chapter three

Principles of Two-Dimensional Design

Imagine yourself practicing jump shots on a deserted basketball court. By focusing all of your attention on the basket, you can master the sequence of moves needed to score. Now, imagine yourself playing in a high-paced game. You are now surrounded by skillful and cooperative teammates. The skills you practiced alone become heightened as you take passes and make shots. The complexities increase and the stakes rise when 10 players fill the court.

Developing a compelling composition can be equally exhilarating. **Composition** can be defined as "the combination of multiple parts into a unified whole."[1] In a well-composed design, line, shape, texture, value, and color work together, as a team. As one element becomes dominant, another element becomes subordinate. A dialogue is created between positive and negative shapes, and opposing forces add vitality rather than creating confusion. Through composition, we can create order, emphasize critical information, and evoke an emotional response.

We will begin this chapter with a discussion of unity and variety, the basis on which all design is built. We will then define and discuss balance, scale, proportion, emphasis, and rhythm. The chapter ends with a discussion of the illusion of space and the illusion of movement. Relationships between concept and composition will be emphasized throughout.

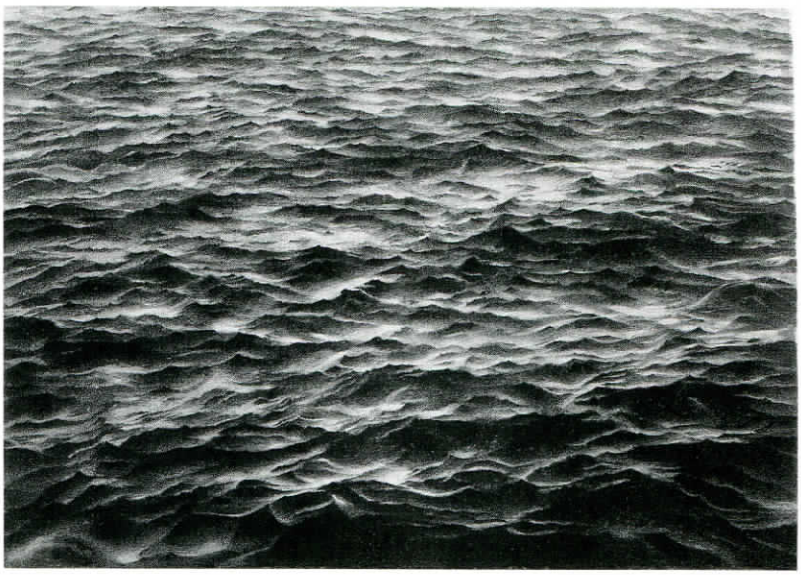
UNITY AND VARIETY

Unity can be defined as similarity, oneness, togetherness, or cohesion. **Variety** can be defined as difference. Unity and variety are the cornerstones of composition. When they are combined effectively, we can create compositions that are both cohesive and lively.

Mark Riedy used three major strategies to unify figure 3.1. First, all of the major shapes are organized diagonally, from the lower left to the upper right. A series of parallel lines in the sand and sea emphasizes this diagonal structure. Second, the top third of the painting is filled with the blue water, while the beach fills the bottom two-thirds. This proportional relationship has been used since antiquity to create a dynamic form of balance. Third, one shape is repeated 19 times, creating the graceful collection of umbrellas. Repetition in any form tends to increase unity.

A sailboat, 9 groups of bathers, and especially the single red umbrella add variety. The red umbrella breaks the pattern set by the 18 white umbrellas. The resulting focal point attracts our attention to a particular spot on the beach. As

3.1 Mark Riedy, *Day at the Beach*, 1988. Acrylic airbrush.



3.2 Vija Celmins, *Untitled (Ocean)*, 1969. Graphite on acrylic ground on paper, 14 × 18 in. (35.6 × 45.7 cm).

3.3 Hannah Höch, *Cut with a Kitchen Knife*, 1919. Collage, 44⅞ × 35½ in. (114 × 90 cm).

we begin to notice the number of people clustered around this umbrella, we are pulled into the painting and the miniature world it represents. One small red circle dramatically changes our visual and emotional response to the entire painting.

We face a new compositional challenge with each design we make. There are no simple formulas: each idea has its own expressive requirements. For example, in figure 3.2, Vija Celmins used a highly unified drawing to create a quiet, contemplative image. The size and shape of the waves are the only variations. At the other extreme, Hannah Höch's *Cut with a Kitchen Knife* (3.3) is crowded with conflicting images and fragmentary words. Created shortly after the end of World War I, this collage reflects the tumultuous economic and political conditions in postwar Germany. Celmins used a highly unified pattern of waves to suggest the ocean's hypnotic power, while Hoch used a collection of conflicting images to suggest chaos. Using very different approaches, each artist created an appropriate composition for the concept she wished to convey.

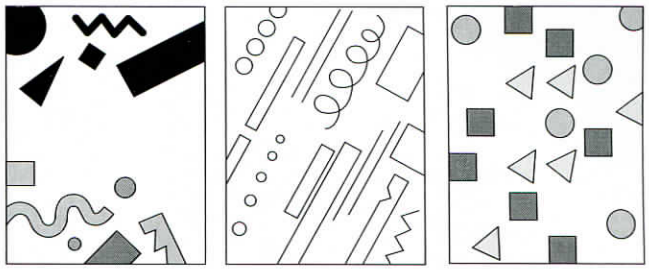
Creating an effective partnership between unity and variety is essential. Excessive unity can be monotonous, while excessive variety can be chaotic. In the following section, we will analyze these and other unifying forces in depth, consider ways to increase variety, and explore ways to create a partnership between the two.

Gestalt: Theory and Application

Artists and designers use many strategies to create compelling compositions. **Gestalt** psychology offers a fascinating analysis of these strategies. According to this theory, visual information is understood holistically before it is examined separately. We first scan the entire puzzle, then analyze the specific parts. Because the human mind can absorb only a limited number of separate bits, an image composed of units that are unrelated in size, style, orientation, and color will appear chaotic and unresolved. The implications of Gestalt are complex, and many books have been written on the subject. In this introduction, we will focus on six essential aspects.

Grouping

When presented with a collection of separate visual units, we immediately try to create order and make connections. **Grouping** is one of the first steps in this process. We generally group visual units by location, orientation, shape, and color. For example, the units in figure 3.4A form two distinct groups despite their dissimilarity in shape. Orientation creates group cohesion in figure 3.4B. The diagonal orientation of the various elements creates unity despite the shape variations. Grouping by shape is shown in figure 3.4C. We mentally organize this set of units by shape in spite of their similarity in size and value.



3.4A–C Examples of grouping by location, orientation, and shape.

Rama and Laksmana Bound by Arrow-Snakes (3.5) demonstrates the compositional and conceptual power of grouping. We first see the complete composition. Multiple groups of humans and animals fill the long, horizontal rectangle. Next, we may notice that the composition is divided into three sections, each dominated by a distinctive background color.

3.5 Sahibdin and workshop, *Rama and Laskshmana Bound by Arrow-snakes,* from the *Ramayana,* Mewar, c. 1650–52. Opaque watercolor on paper, 9 × 15⅛ in. (22.86 × 38.42 cm).

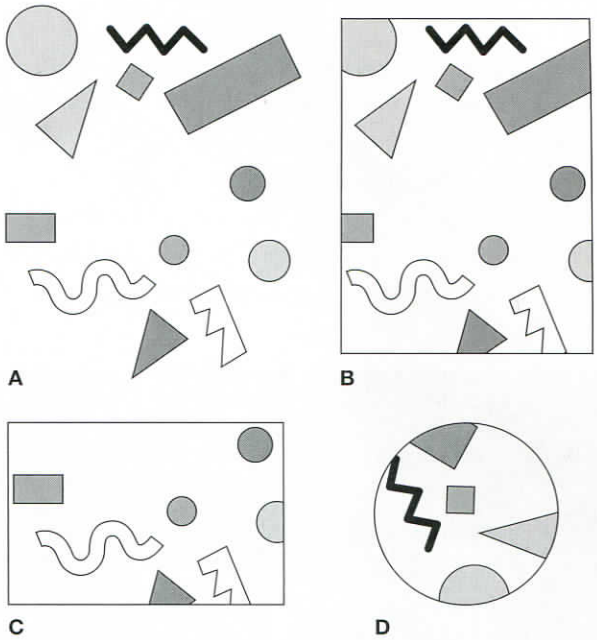
Blue and gray dominate the section on the left; red and orange dominate the section on the right, and a yellow background fills the center. Within these major groups, we can discern further subdivisions, including the two clusters of monkeys on the right, the four compositional boxes on the left, and the throng of horsemen in the center.

Like a comic book, this painting tells a complex story of prophecy, magical transformation, imprisonment, and escape. It begins in the rose-colored box on the right, as Indrajit devises a defense against Rama and Laskhmana, who are about to attack the palace. On the left, Indrajit's arrows turn into snakes, binding the attackers. Indrajit's triumphal march dominates the center of the composition. By grouping the various events, the artist was able to present complex visual information effectively.

Containment

As we can see from figure 3.5, groups are most easily created when visual units are placed inside a container. **Containment** is a unifying force created by the outer edge of a composition or by a boundary within a composition. A container encourages us to seek connections among visual units and adds definition to the negative space around each positive shape. In figure 3.6A, a random collection of shapes becomes more unified when a simple boundary is added (3.6B). Any shift in the location of this boundary creates a new set of relationships. A vertical rectangle is often used when a rising or sinking movement is needed, while a horizontal format can create an expansive effect (3.6C). The circular container in figure 3.6D draws our attention to both the center and the outer edges of the composition.

Larry Moore's illustration in figure 3.7 uses containment in an especially inventive way. Three containers are used in this composition: the edge of the drawing provides the first container; the curtains provide the second; and the face itself provides the third container. A wide variety of corporate logos cover the face. Logos must attract attention, regardless of the context in which they are placed, and each of these logos was originally designed as a distinct visual unit. In this composition, however, the individualistic logos become a cooperative team. The connections created by the three levels of containment are stronger than the separations created by the individualistic logos.



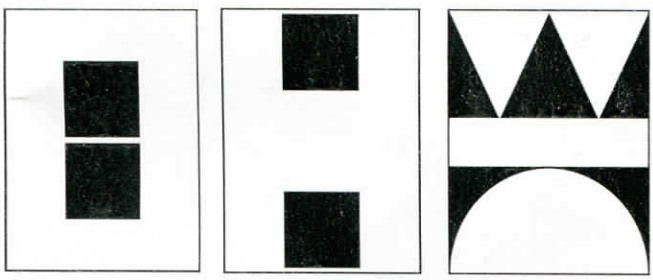
3.6A–D A container of any kind helps unify disparate visual units.

3.7 Larry Moore, for Creative Club of Orlando. Pastel on paper, 10 × 15 in. (25.4 × 38.1 cm).

Repetition

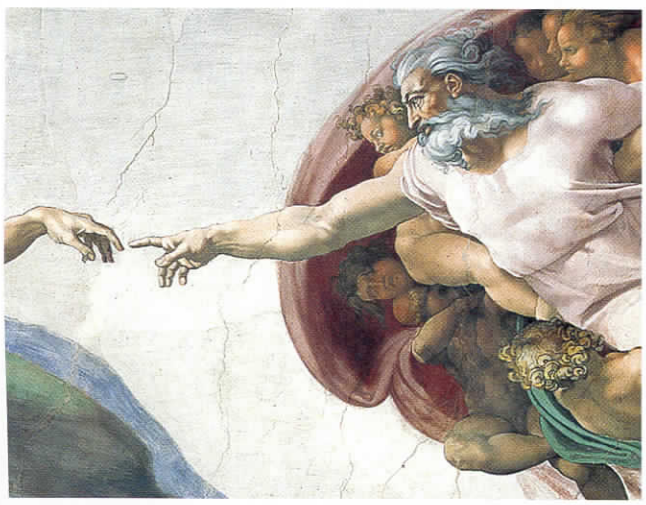
Repetition occurs when we use the same visual element or effect over and over. By leafing through Chapter One, we can find many examples of unity through repetition. Kandinsky's *Several Circles* (page 16) is unified by shape. The repeated circles create a cohesive design despite the wide range of colors used. Repeated textures unify many works, including the Villon portrait on page 23, the Durer engraving on page 41, and the Moran landscape on page 46.

