

Photo Design

Presented by Karen Abrahamson

Based on:

Photographing the World Around You: A Visual Design Workshop by Freeman Patterson

Photos are comprised of:

- shapes,
- lines,
- textures and
- perspective (the representation of 3D in 2D).

Individual shapes (like colors) have unique expressive characteristics.

LIGHT-

Allows you to capture your composition using two kinds of contrast:

- Contrast of brightness or tone
- Contrast of hue.

In B and W we depend on contrast to distinguish line/shape/texture and perspective.

Quality of light (harshness or softness) and direction (front, side or backlit) have potential to change image.

1. Diffused light softens
2. Back and Side light increases tones, gives greater brightness range and crisp transitions.
3. Direct light front the front can limit tonal range and flatten image
4. Bright light can appear to increase colors but actually cloudy days or shadows = diffused light which compresses tonal range and therefore the flowers will appear to glow from within.
5. Harsh light is good for creating/deleting visual building blocks (shapes, lines, textures etc)

Lighting helps arrange the shapes.

SHAPES:

Made of contrast, tones and colors.

Primary Shapes	Secondary Shapes
Circle Square Equilateral (isosceles) triangle	Oval Rectangle Complex shapes like maple leaf
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use to establish a feeling of order and stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unless arrangement is very regular and clear, secondary shapes have less visual order.

Step away from thinking of object as 'thing' and think of shape. E.g. rock or face is oval.

You can change shapes by tilting lens. If expand sky empathizing vastness of sky. If tilt downward, emphasizing landscape contents.

Consider not just the shapes in the viewfinder, but also shapes created by the limits of the viewfinder.

General rule:

There are usually no more than 5 main shapes /elements in an image. If there are more, then look at the image and analyze it. Is it confused from too many elements? Or are you confusing details for the shapes. (e.g. the hydrangea image confusing the flowers for the circle shape.)

LINE:

- The longer the line the more important its effect
- Straight lines are unambiguous and impart a sense of purpose
- Curved lines imply digression, unhurried travel both physically and mentally and a slow down or relaxed view.

Orientation of straight lines is important:

Vertical	Horizontal	Oblique
Stability/Stiffness	More stable	Dynamic
Equal spacing can suggest military precision, strength, power, even growth	If undulating it can be restful	Implies sense of life, movement, change, instability

Invisible lines that when you have two items in image that draw the eye back and forth. If have several spots on a scene viewer will try to connect them.

In General:

The fewer the lines, the simpler the composition.

TEXTURE:

Surface appearance such as suggested weave. Roughness /smoothness. Textures can also create shapes.

To focus on texture:

1. Avoid including any object/shape that will take the focus from the texture
2. Fill the image with the texture.

For different textures consider what is more important to you and try different views of area.

Can alter texture with:

- Distance
- Light angle (e.g. sidelighting increases contrast and therefore texture)
- Shutter speed (e.g. decrease texture of water or field of flowers)
- Multiple exposures to create new textures

PERSPECTIVE:

Quickest way to get perspective is to deform space by enlarging one area in the frame in contrast to another area (smaller).

If sense of space is missing, try:

1. Using a wider (widest) angle (wide angle lenses distort space and creates greatest sense of depth)
2. Lower camera closer to the ground and tilt downward
3. Move in closely on foreground object like small clump of flowers.
4. Take image. This causes viewer to 'see' the distance.

Use the smallest Aperture to get the greatest dof (on manual) or use Aperture priority.

Perspective, perception of depth is also impacted by light intensity, quality, direction and color:

1. Intensity/brightness variation within the image creates contrast and this adds perspective.
2. Quality of light –direct illumination and abrupt tonal variation enhance depth.
3. Direction – front lighting flattened. Back lighting can suggest perspective through shadows but can also sometimes reduce perspective (e.g. silhouettes.) Side lighting creates perspective.
4. Color –warm colors come forward. Red or saturated objects seem closer.

Other perspective variables-

1. Sharpness – closer objects should be sharper
2. Size- larger objects nearer
3. Placement/location – objects in lower half of image usually closer like real life

4. Obliqueness – create dynamic sense of movement up or down – adds to illusion of depth.

Use these concepts for:

- Taking photos
- Post production

The more simple and orderly a composition, the more quickly and effectively it delivers a message to the viewer.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF PHOTO DESIGN:

1. **Dominance** - center of interest.
2. **Balance** – using shapes/spaces/lines to have viewers eyes move between different items (tension).
3. **Proportion** – relative size of objects in picture space .
4. **Rhythm** – harmonious pattern characterized by repetition of strong and weak elements like lines and shapes.