

Two-Dimensional Design

The careful observation required for drawing, the understanding of color required for watercolor painting, and the craftsmanship required for metalsmithing can increase awareness of ourselves and our world. On a personal level, making art heightens our attention, engages our emotions, and provides a sense of accomplishment. Creating objects and images is engrossing and exhilarating. These personal rewards make art one of the most popular hobbies.

The professional artist or designer must translate personal insights into public communication. No one will pay for the production of meaningless images. The ideas and emotions a professional wishes to express must engage an audience, whether the communication occurs in the silence of a museum or in the chaos of a city street.

This ability to communicate visually is developed through years of study plus relentless practice. Artists and designers must develop their visual awareness, develop engaging ideas, and master various techniques. They spend hours in the studio, refining ideas and inventing alternative solutions to visual problems.

A journey of one thousand miles begins with one step. In the chapters that follow, we will define the elements and principles of two-dimensional design and explore their expressive qualities. Line, shape, texture, and value are presented in Chapter One. Chapter Two is devoted to the characteristics and compositional impact of color. Chapter Three is devoted to the organization of all the elements of design into increasingly complex compositions. These readings can help you build the base of visual knowledge needed for art and design at a personal as well as a professional level.

Part One

chapter one

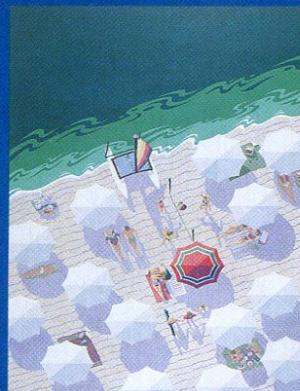
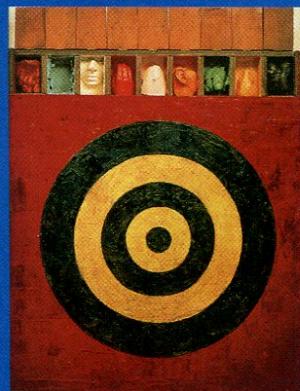
Basic Elements

chapter two

The Element of Color

chapter three

Principles of Two-Dimensional Design



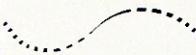
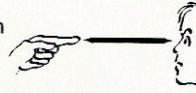
Basic Elements

Line, shape, texture, value, and color are the basic building blocks from which two-dimensional designs are made. Just as oxygen and hydrogen are powerful both individually and when combined as H₂O, so these visual **elements** are powerful both independently and in combination. In this chapter, we will explore the unique characteristics of the four basic elements and analyze their uses in art and design. Color, the most complex element, will be discussed in Chapter Two.

LINE

Defining Line

Line is one of the simplest and most versatile elements of design. Line may be defined as

- a point in motion 
- a series of adjacent points 
- a connection between points 
- an implied connection between points 

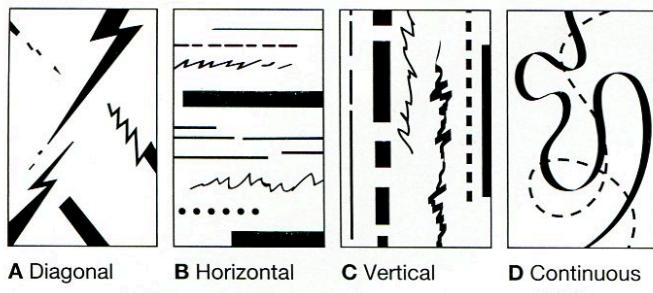
1.1 Despite its apparent simplicity, line can be created in many ways and can play many roles in a design.

The inherent dynamism of line is embodied in the first definition. The remaining three definitions emphasize the connective power of line. Lighter and more fluid than any of the other visual elements, line can add a special energy to a design. Simply by drawing a line, we can activate a space, define a shape, or create a bridge between visual elements.

Line Quality

Each line has its own distinctive quality. This quality is largely determined by the line's orientation, direction, degree of continuity, and by the material used.

Orientation refers to the line's horizontal, vertical, or diagonal position. Diagonal lines and curving lines are generally the most dynamic (1.2A, 1.2D). Charged with energy, they suggest movement and change. Horizontal lines are typically the most stable, or static (1.2B). Vertical lines imply *potential*



1.2 Line orientation and continuity.

action, and can be static or dynamic, depending on the context in which they are placed (1.2C).

Direction refers to the implied movement of a line. Line weight is often used to accentuate direction. Generally, a swelling line suggests forward or outward movement, while a shrinking line suggests inward movement. Notice how the top and bottom diagonal lines in figure 1.2A seem to push forward as they become thicker.

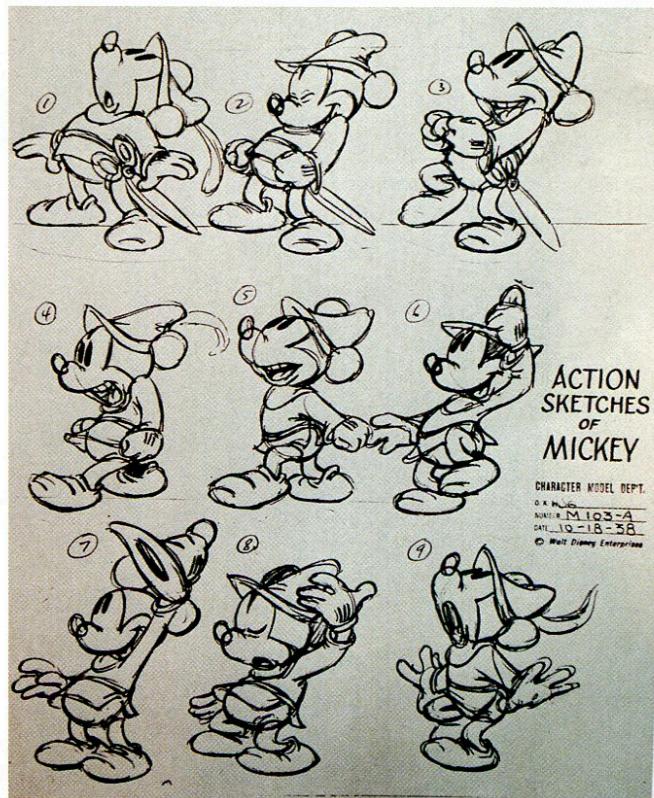
Continuity, or linear flow, can enhance or reduce direction. As shown in figure 1.2D, a continuous line tends to generate a stronger sense of direction than a broken or jagged line.

Each material can be used to produce a range of distinctive lines. Metallic graphite can be used to produce modulating lines of varying thickness. A felt pen produces a crisp, clean, emphatic line. Charcoal and chalk are black, soft, and highly responsive to each change in pressure and direction. Brush and ink offers even wider variation in line width, continuity, and darkness. By experimenting with the range of marks each instrument can produce, we can use each material more expressively.

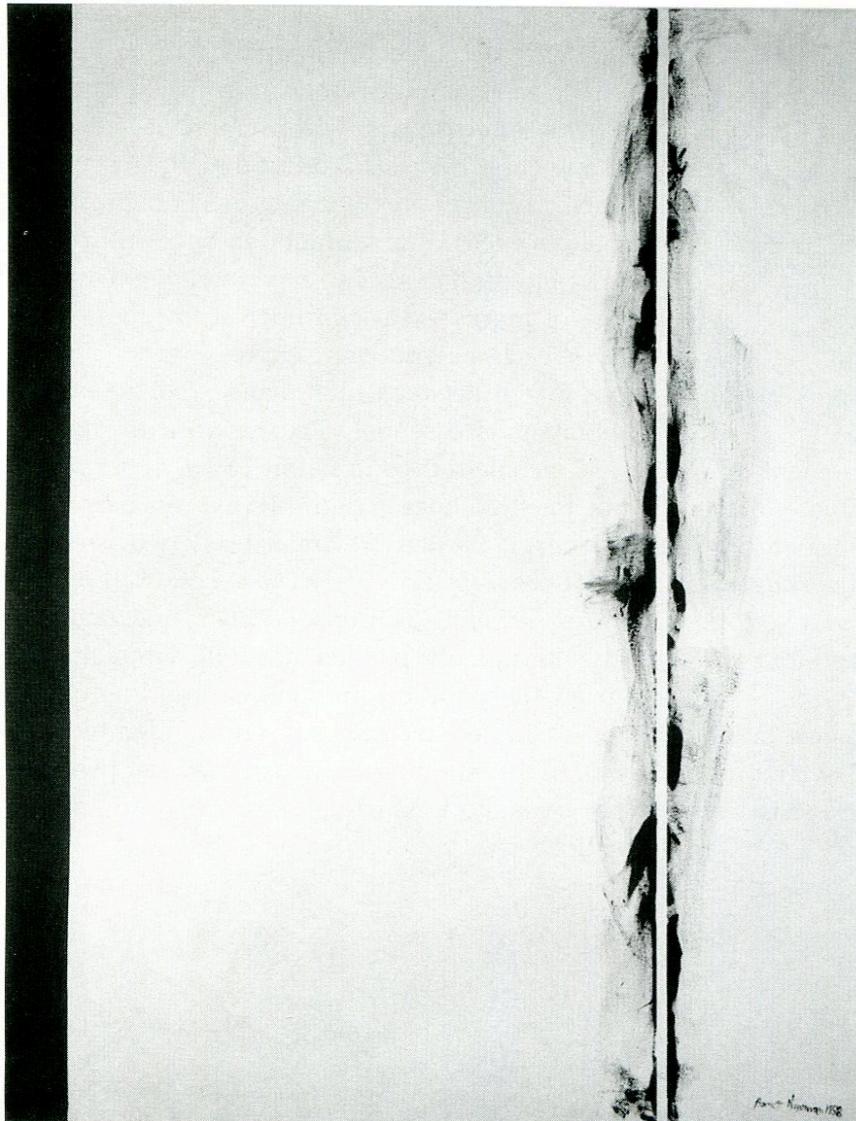
A match between line quality and the expressive intent is essential. The network of agitated lines Giacometti used in figure 1.3 suggests anxiety, while the fluid lines in figure 1.4 express movement and energy. Barnett Newman used two very different lines in *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani, the First Station* (1.5). The solid black line gains stability through its parallel position along the left edge of the painting. In contrast, the line on the right is agitated and exposed, surrounded by open space. In this painting, Newman used just two lines to express both spiritual strength and human fragility.



