**Design Principles**

**Unity**

In a unified design, all the elements work together as a whole. No element can be removed or modified significantly without harming the overall impression of the design. A well-designed ad must have two forms of unity.

**Logical unity** is present when all the elements convey the same easy-to-grasp message. The pictorial, headline and the body copy must relate directly and immediately to each other. When the headline talks about apples, the body text can't talk about oranges, peaches or pears. If the headline and text extoll the benefits of orange juice, the pictorial can't be a cornucopia spewing forth apples and bananas. Every element MUST communicate exactly the same message. Consistency equals credibility.

**Visual unity** means that the elements relate to each other in terms of both style and spatially. As you work more with type, you'll notice that one font seems very formal and traditional while another may look sleek and sophisticated. Yet another may appear fluid and whimsical. You'll want to make font choices that help visualize what the text is saying.

Imagery also can have a "look" exclusive of the content of the image. It may look delicate or bold or rustic. The important thing, once again, is that consistency equals credibility.

Even more important than stylistic unity, are the visual relationships created when elements are positioned within the ad space. When these relationships are absent, the elements float aimlessly on the page or look like a random jumble. When they are present, the arrangement looks intentional and organized. Even very complex designs like those you will see in the Circus section of the Formats chapter need a sense of organization. Unity also makes it easier for the viewer's eye to flow from element to element or from element group to element group. There are just four sure-fire ways to create visual unity, and one or several of them can be used in any ad:

1. **Repetition**. When two or more elements have approximately the same size and shape, a visual relationship is created. Color can add to the obviousness of the repetition.
2. **Proximity.** Simply put, the word, proximity, means nearness. A viewer will easily associate two or more elements clustered close to each other. As a general rule, elements need to be within 1/4" to 3/8" of each other to establish the proximity relationship.

When two elements overlap, a proximity relationship is created automatically. Overlapping also enhances the sense of dimension in an ad. An element that overlaps another is perceived to be in front of it.

At left, Armstrong used proximity unity to a tee. They’ve overlapped elements to create a sense of depth. They’ve clustered elements to facilitate eye movement. Additionally, they created alignment unity when they positioned their logo.
3. **Contouring.** When the exact shape of one element is repeated by another, contour unity is created. Most commonly, you’ll see type used to contour a pictorial image, but type also can contour other type and a pictorial can contour another pictorial as well.

Often, there will be a proximity relationship along with the contour unity. But, two elements that share a common boundary line can be on opposite sides of a two-page spread and still relate to each other.

4. **Alignment.** When two or more elements are attached to the same axis, an alignment relationship is created. An axis may be a real or imaginary line that cuts through an ad vertically, horizontally or diagonally. An ad may have one, two or even three axes. If too many axes are used, however, the relationship will be destroyed and the elements will look like they have been placed randomly.