

Principles of Design

Unit

6

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Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this Unit the learner will be able to:

- Analyse the principles of design
- Explain how these principles are applied when designing a garment
- Explore the importance of design principles in designing

Principles of design are guidelines for the use of the elements of design. They are used for creating, discussing & evaluating garment designs on and off the individual. In order to arrange the elements of design well, application of principles like balance, proportion, emphasis and unity/harmony are essential. These are not abstract art terms but specific guides that help to create attractive garments.

The principles of design are useful in creating different forms of expression in an artistic manner, which are pleasing and attractive to the eye. Following are the principles of designing.

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

Balance

Balance implies pose, equilibrium, stability and security. The average human body is visually symmetrical which mean that the body seems to be same on each side of a central line. When important details or decorations are designed for a dress, they should be grouped in such a way that there seems to be equal interest or weight on each side of an imaginary centre. When the design elements are in balance, a pleasing harmony is established. Balance in garments is produced by structural parts and by added decoration.



Fig 6.1

Formal Balance

It is also called symmetrical balance. It is easier to create but may not be as interesting as informal balance. This occurs when identical objects are equidistant from a centre point or otherwise called as the exact mirror image of the other half. In dress design the feeling of dignity or formality is created by formal balance.

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 of weight at the bottom or a heavy appearance. For Example, dark coloured shirt over lighter shade of pants make a short person shorter.



Fig 6.2

Fig6 . 2 is an example of good formal balance. It shows that both sides of the dress are exactly alike. The plaiting on either side is of the same width and amount, and is placed the same

distance from the centre line running from the head to the feet, thereby creating a perfect balance. The jacket, too, has the same ornament on either side so it does not disturb the balance. The dress is equally well balanced about the waistline, for the jacket above balances the plaiting below.



Fig 6.3

Fig.6.3 illustrates an example of formal balance which could be improved upon by moving the monogram to the centre of the dress. Currently the dress appears out of balance.

Informal balance

Informal balance occurs when objects appear to equalise each other but not through repetition and the arrangement. It is in a haphazard manner. Here design of different sizes and shapes and of different attraction are arranged. The larger and more attractive designs are kept far away from the centre. If used correctly, informal designs can be effective in being attractive.



Fig 6.4

A good example of informal balance may be seen in Fig 6.4. Both sides of the dress are different. The large sash placed near the centre lines is balanced by the small ornament on the shoulder which is placed as far as possible from the centre line.

On the other hand, fig 6.5 is a poor example of informal balance, because of all the weight being on one side of the dress, thereby making the dress very one-sided.



Fig 6.5

If a dress is to appear in balance it must show the equal distribution of weight, on all sides of the centre. Whereas in formal balance you are less likely to make mistakes because in that case each line and decoration is repeated on both sides of the centre line.

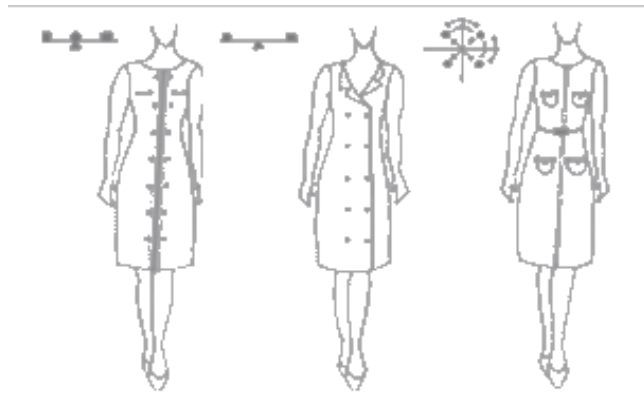
Of course, formal balance should not be used for all dresses, as it tends to be rather too severe for some occasions. It is most fitting for street dresses and sport clothes, whereas informal balance lends itself to the afternoon and evening gown.

Informal balance can be used to correct the appearance of body irregularities. This is because the observers will not assess or compare one side of the body with the other. Informal balance may create illusions that will make the body appear symmetrical. This is because the right and left

sides of the garment are cut and handled differently. Assembling this type of garment is more time consuming, which adds to the cost of manufacturing.

