



CRSP

Canadian Restructured School Plan
Le Projet D'une École Canadienne Restructurée

The Artist's "Prism Cell"

CRSP is a project of the



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Association canadienne de la formation professionnelle

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Artists beware! This guide and the skills you will develop through its use are guaranteed only to be good and useful tools!

In this guide, you will learn about the *visual elements* and the *principles* artists use to create *compositions*. This is called **design**. Artists will find these visual elements and principles useful tools to express themselves far beyond the confines of the activities that follow here. Beware, then, not to consider this guide as a formula for creating art. Instead, consider the guide as a useful tool to free the artist to dream from this “prism cell”!

Why study the topic?

Design and composition are areas of human activity that have evolved out of an inner sense we all share for visual order, beauty, and function. Consider the reason for wearing socks of the same length, for combing our hair or for mowing the lawn! Are these not evidence of our need for and sense of design? Studying these topics allows us to see the reasons behind the decisions we make in our visual world. And studying design and composition can become a springboard for creative innovation!

What do I need to know before I begin?

You need to be able to understand the differences between shapes, colours, lines, and textures and see that many variations and combinations are possible in each. You should also be familiar with the principles of balance, contrast, unity, and movement.

What will I know and be able to do when I have completed the guide?

This guide is not intended to provide you with technical design skills, but to help you to develop a useful framework for judging design.

You will be able to:

- Identify and evaluate a variety of designs.
- Arrange any set of shapes, colours, lines, and textures into a composition.
- Make informed judgments in such everyday situations as matching colours in clothing and arranging a table setting. You will also be able to make informed judgments when making your artistic creations, whether they be landscape paintings or statues.

What resources are available to help me?

Books

Bennett, Bryan, and Constance P. Hall. *Discovering Canadian Art: Learning the Language*. Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1984.

Bevlin, Marjorie Elliott. *Design Through Discovery*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970.

Birren, Faber, ed. *A Grammar of Colour*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969.

Brainard, Shirley. *Design Manual*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1991.

Brommer, Gerald F., and George F. Horn. *Art in Your World*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis Publications Inc., 1977.

Brommer, Gerald F., and George F. Horn. *Art: Your Visual Environment*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis Publications Inc., 1977.

Gatto, Joseph A., Albert W. Porter, and Jack Selleck. *Exploring Visual Design*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis Publications Inc., 1978.

MacGregor, R. N., et al. *Canadian Art: Building a Heritage*. Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1987.

Ragans, Rosalind. *Arttalk*. Columbus, Ohio: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 1988.

Tritten, Gottfried. *Teaching Colour and Form in Secondary School*.
Translated by Alba and Ernest H. Lorman. New York: Van
Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971.

Other Resources

Check out the following Internet site:
<http://pete.pomona.edu/visual-lit/intro/intro.html>

You can also learn from all the visual images you see in the world around you.

How may I meet the expectations of the guide?

Complete all of the activities in this guide. You will notice that each activity gives you the opportunity to express your personal preferences. You will approach each activity with your own particular skills, abilities, and knowledge. The work you produce should be presented to an informed audience that can appreciate it critically. If you are in a formal classroom situation, the instructor will provide this evaluation. You could also present your work to an art club, library group, or a knowledgeable friend or colleague.

When should my work be done?

This will depend on your strengths and abilities. Some of the activities may take a few minutes; others may take an hour or two. The final design composition may take much longer to do.

How will I demonstrate I have met the expectations?

1. Practise each of the basic activities and perhaps even invent some of your own to demonstrate your level of understanding, your skills, and your creativity.

2. Attempt the final design exercise involving each of the elements and principles described in the earlier activities. Arrange for an evaluation process in which you present your final design for critical analysis.

What activities do I need to do?

There are several activities in this guide. The early activities focus on specific elements of design: shape, point and line, texture, and colour. You will find, however, that it is very difficult to use only one element at a time. For example, you need to use line and some colour to define a shape. Do not be confused by this as you progress through the exercises. The last activity combines all of these elements into a dynamic composition that frees the artist from his “prism cell.”

