

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Name: _____

The Gestalt Principles of Design are design principles devised from the psychology of how humans visually perceive things. Therefore, designers can use them in their work to create a more unified and effective design.

"The whole is other than the sum of the parts."
— Kurt Koffka

The quote above is gestalt in a nutshell. When human beings see a group of objects, we perceive their entirety before we see the individual objects. We see the whole as more than the sum of the parts, and even when the parts are entirely separate entities, we'll look to group them as some whole.

There are 5 main Gestalt Principles of Design.

Similarity

Similarity occurs when **objects look similar** to one another. People often perceive them as a group or pattern.



The example to the left (containing 11 distinct objects) appears as a **single unit** because all of the shapes have **similarity**.

Unity occurs because the triangular shapes at the bottom of the eagle symbol **look similar** to the shapes that form the sunburst.

Shared visual characteristics automatically create relationships. The more alike objects appear, the more likely they are to be seen as a group. Note that similarity is based upon what an object looks like, not what an object is. Two dogs on a page do not automatically have similarity because they are dogs. One could be a Great Dane and the other a Chihuahua—dogs that have very little in common.



However, similarity would be created if both were brown and wearing red collars. Similarity can be achieved in many different ways, including size, color and shape.



Similarity



Subhead

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When similarity occurs, an object can be emphasized if it is *dissimilar* to the others. This is called **anomaly**.



The figure on the far right becomes a focal point because it is **dissimilar** to the other shapes. It creates a point of emphasis.

Continuation

Continuation occurs when the eye is compelled to **move through** one object and **continue** to another object.



Continuation occurs in the example above, because the viewer's eye will naturally follow a line or curve. The smooth flowing crossbar of the "H" leads the eye directly to the maple leaf.

A good example is a line with an arrow at the end of it.



This symbol indicates that a viewer should follow the line to the end to see where the arrow is pointing. Symbols and objects that are similar to arrows, such as a hand with a pointing finger, are used frequently in design to create continuity.



Other ways to lead the eye include a photograph or illustration containing an eye. A common design rule is that if an image of a person is used, make sure the person is looking toward the rest of the design.



help but follow the path.

This helps the viewer move through the information instead of looking off the edge of the page, turning away from the information. A designer can also create a path through the page, either literally or figuratively. An image of a road, a path, a fence, a row of flowers or a tunnel can all guide the eye across a page. For readers from Western cultures, the natural inclination is to lead the viewer's eye from left to right. Continuity gives the designer significant control over the viewer. The mind can't



Closure

Closure occurs when an object is *incomplete* or a space is not *completely enclosed*. If enough of the shape is indicated, people perceive the whole by filling in the missing information.



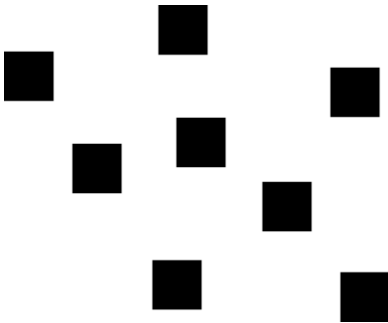
Although the panda above is not complete, enough is present for the eye to complete the shape. When the *viewer's perception completes a shape*, **closure** occurs.

Closure works best with objects that are recognizable. For example, an outline of a triangle that slowly has pieces taken away is still recognizable as a triangle even when down to a bare minimum of pieces. Complex objects are trickier for the mind to complete.

The designer must strike a balance between what is taken away and what remains. The mind cannot complete the object if too much of it is missing.

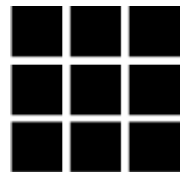
Proximity

Proximity occurs when elements are placed close together. They tend to be perceived as a group.



■ The nine squares above are placed without proximity. They are perceived as **separate shapes**.

■ When the squares are given close proximity, unity occurs. While they continue to be separate shapes, they are now perceived as **one group**.



Using other design elements, such as lines or shapes to surround objects, also creates strong proximity. Lines and shapes can also link objects by passing through them or by underlining them.



