Graphic design

(Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying
and Love the Grid)

Ollie Palmer / AKV St Joost / Nov 2019

Who this is for

This is a short guide to making any graphic content: posters, diagrams, books, zines, websites, etc. It’s useful for anyone who has to make graphic content.

Often the job of graphic layouts can be confusing: so many fonts, ways to lay things out, the horror of a blank page! A few simple rules will make your life easier.

Purpose

Graphics are there to facilitate the transfer of your knowledge to the audience.

They should present information in a logical, ordered way, with a clear hierarchy, whilst not distracting the reader.

Hierarchy

Put the most important information
in the most prominent place.

It’s far easier to work this out on paper than on a computer.

The most important information in the most prominent place

All other information in order of importance

really cool
band name

date + time

venue name
123 streetstraat
townville 1234 AB

012 345 6789
coolband.com

This poster is now advertising the date and time, not the band!

Complete lack of structure results in incoherence

Typography

Serif

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur, adipiscing elit fusce dictumst etiam varius, cum convallis et mus.

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Sans-serif

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur, adipiscing elit fusce dictumst etiam varius, cum convallis et mus.

Suscipit tellus eget aptent etiam cubilia tortor eros faucibus fringilla malesuada mus, hendrerit montes felis nisi ullamcorper vivamus in dui dictumst. Conubia purus libero mus amet morbi dolor et tempor, iaculis lacinia potenti tristique cras quam mi, per nisl ante tempus elit ligula varius.

serif

How many fonts?

Only use one or two typefaces per document.

If combining fonts, make sure each one brings something fresh and distinct. A sans-serif body mixed with a serif header, or vice-versa, often works well.

If in doubt, stick with one sans-serif typeface.

General rule

Use sans-serif typefaces!

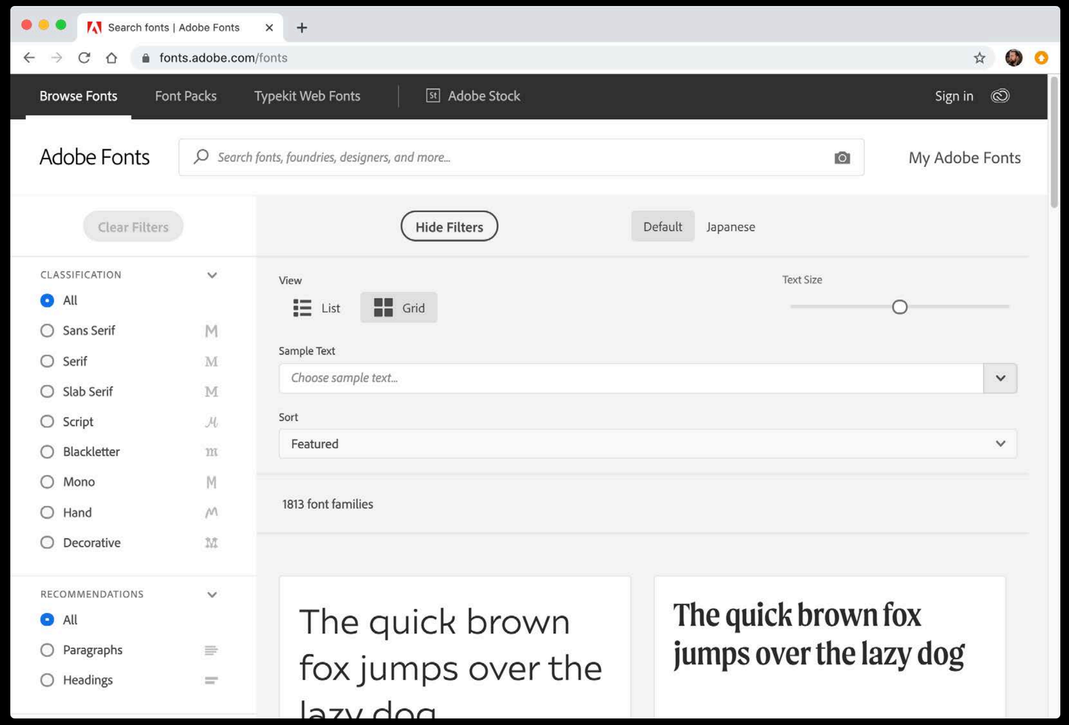
They are cleaner, and easier
to read from a distance.

Helvetica Neue, Acumin Pro, Aktiv Grotesk,
and Proxima Nova are all solid choices.

Look for a family

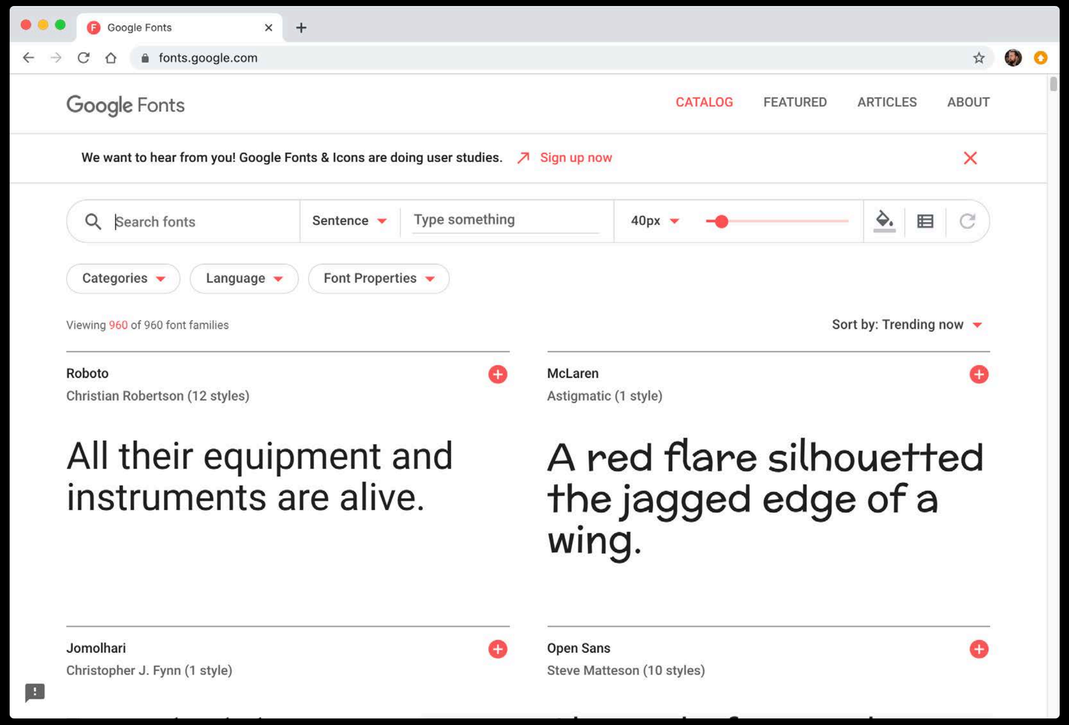
A type family will enable you to vary the **emphasis** without confusing your reader.

If you have an Adobe Creative Cloud subscription:



fonts.adobe.com

else:



fonts.google.com

Helvetica Neue

UltraLight
Thin
Light
Regular
Medium
Bold

UltraLight Italic
Thin Italic
Light Italic
Regular Italic
Medium Italic
Bold Italic

Aktiv Grotesk

Hairline
Light
Regular
Medium
Bold
XBold

Proxima Nova

Light
Regular
Semibold
Bold
Extrabold

Acumin Pro

Extra Light
Light
Regular
Medium
Semibold
Bold
Black
Ultra Black

Sabon

Roman
Italic
Bold

Minion

Medium
Medium Italic
Semibold
Semibold Italic
Bold
Bold Italic
Bold Cond

Adobe Caslon

Regular
Italic
Semibold
Bold

Adobe Garamond

Regular
Regular Italic
Bold
Bold Italic

Source Sans Pro

ExtraLight
ExtraLight Italic
Light
Light Italic
Semibold
Semibold Italic
Bold
Bold Italic
Black
Black Italic

Consolas

Regular
Italic
Bold
Bold Italic

Ordering information

You should be able to use a limited number of type styles:

- Title
- Heading 1 / 2 / 3
- Body text
- Quote
- Footnote

Anything else should be implied through your layout.

date + time
Heading 2
really cool
band name
Heading 1
venue name
123 streetstraat
townville 1234 AB
012 345 6789
coolband.com
Heading 2
Paragraph

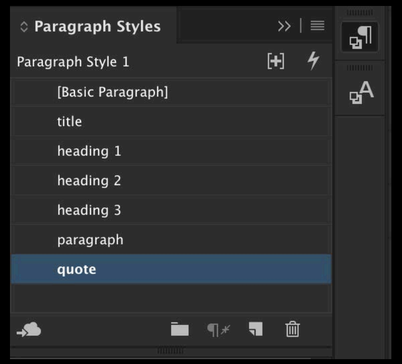
Stylesheets

Stylesheets save you time, and ensure visual consistency.

