

# Advanced Composition: Gestalt Theory

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To please the viewers eye, you need to understand how the viewers eye works.

# House Rules:

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- No stupid questions
- Safe learning environment, we will not be recording sessions
- The more you contribute the more you'll learn – Free thinking discussion group
- I'll send links and slide deck directly – check your spam folder
- Aftercare – welcome to an ongoing relationship
- Comfort break at 11:15am
- Lunch 1-3pm and close 4:30pm

# Agenda:

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- Introductions
- Who and what is Gestalt theory
- What are the principles
- Principles 1-7
- Images combining them
- Your image review
- Final summary
- Next Steps

## Key Learning Points:

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- Learn different ways to add impact and really make your subject stand out
- Learn how to immediately draw the eye
- Learn how to quickly build narrative
- Master pictures of patterns and texture
- Create compositions that are playful with your audience
- Make the viewers minds fill in the blanks using the clues in the image
- Increase the viewers engagement in your images

# Introductions:

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- Name
- Location
- Genres you gravitate to
- What you'd like to get out of the day?

# Who & What is Gestalt Theory?

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Gestalt psychology, gestaltism is a school of psychology that emerged in the early twentieth century in Austria and Germany.

As used in Gestalt psychology, the German word Gestalt is interpreted as "pattern" or "configuration". Gestalt psychologists emphasized that organisms perceive entire patterns or configurations, not merely individual components.

The view is sometimes summarized using the adage,  
**"the whole is more than the sum of its parts".**

Gestalt principles including proximity, similarity, figure-ground, etc., describe how humans perceive visuals in connection with different objects and environments.

# What are the Gestalt principles in photography?

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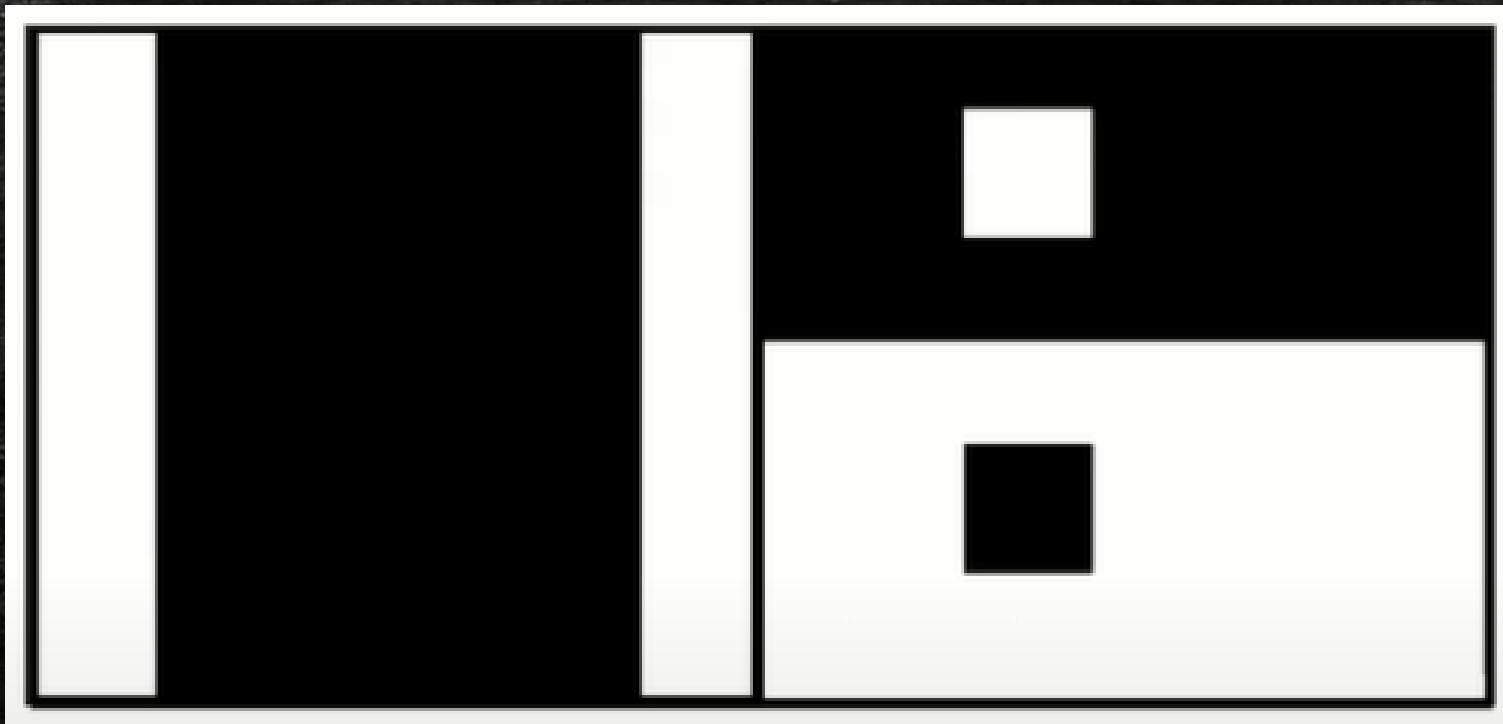
Gestalt principles, also called Gestalt laws, make up Gestalt theory. Principles of Gestalt theory in photography include:

1. Figure to ground
2. Similarity
3. Continuation
4. Closure
5. Proximity
6. Symmetry
7. Common fate

# 1. Figure Ground Relationship:

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Put Simply: Differentiate the subject from the background

