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DESIGN AND THE WOMAN

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Woman is a unique and almost mystic creature. Her role in society is limited only by her dreams and desires. One important aim in a woman's life is to appear her best at all times. By careful selection and a proper foundation in the art of clothing, she is well on her way to accomplishing her goal. With a thorough knowledge of her own physical characteristics and a few basics in the fundamental elements of design, the lady may be creative in applying these guides to her own needs. Each piece of clothing can be a delightful reflection of her personality.

In considering clothing basics, a very important meaning is assigned to the word "design." It is defined as any arrangement of lines, shapes, textures, and colors.¹ These elements, often considered the fundamental and plastic elements, "are fundamental because they can be manipulated with infinite variety. The problem of creating design is in choosing and organizing the fundamental or plastic elements."²

Designs vary according to periods in history although many specific efforts are copied and updated along the way. Some designs that are popular over a long period of time are called

²Ibid.
In order for these designs to be good, they must consider the human body. An understanding of the human anatomy, as in any art related to it, must be had by the designer. The molding of a garment to produce a pleasing effect as well as the ability to be worn in comfort both contribute to a successful garment.

There are two types of design—structural and applied. Each garment has structural design which achieves its look from construction details and the fabric. "Beauty in structural design depends on the relative size, shape, and form of each part and on the suitability of the fabric."^4

Applied or decorative design "is surface enrichment added to the garment."^5 This includes decorative fabrics and applied decorations such as ribbons or rickrack.

The definition of design includes the basic elements, line, shape, texture, and color. As the designer uses these elements in making his plan for a creation, he starts with the basic lines of a dress. No other element is so important to good costume design. "Fine line in costume requires good fit, fine fabric, and excellent constructive techniques, and so is apt to be found

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^3Bernice G. Chambers, Color and Design in Apparel, New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946, p. 18


^5Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 206
in the classics." Lines can "suggest movement, mood, and personality, depending on the type and direction."6

The reaction to various lines is often associated by the posture and movements of the body. According to this idea, a horizontal line suggests rest and repose while a vertical line gives dignity and strength. The diagonal line shows motion. Each of these is a straight line in various positions. A continuous use of straight lines without relief can cause a harsh, severe effect that is prevalent in tailored or masculine clothes. These can sometimes be difficult to wear unless broken by a soft fabric.

The other line type is the curved line, either extreme or subtle, found in bouffant skirts which suggests youth, gaiety, and action. These full, curved lines can be overdone, however, creating a weak and tiresome work. A more pleasing effect is often achieved by the restrained curve, "which is a transition between the full curve and the straight line."7 This curve is frequently found in nature as well as the feminine figure. It recalls grace, subtlety, and softness.

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Repose Stability Movement Grace Bouyancy Excitement

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6 McJimsey, op. cit., p. 162
7 McJimsey, op. cit., pp. 159-160
The large graceful curves in some evening apparel "expresses exuberance, vitality, joy, and vigor of youth," while smaller curves, often referred to as rococo curves, suggest vivacity and youthfulness. When used in excess, however, they create restlessness. Giving the impression of sauciness and merriment are the short straight lines and small zigzags.

All the lines working together create harmony within a garment. One line is dominant with additional lines in varying directions or type to eliminate monotony. Too much contrast, on the other hand, causes discord and an undesirable effect.

Lines are present in everything around us. John Dewey reminds us that lines are the "boundaries of things." They define the shape of objects which we recognize about us. They assemble and connect one part with another. They give direction and movement. They divide or break up large areas or spaces into smaller areas. More than this, they create impressions. They take on the expressiveness or properties of objects. "They may be intimate or coldly aloof; inticing or repellent; playful or dignified."9

In order to create illusions, line types are combined for an individual to perceive their effect. "Illusions are errors of the visual sense, the intellect, or judgment. Lines, shapes, 


colors, and textures may form illusions that will distract the eye or make accurate judgment impossible."\(^{10}\)

In the following figures examples are given in the study of optical illusion using line and shape. Each oblong is equal in dimensions, only the illusions vary.\(^{11}\) These same principles applied according to body types are used in costume.