Before you begin the activities, study the glossary at the end of this guide. If you are unsure about the meaning of some of the terms, talk to your instructor or consult the works listed in the resources section of the guide.

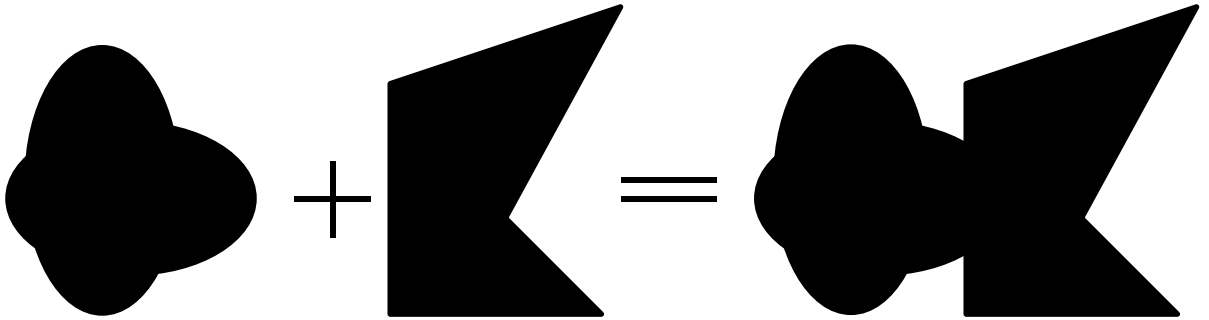
Activity 1: Shapes

What are the basics?

There are **organic** and **geometric** shapes, **combined** (organic/geometric) shapes, **large** and **small** shapes, as well as **positive** and **negative** shapes.

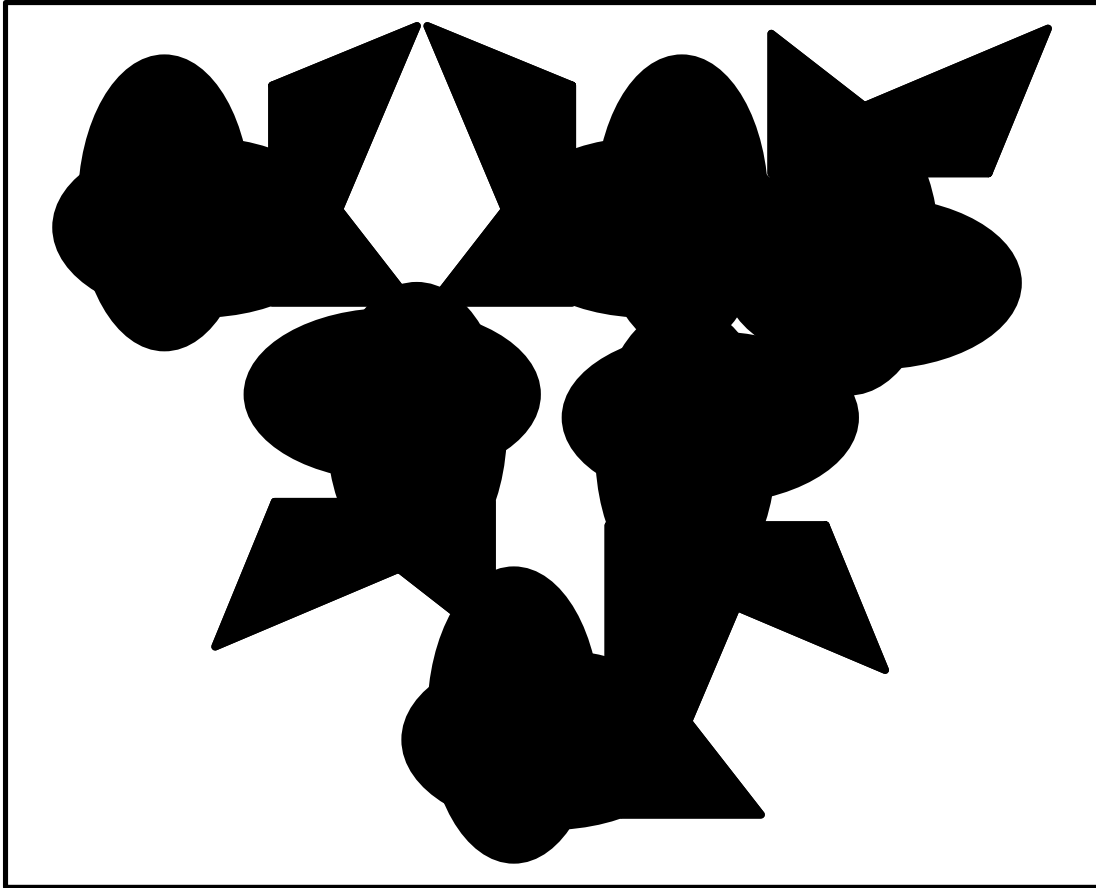
1. Turn to the glossary at the end of this guide and review the meaning of the following:
 - balance
 - contrast
 - overlap
 - repetition
 - unity

