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EXTENSION DIVISION
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Using Design Principles in Clothing

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You create a design every day through selection and wearing of your clothing. Every time you change clothes, or remove or replace an accessory you are changing the design or picture you present to others. Sometimes this picture is pleasing; at other times, it is not. Whenever you dress you must plan your outfit with the final product in mind. What design do you wish to present to others?

To create any design you would use the elements of design, which include line, shape, space, color and texture. These elements can be combined in numerous ways to produce either an attractive or unattractive design. To form a becoming design you will want to use the elements wisely, following certain principles. Some of the principles of design include proportion, balance, rhythm, and emphasis. As you look at any beautiful object, whether it be a sculpture, a painting, an object in nature, or a room arrangement, you see that an organized plan has been followed in its creation. Likewise, principles of design can be followed in the proper selection of clothing for the individual.

What Are Principles of Design?

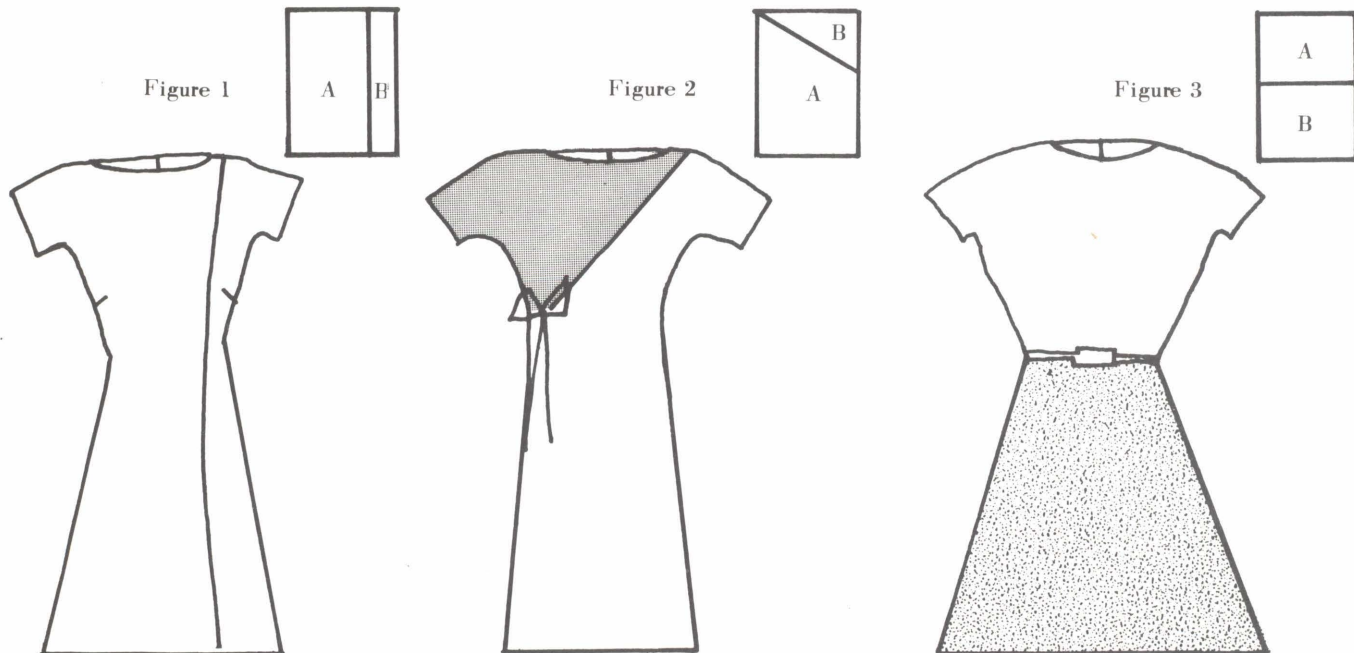
Four principles which you will be most interested in learning more about include:

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| Proportion | Balance |
| Rhythm | Emphasis |

Proportion is the relationship of one part of an object to another. The term frequently is used in architecture to describe relationships such as the length to the height of a building or the height of columns to the length of the building front.