1.3 Alberto Giacometti, *Annette*, 1954. Pencil on paper, 16% × 11% in. (41.59 × 29.85 cm).



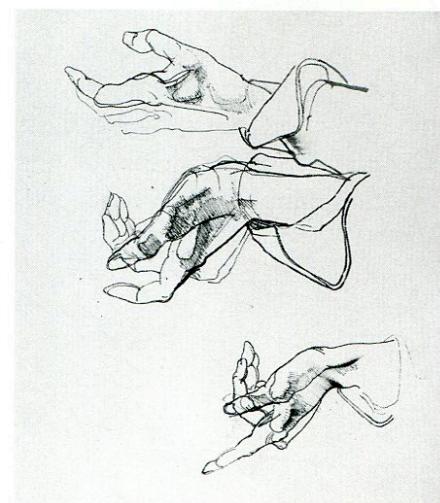
1.4 This is an original sketch of a Walt Disney Mickey Mouse cartoon done by Walt Disney artists Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston.



1.5 Barnett Newman, *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani, The First Station*, 1958. Magna on canvas, 6 ft 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times 5 ft 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (1.98 \times 1.54 cm).



1.6 Eleanor Dickinson, *Study of Hands*, 1964. Pen and ink, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ \times 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (34 \times 26 cm).



1.7 Rico Lebrun, *Hand*, 1964. Pen and ink.



1.8 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two Women Helping a Child to Walk*, c. 1635–37. Black chalk.

Actual Lines

Actual lines can describe complex forms simply and eloquently. In figure 1.6, Eleanor Dickinson used pen and ink **contour lines** to define both the inner and outer edges of a woman's hands. Through contour drawing, the complex anatomy was distilled down to a few simple lines. Similarly, Rico Lebrun's **gesture drawing** of a hand (1.7) captures essential action rather than describing anatomical detail. We focus on what the hand is *doing* rather than on what the hand *is*. As shown in figure 1.8, Rembrandt often used economical lines to describe



1.9 Attributed to Tawaraya Sôtatsu, calligraphy by Hon’ami Koetsu, *Flying Cranes and Poetry*, Edo period (1615–1868). Ink on gray-blue paper, gold flecked, 7% × 6% in. (19 × 16 cm).

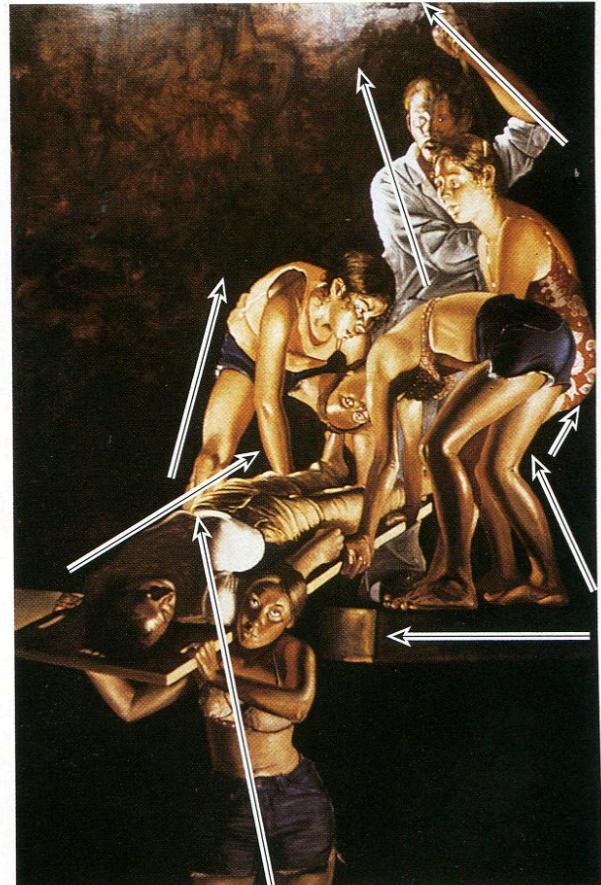


1.10 Wu Guanzhong, *Pine Spirit*, 1984. Chinese ink, color on paper, 2 ft 3% in. × 5 ft 3% in. (70 × 140 cm).

the spheres and cylindrical volumes from which figures are made. Because it communicates information using basic volumes, this type of line drawing is often called a **volume summary**.

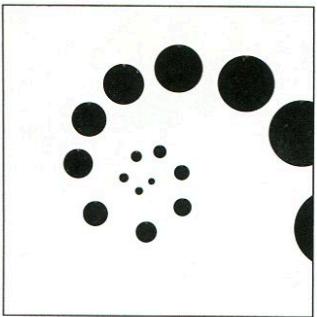
Calligraphic lines can add even more energy to a drawing or a design. The word *calligraphy* is derived from two Greek words: *kalus*, meaning “beautiful,” and *graphein*, meaning “to write.” Like handwriting, the calligraphic line is both personal and highly expressive. In figure 1.9, words and images are combined in a celebration of flight. Painter Tawaraya Sôtatsu and calligrapher Hon’ami Koetsu used variations in line weight and continuity to suggest the graceful motion of birds. This exploration of movement is pushed even further in *Pine Spirit*, by Wu Guanzhong (1.10). Fluid ink lines record the movement of the artist’s hand while simultaneously creating an abstract landscape. There is a wonderful economy in each of these drawings. Like poetry, the story is told using minimal means.

Organizational lines are often used to create the loose linear “skeleton” on which a composition can be built. Ideas can be developed quickly through line, and compositional changes can be made easily. As shown in the Giacometti drawing in figure 1.3, these skeletal drawings have great energy and may be presented as artworks in themselves. In other cases, organizational lines provide the framework for elaborate compositions. When we analyze Alfred Leslie’s *The Killing Cycle* (1.11), we can discern

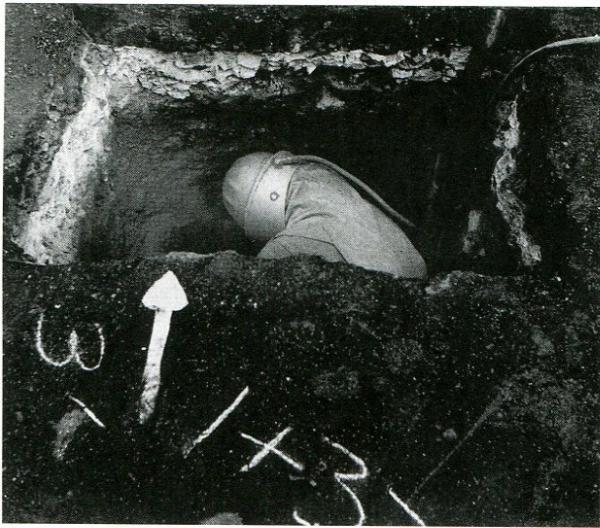


1.11 Alfred Leslie, *The Killing Cycle (#5): Loading Pier*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 9 × 6 ft (2.7 × 1.8 m).

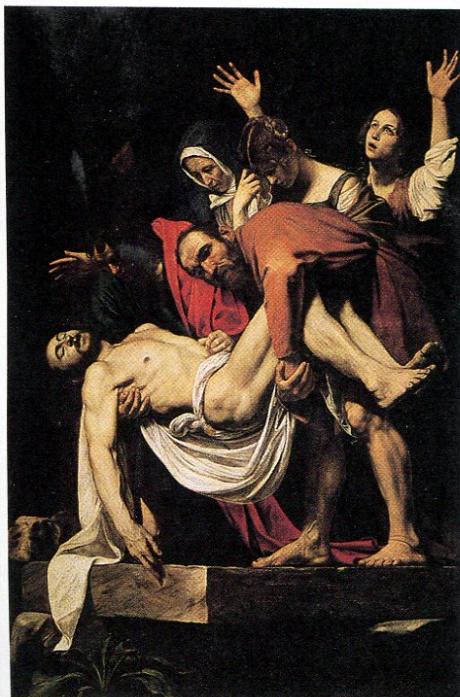
an underlying framework. A dead man on a diagonal board connects a single woman in the lower left corner to the four figures in the upper right. A horizontal line supports these four figures, while their bent arms and legs create even more diagonal lines. The diagonal lines add energy to the composition, while the horizontal line adds stability.



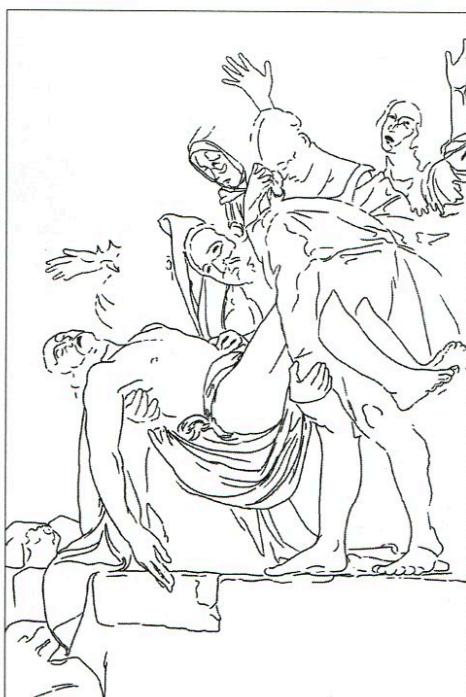
1.12 A series of dots can create an implied line.



1.13 Minor White, *Sandblaster*, San Francisco, 1949. Gelatin silver print, $10\frac{1}{16}$ × $11\frac{1}{16}$ in. (26.51 × 29.05 cm).



A



B

1.14 Caravaggio, *The Deposition*, 1604. Oil on canvas, 9 ft 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. × 6 ft 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (3 × 2.03 m).

