The biggest difference between two dimensional design and three dimensional design is, obviously, that third dimension. So when you are developing a design in two dimension you have only to consider the placement within the plane of the canvas or page. When designing in three dimensions it s important to consider every view. In certain cases it may even be necessary to consider every angle. Each significant view must be considered as you would consider a two dimensional design. The most interesting piece tend to surprise the viewer as the pass from one view to the next with and unexpected set of forms.

To clarify when I say “view” I mean each position that the piece can be viewed from, and when I say “significant view” I mean each view that is significantly different from the others. So when viewing a russian nesting doll as an, admittedly random, example there is usually on two significant views and one of them is of predominant interest, the side with the face. In the case of the nesting doll this is a product of tradition, if the design of a nesting doll were to be considered in a new light you might decide to add a number of interesting views for added interest. Though the nesting doll has the added benefit of the layering, so technically there are many more than just the two views. It should be said that in general it is a good rule of thumb that if you can consider one particular view to be the “front” the design is unbalanced and the other views might need more development.

In the case of a wall mounted piece there may be as few as one significant view, though more interesting pieces that better exploit their three dimensionality may have as many as four or five. Wall mounting a piece is a good way to better control what the viewer will be seeing, but it can tend to literally and figuratively flatten the work out. But in most wall mounted pieces there are three views, the first would be the view when looking directly at the piece (most wall pieces are mounted at eye level) the two additional views would be to the extreme right and left of the work. Again it is a good Idea to try and develop some interesting differences between these views.

To be clear, the purpose of such rules are not to impose so rigid rubric by which you measure artwork, the purpose is to guide a new or unsure artists in developing a dialogue with the viewer. After all what is art without someone to view it. You should also think about how the viewer will be approaching the piece, if they have to walk around the piece to see everything then a good idea is to walk around it yourself as you sculpt it. At the heart of three dimensional design the goal is to not only create an interesting art of art but to make an interesting work of art that take advantage of all three dimensions. If you aren’t use all three dimensions than you might as well use paint or ink, and save yourself the effort and expense of three dimensional materials.

**And that my take on three dimensional design.**