In the following illustrations the rectangles are divided in different ways to create different proportions.

In all of these illustrations a different effect is created through various divisions of space. The relationship of A to B in Figure 1 is different from that in both Figures 2 and 3. These proportions can be achieved in costume through the use of line, color, and/or texture to create different effects. See how these garments compare with the rectangles in proportion.



You should consider your figure and the effect you want to create when you select lines, colors, and/or textures in a garment. You want to choose these wisely so that the proportion created is pleasing. For instance, if you are short and on the heavy side, the proportion in Figure 2, created through the use of a diagonal line and contrasting colors, would be most becoming.

Balance can be either formal or informal to produce a feeling of equilibrium or stability.

The best example of formal balance is the human figure. If you were to draw an imaginary line from the top of the head to the floor, you would find that the right side is exactly like the left. This same example can be applied in clothing. Both sides of the costume are the same.

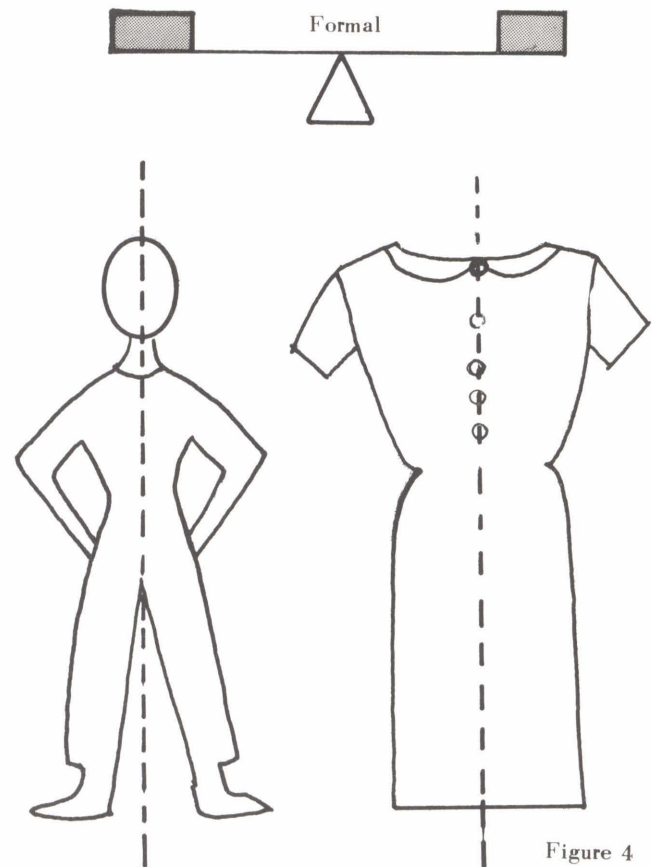


Figure 4

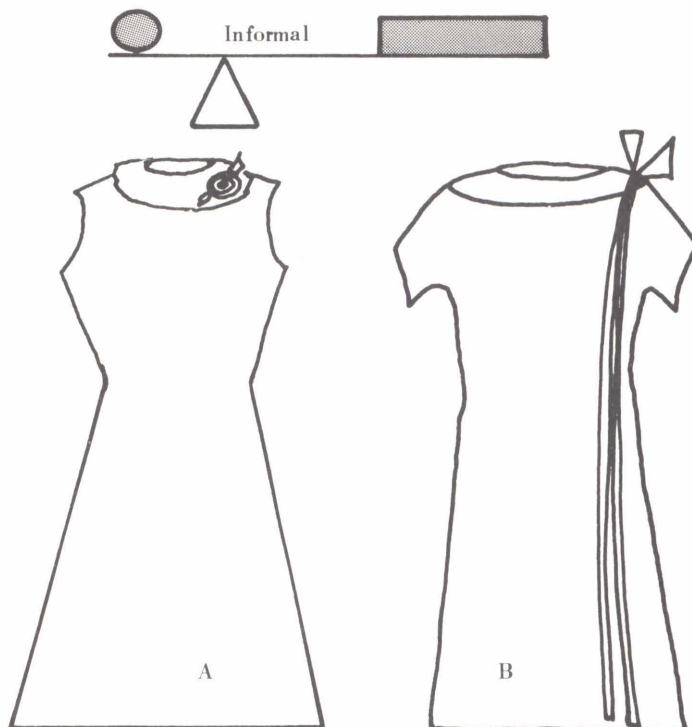


Figure 5

Many garments have formal balance which is easy to achieve. Informal balance, in which one side is different from the other, is more interesting than formal balance and is used frequently in contemporary dress and art. Informal balance can be achieved in a garment through use of accessories, line, color, or texture.

Informal balance is created through use of scarf and pin at neckline in Figure A and through lines which create a side closure and the bow in Figure B.

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Rhythm suggests movement and flow so that the eye travels from one item to another. A sense of rhythm can be created through a continuous flowing line, by repetition at regular intervals, or through contrast.