Cut horizontally by a light colored band, No. 1 gives the effect of widening the oblong. As a result of the perpendicular break, the area appears narrower and longer in No. 2. In Nos. 3 and 4 the areas are cut diagonally producing a more appealing effect than in Nos. 1 and 2. No. 5 appears narrower because of the dark tones on the sides. Because of the focal point in the center of No. 6, the middle appears narrower while the white side panels give width to the whole. The monotony of the even shapes in Nos. 7 and 8 is contrasted by the far-more interesting divisions of Nos. 9 and 10.

\(^{10}\)Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 211

Using these examples of illusion, lines can be arranged to give the desired appearance to a particular body type. Since verticle lines add height or length, they are used by those who wish to look more slender. "Verticle lines in clothing are found in fabric design, construction line, sleeve line, trim, and fasteners." Vertical lines can divide areas such as skirts or pants in such a way that the eye travels up and down.

It is important to remember that the plastic element of space also influences the effect achieved by lines. When repeated in quantity, vertical lines can also add width. Therefore, "what effect the vertical line has depends on the spacing and the background contrast of the vertical." Parallel lines that are spaced closely lead the eye upward, but the eyes measure width

12 Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 211
13 Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 211
if the space between the lines increases.

Horizontal lines are generally considered to add width although with special effects, they can also add height.
"Horizontal lines in clothing are found in fabric design, waistlines, yokes, belts, hems of skirts, sleeves, and trims."\textsuperscript{14}
Widths are measured by the lines moving across as well as by comparison to other horizontal lines. The lines of the waist, for example, are compared to those of the hips.

Diagonal lines correspond to either horizontal or vertical lines, depending on their slant and extreme of direction. The use of the diagonal is very pleasing and is one of the best ways to camouflage figure faults. Zigzag lines, which are actually a series of connected diagonal lines, carry the eye abruptly in a jerky movement across the surface giving the illusion of more space.\textsuperscript{15}

To obtain the most satisfactory results in the application of line, the individual must consider these two guides: (1) "repetition of line emphases and (2) contrast to line emphases."
The tall person would emphasize her height by wearing vertical lines as well as with very round lines or horizontal lines. A rounded face would be emphasized by a rounded collar or a square cut neck-line. To conceal a physical fault neither repeat its line nor contrast it. It is best to use lines of less extreme.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 212
\textsuperscript{15}Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 216
\textsuperscript{16}Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 218
Not only do the structural lines of a garment add to the illusion, but so do the texture lines. Characteristics of a specific fabric such as weight, texture, and pliability influence the final effect. The cut of the pattern should correspond with the texture of a fabric. Crisp, definite edges require a firm fabric to give a tailored appearance while soft, flowing lines should be complimented with appropriate light-weight fabrics. "The design, the fabric, and the construction all go hand in hand to determine the character and beauty of the line in any garment.17

The most important lines of a garment, creating a first impression, outline the total shape that forms the silhouette. Contrasted against the background, a good silhouette is related to the proportions of the beautiful human figure.

Although styles and the use of lines have evolved and reverted during the years, there are only three basic silhouettes with some variations. The straight or tubular, the bell-shaped or bouffant, and the back fullness or bustle are each used in fashion to flatter particular figure types, although only one may dominate.

\[\text{Tubulor} \quad \text{Bouffant} \quad \text{Bustle}\]

17McJimsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-162
Fashion exists to offer variety, and historically as well as currently offers both beautiful and exaggerated silhouettes. Both good taste and economy suggest the wisdom of choosing the modified silhouette which avoid weird distortions of the figure and remains in fashion long after the extreme design has been discarded.\(^\text{18}\)

The following are three excellent points to use in judging a good silhouette.

1. "A good silhouette will be related to the body structure." Certain body curves will be emphasized while others will be concealed. This can be used to an advantage in camouflaging physical faults.

2. "A good silhouette will be composed of individual parts which have in themselves an interesting outline." One good example is the use of sleeves to produce varying effects in the silhouette. Long, full sleeves give a soft, feminine effect; short cap sleeves are heat and cool.

3. "Silhouettes must be in character with and reflect the spirit of the times for which it is designed." The long bouffant gowns of the romantic era, emphasizing a small waist would be in direct contrast to the straight, sack-dress of the late 1950's.\(^\text{19}\)

Just as the silhouette is a shape or form created by line, so are the individual parts which compose the silhouette made up of forms or shapes. Through the use of line, spaces are

\(^{18}\text{McJimsey, op. cit., pp. 120-121}\)

\(^{19}\text{Morton, op. cit., p. 79}\)
broken down into various shapes to compliment the figure. Optical illusions such as those previously mentioned are used in costume design with form also.

