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The Elements and Principles of Design

1. INTRODUCTION



Every person nurtures an innate desire of looking good and feels 'accepted' in the socio-economic circle. The word fashion instantaneously brings to mind a flash of colour with a dash of glamour. Men and women are taking fashion in a big way, and are experimenting with different looks, styles, and textures. Fashion plays an increasingly important role in an individual's life because it

is considered as a means of self-expression. For centuries individuals or societies have used clothes and other body adornment as a form of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, sexual availability, locality, class, wealth and group affiliation. Fashion is a form of free speech. It not only embraces clothing, but also accessories, hairstyles, beauty and body art. What we wear and how and when we wear it, provides others with a shorthand to subtly read the surface of a social situation. Fashion is a language of signs, symbols and iconography that non-verbally communicate meanings about individuals and groups. Fashion in all its forms from a tattooed and pierced navel, to the newest hairstyle, is the best form of iconography we have to express individual identity. It enables us to make ourselves understood with rapid comprehension by the onlooker. Fashion makes a dramatic statement about one's personality and when worn with elegance and flair, gives an impression of sophistication and style. That is why a true fashion designer is said to possess the ability to transform a piece of fabric into a work of art. It can be said therefore that, the proper use of elements of art play an important role in designing beautiful and attractive dresses. That is why several factors ought to be considered before choosing the right design elements and principles for a fabric.

2. ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

The elements of design are the fundamental building blocks of any composition. These pieces work together to form a unified composition, and when utilized successfully, create a strong, dynamic visual layout. The designer uses these elements as tools that control how a message is delivered to an audience. The elements are components or parts which can be isolated and defined in any visual design or work of art. They are the structure of the work, and can carry a wide variety of messages. The different elements of design are as follows:

- 1) Line
- 2) Shape
- 3) Colour
- 4) Texture
- 5) Space
- 6) Value
- 7) Form



2.1 LINE

A line is a series of connected points. It is the simplest of design elements and is incorporated into other four elements. All lines have directions, width and length. Lines work in a design in the following ways, line creates movement by leading the eye up and down, side to side or around the garments. Lines may be straight, curved or bent, horizontal, diagonal or vertical. It can also be a combination of all these directions.



Vertical lines convey different moods, ranging from power to strength, to growth. These lines make a person look taller. Vertical lines can be thick or thin as per the requirement. Thin vertical lines are used to make a person look thin and tall.



Horizontal lines represent calm, peace and relaxation and add bulkiness. These can also be thick or thin as and when required. These lines make a person look wider.



Jagged lines can be perceived as sharp, forceful, chaotic. They suggest an illusion of drama, confusion, interest, excitement. These lines are used to highlight a particular part of the body.



Diagonal lines hold the eye's attention longer than vertical lines. These lines add more motion, drama and illusion. They are often found in V-necks, open collars, ties, zippers, shoes.



Curvy lines are created by designers to give a gentle, feminine, casual, graceful and sensual illusion. They are often found in bows, lapels, sleeves, ruffles, skirts. These are used to emphasize on body curves.

The linear marks made with a pen or brush or the edge created when two shapes meet. This is one of the most important elements of design. It defines a subject's form or shape on a flat, two-dimensional surface. Characteristics of lines can be thick, thin, smooth, jagged, rigid, mechanical, organic, hand drawn, sharp, fuzzy, blurry, parallel, zigzag, choppy, uneven, diagonal, radial, oblique, graceful, broken, uneven, tapering and many other. Lines include straight lines, diagonal lines and curve lines etc. It is a basic element of design and refers to a continuous movement of points in a space. The edges of forms and shapes too create line elements.

2.2 SHAPE

Shapes refers to the silhouette of a garment. There are basic shapes for men's and women's fashions. Wise selection in shape can flatter the wearer's appearance. Shapes or silhouettes are important in fashion as it affects how someone sees fashion. Shape is an area that is contained within an implied line, or is seen and identified because of color or value changes. Shapes have two dimensions, length and width, and can be geometric or freeform. When a line crosses itself or intersects with other lines to enclose a space, it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional and has height and width, but no depth. Silhouettes in fashion change over time. For example, in the early 1900s, the ideal silhouette consisted of a pigeon-breasted figure with the bust jutting forward and the hips thrust backward. In the 1920s, a boyish, flat-chested shape was favored. A garment's shape or cut has a great deal to do with whether or not a particular clothing item flatters the person who is wearing it. Today's most desirable silhouette is an hourglass shape.



Hourglass silhouette is one of the most popular shapes. This shape shows the bust and hips being proportionate while the waist being narrower. These shapes are used to emphasize on the curves of a body.



Wedge silhouette is used in both men's and women's fashion. This shape depicts width at the shoulders while narrow at the waistline. These shapes are used to draw attention towards the shoulders region. Wedge shapes create a broader illusion at the shoulders.



Tubular silhouette is basically a straight or rectangle silhouette without any curves. Hips, shoulders, waist proportionately are the same. Tubular shaped garments do not cling to the body. These shapes draw attention up and down the length of the body. They are used to smooth out body lines.