3.8 Aaron Macsai, *Panels of Movement.* Bracelet, 18K gold, sterling, copper, ⅞ × 7 in. (2 × 18 cm).



A B C

3.9A–C Variations in proximity.



3.10 Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam* (after cleaning, 1989), c. 1510. Sistine Chapel, Rome.

In Aaron Macsai's *Panels of Movement* (3.8), similar lines, shapes, textures, and colors were used in each of the 10 panels from which the bracelet was constructed. A spiral shape, an undulating line, a sphere, and at least one triangular shape appear in each of the panels. Despite their variations in size, texture, and location, these repeated shapes create a strong connection from panel to panel.

Proximity

In design, the distance between visual elements is called **proximity.** As shown in figure 3.9A, close proximity helps increase unity. More distant shapes read as separate events (3.9B). **Fusion** occurs when shapes or volumes are placed so close together that they share common edges. When shapes of similar color and texture fuse, new negative shapes can be created as the surrounding area becomes more clearly defined (3.9C).

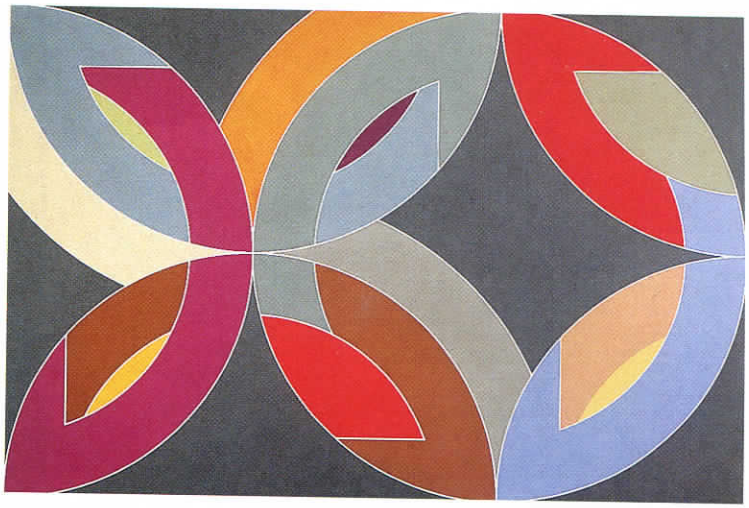
Careful use of proximity can create visual tension, adding energy to the design. A detail from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (3.10) demonstrates the expressive power of visual tension. Jehovah's hand, on the right, nearly touches Adam's hand, on the left. As we gaze upward at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, less than 6 inches of space separate the two. In this cosmology, all of human history begins when the spark of life jumps this gap. If the hands had been placed too far apart or too close together, the spark that animates both the man and the painting would have been lost.

Continuity

Continuity may be defined as a fluid connection among compositional parts. As shown in figure 3.11, this connection can be actual or implied. With actual continuity, each shape touches an adjoining shape. With implied continuity, we mentally make the connections. Actual continuity helps to unify the flowers at the top of the drawing, while implied continuity helps connect the hands of the clock to the flowers on the lower right.

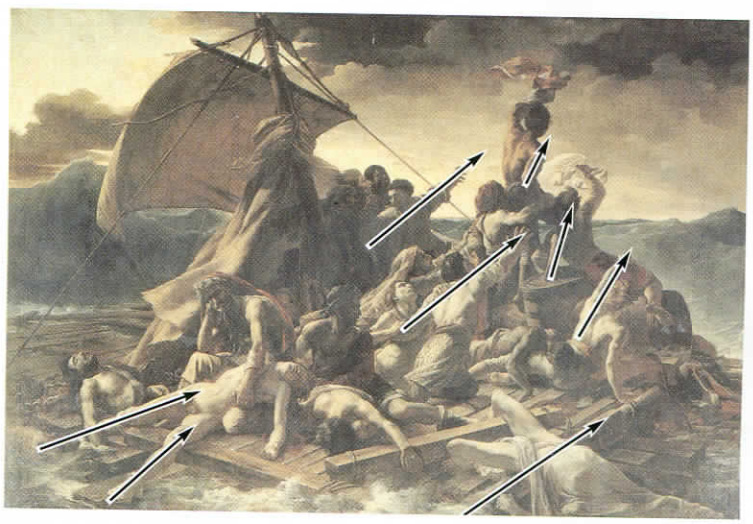
Skillful use of continuity can add visual movement to a design. **Movement** creates deliberate visual pathways and helps direct the viewer's attention to areas of particular interest. In Frank

3.11 Mary Stewart, *Line Study*, 2004. Graphite, 12 in. × 9 in.



3.12 Frank Stella, *Lac Laronge IV*, 1969. Acrylic polymer on canvas, 9 ft ⅛ in. × 13 ft 6 in. (2.75 × 3.11 m).

3.13A Théodore Géricault, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818–19. Oil on canvas, 16 ft 1 in. × 23 ft 6 in. (4.9 × 7.2 m).



3.13B Diagram of *Raft of the Medusa*, showing eye movement toward focal point.

Stella's *Lac Laronge IV* (3.12), curving lines and shapes flow from one circle to the next, creating continuous visual flow. Color distribution enhances this effect. The upward curve of blue in the upper left corner is echoed by a quarter turn of blue in the lower right corner. The downward curve of reds in the lower left corner is echoed by a quarter turn of scarlet in the upper right corner. The hints of olive and ochre add a further spin to the wheel.

Movement can play an equally important role in a representational design. In Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (3.13A), a pattern of diagonal lines (3.13B) directs our attention to a single **focal point,** or primary point of interest. The arms and legs of the sailors, the floorboards of the raft, and even the angle of the sail all lead us toward the rescue ship in the upper right corner. This dramatic use of movement greatly increases the emotional power of this historical painting. One hundred forty-nine survivors from a sinking ship began a desperate journey on the raft.

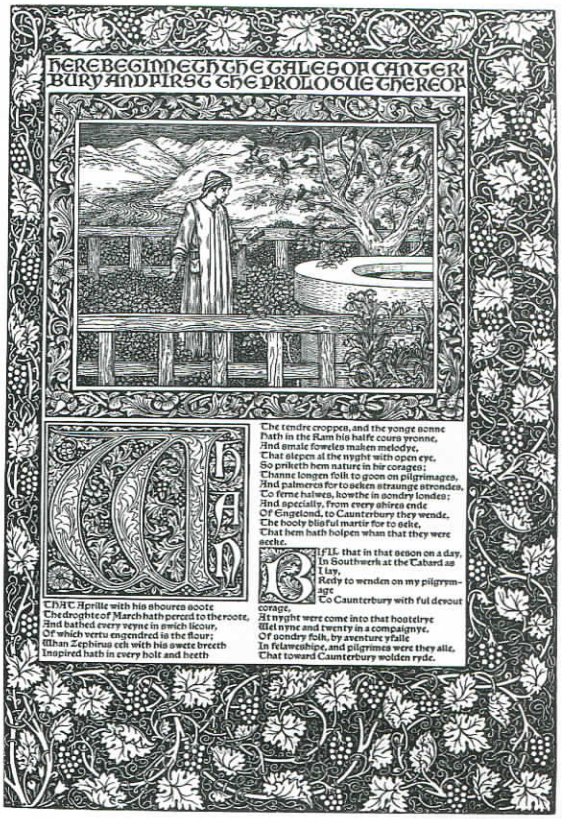
help us read the disoriented words at the top of the composition. Proximity then helps us connect these words to the doll's face that fills the bottom half of the design. In *Turn of the Screw,* a play by Henry James, two children turn the tables on their governess, with devastating results. The turning text and frightened face convey both the title and the feeling perfectly.

Patterns and Grids

A **pattern** is created when any visual element is systematically repeated over an extended area (3.16). Many patterns are based on a module, or basic visual unit. A **grid** is created through a series of intersecting lines. Both can be used to create containment, increase continuity, strengthen proximity, and encourage closure. As a result, patterns and grids tend to increase compositional unity.

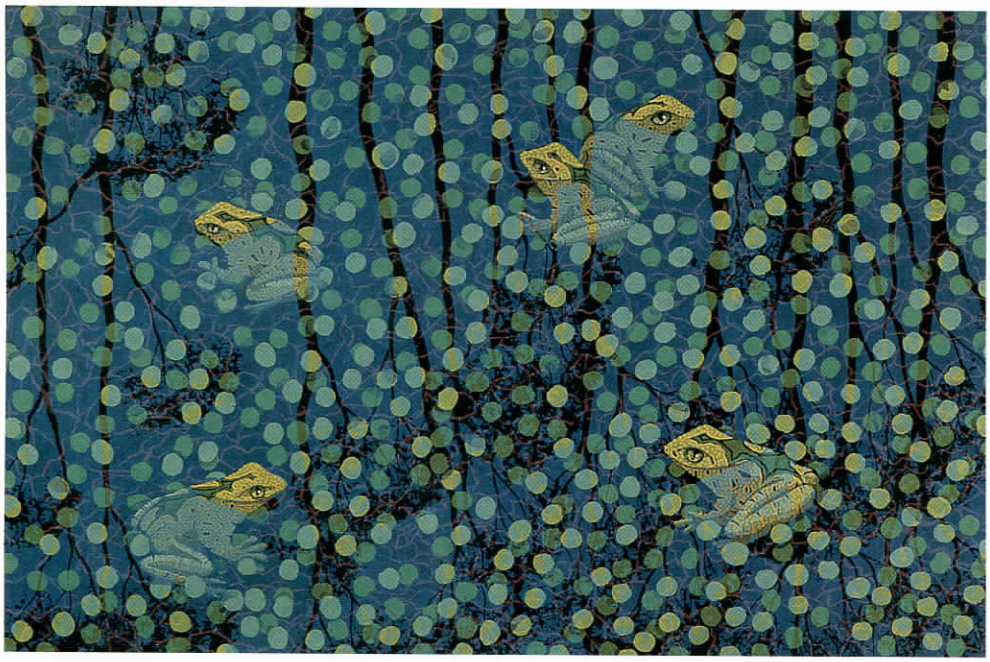
Patterns are often used to decorate walls, books, or fabrics. In his *Canterbury Tales,* designer William Morris used complex floral patterns to create multiple borders and backgrounds. Four major patterns are shown in figure 3.17. Curvilinear patterns of grape vines, flowers, and oak leaves fill the borders. The flowing text at the top of the page echoes these curving shapes and creates an additional pattern. There are even more patterns in the main drawing. The standing man is surrounded by two distinct leaf patterns, and a linear pattern suggests wood grain.

Multiple fragments of visual information can also be unified through pattern. In *Tar Beach* (3.18), Faith Ringgold used a pattern of repeating squares to organize blocks of printed fabric into a distinctive border. Based on Ringgold's own memories of sleeping on an apartment roof during hot weather, this pattern refers to the quilt depicted in the painting and to the magical expanse of buildings and lights visible from the rooftop.



3.17 William Morris, Illustrated Page from *The Canterbury Tales,* 1896.

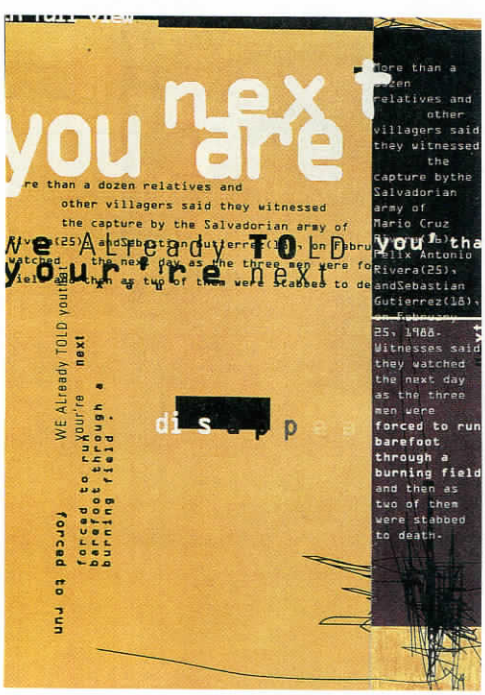
3.18 Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach,* 1988. Acrylic on canvas, fabric border, 74 × 69 in. (187.96 × 175.26 cm).



