

Balance & Emphasis

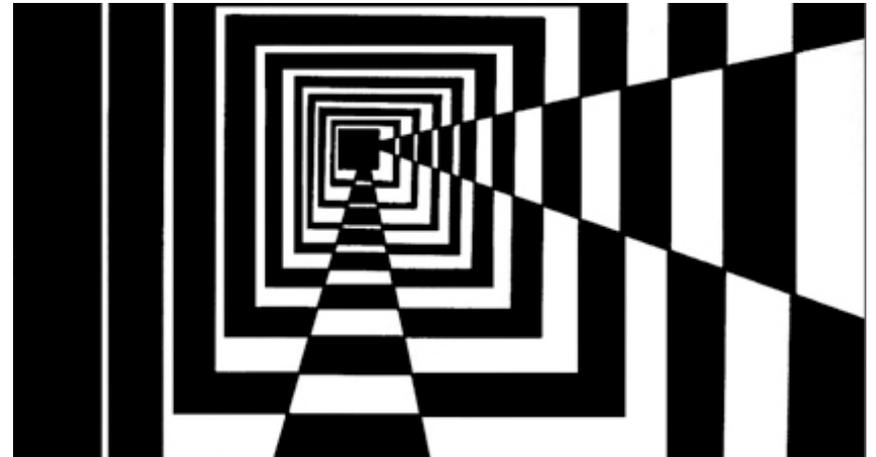
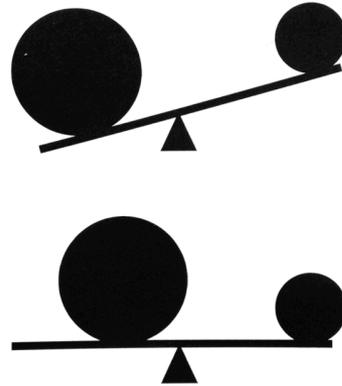
Principles of Design

As artists, we reflect our basic desire for order while designing a work of art.

The principles of design are used to organize the elements in a work of art.

Principles & Elements of Design

- Balance
- Emphasis
- Contrast
- Movement
- Patterns
- Unity
- Texture

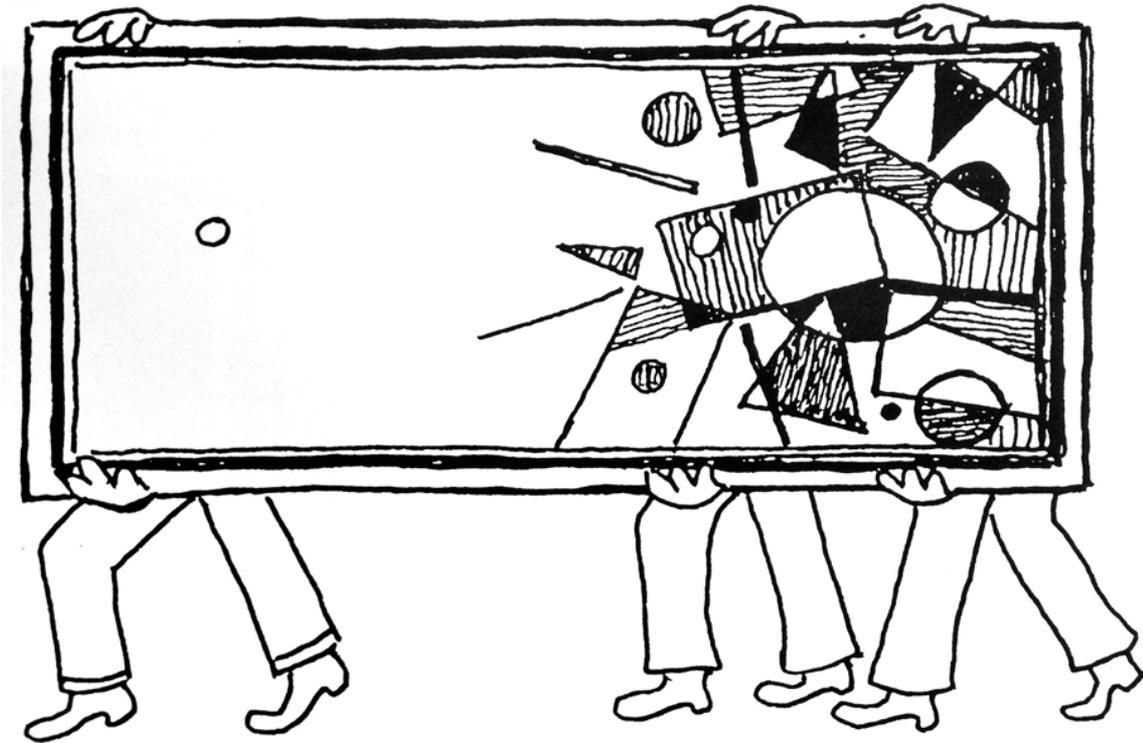


Principles of Design: Balance

Balance refers to the way the Elements of Design are arranged within the format to create a feeling of stability or harmony.

