Principles of Design

A Course in Design Production

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Professional Certified Florists' Program

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Elements and Principles of Design

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I. Introduction

This course, "Elements and Principles of Design" might well be called "Tools of Design". These concepts are not arbitrary rules – they are constant guidelines. They are the tools of all the arts, and no artist can vary them until they are mastered. A careful study and understanding of these elements and principles of design enable one to express his or her personality in floral art. It is through this mastery that *distinction, originality* and *individuality* are created and reflected in design. *Distinction is that extra note of quality, taste and clarity for which we all strive. Originality is the expression of creative thinking. Individuality is the expression of a designer's personality.*

It is interesting to note that as our knowledge and our perceptions about design become more sophisticated, we appreciate more complexity in design. The same is true in the definitions of terms. This course was first offered in 1981 and at that time it was considered best to lump the elements and principles together – especially since the definitions of both terms are very similar. Now however, leaders in the field including AIFD have embraced the fact that Elements and Principles are truly different. The definitions have been updated:

Elements of Design – *are basic visual characteristics of the components themselves. The elements are Line, Form, Space, Texture and Pattern, Color, Size, and Fragrance.*

Principles of Design – *are the "tools" of design. They are guidelines - the "ways" in which we compose a design – the manner of placement. These guidelines govern the organization of materials in accordance with the laws of nature. They often reinforce one another.*

Principles of design are now organized into two categories: *primary* and *secondary* principles. The *primary principles* are Proportion, Balance, Dominance, Rhythm, Contrast and Unity. The *secondary principles* of Design are: Scale, Focal Area/Focal Point, Repetition, Accent, Depth, Transition, Variation, Opposition, and Tension.

Flowers placed in a container without any thought of design are satisfying simply because they are in themselves, pleasing to the eye. However, these same flowers arranged according to certain guidelines (Principles of Design) can become works of art.

Design is everywhere in the universe, but it is hidden from us until we become aware of it. There is design in the largest things we know and in the smallest…in the shapes of coastlines along continents washed by ocean waves, and in a grain of sand…in deep gorges cut by rushing rivers and in a drop of water. There is design in reaching branches shaped by growth through countless ages. There is design in fleeting shadows that change with the moving sun and shift with every breeze. Each leaf has its place in the pattern it helps to make. Every flower adds a colorful note to its place in the garden – or in a floral design. Let's now look at these characteristics called elements.

II. Elements of Design

The basic visual characteristics and ingredients of design.

LINE	**PATTERN**
FORM	**COLOR**
SPACE	**SIZE**
TEXTURE	**FRAGRANCE**

A. Line

Line is the visual path the eye follows through a composition to produce motion. The element of line is one of the most important in any design. There are many different kinds of lines. Lines may be straight, curving, zigzag, erratic, graceful and delicate or bold and severe. They may express masculine or feminine characteristics.

Line flowers such as cattails, delphinium, gladiola, larkspur and snapdragons are excellent for establishing the skeleton of a floral design. Line foliages such as flax, equisetum, cattail and spiral eucalyptus are great helpers to extend the lines of flowers, container, driftwood, etc.

Line may be created by lining up multiple blossoms – even round flowers - of one type such as carnations, iris, tulips, roses etc. Their stems when exposed, then become an important part of the line. Line is never static…even when in a horizontal position, because the eye still travels along the line. (See Plate 1). Vertical, diagonal and zigzag lines usually add energy and often drama to a composition while horizontal and cascading lines express movement of a more relaxed, graceful and delicate nature.

The understanding of line, and its emotional qualities, enables one to make a compatible selection of flowers, foliage and container to express a desired idea or complement a particular architectural style.

B. Form

Form is defined as the shape or contour of the individual components in a composition. In floral design, the materials like machinery parts, have definite shapes. They should fit together with the same precision as does a good mechanical assembly. The combination of forms should give interest, impart vitality and prevent monotony in a pleasing design. The flowers remain individual and are recognized by their own characteristics even though they may be grouped together. (See Plate 1).

The plan that is followed in making a design exactly right for a particular use depends upon the element of form. Where the plan is perfect the result is perfect – in size, in weight, in strength and in coloring.

The element, form, can be expressed in another way. *It is the overall three-dimensional configuration or shape of a design or composition.* Designs in the shape of geometric forms such as ovals, triangles and fans are easy to comprehend as forms, while compositions identified as vegetative, formalinear and parallel would be considered configurations. The overall shape of the design should be in harmony with the architecture of its surroundings for maximum effect.

C. Space

Space is the element of design that we think of as referring to the open areas around the individual components in a composition. However, in floral design this must include total designed space, which is the entire area occupied by the composition itself. It follows then, that the total design space can be divided into two categories: **positive space** and **negative space.** *Positive space is the area occupied by materials and negative space is the part of the composition NOT occupied by materials. Negative space is open space.* In Plate 1 the curly willow defines the negative space around the tulips and calls attention to them – showing off their forms and emphasizing their importance in the composition.

