

2D Design Basics

Points, Lines, and Planes | Gestalt–Shape, Balance, Rhythm, Unity | Color

National Visual Art Standards

VA:Cr1.1.1Ia: Individually or collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on student's existing artwork.

VA:Cr1.2.1Ia: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

VA:Cr2.1.1Ia: Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.

VA:Cr3.1.1Ia: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

VA:Re9.1.1a: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Guiding Questions

- How does Gestalt theory help students organize the use of shape, pattern, direction, proportion, and rhythm seen in art and design?
- How do designers and artists use Gestalt principles in their work?
- How does Gestalt help designers and artists to communicate complex ideas quickly?

Objectives

Students will...

- Demonstrate an awareness of the formal role of Gestalt theory in the making of art and design;
- Make images—drawings and cut paper compositions—demonstrating the different elements of Gestalt theory;
- Make images—drawings and cut paper compositions—utilizing Gestalt theory and visual principles to visually express complex linguistic concepts/ideas;
- Critically analyze the use of Gestalt theory and visual principles in use in design they encounter in their daily lives;
- Make drawings identifying the use of Gestalt theory and visual principles in this found design;
- Use their images and critical analysis of found design to create through drawing new Gestalt compositions that reflect their understanding of the application of Gestalt theory and visual principles;

Time Period: at least three classes, 45–60 minutes in length

Lesson Introduction: What is Gestalt?

With roots in the 1890s, Gestalt theory as a branch of psychology originated in Germany in the 1920s. While psychologists now debate its utility in understanding (as opposed to describing) how our minds work; it has great appeal for artists and designers because it provides a concise description of how the audience perceives a work, which can help with the effective production of a work.



FIGURE 1: *Skull*, 1991, Octavio Ocampo (detail). Octavio Ocampo uses Gestalt theory to inform his use of shape and rhythm to create hidden images (in this case, skulls) out of seemingly unrelated images and shapes.



GIRL SCOUTS

FIGURE 2: Girl Scouts of America logo, 1978, Saul Bass. Saul Bass used Gestalt to condense complex ideas—young women coming together in a spirit of mutual support and growth—into a single image.

- Constructively critique their peers on their use of points, lines, and planes to communicate visually, respond to critique from their peers and the teacher by editing their work, and write reflections on their work, the work of their peers, and how that work has changed based on critique.

Vocabulary: Gestalt

Closure: the mind supplies the missing pieces in a composition if there are enough of the significant features visible. Simple shapes require few clues while more complex ones may seem incomplete and forces the viewer to work harder to fill in the gap.

Continuation: humans will find lines or contours and continue them beyond their ending points if the elements of the pattern establish an implied direction. In photography, a winding road that extends beyond the image is one example.

Figure-ground: a fundamental concept in design, it refers to the contrast between black and white, foreground and background, dark and light and equilibrium. Adjusting the equilibrium can throw the figure-ground relationship off balance so the viewer is uncertain what they are viewing.

Proximity: objects that are close to one another appear to form groups. Even if they are different sizes or shapes or even radically different in color, they will appear as a group if they are placed close together. (See Figure 3 for examples of all of the Gestalt principles in use.)

Similarity: humans group objects together that look similar. In design, this can be applied to typefaces, colors, text, and headline styles.

Symmetry: the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around an axis. Symmetrical designs are balanced and easily understood by a viewer, but can be visually uninteresting. While asymmetrical designs can be awkward, they can also draw attention to themselves.

Vocabulary: Visual Elements

Gestalt principles help designers and artists organize and make use of a number of design and art elements. In addition to the principles themselves, these are the terms to encourage students to make use of and understand their role in design and art.

Balance: a distribution of one or more elements which visually equal each other. Similarity, symmetry, and continuation rely on balance to be effective.

Compositional space: the area in which all elements of a composition interact. This could be a sheet of paper, a canvas, a package, etc.

Contrast: an abrupt shift in the appearance of the composition. Asymmetry relies on contrast, as can continuation and proximity.

Depth: the degree to which shapes, patterns, textures, etc. seem to move forward or backward in the compositional space. Figure-ground makes use of one shape seeming to exist in front of another.

Direction: an implied sense of motion in an element of a composition. Continuation relies on direction to guide a viewer's eye.