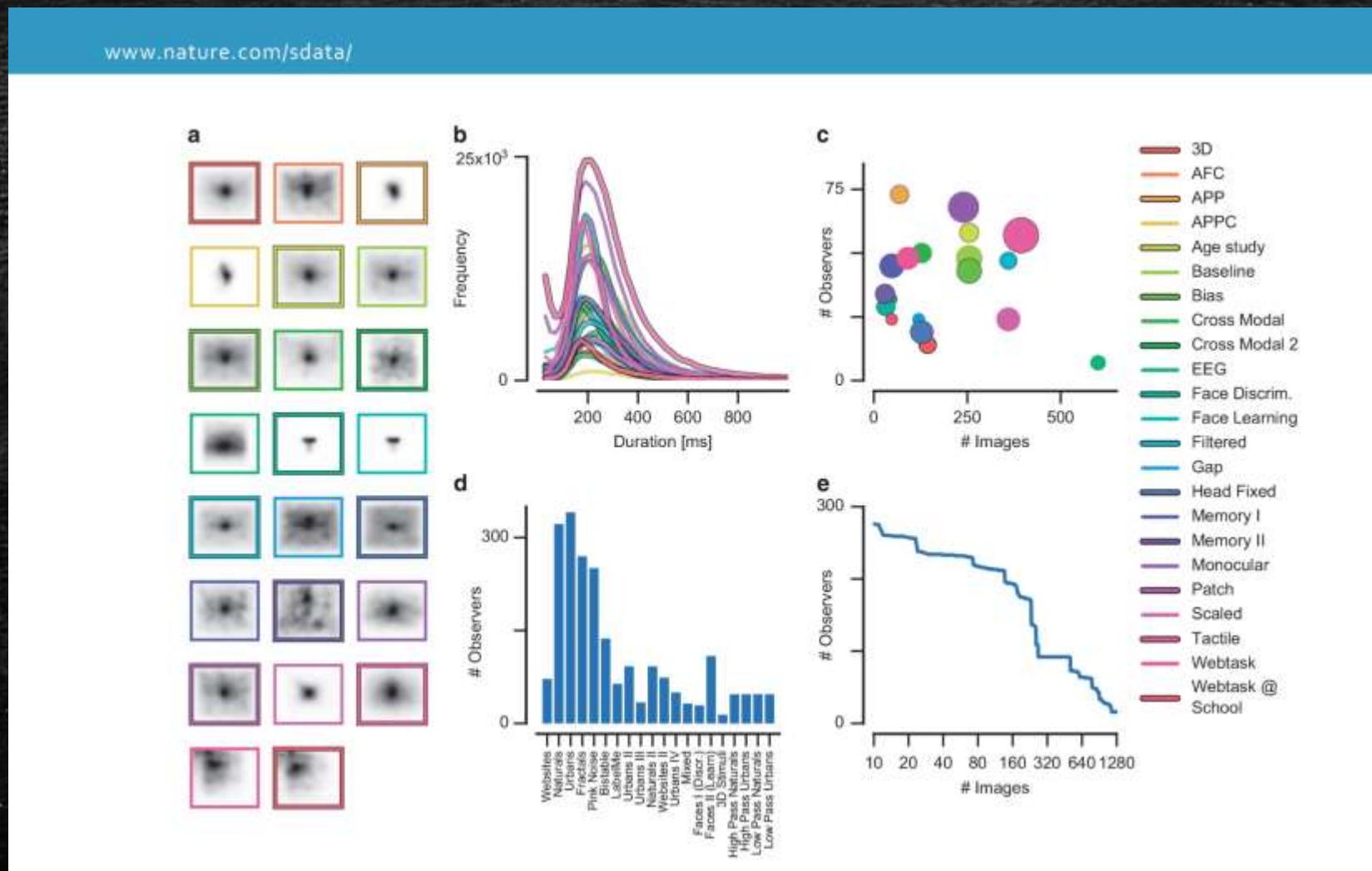




Where do people look first?

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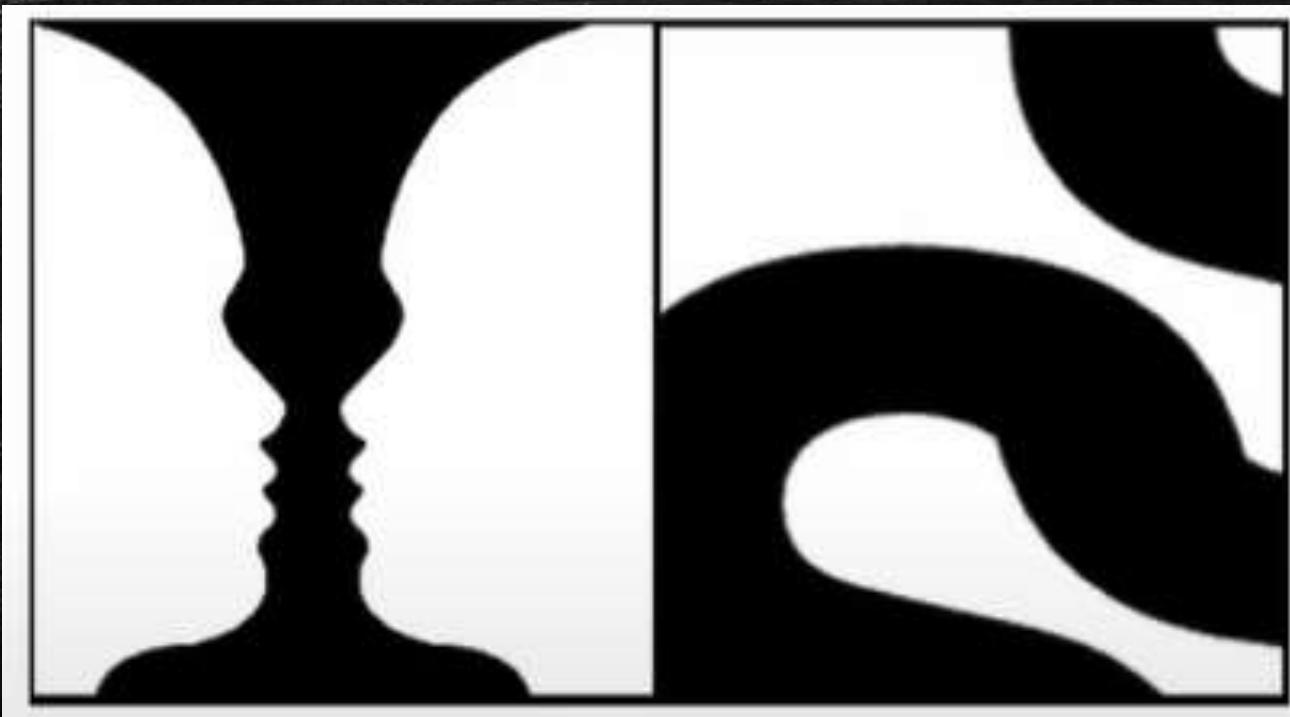
# Where do people look first?