1. Create a pleasing shape by making a very fast scribble. Then create a geometric shape such as a square or a triangle. Move the two shapes together to create a third, combined pleasing shape.



2. Now select a few of these shapes and look for ways to connect or arrange them in relationship to one another and ultimately as a unit. Your composition should take into consideration the criteria you reviewed earlier (balance, contrast, overlap, repetition, and unity). Notice how new shapes appear through positioning and overlapping and how they form a balanced and unified design.

See the example given below.



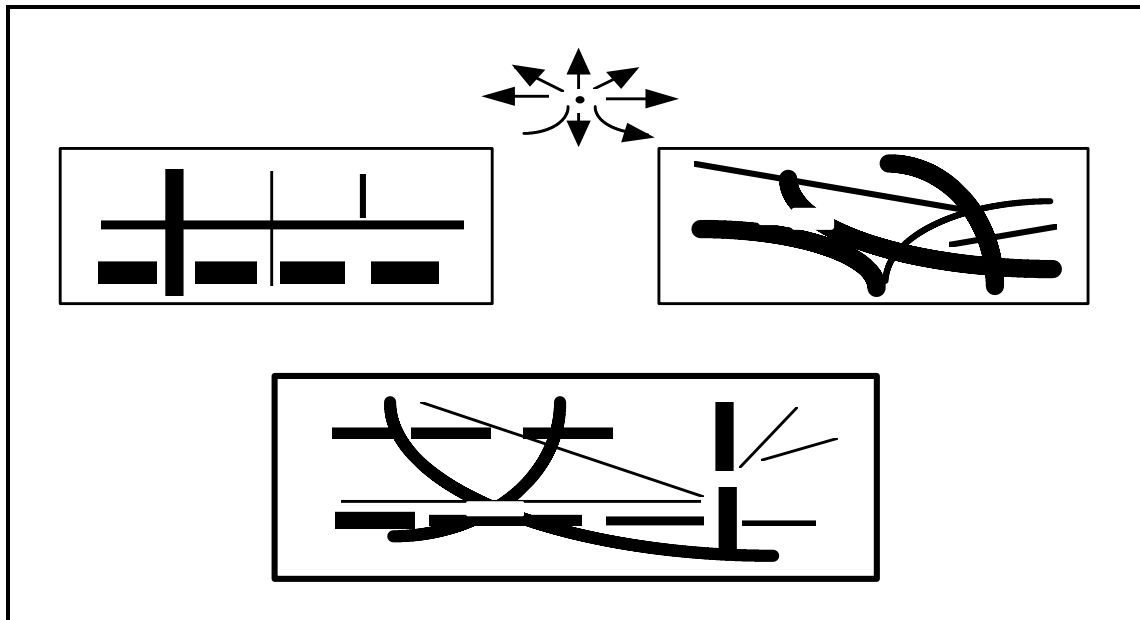
Activity 2: Point and Line

What are the basics?