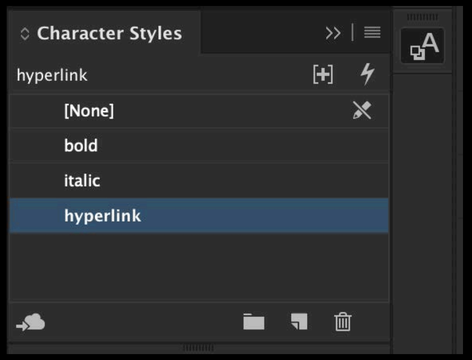
Stylesheets

This is a paragraph. All of the words within it will be formatted in the same style, unless they're **overridden** by *character* styles.

Avoid the **B** ***I*** U buttons; use Character Styles instead. If you have to change styles later, they will all change at once!



Paragraph Styles



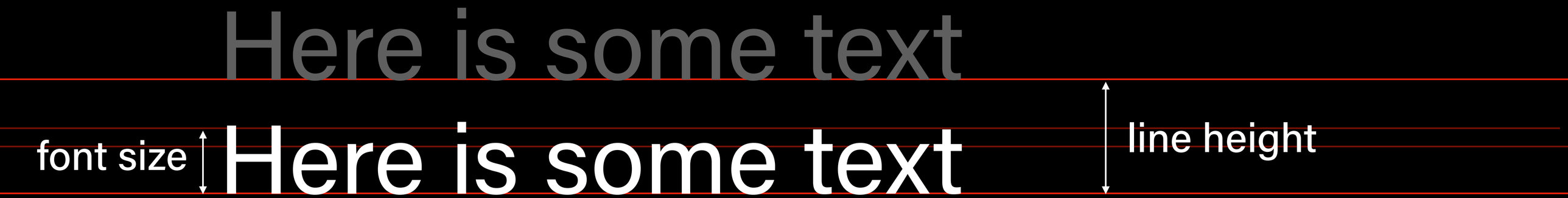
Character Styles

Breathing space

Make sure there is a balance of white space to enable your work to “breathe”

It’s too easy to cram everything onto one page. A few well-placed graphics say far more than a wall of dense, hard-to-interpret information.

Here is some text


Here is some text
font size
Here is some text
line height

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

The quick brown
fox jumped over
the lazy dog.

The quick brown
fox jumped over
the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor

Line heights

Use consistent font sizes and line heights.

A good rule of thumb is 1:1.5 font height to line height:

- 10pt font / 15pt line height
- 20pt font / 30pt line height
- 40pt font / 60pt line height

Making your line heights multiples of each other means it's easier to make sure lines of text are in line with each other!

Widows

Widows are single words at the end of a paragraph.

Ut molestie tortor in mi commodo facilisis. Nam molestie, augue et placerat porta, eros risus volutpat nibh, tincidunt porttitor enim velit id eros. Nullam et quam et elit posuere vulputate. Praesent pulvinar varius rhoncus. Aenean ac erat et lectus laoreet eleifend. Quisque et porttitor sem. In eleifend molestie lacus. Phasellus et ante sit amet lacus pulvinar porttitor sit amet quis lorem. Etiam rutrum pretium arcu quis mollis. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Vivamus eget diam nec leo bibendum tempus eget sed purus. Morbi tempor commodo tempus. Sed at pretium leo, eu placerat sapien. Donec volutpat quam.

Use a ‘soft return’ (CTRL-Enter on Mac) to avoid them!

Type: recap

Pick 1-2 typefaces and stick with them
If in doubt, sans-serif
Use *families* over different fonts
Stylesheets are your friend
Give type space to breathe

Type: avoid

Don’t mix similar fonts!
Don’t use lots of typefaces
Don’t pack everything into a tiny space
Avoid widows and orphans

Colour

You can use colour palettes in the same way you use styles!

The easiest way to create complementary palettes is on color.adobe.com (no subscription required).

File formats

Using the right tool for the job
will save you time and frustration.

File formats make a big difference to your workflow! An appropriate file format will load faster, use up less space, and be easier to edit.

Bitmap

.tiff
.jpg
.png
.psd
.bmp

1.3 Mb

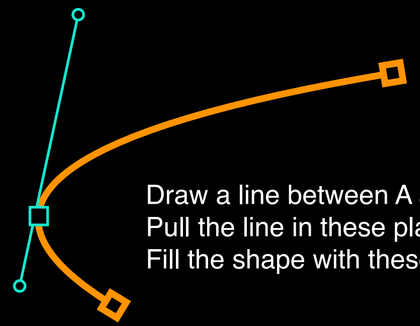
FC1033	101133	FC1034	FEEE55
98F8HH	5661DD	12FF5D	FE556H
12FF5D	101133	5661DD	HE556D
101133	12FF5D	5661DD	112G22
FE556H	F95569	FD7765	12FF5D

Each pixel is a ‘bit' of information
Bigger images = heavier images
Pixellates when blown up too much

Vector

.ai
.svg

18 Kb



All information stored as mathematical vectors
Very small file sizes

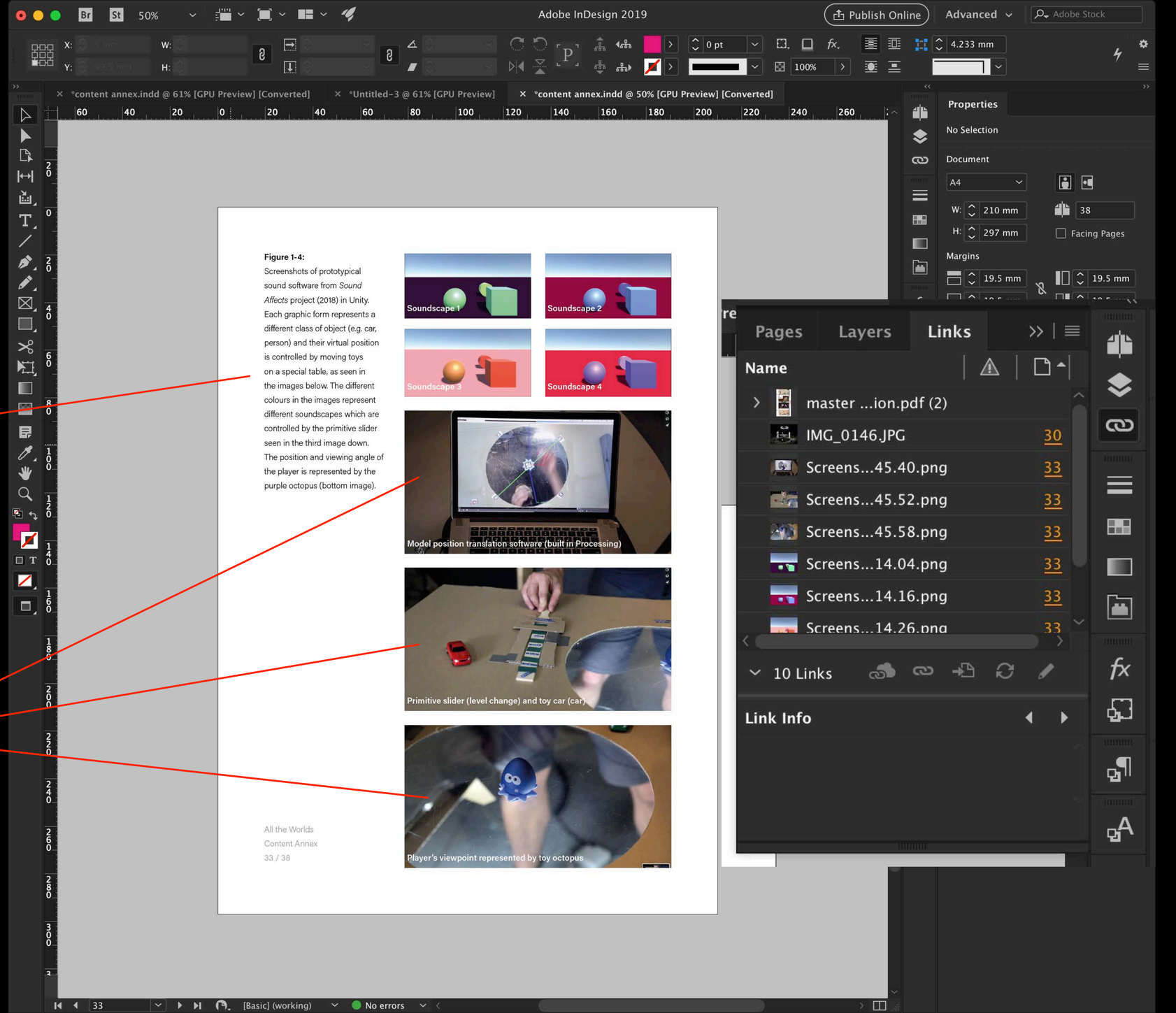
InDesign

.indd

text

images
are links

When we export the file, the images are embedded in the PDF at the appropriate resolution