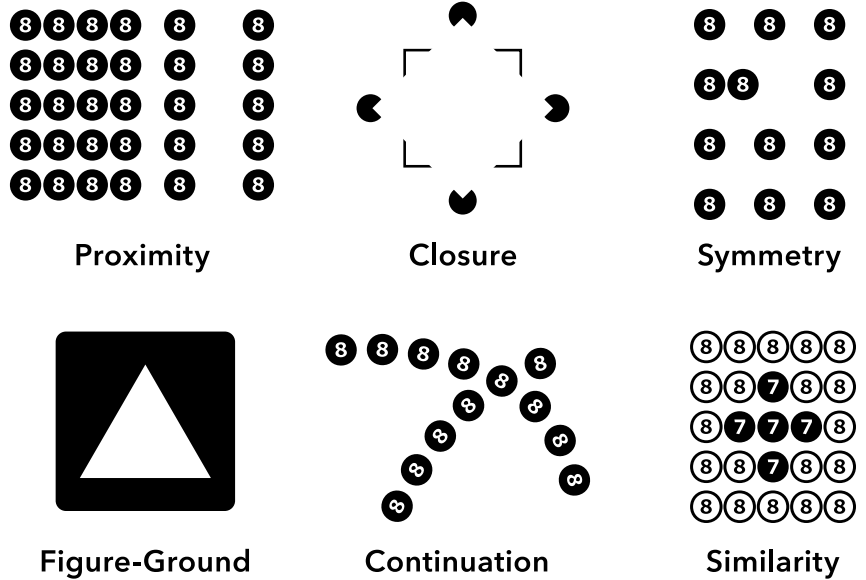


FIGURE 3: Simple examples of the Gestalt principles. Note that many principles often work together in a single composition.

Gestalt theory says humans group things (sounds, visual stimuli, feelings) together into a whole unit. For designers and artists this means that while a composition has individual parts that can be studied and analyzed as distinct components, the whole of a composition is different and frequently more important than the individual parts (see Figure 1). It is especially important for designers to remember that visual elements in any visual communication work together and should reinforce one another as a means of communicating the whole idea or message (see Figure 2).

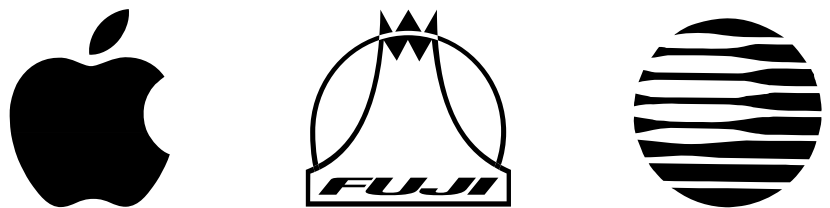


FIGURE 4: (left to right) Apple, Fuji Bicycles (defunct), and AT&T (defunct) marks. When defining the vocabulary with the help of visual aids, teachers should remind the students of the hook from day one of Unit 2B: How are designers combining points, lines, and planes with Gestalt (and how does Gestalt use shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.) to create a sense of space, direction, and unity? Ask students to see where these principles apply outside of images. For example, how does the angle applied to the type in “Fuji” create a sense of direction or motion?

ACTIVITY PROCESS

Engagement (the hook–motivation and relevancy)

“Gestalt” as a description of how we organize the world around us encompasses more than the visual world. Ask students to consider where else in their lives they could apply Gestalt principles. What Gestalt principles can they identify in their favorite song (the hook, the beat, the chorus, etc.)? In their favorite movies (repetition of scenes or characters grouped together, etc.) How do students feel designers and artists might use Gestalt principles to impart a musical or cinematic quality to their work?

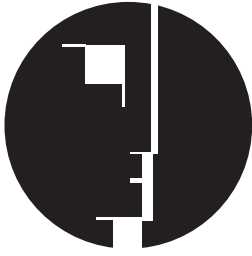


FIGURE 5: Bauhaus Signet, 1922, Oskar Schlemmer. The design for the Bauhaus' signet makes highly effective use of several Gestalt principles to create a complex image out of very simple shapes and positive/negative space.

Dominance: the ability of certain compositional elements to assume more importance than others in the same composition. Figure-ground makes use of dominance to enable the viewer to perceive the foreground object against the background.

Pattern: visual elements that repeat in a predictable manner. These can be made out of points, lines, or planes. Patterns can be applied to shapes (e.g. a plaid shirt), or exist on their own (e.g. wallpaper).

Proportion: the relative size of all the elements in a compositional space in comparison to one another. Proportion is a key principle in creating balance, contrast, direction, and dominance. Symmetry, similarity, and proximity are Gestalt principles that often rely on proportion to be effective.

Rhythm: the moving force connecting the elements within a composition, creating a visual beat or tempo. The regular repetition of elements can create the look and feel of movement. It is often achieved through the careful placement of repeated components which encourage the viewer to jump rapidly or glide smoothly from one to the next. To be effective, continuation must establish a solid rhythm.

Shape: the form of an object or its external boundary, outline, or external surface, as opposed to other properties such as color, texture, etc. Lines and planes are used to create shapes.

Texture: an interwoven pattern of light and dark tones that imparts a physical quality to a surface—rough, smooth, etc.