Plate 1

Plate 1a – Stems increase the effect of line when multiple blossoms are used to create a linear pattern.

Plate 1b – Individual components are seen individually even when grouped.

D.
Texture and Pattern

Texture is the surface quality of any material as perceived by sight or touch: (smooth, glossy, rough, fuzzy, velvety, etc.) In floral design, the texture of each part of a composition must be so related that it blends pleasingly with its neighbor, or it may be in strong contrast, causing one part to compliment the other. Bold or strong contrasts in texture can add interest and excitement to a design while textures that blend together may produce a feeling of unity. For instance: the soft and delicate leaf arrangement of *Asparagus ming* would be thought of as texture while the long needles of ponderosa pine would be perceived as pattern.

Plate 2

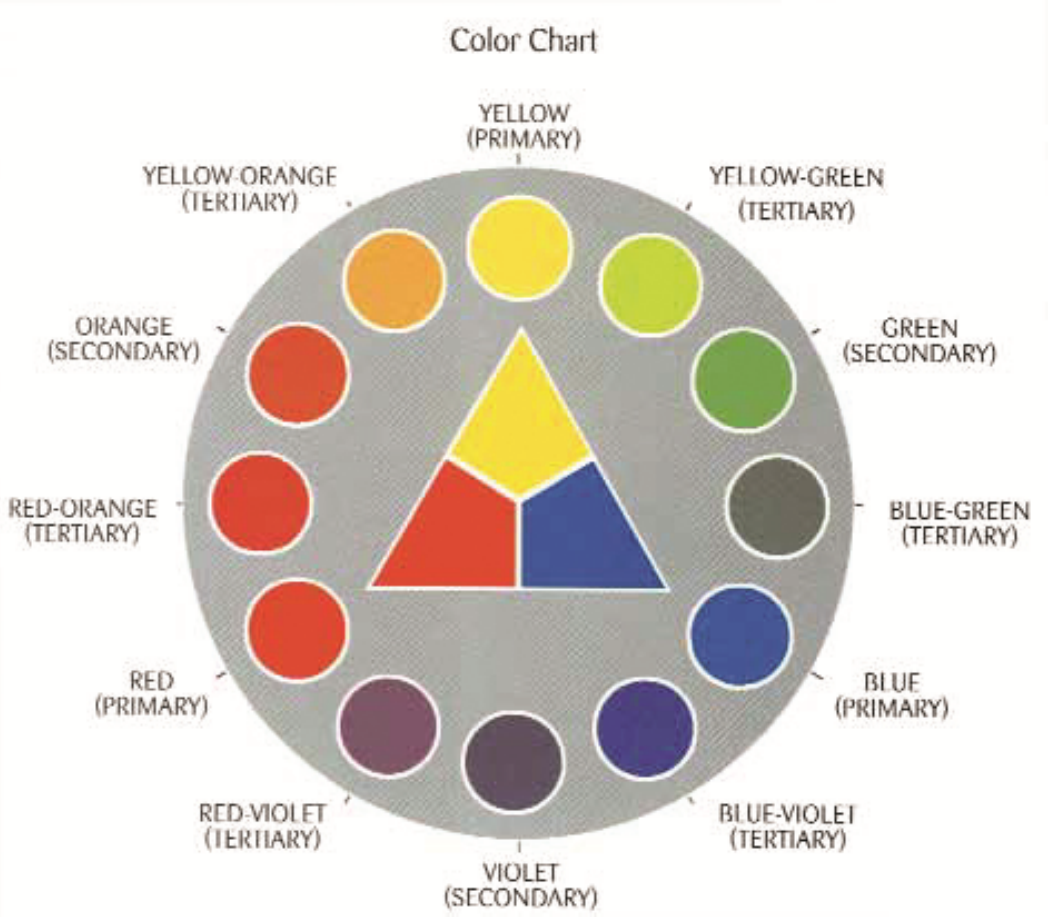
Pattern is a repeated combination of line, form, color, texture, size and/or space in the arrangement of florets, leaves, twigs, or branches on main stems. You could say that when texture is enlarged we see pattern. For example the herringbone weave of a woolen fabric would be expressed as texture with both sight and touch. That same orderly and measured arrangement of units marked by separations in a basket or brick floor would be perceived as pattern. Both texture and pattern are seen in Plate 2. Notice how each *Zingiber ginger* scale exhibits its own specific texture, but when the shampoo ginger is perceived in its entirety, the combination of scales becomes pattern. And finally, the vase itself is a good example of how coloration gives the impression of texture to a smooth surface. Speaking of color, contrasts in texture will prevent a subtle or monochromatic color scheme from being monotonous.

Plate 2a – How many textures and patterns can be found in this close-up image?