3.19 Lin Onus. *Gumiring Garkman.* 1994. Screenprint, 19⅝ × 29½ in.

Patterns can add energy as well as unity to a design. Hundreds of small circles provide a unifying pattern in figure 3.19. The circles are unified by their similarity in size and organization, while slight variations in color cause subtle shifts in visual space. The location of the five frogs within this pattern is unconventional. They sit like the corners of a skewed square, just to the left of center. As with nature itself, an underlying pattern has been combined with unexpected variety to create a memorable image.

Grids are most commonly created using vertical and horizontal lines. The unifying power of a grid is so great that even the most disparate information gains cohesion when a grid is used. In Dobkin's Amnesty International leaflet (3.20A), commercial



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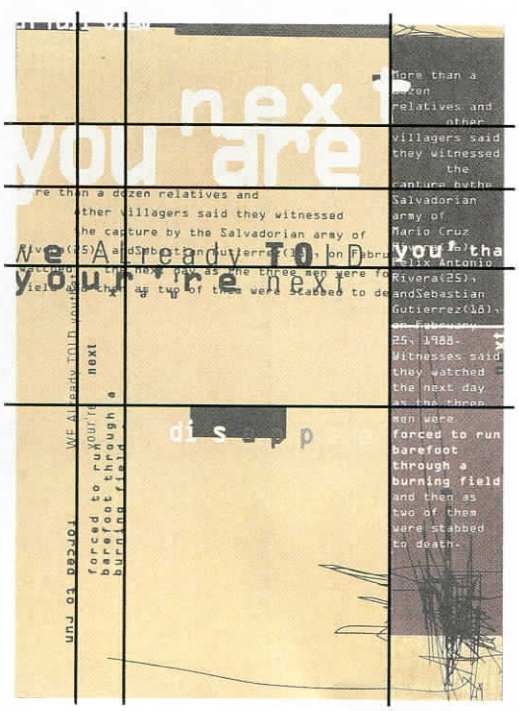

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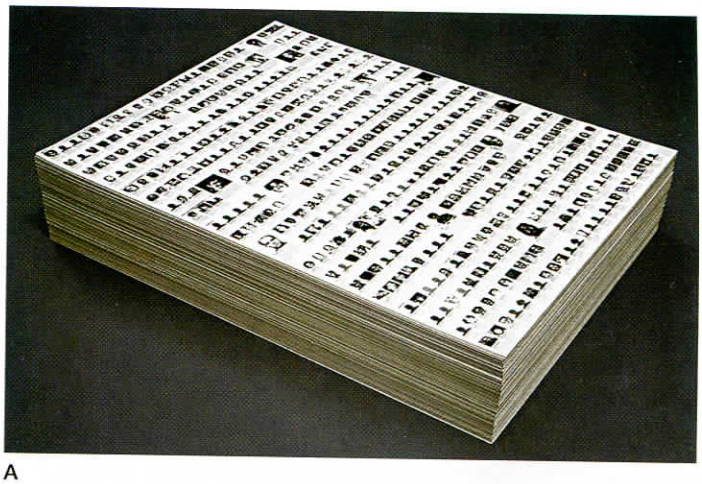
3.20A Joan Dubkin. Informational leaflet for Amnesty International, 1991.

3.20B Diagram of Amnesty International poster, showing organizational structure.

and handmade letterforms tell the story of political repression and governmental terror in El Salvador. Disoriented words and menacing phrases convey the helplessness and fear of the victims. Fragments of sentences appear and disappear unexpectedly. An underlying grid, shown in figure 3.20B, brings just the right amount of order to this poignant design.

Grids can be used to expand ideas as well as increase order. For example, in *Death by Gun* (3.21), Felix González-Torres used a grid to organize hundreds of photographs of weekly victims of gunfire in America. The large sheets were then photocopied and distributed to gallery visitors. The grid provides structure for the collection of images while emphasizing the sheer number of weekly deaths. As units with the grid, each victim was presented more as a statistic than as an individual.



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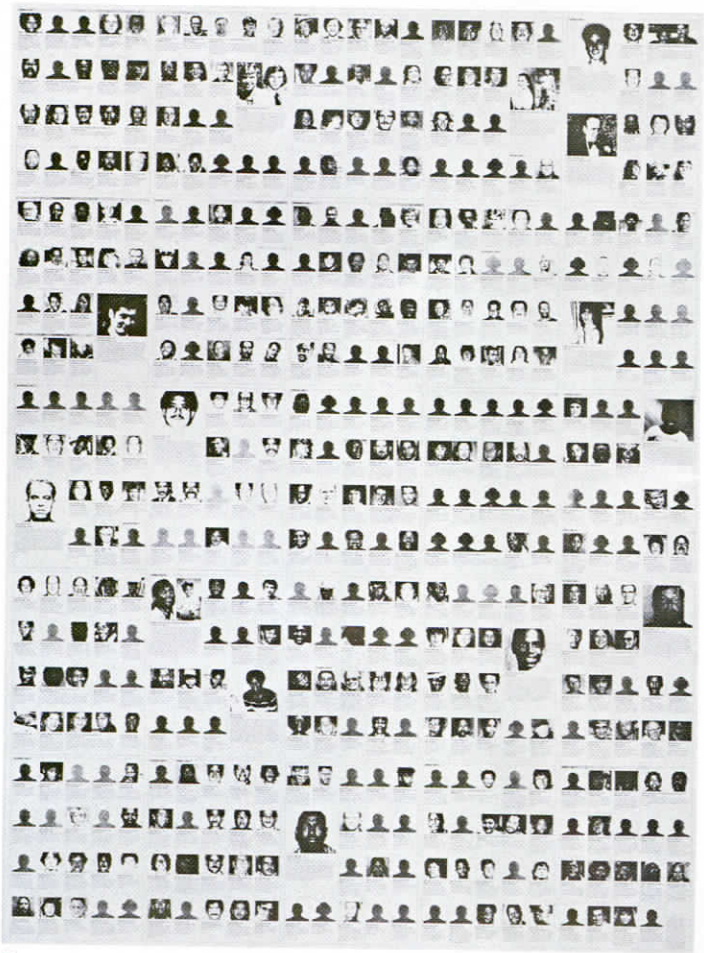


B

3.21A–B. Felix González-Torres, *Untitled (Death by Gun)*, 1990. Offset print on paper, 44½ × 32½ in. (113.03 × 82.55 cm).

Key Questions

- What strategies have you used to unify your composition?
- What gives your composition variety?
- Is the balance between unity and variety appropriate for the ideas you want to express?
- What would happen if your composition were constructed using a pattern or grid?

BALANCE

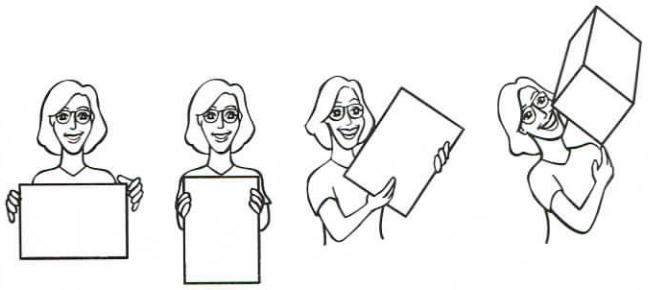
In design, **balance** refers to the equal distribution of weight or force among visual units. Visual balance creates equilibrium among compositional units, regardless of their size, weight, or shape. Negative and positive shapes work together to create balance.

Weight and Gravity

Visual weight can be defined in two ways. First, *weight* refers to the inclination of shapes to float or sink. Second, *weight* can refer to the relative importance of a visual element within a design.

The compositional forces that most influence visual weight are size, value, type of shape, texture, location, and orientation. The context in which a visual unit is placed strongly affects each of these forces. For example, when a shape is placed on a neutral white ground, darker values and vigorous textures generally increase its visual weight. As noted in Chapter One, circles tend to stand out when placed in a rectangular format, while squares fit in more easily. Location within the format also affects visual weight. Shapes that appear to extend beyond the upper edge tend to rise, while shapes that appear to extend below the bottom appear to sink.

The vertical, horizontal, or diagonal orientation of a line or shape also affects visual weight. Try this simple experiment. Which is the most dynamic and which is the most static position for the box in figure 3.22? Most viewers find positions A and B the most static, or stable. In these positions, the box is at rest, with the vertical and horizontal edges reconfirming the stability we experience when objects are at rest in the real world. By contrast, position C and position D place the box in a dynamic position, halfway between standing and falling. A composition that is dominated by diagonals tends to be visually dynamic, while a composition that is dominated by horizontals tends to be more stable, or static.



3.22 Which box is the most static? Which is the most dynamic?

Bernice Abbott's photograph of New York skyscrapers (3.23) demonstrates the power of orientation. Using dramatic vertical shapes within a tall vertical format, she captured the soaring energy of Wall Street within a small image. Even the most abstract design is governed by gravity. In figure 3.24, a rectangle filled with horizontal lines suggests the stability and tranquility of a landscape. Image stability would have increased if a horizontal format had been used. Instead, by using a vertical orientation and devoting the upper half to a gradated blue shape, Tetsurō Sawada combined the serenity of a landscape with the expansive feel of the soaring sky.

Visual weight can also refer to the relative importance of a visual element within a

3.23 Bernice Abbott, *Exchange Place*, New York, 1934. Photograph.

3.24 Tetsurō Sawada, *Brilliant Scape (Blue)*, 1985. Silkscreen, 22⅞ × 15¾ in. (58 × 40 cm).

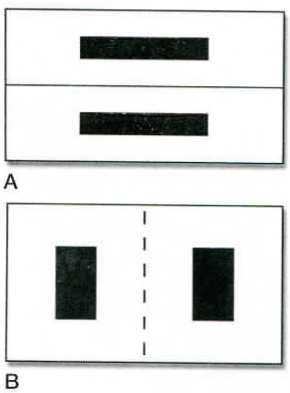
design. In *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941* (3.25), Ansel Adams combined balance, gravity, and movement to create an image that is both tranquil and dramatic. A squarish format dominated by horizontal lines provides stability. The quiet village sinks to the bottom of the design. The tiny moon, positioned just to the right of compositional center, pulls us into the velvety black sky at the top half of the image. As the focal point for the image, the moon has the most visual weight in this photograph.

3.25 Ansel Adams, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941.* Photograph.

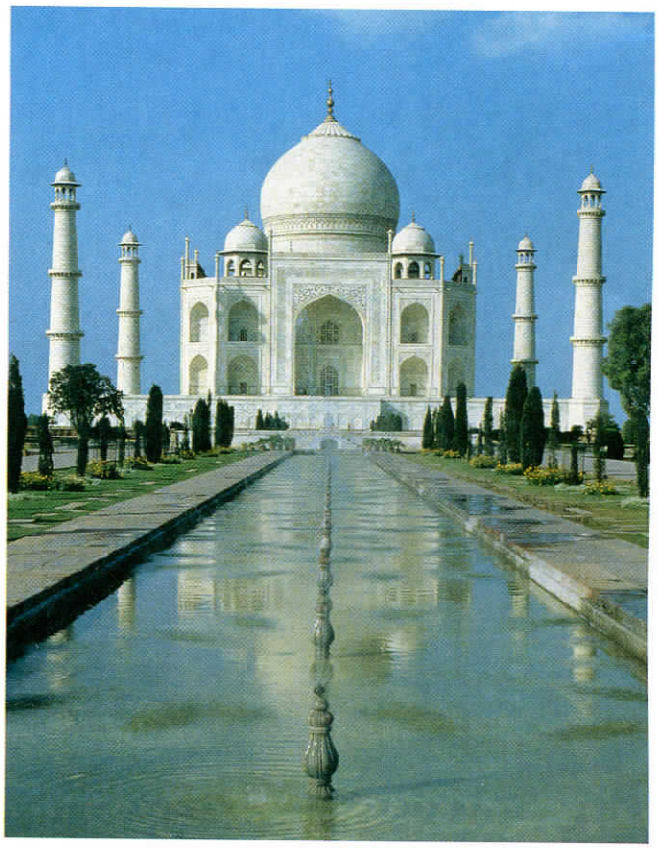
Symmetrical Balance

Symmetrical balance occurs when shapes are mirrored on either side of an axis, as in a composition that is vertically divided down the center (3.26A). A shift in this axis (3.26B) creates symmetry between the top and bottom of the design.

A symmetrically balanced design can appeal to our desire for equilibrium and communicate calm and stability. The Taj Mahal (3.27) was built by a seventeenth-century Indian emperor as a tomb for his beloved wife. The three white marble domes and the four flanking towers create architectural symmetry. In the reflecting pool, a mirror image appears, increasing visual symmetry. The building is both graceful and serene.