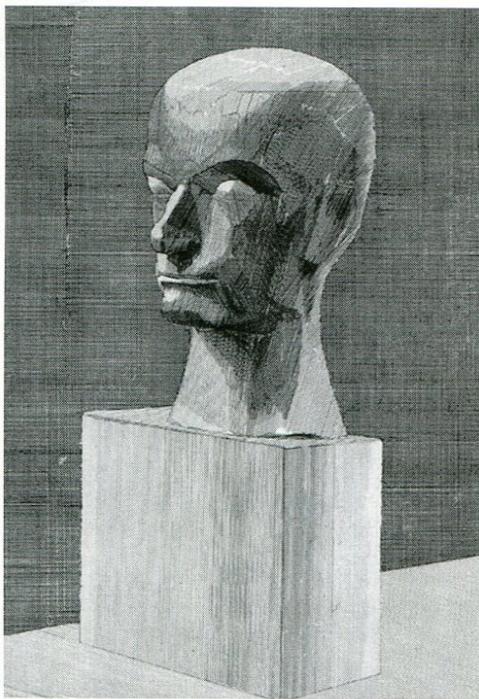
Implied Lines

Lines can play a major role in a design even when they are **implied** or suggested, rather than actually being drawn. Because **implied lines** simply suggest connections, the viewer must become actively involved in compositions that are constructed using this type of line.

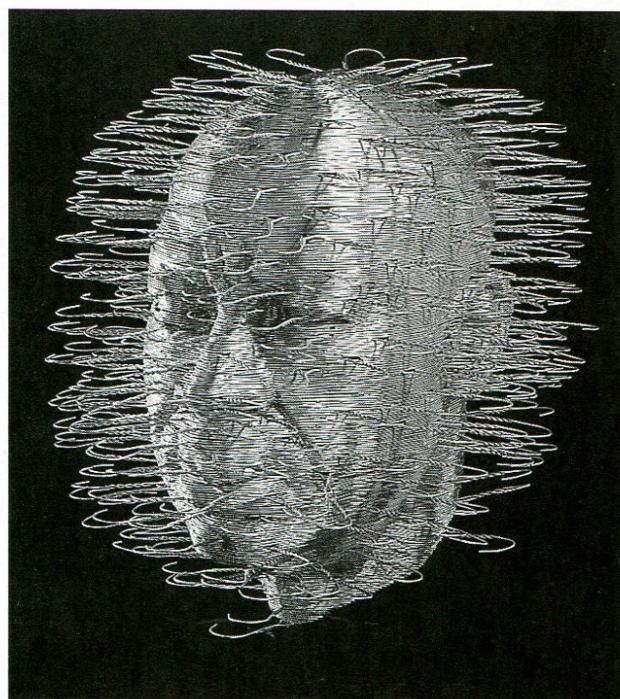
Fortunately, we have a natural inclination to seek visual unity. Given enough clues, we will connect separate visual parts by filling in the missing pieces. The visual clues may be quite obvious. For example, we can easily link the 16 circles in figure 1.12 to create a linear spiral. In other cases, the clues are subtle. In Minor White's *Sandblaster* (1.13), the white arrow implies a connection between the numbers in the foreground and the worker's helmet.

This inclination to connect fragmentary information is called **closure**. "Lost and found" contours require an elegant form of closure. In a "lost and found" composition, the edges of some shapes are clearly defined, while other shapes appear to merge with the background. When presented with such an image, the viewer must create a mental bridge between the resulting islands of information.

The Killing Cycle is an example of a "lost and found" composition. The top four figures are clearly delineated, while the lower two figures begin to merge with the surrounding space. This effect is even more pronounced in Caravaggio's *The Deposition* (1.14A), the painting from which Leslie derived his inspiration. A line drawing of this image has many gaps, as details are lost in the shadows (1.14B). Used skillfully, this loss of definition becomes a strength rather than a weakness. Connections made through closure can stimulate the viewer's imagination by encouraging a more personal interpretation.



1.15 Jacques Villon, *Baudelaire*, c. 1918. Etching, printed in black, plate 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 11 in. (41.4 × 28 cm).



1.16 David Mach, *Eckow*, 1997. Coathangers, 2 ft 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. × 1 ft 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. × 2 ft 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (67 × 60 × 75 cm).

Line Networks

Multiple lines and line networks can add detail to a design and create a convincing illusion of space. **Hatching** produces a range of grays through straight parallel lines. Even a wider range of grays can be produced through **cross-hatching**, which creates a more complex network of lines. Jacques Villon used both hatching and cross-hatching in his portrait of poet Charles Baudelaire (1.15). The head is divided into a series of faceted planes. Hatching defines each shift in the surface of the head, while cross-hatching creates the shadows.

Cross-contours can create an even more powerful illusion of three-dimensionality. Often created using curving parallel lines, cross-contours “map” surface variations across shapes or objects. In figure 1.16, David Mach created a cross-contour sculpture by bending coat hangers into the shape of a human head. In two-dimensional design, we can use drawn lines to produce a similar effect.

Hatching, cross-hatching, and cross-contour are often combined. In *Head of a Satyr* (1.17), Michelangelo used all of these techniques to visually carve out the curves and planes of the head.



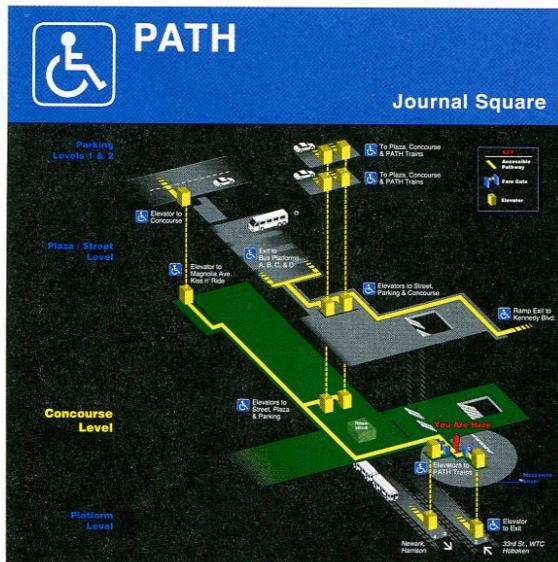
1.17 Michelangelo, *Head of a Satyr*, c. 1620–30. Pen and ink over chalk, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (27 × 20 cm).



1.18 Jackson Pollock, *White Light*, 1954. Oil, enamel, aluminum paint on canvas, $48\frac{1}{4} \times 38\frac{1}{4}$ in. (122.4 \times 96.9 cm).

Line networks play an equally important role in abstract and nonobjective art. Jackson Pollock dripped and spattered house paint to produce *White Light*, shown in figure 1.18. Seeking universal meaning rather than conventional representation, Pollock spontaneously generated many layers of

lines on a large piece of canvas. He then trimmed the canvas, discarding the weaker sections of the design. The remaining lines seem to flow in and out of the painting. Clusters of silvery enamel form swirling, textural masses that are punctuated by explosions of red and yellow.



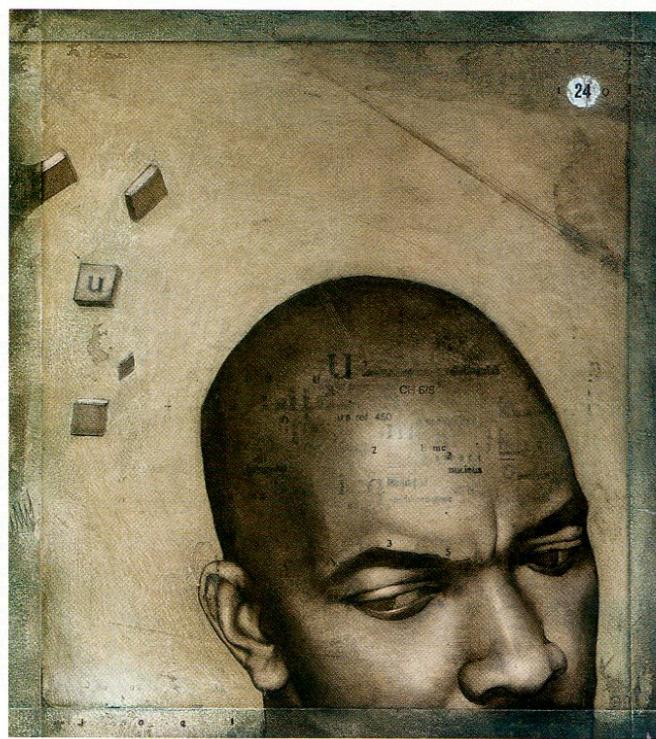
1.19 PATH Station Maps, Louis Nelson Associates, Inc., NY. Graphic designer: Jennifer Stoller.

Using Line

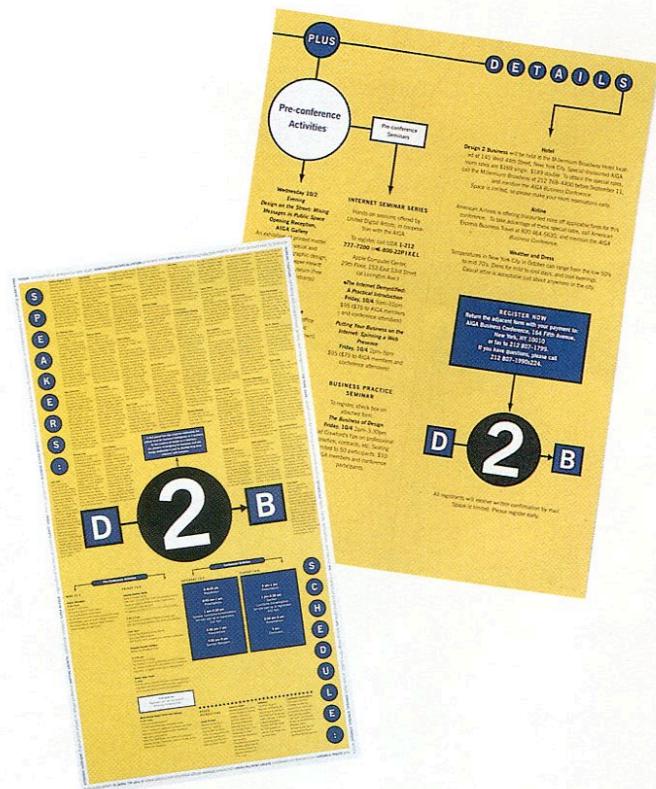
Line can be used to define, enclose, connect, or dissect. Line serves all of these purposes in a New York City subway map (1.19). A curved line has been combined with an angular line to define the wheelchair shape. Another line encloses this logo within a square, emphasizing its importance. Diagonal lines connect the subway entrance to the elevators, while vertical lines dissect the drawing to show the location of the elevators. This seemingly simple design communicates complex information clearly. Using this map, a person in a wheelchair can navigate through a busy station and catch the right train.