E. Color

Color is the visual response of the eye to various reflected wavelengths and pigments.
An understanding of the function of color and a mastery of its use will increase the versatility of any designer and strengthen his ability to create desired atmospheres and effects. Through the use of almost any color, desired impressions can be produced. Color gives life and personality to designs. It can "turn people "on" or "off". Harmonious colors will produce designs that satisfy even though they lack proper design. Conversely, if arrangements are perfect in form, but poor in color selection, they may never satisfy (or sell!).
Design (skeletal pattern of the arrangement) pleases the sense of physical balance and proportion, while color satisfies the esthetic taste - senses of sight and perceived taste, touch and smell. It is not necessary to understand the theory of the internal combustion engine to drive a car. It is imperative, however, to know and understand human reaction to color and how to skillfully employ it. People react differently to color. Their reactions are governed by their emotional responses and their background experience. Skillful use of color should be employed not only in arrangements, but in the display of merchandise as well. The understanding of color can be a powerful sales tool.

BENZ COLOR WHEEL



THE COLOR CHART

The basic colors - Red, Yellow, and Blue - are the primary colors from which all others are made. They are the building blocks for the entire color pigment system. Nature has provided the special qualities of red which is advancing, exciting, and warm; blue which is receding, cool and quieting; and yellow which is brilliant and cheerful.

The mixture of any two primary colors produces a secondary color; orange, green or violet.

Yellow and red = orange.
Blue and yellow = green.
Red and blue = violet.

The mixture of any primary color with its secondary color neighbor gives a tertiary color.

Yellow and orange = yellow-orange.
Orange and red =red-orange.
Red and violet =red-violet.
Violet and blue = blue-violet.
Blue and green = blue-green
Green and yellow = yellow-green

The color wheel may be divided in half to show which colors are cool and which are warm. Red, orange and yellow which symbolize blood and fire are warm; green, blue and violet recall sky and water which are cool. The warm colors advance (stand out from a distance) while the cool colors recede – they look better up close. These qualities become critical when decorating a display window, or a church for a wedding.

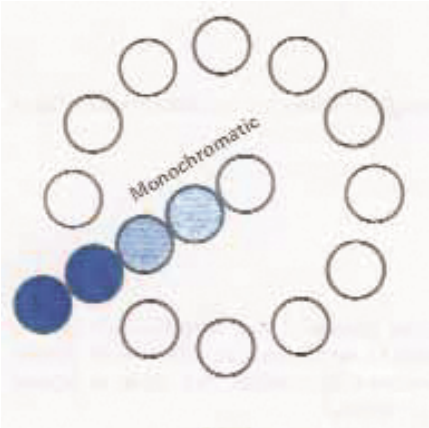
NEUTRAL COLORS

Black, white, and gray are known as neutral colors. They do not appear in the color wheel, but they are used to change the tonal quality or value of a color. White lessens the visual weight of a color, making it lighter. Black increases color value making the hues darker, adding visual weight. A white background reflects more light therefore competing with, and reducing their perceived brilliance. Pastels harmonize well because of the large quantity of white they contain. To blend two colors that appear to "fight," mix the two in the mind's eye. Add white with this resulting color to get the pastel. This pastel will harmonize the two colors and act as the transition color that is needed. For example: hot pink and orange may seem like discord . . . mix them in the mind's eye to get bright coral, then add white to gain a soft coral. The soft coral will be an excellent transition color between orange and hot pink.

Black is used as a background for colors when they need to look intensified. Black absorbs light rays, which decreases competition with, and actually intensifies the brilliance of red, blue, yellow, orange, and green while causing violet to often disappear.

COLOR TERMINOLOGY

The following terms and definitions will present the background necessary before color harmony can be clearly understood and used to the best advantage.

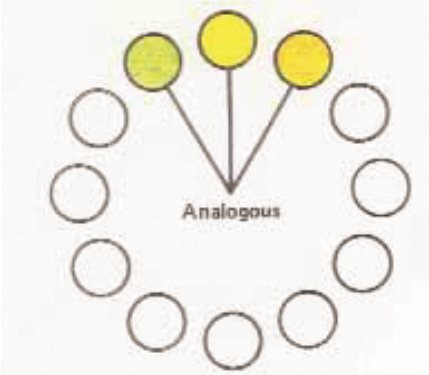


Color Harmony — The various usable or pleasing combinations of color.

Hue — means color, any color, is interchangeable with color

Chroma — the purity of a color, determined by its degree of freedom from white, gray or black.

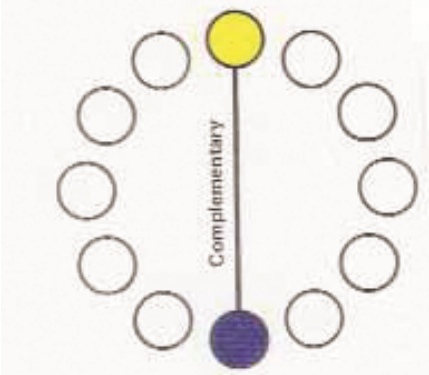
Value — is the term used to designate the visual weight (lightness or darkness) of a hue. For example, the values of red range from pink to maroon.



Tint — any color to which white has been added (red plus white becomes pink).

Shade — a color to which black has been added (red plus black is maroon).

Tone — any color to which gray has been added (red plus gray becomes dull red – not lighter or darker).