A **point** is a position of focus or the **shortest line**. A **continuous line** shows length, width and direction. Continuous lines can be angled, horizontal, or vertical. A **broken line** makes a connection between two or more lines. (A broken line may be said to employ an **imaginary line** between two lines located apart from each other, yet maintaining a “connection.” This connection is referred to as “closure” and demonstrates a “relationship.”)

Variations of lines include lines that are **thick** or **thin**, **short** or **long**, **curved** or **straight** or “**irregular**.” Note: Although different from our usual interpretation of what a line is, an irregular line in a composition can be represented by something like the edge of a torn paper, for example.

Using your knowledge of all types of lines and their variations, create an image. The image might be a recognizable form or simply an arrangement forming a balanced and unified whole. Try to consider the direction (movement) of the lines in the composition. Examples of such lines and a sample composition are shown below.



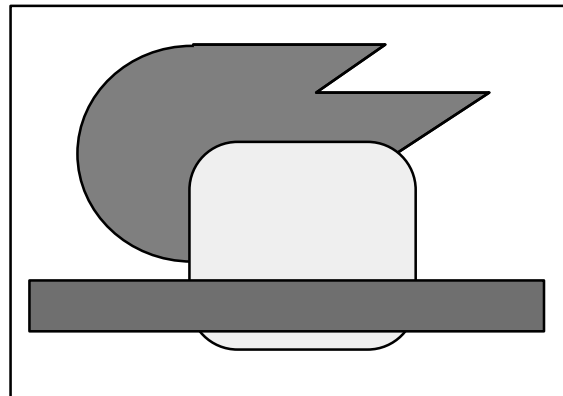
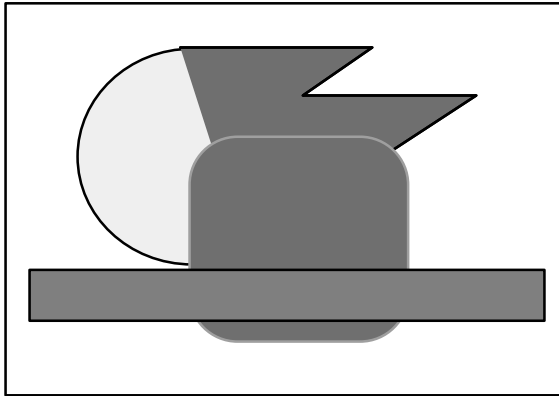
Activity 3: Texture

What are the basics?

In essence, textures are classified on a scale somewhere between being **rough** or **smooth**. We can identify textures merely by looking at them. In design and art, there can be **real** or **actual textures** as well as **illusionary textures**. Illusionary textures are common and add interest and variety to a composition. An **illusion of a texture** is created simply by repeating a significant number of small shapes (points) or lines within a given area.

Arrange a variety of organic and geometric shapes into a composition. Make a duplicate of this composition. Apply a set of visual textures to one composition; then rearrange these textures in the second

composition. Decide which arrangement contains the “best” balance, unity and contrast. See the examples given below.

