

# Collec ables

## **Notes on Design**

Design is the organization of parts into a logical whole.

### A Musical Analogy

Design is like learning to make music. Students of music learn theory and sight reading. The basic elements and principles that guide the creative process are the basis for breaking the rules. Music's vocabulary includes notes, octaves, phrases, melodies, rhythm, the sounds of the instruments, stanzas, fingering and scales. Many elements have a corresponding visual symbol. For example, symbols for different notes, clefs and how it is all written on a page.

Art and design also have their own vocabulary. As you master the basics of design, a little practice will spark a lifetime of living with and in art.

## **Design**

### Structural

Structural design refers to elements integral to the object's basic structure. Look for simplicity, good proportions, appropriate materials, and suitability for purpose. The object may take forms such as round, square, triangular, rectangular, or irregular.

### Decorative

Decorative design involves elements added for ornamentation. Evaluate the appropriateness of decorations to the structure, their placement, and their proportion relative to the whole.



The designer of your collection has addressed the Structure and Decorative elements already. You will be building on their choices as you create your Collect<sup>T</sup>able.

When planning your design:

- In general, use sample boards or photograph boards.
- For Collect<sup>T</sup>ables, lay out all your collection pieces, the place settings and linens on the table. View them as a group.
- Try to get the overall design laid out as early in the process.

## Visual Perception

Visual perception can be reduced to some basic Elements and Principles.

The Elements:

Line, direction, shape, size, texture, pattern, and color (value and hue).

The Principles: Rhythm, variety, unity, proportion, scale, and the balance of emphasis and dominance.

## Elements

### Line

- Line is the most dominant element. It outlines forms, gives direction and movement and limits space.
- The 'Quality of the Line' refers to the characteristics of a line. It defines the form of an object by highlighting the edges and contours of the object. It can also be an especially pleasing artistic flow of line or objects.
- Horizontal: repose, restfulness, solidity, casualness.
- Vertical: height, dignity, strength, directness.
- Diagonal: guides the eye; use sparingly to avoid overwhelming the composition.
- Curved: softer but often combined with verticals for strength.



- Variations: thick or thin, smooth or rough, squiggly, fluid, or angular.
- Movement: creates energy and motion within the design.

### Texture

- Texture is the surface quality of an object. We respond to its touch, but also visually.
- It can have variations in light and dark, be smooth or rough, be fine or coarse.
- Texture has a big effect on the look and behavior of color and light on a fabric or object.

Color - see “Notes on Color” as well.

### Some Definitions:

- Value: the relative lightness or darkness of a color.
- Tints: lighter variations of a color.
- Shades: darker variations of a color.
- Intensity: the saturation or purity of a color.

### Color Palettes:

- Monochromatic vs. polychromatic schemes.
- Monochrome with varied patterns or textures.
- Color “sculpting” or blocking to define spaces or emphasize features.

### Lighting and Color:

- Afternoon sunlight adds red tones, creating warmth.
- Fluorescent light often casts a bluish tone.
- Warm colors (e.g., red, orange) advance visually, making spaces feel smaller and objects appear larger.

- Cool colors (e.g., blue, green) recede, creating spaciousness and making objects feel smaller.



#### Other Color Concepts Include:

- Tinted screens, filters, sheer drapery, colored bulbs, stained glass, anything translucent will affect how an object looks. The object will also be affected by the colors, values and intensities of items around them.
- Increase the number of neutrals in dark areas or places with low value or high intensity colors in them. Less neutral is needed if there is good light, high value or low intensity colors.
- Color will affect the balance of the design. Designs should contain three tonal values, light, medium and dark in varying amounts.
- Color Distribution - let one color (hue) dominate (2/3) with a second providing about 1/3. Other colors are accents.
- The farther apart on the color wheel the more contrast between colors. A warm color used with another warm, or a cool used with another cool, will contrast less than a warm used with a cool.
- Light values used with dark create contrast.
- More than two different colors of similar values create contrast.
- Maximum contrast is a direct complement - the color directly opposite on the wheel.
- Increasing intensity increases contrast.
- The more main colors in a color scheme, the more contrast.
- Adding intermediates between main colors tends to reduce contrast.

#### Pattern

Pattern is defined as “a repeated decorative design”.

Think about the proportion and scale of your dining table. Then consider your collection and place settings with the following in mind:



- Is the amount of pattern used in proportion to the size of the table?
- Is the scale of the pattern appropriate for the table and the elements on it?
- One pattern should dominate, with others used as accents.
- Attempt to have one color in the dominant pattern repeated in the secondaries or accents.

Other Pattern concepts include:

- The more colors contrast, the more effect a pattern will have. Vivid contrasts make the pattern seem larger than it is.
- Avoid repeating patterns that are too similar. A floral and a stripe are easier to coordinate than are two florals.
- Mixing formal and informal textures can make an interesting table setting. Silk and burlap can look great together.
- Balance patterns with areas of solid color or neutrals. The more pattern you use, the more the table needs visual relief. Using one color from the patterns as a solid works well.

## Principles

### Rhythm

Rhythm is the repetition of lines, form, colors, patterns, textures and materials to create relationships between objects. Repetition helps unify the design. It creates organized movement.

The eye naturally follows from items that are graduated in size (small to large, light to dark) or show transition (young to old, winter to summer). When rhythm exists, the eye will first be attracted to the area of major interest or the focal point. It will then travel from place to place or grouping to grouping. Rhythm encourages eye travel, but also controls it.



Does your table scene show movement? The slow rhythm of line, flexible rhythms, energy?

### The Balance of Emphasis and Dominance

How is your attention focused? Set up the table in a way that really draws your eye to the Collect<sup>1</sup> Table. This refers to visual equilibrium. The more an object attracts the eye, the more its visual weight.