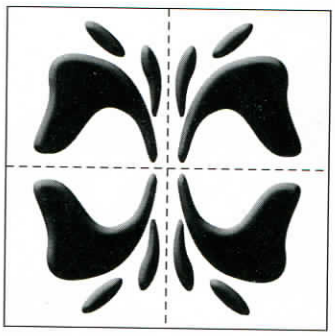
3.26 Examples of symmetrical balance.



3.27 Taj Mahal, Agra, India.

3.28 Richard Estes, *Miami Rug Company*, **1974.** Oil on canvas, 40 × 54 in. (101.6 × 137.16 cm).

Approximate symmetry is created when similar imagery appears on either side of a central axis. For example, in Richard Estes' *Miami Rug Company* (3.28), actual and reflected light poles divide the space as decisively as a gate. Radiating from the center of the composition, a network of diagonal lines pulls us into the painting. At the same time, the large pane of glass on the left side pushes toward us, shimmering with darkened reflections of the buildings on the right side. The overall effect is unnerving. The seemingly symmetrical shapes are actually quite different, and the resulting image is disorienting rather than serene.



3.29 Radial symmetry can be created when lines and shapes are mirrored both vertically and horiontally.

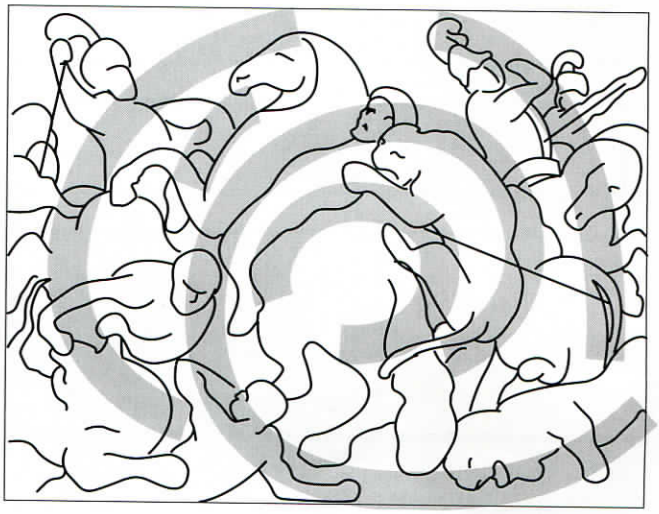
Radial Symmetry

With **radial symmetry,** lines and shapes are mirrored both vertically and horizontally, with the center of the composition acting as a focal point (3.29). An expanded approach to radial symmetry is shown in Judy Chicago's *Rejection Quintet: Female Rejection Drawing* (3.30). Because the format is now divided diagonally as well as vertically and horizontally, the entire design radiates from the center.

A popular variant on radial balance is the spiral. A spiral can increase energy in a circular format or add

3.30 Judy Chicago, *Rejection Quintet: Female Rejection Drawing*, 1974. Prismacolor and graphite on rag/board, 39⅝ × 29⅝ in. (101 × 75 cm).

3.31A Workshop of Peter Paul Rubens, *Tiger Hunt*, c. 1616. Oil on canvas, 38⅞ × 49¼ in. (98.8 × 125 cm).



3.31B Diagram of compositional forces.

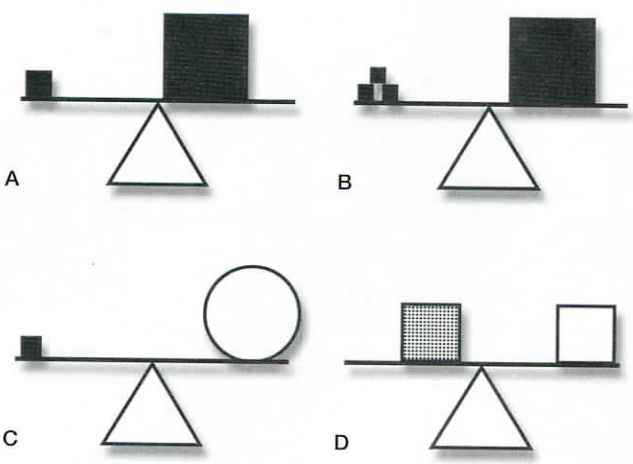
movement to a rectangular composition. In Rubens' *Tiger Hunt* (3.31A–B), the spiral pulls the tiger and the hunters together in the center of the painting. It then spins outward, breaking apart near the edges.

Asymmetrical Balance

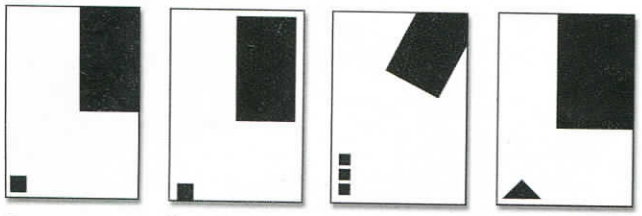
Asymmetrical balance creates equilibrium among visual elements that do *not* mirror each other on either side of an axis. Depending on the degree of asymmetry, the resulting design may be quite stable, very dynamic, or nearly chaotic.

Many strategies can be used to create asymmetrical balance:

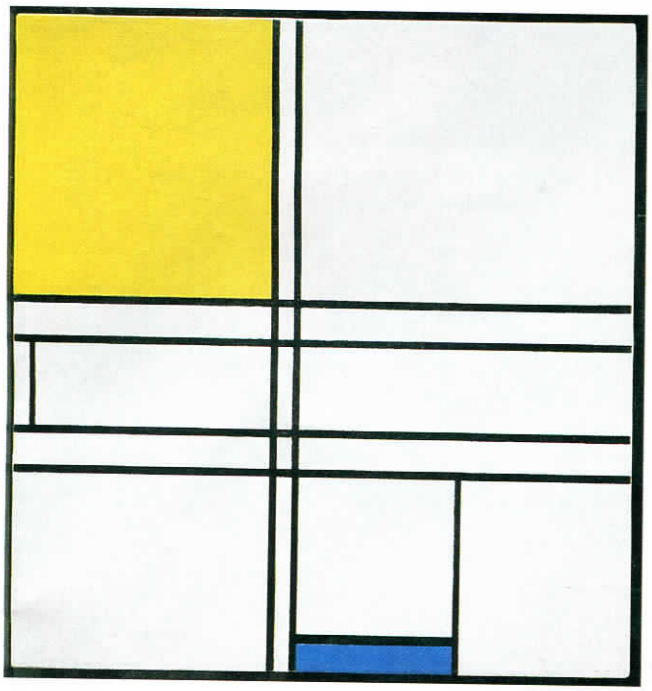
- A large shape is placed close to the fulcrum, while a small shape is placed farther away. Just as a child at the end of a seesaw can balance an adult near the center, so large and small shapes can be balanced in a design (3.32A).
- Multiple small squares, acting together, can balance a large square (3.32B).
- A small, solid square can balance a large, open circle. The solidity and stability of the square give it additional weight (3.32C).
- A textured shape placed near the fulcrum can be balanced by a distant open shape (3.32D).



3.32A–D Creating assymetrical balance.



3.33 Examples of asymmetrical balance.

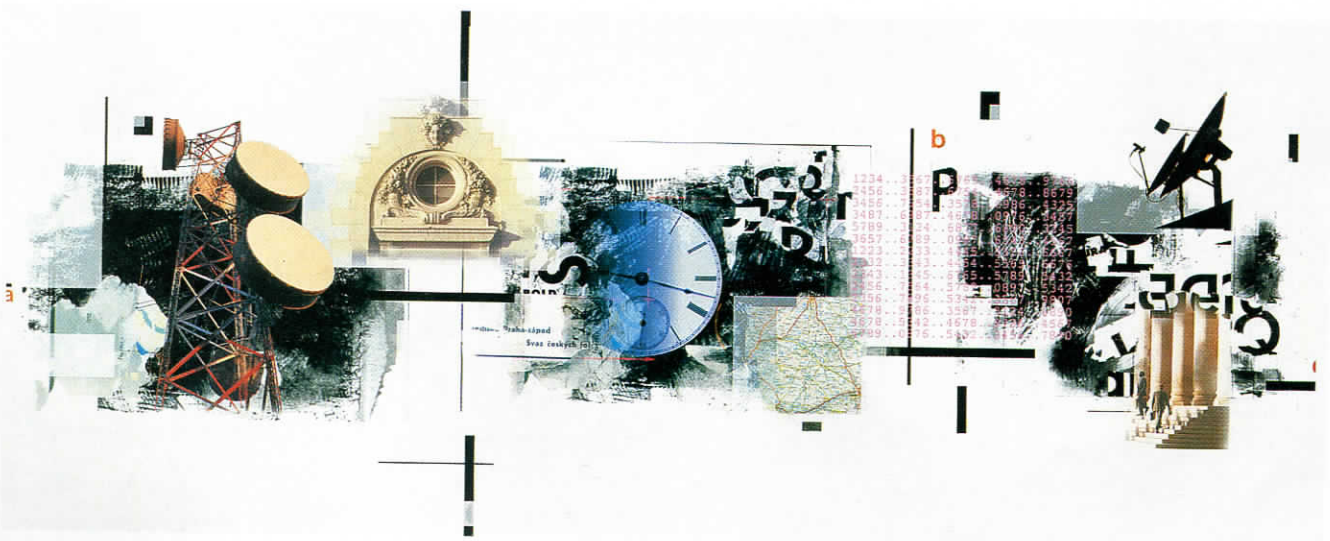


3.34 Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Blue and Yellow*, 1935. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 27¼ in. (73 × 69.2 cm).

Asymmetrical balance becomes even more interesting when a boundary is added. Because the negative space is just as important as each positive shape, more complex compositions can now be created:

- A small shape placed near the bottom of the format balances a large shape placed along the top. Especially within a tall rectangle, shapes placed near the top tend to rise, while shapes placed near the bottom tend to sink (3.33A).
- When the small square intersects the bottom edge and the large square moves away from the edge, the differences in weight become even more pronounced (3.33B).
- The top shape now gains energy through its diagonal orientation. Three bottom shapes are needed to create balance (3.33C).
- Finally, a small, aggressive shape can balance a large, passive shape (3.33D).

Balance in a composition shifts each time a visual element is added or subtracted. A complex network of negative and positive lines and shapes creates the balance in Mondrian's *Composition with Blue and Yellow* (3.34). The large yellow square positioned along the top edge is easily balanced by the small blue rectangle, which sinks to the bottom. Very minor changes can substantially shift compositional balance.



3.35 Frank Miller, *Untitled*, 1997. Digital image.

The balance in Frank Miller's digital design (3.35) is even more complex. A horizontal line extends from the left to the right, in slightly descending steps. Four broken vertical lines divide the design into three major sections, each roughly one-third of the total length. Within these sections, the curving satellite dishes, clock, and letters add a series of repeated curves. Multiple lines, shapes, and clusters of information have been balanced in this image.

Expressive Uses of Balance

Each type of balance has its advantages. The approximate symmetry Frida Kahlo used for her double self-portrait (3.36) is symbolically appropriate and compositionally effective. Painted in response to her divorce from painter Diego Rivera, it presents the beloved Frida in a native costume on the right and the rejected Frida in European dress on the left. A linear vein connects the women's hearts. In figure 3.30, Judy Chicago used radial symmetry to pull the viewer into the composition. In figure 3.1 (see page 63), Mark Riedy used asymmetrical balance to animate his beach scene and accentuate the red umbrella.

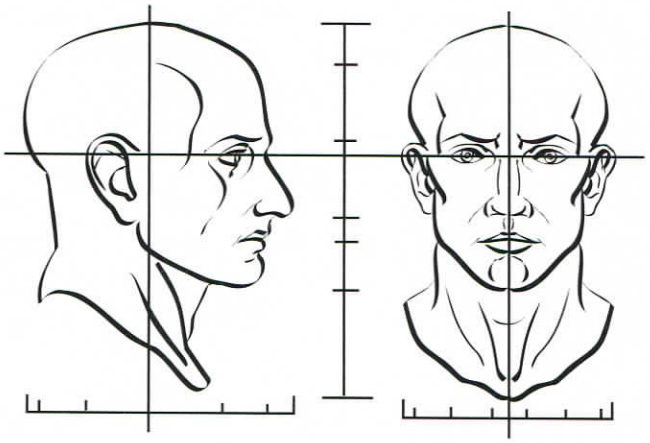
There are even some cases in which a degree of **imbalance** is necessary. Eric Fischl used imbalance very deliberately in *Barbeque* (3.37). The table in the foreground is tilted and the bowl of fish is impossibly large. Pulled by the diagonal lines leading to the house, the pool seems strangely distorted, while the tiny women are more like dolls than people. Manning the grill, the father looks on approvingly as his son engages in a little recreational fire-breathing. Spatial distortion combined with a bizarre collection of objects and events turns a family picnic into a suburban nightmare.

