POINT, LINE, AND PLANE IN FASHION DESIGN: EXPLORING VISUAL EFFECTS ON THE BODY

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Abstract: Point, line, and plane are basic visual elements in fashion design, shaping garment structure, surface composition, and the way the body is perceived in clothing. This study analyses a selection of fashion images to examine how these elements are organised across different design approaches and compositional strategies. Through detailed visual observation, the research describes how specific arrangements of point, line, and plane affect proportion, direction, emphasis, and the overall perception of silhouette in each case. Each example presents a distinct configuration, illustrating how compositional decisions influence balance, visual weight, and spatial relationships within the garment and in relation to the body. Attention is given to how variations in the arrangement of composition elements can create contrasting visual effects and guide the viewer's focus. Three design works developed by the author are also included, extending the observations into practical design exploration and offering a complementary perspective on the operation of these visual elements in clothing. Together, the analysis and design outcomes provide a descriptive account of how point, line, and plane contribute to both visual composition and the shaping of the body in contemporary fashion imagery.

Keywords: Body perception, Composition elements, Fashion design, Visual analysis

1. Introduction

Point, line, and plane are widely recognized as fundamental compositional elements in visual design, forming the basis through which form, structure, and spatial relationships are organized (Wong, 1993). In fashion design, these elements are not only present as abstract visual concepts but are embodied in concrete features such as seams, panels, edges, and surface details. Through their placement and interaction, they contribute to the visual organization of the garment and influence how its form is perceived. As a result, the arrangement of compositional elements plays an important role in shaping the overall silhouette and guiding visual attention across the body.

The relationship between clothing and body perception is an important consideration in fashion design, as garments contribute to how the body is visually presented rather than simply covering it (Carufel & Bye, 2020). Through their structural and surface organization, garments can influence how proportion, balance, and bodily form are perceived. Specific compositional features, such as seams, panel divisions, or directional elements, may emphasize certain areas, guide visual attention, or alter the perceived continuity of the silhouette. For instance, linear elements can direct the viewer's gaze along particular paths, while larger planar areas may establish zones of visual weight or spatial emphasis. These effects are closely related to how compositional elements are arranged within the garment. As Arnheim (1974) notes, visual perception is shaped by the structural relationships within an image, and the organization of visual elements plays a key role in determining how form is interpreted.

Although the importance of visual elements is well established in design theory, their specific role in shaping body perception within fashion imagery has received relatively limited focused analysis. Existing fashion research has often examined silhouette, material, or stylistic characteristics, but fewer studies have addressed how fundamental compositional elements operate at a structural level. Visual analysis provides an effective approach for examining such relationships, as it allows detailed

observation of how visual components are organized and how they contribute to meaning and perception within images (Rose, 2016).

This study examines how points, lines, and planes are arranged in selected fashion images and how their organization influences visual composition and the perception of the body. Through systematic visual analysis, the research identifies how different compositional strategies affect emphasis, balance, spatial organization, and silhouette perception. The study also includes three original design works developed by the author, extending analytical observations into practical design exploration. By connecting visual analysis with design practice, this research provides a clearer understanding of how compositional elements function in contemporary fashion design and how they contribute to the visual construction of the dressed body.

2. Literature Review

The visual structure of a garment is shaped through the arrangement of compositional elements that define spatial relationships, visual emphasis, and formal organisation. In design theory, point, line, and plane provide a conceptual framework for understanding how visual forms are constructed and how compositional order is established (Kuhnen & Santos, 2018). These elements, beyond functioning as abstract categories, describe observable structural features that organise visual information within a composition (Kotsopoulos, 2000). They also contribute to perception, as their arrangement influences how the body is interpreted through the garment.

Wong (1993) explains that visual elements operate through their spatial relationships rather than as isolated units. A point establishes a position within the visual field and can act as a focal marker, particularly when contrasted against surrounding areas. When points are extended or connected, they form lines, which introduce direction and guide visual movement. Lines may suggest continuity, separation, or structural alignment depending on their orientation and placement (Pehlivanoğlu & Başaytaç, 2020). Planes emerge through the expansion or enclosure of lines and define areas that contribute to visual mass, spatial division, and compositional balance. These elements collectively organise the visual structure of a design and determine how its form is perceived.

Kandinsky (1947) emphasises that these elements possess inherent visual tensions and directional properties. He conceptualises the point as a concentrated visual presence, from which the line emerges as a dynamic force introducing movement and direction. The plane, formed through the interaction of lines, establishes spatial stability and contributes to the perception of mass and proportion. Importantly, meaning does not arise from individual elements in isolation, but from their relationships and arrangement within the visual field. This relational perspective underscores the role of compositional organisation in shaping visual experience.

In fashion design, point, line, and plane can be identified through specific material and structural features. Points may appear as buttons, fasteners, or localised decorative details that attract attention to particular areas of the garment. Lines are visible in seams, edges, pleats, and directional pattern arrangements, which guide the viewer's gaze and establish structural continuity. Planes are formed through fabric panels, colour blocking, or material contrasts, defining areas of visual weight and contributing to the overall silhouette (Kaya & Romanescu, 2021). These compositional features structure the visual appearance of the garment and influence how its form is perceived in relation to the body.