Rhythm can be created in a garment in several ways. The effective handling of fabric can result in rhythm, and as the soft, draping qualities observed in a chiffon dress. A regular plaid, polka-dot, stripe, or other pattern in fabric produces rhythm through repetition. A contrast of line, shape, and color in the fabric and/or the garment creates an interesting rhythm. Rhythm in your garment makes the eye of the observer follow the movement to rest on one dominant feature. Usually your best feature is the one you want to emphasize.

Emphasis is another principle used in effective design. You need one main center of interest to attract attention in any design or work of art. Likewise, you will need to give more attention to one part of the body through the use of color, line and/or texture in accessories and clothing. The remainder of the garment should not be dull and uninteresting, but one area should receive more emphasis than other. For instance, if the intricate seaming of a dress is the dominant feature, do not detract from this by wearing overwhelming accessories. If the center front closure is unusual and the most interesting part of a dress, avoid additional decoration on the sleeves, color, and hem.

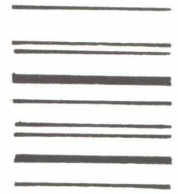
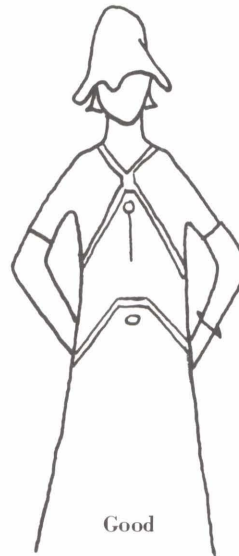
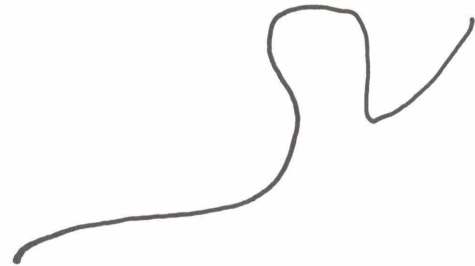
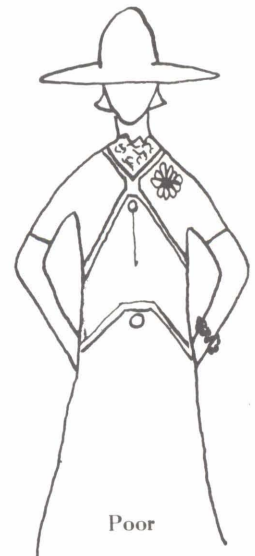


Figure 6



Good

Figure 7



Poor

Use These Principles Every Day

Now that you understand the principles of design, you can apply these to selecting clothes for yourself and others. Remember your good features and your bad and use design advantageously. The goal toward which you are working is harmony. It is harmony or the lack of harmony that determines the success of your design. By achieving harmony in the clothes you wear you not only feel you have accomplished something, but you also will have greater insight into the principles of design.