3.36 Frida Kahlo, *Las Dos Fridas*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 69½ × 69½ in. (176 × 176 cm).

3.37 Eric Fischl, *Barbeque*. 1982. Oil on canvas. 5 ft. 5 in. × 8 ft. 4 in.

Key Questions

- Which is the "heaviest" shape in your design? Does its weight match its importance?
- How does the shape of your design affect its compositional balance?
- In your composition, how does negative space affect overall balance?
- Various forms of balance were described in this section. Which is most effective for the ideas you want to express?

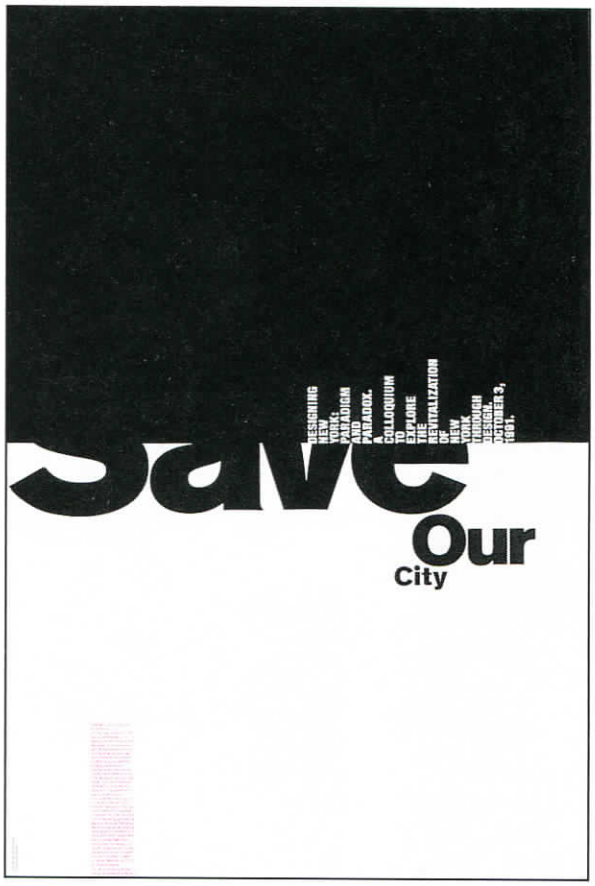


3.38 Proportion is an essential part of figure drawing.

SCALE AND PROPORTION

Scale and proportion strongly affect compositional balance and emotional impact. **Proportion** refers to the relative size of visual elements *within* an image. When we compare the width of the head with its height or divide a composition into thirds, we are establishing a proportional relationship (3.38). **Scale** commonly refers to the size of a form when compared with our own human size. Thus, a 50-foot-long painting is a large-scale artwork, while a 10-square-inch square painting is an example of small scale.

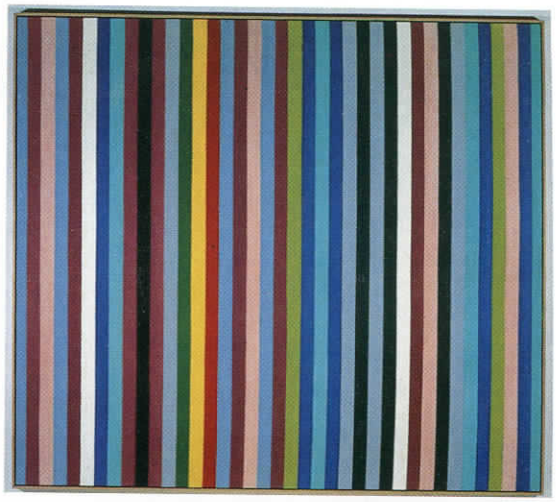
Most designs distribute information fairly evenly within the format, with only modest size variation among the parts. Exaggerating these proportions can be eye-catching, because the image immediately stands out from the norm. In *Save Our City*, by Michael Bierut (3.39), the large black rectangle at the top presses down on the white shape below, covering the top part of the word *Save*. Meanwhile, the vertical white text suggests a city skyline and helps pull the white section of the poster upward. This tension between the upper and lower sections of the design perfectly matches the urgency of the message.



3.39 Michael Bierut, *Save Our City.* Design Firm: Pentagram, NYC.

Likewise, various expressive possibilities occur when scale is exaggerated. *Intermission* (see page 97) presented many challenges to painter Ken Stout. The 50-foot-long format had to become an asset, rather than a liability. We visually enter the theater through the pink doorway at the far left. Cool blue light bathes the restless audience. Two men in the balcony add to the action, as one aims a peashooter and another launches a paper airplane. On the stage, a tiny actor creates a transition between the audience and the stage crew. The painting ends in a final burst of red, at the far right side. Taking advantage of each square inch, Stout created a swirling panorama of figures engaged in a wide variety of activities, onstage, backstage, and in the audience.

3.40 Bridget Riley, *Drift No. 2*, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 7 ft 7½ in. × 7 ft 5½ in. (2.32 × 2.27 m).



3.41 Gene Davis, *Billy Budd*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 5 ft 8½ in. × 6 ft 4⅞ in. (2.32 × 2.27 m).

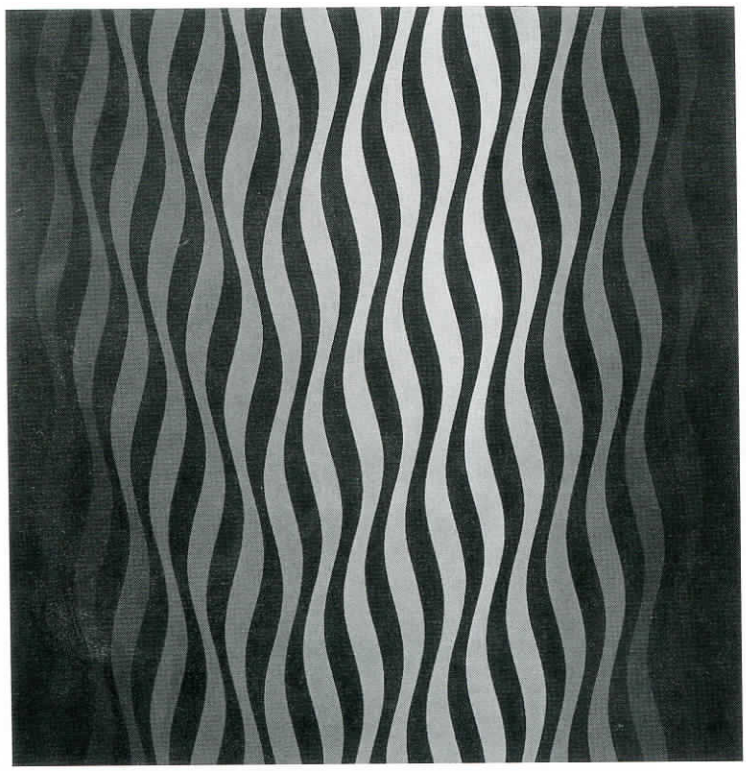
RHYTHM

Rhythm is created when multiple units are presented in a deliberate pattern. Visual rhythm is similar to musical rhythm. In music, rhythm is created through the organization of sound in time. Meter (the basic pattern of sound and silence), accents (which emphasize specific notes), and tempo (the speed with which the music is played) can be combined to create a dazzling array of compositional possibilities.

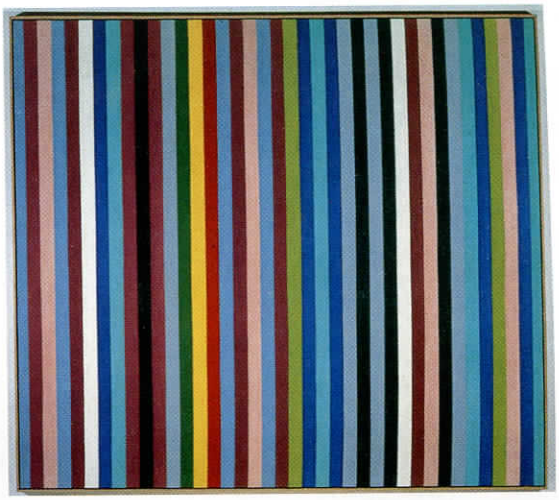
As with music, the rhythm in a visual composition can take many forms. In Bridget Riley's *Drift No. 2* (3.40), a simple line has been repeated to create an undulating rhythm similar to the waves on the surface of a pond. Stripes of various colors create a spatial rhythm in Gene Davis' *Billy Budd* (3.41). Warm and cool colors in various values and intensities were used, causing some stripes to advance while others recede.

Michael James combined undulating and spatial rhythms in his *Rhythm/Color: Improvisation* (3.42). A series of square blocks creates a unifying grid. Diagonal lines within each block and the curving shapes between blocks add another layer of movement. Fifteen blocks covered with diamond shapes provide accents, while a pattern of radiating diagonals energizes the border.

3.42 Michael James, *Rhythm/Color: Improvisation*, 1985. Machine-pieced and -quilted cotton and silk, 99½ × 99½ in. (253 × 253 cm).



3.40 Bridget Riley, *Drift No. 2*, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 7 ft 7½ in. × 7 ft 5½ in. (2.32 × 2.27 m).



3.41 Gene Davis, *Billy Budd*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 5 ft 8½ in. × 6 ft 4⅛ in. (2.32 × 2.27 m).

RHYTHM

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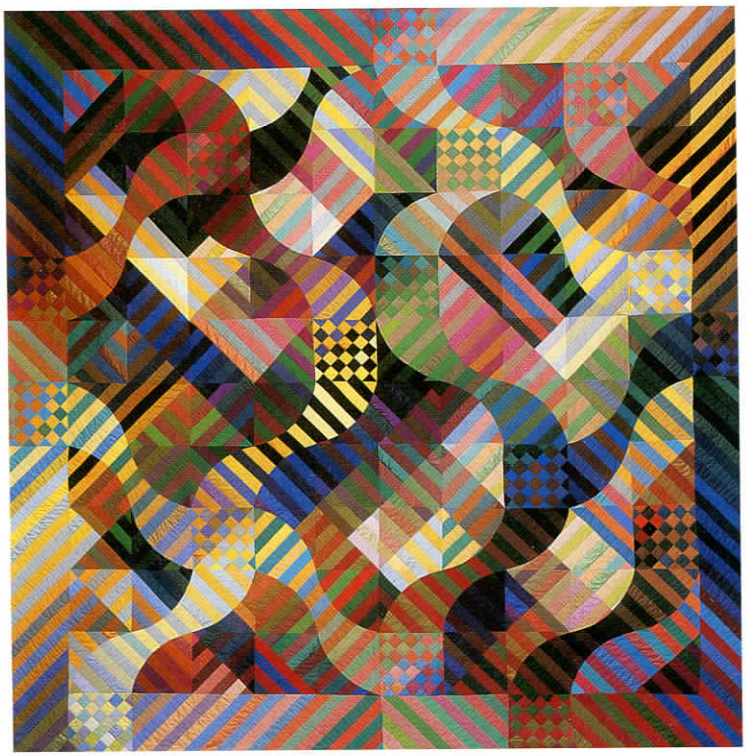


3.42 Michael James, *Rhythm/Color: Improvisation*, 1985. Machine-pieced and -quilted cotton and silk, 99½ × 99½ in. (253 × 253 cm).

3.43 Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2,* **1912.** Oil on canvas, 58 × 35 in. (147.3 × 88.9 cm).

3.44 Pentagram Design, Magazine. Publisher: Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA.

3.45 Joana Kao, *I Never Liked Musical Chairs.* Bracelet, sterling, 24K, 2¾ × 1⅝ in. (7 × 4 cm).

Visual rhythm can be as regular as a waltz or as syncopated as jazz. Multiplication, fragmentation, and superimposition propel the nude descending Duchamp's staircase (3.43). The jerking rhythm demonstrates the alternating stability and instability of human locomotion, rather than physical grace.