Unity: unity is the relationship among the elements in a compositional space that enables them to work together as a whole. The Gestalt principles are all about the effective manipulation of different visual elements to create a unified whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Review and Retain: Describe the Gestalt principles and visual elements individually and in combination when showing students work by the referenced artists and designers, and other visual aids. Ask the students to recreate what they see in their notebooks during discussion using Gestalt and visual elements. Students should explore combinations of the various Gestalt and visual elements in their sketchbooks during the introductory lecture and throughout the unit.

Language Demands: Focus on language function—

1. Can students appropriately differentiate between the Gestalt principles when shown examples in class or when making and discussing their own

DAY 1

Introduction

After defining the Gestalt principles and the visual elements they make use of (**shape, pattern, balance, rhythm**, etc.) and introducing the role they play in graphic design and art with relevant visual aids from the artists and designers above (and others, if possible), review illustrative examples with students. Looking at the examples, discuss with students the role each Gestalt principle is playing in the composition or design. As this is taking place, encourage students to not only write down the definitions of each Gestalt principle and term, but to make quick sketches as examples of each in their sketchbooks. Beyond the visual aids presented at the beginning of the lesson, teachers should prompt students to find examples of the Gestalt principles in the classroom (e.g. the **symmetry** of the ceiling tiles, or the **proximity** of desks in the room) and then break down those examples based on what they observe in terms of shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc. Task the students with drawing what they see in their sketchbooks as they talk. This activity should progress directly from the introductory portion of the lesson and be given 10–15 minutes depending on class time available and the teacher's discretion.

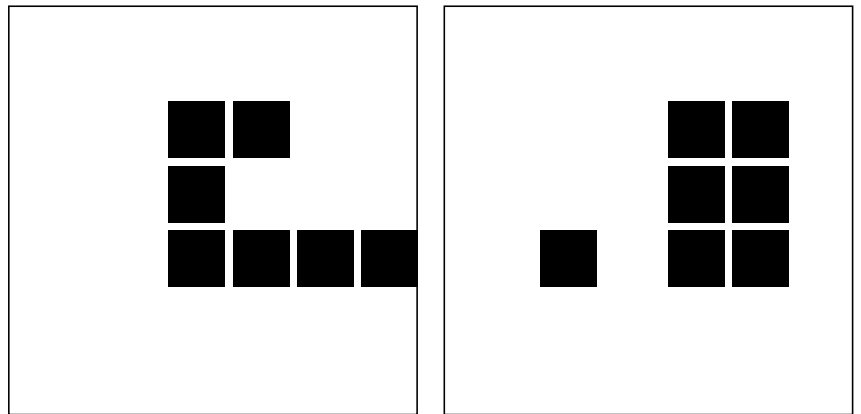


FIGURE 6: Initial explorations with Gestalt. Which Gestalt principles are being expressed above?

Once the discussion ends, break the class into groups and provide each group with seven 8" x 8" squares of black and seven 8" x 8" squares of white paper. Ask each group to arrange their squares in such a way that they convey one of the Gestalt principles more strongly than any other (see Figure 6). Encourage the students to challenge one another on the arrangement and the principle it conveys and ask one another the following questions: How does the **compositional space** (the desk, table, etc.) impact the **unity** of the finished design? How might the compositions be different if they were made with different shapes (circles as opposed to squares)? Which principles do they find rely more on pattern than others? Balance? **Direction**? Rhythm? What role do they see for **dominance** in **figure-ground**? **Proportion**? **Depth**? Providing students with a handout or checklist supplement listing and defining the unit vocabulary will greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this activity. The majority of the remaining class session should be devoted to this activity, while leaving enough time at the end of the session to answer questions and adequately explain and assign the first out-of-class assignment.

work? Are students able to describe the role of the various visual elements they see in the (shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.) classroom during discussion, as well as apply and speak about them in their own work? Informal assessments of language use by the teacher while students sketch or revise their work are ideal. Teachers should talk to students about the images they are making, using and reinforcing the vocabulary while offering constructive critique and guidance. In these conversations, teachers should be actively listening to ensure students are using the vocabulary correctly, and offering constructive correction when students confuse or misuse terms.

- Can students describe the role of visual elements (shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.) within the various Gestalt principles, and how the visual elements and Gestalt principles can be combined in a larger composition?
- Can students use unit vocabulary correctly when discussing their work and the work of their peers?

Language Assessment: Students should use terms appropriately in discussion and critique, and be able to correctly describe how the Gestalt principles make use of shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc. and are used/combined by artists and designers to create work (either samples provided in class or that they locate on their own). Teachers should use and reinforce the vocabulary during class critiques and discussion as an informal assessment, and formally assess the students use of vocabulary in the written components of the course work that students submit at the end of the unit.