Relates to our everyday mortal experience of gravity.

Portions of a composition can take on measureable weight or dominance, and can then be arranged in such a way that they appear to be either in or out of balance, or to have one kind of balance or another.



**Balance can be symmetrical (formal);
or it can be asymmetrical (informal).**

Balance

Striking composition by using principal of **balance** or distribution of **visual weight**.

All the figures are concentrated on the right side, while the left side is basically empty.

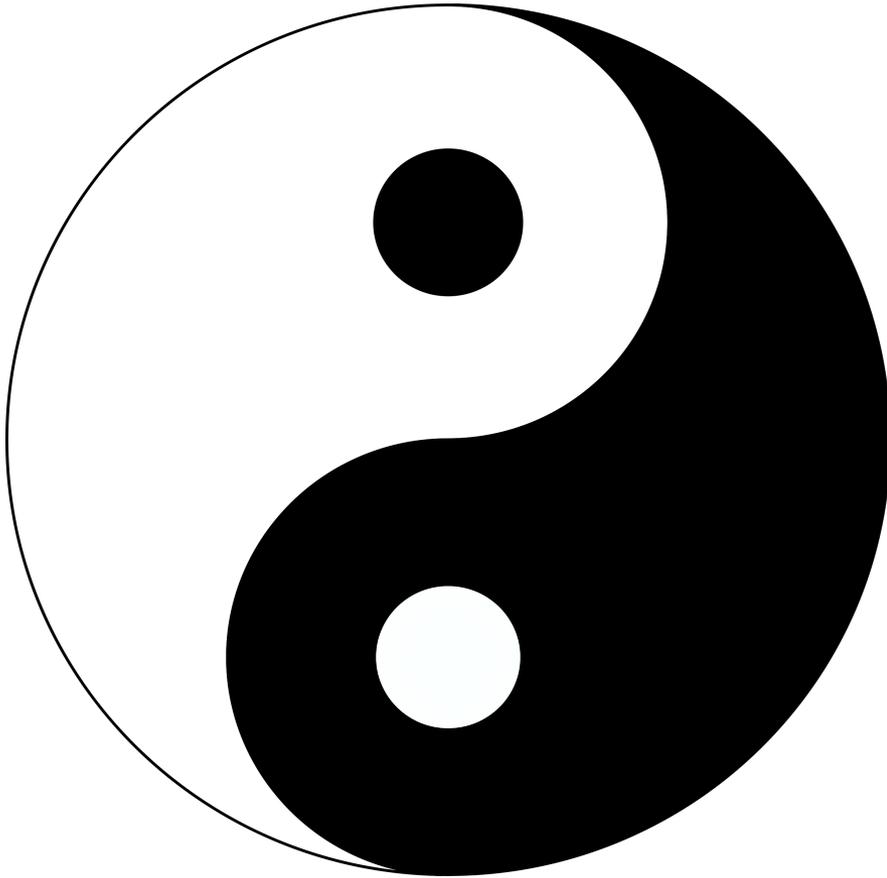
The driving rain, presented in a contrasting diagonal sweep, subtly balances the other diagonal sweep of the funeral procession. This gives us a sense of **balance**.



Funeral under Umbrellas. Henri Riviere, 1895.