Radial Balance

Radial balance occurs when the major parts of the design radiate from a central point. Pleats, seams, gathers, darts, or motifs radiate from the focal point creating a sunburst effect. This type of balance is found frequently in necklines. Because of intricate feature involved in this type of construction, it is found only in expensive clothing (Fig: 6.8 c).



a. Formal Balance b. Informal Balance c. Radial Balance

Fig 6.8

Emphasis

Emphasis is concentration of interest in one area of a design that acts as the centre of attention. This creates more eye arresting area than any other part. It is the centre of attention of an outfit. All areas may be interesting, but all areas should not have equal strength of interest. This implies that some areas require subordination in order to emphasize some areas. Without any such centre of interest, an outfit looks unplanned and monotonous too. On the other hand, there should never be more than one main centre of interest. Two or more would compete confusingly with each other. Spotty use of details-especially those of equal importance, such as pockets-is distracting. Such distractions should be removed and the dominant design feature strengthened. Care should be taken not to emphasise awkward parts of the body. Above all, the wearer should be the centre of attraction. Lines leading to the face are particularly effective. Light colours around the face also help direct interest to the wearer. This is one reason why contrasting collars are common. A black dress with white collar and cuffs will direct the eye to the face and hands.



Fig.6.9



Fig.6.10

The fig 6.9 is a satisfactory example of emphasis. The bow at the neckline emphasises this part of the dress; thereby the attention is attracted to the head where the centre of interest should be.

By contrast, Fig. 6.10 is a very bad example of emphasis. The large, curved, meaningless design on the dress does not go well with the V-shaped neck. It would be better to do away with this design entirely or at least substitute one, which should not emphasise the centre portion of the dress to such an excessive extent. Instead should move interest to the wearers' head.

Placement of emphasis should not be placed in any area where the individual wishes to minimize. The face or personality area is more important and should be emphasized most often. This is the part of the person that is most unique and individualistic and so one should make use of this area. Emphasis at this personality area may be achieved by colour and texture contrasts, necklines, jewellery, scarves, hats, hairstyles, and makeup. Care is exercised to see that only one area is emphasized as discussed earlier.

Hands are emphasized by long sleeves, especially when cuffs are linked, by bracelets and rings and even by well manicured nails. Hands that are dirty or with chewed nails can bring negative emphasis to this area. Similarly, legs and feet are made dominated by unusual hem lengths, design details at the hem, textured or colored hosiery and even elaborate footwear. Parts of the torso, such as the waist and hips become areas of interest when garments lines or ornamentation fall at these areas.

Creating Emphasis in Garments

1. Emphasis may be achieved by grouping rows of stripes, tucks, gathers, ruffles, buttons or trim in one area, or by concentration of jewellery such as rows of beads, chains or pins (Fig: 6.11d).
2. Unusual lines and shapes by virtue of their individuality are eye arresting. Unusual shapes of collars, sleeves, pockets, jewellery, outsized buttons, belts and trims can be used to create local interest. Texture and fabric designs that are unusual and different from the ordinary may attract focus of attention. Elaborate, complex or eye arresting fabric design is displayed at its best by simple garment design, so that the fabric and garment design do not compete with each other for attention.
3. The placement of decoration on a plain, contrasting background permits the decoration to be dominated (Fig: 6.11b). Trims, embroidery appliqué, jewellery, buttons and belt, buckles when used on a contrasting background are emphasized and become areas of interest.

4. Contrasts of colour, line, shape, and texture will create emphasis (Fig: 6.11 c). Some related factor must be used to connect these contrasts or else it results in confusion. Using contrasts too many times often lose their impact in the design.
5. Contrasts of shape in designs are more strongly emphasized when their intensity, value or hue differs from that of the background. Yokes, collars, cuffs and shapes will be more noticeable when their edges are outlined in a contrasting trim.
6. Texture contrasts also provide a means of emphasis. Whereas the use of all textures that are shiny, dull or all heavy in the same garment produces monotony.
7. Emphasis can also be achieved by progression in ruffles, contrasting bands, buttons and other trims (Fig: 6.11a).

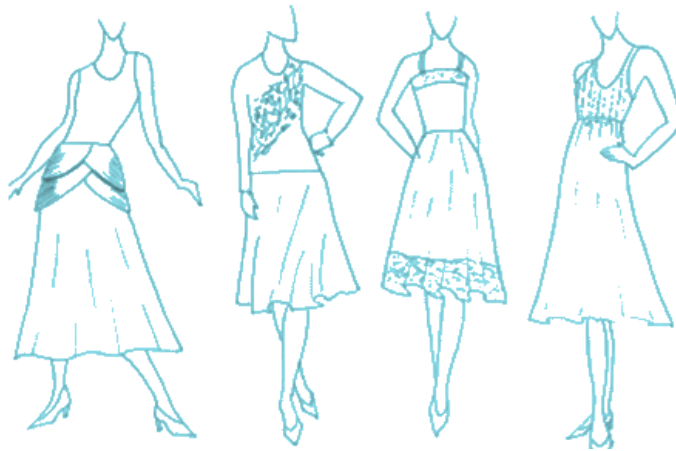


Fig 6.11

a. Repetition of Shapes b. Placement of decoration c. unusual texture d. Grouping Tucks