# 1. Figure Ground Relationship:

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Put Simply: Differentiate the subject from the background





# Creating Good Figure Ground Relationship:

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AKA: how to immediately draw the eye

1. Depth of field
2. Contrast
3. Isolation









# Creating Good Figure Ground Relationship:

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# Creating Good Figure Ground Relationship:

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AKA: how to immediately draw the eye

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# 3 x Other Methods of Isolation:

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AKA: how to immediately draw the eye

1. Framing
2. Fill the frame
3. Simplicity





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# 3 x Other Methods of Isolation:

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AKA: how to immediately draw the eye

1. Framing
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3. Simplicity



# 3 x Other Methods of Isolation:

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AKA: how to immediately draw the eye

1. Framing
2. Fill the frame
3. Simplicity





# What we have learnt: Figure / Ground

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- **ALWAYS** consider Figure / Ground and use it to immediately draw the eye, different ways to add impact & really make your subject stand out using:
  1. Depth of field
  2. Contrast (light, colour, or content)
  3. Isolation (Framing, Filling Frame or Simplicity)

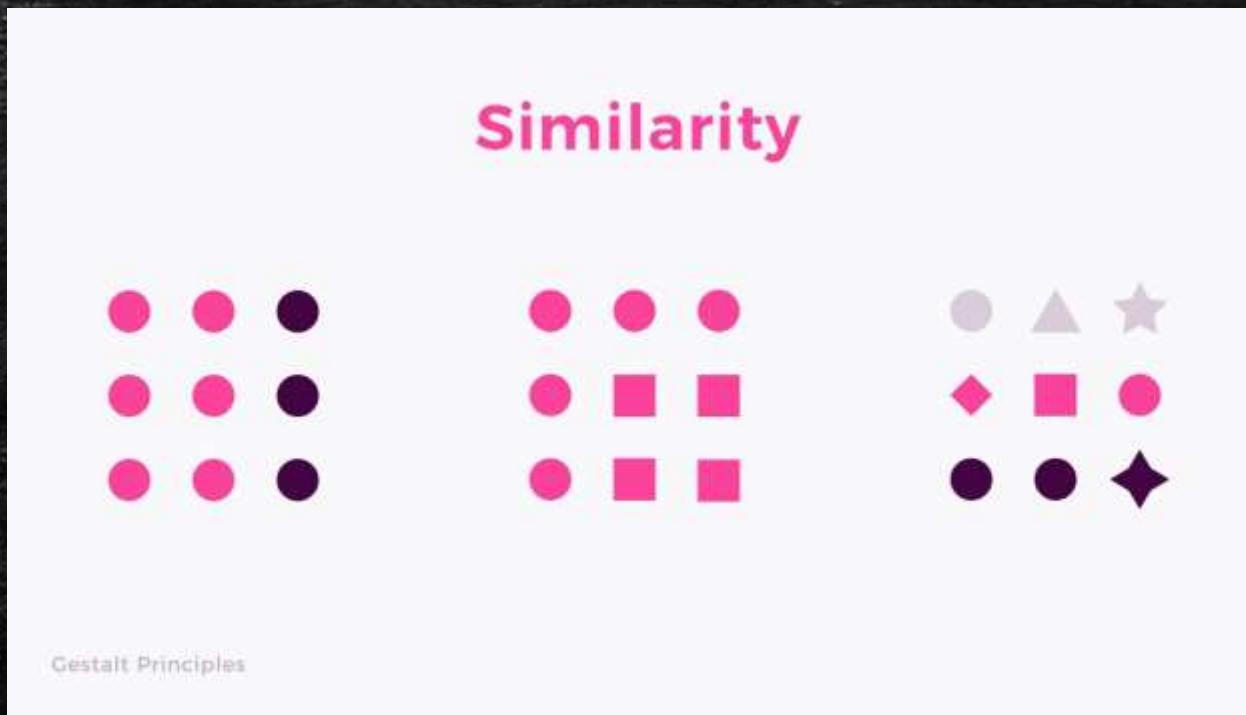
## Bonus Learning:

- Less is more, craft images with no superfluous elements
- Try to previsualize – ask yourself “Does say what I want it to say?”

## 2. Similarity:

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Put Simply: *our eyes group together similar elements*

















STRATHBERRY



# What we have learnt: Similarity

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- We can use the law of similarity to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative by:
  1. Using it isolate / make subject standout
  2. Implying a relationship with a similar object
  3. For humorous effect
  4. Colour matching for additional cohesion
  5. Master pictures of patterns and texture

## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

### 3. Continuation:

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Put Simply: *the viewer's eyes are taken beyond the subject & continue through the image*













# What we have learnt: Continuation

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- We can also use the law of continuation to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative by:
  1. Planning a route thought are images to the punchline
  2. Allowing things can exist outside our image, we can include less
  3. Creating playful images for the viewer

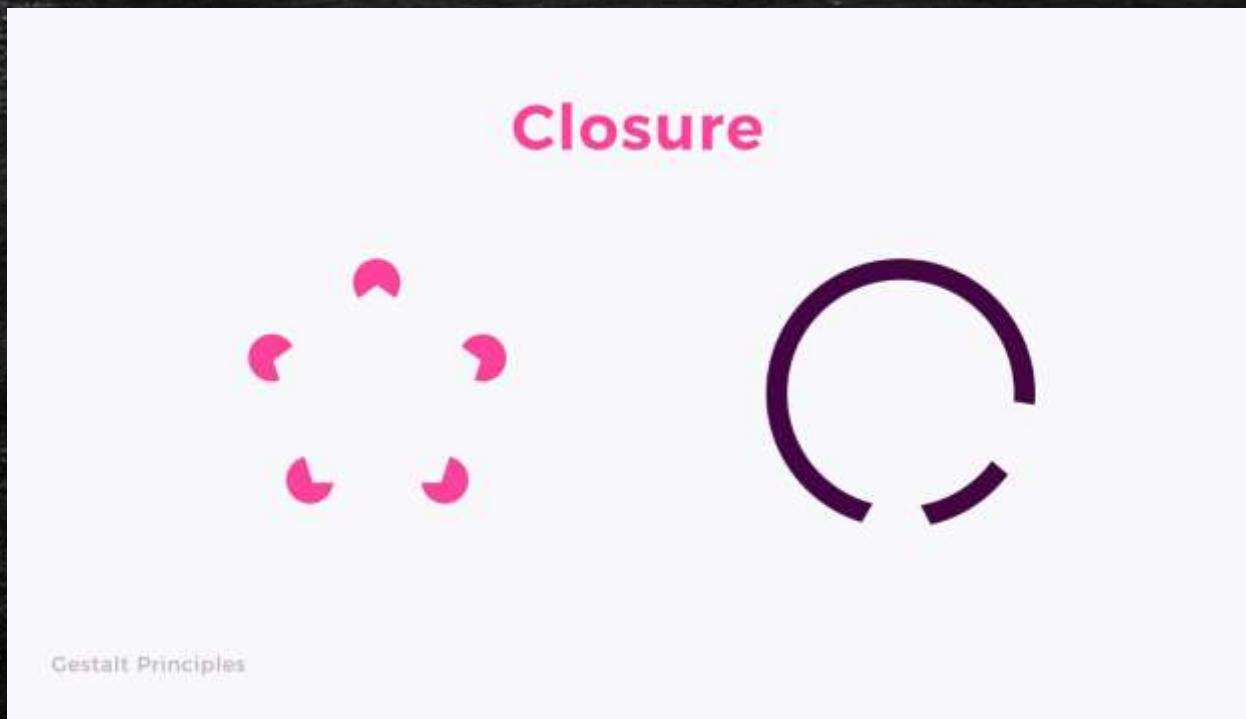
## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