Between shapes or forms is a void referred to as space. Applied to costume it is the background area on which individual shapes or decorative details are imposed.

Background spaces are very important in costume. Therefore, the unoccupied space around pockets, buttons, or lapels is as much a part of the design as the background of a printed fabric.

Lines give a shape its characteristic appearance. Shapes such as circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, or ovals possess the attributes of the lines determining their shape. When one of these shapes is applied to a garment in the form of decoration or structure, such as a pocket or yoke, the placement helps determine the particular expressive quality.

Various shapes used in costume often go unnoticed. Those which add the most pleasing effect are those of unequal measure such as the oval, ovoid, oblong or trapezoid, more so than a circle or square. These, for example, repeat the lines of the torso (in the trapezoid) and the face (in the oval or ovoid).20

Working together with lines and spaces to mold a more perfect art creation is the element of texture. To many people in the United States, line and form have more of a meaning than

20McJimsey, op. cit., pp. 163-165
color and texture; these elements are enjoyed at the expense of
color and texture which actually produce a more sensuous
experience. 21

Through the use of texture, line and color become more
individualized; without it "decoration would be meaningless and
beauty impossible." Using texture to deviate, "the dead gloom
of black, the glare of white are relieved and endowed with life
and animation, as the heat of red, the cold of blue, and the
brilliance of yellow are tempered by texture." 22

The word texture means "to weave" although its meaning has
been broadened to include fibers, yarn, structures, and finish.
Making these additions, "texture is an element of design that
describes the surface appearance and feel." 23 Both appearance
and feel are influenced by various factors. For example, a
shiny fabric reflects light while one that is dull absorbs light.
The shiny effect may be created by different means such as a
satin weave or a glazed finish. Appreciation of texture is
acquired by experience. Through a cultivation of hand—the
fabric's feel, body, weight and fall—surface appearance and
characteristics can be developed.

21 John C. Van Dyke, *Art for Art's Sake*, New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1917, p. 214

22 Bernard Jakway, *Principles of Interior Decoration*, New
York: The Macmillan Co., 1922, pp. 70-71

23 Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, *op. cit.*, p. 256
Texture is determined by the arrangement of the component parts in fabric. These are the fiber, the yarn construction, the weave, or other methods of making fabric and the finish given to it.\textsuperscript{24} The strands of raw materials which are spun into yarns and woven into cloth are fibers. The texture of a given fabric is governed by the raw material used in a fiber. Fibers are twisted together in long filaments creating yarns. The exact way in which they are joined creates distinctive textures. These yarns are then combined by either weaving, knitting, felting, crocheting, or braiding to produce a fabric. After constructions, many fabrics are given a finish to add such qualities as wrinkle resistance, for example.

As definite styles repeat stages in popularity, so do the textures that suit them. Today, instead of the crisp dress that can be slipped on instantly looking neat and tailored, the cycle has moved to the softer fabrics that cling to the curves of the body. Textures such as print cloth, dress-weight linen, and percale are classics in texture, for they have been used over a long period of time. Since they are not extreme, they can be used often without being old.

Texture should be considered not only in the sense of its current popularity but also how it responds to the different grains; "what silhouettes can be made from them; the kinds of seams and dress-maker finishes they will take; which to choose

\textsuperscript{24}Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 257
for country clothes, and town and evening fashions; how to combine them appropriately;"25 and how texture will enhance physical characteristics and personality.

Illusions are also produced with many types of texture to either enlarge or dwarf while other textures add nothing to the illusion. The scale of a fabric--determined by the size relationship of the pattern formed by the texture--should be considered in relationship to the size of the person.26 A contrast between the scale and the body will emphasize the form. A heavy woman wearing a dainty print will seem that much larger compared to the delicate design. On the other hand, if she wears a large bold pattern, her size is repeated also giving emphasis.

Soft, clinging fabrics that reveal body shape should be worn only by those who are proud of their figure. Stiffer fabrics in contrast, stand out from the body hiding irregularities. Bulky fabrics which add volume can be used effectively by a slender person although they could be overpowering on the petite figure. Another texture type becoming to the slender figure is the shiny texture. Reflecting the light an area appears larger, and the color is intensified. As opposed to a shiny surface is the dull texture. Any figure type may wear dull textures if they are void of characteristics such as bulk or crispness. Other textures not included in a category are considered in the middle group.