Careful use of the four edges of a sheet of paper can strengthen any design. In a sense, the first line we draw is actually the *fifth* line in the composition. In his *Self-Portrait* (1.20), Joel Peter Johnson used drawn lines to repeat the four edges of the composition. The resulting box encloses four small shapes on the left and the number on the right. Johnson's head breaks out of this boundary. As a result, the portrait appears to extend beyond the painting's edge and into the world of the viewer.

Lines can serve many purposes at once. In an advertisement for the American Institute of Graphic Arts (1.21), vertical dotted lines at the upper left and lower right highlight the speaker's schedule. A horizontal line creates a connection between the *D* and *B* in the "design to business" logo, and separates the top and bottom of the overall layout. Even



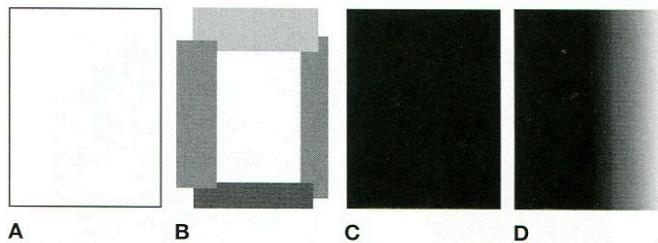
1.20 Joel Peter Johnson, *Self Portrait*. Oil on board, 9 × 8 in. (22.86 × 20.32 cm).



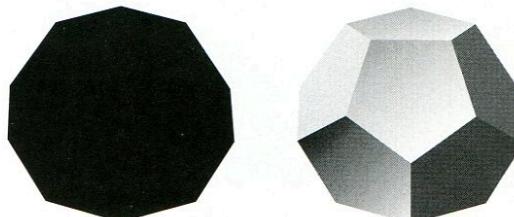
1.21 Brochure from an American Institute of Graphic Arts conference "Design 2 Business, October 5–6 '96 NYC."

Key Questions

- What is the dominant orientation of the lines in your design—diagonal, vertical, or horizontal? What is the expressive effect?
- What happens when lines are repeated or when lines intersect?
- How would the composition change if one or more lines were removed?



1.22 Any form of enclosure can create a shape.



1.23 Variations in lighting can transform a shape into an illusory volume.

SHAPE

Defining Shape

A **shape** is a flat, enclosed area (1.22A–D). Shapes can be created by

- Enclosing an area within a continuous line
- Surrounding an area by other shapes
- Filling an area with solid color or texture
- Filling an area with broken color or texture

A three-dimensional enclosure is called a **volume**. Thus, a square is a shape, while a cube is a volume. **Gradation**, or **shading**, can be used to make a two-dimensional shape appear three-dimensional, or volumetric. For example, in figure 1.23, a flat, angular shape becomes a faceted polyhedron when a series of gray tones is added.

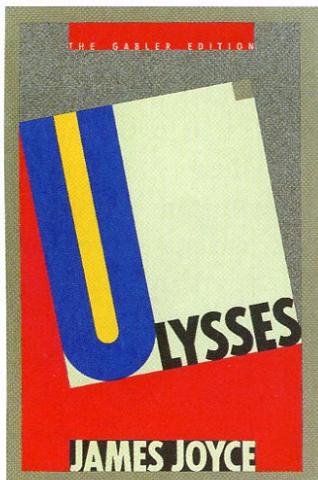
Flat or gradated shapes can be used to create an arresting image. In Aaron Douglas' *From Slavery Through Reconstruction* (1.24), flat shapes and transparent targets create an energetic panorama. We can almost hear the speaker in the center



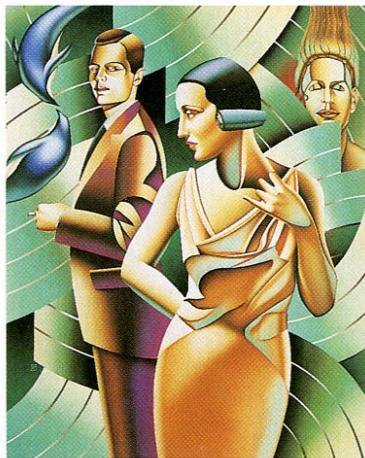
1.24 Aaron Douglas, *Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 5 ft × 11 ft 7 in. (1.52 × 3.5 m).



1.25 Diego M. Rivera, *Detroit Industry, North Wall*, 1932–33. Fresco, 17 ft 8½ in. × 45 ft (5.4 × 13.7 m).



1.26 Cover of *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, 1986. Designer: Carin Goldberg.



1.27 Cover image from *The Penguin Pool Murder*, a Hildegarde Withers Mystery, by Stuart Palmer. Art Director & Designer: Krystyna Skalski, Illustrator: John Jinks.



1.28 Gustav Klimt, *Salomé*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 70½ × 18½ in. (178 × 46 cm).

and feel the movement of the crowd. In Rivera's *Detroit Industry* (1.25), shading and size variation have been combined to suggest volume and increase the illusion of space. One-point perspective (which will be discussed at length in Chapter Three) has been used to increase visual depth in the painting.

Graphic designers are equally aware of the power of both flat and gradated shapes. In a cover for *Ulysses* (1.26), Carin Goldberg used crisp, simple

shapes to create a dramatic design. The primary colors of red, yellow, and blue combined with the tilted title block immediately attract attention. Krystyna Skalski and John Jinks used a very different approach for their cover for a mystery novel (1.27). Gradation now suggests a light source and helps to create the illusion of space.

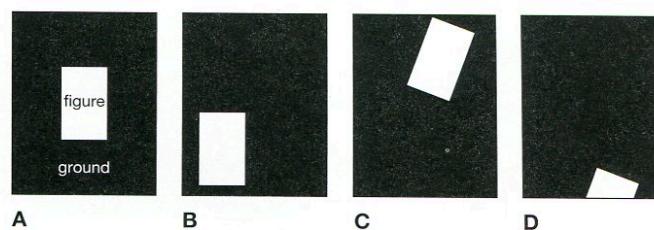
Gustav Klimt combined flat and volumetric shapes to create *Salomé* (1.28). In this horrific tale from the biblical New Testament, John the Baptist

has been imprisoned for his criticism of the royal family. Salomé, the king's niece, performs a stunning dance and the delighted king grants her a single wish. In revenge, Salomé asks for John's head. The tall, vertical shape of the painting is similar to the size and shape of a standing viewer. Flat patterns and color surround the volumetric figures, while two curving lines add a sinuous energy to the center of the design.

Types of Shape

The size and shape of a soccer field are very different from the size and shape of a tennis court. In both cases, the playing area defines the game to be played. It is impossible to play soccer on a tennis court or to play tennis on a soccer field.

Similarly, the outer edge of a two-dimensional design provides the playing field for our compositional games. The long, horizontal rectangles used by Douglas and Rivera can create an expansive



1.29 Various figure/ground relationships.

panorama, while the vertical rectangle used for *Salome* compresses the sordid drama into a narrow, claustrophobic shape. Thus, creating a dialogue between compositional shapes and the surrounding format is our first area of concern.

Figure and Ground, Positive and Negative

As shown in figure 1.29A, a shape that is distinguished from the background is called a **positive shape**, or **figure**. In design, the area around a positive shape is called the **negative shape**, or **ground**. Depending on its location relative to the ground, the figure can become dynamic or static, leaden or buoyant (1.29 B–D).

In highly realistic paintings, the entire composition is treated like a window into an imaginary world. A smooth surface tends to increase this illusion. The canvas texture is sanded down before the paint is applied, and heavy brushstrokes are often kept at a minimum. We are invited to see *into* the painting, rather than focusing on the surface.

When a shaped format is used, we become more aware of the artwork's physicality. The 9-foot-tall teacup in Elizabeth Murray's *Just in Time* (1.30) is monumental in size and loaded with implication. The painted shapes connect directly to the shaped edge, emphasizing the crack running down the center of the composition. This is no ordinary teacup. For Murray, a crack in everyday reality invites entry into an alternative world.