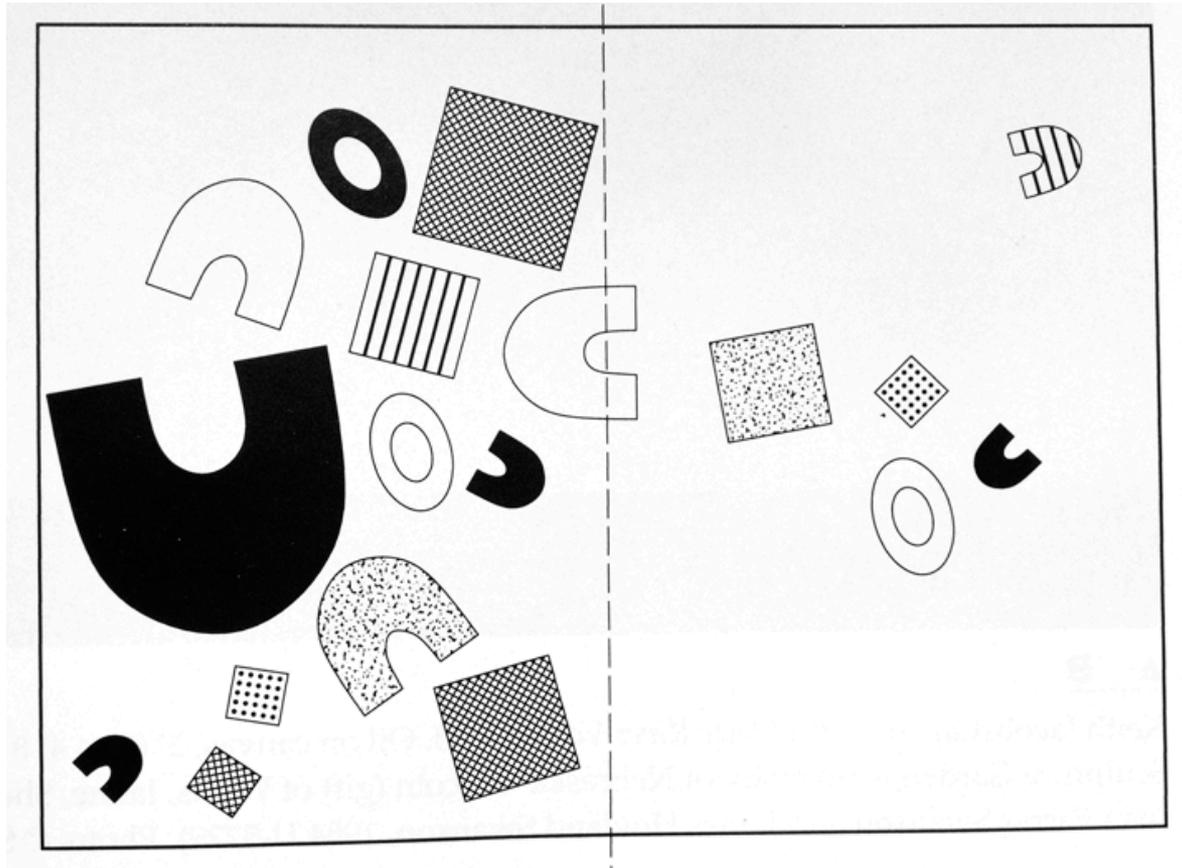
Principles of Design

Balance



- A sense of perfect balance can be seen in the yin/yang symbol
- An example of figure-ground ambiguity – it is unclear which is the figure (positive form) and which is the ground (negative space)

A sense of balance is innate.





- Balance is visual weight of a piece of art.



Symmetrical balance

both sides are mirror images



Asymmetrical balance

one side is different



Radial balance

design radiates out from center of art

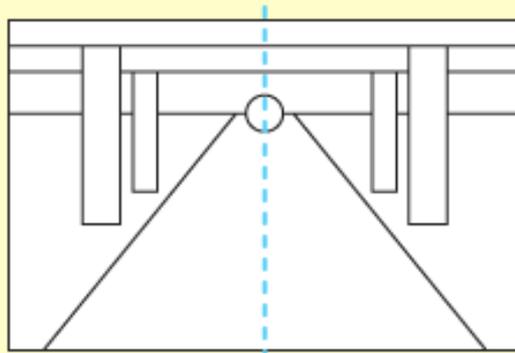
Principles of Design

Symmetrical Balance

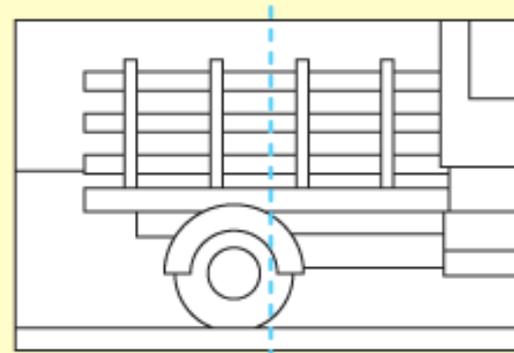


Taj Mahal, Agra, India. Mughal period, c. 1632–48.

Kinds of Balance



Symmetrical



Asymmetrical

When considering the idea of balance, it is very helpful to divide any picture plane in half, using a central axis line. If the shapes are mostly the same on each side of this axis line, the image is symmetrical. If they are different on each side of the central axis, they are asymmetrical.

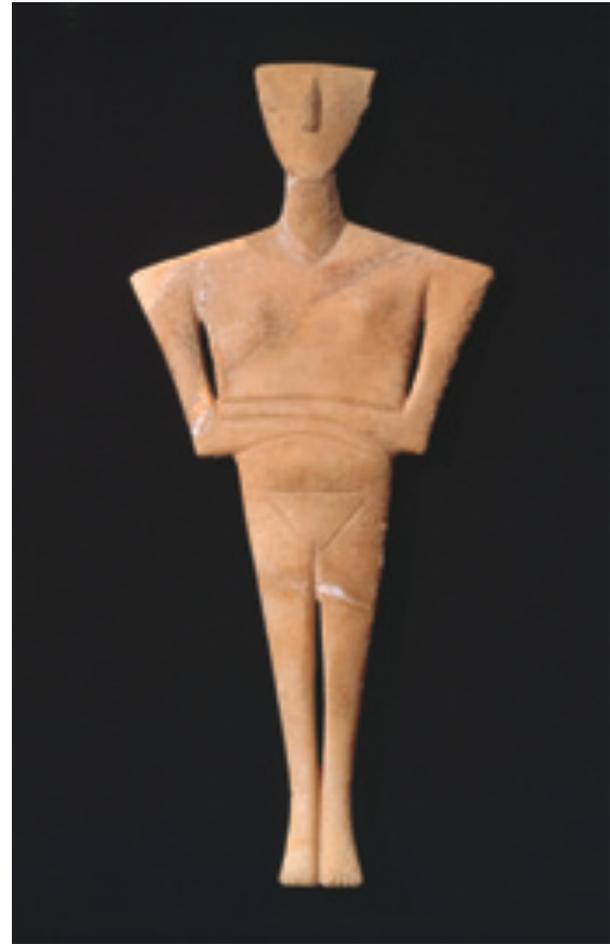
The human eye is always drawn to the area of greatest contrast—we can't help it.