25Morton, op. cit., p. 207

26Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., pp. 260-261
Because of their lack of appeal, color and line are needed for interest in these inbetween fabrics.

For many years there has been a set pattern concerning the combination of textures. Today, however, when change constantly presents itself, such rules have been broken down to two general ideas.

1. A unity of ideas should be achieved whether it is according to weight or hand or surface appearance, for example.

2. Textures associated together in the mind are appropriate.27 This permits a wide area for experimentation and creation.

Because of the depth and texture of a fabric, the color reflects the light in a pleasing manner. "The use of color and design in fabrics is one of the oldest arts." The classification of fabrics according to color and design are (1) solid-color fabrics (the largest group of colored materials, usually piece-dyed); (2) yarn-dyed materials, which appear to be solid-color fabrics but are actually composed of pre-dyed fibers; (3) printed designs classified according to the method of application of the dyestuff and the type and arrangement of the design; (4) woven patterns typed to color and design; (5) laces and lace effects; (6) fur and fur effects.28

Color, the fourth plastic element, is the most impressive. "The magic in color is most exemplified in the art of dress. The

27Morton, op. cit., p. 221

28Chambers, op. cit., pp. 243-249
lines and design of a toilette may be graceful and interesting, the workmanship may be beyond criticism, but if the color is not suitable, the costume is a failure."\(^2^9\) Colors give a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction. Through the use of color there is a variation in nature as well as in costume. Tender green leaves silhouetted against a pastel sky; whisps of white clouds and a yellow sun pasted against the blue; a garden sprinkled with yellows and reds topping green stalks—the entire picture is flooded with color.

As a child, these colors are identified in their primitive forms. The interest and ability he shows in color depends upon his environment. The next stage in his color appreciation comes when he remembers and copies color schemes that he has seen in nature. Many never develop to the three stages which involves discernment and appreciation of color principles.\(^3^0\) This goal takes some effort and study in the field of color. What exactly is color, and how can it be used effectively?

From experiments conducted by Sir Isaac Newton in 1660, results showed that color is contained in light and is evident when the rays are refracted. Rays of white light are broken into parts of the spectrum—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Physiologists later studied the process by which color is seen by the human eye and translated by the human brain. This is extremely complicated. The color reflected from


\(^3^0\)Morton, *op. cit.*., p. 149
an object is determined by the composition of the object. Light striking an object may be reflected, absorbed, or pass through it. Surface transparence or opacity will determine the pattern of the light. Colors not reflected are absorbed by the object and are not visible. For example, a green fabric is green because its chemical colorant absorbs all colored rays of light except green which it reflects. In this manner all other colors are reflected. Black is the absence of all color or light. White is a combination of all colors in light. Gray is a mixture of black and white. 31

For painters and others concerned with the actual production of color, the principles of the Prang system are important. Beginning with the three primary colors of red, blue, and yellow, all other colors may be made. The secondary colors, purple, green, and orange, are created by mixing equal proportions of the primary colors; red and blue yield purple; blue and yellow yield green; red and yellow yield orange. Intermediate colors, produced from neighboring colors, are yellow-green, blue-green, blue-violet, red-violet, red-orange, and yellow-orange.

The color wheel can be expanded by continuing the process of mixing equal amounts of the same intensity of neighboring colors." 32

31Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 272
32Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 274
In studying the properties and variations of color, it is necessary to have a working vocabulary concerning color terms. Hue, the most basic, is the family name for color. A hue is red, blue, or orange, for example. Hues with long wave lengths such as blue and violet are considered cool colors. Those nearest orange are warm colors. "Every color has warm and cool hues. Those are warm which most nearly approach orange, and those are cold which most nearly approach blue."33 Along with the varying wave-lengths are the sensations produced by each group. The colors of red and orange are associated with fire and heat while blue describes the frozen snow and ice on mountain tops.

Warm colors are more luminous than cool colors just as bright colors are more so than dull colors. Because the warm colors--red, orange, and yellow--are more advancing, they appear larger and more important. The cooler, receding colors of blue, blue-green, and violet, on the other hand, are less prominent and seem farther away. Warm colors, therefore, emphasize the body's proportions and size, and cool colors diminish the contours. A careful consideration of color luminosity is particularly necessary to those who wish to conceal figure flaws.