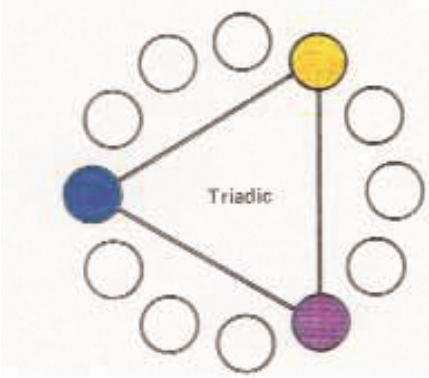


COLOR HARMONY

All florists work with color harmonies every day.
It is prudent to understand basic color combinations.

Monochromatic Color — different values of one hue (pink, red, maroon). Color gradations must be used carefully with the strongest value placed at the focal point. (See Plate 2) Interesting textures play a vital role in this harmony, to prevent monotony.

Analogous Color — is achieved through the use of three or more hues in sequence on the color wheel, with only one being a primary color (yellow). Analogous colors can produce special moods and seasonal effects.



Complementary Color — is a combination of hues in the very strongest contrast; opposites on the color wheel (red and green, orange and blue, yellow and violet). This combination gives dramatic emphasis to any decoration or display.

Triad — any three colors that are equally spaced on the color wheel (red-blue-yellow or orange-green-violet). This color harmony always creates great interest.

E. Size

Size is the measurement of the amount of space something occupies such as a design or a component of a design. It is the dimension of line, form and space. Size is what distinguishes between our perception of texture and pattern. Size is a key word in describing both the primary principle of proportion and the secondary principle of scale. In floral design size is one of the factors in the selection of container, plant material, accessories and mechanical aids. It relates also to price, perceived value and satisfaction as experienced by the customer. In fact the concept of size is present in everything we do – from start to finish.

F. Fragrance

Fragrance in floral design is identified as a sweet or pleasing odor, perceived by the sense of smell. As we all know, most people when handed a flower, smell it almost before they look at it. Fragrance is more a component of *atmosphere* than design itself. It is very personal perception that is governed by personal preference and often creates a lasting memory.

Illustration: Now, let's look at some elements in the floral design in Plate 1, shown on the opposite page:

Line: line is expressed in three materials – curly willow, tulips and *Phormium* (New Zealand Flax). Notice how the flax brings your eye back into the composition. Implied line is created with the six tulip blossoms placed in sequence. Even the vase expresses the element of line.

Form: The tulip flowers are strong forms when seen individually, especially when they are open, and the vase is a clear form.

Space: Notice how important space is in "showcasing" each material, especially the tulips in this design. Without space everything would run together.

Texture and Pattern: The variety of textures seen in the different materials really stands out and adds interest to the design. Again, space separates them for best effect. Pattern is not as strong here, but notice in the close-up shots how much more evident it is.

Color: Here color speaks for itself – the stronger red wool-covered wire spheres attract the eye to the focal area while the greens, browns and blacks are distributed to create balance.

Size: The vase dictates the size of the materials, especially the tulips, which are strengthened visually by the grouped roses, hypericum berries and oregonia below.

Fragrance: We don't actually see or perceive any sweet odor in this design, but if we were in the actual presence of the design there would be a *perception* of fragrance. However if the tulips were replaced by Stargazer lilies then some people would be attracted by the strong "aroma" and others would be "turned off by the odor."

Plate 1

III. PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

"Tools of Design"
Guidelines that govern the organization of materials in a design according to the laws of nature.
Certain primary principles of design are associated with related secondary principles of design.

PROPORTIION
- **Scale**

BALANCE

DOMINANCE
- **Focal Point/ Focal Area**
- **Accent**
- **Emphasis**

RHYTHM
- **Depth**
- **Repetition**
- **Transition**

HARMONY
- **UNITY**

CONTRAST
- **Variation**
- **Opposition**
- **Tension**

A. Proportion (primary)

Proportion compares the relationship of the units of a composition to each other in size, quantity and degree of emphasis within the composition It is the relationship of one part to another or of one part to the whole design.

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From the Japanese, American designers have learned that proportion will be pleasing if materials are approximately 1-1/2 times the height of a *tall* container or 1-1/2 times the width of a *low* container. Their ratio 1-1/2 :1 has been established through constant use and experimentation over hundreds of years in all types of art. When a base is used under a container, it is considered part of the container and is included in the measurements. This measurement ratio may be *exceeded* where plant materials are used with a visually heavy container. (See Plate 1).

This concept is in perfect agreement with the recent study by Dan Harwell of Abilene, Texas, who explained the Golden Proportion in his book, "*Searching for Design*." He states that "…proportion is the one principle which has a close relationship to all of the elements and principles of design. Proportion is the mathematical ratio or the quantitative comparison of form or material used in one part of a design to those of another part. It is the mathematical fiber that ties the entire composition or design together to make it work and become a creation of beauty. It is interesting to note that if these proportions are close to Fibonacci's 3-5-8, or Phi ratio, they are usually more aesthetically pleasing to the human eye." Who was Fibonacci?

