



Discussion Cues: Shape, Rhythm, and Color in the Giant Kites of Guatemala



Image #1: Typical of design strategies in the giant kites of Guatemala are: concentric bands around a central image; repetition of motifs to create a regular or alternating rhythm; a polychromatic color scheme (though here the palette is comparatively low-contrast); use of free-form shapes as well as geometric shapes. Note how the flecos or fringe contrast in color and texture with the kite sail.



Image #2: Notice here the free-form yellow shape, its effect heightened by the outline of red and purple. The colors are intense: kite makers will at times cut double or quadruple layers of tissue to heighten intensity of the color when sunlight shines through.



Image #3: More brightly colored, free-form shapes; note the comparatively rare use of white as a background color.



Image #4: Here curved shapes contrast with straight-edged shapes, and the color scheme is high contrast.



Image #5: Here's an example, again, of a polychromatic color scheme, with some geometric shapes and some free-form shapes arranged in concentric circles. Notice again how shapes (here the yellow "tear drops," the green semi-circles, and lighter green ovals) are emphasized with narrow outlines in a different color.



Image #6: Same principle here. Notice how the band with a simple motif, the outlined circle, contrasts with the more complex motifs above and below, while color, particularly the yellow, unifies the design.



Image #7: Notice here the contrast between bands of motifs arranged in a regular rhythm with the random rhythm of the middle band.



Image #8: Note here the contrast between geometric shapes (the small rectangles) with a larger, free-form motif.



Image #9: The complementary colors drive this design: we can't tell from this close-up whether these are repeated motifs. Notice the black, straight-edged figure: that design appears in the next image as well.



Image #10: The right-angled shapes in this and the following image are another common element in the kite designs and resemble designs used by weavers of Guatemalan textiles.



Image #11: Here the right-angled shapes contrast with adjacent bands of zigzags (on the bottom) and free-form shapes (on the top). One commentator on Guatemalan textiles says that zigzags symbolize the steps on Mayan temples.



Image #12: A final example of the play of geometric against free-form shapes.