Principles of Design

Symmetrical Balance

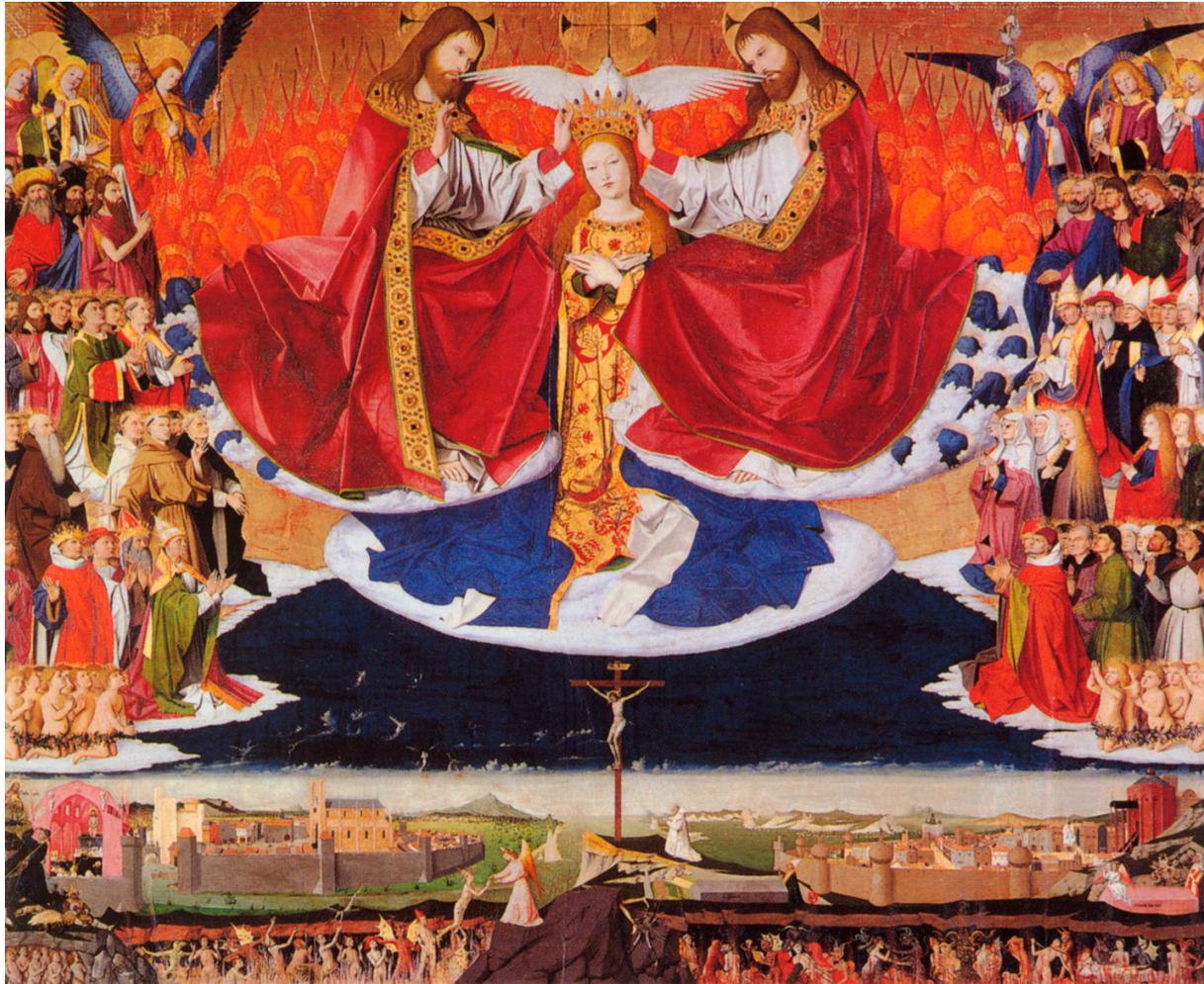
- An equivalence of shape and position on opposing sides of a central *axis*
- Produces a feeling of calm and order

Axis – an imaginary line passing through a figure, building, composition, etc., about which its principal parts are arranged