## 4. Closure:

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Put Simply: Our minds ability to complete unfinished objects

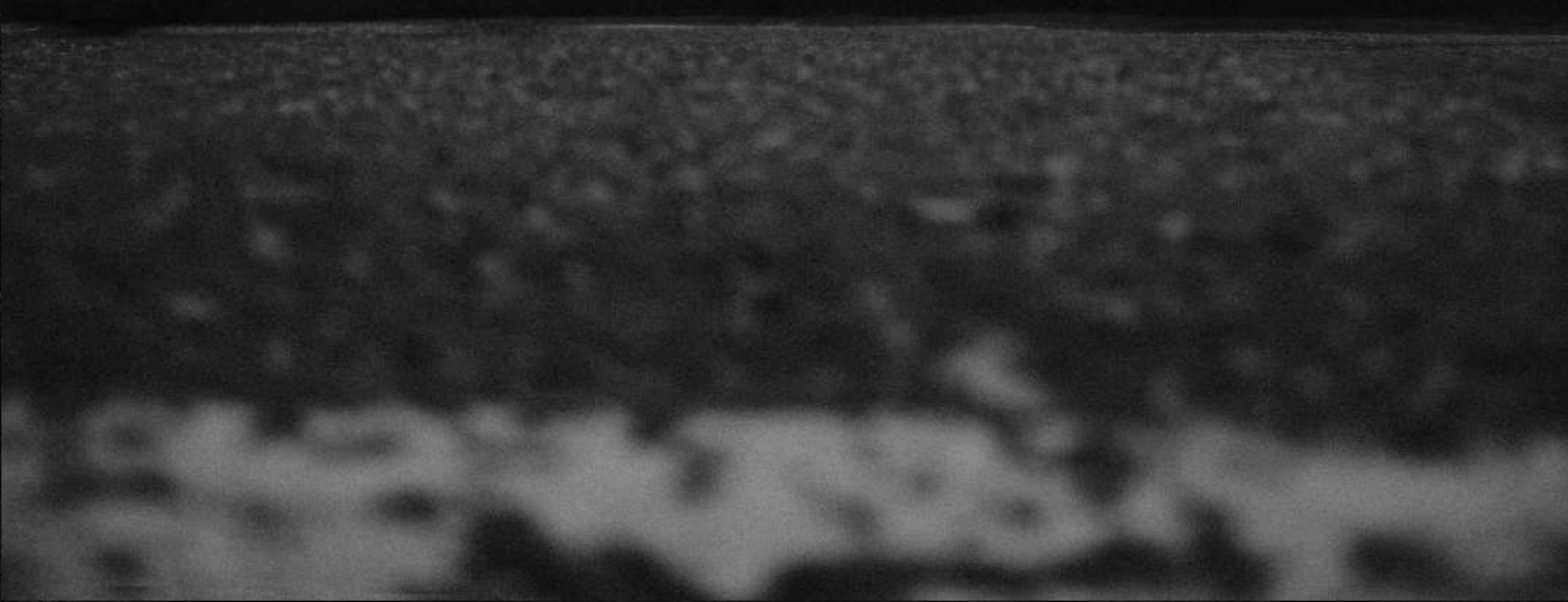


## 4. Closure:

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Top Tip: Our minds enjoy solving a puzzle, so incomplete scenes present a joyful challenge, providing the cues are available for closure to occur

















# What we have learnt: Closure

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- We can also use the law of closure to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative by:
  1. Use graphical elements
  2. Allowing things can exist outside our image, we can include less
  3. Creating playful images for the viewer
  4. Master pictures of patterns and texture

## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

## 5. Proximity:

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Put Simply: Our minds group objects close to each other















# What we have learnt: Proximity

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- We can also use the law of proximity to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative:
  1. Including emotions such as intimacy, isolation, polarization, etc.
  2. By grouping for artistic effect
  3. Creating meaningful images for the viewer
  4. Master pictures of patterns and texture

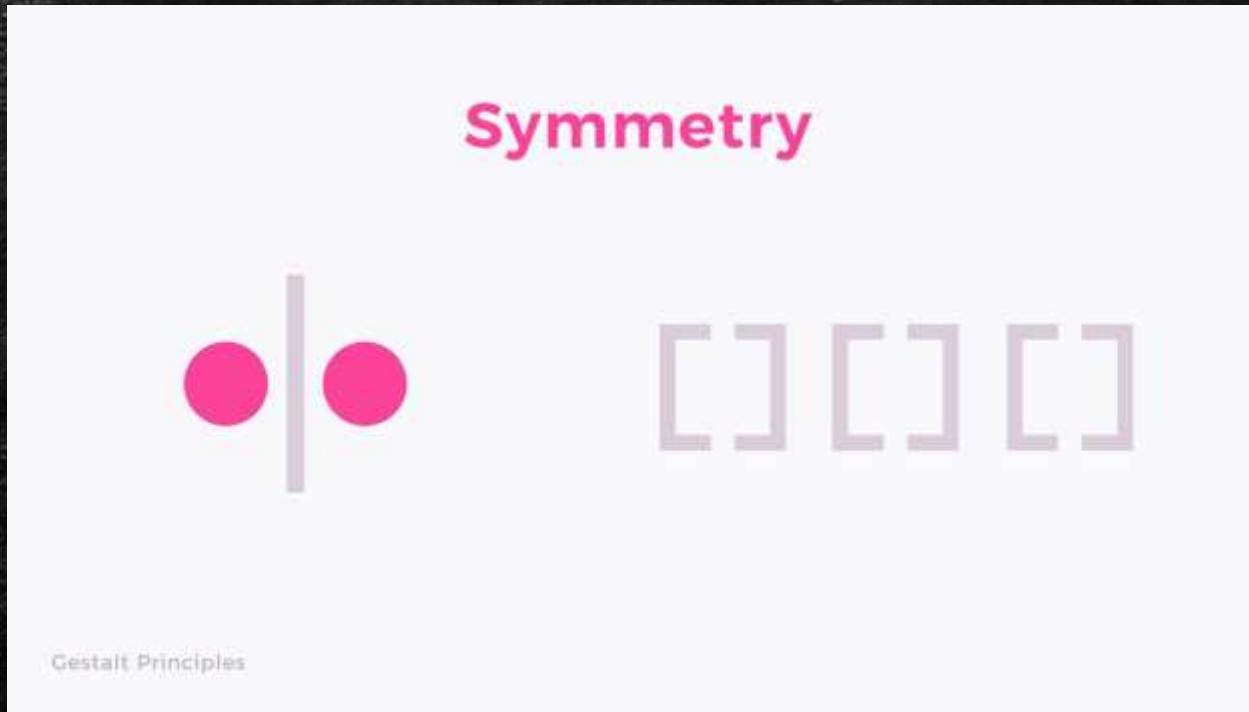
## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

