The Elements and Principles of Design

The Elements of Design are the building blocks of visual art. They are what artists, photographers and craftsmen use to express their ideas. There are seven elements:

Line
Shape
Texture
Form
Color
Value
Space

The principles of design are the different ways in which artists use elements of design. They are concepts by which the artist composes or organizes the work of art. The eight principles are:

Balance
Proportion
Perspective
Emphasis
Movement
Harmony
Rhythm
Gradation

Following are subsets of the various elements to better explain each concept.

Color: Red, Green, Blue, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow
Violet, Orange, Ochre, Brown, Maroon, Sienna, Amber, Purple, Kelly Green, etc.

Line: Straight, curved, broken, zig-zag, vertical horizontal, diagonal, wavy, long, short, thin, thick, scalloped, etc.

Space: 2-Dimensional, 3-Dimensional, Positive, Negative, Illusion of

Value: Dark (low key), Light (high key), Gray,

Shape: Square, Circle, Octagonal, Rectangle, Geometric, Cresent, etc.

Form: Three dimensional, Mass, Volume Real, Perceived

Texture: Rough, Smooth, Sandy, Fuzzy, Slick, Satin, 2, 3-dimensional, gritty, Polished, Waxey, etc.

Balance: Symmetrical, Asmmetrical, Unbalanced, Vertical, Horizontal

Emphasis: Contrast, Focus, Direct, Centers of Interest

Harmony: Contrast, Focus, Direct, Centers of Interest

Variety: Complicated relationships, Intricate, Varied, Difference

Gradation: Gradual change, Orderly, Predictability, Expected

Movement: Action, Motion, Illusion, Kinetic

Rhythm: Tempo, Beat of the movement, Slow, Rapid, Gradual

Perspective: Low, High, Angled, Exaggerated

Finally there is one more element that encompasses the others, **unity**. When the artist has used the elements at his or her disposal to create something unique, fresh or special, there will be a sense of unity. Even a work that seemingly has no unity will have a disjointed unity of the elements.

The idea in composition is to use those elements present in the subject. For photography, as in other forms, the trick is to accentuate those specific elements present to allow the viewer to view the subject in a new or different way, usually from the artist's point of view.