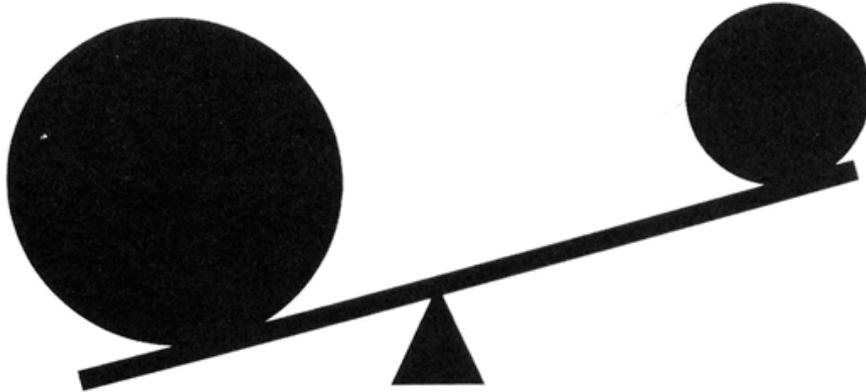


Principles of Design

Symmetrical Balance

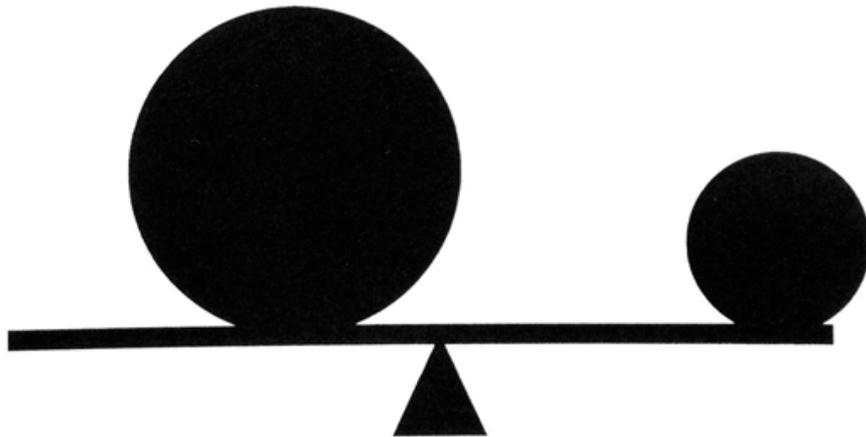


Coronation of the Virgin. Enguerrand Quarton, 1453–54.
Panel painting. 72 × 86-5/8 in.



A smaller shape placed towards the outer edge can **balance** a large shape placed near the middle of a design.

Two items of unequal weight are brought to **equilibrium** by moving the heavier weight inward toward the fulcrum.



In design, this means that a smaller item placed out toward the edge can balance the large item placed closer to the center.

These seesaw diagrams illustrate this idea of **balance** by position.

Balance



South Wind, Clear Dawn from Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji.
Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese woodcut, c 1830.

Principles of Design

Asymmetrical Balance



- More dependent on an intuitive balancing of visual weights
- While symmetry is static, asymmetry is active
- Creating balance will be more challenging but also more dynamic (than with symmetrical or radial balance)

