

Elements of Design for Visual Display

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Figure 1: *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)* (Kandinsky, 1912)



Figure 2: *Kate Spade Spring 2017* (Ahmad, 2017)

Art is a personal sensory experience. We are motivated by paint on canvas, inspired by sculpted shapes, moved by musical notes, soothed by silken textures. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) We tend to be inspired by art and in turn, situate it into our daily lives with creative expressions such as interior design and dressing up. In other words, life often imitates art, but art also imitates life. Artists sculpt, paint, draw, and create art as a figure of speech. It helps them express their feelings, which gives their art a story on how it all started. Figure 1 is a painting called *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)* by Vasily Kandinsky. The painting was made in 1912, and it's an oil on canvas. The painting is currently displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, located at 1000 5th Ave, New York, NY. Figure 2 is the window display of Kate Spade Spring Collection 2017. The picture of the display was taken at 135 5th Ave, New York, NY. One can say Kate Spade's window display is influenced by Kandinsky's composition and has resemblances based on the elements of design.

The ***Composition*** is the organization or grouping of parts or elements to achieve a unified whole by an arrangement of lines, form, shapes and color. (Adomaitis, 2017) The Composition of figure 1 is an

abstract art. In *Improvisation 27* (Kandinsky, 1912), it's not only just a mood going on. Although, Kandinsky did suggest that you should look for mood and not just figures in his paintings. He even gives us a clue in the subtitle, *Garden of Love II* (Poleman, 2016). The entire painting seems like a colorful garden. The name of the piece seems to give a clue about the piece. The *Garden of Love* relates to a biblical story of the Garden of Eden. The story in Biblical Eden, also known as Garden of Eden, is about when Adam and Eve ate a fruit from the tree of good and evil. God specifically told them not to eat the fruit because if they do, they would die. Satan appears disguised as a serpent and deceives Eve into thinking that if she eats the fruit, she will become God. Eve also makes Adam eat the fruit, but the couple then feels guilty and hides from God. However, God finds out the couple has eaten the forbidden fruit because of the serpent. So, in turn, God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and banishes the serpent to work under the ground. The story mentions how the Garden of Eden has a river that flows throughout the garden, trees, fruits, and animals. (John: Genesis 2:16) The painting seems to show a couple in the garden that's in love, and there are serpents all around them which refers to Biblical Eden. It seems to have a bright, shiny sun in the middle, and a heart as well. There are shapes that are rounder around the painting. The painting seems to have colors in different *values* and *intensities*. One can notice the colors and theme relating to the season spring.

Similarly, the *composition* for figure 2, the Kate Spade window display is for the season spring. The flowers all around scream, "spring is here", since flowers bloom in spring. The entire display has pastel-like colors, but also a very dark exterior. The display also has camels all around holding bags and straw hats in colors like yellow and pink. One can say, the display shows a girl walking in the streets of New York City and she is in love, like the story from the Garden of Eden. When you think of spring, you think flowers, trees, and gardens, so this display has so much in common with the painting. The compositions are very similar with the bold lines, lighting, and colors with tints.

After composition comes colors. **Colors** are many qualities of light that individuals can perceive with their eyes and describe in terms of lightness, brightness, darkness, richness, purity, and so on. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The **colors** that are presented in this painting are very bright. One can believe this is to represent how love shines. The colors here are the **primary colors**, these colors are red, yellow, and blue-the starting points on the color wheel. These colors form other colors. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) **Tints** are the lighting of a color by adding white. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The yellows and reds are tinted, that's why they appear to be lighter. **Intensity** is the brightness, purity, and degree of saturation of a color. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The intensity of the colors is very light. The intensity of the red makes it look pink, which seems to represent love. The yellow in the middle with the orange strokes is the sun shining around the garden. There are **analogous** colors which consists of two or more colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. Those adjacent colors are yellow and yellow-orange, blue and blue-green. The blues have darker value to show the river streaming. Also, there are **tertiary colors** such as blue-green and yellow-orange, these colors are formed by mixing primary colors with secondary colors. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The tint of the red, which is a vulgar color is now pink. It makes it more loveable, and that happens to go well with the name. Pink is a delicate color that represents sweetness, nice, playful, cute, romantic, charm, and feminine. Pink is related to flowers, girls, cotton candy, and sweetness. (Bourn, 2010) The contrast colors are yellow and red. There are so many kinds of colors that flow around this painting that shows a mood of love. The black lines represent the bad sides like a snake-like thing around. The serpents are people who try to ruin people's relationships and causes them to sin. The color black is associated with power, fear, mystery, dark, strength, death, evil, aggression, authority, rebellion, and sophistication. (Bourn, 2010) Black is a mysterious color that is typically associated with the unknown or the negative, which is the reason why Kandinsky used this color to represent the serpents.