NEVER

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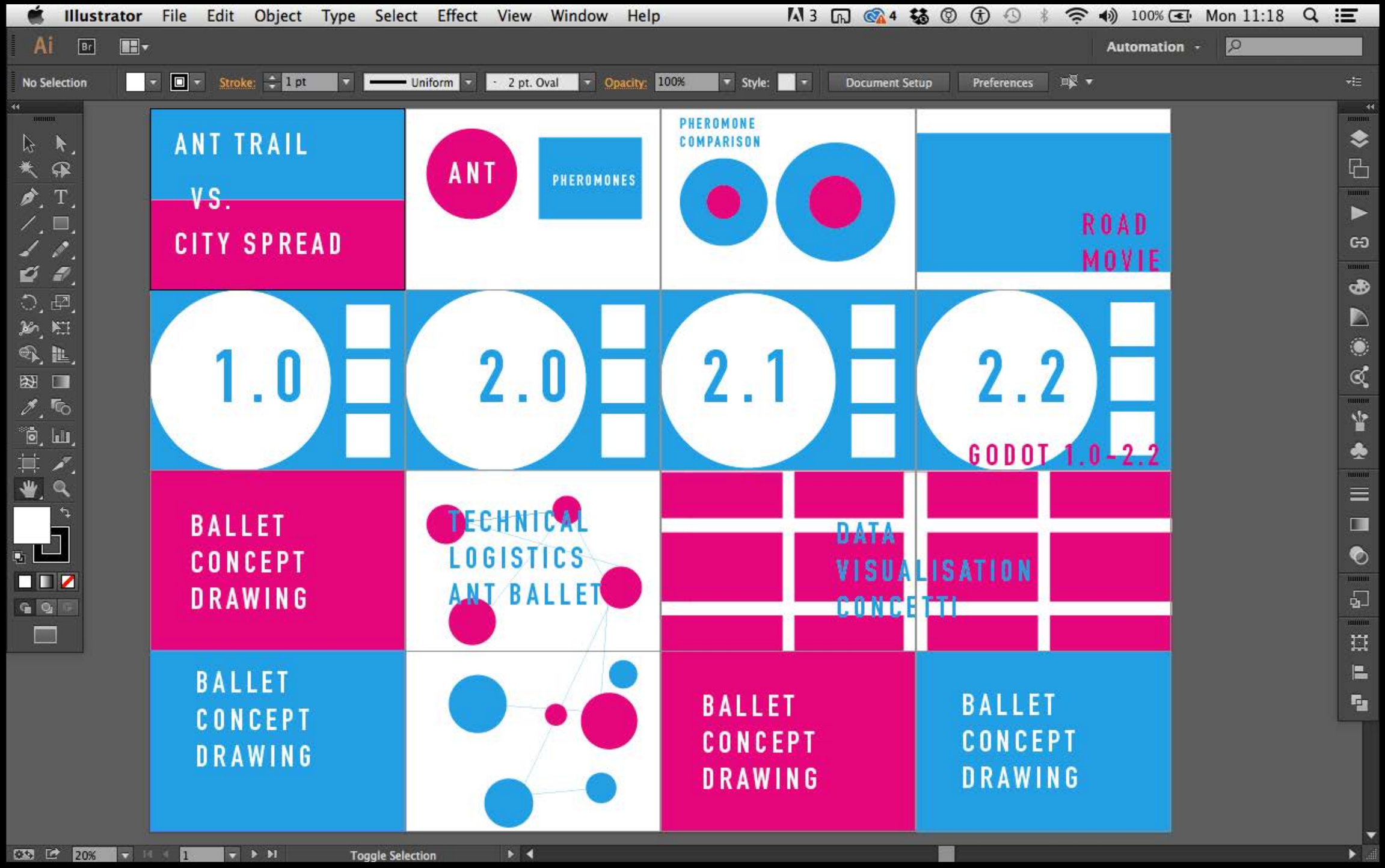
Never use Photoshop for poster design!
It is great for photo editing, but not text.

Logic and information flow

Think about the story you'd like to tell your audience, and order your information accordingly.

People read graphics in 'chunks'. Think about the ordering of those chunks – if you had to explain this idea to somebody who knew nothing about it, what would you say? Where would you start?


Illustrator File Edit Object Type Select Effect View Window Help
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Uniform
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CONCEPT
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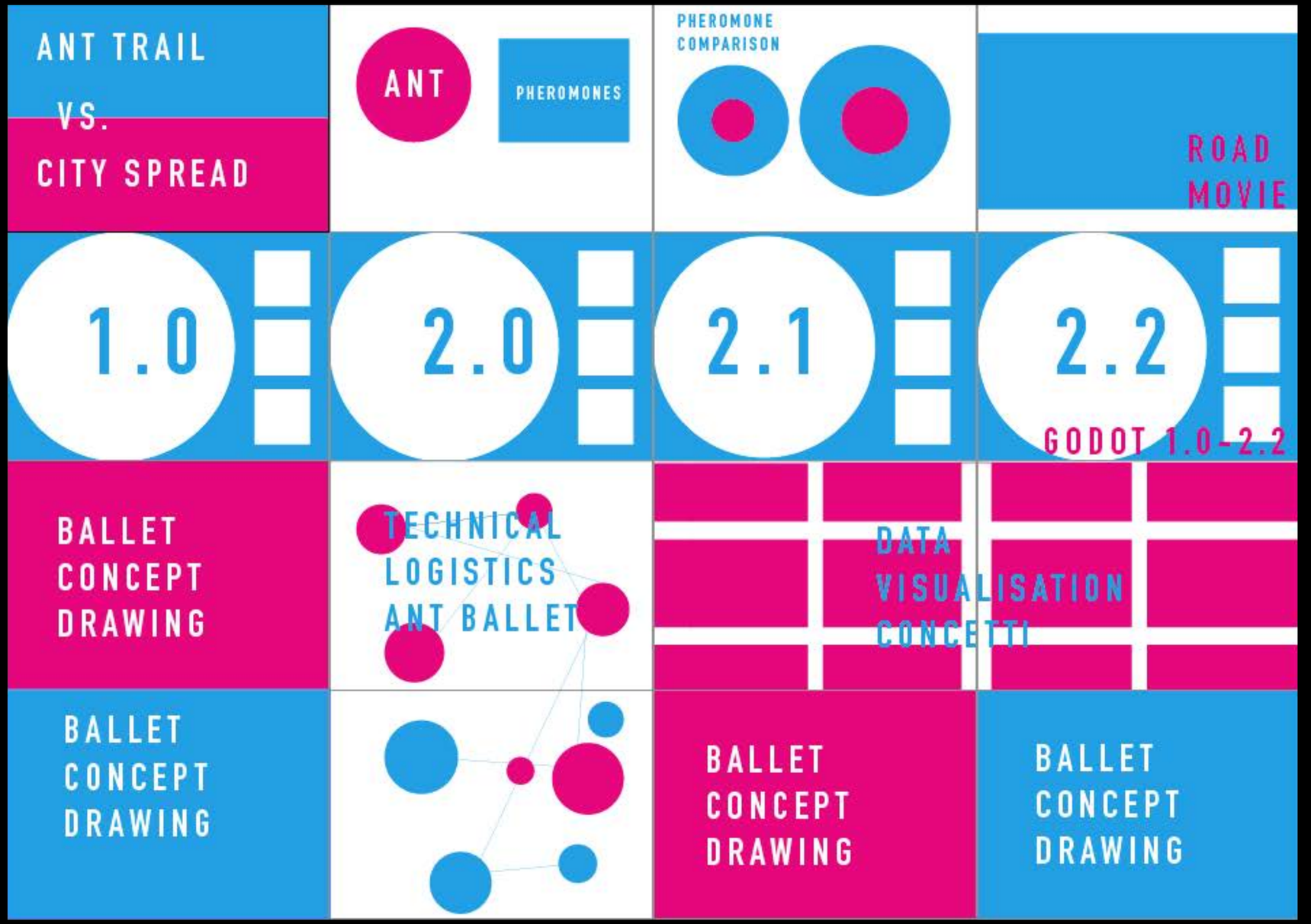
Things I've already made

