

3. What are the ways we can achieve it?

This answer explores some mechanisms for achieving the desired effects through different uses of the art and design elements and provides examples.

2.6.1 Unity and Harmony

What do they mean, and how can we identify them in a piece?

- In a piece that has achieved unity, its different elements work together to convey a feeling that they belong together.
- Imagine a part of the piece in isolation. Do you have the urge to put it back where it was? Do you feel that it belongs with the whole piece?
- *Unity can be visual.* It also can be conceptual, which means that the work expresses a unified idea. Both types of unity are important to make an artwork strong.
- Harmony is about finding a visual rhyme scheme by combining elements that accent their similarities.
- In a harmonious composition, the elements—even standing in opposition—share common visual or conceptual attributes.
- Too much variation or contrast between elements can break up an image's sense of harmony.

What are the aesthetics they can create?

- The piece naturally will appear whole visually and conceptually. All of the individual elements will contribute to the whole effect. Without unity, different parts of the piece will look disjointed.
- Harmony can reinforce unity.
- Harmony makes the work visually pleasing.

What are the ways we can achieve them?

Unity and harmony are closely related principles. But they are different. Unity can be created by visual linking of various elements in a piece. For example, scattered houses can be connected by adding a road. Sharing similar colors and architectural design for the houses adds harmony.

Creating the visual elements coherent with the idea being expressed reinforces the sense of unity. For example, an active and dynamic subject may utilize an oblique design, rough texture, high contrast, and angular lines, while the passive and quiet subject is more consistent with horizontal design, soft texture, low contrast, and monotonous lines. If the active and the passive subjects share enough similar visual attributes—for example, analogous colors—it will convey a sense of harmony.

Most of the ideas here are founded on the perceptual organization principles discussed in the previous section.

- *Line:*

- Use a line style consistent with the theme of the piece.
 - Variable line width versus the same line width
 - Organic (curved, flowing) versus angular

- Different elements can be linked together by sharing similar visual attributes.

- **Shape:**
 - Use shapes that are visually or conceptually similar.
 - Visually similar: organic versus angular
 - Conceptually similar: repeat objects that carry similar meanings; different shapes can be brought together by their similar conceptual associations
 - Recall that shapes do not have to have a single continuous outline; they can be imaginary as well as made up of multiple elements or objects. Multiple elements arranged to make up a shape will be perceived naturally as a group.
- **Value:**
 - Use light and shadow consistent with the mood of the piece.
 - Use similar values throughout the piece.
- **Color:**
 - Use the color temperature consistent with the mood of the piece.
 - Recall that a color is made up with three components: hue, value, and saturation. Using a palette of similar hue or saturation on different elements can bring them together.
 - Use of analogous colors can create a sense of harmony.
- **Texture:**
 - Different elements with the same textural quality—highly tactile versus a flat pattern—will be viewed generally as related to each other.

It should be emphasized that coherence or consistency does not mean using only one single line style, one texture pattern, or one color throughout the piece. Simply repeating the same component will create a boring result. *Variety* makes the work more interesting. Still, too many unrelated variations will make the work disjointed. Variants of the same component can be connected by sharing some properties. Variants can share similar shapes or concepts but may have a different size and color. For instance, repetition of a pig does not create as strong feeling of a farm as using pigs, cows, horses, chickens, goats, and sheep together.

In the photograph shown in Figure 2.35, the cars basically are facing the same direction. The slight disorders of the cars add variety and make the photograph visually more interesting. In addition, some cars are in motion while others stay still.

2.6.2 Balance

What does it mean, and how can we identify it in a piece?

- Balance refers to the distribution of the visual weight of the different elements in the piece.
- The composition lacks balance when one part of the piece overwhelms the rest. A piece that lacks balance often makes viewers feel uncomfortable, although they may not be able to pinpoint the problem right away. Their attention may keep leaving the piece or stick on one part of the piece and fail to look at the whole.

What are the aesthetics it can create?

- A piece that has balance gives a sense of harmony, while an out-of-balance piece creates tension.