Proximity

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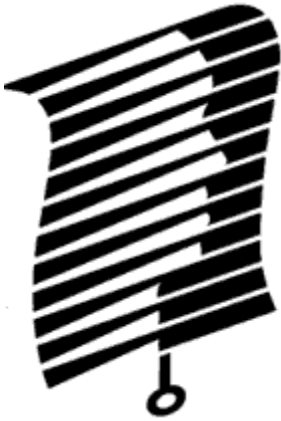
The fifteen figures above form a *unified whole* (the shape of a tree) because of their **proximity**.

Figure and Ground

The eye differentiates an object from its surrounding area. a form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as **figure** (object), while the surrounding area is perceived as **ground** (background).

The figure/ground principle is based upon the relationship between an object and the surrounding space. Figure/ground is also referred to as positive and negative space, the positive being the object and the negative referring to the space around it.

Balancing figure and ground can make the perceived image more clear. Using unusual figure/ground relationships can add interest and subtlety to an image.



In this image on the left, the figure and ground relationships **change** as the eye perceives the form of a shade or the silhouette of a face.

This image on the right uses **complex** figure/ground relationships which **change** upon perceiving leaves, water and tree trunk.



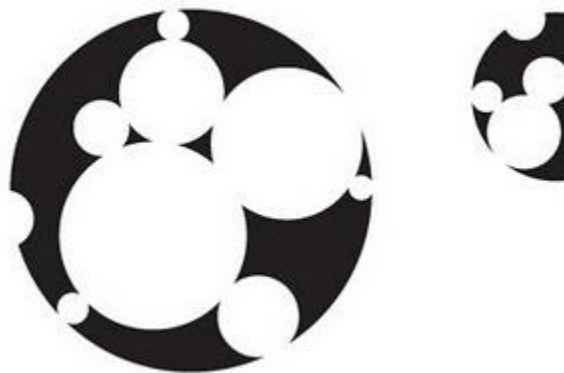
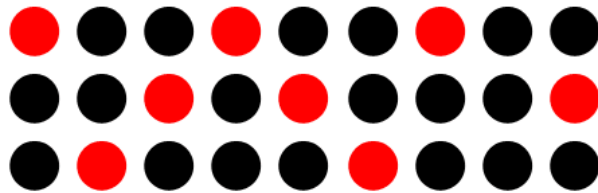
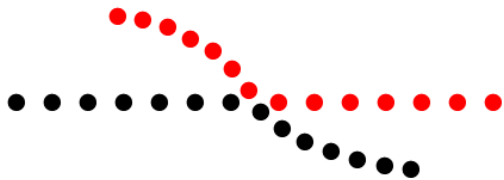
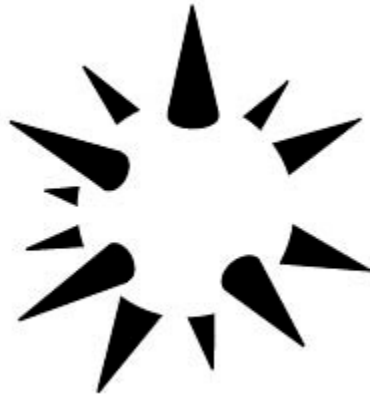
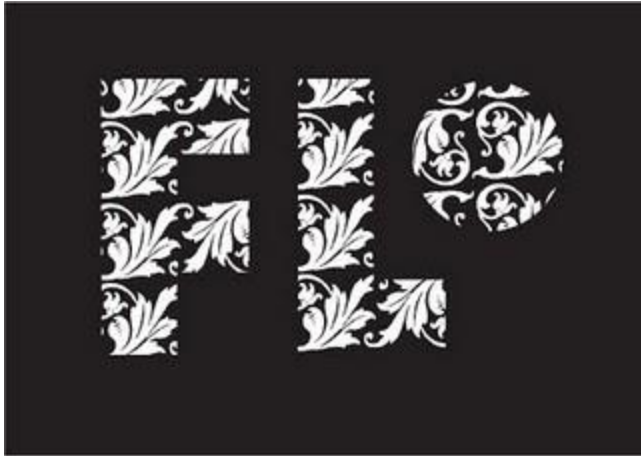
This principle gives the illusion of depth, and is a fundamental principle used in almost every design. Figure refers to more than just imagery; [type](#) is considered figure as well.