Materials

- Camera
- Construction paper and graph paper
- Glue/glue sticks
- Sketchbook/paper/journal
- White chalk, markers, and/or colored pencils

Figures

1. *Skull*, 1991, Octavio Ocampo (detail)
2. Girl Scouts of America logo, 1978, Saul Bass
3. Simple examples of the Gestalt principles
4. Apple, Fuji Bicycles (defunct), and AT&T (defunct) marks
5. Bauhaus Signet, 1922, Oskar Schlemmer
6. Initial explorations with Gestalt
7. Assignment 3–The Black Square Problem sample solutions
8. US bicentennial symbol, 1976, Bruce N. Blackburn
9. A–Gestalt and texture;
B–Gestalt, rhythm, and contrast;
C–Gestalt, proportion, dominance, and balance.
10. Gestalt in the Broader World; film still from *Reservoir Dogs*

Observe and participate in each group's activity, providing critical assessment of their compositions, discussions and vocabulary use as they work. Encourage the students to sketch as they work and discuss ideas with their group mates to better form their ideas.

Close the discussion and sketching session by giving the students their first out-of-class assignment for the unit.

Assignment 3–The Black Squares Problem (Homework)

SCENARIO: Graphic design must often communicate emotions, feelings, or actions without the use of written language, relying solely on images and visual elements and their careful arrangement. This activity is intended to help students begin to develop visual literacy skills by applying the Gestalt principles and 2D shapes to a common visual communication challenge: expressing a complex idea without the use of words.

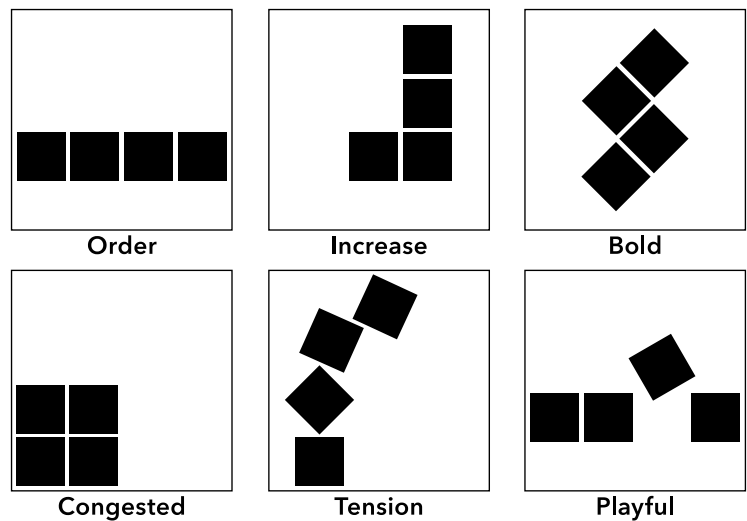


FIGURE 7: Assignment 3–The Black Squares Problem sample solutions. Day 1 out-of-class assignment.

OBJECTIVE: To use Gestalt and other visual principles to make the most of a limited set of tools to express emotion or action in a composition.

PROCESS:

1. Provide students with six 8" × 8" sheets of white paper and 24 1½" × 1½" square pieces of black paper.
2. Remind the students of their work from Day 2 of unit 2B, and how they were able to make words more expressive through their use of points, lines, and planes.
3. With that experience in mind, prompt the students to use the Gestalt principles to make equally expressive compositions with four of their black squares each for the words: Order, Increase, Bold, Congested, Tension, and Playful. For this assignment, the squares should not overlap or leave the compositional space (the page).
4. Encourage the students to explore multiple options for each word by sketching on graph paper before committing to a final idea and gluing their squares to the page. The purpose of having the students work with physical materials and gluing them down is to create a sense of finality to the finished work, and to encourage them to explore options and ideas before committing to a design.

11. A–successful, B–unsuccessful use of Gestalt in design
12. Gestalt in use, A–Saul Bass; B–Alexey Brodovitch
13. Gestalt in design and branding; brand family logo, Coca-Cola Spain

Art Context, Cultural Connections and Relevancy

Based on what students learned in Unit 2B, do they think points, lines, and planes become more effective visual tools when used in conjunction with Gestalt principles and a better understanding of visual elements? Do students think that the more nuanced a symbol or design becomes that it is more effective? When students think about the symbols in their lives that mean the most to them—religious, political, commercial—what is it about those symbols solely as designs that makes them resonate? Can students identify how these symbols can be used for good purpose—traffic signs, warning labels, etc.—and for potentially less positive ends, the branding and marketing of dangerous products (e.g. tobacco) or products or brands (e.g. Apple, BMW) that entice people to spend money that they might be better off saving?