## 6. Symmetry:

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Put Simply: Our minds consider everything symmetrical one thing

















# What we have learnt: Symmetry

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- We can also use the law of Symmetry to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative:
  1. By breaking it with our main subject.
  2. By implying it for artistic effect
  3. To simplify complex images

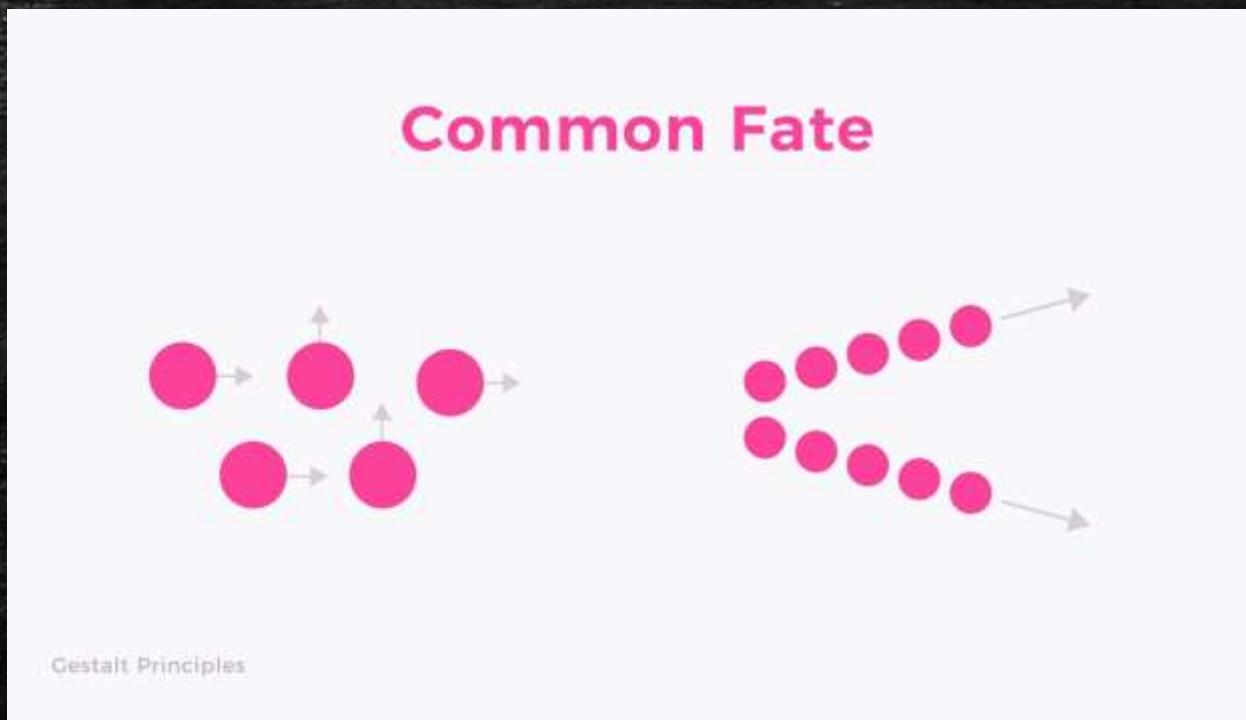
## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

## 7. Common Fate:

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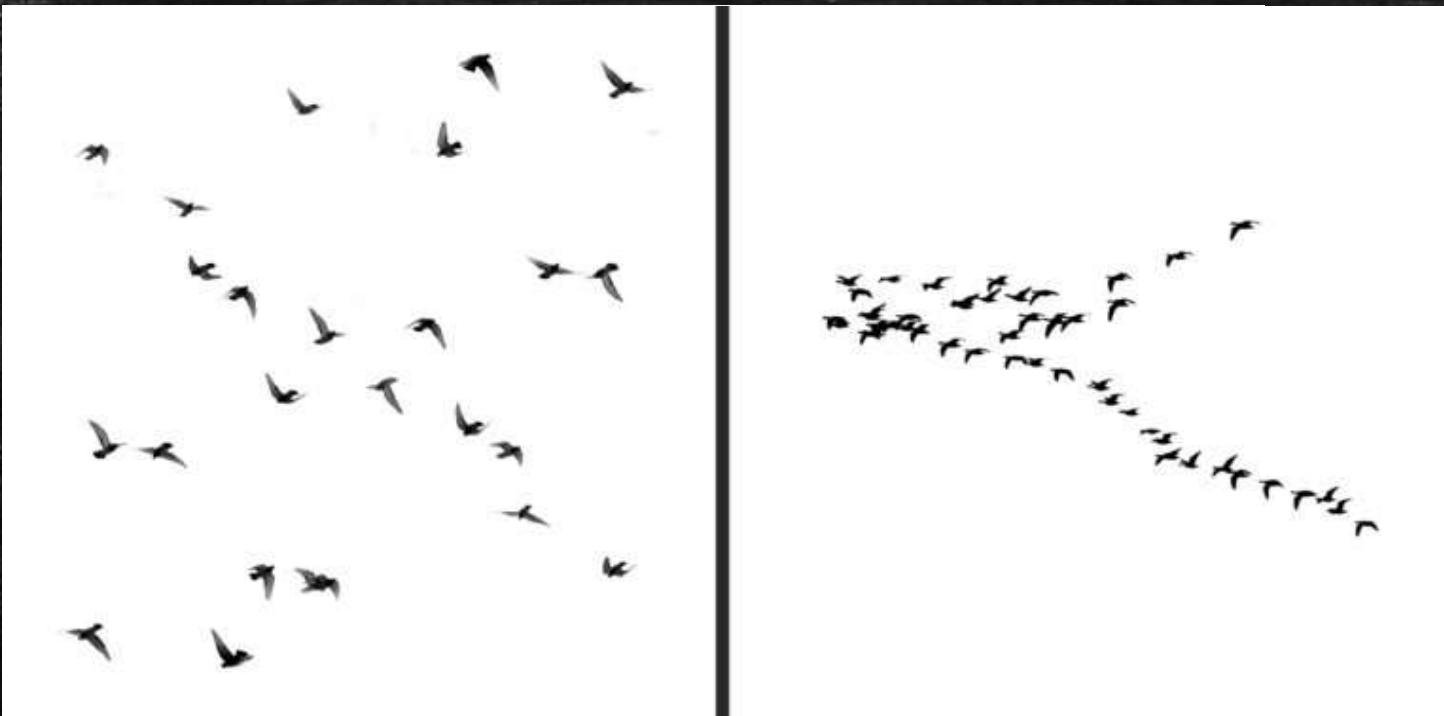
Put Simply: Objects moving in the same direction are grouped