Harmony / Unity

Harmony is also called unity in design or in other terms, harmony is pleasing visual unity. It is the relationship among all parts within a whole. This is created when all parts of the design are related, in a regular and orderly manner. When a design has unity, it gives an overall impression that attracts and holds the attention of the observer and gives a feeling of belongingness to the composition. This effect is created when the elements of design are used effectively according to the design principles.

Unity in Clothing Design

Harmony between shape and form is necessary for good design. Functional aspects of harmony imply that a garment is comfortable, moves easily and breathes with body, performs any specialized duties effectively and fits well.

In physical effects of harmony, garment parts are in scale; their combined proportions seem to belong with each other and the figure. Advancing qualities harmonize with receding qualities and every part bends consistently with every other part giving a total look. The term total look has been coined to describe this unity in dress. A total look is achieved when each part of the design, including garments accessories, jewellery, hairstyle and facial ornamentation, expresses a single theme that is dependable with the personality of the wearer and with the place where it is to be worn.

Shapes and spaces created by pockets, collars, cuffs, sleeves etc will harmonize if they are soft curved or straight and angular in accordance with the major forms of garment. By using monochromatic and analogous colour schemes one can achieve harmony of colour in a dress. Textures, which gently move from clinging to fluid folds, introduce harmony of texture. In order to achieve harmony in any garment, the three aspects of design- function, structure and decoration must be in accordance with each other. This means that occasion, climate, size, gender, age, personal colouring, life style and personality of the wearer should be considered while designing the garments.

However complete identicalness in a garment, be it colour, texture, shape or space may create boredom. To avoid this monotony a small area in contrast colour or a garment part cut in contrast of texture can often add interesting element in the design.

Harmonious and disharmonious design



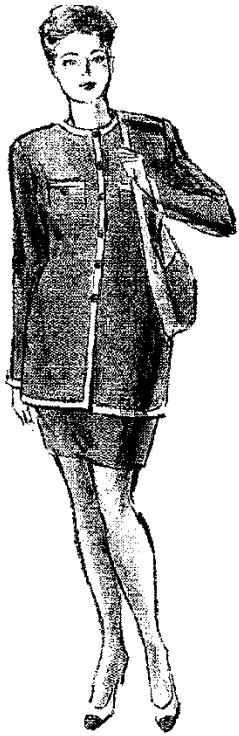
Fig 6.12

Proportion or Scale

Proportion is simply the pleasing interrelationship of the size of all parts of the garment. Generally, unequal proportion is more interesting than equal. When we see an outfit in the mirror, on someone else, or in a pattern catalogue, our eye automatically compares the smaller part of the outfit with the larger one. This comparison is called *proportion*. When the parts of an outfit are divided equally, the garment seems shorter and wider. A good example of even proportions is a Chanel-style suit, with a hip-length jacket and knee-length skirt. Uneven proportions keep the eye moving and give it interesting things to look at.

The height and width of all parts of a design must be compared. Individual sections of a garment, such as sleeves, pockets, and collar, must all relate in size to each other as well as to the total silhouette.

Styles with proportions of two-thirds to one-third make the person look taller and slimmer, such as a fingertip-length jacket over a short skirt or a knee-length tunic over pants. Proportions of one-third to two-thirds are also pleasing, such as an Empire-waisted dress or a waist-length jacket with a long flared skirt. Width above and/or below an area makes that area seem smaller. For example, a flared skirt can make hips look less wide and shoulder pads with extended shoulders make the lower torso look narrower by comparison.



6.13

This long jacket and short skirt combination (uneven proportion) makes the person look taller and slimmer

The spacing of trimmings, pleats, and tucks must have meaning in relation to the total design. Trimmings must not be too heavy or too light, too large or too small to harmonise with the space around them as well as with the feeling of the garment.

Proportion and Body Conformation

The human body size can be divided into three general categories- small, medium and large. The body size should be identified for using it as a guide in selecting all clothing and accessories. The small person should limit himself or herself to items that are of small or medium scale. The middle or medium sized person may select from the small, medium or large scale. The large person should be limited to the large or medium scale.