Questions for students to consider:

- How have designers such as Saul Bass or George Lance Wyman applied Gestalt principles to guide the visual elements used to condense complex visual ideas into seemingly simple marks (e.g. the diversity and strength in numbers implied in the Girl Scouts logo.)?
- How do designers use those principles and techniques to create the symbols people bond with, either as fans of Apple products for example, or an entire country united in celebration (see Figure 8)? Do students feel that the successful application of these principles help a design resonate on a deeper psychological—or even biological—level?

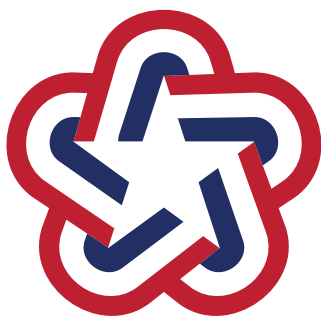


FIGURE 8: US bicentennial symbol, 1976, Bruce N. Blackburn. The logo for the 1976 bicentennial commemoration of the American Revolution, designed to convey a complicated message of both a national renewal through a reliance on shared traditions and history. What Gestalt and visual elements are at work here?

5. Once their compositions are complete, have the students reflect on each one, and write two to three sentences on the back that describe which Gestalt principles they feel are at work, and how their decisions were informed by those principles and the other elements discussed in class (shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.)

SPECIFICATIONS: Each student will be responsible for presenting their six finished compositions to the class as well as speaking about their brief reflections on each. (Teachers may also wish to consider including a self-evaluation rubric for students to fill-in prior to the critique/discussion to help students better organize their thoughts and prepare for discussing their work and/or questions.)

HINTS: Encourage students to explore options in their sketchbooks or journals before committing to their final compositions. Remind them also of the advice received during Day 2 of Unit 2B; to think about how the words make them feel, and to make quick sketches in response to those gut reactions.

Extensions

Students in need of additional challenges can create multiple examples of each of the six words, either with additional pieces of paper or in their sketchbook. Students could be encouraged to find Gestalt examples of the six words in the environment and document them with cameras. These additional examples and/or images should be presented with the finished work from Assignment 3 at the next class session.

DAY 2

Introduction

At the close of Assignment 3 and the launch of assignment 4, discuss with students how what they now know of Gestalt might be applied to the graphic design they consume every day: apps, websites, posters, packaging. For example, **similarity** describes why repetition in color, typographic styles and the use of visual elements is a good thing in design. By carefully applying similarity, a designer can now manipulate the **contrast** between elements, such as colors, typefaces, and size to guide the audience through the design. Symmetry describes why alignment is not only important, but frequently overlooked by new designers. Without the use of guides and columns to help insure that text and graphic boxes align as they should, no design can be successful. If a design calls for something to be out of alignment, that asymmetry should be dramatic. Graphic elements that are only a little out of alignment look like a mistake as opposed to intentional.

Assignment 4–The Black Squares Problem; Discussion and Revision

- Have the students present their six finished compositions to the class. Taping or pinning work to the wall/corkboards will facilitate an interactive group discussion. (This is an excellent opportunity to use VTS for those teachers applying it to their classrooms.)
- Lead the students in a discussion of what they made and what they see in the work of their peers. Discussion questions could include: How did actively thinking about the Gestalt principles help them make their work? Were there principles that were harder to use than

Artists/Designers to Reference

These artists and designers provide excellent examples of Gestalt and visual elements used in both subtle and complex ways in the creation of their art and design. Examples of their work found in a library or Internet search will serve as excellent visual aids and prompts for discussion of the Gestalt principles and visual elements with students.

Saul Bass (1920–1996): a designer notable for his identity and film title design. Bass' use of fundamental shapes and their spatial relationships is an excellent example of the efficiency Gestalt can bring to a design challenge (see Bass' logos for Alcoa, Girl Scouts of America, Minolta, and Quaker Oats as instructive examples).

Octavio Ocampo (1943–): a Surrealist painter who makes use of Gestalt principles—particularly figure-ground, proximity, and closure—to weave larger compositions out of smaller, complete images. (See *Visions of Quixote* for a key example).

Georges Seurat (1859–1891): a post-Impressionist painter perhaps best known for his use of pointillism (applying small, distinct dots of pigment to make a larger image). Pointillism as a technique is an excellent example of many Gestalt principles in use. (See *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*).

Lance Wyman (1937–): a designer known for his use of bold lines and strong shapes to create highly memorable logos and identities. (See Wyman's work for the Mexico City Metro, the 1968 Mexican Olympic Games, the National Zoo, and the Library of Congress reading room).

Other artists and designers who make relatable use of Gestalt principles and visual elements in their work that teachers could consider including are:

Aaron Draplin, Charles Allen Gilbert, Olly Mos, and M.C. Escher.