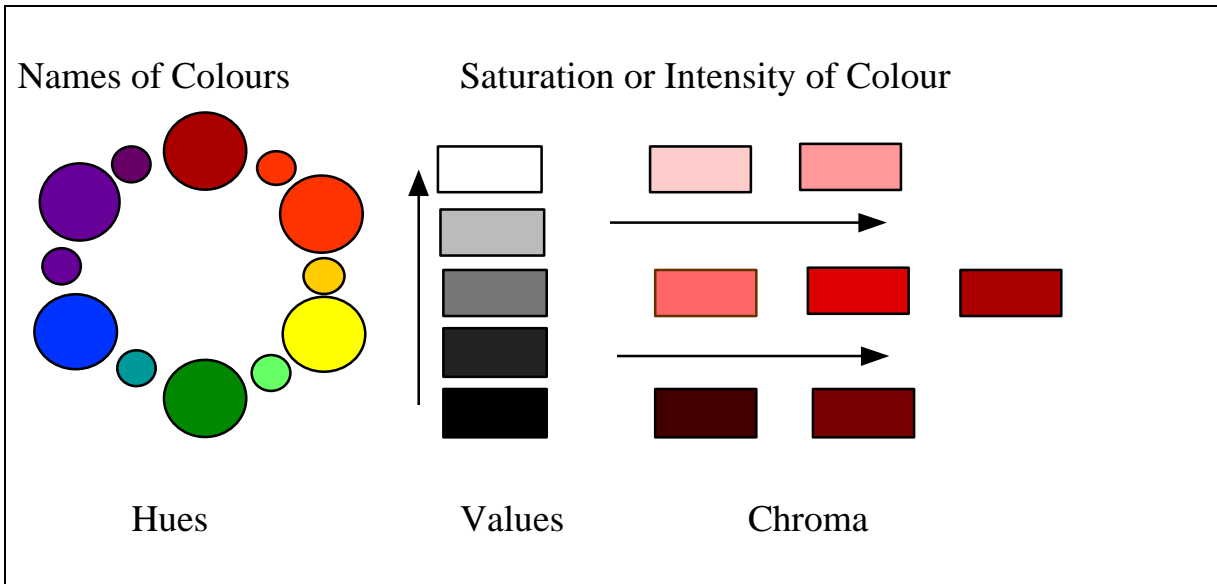


Activity 4: Colour

What are the basics?

The use and value of colour in our lives goes without saying! Yet many have little knowledge of what colour actually does for us or how it works in theory and practice. Basically, colour is a combination of identifiable hues within a scale of values and degrees of saturation. We can study the make up of colour and the way it functions in a controlled way.

The chart on the following page explains the basic components of colour.



Colours in various combinations affect our senses and our preferences. Some colours excite; others tend to pacify. Different colours have acquired specific meanings for people. Red usually means danger, warning, or excitement. Blue most often means a cold feeling, while yellow is hot, and purple can be depressing. Certain colours in combination are generally thought of as pleasing; the colours seem to “go together” (or have unity). Other colour combinations are rather bold and tend to “stand out” (or contrast). We have developed colour schemes that express these kinds of relationships for our feelings and often use them when we design something.

The following samples illustrate the various combinations and the effect they tend to have when used in a composition.

Colour Schemes

Group “A” Unifying Properties

Monochromatic: Monochromatic colours have the same brilliance or intensity of hue (chroma), but a variety of values (lightness or darkness). Here is an example of a hue with the same chroma, but of different values.



Polychromatic: Polychromatic colours are different from monochromatic in that the values remain constant, but the intensity (chroma) varies. Here is an example of a hue with the same values, but different chromas.



Analogous: Colours of equal intensity adjacent to one another on the colour wheel. A family of colours of equal value and chroma. These colour schemes provide a pleasing, close relationship.

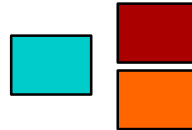


Group “B” Contrasting Properties

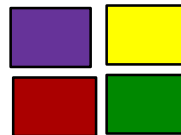
Complementary: Opposites on the colour wheel. Opposite colours of equal value and chroma.



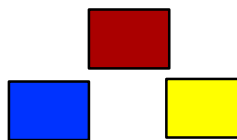
Split Complementary: Complementary and the analogous colours to its complement. One colour opposed by the two colours adjacent to its complementary.



Double-split Complementary: Two sets of opposite analogous colours surrounding a complementary. Adjacent colours to each of two opposing complementaries.