EMPHASIS

Each player in a basketball game has a particular role to play. The guards primarily focus on defense, the forwards on offense. The point guard plays a dominant role, calling plays and controlling the action. Likewise, the various visual elements in a composition must work together as a team. In most cases, a few carefully selected visual elements dominate, or stand out, while others are subordinate, or supportive.

Emphasis gives prominence to part of a design. A focal point is a compositional device used to create emphasis. Both emphasis and focal point are used to attract attention and increase visual and conceptual impact.

Emphasis by Isolation

Any **anomaly,** or break from the norm, tends to stand out. Because we seek to connect the verbal and visual information we are given, a mismatched word or an isolated shape immediately attracts our attention. In figure 3.44, the word "design" is emphasized through its separation from the word "magazine." Its placement right at the bottom edge makes this shape even more eye-catching.

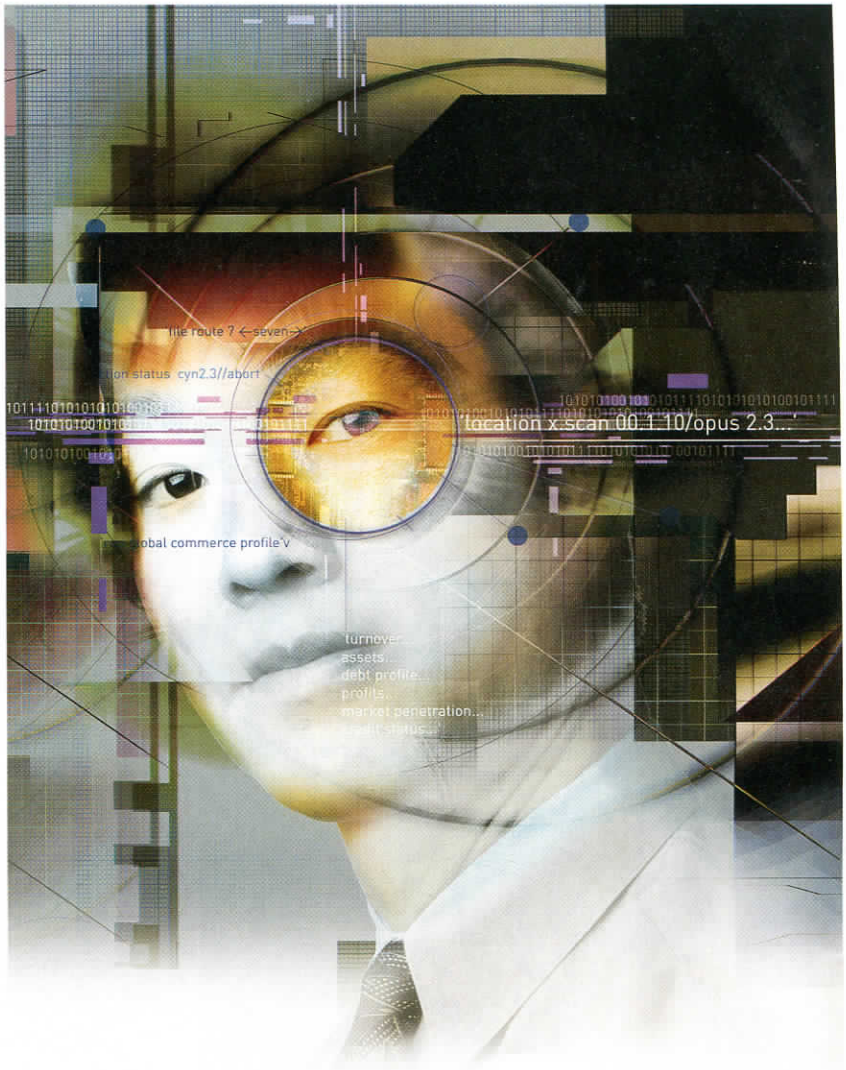
Just as a pattern tends to increase connection among visual elements, so any break in the pattern emphasizes isolation. In figure 3.1 (page 63), 18

white umbrellas establish the pattern that is so beautifully broken by the single red umbrella. In *I Never Liked Musical Chairs* (3.45), metalsmith Joana Kao created a pattern using 7 tiny chairs connected by a silver chain. The figure at the end of the chain breaks the pattern. This break conveys the isolation felt by a child ejected from the game.

Emphasis by Placement

Every square inch of a composition has a distinctive power. As a result, placement alone can increase the importance of a selected shape.

The compositional center is especially potent. In his *The Power of the Center,* psychologist Rudolph Arnheim discusses **centricity** (compressive compositional force), and **eccentricity** (expansive compositional force). Both centricity and eccentricity activate *Flash Point,* shown on page 30. The central white square pulls us into the middle of the painting, while the explosive red rectangle pushes toward the outer edge.



3.46 Jacey, *Untitled,* computer graphics. Example of centricity and eccentricity.

This effect is even more pronounced in figure 3.46. Any representation of another human attracts our attention, and faces are of particular interest. Four major lines and a series of concentric circles direct us inward, toward the man's left eye. Fragments of text extend outward, beyond the edge of the composition. Continually compressing and expanding, the seemingly simple image pulls the viewer inward while simultaneously appearing to extend outward, beyond the boundary.

3.47A–D Examples of contrast.

Emphasis Through Contrast

Contrast is created when two or more forces operate in opposition. By reviewing the elements and principles of design discussed in this section, we can quickly create a long list of potential adversaries, including static/dynamic, small/large, solid/textured, and curvilinear/rectilinear (3.47A–D).

When the balance is just right, powerful compositions can be created from any of these combinations. Devoting about 80 percent of the compositional space to one force and about 20

3.48 Robert Crawford, *Jamie Sleeping,* 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 20 × 14 in. (50.8 × 35.5 cm).

3.49 Francisco de Zurbarán, *Saint Serapion,* 1628. Oil on canvas, 47½ × 41 in. (120.7 × 103.5).

percent to the other is especially effective. The larger force sets the standard, while the smaller force creates the exception. Just as a single basketball player wearing a blue uniform will stand out if the other four players wear yellow, so a smaller force can dominate a design. Consider these examples:

- *Contrast in scale.* In figure 3.48, the small airplane and the moon become charged with meaning when combined with the image of the sleeping child. Dreams take flight.
- *Contrast in shape.* Zurbarán's *Saint Serapion* (3.49) provides a brilliant example of contrast by shape as well as emphasis by separation. The small note pinned at the right edge of the canvas gains so much power that it easily balances the large figure filling the rest of the frame.
- *Contrast in color.* One of the most compelling uses of emphasis by color occurs in *Schindler's List,* by Steven Spielberg (3.50). Midway through the black-and-white film, a small girl in a red coat is shown walking toward her death. She breaks away from the line and runs back to hide under a bed in a nearby house. This is the only use of color in the main body of the film. When her red coat appears again, her body is being transported to a bonfire. This simple use of color creates one of the most emotional moments in a remarkable film.

3.50 Still from *Schindler's List,* by Steven Spielberg.

Key Questions

- What would happen to your composition if you dramatically changed its scale or shifted its proportions?
- Is there a dominant shape in your composition? If so, is it the shape you most *want* to emphasize?
- Is there a focal point in your composition? If not, should there be?

Now, let's return to our basketball game for a moment. First, place yourself in the bleachers, high above the court. As a spectator, you can easily observe the overall distribution of players and follow the flow of the game. Now, mentally place yourself in the middle of the game, passing the ball and making shots. As a player, you are physically engaged in a complex and ever changing event. The game swirls with activity as players advance and recede in space.

In the preceding section, we focused on the overall distribution of compositional elements and analyzed the basic structure of a visual game. In this section, we will explore ways to create the illusion of space and the illusion of movement. By pulling viewers into our compositions, we can create a very different type of engagement.

CREATING THE ILLUSION OF SPACE

Just as symmetrical balance is appropriate for some images while asymmetrical balance is appropriate for others, so each type of space offers distinct advantages. The opening page of the medieval *Book of Kells* (3.51) is spatially shallow. Assorted human figures huddle to the right of the dominant vertical shape, while intricate border patterns flatten the space. At the other extreme, the spatial depth in Altdorfer's *Battle of Alexander* (3.52) is so convincing that we almost feel we can enter this battle between Alexander the Great and King Darius of Persia. The flat wooden panel has been transformed through the illusion of space.

3.51 Book of Kells: Opening page, St. Luke's Gospel. Trinity College, Dublin, 9½ × 13 in. (24 × 33 cm).

3.52 Albrecht Altdorfer, *Battle of Alexander*, 1529. Limewood, 47¼ × 62¼ in. (120 × 158 cm).

Linear Perspective

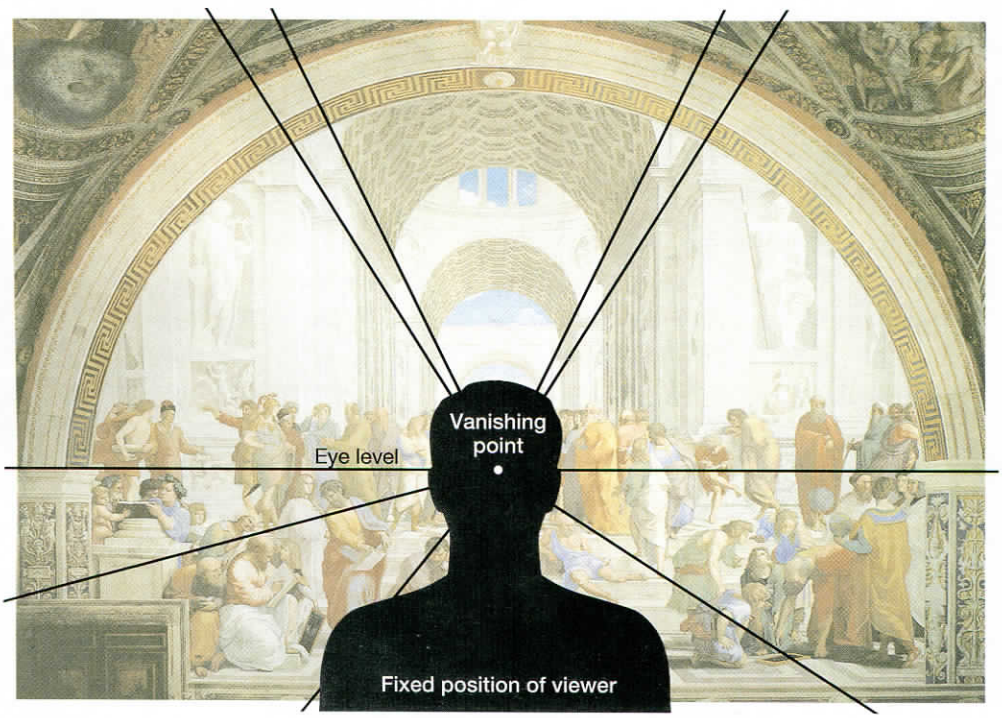
Linear perspective is a mathematical system for projecting the apparent dimensions of a three-dimensional object onto a flat surface. This surface, called the **picture plane,** is comparable to a window overlooking a city street. By tracing the outlines of the buildings on the pane of glass, you can make a simple perspective drawing.

Developed during the Renaissance, perspective offered a methodical approach to depicting the rational reality perceived by artists in the fifteenth century. It soon gained wide acceptance as a means of systematically diminishing the size of objects as they recede in space. Raphael's *School of Athens* (diagram 3.53) is one example. A broad arch in the foreground frames the compositional stage. Three additional arches diminish in size, pulling us into the painting. The diagonal lines in the buildings and floor converge at a point in the center of the painting. The viewer is invited to enter a vivid illusory world.