In addition, figure 2 has identical **colors** to figure 1. The main colors seem mid-tone, which is not too bright and not too pastel, but just in between values. **Value** is the apparent lightness or darkness in a hue. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The value is shown on the pink colors from the flowers. Also, some of the flowers are tinted. This displayed the different tones of pink that made it look created a monochromatic scheme. A **monochromatic** scheme contains one color in different values and intensities. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) The **contrasting** colors are yellow and red but both are **tinted**. Contrasting colors bring out the brilliance of each other. (Adomaitis, 2017) In figure 2, the yellow is shown more on the lighting that is in the store, which is very like the sunshine that is displayed in figure 1. The exterior of figure 2 is all black, emphasizing the darkness. On a display, color is the first thing that charms customers. Colors make people relate to the display. So, one can say the colors on this display gives one vibes of being in love because of pink. Color is power. Pink is known as the color of love; it warms the heart. Since figure 2 display had a few shades of pink, it attracts positive attention.

After color is texture. **Texture** is how a surface feels to the touch or how it looks that it might feel if touched. Roughness and smoothness may be readily visible but softness and hardness may need actual physical contact. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) Basically, it is the surface treatment or feel. The painting is an oil on canvas. The painting seems smoother to show a flow around the whole painting. There are some rough brush strokes on the lines to emphasize the bad things that can happen in love like a person trying to ruin your relationship. Some areas had some layers of paint which show there are different stages of love. Overall, it looks soft and silky which gave it a feminine touch. As for **juxtaposition**, the lines on the painting seem sharp and rough. The masculinity showed with the uneven lines made by the brush strokes.

Compared to figure 1, figure 2's **texture** has a lot in common. The texture is very soft like petals from the flowers. A soft like surface means its feminine like. The fur from the camels give it a fine, soft,

thick, hairy coat of the skin. The shiny and slick mannequins feel smooth. Smooth, slick, and shiny materials give a meaning of modern and youthful and it reflects light. For **juxtaposition**, Figure 2 shows a street sign have a different form and rough like line, which displays the masculinity.

After talking about texture and juxtaposition, next come is **Lines**. Lines guide the eye to a feature or linear element that sets the mood. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) For example, **horizontal** lines can mean calm and stability. However, **vertical** lines suggest tall and elegant. Depending on they are arranged, **lines** can determine the effectiveness of presentation. The lines are not vertical at all. Most of the lines are **horizontal**, which makes the painting look wider and calm. Some lines are **diagonal** so this shows the actions that can happen in love. A few lines are a bit bold so can view something strong and forceful is going to happen. The **curves** on other lines make the painting have a playful vibe. The two lines that are diagonal going downwards look like they represent the serpent that appeared in the story of Garden of Eden, God banishes the serpent underground after he deceived Eve. This must mean that when people are in love they will be people attempting to ruin their relationship. On the right side of the painting, the lines that are crosshatched seem to be fences in the garden.

On the contrary, figure 2's **lines** are different compared to figure 1. The lines that displayed in figure 2 are vertical from the street sign. **Vertical** lines mean dignity and height. Also, the mannequins are long and tall so this makes the garments look refined and sophisticated. The lines are thick and bold, one can see that these are direct and forceful. The difference between figure 1 and figure 2 is that figure 2 have no **curved** lines or **horizontal** lines like figure 1.

Next, **Balance** is an equality of optical weight and relative importance that allows a unified presentation. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) Figure 1 is an **informal balance**, both sides of equal weight but not exact. There is more color which makes it heavier on the bottom right. The Sun in the middle is the only

thing that is equal of optical weight and unifies the painting. This *asymmetrical balance* shows love is not perfect but has its ups and downs.

As well as, the *balance* for figure 2 is comparable figure 1. Both figures have an informal balance, both sides are equal weight but exact. Both sides have a street sign and the arrangement of flowers so that so far makes it equal weight. Also, both sides have the camels all going horizontal. However, on the left side there are two mannequins so this creates more weight but on the right, there's an extra camel so this equal weight but different. This creates variety for the display so they don't always have to show the same merchandise but other kinds like bags on one side and shoes on the other. Informal balance gives you the freedom movement and activity with merchandise.

Then, *Dominance* is a special focus or emphasis placed on an item to highlight it in a presentation. This can be achieved by using contrast, lighting, color, placement, and repetition. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) For dominance, the heart and sun seems to be dominant in figure 1. Whoever is in love it's all happy and sunny days for them. There are no square shapes but curves and circular kind of shapes. Also, the serpents are sort of dominating the garden as well representing Satan attempting the couple to sin.

On the other hand, in Kate Spade's window display, the *dominance* in this display is the flowers and camels. There's an array flowers are everywhere on top throughout the display. The flowers emphasize spring. The street signs are on the side and represent the signs we see in New York City. Pink also takes over this display, this highlights sweetness, love, playfulness, and romance. The lighting also dominant because it is very yellow tone instead of white. One could say this stress the look of the sunshine.