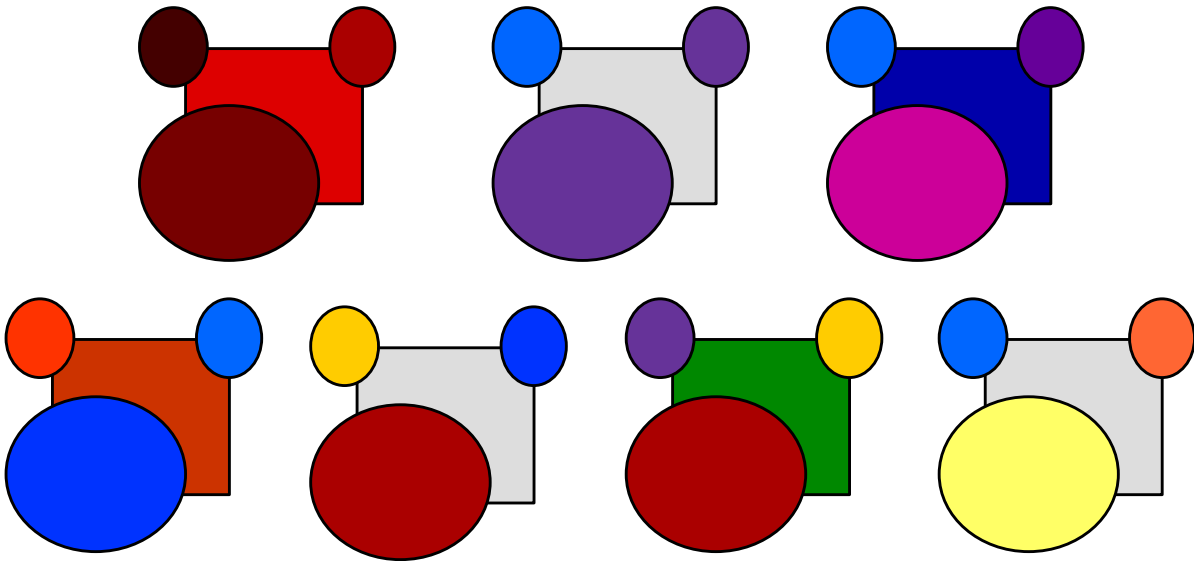


Triadic: Any equidistant set of colours based on the positions of the primaries. Three colours equidistant from each other on the colour wheel.



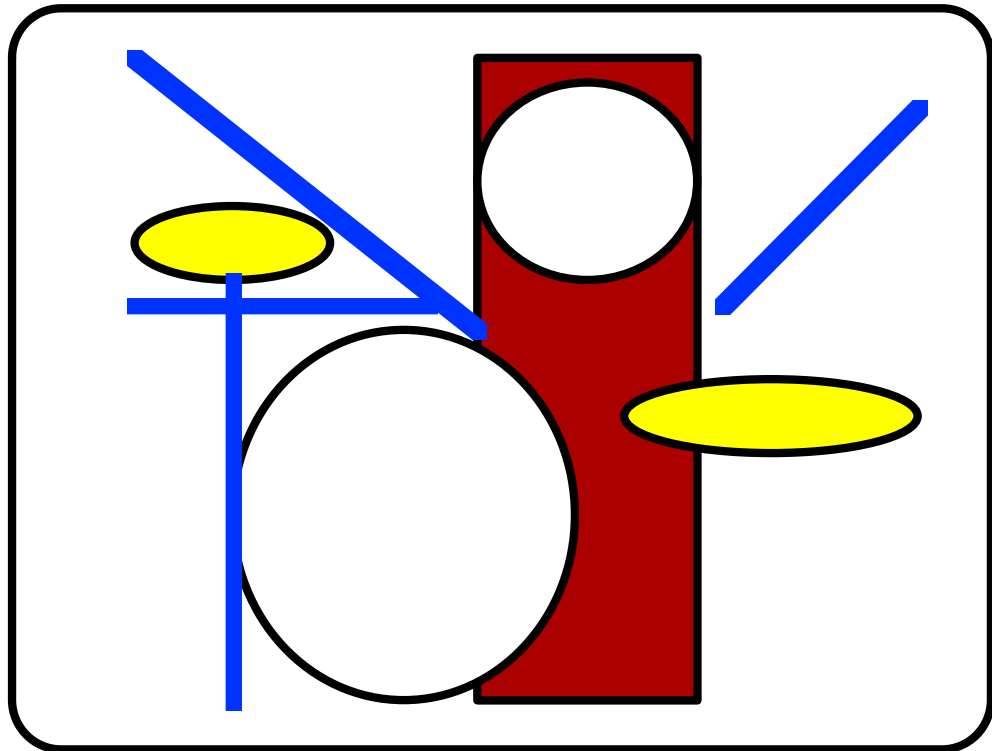
When colours are used in a design or work of art, it is their individual and combined effects that have a profound impact on the viewer. Colours that are used with no concern for their relationships can create discord and an uneasy feeling for the viewer.