- Formal (Symmetrical): Equal balance on either side of a center line.
- Informal (Asymmetrical): A more flexible and dynamic approach.
- Radial: Elements radiate around a central point.
- Balance of line, size, color, shape

### Visual weight concepts:

- Large objects weigh more than small
- Shiny objects weigh more than dull
- Rough textures weigh more than smooth
- Objects having high contrast weigh more than those having low contrast
- Bright, intense colors weigh more than those that are duller or grayer
- Warm colors weigh more than cool
- Solid appearing objects weigh more than those with open areas
- Objects set farther from the center line of the composition weigh more than those closer to it

The design can feel like the elements are symbiotic or that there is a dis-equilibrium. Either is fine in a Collection. You are making choices that you enjoy and think your guests will enjoy.



### Variety

Design is the organization of elements into a consistent whole; however, too much organization is boring - there must be variety for relief. Variety makes the table setting interesting. Your collection provides the variety. It is built in. Unity controls variety. Again, your collection has a unity of forms or colors, or if a Guest Table Collection, a unifying theme.

### Unity

Unity is also related to repetition and rhythm. Unity comes from repetition and rhythm, ensuring a cohesive design. Your collection's designer has provided this already.

### Proportion

Proportion is the relationship of one part of an object to other parts or to the whole, and of one object to another. The designer of your collection has already done this.

### Scale

Refers to an object's size in relationship to some constant, like the human body. It is concerned with relative size rather than overall size. Your dining table's relationship to your collection is important. Small items will get lost on a large table. Placing the collection on a tray or platform of some kind helps to keep the scene in proportion to the table and the guests, as does placing tall items on a buffet.

In general, your collection pieces are proportioned and scaled to the human body. They are sizes that are comfortable for human beings to exist in and around. Collect<sup>TABLE</sup>ables use pieces of your collection that are also proportioned and scaled to your dining table, while still allowing room for the place settings.



### Perspective

Defined as *'the art of drawing solid objects on a two-dimensional surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth, and position in relation to each other when viewed from a particular point.'*

Your Collect<sup>TABLE</sup>able design is a 3D room and is a 3-dimensional design. Perspective does not play a major role.

### Composition

How do we focus our guest's attention? How does the organization of the collection focus our attention on what we want? Start with boldest pieces and then arrange the other pieces.

- Think about how your eyes move across the table as you add pieces.
- Think about balance, visual weight and proportion.
- Place visually heavy objects down low or near the center. The whole composition should have some rough geometric form. Triangular compositions work well.
- Don't place elements so far apart that they lose their relationship to each other. Don't crowd them either (yikes!).
- Lead the eye, but keep it focused on the centerpiece. Keep things at eye level when seated at table.
- Balance the visual weight by distributing elements on either side of a center line.



- Compose groupings. Have one item dominate, others in support roles.
- Choose odd numbers rather than even for displays
- Collections of small objects can be placed on a tray or separate surface to provide both unity and contrast.



## Other Important Considerations

### Individuality

Your collection is unique to you. Make it visually unique as well.

### Beauty

Make your Collectable pleasing to the senses and uplifting to the spirit

### Economy

Conserve resources, be resourceful. Use what you already own, when possible, but don't limit your creativity. Buying at thrift shops and discount stores is helpful.

### Personality

The goal is to have your Collectable design generates an "Ohhhh!" from your guests. That is personality.

### Humanity

Does your design have the human touch? Does it touch the heart? Yes, it does, because it grows out of your passions and aesthetic.

### Harmony

The design of your collection is the beginning of creating a harmonious scene. The designer of the collection has given you a

starting point. You may create a scene that feels peaceful and cohesive or you may design something that stimulates debate.



## Space

Is there visual space to allow your eyes to rest somewhere, especially if your table is visually busy? Utilize your table space effectively. Leave space on the table for food, if necessary, and plan place settings to allow for elbow room. Make the space comfortable for each person. Remember there is physical and psychological space that your guests will need. Is there room to walk around the table when guests are seated

## Form Follows Function

Great design allows for great functionality. Consider the practical demands of having a dinner party as you design your table.

## Backgrounds

The room or setting of your dining area can be part of your design. It can add to the scene. However, often the colors and design scheme of your room will not lend itself to the design and color scheme of your Collect<sup>™</sup>Table. Don't worry about it. Your guests came to be with you and share your collection.

## Style

You Have Style! Your personal style reflects your philosophy and interests. Your Collect<sup>™</sup>Tables will speak to both.

## Contrast

- The interplay between colors, patterns, lights and textures produces a level of contrast somewhere between high and low.
- Contrast determines active vs. quiet, flat vs. dimensional
- Color choices affect contrast.
- Texture increases contrast somewhat, especially in very neutral rooms.
- Pattern increases contrast. The bolder the pattern, the higher the contrast level.



- The more different the patterns used, the higher the contrast will be.
- The closer either colors, or patterns, are to contrasting colors or patterns, the more they contrast. i.e. red and green contrast more when they are adjacent.
- Lighting creates depth and contrast.
- Flat vs. dimensional

### Perception

We all bring our own history to our perception of art and design. It is part of what will make your design unique to you and affects how your guests will react to it. All of which makes for great conversation and warm connections.

### **\*Break the Rules!**

While understanding these elements and principles provides a strong foundation, don't be afraid to break the rules and embrace creativity. Your collection, style, and passions are the most important parts of your design.

### Useful Tidbits

#### Reading

*The Design of Everyday Things and Emotional Design*

by Donald A. Norman

*Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* by Betty Edwards

*Monart* by Mona Brooks