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BUF 2203-Visual Merchandising

The Elements of Design: Comparison of *Easter Monday* by Willem Kooning and  
Emporio Armani's S/S 2017 Visual Display

## Elements of Design



Figure 1: *Easter Monday* by Willem de Kooning (1956) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017)



Figure 2: Emporio Armani Spring/Summer 2017 Visual Display at Fifth Avenue Location (Emporio Armani, 2017)

William de Kooning was a Dutch-American painter who spent the majority of his life in the New York City area. His specialty was in Abstract Expressionist paintings, which was a combination of Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism (The Art Story, n.a.). De Kooning painted, *Easter Monday*, during the deindustrialization period of New York. At that time he lived in Downtown Manhattan (The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), 2011). After a year of working on this piece (1955-1956), de Kooning finished it on Easter Monday and that is how this painting got its title. Much of de Koonig's Abstract Expressionist paintings were inspired the New York City scenery. Figure 1, shown above, is an image of de Kooning's *Easter Monday*

painting that is on display in the Modern and Cotemporary Art section of the Metropolitan Museum in New York City.

Figure 2, which is a Spring/ Summer 2017 visual display from Emporio Armani's Fifth Avenue location, is inspired by the fast pace of city life much similar to the inspiration behind of *Easter Monday*. However, today New York is more technologically advanced than the era of which de Kooning drew his inspiration from. The composition of this visual display is one that incorporates digital displays with clothing and accessories. One can further evaluate and the Emporio Armani with the use of the Elements of Design. The Elements of Design are divided into nine characteristics: composition, color, texture, line, balance, dominance, proportion, rhythm and repetition.

### *Composition*

Composition is how elements are combined to create an art form or a visual display with the use of lines color, shapes, or any element of the Elements of Design. The composition of *Easter Monday*, by contemporary artist Willem de Kooning, was completed in 1956. For this painting, de Kooning used mixed media consisting of newspaper transfer and oil paint on canvas. One can see the faint presence of newspaper transfer at the bottom right of the canvas and various places throughout this painting.

*Easter Monday* reflects that of a city with its fast pace and its polluted appearance. Also, this painting was created during the late fifties, and de Kooning wanted to capture the deindustrialization of neighborhood. This idea of using one's urban city surrounding s an inspiration is relevant to both the *Easter Monday* painting and Emporio Armani display.

Emporio Armani's visual display is an open display allowing one to view further into their Fifth Avenue store. The visual merchandisers did not use a mannequin to

display the Spring/Summer 2017 collection instead they opted for a simple stand. On this stand, they placed a simple navy blue shirt on a hook. Above the hook, is a visual from their Spring/ Summer runway with a model wearing the same Emporio Armani shirt in this visual display. Also in the display are some of the bags, shoes and other accessories from this collection. They seem to be almost placed in a chaotic manner with some being clustered in one are. The background mimics that of a developed photo or film and also has a three-dimensional effect as if it is trying to flow out of the display. One would surmise that this display is of a vibrant city nightlife with a focus on film. Even the brand's name is on moving LED screen similar to that of what one would find in a movie theater. Both the Emporio Armani display and *Easter Monday* painting have incorporated all of the Elements of Design, including composition. However, the most important of these elements is color.

### *Color*

Color is an important part of visual displays and of course in art. They are divided into several groupings that include primary, secondary, and tertiary colors (Bell & Ternus, 2012). Their relation to each other on the color wheel can also categorize them. For example, complementary colors are two colors that are opposite of each other on the color wheel (Morton, 2017). Analogous colors are colors that are “any three colors which are side by side” on the color wheel (Morton, 2017). A hue can be tinted or shaded in order to have a certain look or shade. If a color is tinted, that means white has been added while on the contrary if a color has been shaded black was added. The composition of *Easter Monday* consists of primary, secondary, and tertiary colors. The primary colors in this painting, especially yellow, are in the forefront of the painting. The tertiary colors in

this painting are not of the same intensity of the primary colors. The yellow hue used in this painting is the most intense color in this composition. The blue hues in this painting, unlike the other primary, colors are used faintly throughout the painting. Only a small portion of the blue hue is intense. The top of the painting has a lighter value because the color has been tinted to achieve that particular hue. At the bottom of the painting it appears to have more shading resulting in darker values in those colors.

The Emporio Armani display. Color is also a major component of the Emporio Armani display whether it be the screens that have been placed in the visual display or the film-like background. Color is present here. The orange hue of the background complements the navy blue shirt in the display. Analogous colors are also present in this visual's background. The viewer sees yellow, yellow-green, and green hues in this composition. The visual display uses both complementary and analogous color schemes to make the display aesthetically pleasing. Color is a critical aspect of any composition and one can also incorporate other Elements of Design to enhance the hues of their composition. Texture is one element that can be used, like color, to emphasize certain elements.