When the figure and ground are equally well designed, every square inch of the composition becomes highly charged. In Bill Brandt's photograph (1.31), the brightly lit arm, face, and breast dramatically divide the black ground,



1.30 Elizabeth Murray, *Just in Time*, 1981. Oil on canvas in two sections, 106 × 97 in. (269.24 × 246.38 cm).

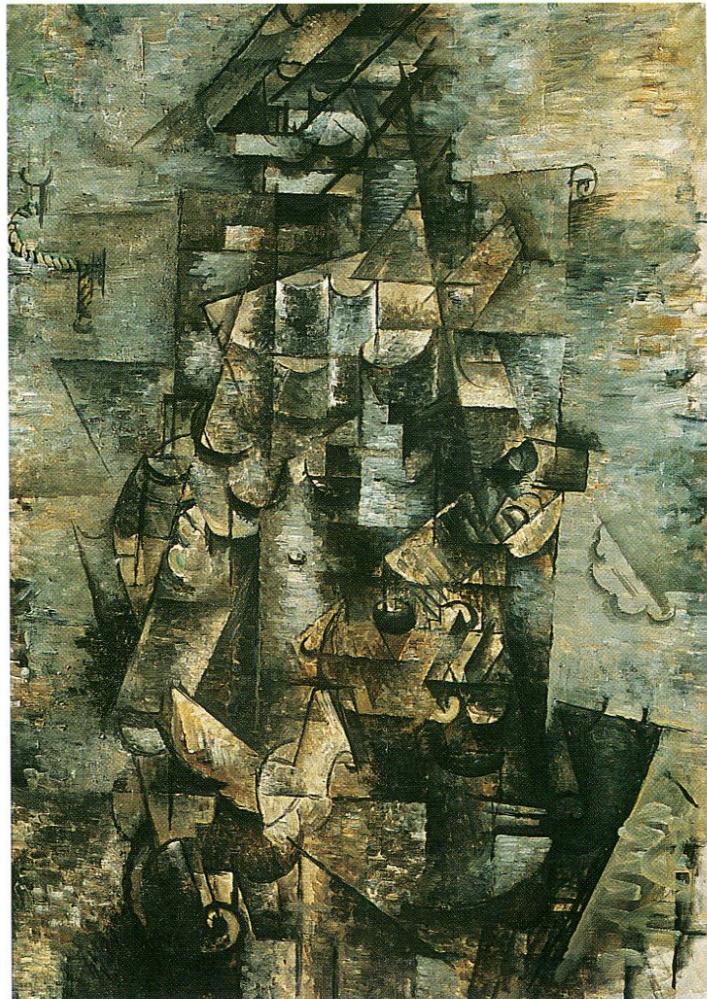


1.31 Bill Brandt, *Nude*, 1952. Gelatin silver print.

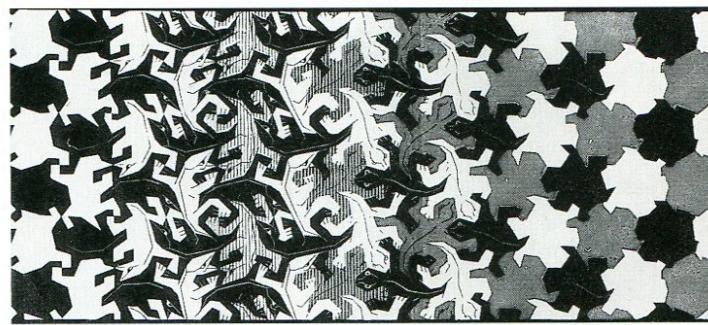
creating three strong, triangular shapes. These triangles energize the design and heighten our awareness of the compositional edge.

In a Cubist painting, such as Georges Braque's *Man with a Guitar* (1.32), the figure and ground merge and shift, further activating the dialogue between figure and ground. Seeking a fresh interpretation of time and space, the Cubists shattered the fixed viewpoint required for traditional perspective drawing. Painting this image shortly after Einstein published his general theory of relativity, Braque visually deconstructed solid matter, then reconstructed the composition from the fragments.

Figure/ground reversal occurs when first the positive then the negative shapes command our attention. As shown in a fragment from *Metamorphosis II* (1.33), M. C. Escher was a master of figure/ground reversal. The organic shapes on the left become an interlocking mass of black and white lizards. The lizards then evolve into a network of hexagons. Combined with the figure/ground reversal, this type of metamorphosis animates the entire 13-foot-long composition.



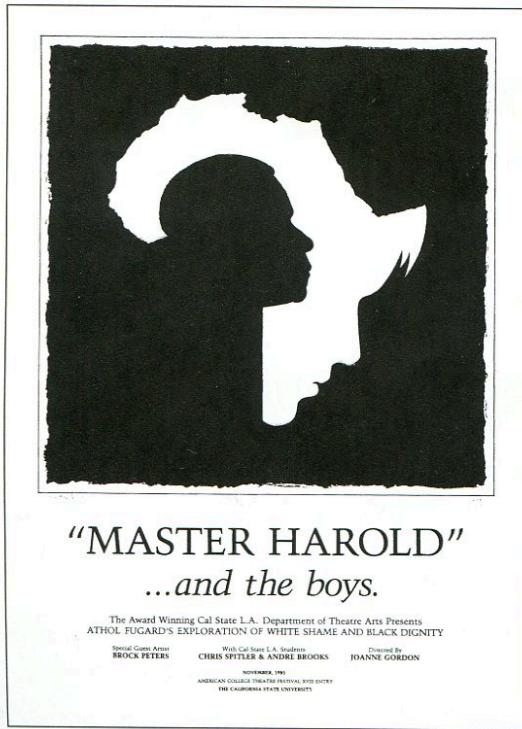
1.32 Georges Braque, *Man with a Guitar*, 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (116.2 × 80.9 cm).



1.33 M. C. Escher, part of *Metamorphosis II*, 1939–40. Woodcut in black, green, and brown, printed from twenty blocks on three combined sheets, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (19 × 390 cm).



1.34 Sam Francis, *Flash Point*, 1975. Acrylic on paper, 32½ × 22½ in. (82 × 59 cm).



1.35 David McNutt, "Master Harold" . . . and the Boys, 1985. Poster.

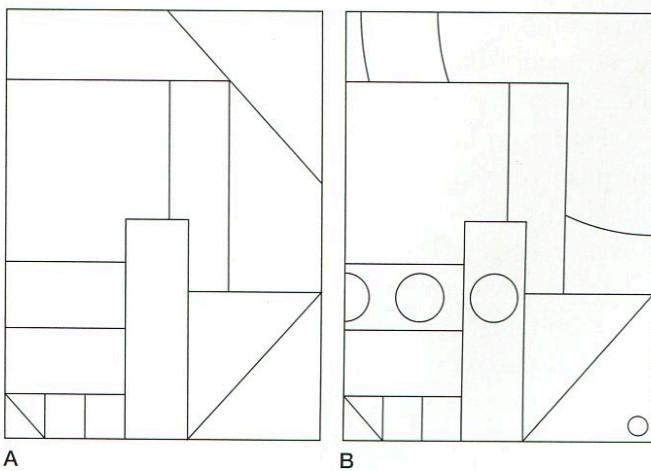
Figure/ground reversal requires interaction between opposing forces. Escher generally achieved this balance by using light and dark shapes of similar size. In figure 1.34, Sam Francis achieved a similar balance between a small white square and a much larger red rectangle. The crisp boundary and central location strengthen the square. Despite its small size, it holds its own against the much larger mass of swirling red paint.

Graphic designers often use figure/ground reversal to create multiple interpretations from minimal shapes. In figure 1.35, David McNutt used a single white shape on a black ground to create the head of a master and a servant within the outline of Africa. Used to advertise a South African play, the poster immediately communicates a dramatic human relationship within a specific cultural context.

Rectilinear and Curvilinear Shapes

Rectilinear shapes are composed from straight lines and angular corners. **Curvilinear shapes** are dominated by curves and flowing edges. Simple rectilinear shapes, such as squares and rectangles, are generally cooperative. When placed within a rectangular format, they easily connect to other shapes and can run parallel to the compositional edge (1.36A). Curvilinear shapes, especially circles, are generally less cooperative. They retain their individuality even when they are partially concealed by other shapes (1.36B).

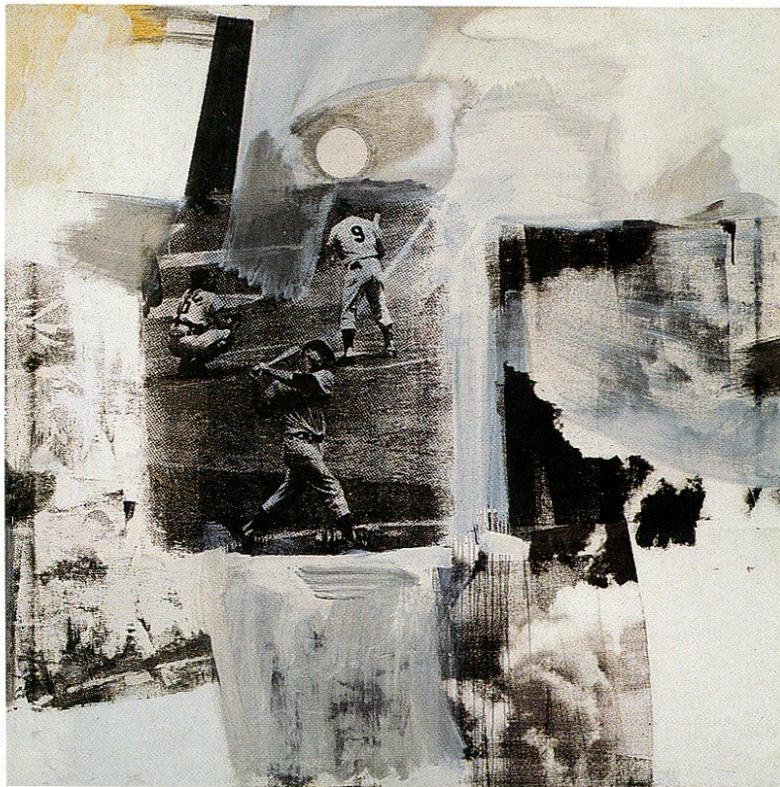
Aubrey Beardsley (1.37) combined rectilinear and curvilinear shapes to create another interpretation of the Salome story, described on page 27. The



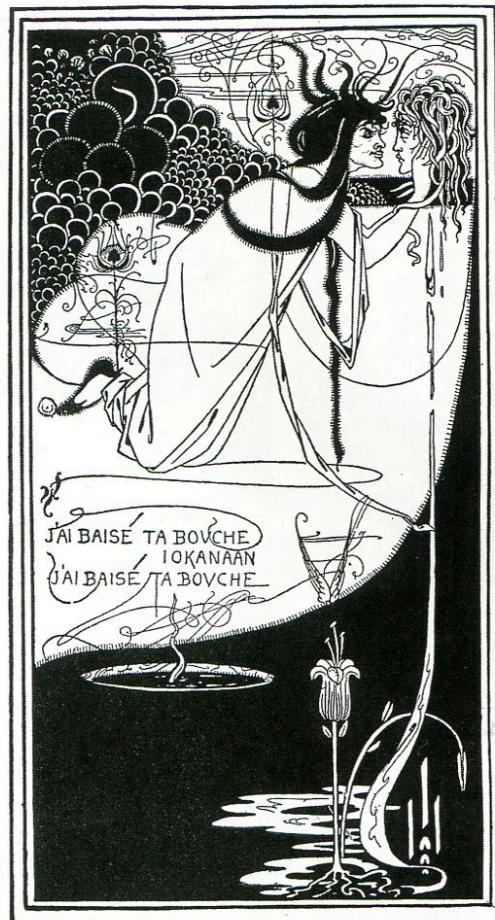
1.36A-B Rectilinear and curvilinear shapes. Rectilinear shapes can easily be fit together to create a unified design. Curvilinear shapes tend to be more individualistic.

rectangular shape of the format is reiterated by an additional boundary line. Within this boundary, curving black and white shapes create a complex composition, dominated by the bubble pattern in the upper left corner. In the upper right corner, Salomé clutches Saint John's head. Extending from the head down to the flower, a white line follows the transformation of the dead saint's blood into a living plant. This line creates a conceptual and compositional connection between the top and bottom edges.

