

Lesson 1: The Black Square Problem

By using four flat black squares of the same dimension, create a graphic image to express the meaning of each of the following six words: order, increase, bold, congested, tension, and playful. Make eight preliminary sketches for each word in the areas indicated. Then select the most effective solution for each and execute it in the larger designated area. Using only four squares may seem to be a rather limited palette for expressing such diverse words, but consider how these squares can be expanded into a more comprehensive language by utilizing various design principals.

Analysis: The intention of this problem is to develop a geometric idiom through the discovery of the various two-dimensional design principals needed to extend a limited graphic vocabulary. The necessary principals include:

framal reference;

touching;

overlapping and cropping of forms;

illusory space;

contrast of elements in terms of size;

direction,

space, and position;

and the dynamics of negative-positive relationships.

The discoveries result from experimentation with the interrelationships of forms, a vital experience for the growth of a designer developing a personal, formal style. Combining these principles can further expand a graphic vocabulary into a comprehensive, abstract graphic language, maximizing the possibilities for graphic expression.

Because design skills become more comprehensive by creating several solutions for a single problem, selecting the most effective solution is an important condition explored through this assignment.

Through the use of perspective, the sour squares can be of differing sizes, furthering the range of possible solutions.

Vocabulary:

Dimension - measurement of extension (i.e. length, height, or breadth.)

Idiom - language peculiar to a person or group, expression with a special meaning.

Graphic - vividly described/ relating to the arts of representation and printing on flat surfaces