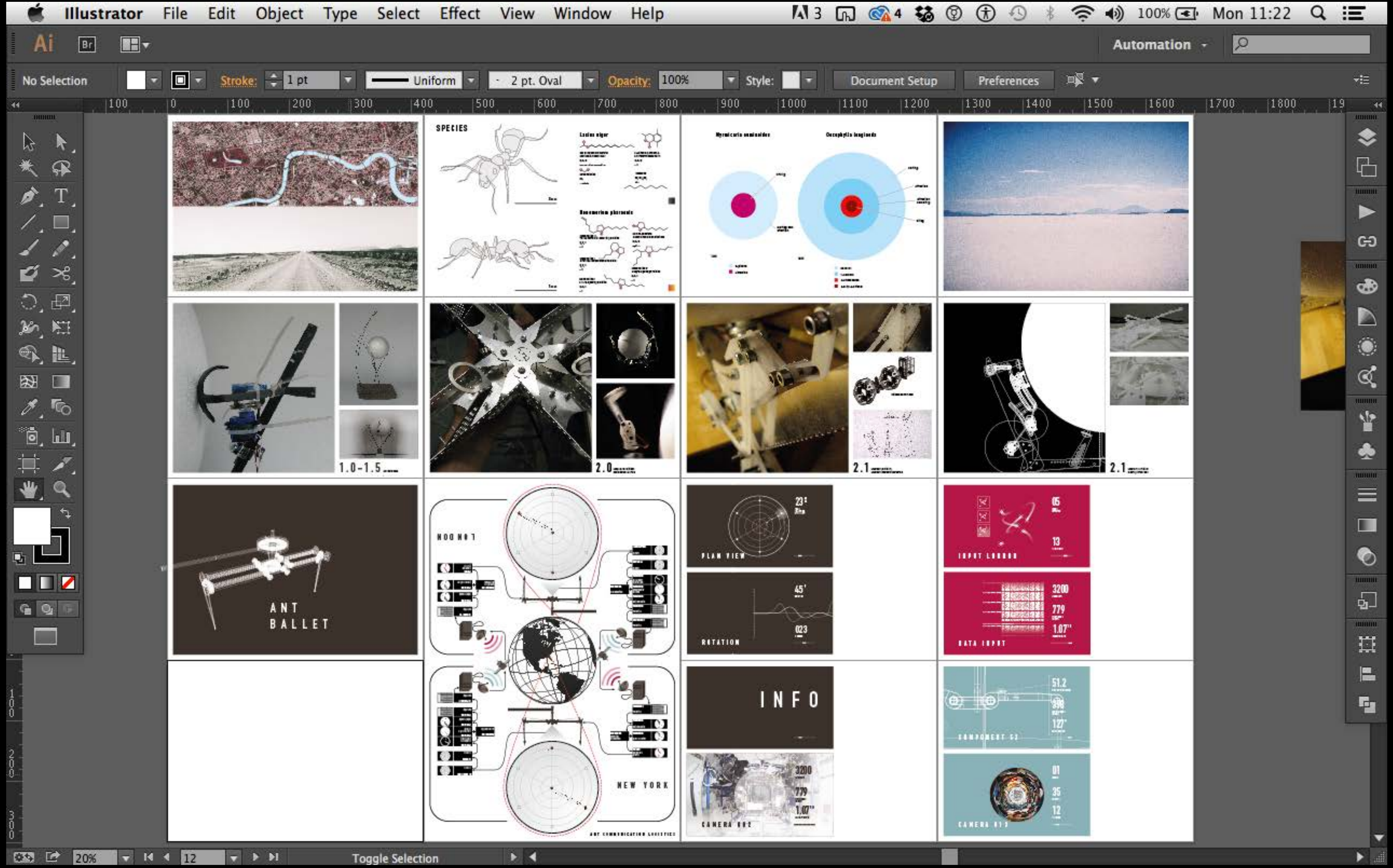
Things I want to make



Introduction

Prototype sequence

Future prototypes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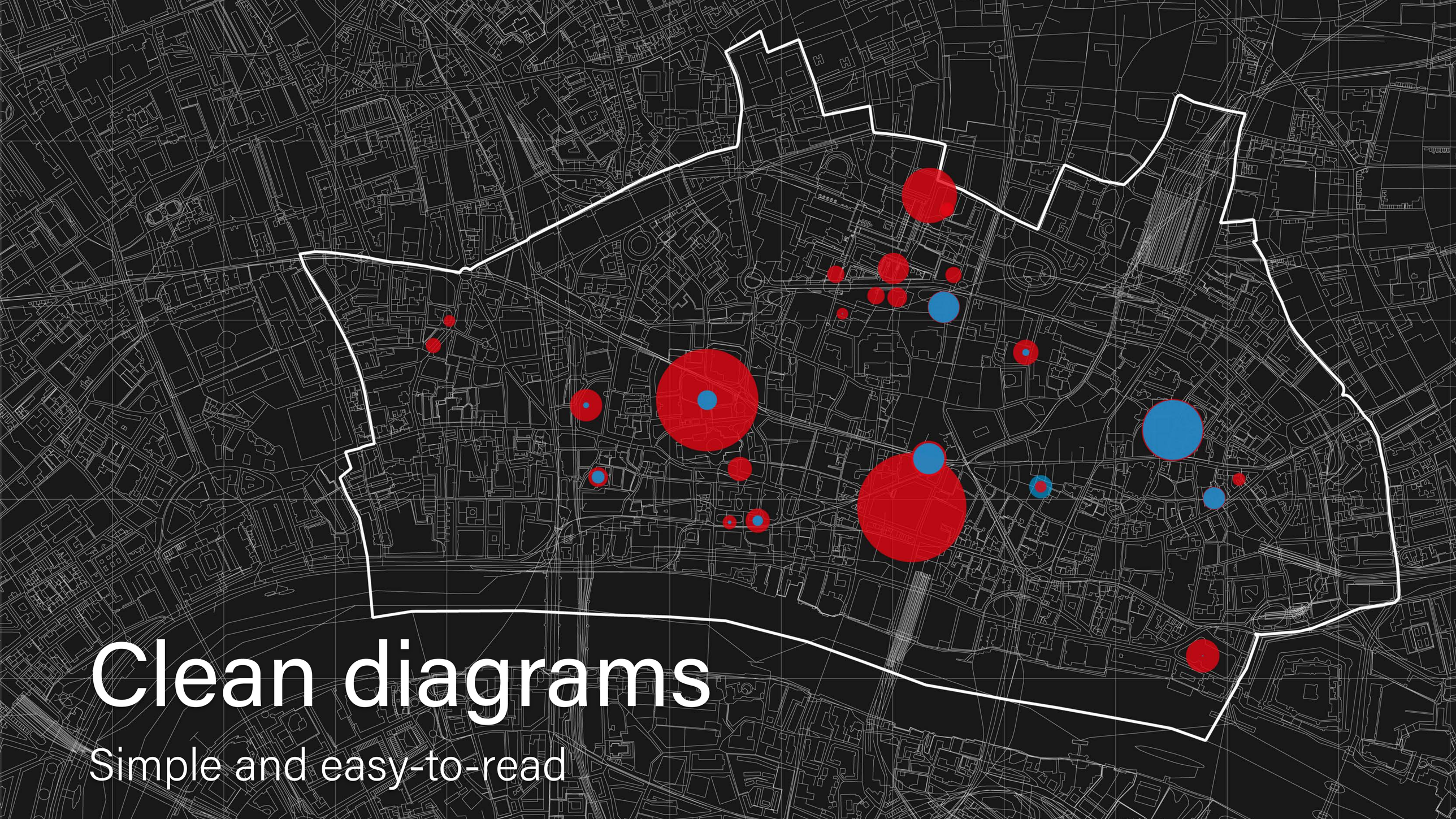
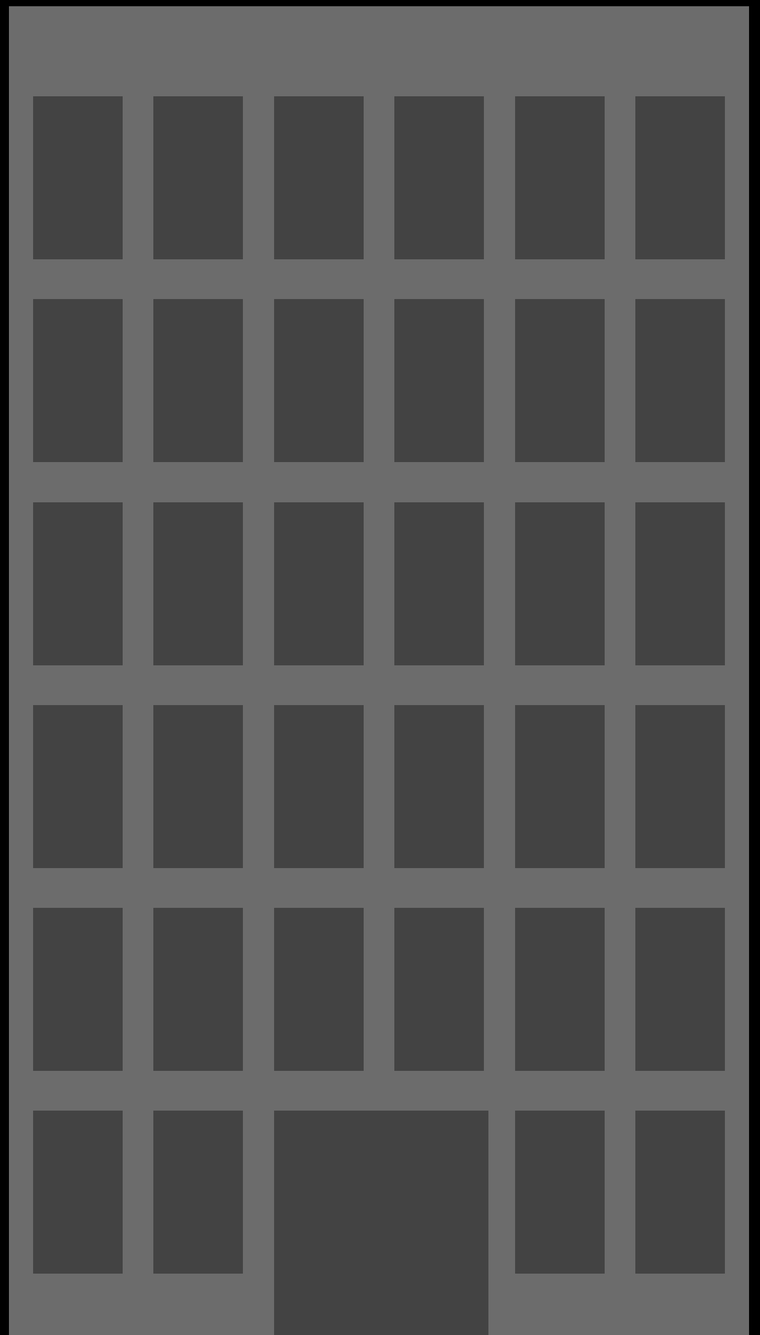

