

Research in Practice – (ADAD5004/C)

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Designing and making a work of art requires the creator to have a specific purpose in mind in order to guide the viewer to feel some emotion or emotions. To create a successful outcome or experience the artist needs to include a variety of elements into their work. These elements together form the composition. Tate (Tate.com 2023a), defines the term '*composition*', as the arrangement of elements within a work of art.

In general, the term *composition* can be used to refer to the arrangement of elements in any work of art from paintings, sculpture, writing to music and any combination of these and other different mediums. Traditionally, in visual art, triangular and pyramidal *compositions* have been used to create a balance and harmony within a geometric structure or form. The artistic technique, based on the triangular theory of vision was developed in the renaissance, where lines in the composition were used to guide the viewers eyes to a point on the horizon to imply depth. The triangle also had religious connotations, where the holy trinity of Christianity was frequently insinuated in works of art. For example, Leonardo Da Vinci's (1503) Mona Lisa, arguably the most famous painting in existence, takes on a three-dimensional triangular quality because the subject is placed at the centre of the composition, broader at the base occupying the paintings foreground, while the background recedes in depth causing the subject to take on the shape of a pyramid.

Samara (2007) in the book, *Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual*, explains the principles of design, including *composition*, in a clear and concise manner. Where various visual elements including, line, shape, colour and texture are all used to create effective *compositions*.

Dow (1899), *Composition: Understanding Line, Notan and Colour*, is a classic book in the field of art and design. Dow's approach on *composition* is to emphasise the importance of simplification and abstraction and encourages artists to focus on the underlying structure of their subject matter, rather than simply replicating what they see. Also, Hambridge (1920) in *The Elements of Dynamic Symmetry* describes *composition* particularly within classical art and design. His approach is based on the concept of dynamic symmetry, defining "the symmetry of growth". Arguing that the

form of symmetry is inherent in nature and can be used to create harmonious *compositions* in art.

Stubbs' (1760 – 1769) *Mares and Foals* piece, provides a very clear example of where *composition* has been used effectively by the grouping of the animals. The piece is a complex *composition* of the subjects (the horses), demonstrating artistic form and providing balance and symmetry in the arrangement of the four horses. The feeding foal helps to draw the viewers eyes slowly towards the mares.

Edgar Payne (1941) describes the effective *composition* as, 'a good use of contrast in texture and line, with a simpler design being better'. This emphasises the importance of simpler designs that focus on a few subjects which is easier for the viewer to understand. Also, Bang (2016) *How Pictures Work*, provides a good description of how shape is fundamental to creating an effective *composition*; '*Shapes with sharp edges feels threatening, shapes with curves feel comforting*', which also describes some of the fundamentals of visual language within art and design.

Kandinsky, the Russian painter and art theorist, credited with painting the first known modern and abstract artworks, provides insights into *composition* in their book *Point and Line to Plane*, (Kandinsky, 1926), which describes how *composition* and rhythm come together in art, '*repetition is a potent means of heightening the inner vibration and is a source of elementary rhythm, which is a means of attainment of elementary harmony in every form of art*'. He asserts that the layout and structure of art pieces is very important to the way the subject is perceived and understood, through the image and emphasises the importance of focal point to the viewer.

Composition is a fundamental concept within fashion design, as it combines elements of colour, shape and proportion. A carefully chosen colour palette can create a specific mood to the design. Shape and proportion are explored to create unique silhouettes and to highlight certain features of the body. Oversized and exaggerated proportions are used to create a dramatic look. Whereas tailored designs are used for a more elegant look to the garment. These are all elements that are employed by fashion designers, to create a unique and creative *composition*.

Overall, effective *composition* within art and design is vital in arranging the elements or content, without a composed layout the work is basically incoherent and fails to succeed in its own right. This is very important within my study of Surface Pattern Design & Textiles; if the layout is wrong within a textile print it can lead to it being unsuccessful when taken to market.

Tate (Tate.com/Form 2023b) defines 'Form' "*with two meanings: it can refer to the overall form taken by the work – its physical nature; or within a work of art, it can refer to the element of shape among the various elements that make up a work*". The importance of *form* within art can be traced to Aristotle's concept of mimesis, which emphasises the role of art in representing the value of reality. Aristotle's *Theory of Mimesis* (in *Britannica*, 2023), argues that *form* should be appropriate to its subject matter and that the artist should look to achieve balance between *form* and content. This balance between *form* and content is a central theme within the work of German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who argued that *form* is essential to aesthetic value in art. Kant (1781) in *Critique of Pure Reason* stated that *form* in artwork is what makes it pleasing to the senses, and that *form* is used to express its meaning and significance.