Beyond their role in formal visual composition, these elements also influence how garments are interpreted by both designers and wearers. For designers, understanding how compositional elements guide visual attention can support more deliberate decisions when shaping silhouette, proportion, and visual emphasis during the design process. From the user perspective, clothing structure and visual organisation may influence aesthetic perception and psychological response, as garments function not only as visual artefacts but also as embodied experiences. Research on the concept of enclothed cognition suggests that clothing can influence the wearer's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour through

both its symbolic meaning and the physical experience of wearing it (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). Consequently, analysing how points, lines, and planes operate within garments may provide insights that are relevant not only for visual analysis but also for practical design processes and user experience.

Understanding garments in terms of point, line, and plane, therefore, provides a structured way to examine how visual organisation operates and how compositional decisions influence perception. This framework enables visual analysis to focus on observable relationships between elements and their role in shaping the visual configuration of the garment.

3. Methodology

This study examines runway images from the Vogue Runway archive, focusing on garments that showcase clear and distinct uses of point, line, and plane.

Each image was analysed to identify these visual elements as expressed through garment structure and surface details, including seams, panels, edges, and focal areas. Attention was given to their spatial arrangement, orientation, and interactions, and to how these factors influence visual organisation, proportion, and silhouette.

A comparative approach was adopted to examine multiple examples and highlight variations in compositional strategy. By documenting the presence and configuration of points, lines, and planes across different garments, the study provides a structured account of how these elements operate in fashion design and shape the visual perception of the dressed body.

4. Visual Analysis Findings

4.1 *Point*

Point elements create areas of relative importance by standing out from their surroundings, and this difference in visual weight influences where attention is drawn within the image (see Table 1). Variations in how points are distributed contribute to differences in visual emphasis and perceived order in the composition, with isolated or high-contrast points tending to attract gaze earlier than those that blend more subtly. In fashion design, beyond their functional role as buttons or fasteners, point elements are strategically used to guide the viewer's eye across a garment, highlighting key features or aesthetic details.

Table 1: Point Elements in Fashion Design

Image	Formal Composition	Functional Effect on Perception
 Source: Eudon Choi, FW2021 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/eudon-choi/2021-aw-RTW/	A metal ring connects the neckline and front cut-out, acting as both structural closure and compositional connector.	This junction functions as a visual focal point, clarifying the bodice structure and guiding attention across the upper silhouette.

 Source: Louis Vuitton, SS2020 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/Louis-Vuitton/2020-ss-RTW/	A dark brooch on the upper left shoulder interrupts the unbroken white surface, introducing a discrete point element into the composition.	The contrast between the dark brooch and the white field draws the viewer's eye to this localized area.
 Source: Temperley London, FW2024 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/temperley-london/2024-aw-RTW/	Sequins are arranged as discrete point elements from dense to sparse, with a subtle outward tendency that creates a slight radiating pattern.	This point-based arrangement creates a gentle upward and outward rhythm that guides the eye and contributes to an elongated silhouette.

4.2 *Line*

Line elements introduce direction and continuity within a composition, guiding visual movement across the garment and shaping how form is perceived. Their orientation, curvature, and placement influence the flow of visual attention and the organisation of structural relationships. Vertical lines may extend visual length, while curved or angled lines can alter perceived contour and spatial dynamics (see Table 2). In fashion design, lines are expressed through seams, darts, pleats, and pattern arrangements, where they function not only as structural components but also as visual guides that influence silhouette perception and the viewer's interpretation of the body.

Table 2: Line Elements in Fashion Design

Image	Formal Composition	Functional Effect on Perception
 Source: Ashlyn, FW2023 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/ashlyn/2023-aw-RTW/	Waist darts, back darts, and side waist pleats form inward-directed linear elements that draw fabric toward the waist and release it toward the shoulder and hips, creating a structured gather-and-release configuration.	These shaping lines define the waist as a point of visual constriction, enhancing three-dimensional contour and guiding the eye along the torso, reinforcing the perception of an hourglass silhouette.

 Source: Rejina Pyo, SS2020 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/rejina-pyo/2020-ss-RTW/	Vertical stripes form continuous linear elements that follow the body's longitudinal axis, establishing a clear directional structure that extends from the upper to lower areas of the garment.	These vertical lines guide the viewer's eye downward, extending visual flow and creating a lengthening effect that enhances the perception of a taller and more elongated silhouette.
 Source: Chiara Boni, SS2020 https://depositphotos.com/editorial/	Curved lines are arranged in an optical distortion layout, forming flowing contours that deviate from the body's natural axis and create a dynamic, visually active surface structure.	These optical curves create visual disturbance and directional movement, guiding the viewer's eye along the contour while enhancing the perception of motion and spatial depth in the silhouette.

4.3 *lane*

Plane elements define the surface and structural organization of a garment, establishing spatial form and shaping the overall silhouette. By their configuration, planes create visual rhythm, emphasize mass, and clarify proportional relationships. Across fashion design, planar arrangements contribute to dimensionality or structural coherence, influencing how the body is perceived within the garment (see Table 3).