Clean diagrams
Simple and easy-to-read

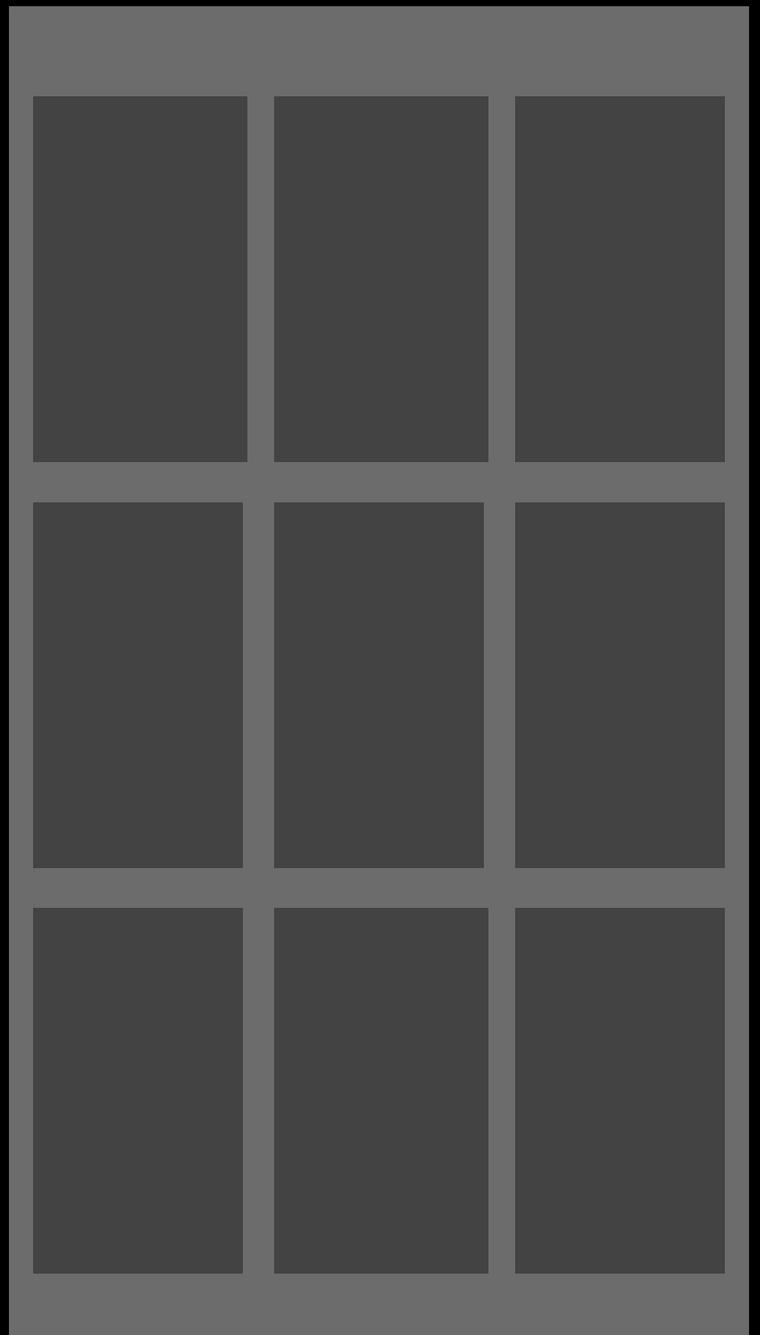
Grids

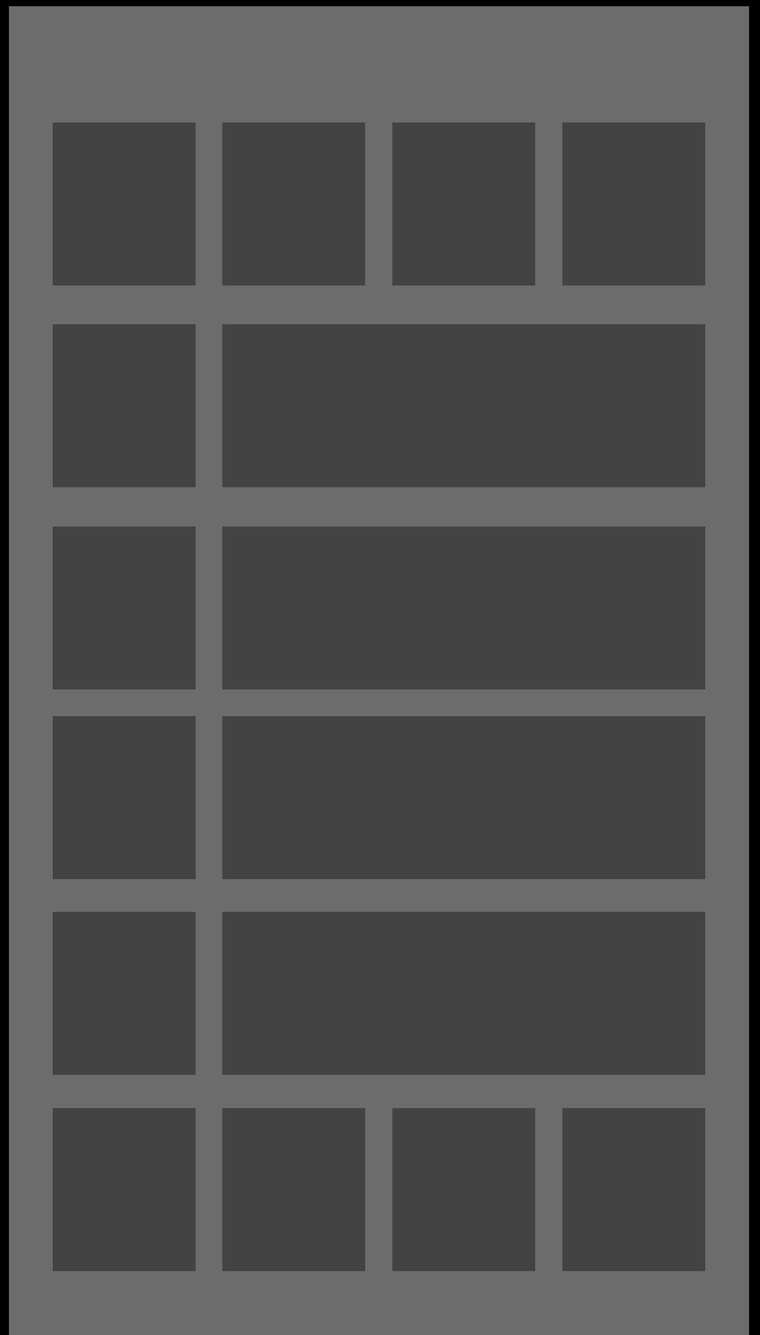
Grids are the 'invisible scaffolding' which hold graphics together.