## 7. Common Fate:

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Put Simply: lots of birds    V    1 x group (or flock)





**LOVE**











TURN  
RIGHT

# What we have learnt: Common Fate

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- We can also use the law of Common Fate to help us deliver a simpler to understand message and build narrative:
  1. By organising the content into simple groups.
  2. Make your subject more obvious
  3. To simplify complex images
  4. To build tension or build up the idea

## Bonus Learning:

- Its clever use can add real value to an image
- It forms a fundamental part of a visual language

# Your Lunchtime Assignment(s):

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Upload 3 x images to the link in the chat window from either:

A) Your Current Images:

Find & Upload 3 x of either your favorites or best gestalt examples to:

<https://amershamstudios.smugmug.com/upload/FXvGwf/up>

B) Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq4sN2vqKq4>

C) Optional Practical:

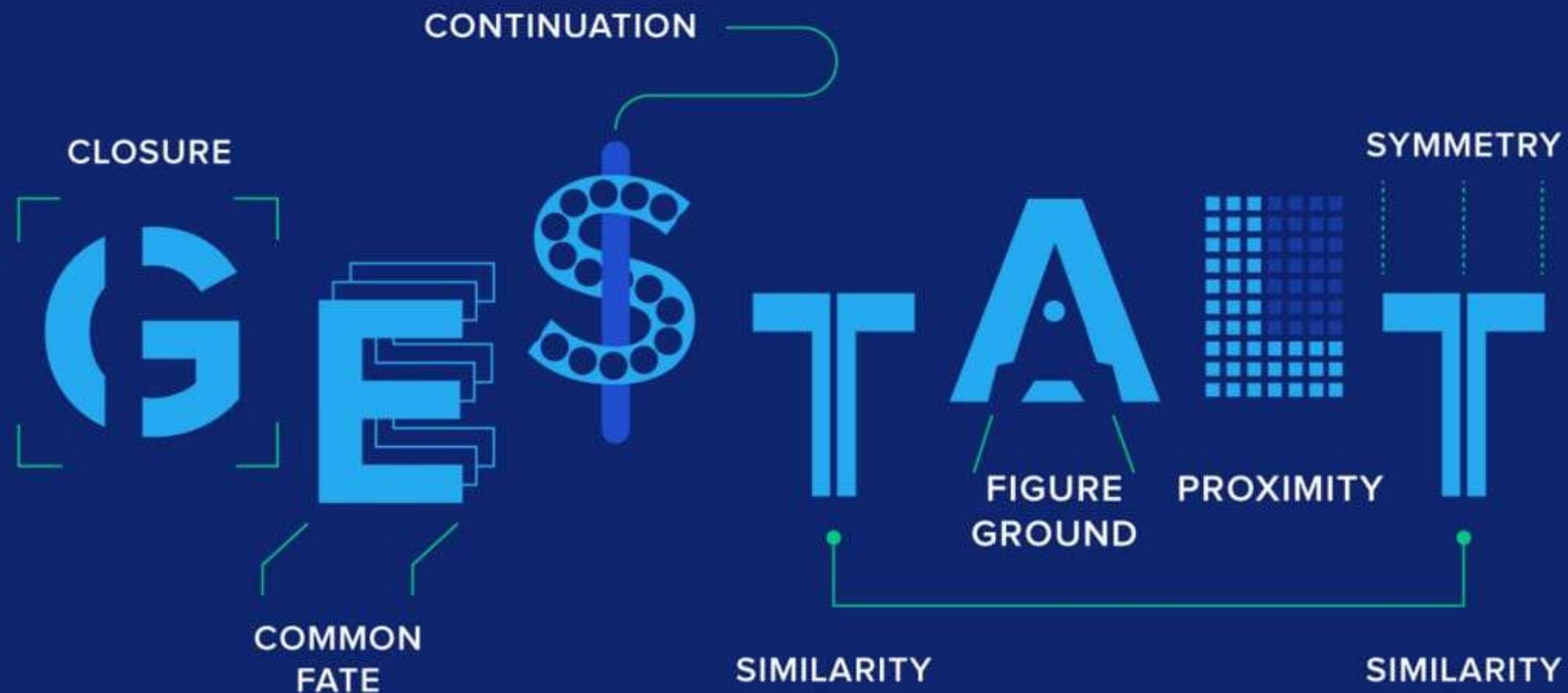
Shoot images which capitalize on the Gestalt rules.