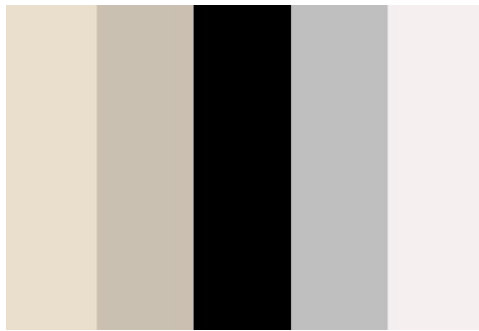
Bell silhouette shows a shape of a fitted top, with a full, bell shaped skirt. These shapes draw the eye's attention towards the hip and waist region.



A-line silhouette is a popular shape for women and usually used for skirts and dresses. These shapes resemble the shape of capital letter 'A'. These garments are narrow at the top which broadens out at the waist. It is not fitted and gives a flatter figure.

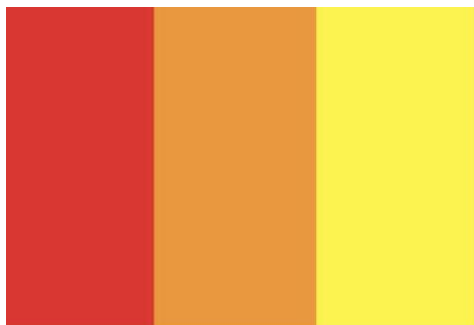
2.3 COLOUR

Colour is one of the most important elements of fashion design because it is the first thing we notice about a garment. When shopping, we look for colour first, then fabric, silhouette, and finally detailing. Colour is a major deciding factor in everything we purchase and choose to surround ourselves with, from cars and furniture to washing powder. Color comes from light - if it weren't for light, we would have no color. Light rays move in a straight path from a light source. Within this light, rays include all of the colors in the spectrum or rainbow. Shining a light into a prism will create a rainbow of colors because it separates the color of the spectrum. For example, a red ball reflects all the red light rays. As artists, we use pigments in the form of powder or liquid paints to create color.



Neutral colours can be worn with any other colour, making them good colours for wardrobe-building. Colours such as beige, black, grey, brown, and white are neutral colours because of their versatility to match with other colours.

Warm colours are made with orange, red, yellow and combinations of them all. As the name indicates, they tend to make you think of sunlight and heat. Warm colours advance (or seem bigger in space), so they give the illusion of enlarging size.



Cool colours such as blue, green and light purple have the ability to calm and soothe. Where warm colors remind us of heat and sunshine, cool colors remind us of water and sky. Cool colors look as though they recede (or seem smaller in space), giving the illusion of reducing size.

2.4 TEXTURES

Texture refers to the surface quality of goods. Fabric can have a variety of textures, all of which can affect the look of a garment or fashion accessory. The weave and texture of a fabric has an impact on the way it drapes, which, in turn, affects the way a garment looks when it is worn. Texture can be used all over the garment or for embellishment.



Tactile texture changes in fabric due to the arrangement of the individual threads in weaving or knitting can be felt on the skin. It is the roughness, softness, stiffness, coarseness and drape. It gives an actual 3D texture. Tactile means touch, they are rough and prickly.



Visual Texture is an illusion, a surface texture. It is what tactile texture looks like (on a 2D surface). The texture you see in a photograph is a visual texture. No matter how rough objects in the photograph look, the surface is smooth and flat. It can be smooth, shiny, dull and matte. Rough/Matt are sporty, casual and comforting. Soft fluffy textures such as fleecy knits seem to offer cosiness and comfort, while the coarser textures of hand knits and corduroys suggest warmth and protection in a casual outdoor environment. Rough/glossy are rich, luxurious and glamorous such fabrics as shimmering lames brocades, sequins and dupion silks seem to reflect the night lights. Smooth/Matt are formal wear often found in suiting fabrics, generally crisp and tightly woven and they look good quality. Denim and Gabardine are examples of smooth or matt texture. Smooth/Glossy are associated

with young fancy, slinky, evening wear. The smooth swish of satin are sounds we associate with luxury and glamour.

2.5 SPACE

Space refers to the area within, around, above or below an object or objects. It is important to create and understand both two dimensional or three dimensional works of art. With three dimensional art the space things occupy is real as is the space around the object. Two dimensional art exists on a flat surface, so if something looks three dimensional- it is an illusion! Even the most realistic paintings or photographs are illusions. Two dimensional artists use a number of "tricks" for creating the illusion of depth in their art. By incorporating the use of space in your design, you can enlarge or reduce the visual space. There are three types of spaces in design open, uncluttered spaces, cramped, busy and unused space.



3. PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The principles of design are the artistic guidelines used to organize or arrange the structural elements of design. The principles combine the elements to create an aesthetic placement of things that will produce a good design. The way in which these principles are applied affects the expressive contents, or the message of the work. Fashion Designers are taught principles of design so that while working on their designs they do not go wrong with their designs and are able to analyse the problem in terms of proportions, balance, rhythm, emphasis and unity to create a harmonious design.