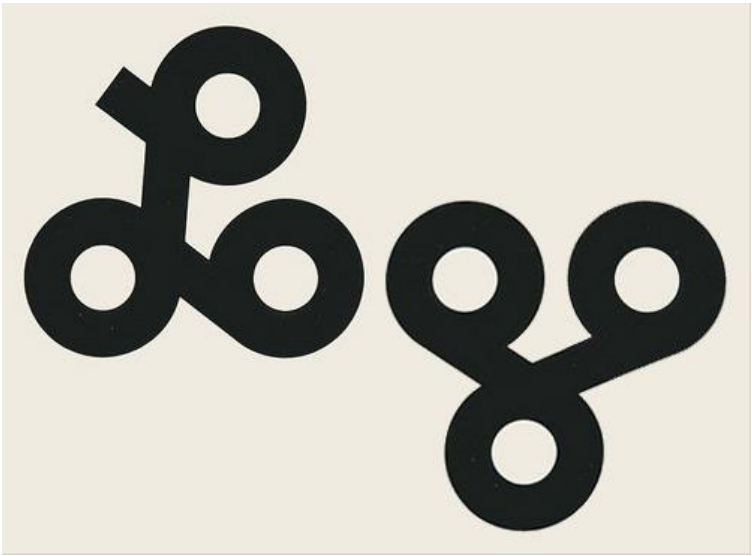
Figure/ground can be used quite creatively when both the figure and ground form recognizable shapes at the same time. There are many examples of this, one of the most common being the optical illusion of two opposing faces on opposite sides of the page with the negative space in between them forming a lamp, spindle or another recognizable shape.

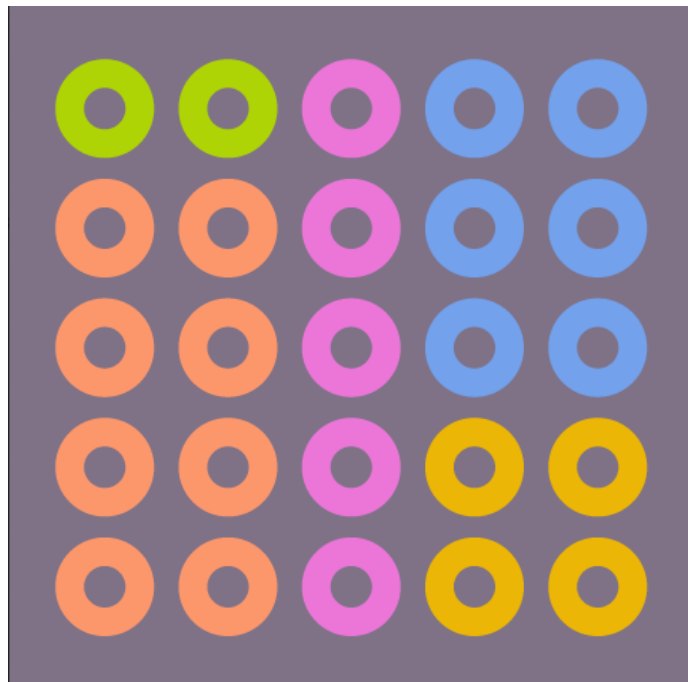
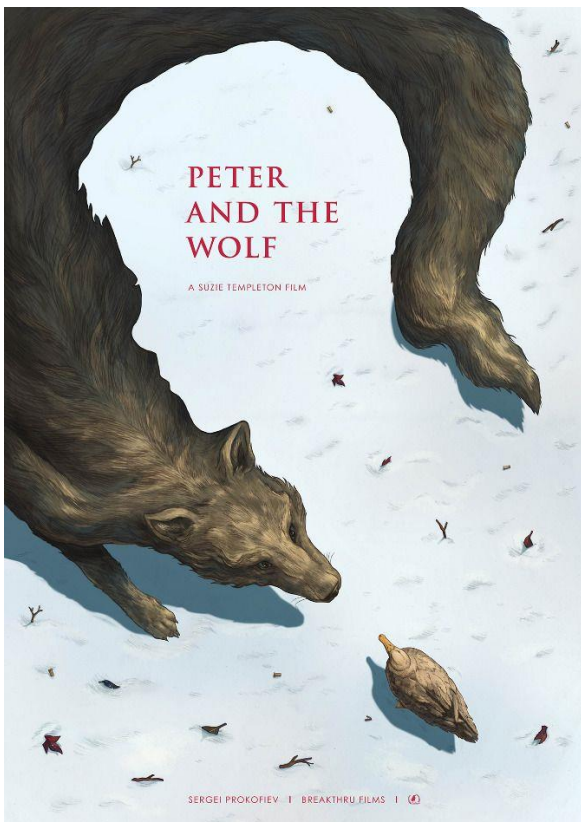
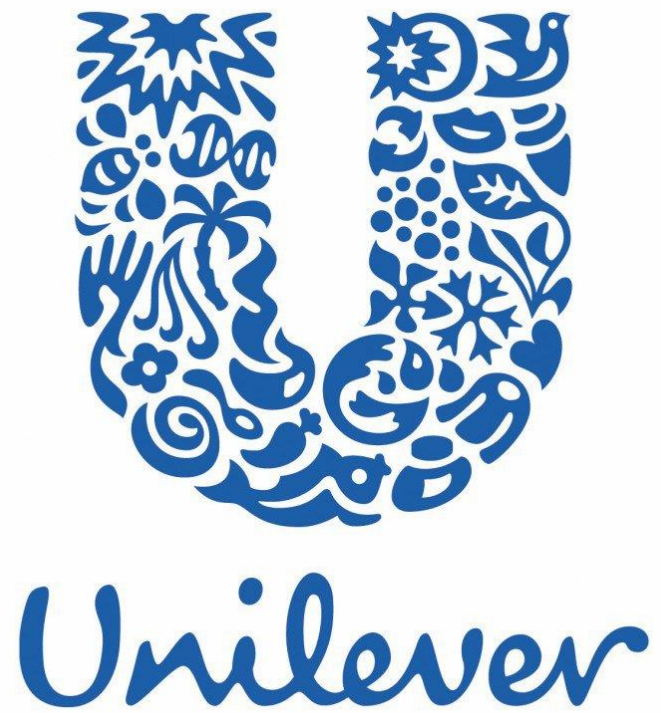