1. Create an arrangement of shapes and duplicate the arrangement a number of times.
2. Impose a colour scheme on one of the arrangements by colouring the shapes using only colours within that scheme.
3. Try other colour schemes on each of the similar designs and compare the effects. See the example given below.



Activity 4: Orchestrating the Elements and Principles of Design into Dynamic Compositions *or* How to Free the Artist from his "Prism Cell"!

Using all of the elements (shape, line, texture and colour) and the more significant principles of design (balance, unity, contrast, and movement), create a composition that demonstrates at least one aspect of the unique characteristics of the elements and the relationship each has to the others in an arrangement. See the example provided below.



“The Drummer”

Note the use of geometric and organic shapes, vertical and angled lines, textures, and a triadic colour scheme. Through the careful placement of these elements, you can easily detect balance, unity, contrast and movement.

Where do I go from here?

The sky is the limit . . . or is it? Careers for designers and artists are there for the taking if you are able to develop the skills you have studied in this learner guide to their full potential. The creative thinking required is a subject of its own, and food for another study guide! But read on!

You can use the skills you have developed through this learner guide the whenever you do any of the following:

- Create art projects at school or home or in your own studio.
- Make visual presentations for school assignments in other disciplines.
- Create covering letters and documents for colleges and universities

for entrance requirements relative to the critical analysis of your work.

- Create visual aids to help others understand a message you want to convey.

Political, industrial, economic, social, artistic, recreational, and philosophic interests are influenced by what a good designer is able to offer and the fine line between good design and artistic statement is a fine one indeed.

Artists with a basic understanding of design become free to express their ideas and feelings for their subjects when they are no longer caught in the prison of ignorance or the prison of design theory! Knowledge is a tool! Design is a product of thought, feeling and judgment! Art goes beyond design into the world of myths and legends, fantasy and dreams! Enjoy and learn!

The Artist's "Prism Cell": Glossary

ELEMENTS

- Colour** A visual phenomenon of reflected light upon the sense of sight. Most people can make the distinction between light and dark, but also of “hue” or “colour.” This is unexplainable to those who are blind to colour! (Colour “blindness” need not mean the total inability to detect colour. For example, one in ten males is considered to be red/green colourblind, Some people who are labelled “colourblind” can distinguish differences in colours, while others are unable to see even basic colours at all!)
- Line** Emanating from a point, a line is a thin mark, straight or curved, that the eye follows. Lines make connections with other images.
- Point** A significant area of focus where the eye is able to “see” a specific site in detail. The shortest line.
- Shape** An image defined within specific two-dimensional space. (This differs in three-dimensional space!)
- Texture** The apparent or “real” feeling of a surface of an image.