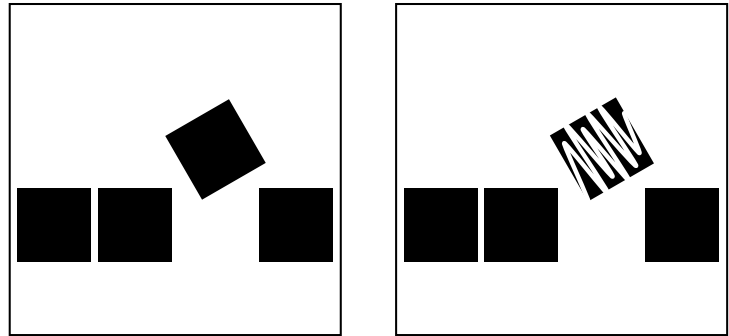


FIGURE 9A: Gestalt and texture. Adding a loose texture or pattern can help the word "Playful" seem livelier.

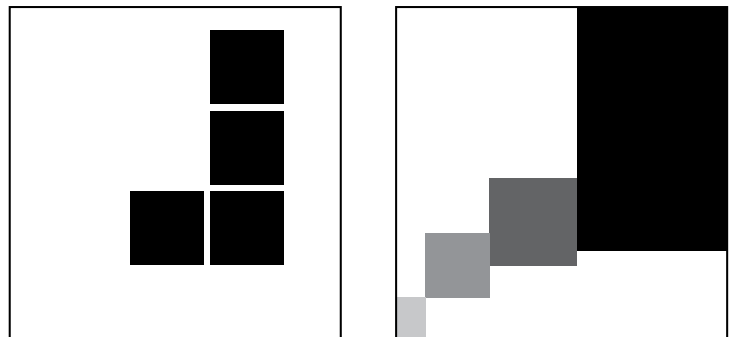


FIGURE 9B: Gestalt, rhythm, and contrast. Changes in rhythm, contrast and the use of the edge of the page can give the word "Increase" a more dramatic sense of depth and direction while retaining unity.

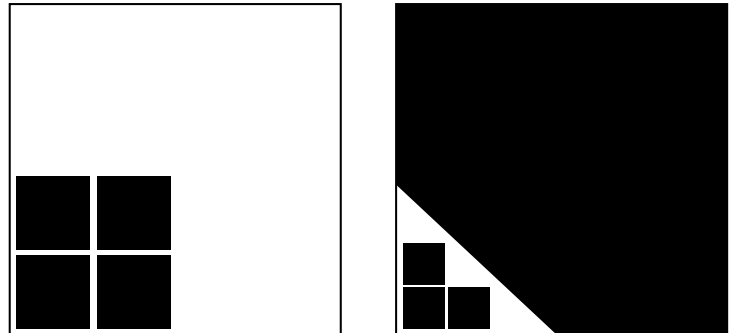


FIGURE 9C: Gestalt, proportion, dominance, and balance. Changes in proportion, dominance, balance, and the use of the compositional space help the word "Congested" to feel more dynamic and intense.

they thought? Some that came more instinctively? What ideas do they see on the board they like? (Are any of them having an "I wish I'd thought of that" moment?) Which do they feel could be improved? How? Stress the use of the unit vocabulary in the critique.

- Guide the end of the critique session toward the discussion of revisions. Based on what they made and what they've seen, how would they change what they had made? Use this prompt to guide the students in an in-class revision of their initial compositions.
- Distribute new 8" × 8" sheets of white paper and black squares of varying sizes (or full sheets of black paper that students can cut down), as well as white chalk/paint pens. Reflecting on what they've seen and learned in critique, have them revise their original compositions not only thinking about the Gestalt principles, but the other vocabulary/elements introduced the previous day. How can the addition of **texture** help the word "Playful" seem livelier? How could a change in rhythm or contrast give a sense of depth and



FIGURE 10: Gestalt in the Broader World. Quentin Tarantino's highly dynamic cinematic style relies greatly on Gestalt and other visual principles to quickly convey atmosphere and tension. In this still from *Reservoir Dogs*, proximity and similarity combine with dominance, depth, direction, and unity to quickly establish the relationships between characters.

motion to the word “Increase?” How might changes in proportion, or having squares leave the compositional space (the page) create a stronger sense of dominance in the word “Congested?” (See Figures 9A–C.) Encourage the students to add pattern and texture to their squares with the chalk/markers, overlap their squares, have them extend beyond the page, etc., to revise their original ideas into much more expressive compositions.

- As the students work, teachers should move about the room, offering input on student revisions. As students discuss their revisions and new ideas, teachers should stress the use of the proper vocabulary in their discussions.

Closure (Assignment 4)

As you conclude the in-class revisions of Assignment 4 with the students, ask them to note briefly on each new composition what elements they used and how they feel this has improved the way their compositions communicate each of the six words (two–three sentences each), and collect their original and revised compositions and statements. Ask the students to be mindful of what they have seen, heard, and made as they embark on Assignment 5.