Prometheus Bound. Peter Paul Rubens, 1611-12. Oil on canvas

Albert Renger-Patzch:
Asymmetrical balance

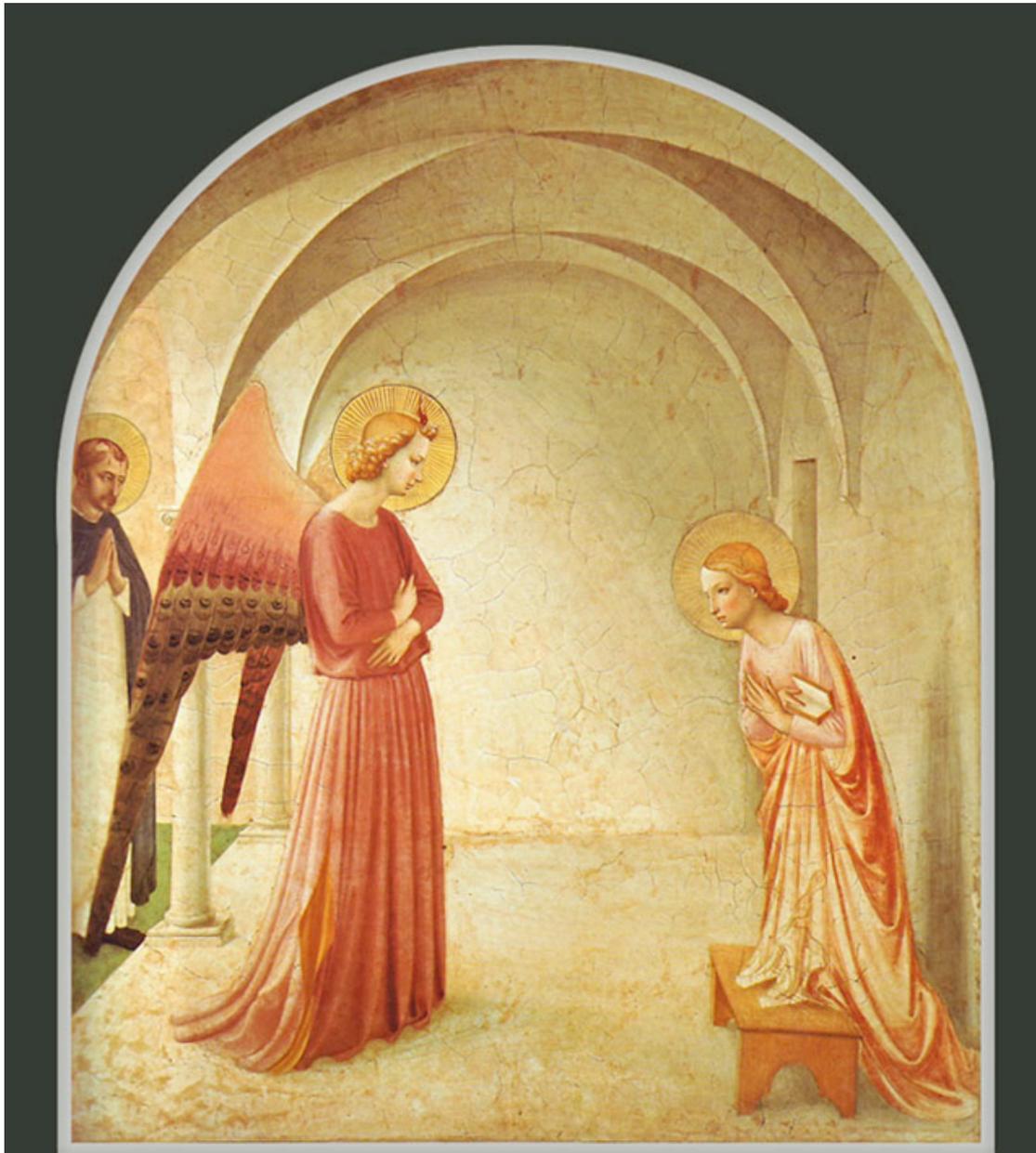




Garry Winograd. *White Sands National Monument*, 1964.

Asymmetrical balance is achieved by having aspects of the composition that keep us engaged:

- ❖ The white car on the left blends into the light sand, while the blue picnic stand on the right seems to echo the sky.
- ❖ The open door and figure on the left balance the two figures on the right.
- ❖ The clouds are distributed equally left and right but the shapes vary.



Fra Angelico. *The Annunciation*. 1442. Fresco, Florence, Italy.

At first glance, this composition seems heavily weighted to the left side of the frame. The angel on the left has prominent wings, painted with brighter colors and darker values.

The figure of Mary, by contrast is pale, almost dissolving into the background.

This potential imbalance is offset by subtle eye direction.

The figures are connected through the line of their gaze and the arches sweeping across the top of the painting.

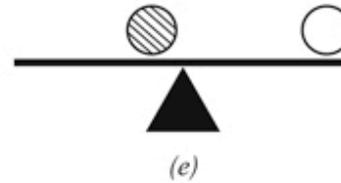
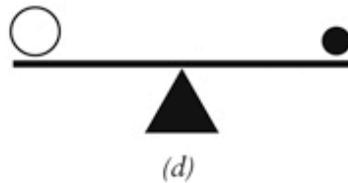
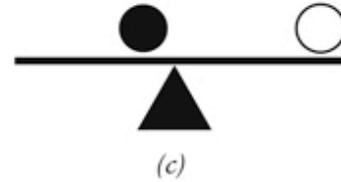
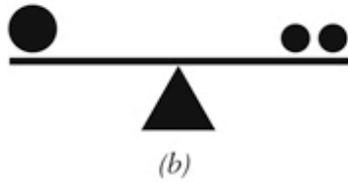
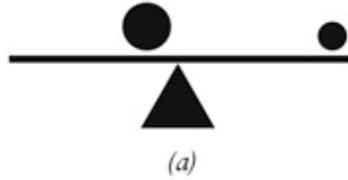
Eye direction is carefully plotted, not only for balance but also for general compositional unity.

A psychic line is formed between the two figures by the gaze of their eyes, and they are linked together. We will talk more about psychic lines and implied lines.



[Poison Sleep by Dan dos Santos](#)

Varieties of Asymmetrical Balance.





- Balance is visual weight of a piece of art.