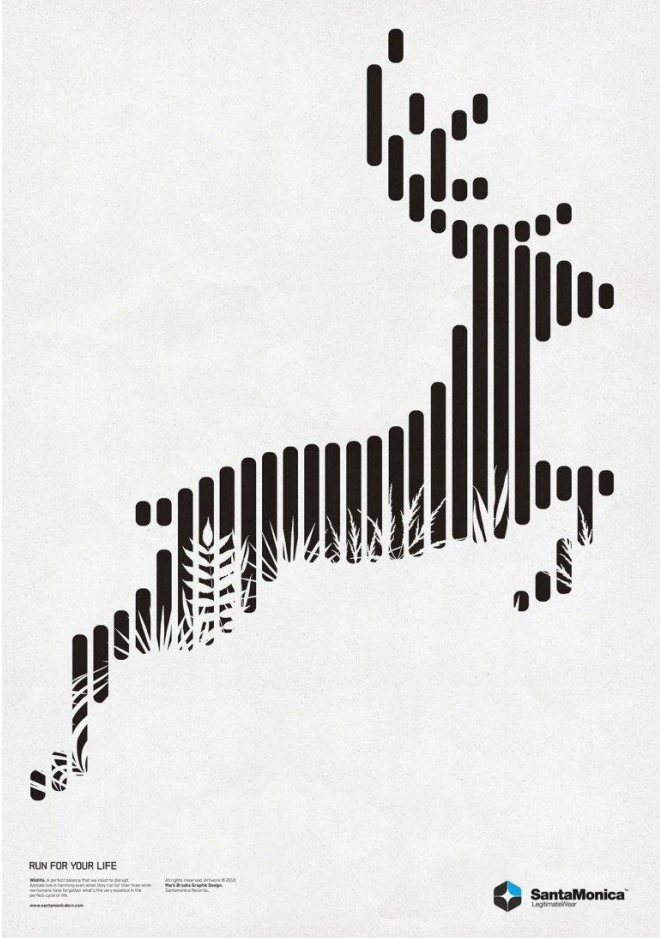
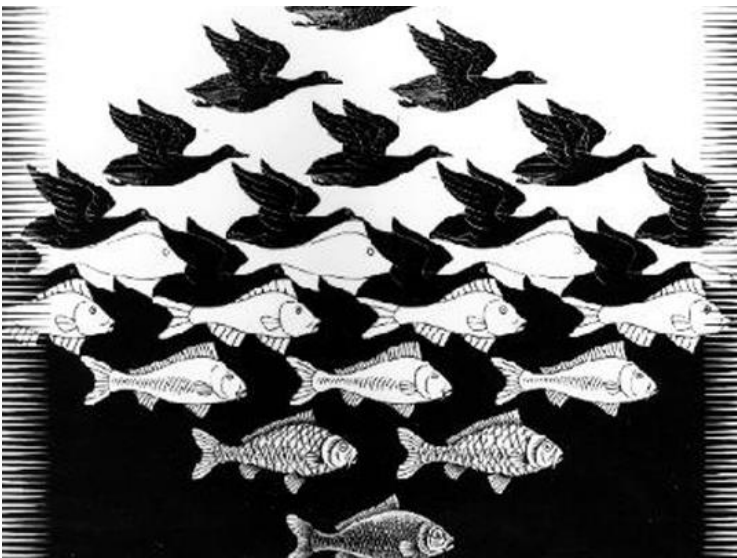
Additional examples

