the Editing and Audio

¡Todos afuera!

Piranha 3D (2010)
What elements show movement?
Line, Space and Value

The lines on the bricks show the linear perspective of space as they get wider as they approach the viewer. The different values of beige show the tunnel blurred as if in movement. The visual beat is made by the repeating arches.

Wine Cellar In Motion By Keith Pickering-Walters, 2011
Emphasis

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

Princess Mononoke (1997)
The element of color is causing the red wound to be dominant. (also think Rule of Thirds)
Where is the focal point? Why?

For the Birds (2000)
The bird in the center is the focal point. Shape achieves Emphasis.

For the Birds (2000)
What elements help the focal point stand out?

*Tron Legacy (2010)*
What elements help the focal point to stand out?

Light beams surround the main subject
Lines provide a natural frame
Composition puts the main subject in the center of interest

*Tron Legacy (2010)*
Repetition

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

* Repetition of an element of art (i.e., shapes, lines, or colors) to achieve decoration or ornamentation is called a pattern.
What element shows repetition?
Line

The lines create a repeating shape that fills the entire photo.

Copperopolis Mining Wire by Keith Pickering-Walters, 2011
What elements show repetition?

Princess Mononoke (1997)
Shape and Color

The repeating shapes of the characters and the repetition of the color.

Princess Mononoke (1997)
Unity / Variety

Both principles while different, bring the same quality of interest to a finished work of art.

- **Unity** refers to the visual quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through effective use of the elements of art and principles of design.

- **Variety** is achieved when the art elements are combined in various ways to increase visual interest.
What element shows unity/variety?
Color and Shape

The shape of the balloons unifies the image of the house and the colors create variety.
How is variety shown?

Composition VII by Wassily Kandinsky, 1913
Kandinsky used a variety of lines, geometric shapes and colors to give the painting interest. By overlapping some elements he showed space.
What elements bring variety?

Cloudy With Chance of Meatballs 2
Shape and Color

Cloudy With Chance of Meatballs 2
Figure-ground Relationship

- The relationship between a form or figure and its background. It can also be described as the contrast between positive space (figure) and negative space (the background).
What elements are contrasted to show figure-ground relationship?
**Space:** The figure (the clock) is gigantic compared to the background.

**Value:** The bright color of the numbers contrast the dark background

**Color:** Black and white are sharply contrasted
What element is contrasted to show Figure-ground relationship?

Valley Fence Post By Keith Pickering-Walters, 2011
Texture

The soft moss on the rough fence post contrasts with the blurred, wind-blown weeds.
What elements are contrasted to show Figure-ground relationship?
Shape, Color and Texture

The shape of the wood and hand are vertical, while the horizon is horizontal. The warm colors of his hand are contrasted with the cool colors of the ocean and the texture of his hand are contrasted with the waves.

*Through The Worm Hole By Uzair Mohammad, 2011*
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