Symmetrical balance

both sides are mirror images



Asymmetrical balance

one side is different



Radial balance

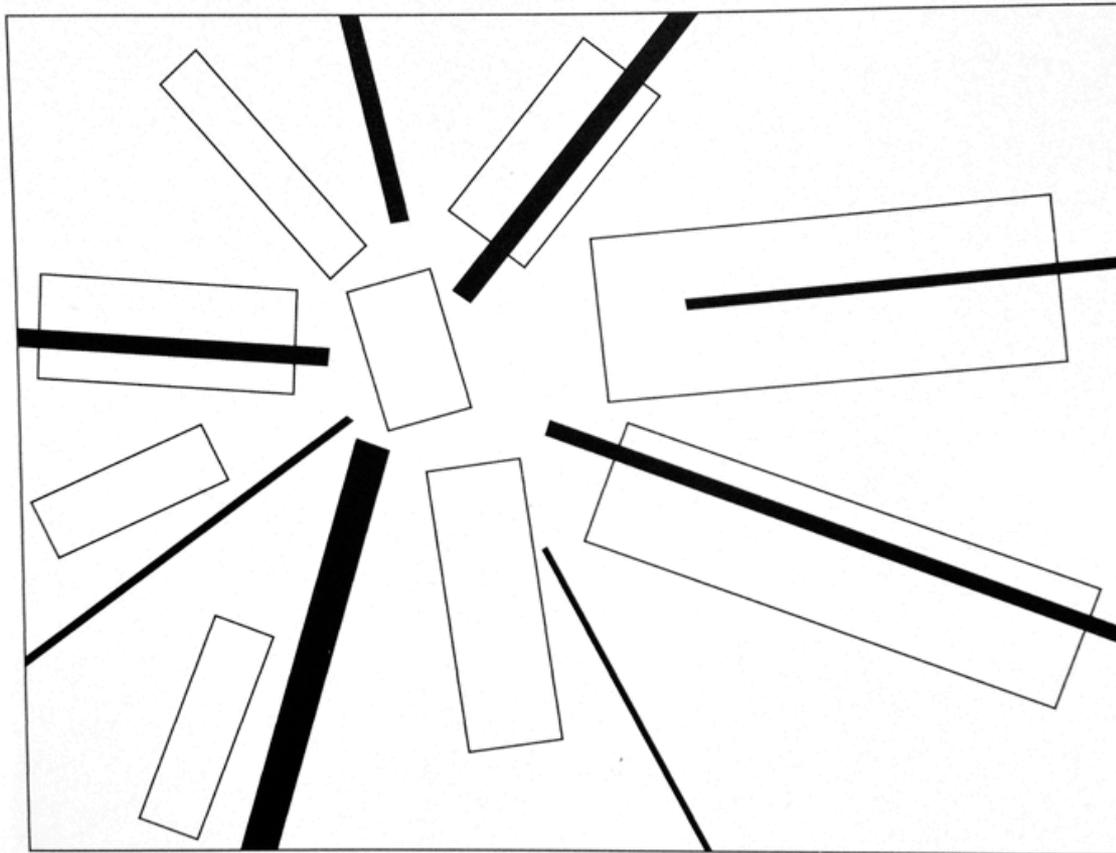
design radiates out from center of art

Principles of Design

Radial Balance



Emphasis by Placement:



The placement of elements in a design can function in another way that creates emphasis. If many elements point to one item, our attention is also directed there, which results in a strong focal point.



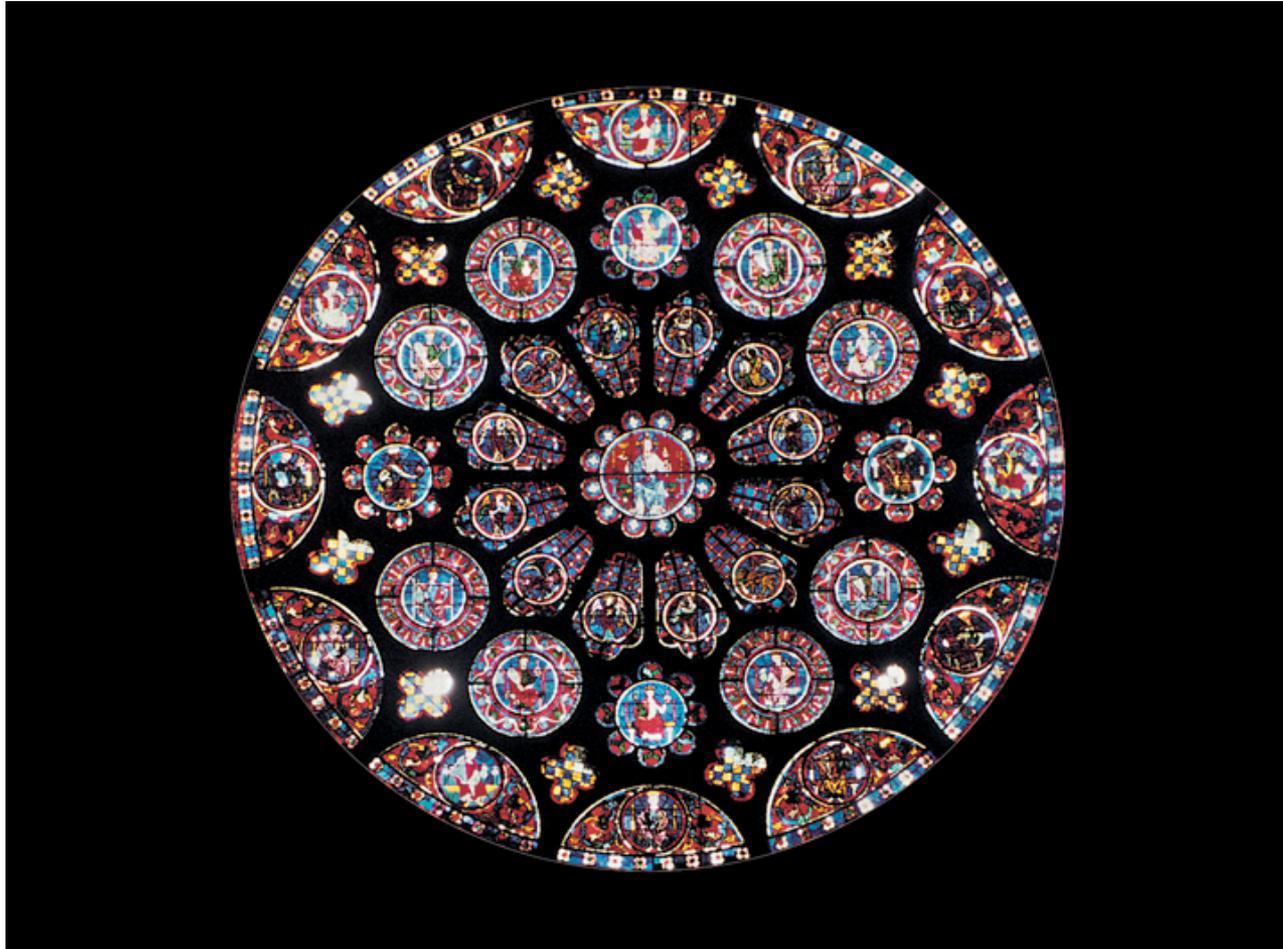
Our eyes are drawn to the central element of this design by all the elements radiating from it.