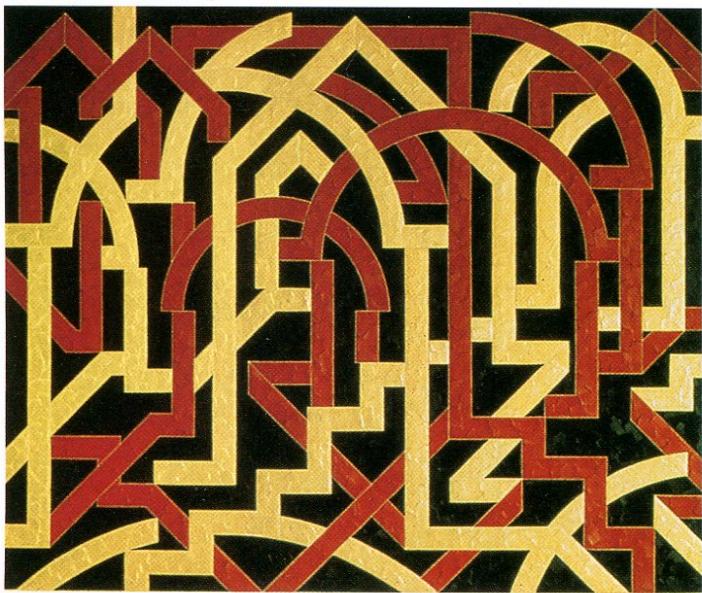
A very different combination of rectilinear and curvilinear shapes activates Robert Rauschenberg's *Brace* (1.38). The central image of three baseball players is surrounded by layered rectangles to the right, left, and bottom, while a solid line extends from the catcher to the top edge. Bold brushstrokes add power to the painting. Occupying only a small fraction of the composition and surrounded by vigorously painted shapes, the circle *still* dominates the design: we *have* to keep our eyes on the ball!



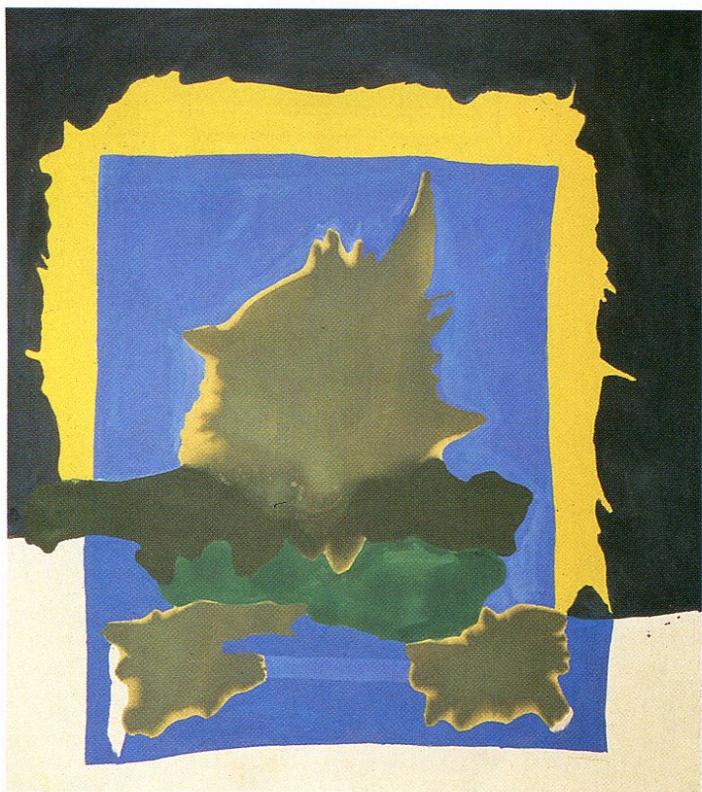
1.38 Robert Rauschenberg, *Brace*, 1962. Oil and silkscreen on canvas, 60 × 60 in. (152.4 × 152.4 cm).



1.37 Aubrey Beardsley, *Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist*, 1894. Line block print, 11 × 6 in. (27.9 × 15.2 cm).



1.39 Valerie Jaudon, *Tallahatchee*, 1984. Oil and gold leaf on canvas, 6 ft 8 in. × 8 ft (2 × 2.4 m).



1.40 Helen Frankenthaler, *Interior Landscape*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 8 ft 8 1/8 in. × 7 ft 8 1/8 in. (266 × 235 cm).

Geometric and Organic Shapes

Geometric shapes are distinguished by their crisp, precise edges and mathematically consistent curves. They dominate the technological world of architecture and industry, and they appear in nature as crystalline structures and growth patterns, such as the spiral. In Valerie Jaudon's *Tallahatchee* (1.39), geometric shapes provide a clarity, harmony, and universality comparable to a musical composition. **Organic shapes** are more commonly found in the natural world of plants and animals, sea and sky. As shown in Frankenthaler's *Interior Landscape* (1.40), organic shapes can add unpredictable energy, even when the composition as a whole is based on rectangular shapes.

Degrees of Representation

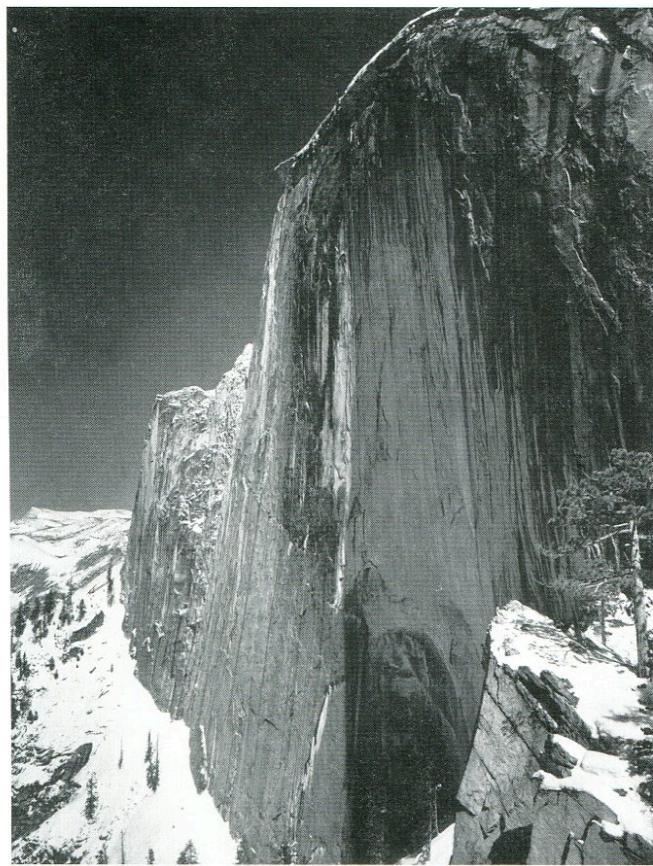
Nonobjective shapes, such as circles, rectangles, and squares, are **pure forms**. Pure forms are shapes created without reference to realistic subject matter. *The Stone Heart* (1.41), by the Zhou brothers, is a nonobjective painting. A vertical line echoes the left edge of the painting, while the right side is dominated by an open, rectilinear shape. Vigorous white and gray brushstrokes fill the background. A spherical shape at the top pulls our eyes upward, while a curving red line seems to dance around the large gray oval. As an exploration of spirituality, this painting is both energetic and intuitive, exploring feeling rather than recording vision.

Representational shapes are derived from specific subject matter and strongly based on direct observation. Most photographs are representational and highly descriptive. For example, in Ansel Adams' *Monolith, the Face of Half Dome, Yosemite Valley* (1.42), each variation in the cliff's surface is clearly defined.

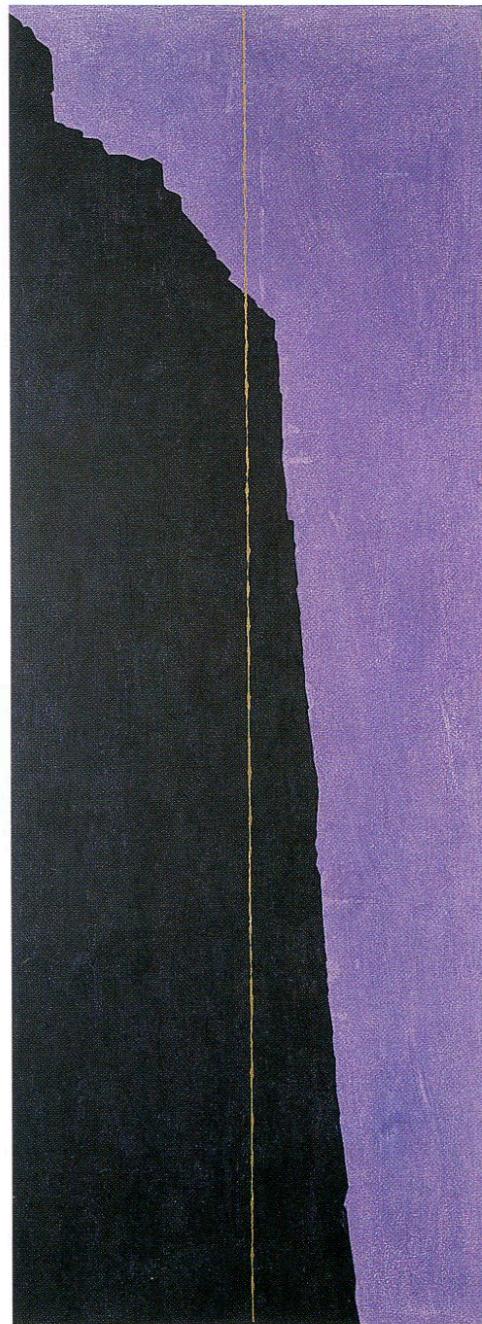
Between these two extremes, **abstract shapes** are derived from visual reality but are distilled or transformed, reducing their resemblance to the original source. In *Seventh Sister* (1.43), Robert Moskowitz deleted surface details from the rocky mountain. His abstracted cliff is a universal representation of a vertical surface rather than a descriptive painting of a particular cliff.



