Design 101: The Fundamentals of Design

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Graphic Justification

Essentially, there are numerous fundamental concepts that provide the foundation to the field of design. In short, these concepts are often categorized differently depending on the specific art philosophy or methodology being implemented. Nevertheless, no matter the ideology or methodology, most fundamental design concepts can be placed into two categories: principles and elements (Jackson, 2008, p. 64). For this unit of instruction, the basics of design are the fundamental truths of the practice. In other words, they represent the principles and elements that guide design and affect the arrangement of objects within a composition. Specifically, this unit of instruction will focus on teaching the learner the fundamental concepts of design so that they may gain new knowledge and skills that allow them to complete subsequent design assignments during the course of the academic year. In other words, this unit of instruction will benefit the instructor's year-long goals in design by providing the learners with the foundational skill sets needed to successfully complete their other design assignments.

User Assumptions

When reflecting on the students other design assignments, I examined the most common user that would be target for instruction. In short, the intended audience for this unit of instruction consists of high school, beginner art and design students in grades 9-12. Specifically, the students must be cognitively very perceptive with intense focus to interpret and execute new knowledge and skills based on visual learning styles (Resnick, 2003, p.152). Second, the affective traits of the intended student should show a tendency toward self-motivation and the willingness to let their emotions impact their work. Next, all students must have the physical ability to view and recreate simple to complex design concepts that require a steady hand and a detail-oriented eye. Finally, each student must possess the social skills to be able to take praise and criticism from peers and instructors to further their understanding and master of the design basics.

The individual learners in the aforementioned intended audience do not need any special knowledge or skills to complete this particular unit of instruction successfully. In fact, there are no prerequisite skills needed to enroll or complete the unit content. In short, the entire course was designed for beginners and requires no previous experience. Essentially, the practical assessment at the beginning and end of the course can be completed using any artistic method or medium the student wishes. In other words, the learner can use their interests or strengths to execute design basics through their preferred learning style.

Graphic Descriptions

Overview

Reflecting on my artistic mediums created for this unit of instruction, I'll start with my overview graphic for this unit of instruction. In essence, I believe this specific graphic does a great job of

providing learners with a visual that explains the specific lessons or information covered in my particular unit of instruction. In other words, I believe it does a great job of organizing and elaborating on specific information for the learners. In fact, I believe it does an outstanding job of communicating elements essential to the larger instructional design project (Lohr, 2008, p. 94). Essentially, by using three, equal circles; I stressed the importance of each lesson to the overall instruction. Additionally, I translated and represented ideas essential to forming the standard, functions and principles of design (Lohr, 2008, p. 94).

Essentially, the main goal of the overview graphic was meant to provide learners with an overview of the three lessons on principles of design covered during this unit of instruction. In short, three lessons are balance and rhythm, proportion and dominance, and unity. Ultimately, I believe my design process model effectively explained thee relevance and importance of the three lessons. Specifically, I used a venn diagram to explain the importance and the overlap these three separate lessons have on the overall concept of principles of design. In the end, I believe it is a very effective way to show the importance of each lesson and relaying to the intended audience that all three lessons are of equal importance to this overall unit of instruction.

Balance and Rhythm

Next, in lesson one, I used shapes to help explain symmetry. In short, I believe this particular graphic utilizing simple shapes works extremely well in conveying the balance aspect of my unit of instruction. In fact, I believe the simple circles, lines, and squares effectively demonstrate the meaning of horizontal symmetry, radial symmetry, and asymmetry. Specifically, the circles in all three sections of my graphic imply unity and harmony within a graphic element (Lohr, 2008, p. 250). In other words, the circles create a natural balance and attract the learners' attention to their specific arrangement (Lohr, 2008, p. 250). Thus, that is why I found circles to be the perfect way to demonstrate the meaning of horizontal symmetry, radial symmetry, and asymmetry. Next, I found that by using lines in both the horizontal symmetry and asymmetry elements, I separated and defined the space of a particular concept and helped translate the meaning of a particular balance (Lohr, 2008, p. 250). Lastly, in both horizontal symmetry and asymmetry, I utilized simple square shapes to facilitate comparisons between all of the elements on opposing sides of the center line (Lohr, 2008, p. 250). In the end, the squares were a great way to translate a concept and focus the attention of each individual learner.

Secondly, the next graphic used within lesson one is focused on rhythm. Essentially, I believe my graphic on regular rhythm versus progressive rhythm works because it utilizes the selection principle to add detail and further explain rhythm in design in a more visual manner. More specifically, the selection principle helps to highlight the most important information about the concept of rhythm (Lohr, 2008, p. 100). Additionally, the rhythm graphic provides the learners with an easy reference when using this concept in their compositions (Lohr, 2008, p. 100). Furthermore, this particular rhythm graphic also uses the figure-ground concept as well as contrast to ensure that the different information within the graphic does not compete with one

another (Lohr, 2008, p. 102). In other words, I believe it does a great job of providing focus and highlighting specific information for the learners. In fact, it translates the critical information for each student about the concept of rhythm in design.