"Fibonacci – is a shortened version of Leonardo Pisana's nickname, Filius Bonacci. He was a brilliant mathematician who lived in the 1200's and rediscovered the logarithmic number sequence which bears his name (Fibonacci): 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,34,55,89,144. Each number in this sequence is the sum if the previous two numbers and the ratio between each when dividing the smaller into the larger is equal to 1.168 – almost the same as 1.5 or 1 ½ (times the height of the container). The ratio between each number is called Phi - from the first letter in the name of the Greek sculptor, Phidias. These Fibonacci numbers and the ratio of Phi are found throughout nature and in both plants and animals and are the foundation of our understanding and appreciation of what looks "right" to us in a composition. This concept is known as the Golden Proportion."

Plate 1

The numbers 3-5-8 (phi) have been pulled out of the Fibonacci series for use only as a tool of communication. These numbers simply designate comparative values. They should apply to line (length, width, height), form (the size of small forms in relation to large ones), and space (quantity of open compared to closed space). In addition, 3-5-8 can apply to volumes or amounts of colors, textures and patterns in relation to each other. This is an easy way to analyze a design to guarantee that it is interesting and pleasing to the eye. (See Plate 1).

B. Scale (secondary)

Scale is the relative ratio of the size of a composition to its surroundings. The scale of an arrangement is governed by the furnishings of a room in which it is to be placed. A heavy oak dining table in a large paneled room needs an arrangement of strength and mass. In a contemporary home that is open, well lighted and functional the floral design must be tailored to the demands of the time and location.

To determine the scale of an arrangement for a dining table, there are two important factors to consider: first, the number of guests and second, where the dinner is to be given. When arranging for a private home, one considers the size of the table, number of seated guests, the number of serving dishes and decorative objects or candelabra, and space from tabletop to the bottom of the chandelier. The height of the arrangement should not exceed 14 inches (not counting delicate buds) if the guests wish to speak freely across the table and not have to play "peek-a-boo." In large rooms with high ceilings tall containers may be used to lift the flowers high enough so guests may have eye contact and speak across the table underneath the flowers.

C. Balance

Balance is a state of equilibrium and is achieved when the components of a design are so composed that they give a feeling of stability and security. It is achieved in two ways:

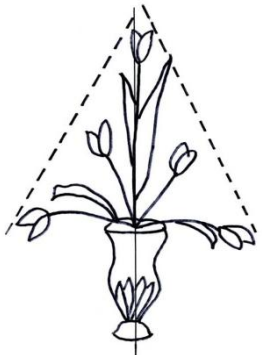
1. *Symmetrical – formal, with perfect mirror-image symmetry, manmade, equilateral.*
2. Asymmetrical – informal, without perfect symmetry, natural.

An accomplished ballet dancer may be motionless on pointed toe, but the weight is so distributed that a feeling of equilibrium is produced: grace and beauty results. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is balanced by weight in relation to the center of gravity, but it does not have visual balance, therefore a disturbed feeling is produced.. Correct balance results in a feeling of stability and security. It is achieved in two ways:

Physical (or mechanical) Balance is gained by the proper placement of main stems forming the design or pattern. The materials establish the skeletal pattern or the desired composition. This may be referred to as the blueprint, or skeleton.

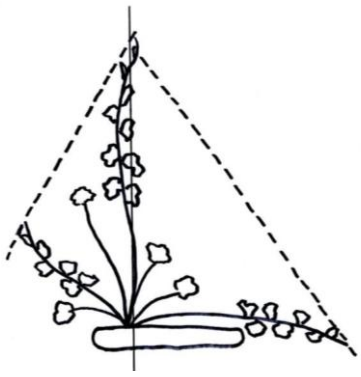
Visual Balance is achieved by the proper use of color and placement in sequence of related sizes of materials in conjunction with structural balance.

Symmetrical Balance is characterized by perfect symmetry. The central stem giving the height of the arrangement is always placed first. It is always placed over the center of the container and establishes the central axis of the composition. The corresponding side arms are then placed, equal in length and similar in kind. Wedding decorations, table centerpieces and arrangements for teas and receptions are usually planned with formal balance. The perfect symmetry of the background or setting often dictates this choice. Man, due to his instinct to organize, uses this pattern for authority and formality. Perfect symmetry may be obtained in symmetrical triangle, fan, oval, round and cone-shaped designs.