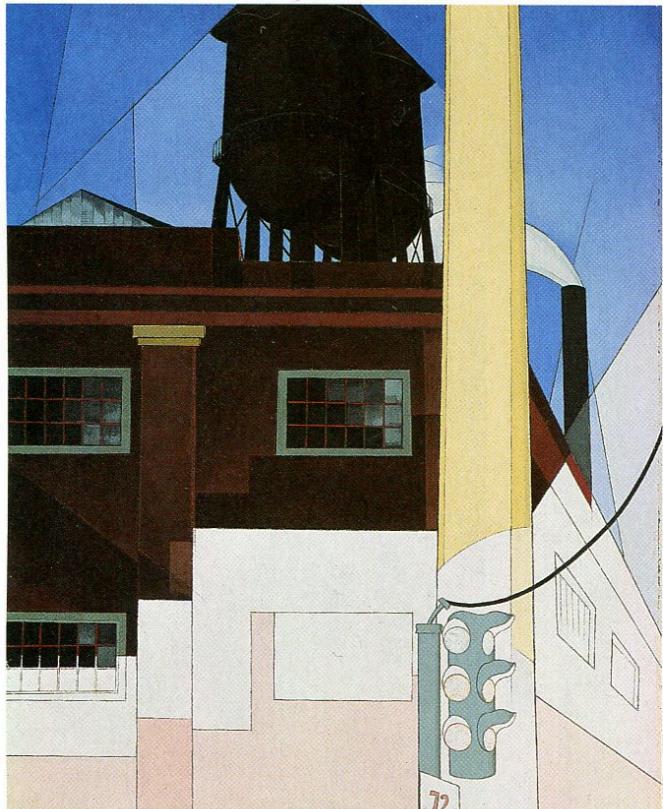
1.41 Zhou Brothers, *The Stone Heart*, 1990. Mixed media on canvas, 48 × 48 in. (121.92 × 121.92 cm).



1.42 Ansel Adams, *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome, Yosemite Valley*. Photograph.



1.43 Robert Moskowitz, *Seventh Sister*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 108 × 39 in. (274.3 × 99 cm).



1.44 Charles Demuth, *. . . And the Home of the Brave*, 1931. Oil on composition board, 29½ × 23¾ in. (74.8 × 59.7 cm).



1.45 Robert Frank, *Movie Premiere, Hollywood*, from *The Americans*, 1955–56. Gelatin silver photograph, 12½ × 8¾ in. (31.75 × 21.27 cm).

Reference to reality is a traditional way to increase meaning in an artwork. Drawing on their experience in the physical world, viewers can connect to the illusion of reality presented in the painting. In a nonobjective image, lines, shapes, textures, and colors generate all of the meaning. Because there is no explicit subject matter, some viewers find it more difficult to appreciate a nonobjective image.

By working abstractly, the artist can combine the power of association with the power of pure form. Charles Demuth's *. . . And the Home of the Brave* (1.44) demonstrates the power of abstraction. A factory has been turned into a series of lines and geometric shapes. Variations on red, white, and blue add a symbolic connection to the American flag. Painted during a period of nationwide unemployment, the factory is dark and forbidding. The ironic title (which is based on a line from the American national anthem), adds a subtle political statement.

Degrees of Definition

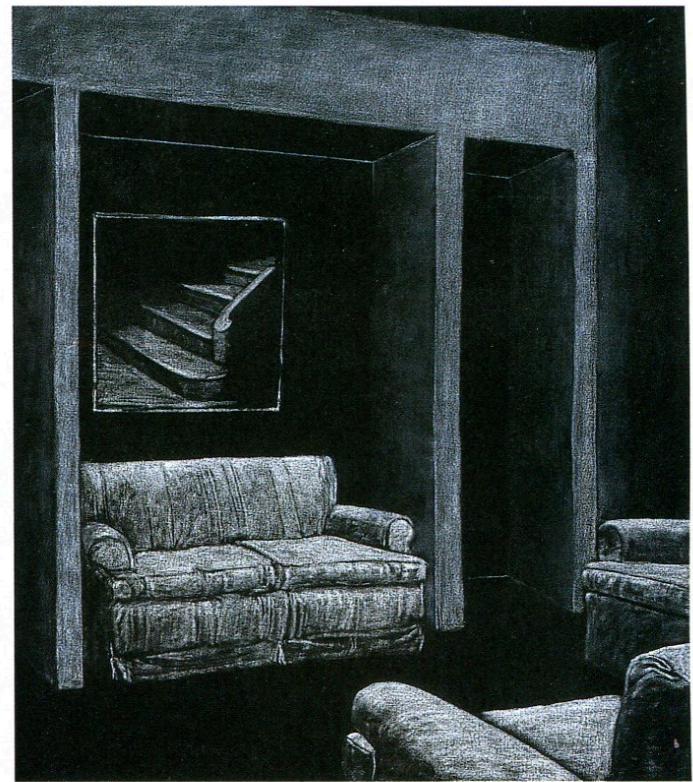
Definition is the degree to which a shape is distinguished from both the ground area and the positive shapes within the design. **High-definition** creates strong contrast between shapes and tends to increase clarity and immediacy of communication. For this reason, the diagrams used in this book generally feature black figures on a white ground. **Low-definition** shapes, including soft-edged shapes, gradations, and transparencies, can increase the complexity of the design and encourage multiple interpretations.

Definition is an inherent quality in photography. In addition to variations in focus, the photographer can choose finer-grained film and slick paper to create a crisper image and coarser-grained film and textured paper to create a softer image.

Variations in photographic definition can substantially affect meaning. We normally expect to see high-definition in the foreground and low-definition in the background. In *Movie Premiere, Hollywood* (1.45), Robert Frank reversed this expectation. He focused on the faces of the worshiping crowd rather than the somber actress, trapped by her fans. This photograph challenges the clichéd image of a glamorous celebrity and suggests the darker side of fame.



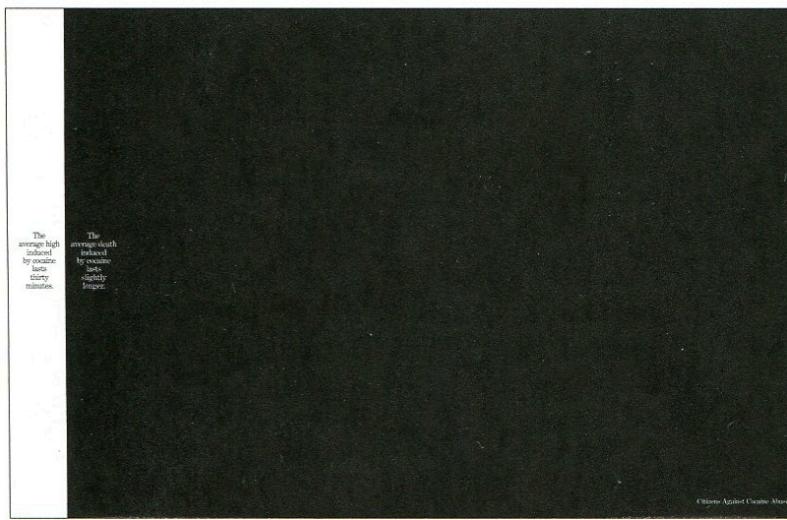
1.46 Sidney Goodman, *Man Waiting*, 1961. Charcoal on paper, 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (65.1 × 48.7 cm).



1.47 Juan Muñoz, *Raincoat Drawing*, 1992–93. Mixed media on fabric, 49 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 40 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (124.94 × 101.92 cm).

Definition also plays an important role in drawing. Many media, including graphite and charcoal, can be used to create strong, clear lines as well as soft, fuzzy shapes. In Sidney Goodman's *Man Waiting* (1.46), charcoal is used to create a mysterious figure in a threatening space. The darker, more clearly defined shapes in the upper torso seem to

