Primary Elements

“All pictorial form begins with the point that sets itself in motion... The point moves... and the line comes into being—the first dimension. If the line shifts to form a plane, we obtain a two-dimensional element. In the movement from plane to spaces, the clash of planes gives rise to body (three-dimensional) ... A summary of the kinetic energies which move the point into a line, the line into a plane, and the plane into a spatial dimension.”

Paul Klee
The Thinking Eye: The Notebooks of Paul Klee
(English translation)
1961
Point

A point marks a position in space. Conceptually, it has no length, width, or depth, and is therefore static, centralized, and directionless.

As the prime element in the vocabulary of form, a point can serve to mark:
- the two ends of a line
- the intersection of two lines
- the meeting of lines at the corner of a plane or volume
- the center of a field

Although a point theoretically has neither shape nor form, it begins to make its presence felt when placed within a visual field. At the center of its environment, a point is stable and at rest, organizing surrounding elements about itself and dominating its field.

When the point is moved off-center, however, its field becomes more aggressive and begins to compete for visual supremacy. Visual tension is created between the point and its field.
Although a line theoretically has only one dimension, it must have some degree of thickness to become visible. It is seen as a line simply because its length dominates its width. The character of a line, whether taut or limp, bold or tentative, graceful or ragged, is determined by our perception of its length–width ratio, its contour, and its degree of continuity.

The orientation of a line affects its role in a visual construction. While a vertical line can express a state of equilibrium with the force of gravity, symbolize the human condition, or mark a position in space, a horizontal line can represent stability, the ground plane, the horizon, or a body at rest.
From Line to Plane

Crown Hall, School of Architecture and Urban Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, 1956, Mies van der Rohe

House 10, 1966, John Hejduk

Although architectural space exists in three dimensions, it can be linear in form to accommodate the path of movement through a building and link its spaces to one another.
From Line to Plane
Planar Elements

The floor plane is the horizontal element that sustains the force of gravity as we move around and place objects for our use on it. It may be a durable covering of the ground plane or a more artificial, elevated plane spanning the space between its supports. In either case, the texture and density of the flooring material influences both the acoustical quality of a space and how we feel as we walk across its surface.

While the pragmatic, supportive nature of the floor plane limits the extent to which it can be manipulated, it is nonetheless an important element of architectural design. Its shape, color, and pattern determine to what degree it defines spatial boundaries or serves as a unifying element for the different parts of a space.

Like the ground plane, the form of a floor plane can be stopped or terraced to break the scale of a space down to human dimensions and create platforms for sitting, viewing, or performing. It can be elevated to define a sacred or honorific space. It can be rendered as a neutral ground against which other elements in a space are seen as figures.

The floor plane is essentially a suspended deck.
Planar Elements
Assignment

In this assignment you are asked to find three primary elements (Point, Line, and Plane) as you see them in real objects around you in the house or in the built environment. Capture them using your digital camera. Make a composition that shows the three elements as they evolve from point to line to plane. Then by using free hand drawing, you need to draw the composition again!

Required: A4 Hard Sheet (21cm x 29.7cm), showing the two entities (the digital images of the evolving elements, and the hand drawing sketch of the same composition).


PIN-UP and Review: please plan a head to come early to our class, I would suggest you to come at least 10 mins before class time to pin-up all your drawings on the front stage’s walls. Also, you may need to bring a Scotch tape to hang your sheets on the board and the walls.

Assessment:
Understanding of the different primary elements of design.
Fulfilling all the previous requirements.
Creativity of selecting the cameras and shootings.
Colored composition is a BONUS!
Presentation: USING Paul Klee’s work as a guide into composing your elements!

Good Luck,
Dr. Tarek Mokhtar