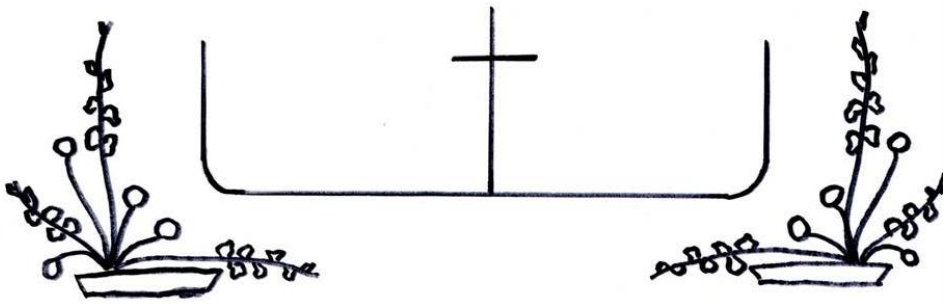
Symmetrical

Asymmetrical Balance is more natural and relaxing. It allows more flexibility in the use of materials. A pair of asymmetrical arrangements designed for a mantel or altar may be placed to frame a center object; thus producing formal balance in the overall setting. These arrangements will accent the corners of the area if placed with their vertical lines toward the outer edges. Their positions can be reversed, placing the vertical sides toward center to accent height.



Asymmetrical

Visual Balance is gained by the selection of correct sizes of materials, and uses of color, textures and accessories. Darker colors appear heavy and generally should be used low, while lighter colors are used toward the extremities except when they provide contrast. However, if the heavy color appears in the smaller, flowers, and the lighter color in the larger mass forms, then color placement will be reversed, since color would be weaker than size. Mass and size determine visual balance in this instance to offset the color positions. Accessories such as ribbon, manipulated foliage or candles may be used to create visual balance in a given setting. Consider with care the texture of both plant materials and containers before combining them, as this quality plays an important part in creating the appearance of proper balance. Thus, fragile containers would be overpowered by massive, rough textured materials, and vice versa.



Symmetrical balance created with
a pair of asymmetrical designs

E. Dominance (primary)

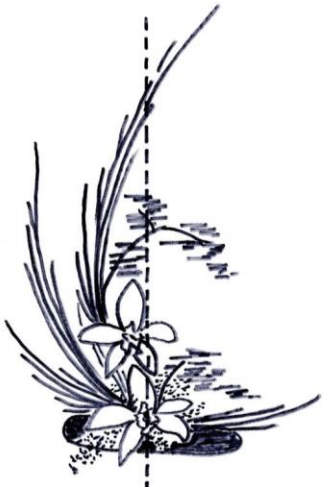
Dominance is the visual organization of a design that emphasizes one or more aspects of the composition. Dominance is synonymous with authority. It is the leading character in the play of materials within the arrangement, and in placement of the arrangement in its setting. Dominance prevents conflict (hodge-podge). Dominance may be the development of a center of interest in conventional designs or it may be the development of a theme or mood in an interpretative design. It subordinates lesser units to the main idea. It is natural for materials in an arrangement to have a starting point which is the logical place of dominance – the point to which the eye is first attracted. This center of interest is vital to geometric designs, but in other design styles it becomes less important because the theme or mood is often the focus itself.

Plate 3

Notice the red musa (ornamental banana) in Plate 3 actually serves as the focal point, but the red gingers are dominant. However, all of the visible stems draw the eye down into the focal area giving the musa additional importance.

E. Focal Point / Focal Area (secondary)

Area(s) of greatest visual impact or weight; center(s) of interest which naturally attract the eye. In life we have an aim – a purpose to which we direct effort. It may be found in the guidance of our children, or a goal we wish to achieve in business. In either case, this is a focus toward which we strive. So it is with any creative project we undertake. In traditional flower arrangement this center of interest is called focal point. Focal point is the origin of convergence to which the eye is drawn. It is often referred to as the "growth point" or "binding point." In Plate 3 all materials come out of (or lead into) the focal point of red musa. Focal point can be developed in several ways. Stem placement is critical. In traditional floral design all stems should come together at one point. In traditional design, crisscrossed stems cause confusion. Gradation of color is another way to emphasize focal point. Lighter colors are kept to the extremities with stronger colors used toward the center. Gradation of sizes of materials is also important. Larger and heavier components are placed in the focal area while light weight or smaller materials are extended outward. The focal point/area is often accented with the use of an accessory such as a holiday novelty, bow, jewels or decorative wire.



Focal Point = lowest orchid
Focal Area = both orchids

F. Accent (secondary)

Accent is any detail added to a design to enhance interest and emphasize other stronger elements. Accents may be botanical or non-botanical and are frequently associated with the focal area or theme of a design. The proverbial bird enhances the theme of a garden or spring bouquet while a bow is often calling attention to the focal area. In Plate 1 the red wool-covered wire bands and balls are accents that call attention to the curly willow line and to the focal area.

G. Emphasis (secondary)

An area in a composition that is given extra importance to make it stand out. Emphasis may assist with the development of the elements and principles of design. Plate 3 illustrates emphasis with the addition of the vertical green whaleback leaves to assist with visual balance and increase the importance of the vertical line of the gingers and scotch broom..

H. Rhythm (primary)

Visual movement throughout a design, usually achieved by means of repetition or gradation. Just as in music, rhythm in floral design is created by intervals or spaces. The intervals between the notes of a melody or the beats of a drum create the rhythm of a musical composition. Similarly, the distances or spaces between components generate rhythm in a floral composition. When viewing a floral design or any work of art, the eye tends to visually connect the components which are the same or similar. Controlled placement of repeated components establishes the rhythm within a composition. This can easily be seen in Plate 3 with the repetition of gingers and in Plate 2 with repetition of the flax leaves and gingers.