When creating *form* in art, the artist aims to modify natural appearances in order to make a new *form* that is expressive in conveying its meaning of itself. According to Tate (2023c) Modern Art '*is an art term generally used to describe the succession of art movements that historians have identified since the realism of Gustav Courbet and culminating in abstract art and its development in the 1960s*'. Within modern art the idea grew that form could be expressive if largely divorced from appearances. Bell, (1914) in *Art* coined the term 'significant form' to describe this formalism. This idea played an important part in the development of the abstract art movement. An art movement that doesn't depict visual reality but uses shape, *form* and gestural marks instead.

Another example of where an artist has explored *form* is Moore (1938) *Recumbent Figure*. This piece was one of the earliest works by Moore, which shows a female

figure undulating like a landscape. The example explores the use of shape and tone that are characteristics of form in artwork.

The contemporary artist Banksy explores *form* in their work, through the monochrome multi-layered stencils they work with. Their use of muted tones including black, white and grey is accented with bold red used to punctuate symbols and icons within their artwork. Another street artist, Aakash Nihalani, uses bright and bold lines of tape creating a new *form* of street art. Nihalani expands the primary elements of *form*, point, line and shape in a modern 3D dimensional depth. Form is very much important within fashion and textile design, particularly within the shape, silhouette and structure of a garment and the way it interacts with the body, which can be guided through techniques such as cutting, draping and construction. Fashion designers use *form* to create visually pleasing and functional clothing. Designers use shape and silhouette to create a specific *form* or shape. Draping is used to create fluid, flowing garments or to add dimensions and volume to their designs. Designers often explore different structural elements, including corsets and boning. These can create a specific shape like a cinched waist. Accessories such as hats and headpieces are used to create a specific *form* or silhouette. Whereas a belt can be used to cinch in the waist to create an hourglass shape. Layering can be used to create a sense of depth and dimension and can be explored in different textures and fabrics.

A notable designer who was known for their use of *form* was, Cristobal Balenciaga. Balenciaga's innovative designs featured bold and sculptural shapes which were elegant and practical. The designer's use of *form* helped to redefine traditional feminine silhouettes, introducing new shapes including the barrel line and baby doll dress. *Form* is absolutely critical in successful fashion design.

Line often defines the edges of a form or surface. It can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, straight, curved, thick or thin. Leading the eye around the composition communicating information through the *line*'s character and direction.

Mondrian's (1937 – 1942) work *Yellow, Blue and Red*, demonstrates the relational opposites of asymmetry and pure planes of colour. Mondrian composed the painting

to harmonise contrast, signifying the balance and tension of dynamic forces. The black *lines* were not viewed as outlines but as planes of pigment, seen in the horizontal black plane on the lower right of the painting stopping just before the edge of the canvas. Mondrian conveys illusionistic depth predicted on a figure in front of the background. He creates a harmonious tension by the asymmetrical placement of the primary colours, balancing out the blocks of white and using a variety of black and white shades, creating different values and textures leading to a harmony of contrast with balance.

Van Gogh, (1889) *The Starry Night* is a masterpiece that shows an expressive night sky over a small hillside village. Van Gogh explored *line* through using white and yellow tones. Creating an interesting spiral effect that draws attention to the sky. The vertical *lines* within the piece, including the cypress tree and the church tower break up the composition without drawing the viewers' attention from the powerful night sky depicted in *Starry Night*. Deacon, (1980) on his work *Untitled Drawing* is quoted as saying '*this drawing was consciously made as a form of relief from precise methods employed in his earlier work*'. Those drawings were created using controlled methods including grids, compasses and geometry. Although, *Untitled Drawing* was created using a more direct image making process. The two rounded vessel shapes were created as a response to the Yin/Yang concept of harmonious interaction of opposites. Usually, the shape is explored by a circle with a curved *line* through the centre, separating the black from the white tones. This symbol is expressed through the vessel on the right-hand side of the drawing. Using rhythmic *lines* helped him to fill the paper. Erasing and adding new lines. Created an interesting shadow effect to the design.

In fashion design *lines* are used to create shape, emphasise movement and to make the garment visually interesting. Some examples of how *line* can be incorporated into fashion is, through the silhouette and the *lines* that form its shape. Straight *lines* create a more geometric garment whereas curved *lines* create softer silhouettes. An obvious example of how *line* can be used is through seams, these join pieces of fabric together and can be altered to create a more visually interesting garment. Like seams, hemlines can be used in many ways to create different visual effects, for example straight, curved or asymmetrical hemlines can add a lot to a garment and

its overall look and shape. Throughout history, fashion and art have come hand in hand. Many fashion designers have been influenced by different art movements and have borrowed ideas for their own collections, interpreting fashion as a form of art. The Yves Saint Laurent, Mondrian Dress was inspired by the works of Mondrian. Yves Saint Laurent, wanted to incorporate the piece Yellow, Blue and Red into his haute couture creations collection. The simple silhouette and cut of the mini cocktail A - line dress works very well with the bold, sharp lines of the art piece. The A – line cut on fashion garments became very popular in the 1950s, where fashion designer Christian Dior released a collection of A – line pieces, including fitted tops paired with flared bottoms. This silhouette created the shape of the hourglass figure, which was very much desired.