(Figure to ground, Similarity, Continuation, Closure, Proximity, Symmetry, Common fate)

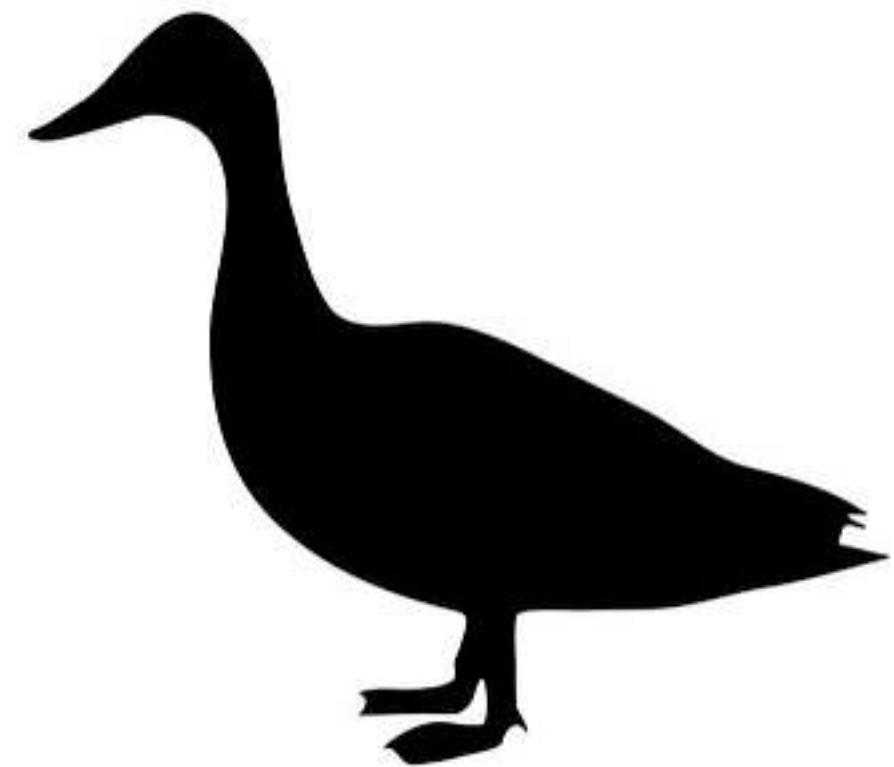
# Your Turn...

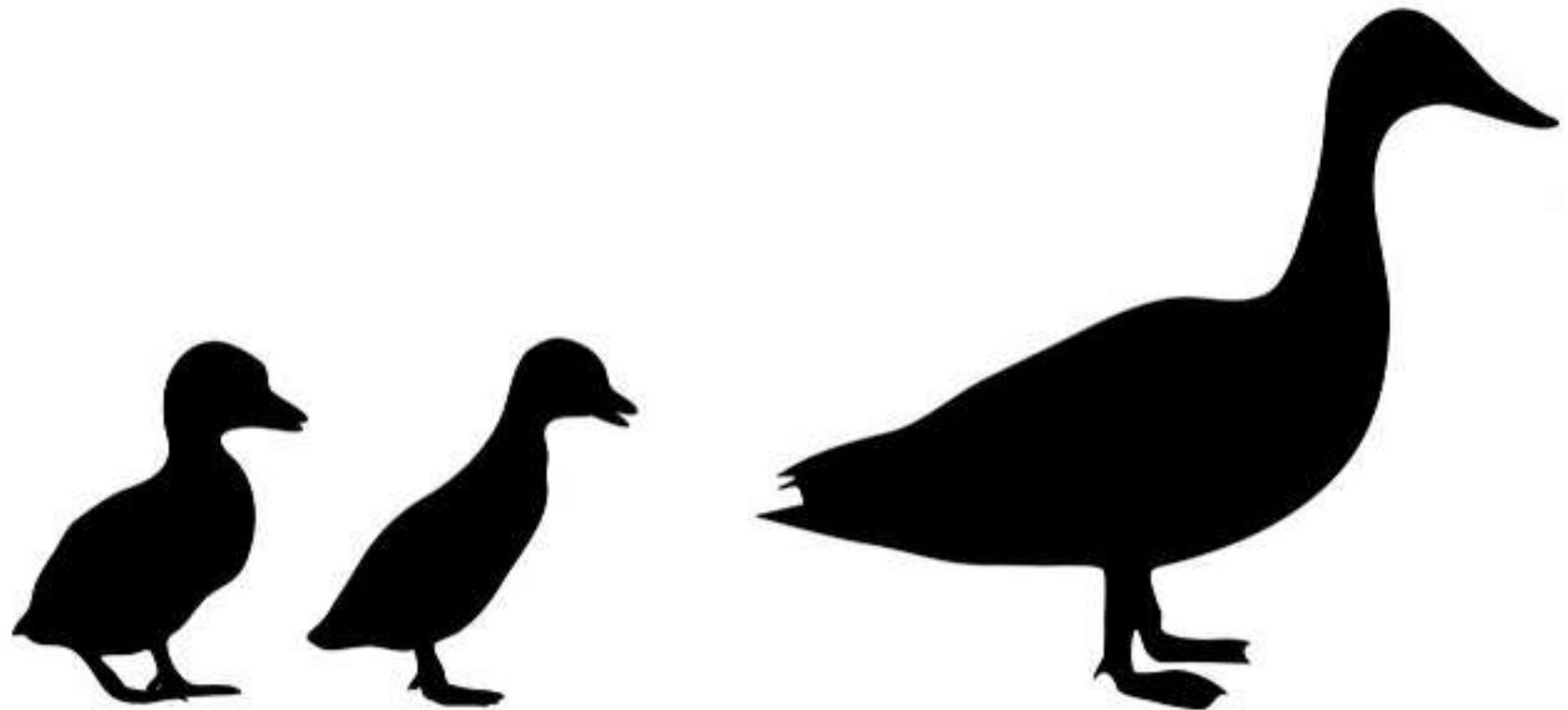
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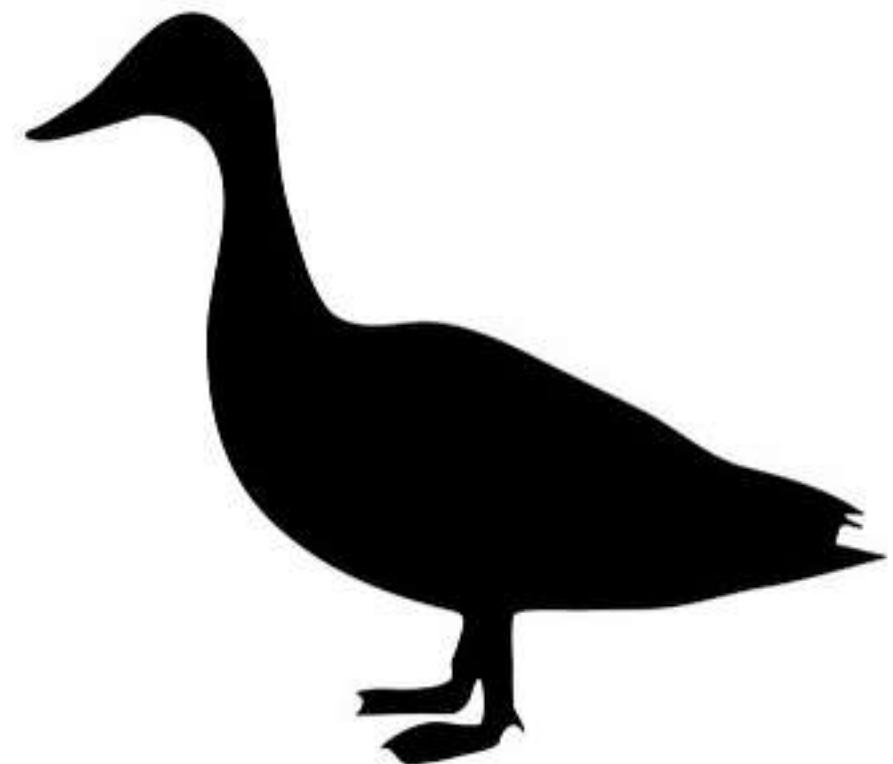
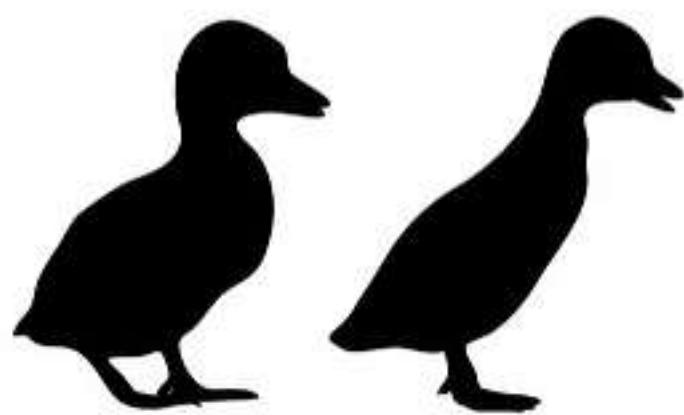
To please the viewers eye, you need to understand how the viewers eye works.