Parts of apparel, such as yokes, collars, and pockets, must be the right size for the total design and for the wearer. A tiny pocket would look out of proportion on a large, heavy overcoat. Similarly, details such as buttons and trimmings should also be related to the overall size of the garment.

When a person wears clothing that is too large in fit, texture and fabric design and also selects accessories that are too large, the relationship of size becomes out of proportion as the large build individual is visualized in contrast to the small scale of the clothing and accessories.

A person of medium size has more freedom to select clothing and accessories in a wider scale range. In considering the proportions of an outfit, one should therefore always use the body as the guide for clothing purpose. It is most pleasing to divide a garment or outfit at natural body division such as the chest, waist or hips than at any other area.

VARIOUS PROPORTIONS IN CLOTHING DESIGN

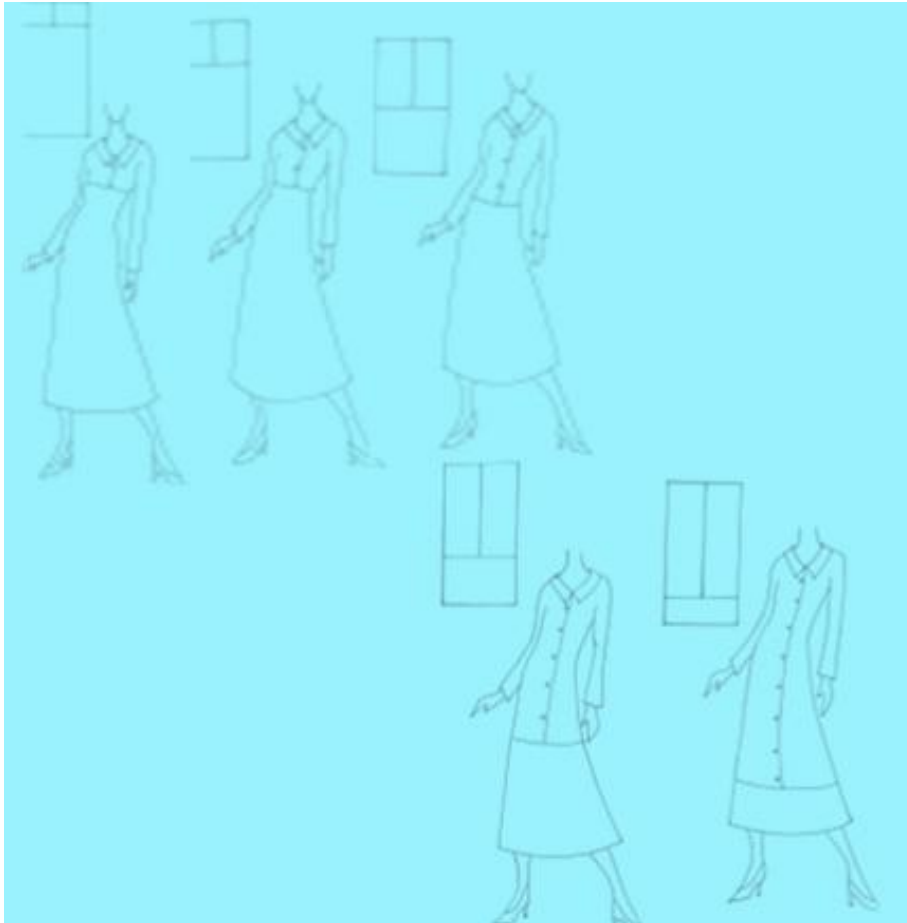


Fig 6.14

Rhythm (Repetition)

Rhythm is the feeling of organised movement. Rhythm is the pleasing arrangement of the design elements so the eye moves easily over the apparel. Rhythm results from a regular or a gradual change, giving the feeling of continuity throughout the design. Rhythmic effect becomes stronger when a pattern is repeated, but repetition is not very essential always. Rhythm is used most effectively with line, shape and space and also by changing the hue, value and intensity of colour.

Rhythm in Clothing Design

Rhythm can be created in a garment with repetition, gradation, transition, opposition or radial arrangement of various parts of design and fabric design. This is achieved in garment construction by the following combination of lines, shapes, colours, and textures.