The flow of line also creates a feeling – a rhythmic *feeling* in a design. In fact, certain line material may be said to possess a rhythm of its own such as the erratic movement of curly willow, which seems to have movement in relation to the contortions of its stem as seen in Plate 1, including the sizes of the bends and twists and the distances between them, and also in the curly willow, safari sunset protea, whaleback leaves and gingers in Plate 3.

I. Repetition (secondary)

The repeating of like elements within a composition; i.e., line, form, space, color, texture, pattern and size. Repetition is the most common means by which rhythm is achieved. By repeating these elements using specific flowers or other materials more than once, the designer imparts a sense of cohesiveness to the composition. Repeating the color of the container with another material in the design helps to visually unify the entire composition. See if you can identify rhythm in Plates 1,2,and 3.

J. Depth (secondary)

Placement of materials at different levels in and around an arrangement. Incorporating depth is the technique that imparts a three-dimensional quality to a floral composition. This can be the distance from front to back, top to bottom or from the surface to the interior. It can also be achieved by having a particular material "jumping out" of the design. Study the white wax flower jumping forward and the triangular loops of green behind the Musa in Plate 3.

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K. Transition (secondary)

This is the easy visual movement that comes from gradual degrees of change in line, form, color, space, pattern and size; i.e. small to large; light to dark; closed to open, smooth to rough. Transitions of these kinds are excellent ways of developing harmony and creating unity in designs. In Plate 2 all of the flax leaves express transition of color between the peach and pink blossoms and the gray container.

L. Harmony (primary)

The aesthetic quality created through the pleasing interaction of a combination of components in a composition i.e. compatibility. This relationship exists when the various units of a composition do not conflict but form a concordant whole. Good composition will not

rescue an arrangement whose parts are not in harmony. Harmony in music is achieved when all instruments are playing the same melody – or variations of it, but when the orchestra is tuning up there is no harmony even though each different instrument can be heard. In Plate 2 we see just such harmony – all of the materials, though different are playing the same melody.

Harmony is an interesting concept because it relates to intangibles such as theme and mood just as it relates to tangibles such as forms and colors. Harmony is often difficult to understand because it is an abstract term that varies with personal taste. Social and scientific advances are changing one's concepts of harmonious units – traditions are being broken. One person's preference maybe in total opposition to another person's choice. We must remember that in dealing with intangibles, the customer's personal preferences and sense of appreciation often are the deciding factors.

M. Unity (primary)

A oneness of purpose, thought, style and spirit. Unity is a blend of components. It is the feeling that all of the elements of the design contribute to its perceived unique identity, and that the whole is greater than any of its single ingredients. Plate 2 shows the unity of various diverse components – even the ribbon-like flax and container express unity – through color and texture. It is important to be able to distinguish between harmony and unity. Unity is expressed more clearly as the relationship between the elements of the composition whereas harmony is the relationship expressed between all of the components of the composition, including theme, mood and the final effect of the design. Even the multi colored flowers in Plate 4 express "…a oneness of purpose, thought and spirit". They are all garden flowers that could grow and bloom at the same time.

Plate 4

N. Contrast (primary)

The difference between objects when they are placed next to each other. A good use of contrast provides excitement and prevents boredom. Contrast can be shown between different lines, forms, colors, textures, patterns and sizes. There are so many ways to provide contrast in a composition that great skill is required in the selection of materials. If a design is intended to be quiet then a small amount of contrast should be used, but nevertheless present – or the design will be dull. The other extreme, a dramatic even shocking design would call for the strongest possible contrasts. Textural contrasts are easy to achieve but are often overlooked. For instance placing larkspur next to stock would be a poor decision as both flowers would compete for attention but "cancel each other out" due to lack of contrast in texture. Textures are floral personalities that must show their full value in each design. Great contrast is seen in the abstract design in Plate 5 between the orange slag metal sculpture and the blue painted wisteria vine. And of course, the bright yellow lily offers another contrast. Look for contrast in all the photographs in this course, especially Plate 2.

Plate 5

O. Variation (secondary)

Basic similarity but with minor differences. Interest is produced by variation. The more variation a composition has the more interesting it is. Again, this principle can be used by anipulating the various elements such as line, form color, etc. Take space, and use small, medium, and large intervals in its placement. In other words un-equal intervals (spacing) create interest through variation, whereas equal spacing often can be monotonous and less interesting. Great variations are shown in Plate 1 and smaller variations exist among all the materials in Plate 4.

Plate 4

Opposition (secondary)

This is total contrast that brings about contradiction in a design. Opposition is particularly exciting when applied to color, form and to direction of line. The graphic abstract design in Plate 5 is almost entirely based on the principle of opposition – even though there is repetition of diagonal line movement in the vine. Opposition is strong between the fresh and dried material, between line and form, and also in textures: rough surface metal slag and smooth vine and waxy flower and leaf. The colors also have great contrast.