Which principle(s) do these examples demonstrate?









Un opéra américain de Kurt Weill

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THÉÂTRE
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MUSICAL
let
DE PARIS

Livret
Elmer Rice

Lyrics
**Langston Hughes
& Elmer Rice**

En anglais, surtitré

Direction musicale
Tim Murray

Mise en scène
John Fulljames

Orchestre
Pasdeloup

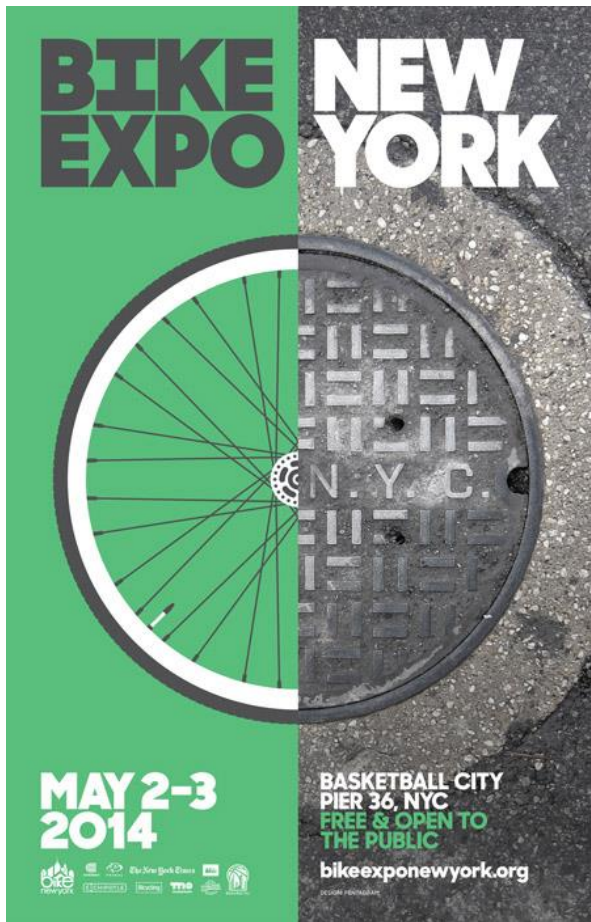
Chœur
du Châtelet

25 – 31 janvier
2013

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Co-Production The Opera Group / Young Vic Theatre, coproduit originellement avec le Watford Palace Theatre. Présenté en accord avec The European American Music Corporation, agent pour The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., The Rice Estate and The Hughes Estate





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