Following are the principles of design:

1. Balance
2. Emphasis
3. Rhythm
4. Harmony
5. Proportion
6. Contrast



3.1 BALANCE

Balance is the concept of visual equilibrium, and relates to our physical sense of balance. It is a reconciliation of opposing forces in a composition that results in visual stability. Balance in fashion design can be achieved with the use of seams, hemlines, necklines. In clothing, balance refers to a visual attribution of weight, from a central area. Balance refers to the restful effect achieved through grouping design details to maintain a feeling of equal weight or attraction from side to side, front to back or top to bottom. Pleasing balance brings about a satisfying relationship among all design parts to produce visual harmony.



Symmetric balance occurs when objects appear to equalize each other by repetition and arranged at equi-distance from the centre. The upper and lower portions of the design are so arranged, as to give an effect of balance. Thus there should not be the effect of too much weight at the bottom or a heavy appearance. It is also known as formal balance. Eg. Dark coloured skirt over a lighter shade of pants makes a short person appear shorter.

3.2 EMPHASIS

Emphasis is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc. It refers to the dominance of one part with subordination of others. A good design should have a design feature which is the centre of interest, while other features support it. Designers often create emphasis partially through the careful arrangement of line, texture and colour. It could also be called a focal point. Every design needs the same note of interest that catches the eye on a specific area of the garment, contrasting colour can be used to emphasize an area. There are a number of techniques that a fashion designer may use to place emphasis on a feature of a garment or a fashion accessory.

Highlight by using contrast hues or by breaking the visual hierarchy to emphasize on a particular design. Artists can emphasize color, value, shapes, or other art elements to achieve dominance. Repeating details such as tucks, gathers, buttons, unusual shapes and textures, applied design on a contrast background.



3.3 RHYTHM

Rhythm is the repetition of visual movement of the elements-colors, shapes, lines, values, forms, spaces, and textures. Variety is essential to keep rhythms exciting and active, and to avoid monotony. Movement and rhythm work together to create the visual equivalent of a musical beat. Rhythm is a sense of movement and is necessary to create interest in a design and carry out the central theme.



Regular rhythm is when elements like lines, colors, shapes are repeated at the same interval each time. The repeated element is identical with the exception of one detail increasing or decreasing gradually with each repetition.



Graduated rhythm refers to the beats of the elements that come closer or go farther as they move. By using pleats, buttons and tucks we can make a rhythmic effect in a garment.



Random rhythms, beats of the elements are random or at irregular intervals. Printed suit fabrics are wonderful examples of rhythm.

3.4 HARMONY

When the principle of unity in fashion design is applied well, a garment or fashion accessory should look good overall. It should look as though it goes together, and it should look as though all the design elements are contributing to make a harmonious whole. In an effective application of the principle of unity, each element enhances the others, rather than distracting from the design.



Harmony-unity, the design should be seen as whole. Unity can be achieved through matching and coordinating. Silhouette of the garment should be in a good relation to the body shape of the garment. Style lines should be consistent on every area of the garment. All areas of the garment should reflect the same shapes so that the continuity of the design is not broken.



Harmony-variety, it can relieve monotony by giving the eye a number of different details to look at. But at the same time it should follow the principles of harmony which are All areas of the garment should reflect the same shapes so that the continuity of the design is not broken. Similar or contrasting textures should be used in a pleasing way. Unity in the color combination should be there to provide harmony.

3.5 PROPORTIONS

Proportion refers to the relative size and scale of the various elements in a design. The issue is the relationship between objects, or parts, of a whole. Proportion can be defined as a pleasing relationship between the garment and its different parts. In garment its silhouette has to be in proportion with the different parts of the garment. The basic law or the golden law that is provided by the Egyptians is 3:5:8 and 5:8:13. A proportionate garment design needs to be synchronized with the motifs, the placement of the motifs and the desirability of the garment to the wearer. The colors in a garment also provide proportion to the garment. The best examples of this are Indian ladies suits which follow an inverse proportion system. Although miniskirts are designed in poor proportion as the shorter length of the garment proportionate the longer legs of the wearer. Proportion in fashion design is the principle that holds that the size of various components of a garment or fashion accessory must look good together. Proportion is one of the most important principles of fashion design for the petite woman because when she selects garments, their proportion (or size/scale of the garment or various components of a garment or fashion accessory) should be relative to her small stature.



4. CONCLUSION

Elements of design described here are line, colour, shape, texture and space and principles of design are balance, emphasis, rhythm, harmony and proportion. These are the building blocks for creation of any designs or art. Therefore, it is very necessary to understand these elements and principles so that we are able to communicate the message through design or art. These elements and principles also help us to appreciate different forms of art and designs.

The purpose of fashion design is not only the pursuit of fashion and aesthetic. It is a multi-disciplinary comprehensive design art. Entering a new era of science and technology, fashion design should be based on the "people-oriented" principle. It develops forward to meeting people's psychological and physiological needs.

Nowadays, multicultural, environmental protection and intelligent digitization have become the theme of fashion design. Technology drives the rapid development of clothing art. The garment has been a qualitative leap. The rapid development of the network information makes clothing design more efficient. People's demands for environmental health gradually achieve the integrative development of production-green -health with the help of science and technology. It is beneficial for human beings and does not damage the environment.

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