### *Texture*

The combination of newspaper and oil paint gives this painting texture. Texture refers to how the surface of an object appears to the viewer or how it feels (Adomaitis, 2017). Texture deals with tactile and/or visual senses. The painting does not have a completely smooth texture. There are ridges and grooves throughout the painting. The use of mixed media influences the texture of this painting. The way in which de Kooning applied each stroke of paint onto the canvas also enhanced the texture of the composition.

In some areas paint is added thinly while in other areas the brush strokes are much wider. This contrast in brush strokes gives definition to this painting. *Easter Monday* has several areas that contrast with each other. Contrast or juxtaposition is when an object or color is different another near it in a visual. The top half of the painting is lighter in comparison with colors and assumed weight of the bottom half. The artist wanted to convey city life as one that is not pristine. Surrounding the larger figures are darker shapes that represent the remaining buildings during the deindustrialization that occurred in downtown Manhattan.

In the visual display, the film that extends from the background into the front of this visual gives the appearance of having a smooth texture. The shirt and the accessories on display also have an appearance of a smooth texture. However, the monitors on display give a more rigid look to the visual display. One would assume they have a more of a course-like feel. The monitors incorporate the New York City lifestyle one that is more industrial and technology driven. Emporio Armani chose this display design to almost mirror the life a New York City local with their use of texture in this visual display. Contrast was also used in this Spring/ Summer display. The background is of multiple colors, which contrast the top in the display that has minimalistic qualities. The shirt and other accessories are mostly of monochromatic blue hues. This is also a contrast with the busy background. The texture of the displays is a heavy contrast compared to the soft goods in the display. Besides the use of perceived texture and contrast, lines also help with the movement and how one would interpret a window display or a painting.

*Line*

In *Easter Monday*, de Kooning used a combination of horizontal and vertical lines. Lines are used to direct the viewers' eyes to an element and it also sets the mood of the visual (Bell & Ternus, 2012). The horizontal lines are the thickest lines on this canvas. There were also vertical lines in this painting. Depending on the placement of the vertical lines, they varied in thickness. By having lines and varying thickness of those lines, it created stopping points in the painting. The use of lines in *Easter Monday* creates the direction the painter wanted the viewers' eyes to follow in order for them to pay attention a certain area in the painting.

The use of lines is also present in the Emporio Armani visual. The stand that the shirt is hanging from is a combination of both vertical and diagonal lines. The background incorporates both vertical and horizontal lines. All of these lines in this display serve as stopping points. The monitor at the top entices one to look further down towards the shirt and the city nightlife background. This leads one to look at the accessories at the bottom of the shirt and wonder why they seem to look clustered in one area. Finally the monitor with the Emporio Armani name comes into one's viewpoint. This visual directs the viewer's attention from the visual at the top down to the screen with the brand's name.

### *Balance*

Balance in a visual can be either of formal or informal balance (Bell & Ternus, 2012). Formal balance is equally balanced while in informal balance it is asymmetrically proportioned. The painting is one that is asymmetrical; it is not one of equal weighted balance. The top part of the painting is lighter compared to the lower section of the painting. The peach like hue represents the sky in this painting and the two large figures

represent people. Upon viewing *Easter Monday*, one could directly see the informal balance that is present in this painting. Knowing that this painting is of a city one can surmise that the reason for the pink sky is to show how polluted the city is by these nonchalant huge figures in this painting. The buildings are smaller in comparison to the two figures in the foreground of this painting.

The Emporio Armani display is also of an informal balance. Much of the optical weight of this display, unlike *Easter Monday*, is on the left side. The right side of the display is clear in comparison to the left side. The accessories and the stand are the cause of this visual display being asymmetrical in its proportions. Also if one would divide the display horizontally, the bottom half of the display would have the most weight. If the stand and accessories were to be omitted from the display, this display would be symmetrical. The background directs the viewer's attention towards to clothing and accessories that were incorporated in the visuals. Both the display and painting, besides being asymmetrical, also have dominant objects within them that capture the attention of the viewer.

### *Dominance*

Dominance is expressed when an object or objects stand out more than others and is in the main focus (Bell & Ternus, 2012). The two masses in the center of the canvas are the most dominant features of this painting. These figures are mostly an off white shade with grey lines and blocks of primary colors surrounding them. The viewer assumes that these objects have the most weight in this painting due to their size and the heavy lines encircling them. Also, the other shapes in this painting are not of the same

size of those large figures. The size of the other objects in the painting are not close, in comparison, to the size of the two figures.