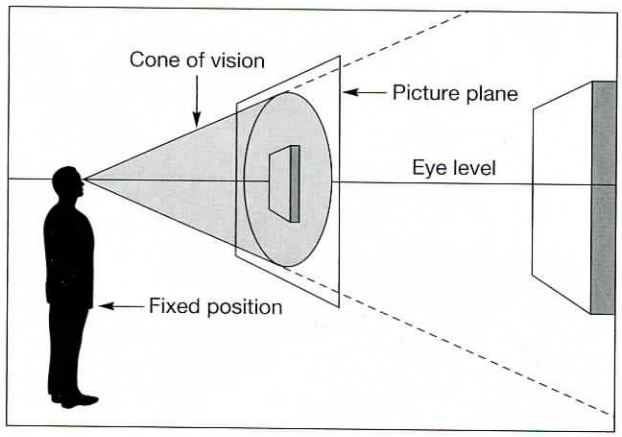
Even though many recent philosophical and aesthetic theories challenge this conception of reality, perspective remains the most pervasive Western system for suggesting three-dimensionality on the two-dimensional surface. Linear perspective is based on five fundamental concepts, shown in figure 3.54:

1. Objects appear to diminish in size as they recede into the distance. This diminishing effect persists until all objects disappear. Perspective is possible because the rate at which objects appear to diminish is regular and consistent.
2. The point at which objects disappear entirely is called a **vanishing point.** Sets of parallel lines (such as train tracks) converge at a vanishing point as they go into the distance, creating deep space.
3. In basic one- and two-point perspective, all vanishing points are positioned on the **eye level,** or **horizon line,** which is level with the artist's eyes.
4. Because all proportional relationships shift with each change in position, a fixed viewing position is an essential characteristic of linear perspective.
5. Only a limited area is clearly visible from a fixed position. To accommodate a larger viewing area, you must move farther away from the object to be drawn. This expands the **cone of vision** and increases the area being viewed.

Using a simple cube, we can explore three basic types of linear perspective.



3.53 Perspective used in Raphael's *School of Athens*.



3.54 Fundamentals of linear perspective.

3.55 A-C. Examples of one, two and three-point perspective.

One-point perspective occurs when the lines receding into space appear to converge at a single point on the eye level. This occurs when the viewer is confronted with the flat front of the cube, and results in a drawing in which vertical lines and horizontal lines run parallel to the edges of your sheet of paper (3.55A). One-point perspective is relatively simple and can be very dramatic. However, as we move to the far right or left of the cube being drawn, many of the horizontal lines appear to shift, becoming more diagonal. They are no longer parallel to the top and bottom edges of your rectangular sheet. At this point, a second vanishing point is needed.

Two-point perspective is used when the lines receding into space appear to converge at two vanishing points on the eye level. This occurs when the viewer is confronted with the vertical edge of the cube, rather than the flat front (3.55B). Now, only the vertical lines remain parallel to each other and the edge of the paper. All other lines recede back to the two vanishing points on the eye level. Because it clearly shows two sides of an object, two-point perspective is often used for diagrams and architectural renderings.

Three-point perspective is used when the lines receding into space appear to converge at two vanishing points on the eye level, plus a third point placed above or below the eye level. This occurs when the artist is positioned far above or below the cube, creating a "bird's eye" or "worm's eye" view (3.55C). Now, all the lines converge at the various vanishing points: none of the sets of lines parallel the edge of the paper.

3.56 Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*, from an altarpiece commissioned by the Crossbowman's Guild, Louvain, Brabant, Belgium, c. 1435. Oil on panel, 7 ft 2⅝ in. × 8 ft 7⅛ in. (2.2 × 2.6 m).

3.57 Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Landers Peak.* 1863. Oil on canvas 6 ft 1¼ in. × 10 ft ¾ in.

Other Ways to Create the Illusion of Space

- *Overlap.* Overlap is the simplest way to suggest space, and it can be especially effective when combined with size variation. In *Deposition* (3.56), Rogier van der Weyden used overlap combined with value to create a convincing drama within a crowded compositional space.
- *Size variation.* Because the diminishing size of distant objects is a basic characteristic of human vision, any systematic variation in size can enhance the illusion of space. This effect is demonstrated most clearly when the distance is great. In Ansel Adams' *Monolith: The Face of Half Dome* (see page 33), the imposing cliff in the foreground rapidly diminishes in size as it moves back in space.
- *Definition.* Sharply focused shapes also tend to advance, while blurred shapes tend to recede. When we look at a landscape, dust and water droplets in the air blur outlines and add a blue-gray color to distant shapes. This effect is known as **atmospheric perspective.** In *The Rocky Mountains: Lander's Peak* (3.57), Albert Bierstadt combined dramatic lighting with atmospheric perspective to increase the illusion of space.
- *Location.* Visual elements placed near the top of the page tend to recede, while shapes placed at the bottom tend to advance. In *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines* (3.58), the mountains at the top of the scroll appear more distant, despite their large size.
- *Color.* As noted in Chapter Two, the spatial implications of color are profound. Under most circumstances, high-intensity colors tend to advance, and contrast in hue, value, or temperature can be used to create a push/pull effect.

3.58 Wang Hui, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, Qing dynasty, 1693. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 8 ft 2½ in. × 3 ft 4½ in. (2.54 × 1.03 m).

Using the Illusion of Space

Through the illusion of space, artists invite viewers to enter an imaginary world. Expression can be heightened when the world so created is particularly intriguing or when the spatial illusion is especially dramatic.

Amplified perspective can be defined as the exaggerated use of linear perspective to achieve a dramatic and engaging presentation of the subject. Amplified perspective is often created using an unusual viewing position, such as a bird's eye view, accelerated convergence, or through distortion.

In Dali's *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (3.59), amplified perspective changes our interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus. Dramatic three-point perspective emphasizes the importance of the note pinned at the top of the cross. As we look down, the vulnerability of Jesus emphasizes his humanity, while the hovering position of the figure suggests his divinity.

Fractured space can be created when multiple viewpoints are combined in a single image. In his

3.59 Salvador Dali, *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 80⅝ × 45⅝ in. (204.8 × 115.9 cm).

3.61 Scene from *Citizen Kane*. Three layers of space divide this shot from *Citizen Kane:* the mother in the foreground, the father in the middleground, and the child in the background.

3.60 David Hockney, *Henry Moore Much Hadham 23rd July 1982*, 1982. Composite Polaroid, 21 × 14 in. (53 × 36 cm).

portrait of sculptor Henry Moore (3.60), David Hockney used multiple photographs to manipulate space and suggest the passage of time. The repeated hands gesture to us as we visually converse with the old master.

Layered space can be created when the foreground, middle ground, and background are clearly defined. Layered space is used extensively in the film *Citizen Kane*. In figure 3.61, young Charlie Kane plays in the background, while his mother in the foreground signs over his care to a lawyer. His father, who is opposed to this action, occupies the middle ground, caught between the mother and the child. The tensions in the family, the determination of the mother, and the innocence of the child are heightened when Charlie shouts, "The Union forever!" as part of his game. When the lawyer takes charge of him, the family will be split apart forever. These three compositional layers communicate complex emotions while telling a story.

3.62 Thomas Hart Benton, *City Building*, from the mural series *America Today*, 1930. Distemper and egg tempera on gessoed linen with oil glaze. 7 ft 8 in. × 9 ft 9 in. (2.3 × 3 m).

Spatial complexity tends to expand when multiple spatial systems are compositionally combined. The swirling space in Thomas Hart Benton's *City Building* (3.62) was constructed using conflicting spatial systems. The size variation between the figures in the foreground and the ship in the background creates a strong sense of space, which is extended even further by the faint skyscrapers in the distance. The dark cranes and pulleys, however, tend to push forward in space, creating a conflict between the background and the foreground. The curving white line extending from the center of the painting to the upper edge complicates matters even further. Part of the wall itself, this bit of molding disrupts the illusion of space by drawing our attention to the flat surface. In this mural, Thomas Hart Benton orchestrated contrasting compositional forces to create an explosive image.

Key Questions

- How can depth be increased or decreased in your composition?
- How will spatial depth affect the meaning of your work?
- What happens when flat and spatially deep areas are combined?

DYNAMIC SPACE: CONSTRUCTING *MULAN*

Animators use the illusion of space with great inventiveness. Freed from the restrictions of reality, they can invent and explore space with abandon. Indeed, every type of space is used beautifully in Disney's *Mulan*. From the opening shots to the grand finale, the illusion of space is of critical importance to the visual and conceptual power of the film.

- *Overlap.* After a brief battle with Shan-Yu and his men, a Chinese soldier lights a signal fire to warn of the invasion. With Shan-Yu filling the foreground, we see six towers, with signal fires gradually blazing forth from each (3.63A). Here, overlap and size variation enhance the illusion of space.

3.63A

- *Linear perspective.* Linear perspective is used in the next sequence, when General Li enters the imperial palace to inform the emperor of the invasion. One-point perspective is used to create the large, majestic hall (3.63B). As the general

3.63B

approaches the throne, the angle of vision shifts to an aerial view. Three-point perspective is now used to emphasize the insignificance of the figures within this great hall (3.63C).

3.63C

- *Atmospheric perspective*. Atmospheric perspective is often used as the troops travel through the mountains. After learning of the death of his father in battle, Captain Shang walks to the edge of a cliff. Like the massive mountains in the background, his seemingly invincible father has dissolved in the mist. A small figure within a large landscape, Captain Shang remains sharply focused, dignified, and powerful, even as he grieves (3.63D).

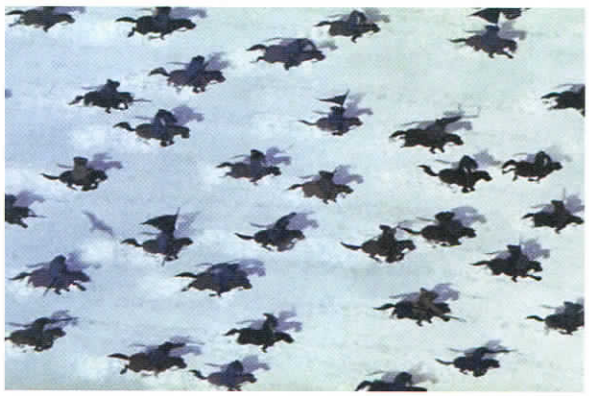
3.63D

Camera angles help orient the viewer and can determine the amount and type of space in each shot. An aerial view can provide the sweeping panorama needed to convey the enormity of a battle, while a low camera angle can provide an expansive view of the sky. The major battle scene in *Mulan* beautifully demonstrates the critical role camera angle can play in a film. The enormity of the enemy army is shown in figure 3.63E. A low camera angle positions the Mongols along a ridge, above the

3.63E

small company of Chinese soldiers. As the Mongols pour over the ridge and gallop toward Mulan, the camera angle shifts to a slanted, oblique view (3.63F), then to a complete aerial view (3.63G). The shifting perspectives give us a more comprehensive

3.63F



3.63G

view of the extent of the battle and emphasize the hopelessness of the emperor's warriors, who are confronted with an apparently invincible enemy

When Mulan grabs the one remaining cannon and races forward to create an avalanche, an aerial view is again used to show her vulnerability against the advancing enemy. Throughout the battle, shifts in camera angle provide the emotional and compositional power needed to create a dramatic battle sequence using the fewest number of shots.

THE ILLUSION OF MOVEMENT

Mulan is constructed from thousands of tiny frames. When run through a film projector, they create the fluid movement that is a hallmark of Disney animation. Animation is possible because we have the perceptual ability to integrate the sequential images into a continuous flow.

Substantial audience involvement is also required to create the illusion of movement within a drawing or sculpture. When presented with multiple images on a single surface, we must feel the movement, complete the action, or anticipate the next event. Based on our day-to-day experience in an ever changing world, we use our imagination to connect static images to create the illusion of movement.

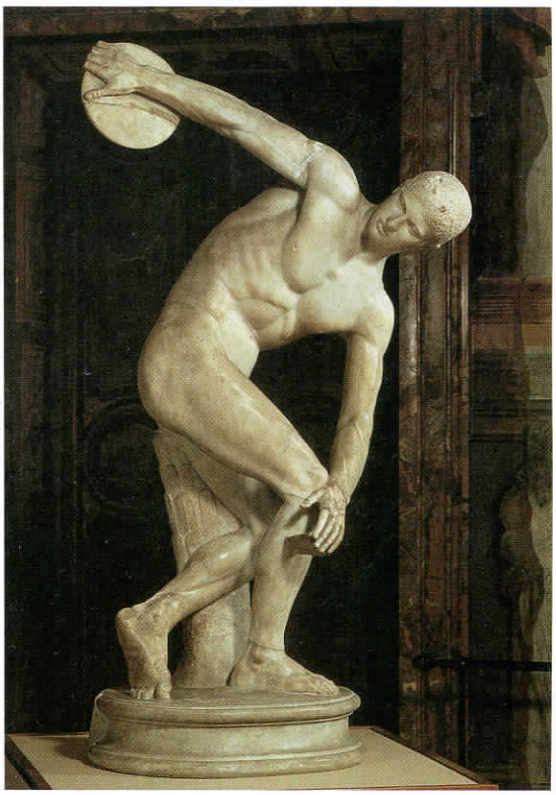
The Kinesthetic Response

Kinesthetics is the science of movement. Through the very process of walking, we consistently engage in a complex balancing act as we fall forward, then catch ourselves with the next step. When confronted by a life-sized figure, such as the man from Robert Longo's *Men in Cities* series (3.64), the lunging movement of the model resonates on a physical level. Based on our personal experience, we feel as well as see the gesture. Capturing the gesture at the right moment is critical. In Myron's *Discus Thrower* (3.65), the athlete is caught at the moment *before* the whirling vortex of energy explodes, releasing the disc. By capturing this moment rather than the moment of release, the sculptor has trapped within the marble the energy of the throw.