Table 3: Plane Elements in Fashion Design

Image	Formal Composition	Functional Effect on Perception
 Source: Christian Siriano, SS2022 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/christian-siriano/2022-ss-RTW/	The left and right parts differ in length, forming an asymmetrical planar arrangement that interrupts the horizontal alignment of the blazer's lower edge.	This variation in panel length disrupts visual balance, drawing attention to the asymmetry and creating a layered effect that enhances spatial depth and visual interest.

 Source: Rejina Pyo, SS2020 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/rejina-pyo/2020-ss-RTW/	The dress is constructed from segmented horizontal panels, creating distinct planar divisions that shape the skirt while maintaining continuity across the garment surface.	These segmented planes enhance volume and guide the eye downward, creating a sense of vertical flow while maintaining clarity and balance in the silhouette.
 Source: Moschino, SS2018 https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/moschino/2018-ss-RTW/	3D rose textures are layered across the skirt, creating pronounced volume and a sculptural surface that contrasts sharply with the clean white bodice.	The volumetric rose detailing functions as a visual focal point, emphasizing ornamental composition and introducing dramatic tension within the silhouette.

4.4 *Design Explorations Based on Perceptual Insights*

Building on the analysis of point, line, and plane elements, three design prototypes were developed to translate visual and perceptual insights into practical garments (see Table 4). Each prototype explores a different use of these elements, resulting in distinct visual and structural effects.

The first design focuses on stability and control. By placing focal points at key positions and reinforcing them with structural lines, the garment produces a more contained and clearly defined silhouette. The second design shifts attention to visual guidance and proportion. Curved lines and colour-blocked surfaces are used to direct the viewer's gaze, creating a contour-refining effect and reshaping the visual perception of the body. In contrast, the third design prioritises flexibility and wearer interaction. Through layered construction and adjustable components, the garment allows the silhouette to change with different ways of wearing, offering a more adaptive and personalised experience.

A comparison of the three designs makes it clear that the role of point, line, and plane shifts depending on how they are used. Differences in their arrangement can influence how the body is visually interpreted and experienced in wear.

Table 4: Design Prototypes Developed from Perceptual Insights

Design Works	Compositional Elements	Design Description	Perceptual Effect
 Design 1	Point, line, and plane	This design uses a belt with a circular buckle as a focal point at the waist. Vertical and horizontal structural lines help organise the silhouette, while the overall planar structure maintains a stable and balanced form. Adjustable elements at the waist improve fit.	Enhances silhouette clarity and provides a sense of visual stability and containment.
 Design 2	Line, plane, and point	This design emphasises curved lines along the side of the body, combined with contrasting color panels. The curved seams guide the visual direction, while the segmented planes create variation across the garment.	Guides visual attention along the body and produces a contour-refining effect.

 Design 3-1  Design 3-2  Design 3-3	Plane, line, and point	This design features layered fabric panels with an asymmetrical hem. Linear elements such as straps and ties allow for adjustment, while small point elements function as connectors and decorative elements. The structure can be modified depending on how the garment is worn.	Supports flexibility in fit and appearance, and enhances comfort and user control.

5. Discussion

The design explorations in this study demonstrate the critical role of analytical observation in informing creative decisions, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between perceptual understanding and design strategy. Visual organization within garments shapes aesthetic experience and directs the interpretation of body form, positioning clothing as an active mediator of perception. This perspective aligns with Gestalt principles, in which perception emerges from the configuration and relationships among elements in a visual field (Wagemans et al., 2012). Each compositional decision, including the placement of points, the direction of lines, and the arrangement of planes, contributes to how the silhouette is read and experienced, and it can influence the perceived proportion, emphasis, and visual rhythm across the garment.

Applying these insights in iterative design enables designers to test specific hypotheses regarding visual attention, spatial balance, and compositional harmony, translating analytical understanding into tangible design interventions. Observing and documenting how elements operate in fashion imagery allows designers to anticipate how adjustments in line orientation, point placement, or plane segmentation can affect visual flow and silhouette perception. Combining visual analysis with prototype development creates a continuous feedback loop that strengthens perceptual insight, material experimentation, and garment construction. This approach enhances the designer's ability to make informed choices about the relationship between form, function, and perception, supporting garments that are both aesthetically compelling and ergonomically considered.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how point, line, and plane, as compositional elements in garments, relate to the visual perception of the body. The visual analysis of selected runway images shows that different arrangements of these elements influence emphasis, visual flow, balance, and spatial perception, shaping how the silhouette is read.

Building on these observations, three design prototypes were developed to explore how these compositional principles can be applied in practice. Each design translates analytical insights into specific structural and visual features, demonstrating how the arrangement of elements can organise attention, refine the perception of body contours, and support adjustments in fit and comfort.

By combining visual analysis with design practice, the study connects observation with application. The findings show how compositional elements can inform design decisions in a direct and practical way, while also offering a clearer account of how garments shape the perception of the body in contemporary fashion.

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