CANON OF DESIGN

TOP 33 DESIGN TECHNIQUES FOR CREATING MASTERFUL COMPOSITIONS

These top design techniques are listed in order of importance, and usually hidden like a magic trick. Most of them can be applied to a **drawing** or painting. **Photographers** and cinematographers might be able to apply 2/3 of them with enough time. Go down this checklist and check off techniques you've incorporated. The more the better! Use the blog to search for these terms if you're not 100% familiar with them.

• As with any work of art, you'll need **light** that suits the story you're trying to convey.

- ☐ Identify the Main Subject- this will usually get the GAC, crisp lines, sharp focus, etc.
- ☐ Greatest Area of Contrast (GAC)- high contrast areas direct our attention. Squint.
- ☐ Figure-Ground Relationship (FGR)- separate the subject from background.
- ☐ Balance- breathing room/gazing direction
- ☐ Magnetic Momentum- Flip the image to see any change in movement.
- ☐ Dynamic Symmetry- choose an appropriate grid for the subject.
- ☐ Dominant Diagonal- a strong diagonal can create visual impact.
- ☐ Edge Flicker- no high contrast near the edge unless redirecting back in.
- ☐ Gamut- a limited number of repeating diagonals.
- ☐ Negative Space- is there too much or too little? Think of your story.
- ☐ Separating Shapes- no overlapping shapes with great FGR.
- ☐ Coincidences- edge-to-edge relationships creating movement and unity.
- ☐ Arabesque- curvilinear element creating movement and unity.
- ☐ Aerial Perspective- depth created by reducing contrast (fog, lost edges, shadows).
- ☐ Overlapping Shapes- overlap shapes to avoid kissing (1/2, 1/3, or Phi).
- ☐ Originality- tell your story in your own style without copying others.
- ☐ Adding Life- gestures or an action which might add to the story.
- ☐ Aspective View- spread limbs, or showing three sides (twist) in the form.
- ☐ Color Harmony- four colors or hue variations in a hierarchy (red/blue/yellow/green).
- ☐ Color Variation- adding a color of similar value or intensity to create variety.
- ☐ Hierarchy- think large, medium, small for size. Dark, darker, darkest for value.
- ☐ 90 Degree Angle- a right angle on a tilt to create strength.
- ☐ Enclosures- triangles, squares, or circles hidden to create unity.
- ☐ Ellipses- edge-to-edge relationships that circle to create unity and movement.
- ☐ Echoing Shapes - repeating the shape in objects to create unity and rhythm.
- ☐ Pointing Devices- linear elements that direct attention towards the subject.
- ☐ Radiating Lines - lines radiating from an interest point to direct attention.
- ☐ Phi Proportions- calipers can be used to organize objects with phi proportions.
- ☐ Law of Pragnanz - creating a hidden illusion like a face (surrealism like Dali).
- ☐ Patterns- creating rhythm and unity, which can also add interest to dull areas.
- ☐ Texture- adds the impression of depth and can create nice variation.
- ☐ Ambiguity- a story that can be interpreted many different ways.
- ☐ Mirror or Exit- a mirror or distant value change can create a sense of depth.