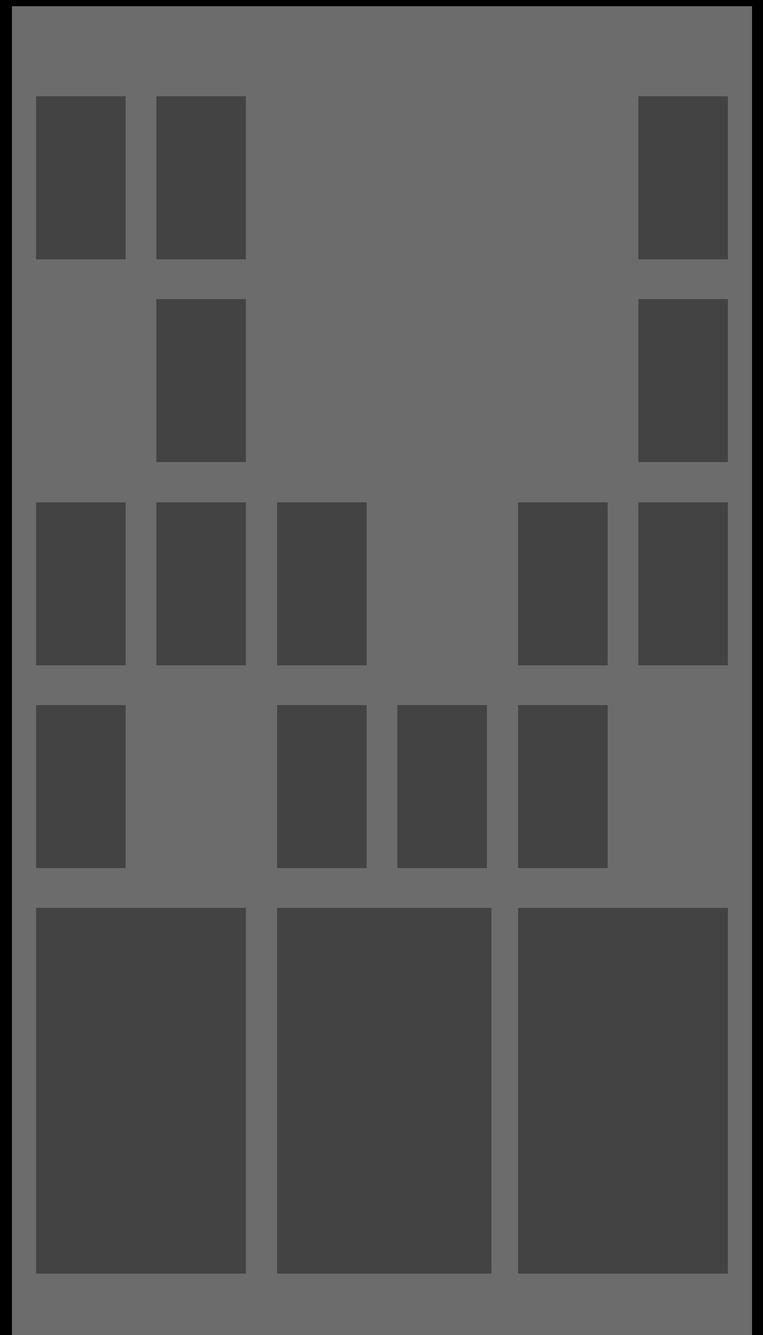
“To reach our intention nothing could be more useful than the grid. The grid represents the basic structure of our graphic design: it helps to organise thecontent, it provides consistency, it gives an orderly look and it projects a level of intellectual elegance that we like to express.”

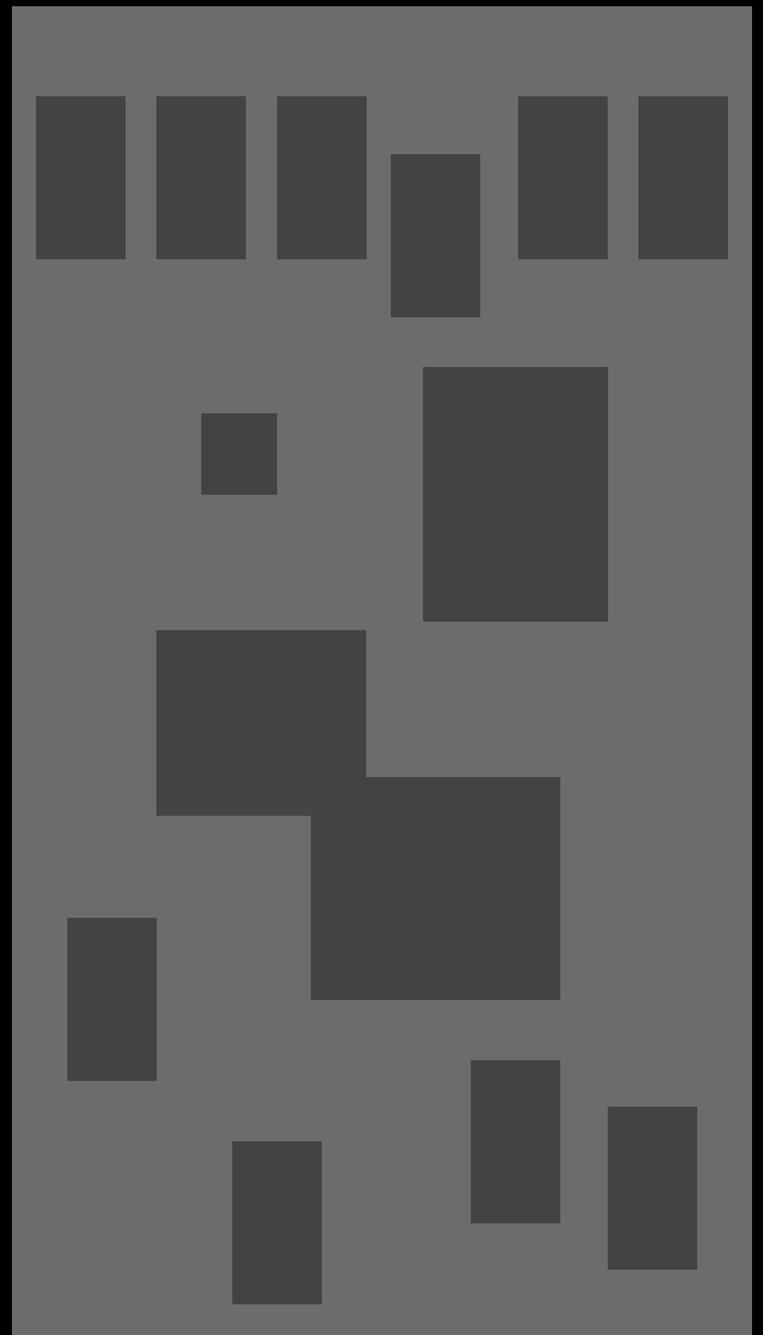
Massimo Vignelli, The Vignelli Canon











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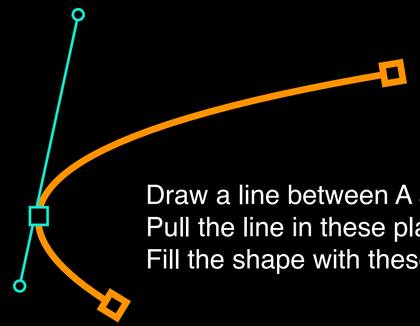

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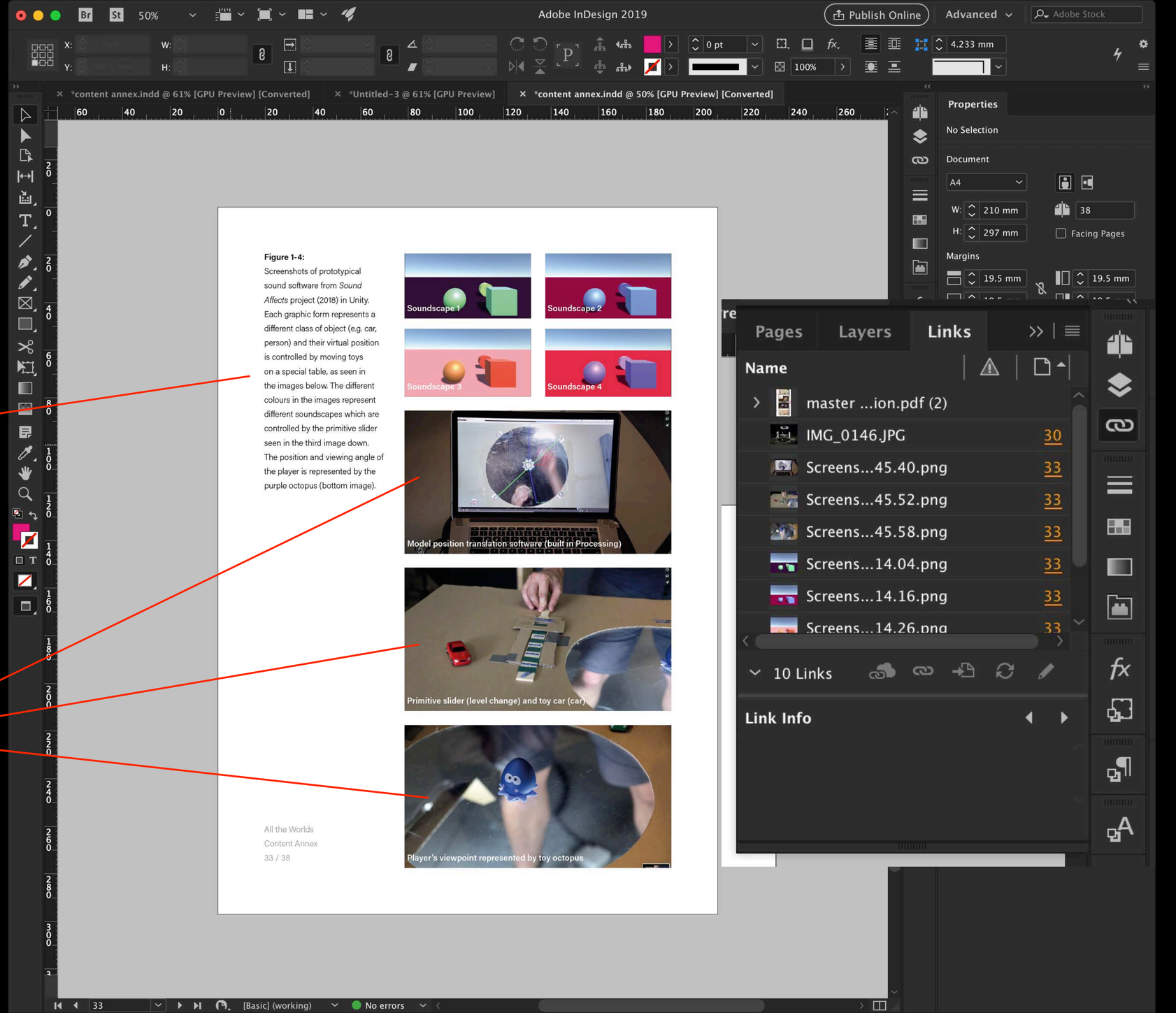