The background and the monitors in the display are the most dominant objects. The vibrant background of traffic in a city at night is an alluring image. One would guess that this is of New York City or another modern metropolitan area. The monitors also add character to the display. The monitor above the shirt is of a model wearing the exact shirt. This helps the consumer visualize themselves wearing this garment, especially during a casual nighttime outing. The other monitor at the bottom of the display has the Emporio Armani name going across but it resembles that of monitors of a show or movie theater. The dominant objects in this display help to draw in attention then direct the viewer towards the luxury goods that are on sale. Prior to explaining dominance in both the visual display and painting balance was discussed. Balance and dominance both tie in to how proportion impacts the Emporio Armani display and *Easter Monday*.

### *Proportion*

Proportion is how an object's size is in relation to other objects of the visual display or any form of art (Bell & Ternus, 2012). The two large figures towards the right of this composition take up the majority of the painting. The artist wanted these figures to be the forefront in this painting. The trash and buildings around them are not as huge in comparison to these figures. This shows the impact that these people have on their environment. The buildings in the background are smaller and are spread apart. Knowing the setting of the painting and that it was completed during the deindustrialized period of New York, one understands why those people are emphasized in this painting.

The film that extends from the background in the Emporio Armani display is larger in proportion than any other object in the visual display. The emphasis of this display is on city life and that is why the background is larger in comparison to the clothing and accessories that are on display. This would attract their target consumers who frequent the area near their Fifth Avenue location. Proportion also affects the directional force or rhythm of a composition. Directional force relates to how the viewer's eye moves from one area to another in the composition (Lamp, n.a.).

### *Rhythm*

Rhythm is described as having to deal with the “repetition of design elements that can create a unique sense of visual cadence” or a movement from one object to another (Bell & Ternus, 2012). This movement usually flows from a dominant object to a subordinate object. The viewer's eye will start at the top of the painting and head towards the large figures. The sky that is of a peach hue with white clouds is the first point of attraction of the viewer's attention. After that the viewer's eyes went into a clockwise direction to the buildings in the background and then to two figures in the foreground. This motion continued until one's eyes returned to the sky. The large blocks and lines in this painting help to direct the rhythm of this painting. The repetition of those elements in this painting is all part of the rhythm of *Easter Monday*.

For the Emporio Armani display, the viewer's eyes did not go in a clockwise motion like with the *Easter Monday* painting. One would view this visual display from the top screen bottom towards the screen with the brand's name. The first thing that one would look at in this window is the screen with a model wearing the navy shirt on display. The shirt and the background are the next objects one would look at then the

accessories that are also in this visual display. Finally, the screen with the Emporio Armani name going across would be viewed. The rhythm of both the visual display's and Easter Monday's rhythm have been influenced by repetition.

### *Repetition*

Repetition is defined as reusing the same elements of design such as color, shape or size (Bell & Ternus, 2012). De Kooning used repetition to imbue the viewer with strong emotions, which help to convey the rhythm and establish patterns within this piece. A pattern, in terms of Elements of Design, is "a combination of elements or shapes repeated in a recurring and regular arrangement (Lamp, n.a.)". The use of thick lines to create breaking points is repeated throughout *Easter Monday*. An off white color is also present in the sky to represent clouds then used as the color of the two large figures in this painting. Peach, green, and blue hues are also present in this painting. In the background of this Abstract Expressionist painting, there are multiple buildings with gaps in between them.

The monitors were repeated items in the Emporio Armani display. The reason behind that is that today, in contrary to the era of *Easter Monday*, the world is more technology driven. Technology has the constant attention of fashion-oriented people including those who are NYC residents. The rhythm of this visual display is one that is vertical as it moves the viewer's eye from the top of the display to the bottom. The visual screen at the top of the display, as mentioned previously, has a model walking in an Emporio Armani fashion show wearing the garment on display. That particular screen helps the viewer to understand the setting behind their campaign and how the company envisions the style of their target audience. By including technology in the design of this

display, Emporio Armani attracts their target consumers. In both the display and painting the repetition is not one that is consistent. The rhythm is more fluid.

A painting or a visual display can be dissected into several parts with the use of each component of the Elements of Design. In *Easter Monday*, the Elements of Design was used to further interpret the message being conveyed by de Kooning. One element that is the most important of the Elements of Design is color. Everything depends on how colors are organized. Colors have different connotations in society and art forms. With the use of the Elements of Design, the visual merchandisers of the Emporio Armani location can implement different aspects of design to increase the sales of that store. Visual displays help to encourage consumers to purchase products in a store. Understanding each component of the Elements of Design helps one to completely understand the structure of both art and visual displays.

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