Assignment 5–Gestalt in Use in Design (Homework)

SCENARIO: The successful use of the compositional space is a key challenge for graphic designers working on page, package, or website designs. The Gestalt principles are a key way graphic designers manage visual elements and arrange them in pleasing, exciting, or useful ways for the viewer. The careful use of these principles—and creating many versions of a design before committing to a finished piece—helps the designer to create work that seems thoughtful and intentional, as opposed to sloppy or accidental.

OBJECTIVE: To analyze examples of design found in the world by breaking down those designs into their basic forms and Gestalt relationships in the compositional space, and to describe how each design successfully—or unsuccessfully—makes use of those principles.

PROCESS:

1. Task the students with finding two examples of design (a poster, a layout, a book cover, a website, etc.) that they use or see every day (this could be a favorite novel, a poster, a website, etc.). Based on their emerging understanding of Gestalt and the related visual elements, ask that one of these examples demonstrate what the student thinks to be a successful use of Gestalt, and the other an unsuccessful use of Gestalt (see Figures 11A–B for examples).
2. While they consider the two pieces of design that they select, ask the students to make quick drawings in their sketchbooks of the designs that block in the visual elements and spatial relationships (as in Figures 12A–B). Ask them to use color where necessary, but to keep their studies loose (squares, circles, lines, etc.) and proportional to the original.
3. With their studies complete, the students should analyze them and list all of the Gestalt principles and visual elements they see in both designs.
4. With their lists complete, students should then describe how Gestalt and the visual elements are being used effectively in the “successful” design, and how they think they are being under



FIGURE 11A: Successful use of Gestalt in design. Note how many of the Gestalt principles are used to successfully organize this magazine spread. Similarity is used to keep likes with likes (text with text, images with images), **continuation** leads the reader from right to left, while symmetry defines the page horizontally, and **closure** creates a space for the headline.



FIGURE 11B: Unsuccessful use of Gestalt in design. Note how the lack of proximity or continuation makes the places where the reader should start or stop confusing, while the lack of symmetry (or well negotiated asymmetry) makes the pages—and the page elements—seem unrelated to each other. Whereas page elements are thoughtfully and clearly laid out in relation to one another in Figure 11A, here they seem sloppy or accidental.

or poorly used in the “unsuccessful” design. The purpose of this activity is to help the students develop a critical eye for the application of basic design principles in the real-world designs they see around them, and to help connect what they have covered in class to the work of real designers and artists.

5. If possible, the students should bring the originals of their examples with them along with their studies and notes to the next class. If they cannot (due to the size of the original, or other logistical considerations) a photo on their phone or digital camera will suffice. Likewise, any websites chosen by students should be represented by a printout, if possible.

SPECIFICATIONS: Each student will produce two compositions in their sketchbooks, one blocking in all of the Gestalt principles they could find in a real-world piece of design they felt was successful, and one blocking in the Gestalt principles in a real-world piece of design they felt was unsuccessful. Each composition will be accompanied by a brief statement (three to four lines) describing how they think Gestalt



FIGURE 12A: Gestalt in use, Saul Bass. Saul Bass' design (left) for Container Corporation of America's (CCA) *Great Ideas of Western Man* series. What Gestalt principles are in use? How is Gestalt being used to control the visual elements?

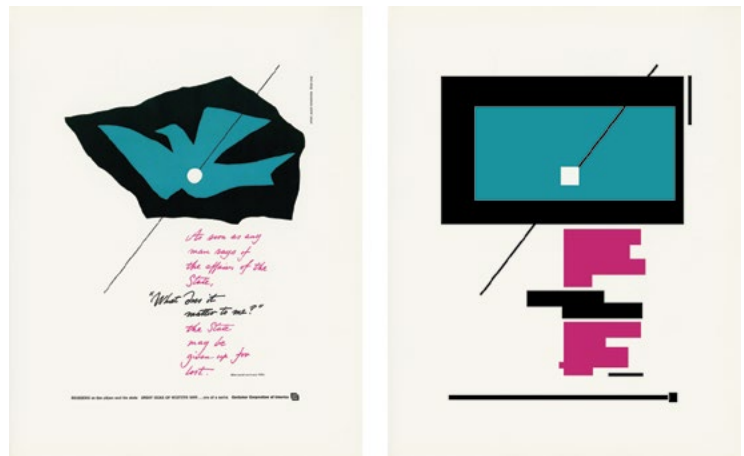


FIGURE 12B: Gestalt in use, Alexey Brodovitch. Alexey Brodovitch's design (left) for CCA's *Great Ideas of Western Man* series. Note how a few simple shapes, points, lines, and planes are combined by Gestalt to make a surprisingly complex image. (Larger versions of both images are available from the AIGA Design Archives at <http://designarchives.aiga.org/>.)

and the visual elements are being used effectively in the “successful” design, and how they think they are being under or poorly used in the “unsuccessful” design.