PRINCIPLES

- Analogous** Colours in a close relationship to one another/colours of the same family. (For example, Colours that are analogous to orange are red and yellow. Or, the analogous colours to blue-green are blue and green.)
- Asymmetry** (See the definition of “balance.”) The apparent disarray of various elements so as to disrupt the balance of the overall composition.
- Balance** A feeling of visual equality within an arrangement between shapes, colours, texture or lines, especially in a horizontal composition (although vertical balance is also a dimension).

Chroma	The strength or weakness of a colour. Chroma is a measure of the brilliance, intensity or luminosity of a colour.
Clarity	The image is obvious and without excessive decorative detail to distort its intended meaning or image. (See the definition of “simplicity.”)
Complementary	Perfectly diametrically opposed images. The term is especially used to define colour. (For example: Orange is the opposite, or complement, of blue.)
Contrast	Simply defined, a contrast is something and its opposite . Black or white, large or small, short or long, thick or thin, curved or straight, dark or light, rough or smooth, red or green, etc., are typical examples of contrasts.
Density	The apparent solidity of an image irrespective of its size.
Depth	The illusionary effects of perspective or such other devices as size, colour intensity, detail, shading, or overlapping.
Emphasis	This occurs when one element dominates a composition.
Geometric	An apparently geometric shape or form. This usually involves straight or angled images.
Harmony	This occurs when variations of an element work together as a unit in a pleasant manner.
Hues	The names given to specific colours.
Illusion	An apparent image that has not been obvious.
Mass	The apparent size of an image, relative to its weight and form.
Monochromatic	A set of colours of similar intensity, but different value.
Movement	The apparent influence of visual images to propel the eye in certain directions, whether as an effect of line, shape, colour or textural connection or “relationship.”
Organic	An apparently irregular or natural shape or form. This usually involves curved or rounded images.

Overlap	The placement of one image over or on top of another.
Pattern	This is when a combination of similar and/or different elements are presented in an organized and repetitive manner.
Perspective	The apparent reduction of size of objects as they recede into the distance according to specific visual principles.
Placement	The location of the element(s) within a composition.
Polychromatic	A set of colours of similar value but different intensity.
Positive and Negative Space	They are the spaces occupied or unoccupied by images or matter within a composition.
Proportion	The relative size of images.
Repetition	When images of elements are presented in multiples. (For example: points, lines, colours, shapes, or textures.)
Rhythm	A repetitive set of images. For example, a fence with regular intervals of different posts.
Scale	The relative size of one image to another, especially to the overall composition or size of the composition.
Simplicity	They are basic elements without undue decoration or embellishment.
Size	This usually refers to the quantity of a form. (For example, the size of a shape, the area of a texture, or the amount of colour.)
Space	The shapes or volumes defining or immediately surrounding images.
Split and Double Split Complementary	This is where several colours of equal intensity are opposed to others on the opposite side of the colour wheel. (See Activity 3, which deals with colours.)

Stress	The visual “pressure” of one element upon another. (For example, a weight on a hammock.)
Symmetry	(See the definition of “balance.”) The apparent arrangement of visual images in an equal manner. (For example, a human face where the left and right sides match.)
Tension	The visual “opposition” between elements. (This is like a tug of war.)
Triadic	Colours that are equidistant to one another on the colour wheel. (For example: red, yellow, and blue.)
Unity	This occurs when all the elements of the composition appear to “belong” within the arrangement.
Value	The lightness or darkness of a colour.
Variety	Differences in the elements of design that are sufficient enough to attract the viewer’s interest without being distracting or confusing.

LEARNER GUIDE WRITING TEAMS

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Site Leaders: Dr. Neil Wortman (1996); Chris Fleming (1997).

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Campobello Island Consolidated School
Carleton North Senior High School
Fundy High School
Grand Manan High School
John Caldwell School
Nackawic High School
Southern Victoria High School
St. Stephen High School
Sir James Dunn Academy
Tobique Valley High School
Woodstock High School

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