Proportion and Dominance

In the next lesson of proportion and dominance, I used two graphics to help explain these elements to the intended audience. First, I believe my graphic explaining the fundamental principle of proportion is a great instructional tool. Essentially, by using left alignment and repetition, with the smaller hot air balloons, I let the learners know that the objects were related (Lohr, 2008, p. 201). In other words, I not only left aligned the repeated, smaller hot air balloons to the edge of the page, but I also aligned the balloons with each other in a vertical and horizontal fashion. In short, this was done to create a grid like structure as well as to translate proportion. In essence, it would take many, smaller hot air balloons to equal the same size as a single, big hot air balloon. Additionally, by using a simple black background with white elements, I ensured that the students focused on the concept of proportion and not just the graphics used in the illustration (Lohr, 2008, p. 199).

Next, I believe my graphic on dominance works because it draws the learner's eye to the word "dominance" and its concept through its colorful design. In fact, I believe the use of color as well as the square shapes and then the subsequent use of a larger rectangle without color draws the learner's eye immediately to the larger section or shape within the composition (Armstrong, 2009, p. 142) . Specifically, I believe I used the quantity and measurement quality of color to show differentiation between the squares in the background and the rectangle in the foreground (Lohr, 2008, p. 265). Additionally, I used spatial symmetry in the colorful squares of the background to create a sense of equilibrium between the different color squares used (Lohr, 2008, p. 275). In other words, I believe my use of contrast, color, and space effectively demonstrates the word "dominance." Furthermore, I believe the rectangle containing the word "dominance" is highlighted or enhanced even more with the use of depth. In essence, by creating depth with the use of drop shadows on the "dominance" rectangle, I created a weaved effect with the rectangle that makes it appear to pop-through or rise above the other background squares of color. In the end, I believe I effectively communicated the concept of dominance through color, depth, and space.

Unity

Finally, in my last project, I use another two graphics to paint o picture of the unity and this lesson. First, I believe my specific graphic does a great job of explaining the concept of unity through color and space. In other words, I believe my graphic does a great job of using space to clarify text. According to author Lohr (2008), although space is a visual element between and surrounding other elements that is often ignored in compositions, it has an important role in visual instruction (p. 272). Essentially, the space creating and surrounding the text in my composition directs the eye to the circle shape and, thus, effectively translates the concept of unity (p. 272). Additionally, the space within my composition utilizes and translates the concepts of symmetry and balance. In the end, I believe it is a highly effective tool at translating the concept of unity.

Secondly, I believe my typography designs translate the intended meaning, motivation, and concepts to the specified users. In other words, I believe they do an excellent job of using text to graphically represent the concept behind the chosen word. Additionally, I believe they provide each learner with a better understanding of the terminology used in a particular area of the unit of instruction (Vekiri, 2002, p. 300). In short, I believe the power of my typography design effectively translates my unit of instruction. Specifically, the concept of unity describes the relationship between the individual parts and the whole of a composition. It investigates the aspects of a given design that are necessary to tie the composition together, to give it a sense of wholeness, or to break it apart and give it a sense of variety. Thus, reflecting on the definition of unity, I decided to illustrate the word unity in a circular or whole fashion. Using the structured font Code Pro Bold to assist readability, I thought that by using a circular presentation for unity each letter in the word would act as an individual part relating to the whole composition of the circle. Specifically, I increased the leading between the letters so that trying to read the word in a circular form would be less intimidating (Lohr, 2008, p. 234). In the end, I am pleased with the outcome.

Design Process

Overall, I would say that my design process is sound. First, I focus attention on the details of graphics so that I cater best to the target audience. Next, I research and brainstorm by reviewing specific design guidelines and notes (Banks, 2008, p. 223). Third**,** I jump into Photoshop or Illustrator to start piecing together a few ideas to get the design process moving and to see what reveals itself to me through the act of creating. Typically, most sketches will eventually be made redundant, but the point is to explore every possible direction before choosing the most effective idea. Next, I normally narrow the design focus until I have one or two strong options for creating comps. In short, the rendering stage involves transferring these options to Adobe Illustrator and to Photoshop. Following a quick user-test and review, I'll either finalize the project, or make any revisions necessary. In the end, my main goal is to create a visual graphic that works for my intended audience, and for many years to come.

Specifically, my website design was created using basic HTML and CSS knowledge using the program Dreamweaver. For specific images included in the site, I used Adobe Photoshop and Fireworks to create .jpgs and .pngs respectively. Overall, I kept the design minimal so I would not distract the learner form the most important information. Additionally, I utilized the multimedia principle by aligning graphics with words to reinforce the visual processing channel of each individual student. Furthemore, I kept the navigation simple across the top as well as the right side of the website to provide easy options for students and teachers. Finally, I included a complete resource section that provides the following:

- The Unit of Instruction
- Lesson Plan 1: Balance and Rhythm
- Lesson Plan 2: Proportion and Dominance
- Lesson Plan 3: Unity
- Justification Paper

In short, the website shows that leaners, especially beginners, benefit greatly from the combination of words as well as graphics (Clark & Mayer, 2008, p. 83). In other words, it uses the cognitive theory of learning that states that humans have an individual processing channel for visual information (Clark & Mayer, 2008, p. 122). Thus, by targeting this particular attribute of each learner, the website effectively and efficiently relays information.

References

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