HINTS: Encourage the students to also look at or consider design from areas of the culture they don't normally frequent. For example, students that don't typically read comic books could analyze the Gestalt they see on comic book covers. Likewise, students not typically interested in sports could look at the Gestalt and visual principles in use in a sports magazine. Students should recognize that their work gets better and their creativity sharper the more new ideas they expose themselves to.

Extensions

Students in need of additional challenges can be asked to make and bring a corrected version of their selected “unsuccessful” design to class. Students/classes with access to photo-editing software could directly manipulate the images, applying their understanding of varying Gestalt techniques to explore different compositional alternatives or to “fix” what they see as problems in the original design.



FIGURE 13: Gestalt in design and branding, brand family logo, Coca-Cola Spain. Coca-Cola Spain unveiled this mark to represent the core family of Coke products: Classic, Zero, Diet, and Caffeine Free. How are they using Figure-Ground, Continuation, Similarity, and Symmetry? How do those principles combined to support the unity of the overall design (and brand) while still conveying complex concepts like youth, energy, and fun?

DAY 3

Introduction

Encourage students to think back on their favorite logos discussed in Unit 2B. Combining what they know about points, lines, and planes and the Gestalt principles and visual elements, how do they think designers combine these elements to create designs that “speak” to them successfully? How do designers use these principles and techniques to give logos a sense of action (Nike, Adidas, etc.), or a sense of personality (Beats by Dre, Coca-Cola, etc.). What principles are at work in their favorite marks and logos? Do they think they’re responding to the logos in the way the original designer intended?

Assignment 5–Gestalt in Use in Design (continued); Presentation, Discussion, Revision, and Reflection

- Have the students present their selected designs and finished studies to the class. Taping or pinning work to the wall/corkboards will facilitate an interactive group discussion. (This is an excellent opportunity to use VTS for those teachers applying it to their classrooms.)
- Lead the students in a discussion of the designs they chose and what they discovered when they broke them down into their fundamental elements. Discussion questions could include: What principles and elements do they see in use? Are there some that the class can help individual students find in their work that they might have missed? Where do the principles overlap or reinforce one another? How does the use of the principles and elements in their “successful” examples make them strong as designs? How might the principles and elements be used to improve the problems they see in the “unsuccessful” designs? Why do they think the original designers made those—successful and less so—decisions? Ask the students to make notes of what suggestions there are for improving the designs in need of improvement, and stress the use of the unit vocabulary in the discussion.
- The end of the discussion should focus on revising the examples of “unsuccessful” design. Based on what they have talked about in class and the notes they have made, have the students (either individually or in pairs/groups) make new versions of their selected “unsuccessful” design. These should be careful—but simple—thumbnail-style drawings made with markers/colored pencils. These revised studies should demonstrate a strong use and understanding of the Gestalt principles and related visual elements.

Closure (Assignment 5)

Toward the end of the third session, ask students to gather their work and reflect on the revisions they have made in class. Have the students write a brief (two to three paragraphs) statement reflecting on how they felt the original “unsuccessful” design made poor use of Gestalt principles and visual elements, and how they made changes to those elements to strengthen the design. Ask them to note not only their thoughts, but also the insight they gained from their peers in class. Encourage students to make appropriate use of vocabulary in their writing. Other questions the students could be asked to consider in their reflection: how do they see the Gestalt principles adding organization and power to the fundamental design elements

of Points, Lines, and Planes covered in the last lesson? How do designers use Gestalt to add energy to such simple elements? How do they all combine to help create a design? Collect the images and reflection paper of each student at the beginning of the next class.

Checks For Understanding

Throughout the lesson encourage students to answer questions/participate in discussions/contribute to critique using the vocabulary introduced and making reference to the work of artists and designers seen at the beginning of the lesson and that they have discovered on their own. Encourage students to verbally explore how Gestalt principles interact with one another and make use of the visual elements (shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.) introduced in the unit. As students work, reinforce the vocabulary and principles in your feedback and critique, asking questions to ensure comprehension.

Lesson Assessment Based On Objectives

Students should be assessed on their ability to demonstrate an awareness and proper use of the Gestalt principles and visual elements (shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, etc.) in their own work and the work of other artists and designers. The correct use of unit vocabulary in class dialog and in written reflection should be accurate and appropriate to the work they make and see. All work produced in and out of class—as well as student writing—should be collected and analyzed. (See *Unit 2B Rubric.docx* for assessment and rubric ideas. Customize to meet class specific assessment needs.)



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