Rhythm through Repetition

Rhythm is achieved by repetition or regular repeats of motifs of design, shapes, buttons, tucks, pleats, laces, edgings, colour, textures, fabric designs etc. This can be done with all parts having the same shaped edges. They might be squared, rounded, or scalloped. Repetition of colours can create good effect, especially if the colours are distributed in an interesting way (Fig: 6.15

A rhythm created by smooth undulating lines reminds us of gentle wave which imparts a peaceful and calming effect. Lines which have sharp points and jagged when repeated gives an exciting rhythm which is more suitable for a dramatic evening wear. One should be cautious about this type of rhythm as it may disturb and subdue a garment design. Pleats, tucks, stitching folds on the other hand create abrupt rhythm; trimmings like beads, buttons, laces etc. create a variety of rhythmic effects in a garment. So such trims are to be added for creating variety in a rhythmic way.

Rhythm through Progression

Rhythm is also created by progression or by gradation. Gradation implies a gradual increase or decrease of similar design elements. Colours can go from light to dark or textures from fine to coarse or vice versa. Shapes may range from small to large, and lines may range from thin to thick. The gradual changes provide continuity while giving a feeling of movement. An systematic sequence of gradually increasing or decreasing changes in sizes of motifs buttons, trims, flowers, ruffles, intensity, fabric design also create rhythm (Fig: 6.15 d).

Rhythm through Transition:

Transition is a fluid rhythm created when a curved line leads the eye over an angle. The curved lines of transition cause the eye to change direction gradually rather than abruptly. Transitional lines and shapes sweep and glide over the figure in an undulating rhythm leading the eye gracefully and easily from one area or direction to another. There is no abruptness like that of jagged lines. It is found in dropped shoulder designs, puff sleeves and cap sleeves. Transition can also be achieved by using scarves, shawls, ruffles and gathers in an outfit (Fig: 6.15 b).

Rhythm through Radiation:

Rhythm by radiation creates a feeling of movement in different directions. This organized movement originates from a central point of gathers, folds, tucks, darts, pleats and lines.

Direction of radiation may be in a similar or one direction, opposing direction or both the directions, several directions and all directions as shown in Fig: 6.15 c.

Rhythm by Continuous line Movement

This type of rhythm is obtained by flowing lines of trims, bands of colour, fabric designs etc, which make the eye move in a continuous line. This movement also unifies the garment design bringing about harmony. Rhythm is broken when lines, trimmings, or fabric designs are not matched at the seams or at other construction points. Fabric's designs with widely placed motifs may lack rhythm. Often the garment design will interrupt this type of fabric designs produce strange effects when worn on the body. So care needs to be exercised while using such fabric design in a dress.

Fig 6.15



a) Repetition of flares b) Transition of line c) Radiation of shape d) Progression of shape

Other Uses of Repetition

The use of repetition is one of the most helpful guidelines in designing. A design line, shape, or detail repeated in another area of the garment helps to carry the theme throughout the whole design. In dress design, for example, a V neck might be repeated upside down in bodice seaming or in an inverted pleat in the skirt. Soft gathers at the neck could be repeated at the hip to unify the design.

Rhythm can be achieved through the combination of lines, shape, colour and texture by the following aspects in designing.

1. By regular repeats or trims,(button etc.,) texture, and fabric design and prints.
2. Progression or radiation in sizes of trims, colours textures and fabric designs.
3. Radiation or movement from the central point occurring within structural details such as gathers, folds, tucks darts etc.
4. Continuous flowing lines such as those in bonds of colours, textures and fabric designs.



Fig. 6.16



Fig. 6.17

Fig. 6.16 shows good rhythm of line, as the eye can trace easily over the curved lines of the skirt which tends to raise the interest towards the upper part of the dress. There is nothing about the lines which conflict, causing the eye to be uncertain whether to go around the dress or up and down. This is not the case in Fig. 6.17, which shows very poor rhythm of line, for the curved lines of the upper and lower parts of the dress cut across the lines running around the dress.

Whether design elements are used successfully depends on their relationship to one another within the garment. Principles of design serve as guidelines for combining elements. Designers may not consciously think of these principles as they work, but when something is wrong with a design, they are able to analyse the problem in terms of proportion, balance, repetition, emphasis, or harmony (the first four principles work together to create the ultimate goal of harmony). These principles are flexible, always interpreted within the context of current fashion.

Suggested Further Readings:

- **Fashion Design Course: Principles, practice and Techniques (By Caroline Tatham, Julian Seaman, Thames and Hudson)**
- **Fashion: A Very Short Introduction (By Rebecca Arnold)**