NEVER

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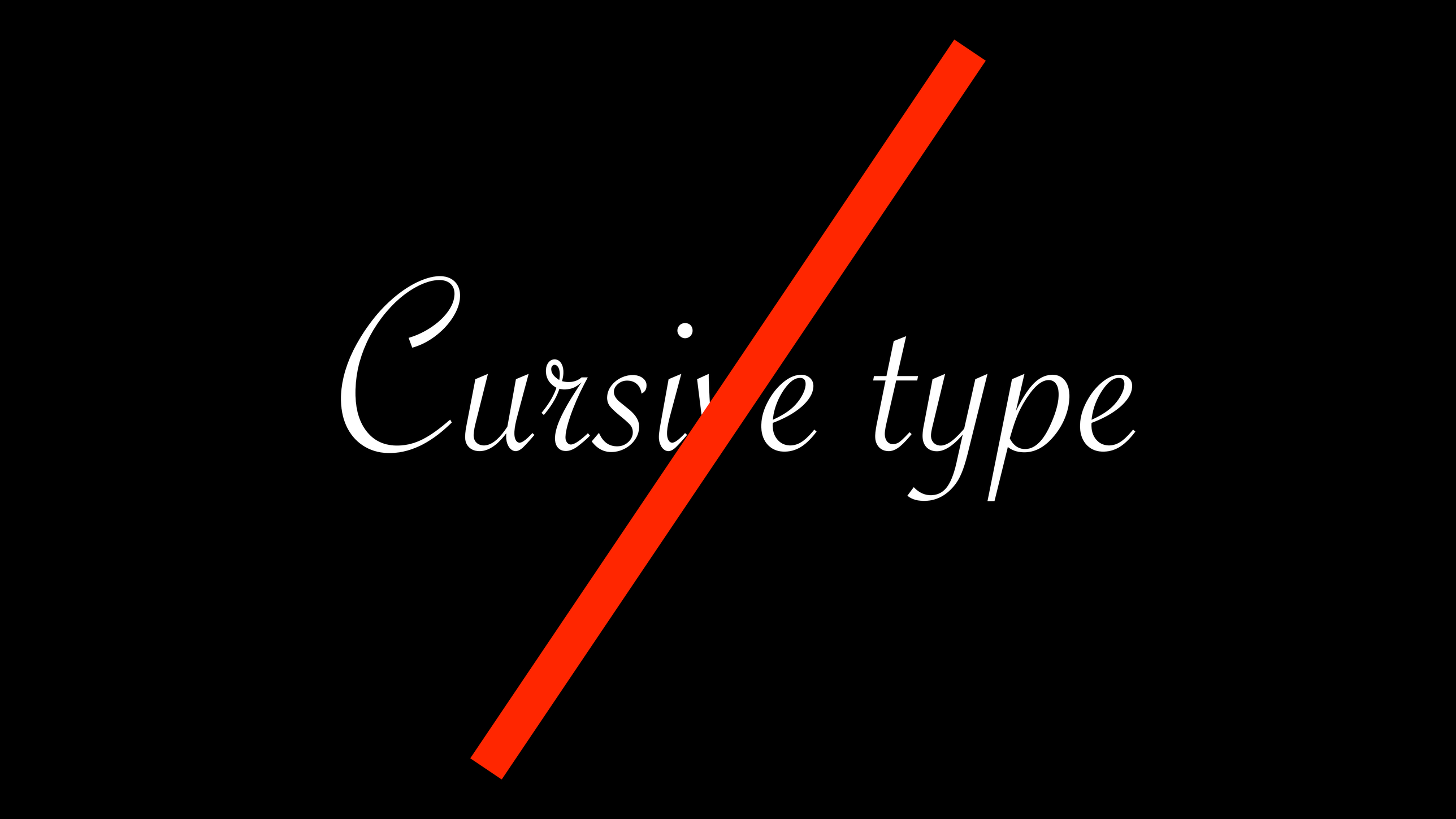
Avoid

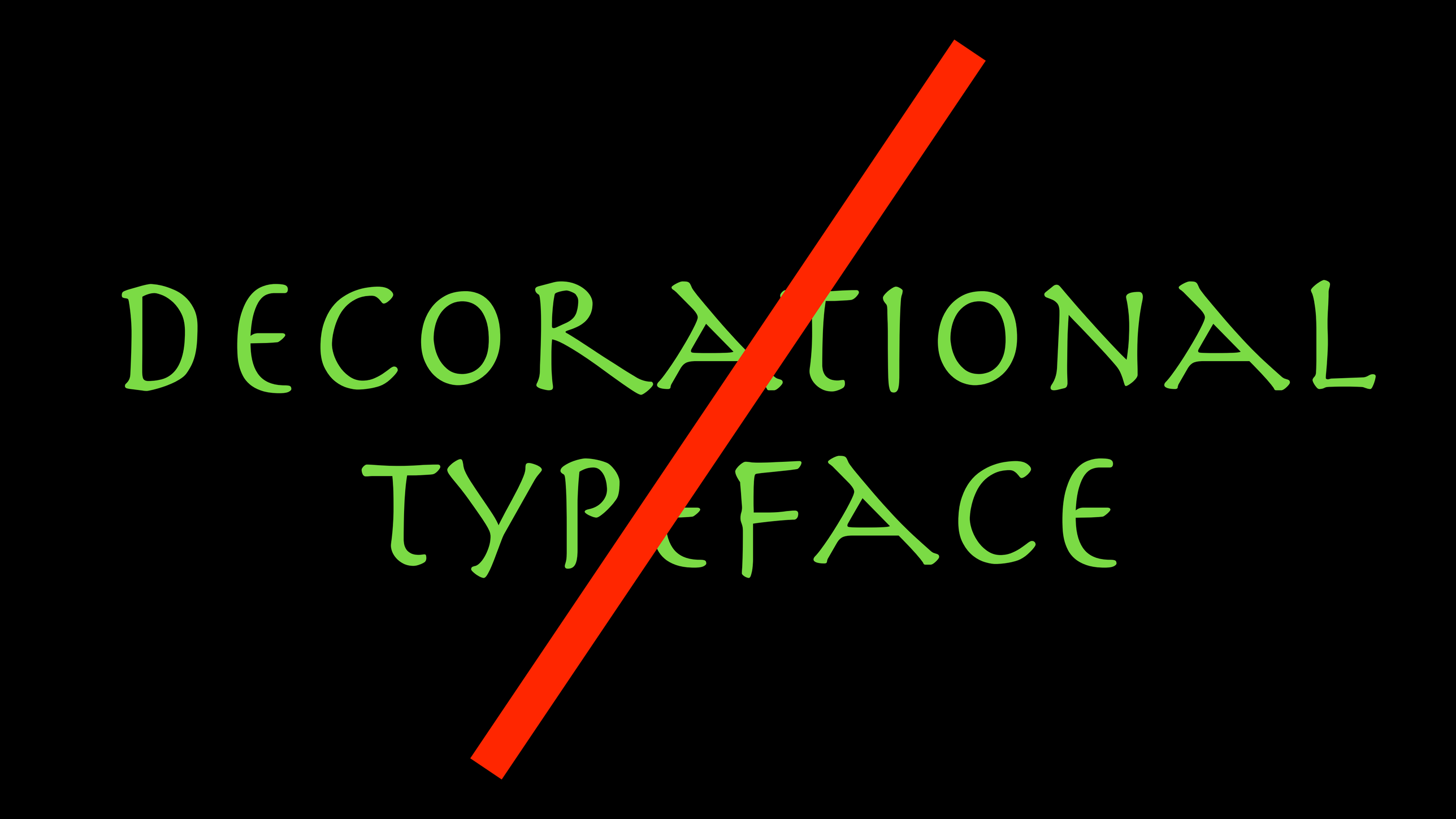
Ps

WordArt

Drop shadow


Cursive type

Handwriting
typeface


DECORATIONAL
TYPEFACE

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CREATE FREE websites
CLICK HERE>
Themes Authors Forum Submit a font
New fonts Top FAQ Tools
Search
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #
Fancy
Cartoon
Comic
Groovy
Old School
Curly
Western
Eroded
Distorted
Destroy
Horror
Fire, Ice
Decorative
Typewriter
Stencil, Army
Retro
Initials
Grid
Various
Foreign look
Chinese, Jpn
Arabic
Mexican
Roman, Greek
Russian
Various
Techno
Square
LCD
Sci-fi
Various
Bitmap
Basic
Sans serif
Serif
Fixed width
Various
Script
Calligraphy
School
Handwritten
Brush
Trash
Graffiti
Various
Dingbats
Alien
Animals
Asian
Ancient
Runes, Elvish
Esoteric
Fantastic
Horror
Games
Shapes
Bar Code
Nature
Sport
Heads
Kids
TV, Movie
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Sexy
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Music
Various
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Valentine
Easter
Halloween
Christmas
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How to install a font
Extract the files you have downloaded, then:
Windows 8/7/Vista:
Windows XP:
Mac OS X:
Other OS...
22,570 fonts of which:
6,030 with accents
6,482 with the Euro symbol
Recently added fonts
Merry Xmas by imagex
in Holiday > Christmas
Free for personal use
Download
iPhone 4 S
Under £22 pm