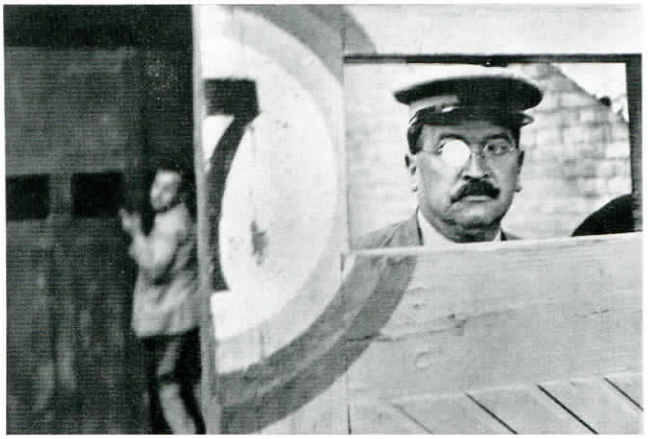
The Decisive Moment

Photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson used his understanding of impending change to formulate a theory of photography he called "the decisive moment." A pioneer in the use of the 35-mm camera, he specialized in capturing the most telling moment in time. The space, emotions, and events he recorded in *Valencia* (3.66) are both fascinating and disturbing. Sharply focused and framed by the window, the policeman's fierce face dominates the foreground. Squeezed between the target shapes and the wall on

3.64 Robert Longo, *Untitled*, 1980. From the *Men in Cities* series. Crayon & graphite on paper, 40½ × 28 in. (102.9 × 71.1 cm).



3.65 Myron, *Discus Thrower (Diskobolos).* Roman copy after the original bronze of c. 450 B.C. Marble, height 5 ft 1 in. (1.54 m).



3.66 Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Valencia*, 1933. Photograph.

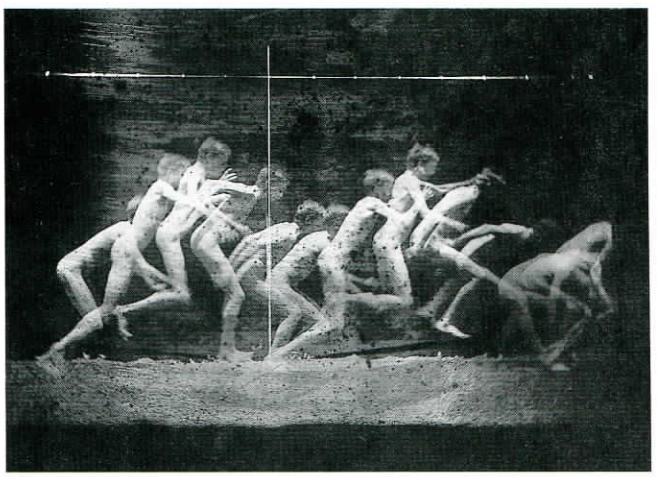
the left, a boy turns toward us apprehensively. A dissected target shape is balanced by the man's monocle on the right and the boy's face on the left. Horizontal rectangles compress three of the four corners of the composition. The resulting interplay of shapes creates a complex dialogue between childhood fears and adult authority.

Before and After

The kinesthetic response and the decisive moment both rely on our past experience. Based on our physical experience, we can feel the awkward position of the Longo figure; through our emotional experience, we realize that the Cartier-Bresson photograph is just one moment in a more extensive story. Likewise, to create a story through a single image, many illustrators deliberately plan the moment *before* and *after* the actual drawing. For example, anticipation plays a major role in Chris Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (3.67). Each drawing is accompanied by a title and an abbreviated text. Based on the clues, we can invent all sorts of stories.

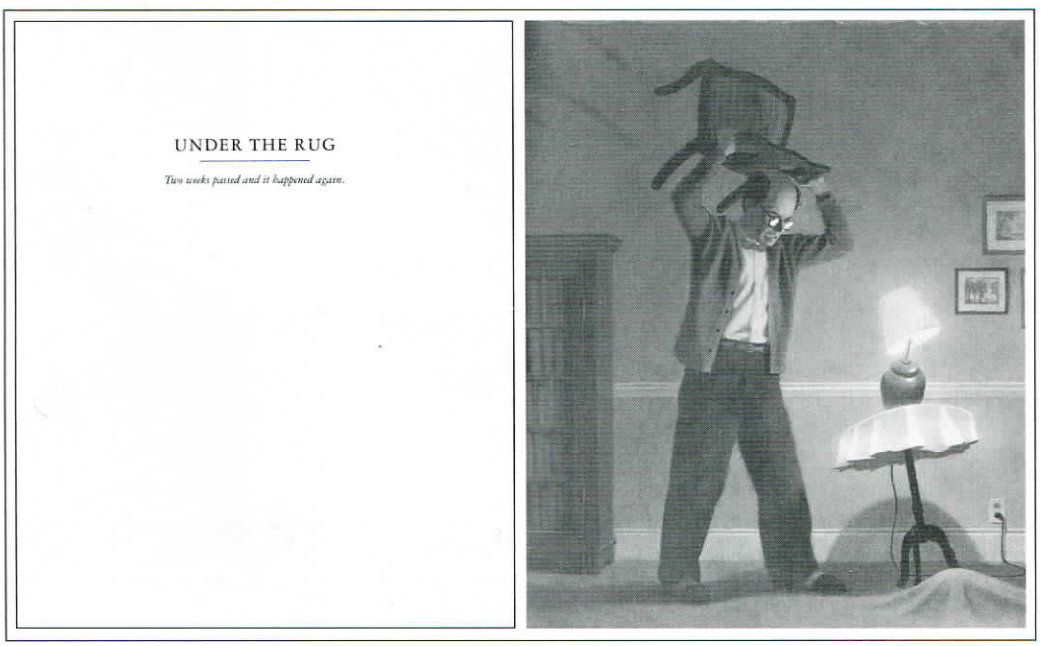
Multiplication

As an object moves, it sequentially occupies various positions in space. Visual multiplication can be used to simulate this effect. For example, the superimposed figures in Thomas Eakins' *Double Jump* (3.68) record the multiple positions the man occupies dur-



3.68 Thomas Eakins, *Double Jump*, 1885. Modern print from a dry-plate negative.

3.67 Chris Van Allsburg, "Under the Rug" from *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.



3.69 Edgar Degas, *Frieze of Dancers*, c. 1895. Oil on canvas. 70 × 200.5 cm.

ing an athletic event. Even when figures are simply repeated, as in Edgar Degas' *Frieze of Dancers* (3.69), movement is strongly suggested.

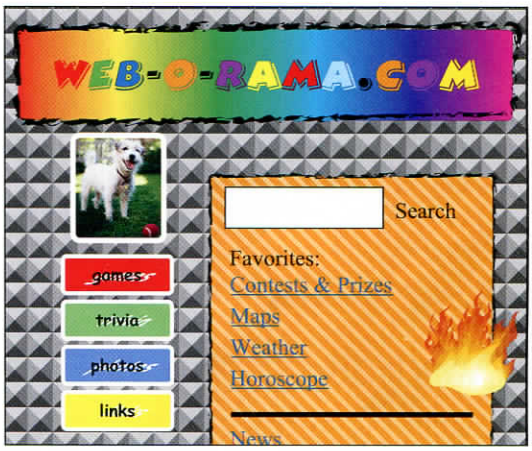
As shapes lose definition, they often gain dynamism. Shifts can occur in both time and space. Francis Bacon's self-portrait (figure 2.32, page 63) retains its volumetric form while simultaneously dissolving any conventional sense of anatomy. The blurred boundaries and repetition create a strong illusion of movement.

DETERMINING PRIORITIES

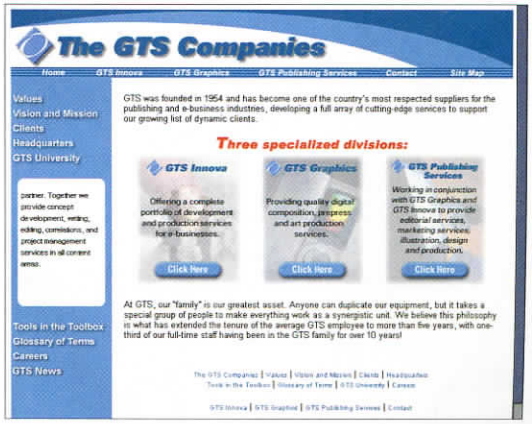
Clear priorities can help us make appropriate compositional decisions. Just as a play will become gibberish if 10 actors speak different lines simultaneously, so a design will become chaotic when all aspects are given equal prominence. The following websites provide wonderful examples of both chaos and clarity.

The site in figure 3.70 is overloaded with competing information, beginning with the banner ads at the top of the screen. Multiple type styles, colors, buttons, and layers of information all compete for attention. There are no supporting actors in this play; each visual element is accorded star status, regardless of its importance.

In contrast, the GTS Companies website (3.71) is a model of simplicity, clarity, and restraint. Information is sized and organized according to its significance. The company name is prominently displayed, followed by a description of services provided. By clicking on three simple boxes, viewers can get detailed information on major divisions in the company and additional links are provided in a column on the left. An update on company activities appears in an open box when the visitor enters the site. The blues that dominate the design provide unity, while a single red header is used for emphasis.



3.70 An example of bad website design.



3.71 GTS Companies Website.

By determining compositional priorities, we can emphasize the most important aspects of a design. Knowing what to leave out is as important as knowing what to include. Using visual economy, we can distill a design down to its true essentials.

Key Questions

- Can the illusion of movement enhance the idea you want to express? If so, how can you create the illusion of movement?
- What happens when static (unmoving) and dynamic (moving) shapes are used together in a design?
- To what extent is the illusion of movement affected by the illusion of space?

SUMMARY

- Using composition, we can organize multiple parts into a harmonious whole. In a well-composed design, visual elements work together as a team.
- Gestalt psychology describes six unifying strategies: grouping, containment, repetition, proximity, continuity, and closure.
- Effective design requires a dialogue between unity and variety. Too much unity can lead to boredom, while too much variety can lead to chaos.
- Any similarity between visual elements tends to increase unity; any difference between visual elements tends to increase variety.
- Symmetry, radial symmetry, and asymmetry are three common forms of balance. Visual balance creates equilibrium among compositional units, regardless of their size, weight, or shape.
- Scale and proportion are two types of size relationships. Proportion refers to the size relationships within an image, while scale involves a size comparison with our physical reality.
- Emphasis is most commonly created through isolation, placement, or contrast. A focal point can strengthen emphasis.
- The illusion of space can be created through linear perspective, overlap, size variation, location, definition, atmospheric perspective, and use of color.
- The illusion of movement is often created by selecting the most telling moment in an event or through various types of multiplication.
- By determining our priorities, we can emphasize the most important aspects of a design. Using visual economy, we distill a design down to its true essentials, create an appropriate visual hierarchy, and increase overall impact.

Keywords

amplified perspective
anomaly
approximate symmetry
asymmetrical balance
atmospheric perspective
balance
camera angle
centricity
closure
composition
cone of vision
containment
continuity
contrast
eccentricity
emphasis
eye level (horizon line)
focal point
fractured space
fusion
Gestalt
grid
grouping
imbalance
isolation
kinesthetics
layered space
linear perspective
movement
one-point perspective
pattern
picture plane
proportion
proximity
radial symmetry
repetition
rhythm
scale
space
symmetrical balance
three-point perspective
two-point perspective
unity
vanishing point
variety
visual weight