Within my own study of Surface Pattern Design & Textiles I explore *line* through different prints and patterns I create, these can be anything from a simple stripe to a polka dot. Print and pattern can also be used to create different visual effects on the human body, such as making someone look taller using a horizontal stripe pattern.

In conclusion, *line* is a vital element to design, without line shapes can't be noted, texture can't be suggested, and tone can't be incorporated to add depth.

Art and design are so important for many reasons including, the way art allows people to express themselves and communicate their ideas and emotions in a creative way. Art is often a reflection of historical and cultural context at the time it was created. It can allow people an insight into past beliefs and events within society. Also, it can serve as a form of political and social commentary, allowing artists to showcase their opinions on big issues within society such as, inequality and injustice. To create a successful piece of art the work should incorporate skill and technique with a sense of originality to distinguish it from others work. Successful work often conveys or elicits a sense of emotion from the viewer, through the use of elements that are relevant, interesting, and relatable to the viewer. However, these elements are not essential to the success of an artist or designer's work. In conclusion art is entirely subjective and its success in achieving its goals is dependent on the individual viewer's opinion. But what are the fundamental elements

of design, and how could I include these within my own practice of study in Surface Pattern Design & Textiles?

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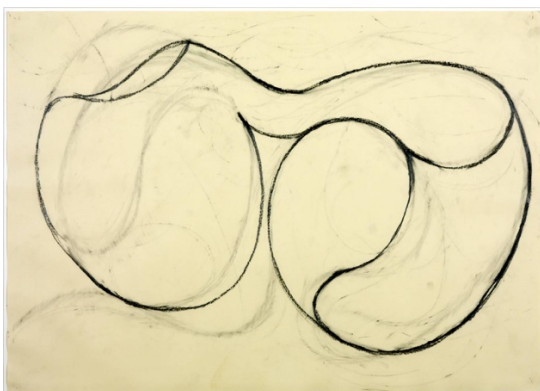
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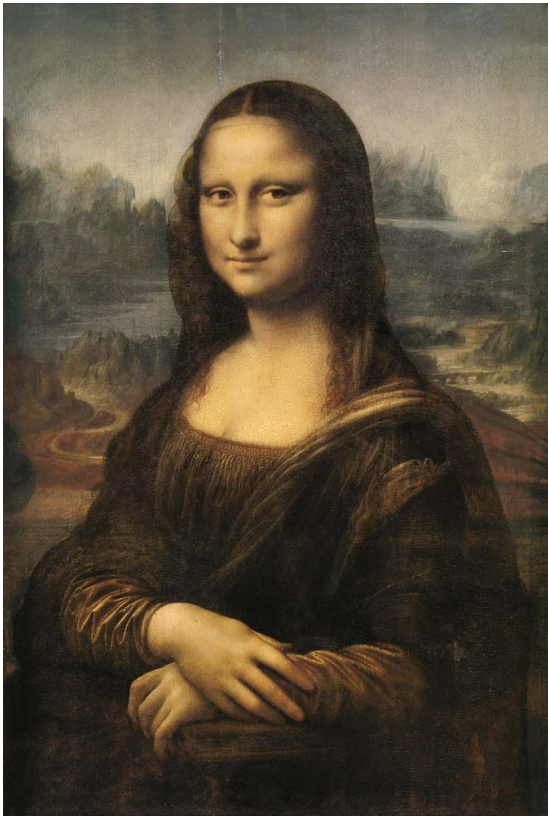
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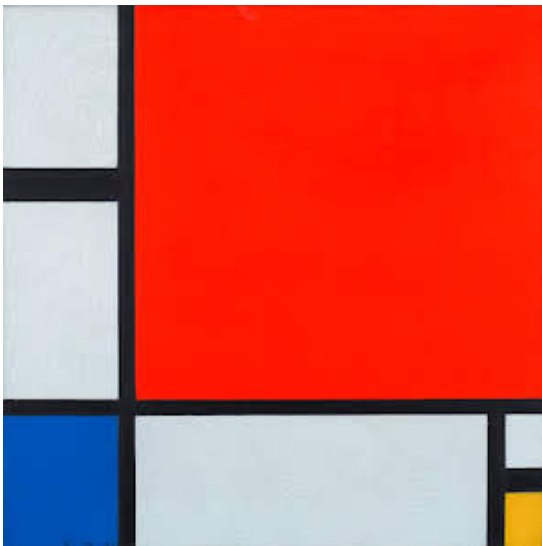
Figures



Deacon, R. (1980) *Untitled Drawing*.



De Vinci, L. (1503) *Mona Lisa*.



Mondrian, P. (1930) *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*.



Moore, H. (1938) *Recumbent Figure*.



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