Q. Tension (secondary)

A dynamic aesthetic quality expressing action or the force of energy within or upon a design component by the skillful use of opposition or contrast. To achieve tension in a design is to convey the beauty of opposition or contradiction. This force of energy can be strong as in tying knots in foliage or in tying a willow branch into an arc and securing it in place, so that it looks as if it will spring loose. Tension can be seen/felt in 3 different ways in the orange and blue sculptural design: the swirling vine, the bending leaf and the inverted lily. They make you want to reach out and catch something before it springs loose!

Plate 5

Plate 5a

Contrast in textures and tension, especially in the bent/flexed strelitzia leaf

The end result of using the ELEMENTS and PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN is a pleasing and successful composition. What is composition? Composition is the selection and subsequent grouping of components to create a pattern (design). All parts must be selected to complete a single idea or theme. Each part should contribute its full value to the finished design. All parts must be compatible with its purpose. An arrangement of flowers in a container may fulfill all the requirements of good design within itself. However, should it not be compatible with its setting or blend with the decor of the room or fulfill the need to express a particular emotion, it will be unsatisfactory. The word "suitability" becomes important and must be considered. One's appreciation or taste changes with the times. Acceptance of new combinations of materials (or trends) will influence those decisions as to suitability. For special occasions, such as Halloween, one may decorate with designs expressive of that theme, and not necessarily be compatible with the interior décor of the room. But in designing a decorative piece for the home, or office, or church, or any specific location, the designer must harmonize the composition to its setting.

General Suggestions

To summarize this course, let's look again at all of our Plates 1-5, to see if they will illustrate all of the elements and principles of design that we have just studied.

1. **Line** –strong vertical lines are established by the placement of the curly willow and Scotch broom in Plates 1 and 2.
2. **Form**-is expressed by the strong intrinsic qualities of each of the materials, especially the tulips in Plate 1, the gingers and flax in Plate 2 – the tropicals in Plate 3 and all components in Plate 5.
3. **Space**-each prominent form is affirmed by the open space that surrounds it – in Plates 1, 2, 3, and 5. The variation of spaces provides interest.
4. **Texture**-contrasting surface qualities from smooth to fuzzy enhance the overall visual appeal in all five designs.
5. **Pattern**-the separation of the petals in the gingers in Plates 2 and 3.
6. **Color**-vibrant colors speak of the tropics and give personality to the design in Plate 3.
7. **Size**-the inherent size of the individual containers in each design governs the size of everything else.
8. **Proportion**-large open spaces and heavy base objects allows the tall curly willow, light in visual weight, to extend beyond the normal 1.5 to 1 ratio of design to container. Phi is expressed with the total height being divided thus: container or container + red spheres = 3; container plus tulips = 5; total height = 8.
9. **Balance**-visual balance is achieved by the asymmetrical placement of materials into all of the designs.
10. **Dominance**-individual bold forms dominate the designs in Plates 1, 2, 3, and 5.
11. **Focal Area/Focal Point**-the convergence of all stems at the low central growth point help achieve visual stability in Plates 1, 2, and 3.

12. **Accent**- the red spheres and bands in Plate 1 and the curly willow in Plate 3 provide added interest in the design.
13. **Emphasis**-the green whaleback palm leaves in Plate 3 emphasize both the height and focal area.
14. **Rhythm**-repetition of lines, forms, colors and textures create strong visual movement.
15. **Depth**-can be seen in Plates 2, 3 and 4 in the focal areas and draws the eye deep into the designs, and adds dimension.
16. **Transition**-is evident in the upward progression of tulips and gingers in Plates 1, 2, and 3 while the paved green dianthus in Plate 4 'transitions' throughout the design.
17. **Harmony**-the components in Plates 2, 3, and 4 are not in conflict, they are agreeable in theme and content.
18. **Unity**-the cohesive relationship of the individual components in Plates 2, 3, and 4 is due to their color harmonies; their suitable combinations and their relationship with the containers.
19. **Contrast**-Plates 2 and 5 are based on contrast, but Plate 2 also expresses unity while Plate 5 does not. The contrast in both provides excitement.
20. **Opposition**-opposing line directions in Plates 1, 2 and 5 produce interest: the diagonal lines always provide energy and excitement in a design.
21. **Tension**-opposite forces of energy are expressed in the flax leaves in Plate 2 and in all material in Plate 5.
22. **Variation**-subtle textural diversity among all of the materials in Plate 4 gives interest while the diverse colors create a little more excitement.

*** A great study tool for developing your eye for design is to look at any real or pictured floral design whether on your worktable or in a magazine, and see how many of the elements and principles listed above you can find***

Reference List

****All definitions, including some text have been taken from: Flowers: Creative Design, with permission****

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The AIFD Guide to Floral Design, The American Institute of Floral Designers; The Intelvid Group, 2005

Searching for Design, Dan Harwell; Golden Spiral Publishing Co. 1995