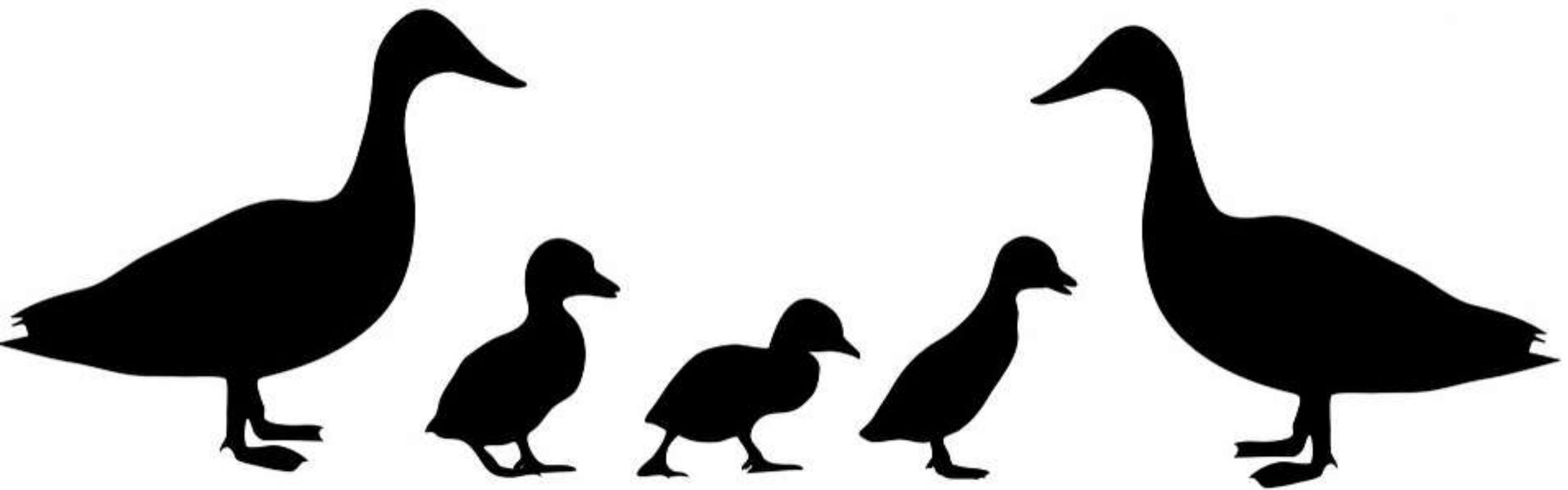


Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual

















Self-Portrait, 1954

VM1954W02936-11-MC





# Key Learning Points:

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## Key Learning:

- Always consider the figure / ground relationship
- Use DoF, Contrast, Isolation, Framing, Filling the frame, Simplicity to add impact to your subject
- Keep images as simple as possible to deliver your message
- The less elements the more impact the remaining ones have
- Use less important objects to point to more important ones
- Use the rules to add narrative
- Use the curiosity gap and allow viewer to think for themselves
- Look to create as much physical contrast in your content

# Your Images...

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To please the viewers eye, you need to understand how the viewers eye works.

# Next Steps...

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To please the viewers eye, you need to understand how the viewers eye works.



L O N D O N  
S O H O (D A Y)

I x Day In-Person Workshop



L O N D O N  
S O H O (N I G H T)

I x Night In-Person Workshop

ONLINE ZOOM WORKSHOP

THE RPS

ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY



FUJIFILM MAGIC:  
NO POST REQUIRED

1 x Day Zoom Workshop

ONLINE ZOOM WORKSHOP

THE RPS

ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY



NATURAL LIGHT  
PORTRAITURE

1 x Day Zoom Workshop

ONLINE ZOOM WORKSHOP

THE **RPS**

ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY



COMPELLING STREET  
INGREDIENTS

**6 x Week Zoom Workshop**

ONLINE ZOOM WORKSHOP



THE **RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT:  
STREET PHOTOGRAPHY I

**16 x Week Zoom Workshop**

