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21M.732 Beginning Costume Design and Construction
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Elements of Design

for Costume Design

I. SPACE – the area between or within shapes.

A. Silhouette – the space of the actor’s body and/or the outline of the garment

1. Physical – Can alter perception of weight, height and size
2. Emotional – Affect emotional response of audience

B. “Stage picture”

1. Spatial relationship between audience members and actors
 - a. proscenium vs. thrust

II. LINE – a line connecting two points or defining an edge. Can be expressed by cut of garment, seaming, application of trim, overall silhouette.

A. Aspects of Line

1. path
2. thickness
3. continuity
4. sharpness
5. contour
6. consistency
7. length
8. direction

B. Costumer uses line to

1. accent psychological traits of character
2. emphasize or minimize actor’s physical characteristics

III. SHAPE AND FORM –

A. Shape – flat space enclosed by a line

B. Form – 3D area enclosed by surfaces

1. They assume characteristics:

rectangles and squares = stability, confidence, assertiveness;
triangles, pentagons, (diagonal sides) = action and drama but
less stability

2. Most shapes have corresponding forms

a. Human body and garments designed for it can be
translated into 2D forms.

C. Silhouette – the outline of the costume

D. Decorative Shape – shapes and forms within the silhouette

IV. COLOR – the most exciting, powerful and provocative element!

A. Color theory for pigments

B. Dimensions of color

1. Hue – the name of the color

2. Value – lightness or darkness of a hue

a. lighter (add white) = tint or high value

b. darker (add black) = shade or low value

3. Intensity – vividness of the hue, or saturation

a. hue is brightest at its full intensity

b. to reduce intensity of hue with least alteration in value,
add a small amount of its complement

C. Physical effects of color and hue and intensity

D. Psychological effects of color

1. Emotional response – memory

2. Bright intensities – attention

3. Universal associations – sky, water, trees

4. Seasons – color and time
5. Symbolic colors – regions, flags, teams

E. Psychological effects of hue

1. Light and heat – warm colors
 - a. advance
2. Ice and coolness – cool colors
 - a. recede

F. Psychological effects of value

1. pink vs. red – love, quiet sacrifice vs. passion and loudness
2. dark garnet vs. red – control and sophistication but still passionate and dangerous

G. Psychological effects of intensity

1. Subduing and stabilizing
2. Youthful and dynamic

H. Color schemes

1. Monochromatic – based on one hue
2. Analogous – two to four adjacent hues
3. Complementary – two opposite hues
4. Double complementary – two adjacent hues and their complements
5. Triad – three hues equally spaced on color wheel
6. Tetrad – four ...
7. Neutral – black, white and grey

V. TEXTURE – tactile surface, or visual representation of a tactile surface

A. Aspects of texture

1. Structural texture
 - a. fiber
 - b. yarn
 - c. construction
 - d. finish
2. Visual texture

- a. visual representation of structure
- b. decorative patterns

B. Physical effects of texture

- 1. Rough
 - a. soften outlines
 - b. diffuse light
 - c. enlarge shapes
- 2. Smooth, hard
 - a. sharp highlights
 - b. distinct edges
 - c. strengthens line

C. Psychological effects of texture

- 1. character
- 2. status
- 3. age
- 4. occasion or season
- 5. sophistication
- 6. fragility or strength
 - a. fragile – events that are not stressful
 - b. sturdy – more vigorous characters and occasions

D. Pattern – made up of other elements