Introduction: Harmony

**Unity** – When elements in an image look as though they belong together.

- Unity is synonymous with *Harmony*.
- Unity can exist with either *representational* imagery or abstract forms.

*Representational* – Images that look like something.

Creating Unity

- Unity is created by repetition of similar shapes, line, patterns and colors.
- When you do this it creates negative shapes that are repetitive, further enhancing the feel of unity.
- An image that is monochromatic can create a sense of unity.

Damon Winter, personal photograph from Iceland, Communication Arts, May/June 2005.
Where Does Unity Come From?

“Unity of design is planned and controlled by the artist.”

*Composition* – the organization of elements in a design.

(Composition is another term for design)

Visual Unity

“The whole must be predominant over the parts. You must first see the whole pattern before you notice the individual elements.”
Exploring Visual Unity

*Collage* - An artwork created by assembling and pasting a variety of materials to a two-dimensional surface.

Intellectual Unity vs. Visual Unity

*Intellectual unity* – elements have common theme; they have unity of idea.

Example: a wedding album
(This is not normally what a designer wants.)
Visual Unity

*Visual unity* – elements have a similarity to the eye. Similar shape, size, etc…

- The designer creates unity for the viewer.
- They create a pattern of similar shapes, line, and colors that help organize the idea or ‘Intellectual unity’ into visual unity.
- The viewer is instinctively looking for visual organization and patterns.
Example: Visual Unity

Cover for Communication Arts, May/June 2005.
Visual Perception:

*Gestalt* – the theory of visual psychology, or the study of perception.

- The viewer tends to group objects that are close to one another into a larger group.
- They also tend to think that these objects belong together.
- Negative (or empty) space also follows the gestalt principle.
Negative Space

- The space and shape created between 2 objects.

The white diagonal is as obvious as the two groups of rectangles.
How We See Unity:

- Our brain looks for similar elements
- We group objects of similar shape together
- And try to make them into something else.
I. Ways to Achieve Unity:

1. Proximity – Place similar elements or elements that belong together close together.
   - Simplest way to achieve unity

Example: We use proximity to create words. If the letters of a word are far apart it becomes very difficult to read.
I. Ways to Achieve Unity...

2. Repetition - Repeat design elements to create harmony.

Repeat:
- Color
- Shape
- Texture
- Direction
- Angle

Placing items close together makes us see them first as a group.

If they are isolated from one another, elements appear unrelated.
Example:

I. Ways to Achieve Unity...

3. Continuation - Literally means “something continues”
♦ The design carries the eye of the viewer through and around the picture.
♦ The main figure’s limbs or forms can intersect with or point at an object, which leads the viewer’s eye to and through the composition.

Balthus (Balthasar Klossowski de Rola). The Living Room. 1941-1943. Oil on canvas, 31 81/2 x 41 93/4 in. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
Continuation can be subtle or deliberate.
Continuation can be used in three-dimensional design.
The lines of the shapes can lead to other shapes.

Examples:
• In a car the sweep of the window can lead to the curve of the hood.
• In sculpture the curve of a hand or arm can lead to the curve of a hip.

2003 BMW Z4 Roadster. Courtesy BMW of North America, LLC.
Continuation Tip:

Use a line, an edge, or a direction to carry the viewer’s eye from one form to another.
Continuity

“The planned arrangement of various forms so that their edges are lined up”

(This is also sometimes called alignment.)
Serial Design

Designing multiple unites as a whole.
In a series the same unifying theme continues in successive designs.
(Serial design is also related to the idea of ‘branding’)

Example: Books, catalogs, magazines, and pamphlets designed for the same company should exhibit ‘serial design’.
II. Unity with Variety

The Grid

- Was used by The Masters
- Start by drawing a series of lines to create a format or template.

“A point to remember is that, with a great deal of variety of elements, a simple layout idea can give needed unity.”
The Grid

A series of vertical and horizontal lines on a page. (Think of graph paper.)

- You can use a grid to create similarity between pages
- Or to create “corporate identity”
Grid Design on the Internet

◊ The grid is an intrinsic part of designing web sites for the Internet.
◊ However, this is not necessarily a guarantee for a successful layout.
Varied Repetition

“The idea of related variations seems to satisfy a basic human need for visual interest...”

Variety Adds Visual Interest:

Elements that can be repeated and varied to create unity:

- Curves
- Columns
- Size
- Shapes

Emphasis on Unity

The ‘rules’ in design are not rigid on the use of unity and variety. There are countless ways to achieve them – all that is required is experimentation.
III. Unity Through Repetition

*Graceful unity* – Although each element is essentially the same, the individual elements have slight variations.

*Rigid unity* – Each element is exactly the same
Example Graceful Unity:

Ogata Korin. Irises. Edo period, c. 1705. Six-fold screen (one of pair), color on gold foil over paper, 150.9 x 338.8 cm. Nezu Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan/The Bridgeman Art Library.
Example Rigid Unity:

- “Unity without variety can evoke our worst feelings about assembly lines and institutions.”
- Unity without variety is disturbing.

Katharina Fritsch. Tischgesellschaft (Company at Table). 1988. Thirty-two life-size polyester figures, wooden table and benches, partially painted; printed and bleached cotton, 4 7/8 × 52 6 × 87/8 in (1.4 × 1.6 × 1.75 m). On permanent loan from the Collection of Dresdner Bank Frankfurt am Main to the Museum Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.
Emphasis on Variety

Use variety in:
- Shapes
- Sizes
- Colors
- and Patterns

Life is not always orderly or rational.

Excessive variety can become unity in art.

Assemblage

An assembly of found objects composed as a piece of sculpture.

George Herms. The Librarian. 1960. Assemblage: wood box, papers, brass bell, books, painted stool, 4 9\(\times\) 5 1\(\times\) 3\(\times\) 9\(\times\) (1.4 m 1.6 m 53 cm). Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena (gift of Molly Barnes, 1969).
Chaos and Control

*Graphic* – A visual object, a drawing or an illustration.

- In the world of computer art, the term graphic is often used to refer to a logo or a design with clean lines.
“Without some aspect of unity, an image or design becomes chaotic and quickly unreadable”
When you are confronted by large amounts of information, be it signs, labels, or pictures you can quickly become lost or confused.

Your eye cannot focus on any one thing.

Signs create a visual clutter along old Route 66 in Kingman, Arizona.
“Without some elements of variety an image is lifeless and dull and becomes uninteresting.”

Example: Large blocks of identical apartments or houses are boring to look at and often boring to live in. They quickly become aesthetically unpleasing.
Sometimes excess becomes unity.

Example:

- A junkyard is just a collection of garbage and junk, but seen from a distance it has a pattern.
- This is especially true of car junkyards.
- The cars are all different colors, shapes, sizes, but when crushed and stacked they create a stratosphere like the layers of sediment in rock.
Unity at Work: Figurative And Nonobjective

The elements of the composition can be simple or complex.

**Analogous colors** - the use of a palette or a selection of colors that are adjacent (next to) to each other on the color wheel.


“An appreciation of unity is a simple and immediate sense of connection resonating throughout a composition.”