A radial design is a good example of this compositional device.

Our eyes are lead to a central element.

Principles of Design

Radial Balance



Rose window, south transept, Chartres Cathedral. c. 1215.

Principles of Design

Crystallographic Balance



Balance with equal emphasis over an entire two-dimensional surface so that there is always the same visual weight or attraction wherever you may look. This is also called 'allover pattern' or 'allover balance'. *Flowers and Skulls*. Takashi Murakami, 2012.

Focal Point/Emphasis

How does a designer capture the viewer's attention and grab the eye? One helpful device is using the design principle: **Emphasis**.

A **point of emphasis** is the **focal point**. This emphasized element initially attracts attention and encourages the viewer to look closer.



Placing the small light circle on the right, draws our attention to that area of the design, creating a **focal point** by **isolation** and **value**.



Susan Jane Walp. *Grapefruit*



Every aspect of the above compositions **emphasizes** the grapefruit at center stage.

The grapefruit's color is large, **centered**, light and warm against the cool darker more neutral background. All these elements bring our focus to the main subject, which is the grapefruit.



1422-23 Tempera on poplar, 35 x 29 cm

Renaissance painters intentionally placed the Virgin Mary in the **center** of their formats to create a very formal mood and to immediately make her the **center of compositional and theological interest.**

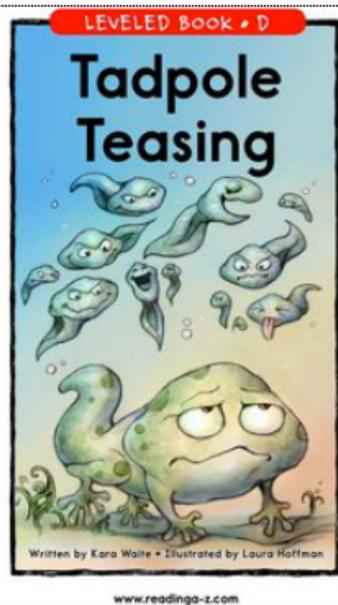
This painting was most likely part of the central panel of the St Lawrence altarpiece in the Cathedral of Florence. The master - probably from the school of Lorenzo Monaco - was a representative of the International Gothic in Florence.



▲ C

Karl Kuntz (photographer). *Columbus Dispatch*, Sunday, November 24, 2002.

Example of a **focal point** created through **contrast**, where one element stands out because it differs from the rest.
Above image is an example of the number 16 on the football hero's jersey standing out from the surrounding crowd.



The hero of this children's book is the froglet named Taddy, who is being taunted and laughed at by the tadpoles. Taddy stands out because he is different; by size, shape, expression, body language and color.

This leads us to **emphasis through isolation.**

Laura Hoffman. Cover illustration for *Tadpole Teasing*, 2012.

Emphasis by Isolation



Andrew Wyeth. *Christina's World*, 1948. Tempera on gessoed panel.

The girl in this painting by Andrew Wyeth is the isolated **focal point**.

Emphasis by isolation artwork creates an image where the focal point of the piece is separated from other objects grouped closely together.

Emphasis by Isolation and contrast



Thomas Eakins. *The Agnew Clinic*. 1889. Oil on canvas.

In the painting by Thomas Eakins, the doctor on the left repeats the **light value** of the other figures in the operating arena.

All the figures in this oval shape stand out in **contrast** to the darker figures in the background.

Isolation gives an added dose of **emphasis** to the doctor on the left.

Divine Proportions