This simple division of color also provides a general rule in selecting color for hair and skin types. The cool colors are becoming to fair skins, blue-black hair, gray hair, and blue or

33Story, op. cit., p. 133
gray eyes. The warm colors are usually becoming to warm complexions and brown eyes, or darker values of a cool color may be used on a warm skin.

The lightness or darkness of a color is termed value. The addition of white to a hue, such as green, increases the value. This new color has what is called a high value; it is called a tint of that color since white was added. When black is added, a shade results and the value is considered low. Some exciting effects can be produced by the contrast of values against a background. The lighter values usually cause the area to appear longer since they reflect the light. An important point to consider is the contrast formed against the background. Since most of our environment is of medium value, extreme light and dark colors will stand out. These values should be worn only by those who wish to call attention to their figures.

The value of hues in clothing has an effect on skin coloring. Dark values drain color from the skin. Pale or very fair-complexioned people will find that wearing dark values will make them appear more colorless. Those with a great deal of color in their skin will find that dark values help to tone down their complexions. Light values reflect color onto the skin and are a good choice for those who wish to enhance pale personal coloring, but not for those who desire to tone down their clothing.34

Another piece of the foundation in color terms is intensity—the brightness or dullness of a color. Those hues of high intensity are pure and brilliant. Those of low intensity are dull and grayed. High-intensity colors, like the warm colors,  

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34 Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, op. cit., p. 276
advance making the figure seem larger. Eye and hair coloring should not be overpowered by such brilliant colors. Hues matching the eye color help to emphasize them except in the case of hazel and brown eyes. Contrasting shades of high intensity compliment brown coloring while hazel reflects the color of the environment.

Colors of high intensity bring out their complement. This property creates an afterimage where the color opposite on the color wheel is reflected onto an area of a more stable color such as the face. A more subtle effect is formed when an analogous color is placed next to a brilliant color. This type of maneuver should be considered when the design is being planned.

A classic color rule, the law of color areas, defines the ratio of high-intensity color to duller colors in a costume. It states that bright, saturated colors should be used in small areas, and less intense colors should be used in large areas. Fashion sometimes ignores this dictum and features entire garments of very high intensity, yet the rule is still a very good one that the wise woman will use in selecting her clothing for several reasons. Figure size can be minimized by following this rule. By using high-intensity colors as accents in the personality area, the eye of the observer is attracted and held there, thus the figure silhouette is ignored. This small amount of high-intensity color, when selected to accent eyes, hair, and skin, has more impact and drama than a larger area would.

The entire color plan for a design may be one of four types. The mono-chromatic harmony uses the value and intensity of one

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36Kefgen and Touchie-Specht, *op. cit.*, p. 277
color throughout the ensemble. This effect is usually quiet and simple and must have enough contrast between shades so not to be monotonous. The second scheme uses analogous colors, those next to each other on the color wheel. Using blue-green, blue, and blue-purple, a fashionable effect can be produced if one hue cominates and if the others vary in value and intensity. Thirdly, color schemes of contrasting harmony may be very exciting. Complementary harmony consists of one color and its opposite on the color wheel such as blue and orange. When two adjacent colors and their complements are used, a double complement harmony results. Blue and orange with blue-green and red-orange would be an example of a double complement. Split complementary colors include a hue with the colors on each side of its complement, such as blue with yellow-orange and red-orange. Another example of contrasting harmony is the triad. This harmony is composed of three colors equidistant on the color wheel; the primary colors yellow, red, and blue form a triad scheme. Four colors equidistant on the wheel form a tetrad harmony, for example, blue-green, violet, red-orange, and yellow. The fourth type of color scheme is accented--neutral. A neutral--black, gray, white, beige, or tan--spiced with one bright color is practical and smart. The neutral color is conservative while a bright color adds interest.37

37Rathbone, Tarpley, East, Ahern, op. cit., pp. 85-86
Color, along with the other plastic elements line, shape, and texture, forms a total design. As the designer produces an artistic reproduction from his mind, he uses all four principles to form a finished creation. To be effective, however, all four elements must be working together to flatter an individual. The garment should be personalized so that it suits the lady's figure, coloring, and personality.

One of a woman's goals is to look her best and be that attractive lady she visualizes in her mind. After she has the assurance of this asset, a woman can then continue her journey, making the world a more desirable place for those she loves.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