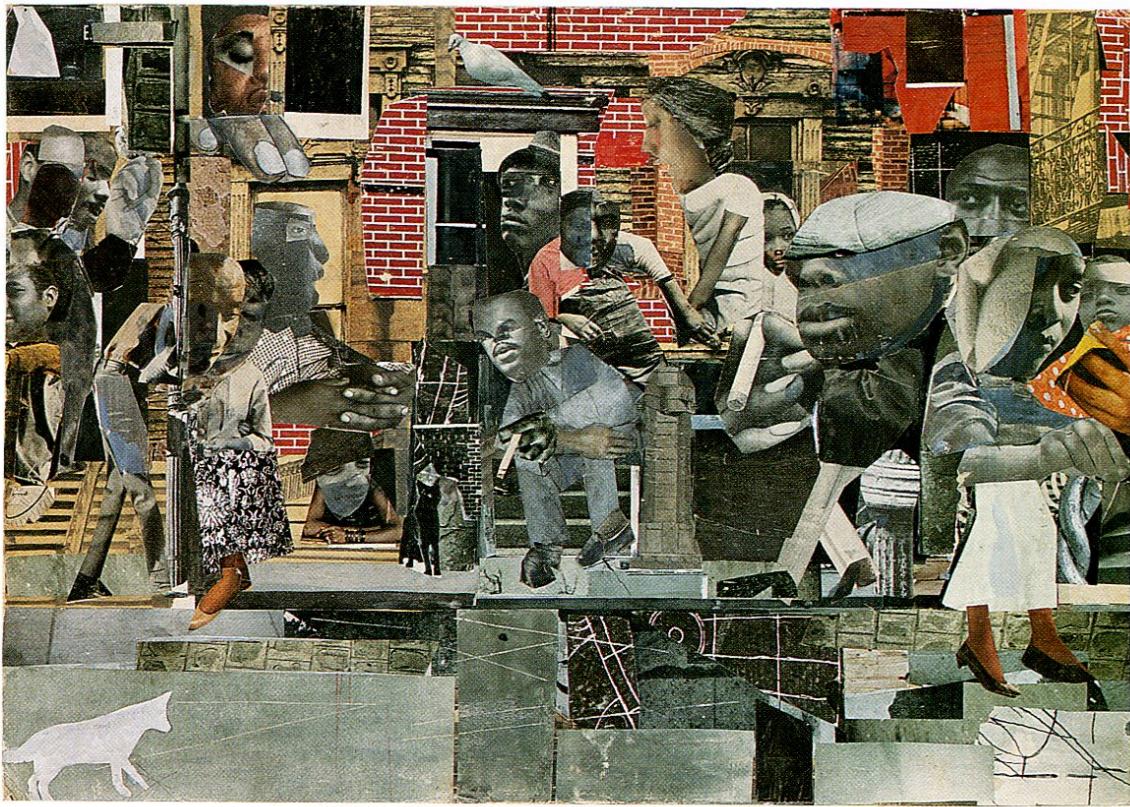
push toward us, while the legs, hips, and chair dissolve into the background. Similarly, in Juan Muñoz's *Raincoat Drawing* (1.47), simple white lines define a boundary and suggest an interior space. The shading used in the staircase increases the illusion of space and invites us to ascend. Encouraged to fill in the details, the viewer becomes actively involved in both drawings.



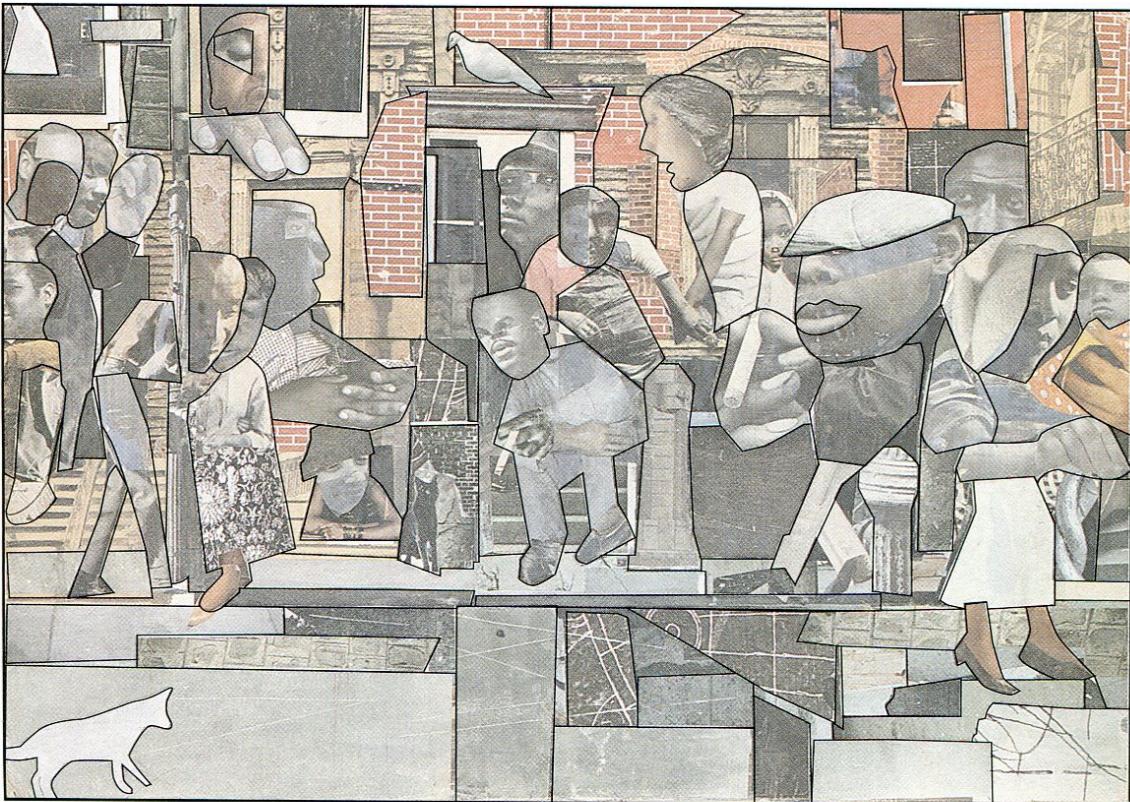
1.48 Ad by Citizens Against Cocaine Abuse: "The average high induced by cocaine lasts thirty minutes. The average death induced by cocaine lasts slightly longer." Art Director & Designer: Gary Goldsmith, Copywriter: Neal Gomberg, Agency: Goldsmith/ Jeffrey, Client: Citizens Against Cocaine Abuse.

Using Shape

Simple shapes are often used when clear, direct communication is needed. For example, Gary Goldsmith used just two shapes in an ad for an antidrug campaign (1.48). The text on the left reads "The average high induced by cocaine lasts thirty minutes." The text in the black shape on the right reads "The average death induced by cocaine lasts slightly longer." When these two sentences are compositionally combined, the narrow white band and the large black rectangle create a division between life and death.



1.49A Romare Bearden, *The Dove*, 1964. Cut-and-pasted paper, gouache, pencil, and colored pencil on cardboard. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (34 × 47.5 cm).



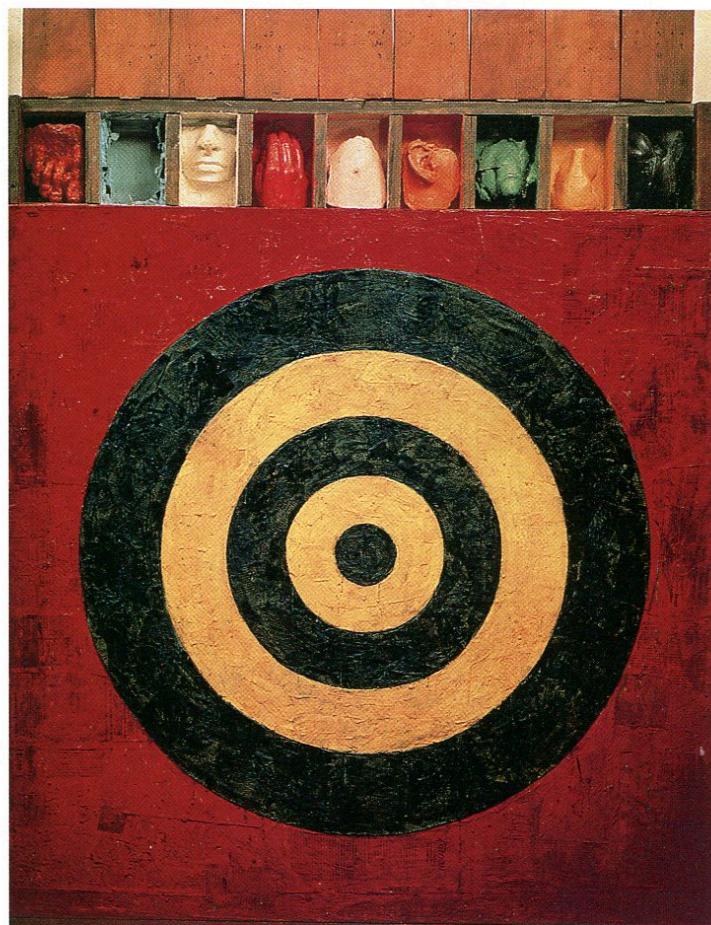
1.49B Romare Bearden (compositional diagram). Printed and cut shapes work together to create a complex composition.

More complex shapes are often used when the message is subtle or contradictory. **Collage** is one method for creating such complex shapes. Constructed from visual fragments initially designed for another purpose, a collage combines two kinds of shapes. In Bearden's *The Dove* (1.49A), the outer edges of each collage fragment create one set of shapes. A second set of shapes is created by the lines and textures printed on these photographic fragments. A linear diagram of this artwork demonstrates the complexity of the resulting composition (1.49B). Combining his perceptions of contemporary Harlem with childhood memories, Bearden used this interplay of the cut edges and printed textures to create a pattern of shifting shapes.

In *Target with Plaster Casts* (1.50), Jasper Johns combined simple shapes with sculptural objects to create an equally complex composition. A series of concentric circles creates a clearly defined target at the center of the painting. Nine sculptural fragments of a human figure line the upper edge—an ear, a hand, a mouth, and so forth. To add further complexity, scraps of newspaper were embedded in the colored wax from which the painting was constructed. Equally attracted to the representational body parts above and the symbolic target below, we must reconcile two very different forms of visual information.

Key Questions

- Experiment with rectilinear, curvilinear, geometric, and organic shapes. Which shape type will best express your idea?
- What happens when negative and positive shapes begin to fuse together?
- What happens when you combine flat, solid shapes with gradated shapes?
- Representational, nonobjective, and abstract approaches are discussed in this section. Which approach will best express your idea?



1.50 Jasper Johns, *Target with Plaster Casts*, 1955. Encaustic and collage on canvas with objects, 51 × 44 × 2½ in. (129.5 × 111.8 × 6.4 cm).

TEXTURE

The surface quality of a two-dimensional shape or a three-dimensional volume is called **texture**. Texture can create a bridge between two- and three-dimensional design. It engages our sense of touch as well as our vision, and it can enhance both the visual surface and the conceptual substance of any design.

Types of Texture

Physical texture creates actual variations in a surface. The woven texture of canvas, the bumpy texture of thickly applied paint, and the rough texture of wood grain are common examples. **Visual texture** is an illusion. It can be created using multiple marks or through a descriptive simulation of physical texture. **Invented texture** is one form of visual texture.