Moreover, **Contrast** is when you see a sharp difference. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) In figure 1, the yellow and red are both colors that show the contrast. The color choices that are contrasting this painting seem to be yellow and red. Yellow is the color of sunshine, happiness, clarity, energy, optimism, enlightenment, and joy. Yellow shows the meaning for warmth and cheerfulness. As for the red has been tinted so it is now pink which is the color of love and romance (Bourn, 2011). These colors stand out and make up for love.

Correspondingly, Figure 1 and figure 1 have similarities in **contrast**. So, figure 2's exterior has black columns but the display is bright and colorful. Choosing a contrast between light and dark emphasis the space you want to stand out. **Emphasis** is a special attention or emphasis positioned on an item to be highlighted in the presentation. This is achieved by contrast, color, lighting, placement, repetition and so on. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) Another thing that you can see in contrast is the colors pink and yellow, the lighting is yellow and the array of flowers are pink. Therefore, the use of lighting contrasts brighter areas to focus on areas of where the merchandise is displayed. The contrast helps draw customer's attention so they can notice the merchandise.

After contrast is proportion. **Proportion** refers to the relative size and scale of the various elements in a design. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) So, in figure 1 the sun happens to be in the middle and the river is on the top left but smaller than the sun. Next to the sun is the heart and seems to be bigger than the sun. This emphasizes that the main thing is in love is your heart and your feelings.

Meanwhile, for figure 2 **proportion** is the flowers. It starts from the street and goes all up over the display and is bigger than the street sign. The **optical weight** is how important, big, or heavy an object appears to be versus how much it weighs or how large it is in actual scale. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) So, this optical weight shows how big the flowers are, showing the importance of pink and spring. The



camels are all walking in a row but smaller next to the mannequins. This makes the garments on the mannequins stand out, if the camels were bigger one would look at the camels instead of the merchandise.

Although proportion talks about size, ***Repetition*** happens when a design element such as size, color, or shape repeats in the presentation. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) In figure 1, one can notice a lot of curved lines happen to be repeat itself. The dark lines around represented the serpents repeated a lot. The curves that repeat around represent the gracefulness when in love. The colors that repeated itself a lot played a role in color symbolism. The colors in this painting that repeat is yellow. The yellow around is the sunlight that is brightens up the garden. The lines that also is reiterating in the painting.

Although, in figure 2 not only the flowers are in ***repetition***, this makes you feel like you are outside in a garden and walking around with cherry blossoms around. This is similarly to Kandinsky's composition of the garden of love II. The camels are repeated throughout the display to create a show stopping display. When one thinks of camels, you think of riding on a camel, it makes you feel high up and majestic. Another thing that is being repeated is the pink flowers, basically repeating the color of love everywhere to send out a positive vibe to the viewer. Also, the two mannequins in a row in the same position provides consistency. This allows the merchandising message to be strengthened over and over to the viewer. Then, the street signs Kate Spade repeated throughout the display is showing the setting is in the city.

Finally, after repetition comes rhythm that is created by some certain design elements that have been repeated. ***Rhythm*** happens when the repetition of a design element creates a different sense of the visual to emphasis for the viewer. (Bell & Ternus, 2012) So, the strokes around the sun highlights the sun rays. The blues that seem to look like water flowing through the painting. The rhythm is that

everything that is happening in the garden revolves all around the sun, which is why the sun shines in the middle. Kandinsky used a new form of artistic expression that used abstract forms and color symbolism to arouse an inner, preconscious world.

As well as, Kate Spade's display *rhythm* was like Kandinsky's composition. The rhythm for Kate Spade is shown on the camels and mannequins. Both are equal and looking toward the left side. The direction leads to the door that makes the viewer end up going inside the store. Rhythm is a sense of visual movement. The group of camels all have bags displayed on their backs of the bags in the same style but different color to give each bag of its own color to stand out. The mannequins are in the same pose and height but different garments to show the variety of merchandise. Also, the flowers that's all throughout the display gives a message that the flowers are blooming and spring has arrived.

One can say fashion is art, it's always telling a story. Behind every window display, it's been inspired by the elements of design used in a painting. Both compositions have identical elements of designs. They both give the impression of spring, love, sunshine, gardens, and flowers. Kandinsky's composition was inspired by the story of Adam and Eve in love at the garden of Eden, Kate Spade showed the modern-day version of being in love during spring with the street sign and flowers going around it. When one thinks spring, you think of sunshine, bright colors, rainy days, flowers, and gardens. Art gives life to fashion; both are very similar. As art is inspired from stories and experiences and display its own story, fashion also is another way to tell a story and express feelings to the viewer.

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