Pixellated

distracting

music

hyphen-
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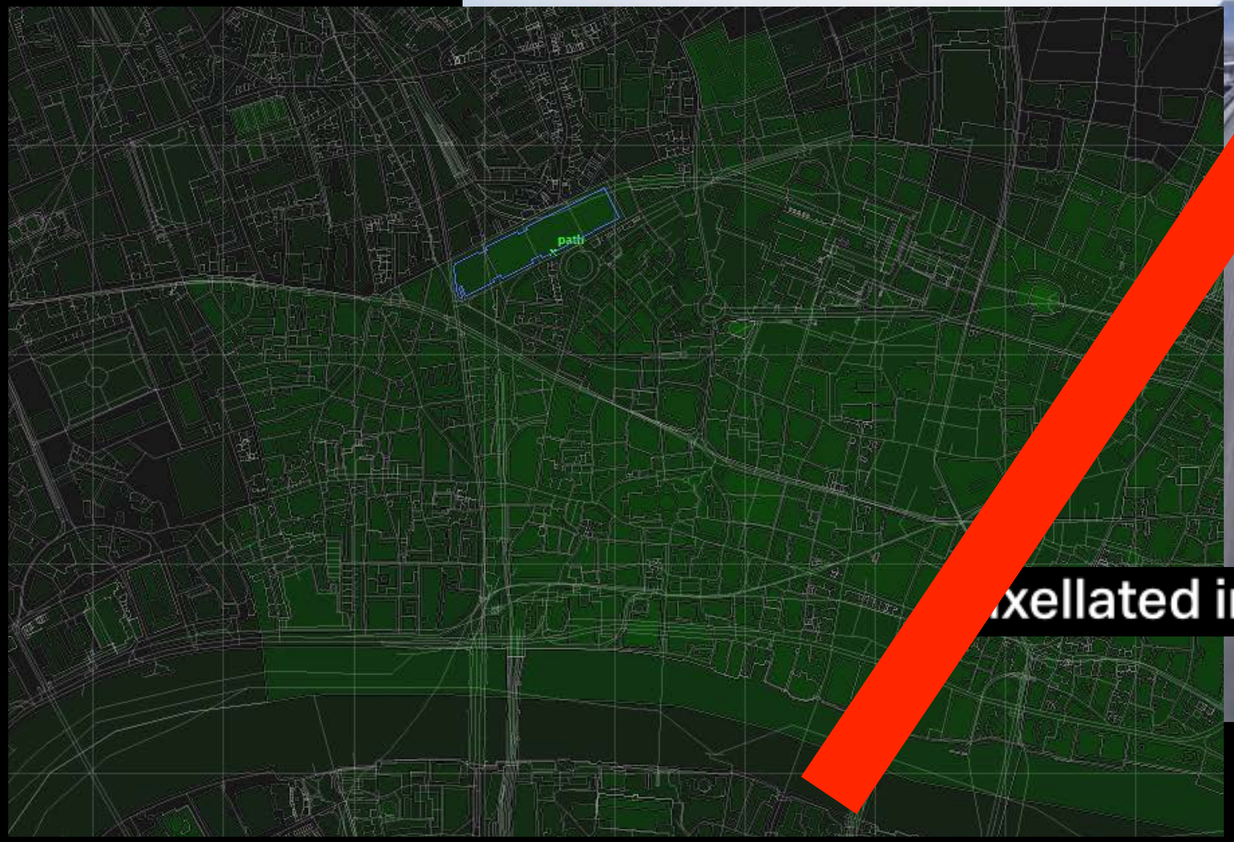
Comic sans

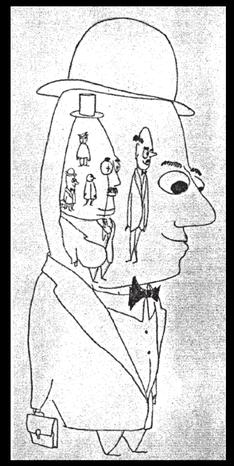
STRETCHED TYPE

Really busy pages

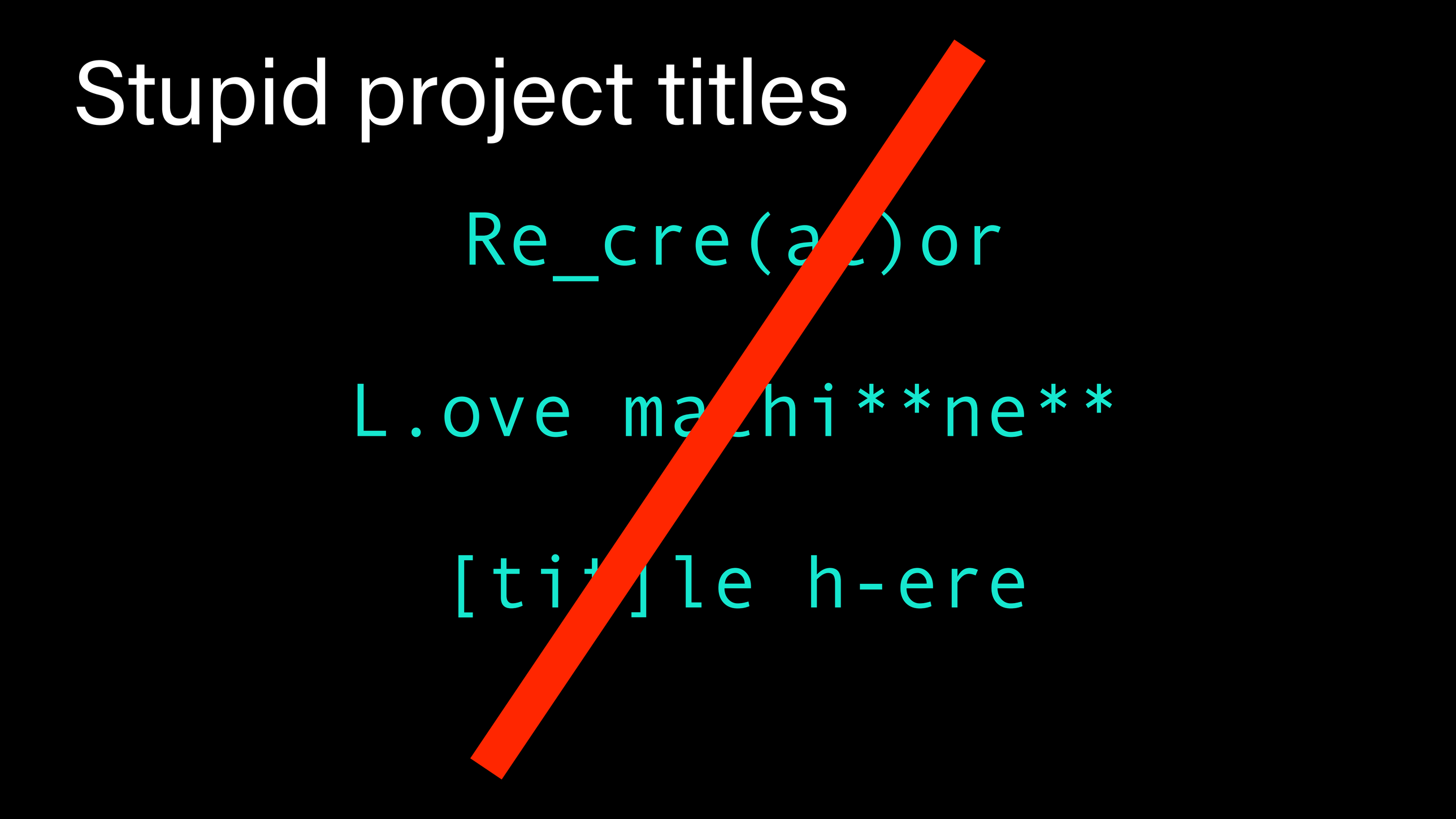
small
text
that
you
can't
read



ixellated images



Stupid project titles



Check yuor spelling

It is incredibly easy to make a spelling mistake!

Get a friend to proof-read your slides before you present.
It really does make a difference.

Key resources

typekit.com (for typefaces)
color.adobe.com (for colour)
lipsum.net (for generating dummy text)

Massimo Vignelli's *Vignelli Canon* is a great resource!
Free download: j.mp/thevignellicanon

Joseph Müller-Brockmann's *Raster Syteme (Grid Systems in Design)* is also good for learning about grids.