

chapter 2



Fundamentals of Graphic Design

OBJECTIVES

- understanding and being able to design with the formal elements — line, shape, color, value, texture, and format
- understanding and being able to employ principles of design — balance, emphasis, rhythm, and unity
- being able to manipulate graphic space

PART I: FORMAL ELEMENTS

Draw a line on a page (paper or electronic). Now add another line. This seems like a simple exercise, but here are a few questions. Where did you draw the first line on the page — at the top or at the bottom? Where did you draw the second line? Were they on angles? How long were the lines? How thick were the lines? Did the lines touch? Did the lines bend or curve, or were they straight?

How can drawing two lines on a page become so complicated? If you think of the two lines as the first two moves in a chess game, you can begin to see how important each is to the outcome. As soon as you draw one line on a page, you begin to build a design.

Lines are one of the basic building blocks of design. These building blocks of two-dimensional design are called the formal elements. They are:

- line
- value
- shape
- texture
- color
- format

These elements are at the foundation of all graphic design.

Line

You probably have been drawing with lines for years, and never stopped to define or analyze them — probably because a line seems like a simple element. When you look at an exquisite linear illustration, for example, the illustration by James Grashow on this package design by Louise Fili, you realize the potential of line as a graphic element (Figure 2-1).

Let's start with a definition. A **line** is a mark made by a tool as it is drawn across a surface. The tool can be almost anything — a pencil, a pointed brush, a computer and mouse, even a cotton swab. A line can also be cut into a hard surface — this practice is called engraving. Sometimes a





Figure 2-1
 El Paso Chile Co. Margarita Mix Package Design
 Design firm: Louise Fili Ltd., New York, NY
 Art director/Designer: Louise Fili
 Illustration: James Grashow

line is defined as a moving dot or point. In this sense, moving the point of a pencil across a page creates a line. A line can also be called an open path.

Considering a line as a moving point may prompt you to ask some questions. In what direction is the line moving? What happens if you move your mouse up and down or your hand up and down while moving the point of your pencil? If you use a rosebud dipped in ink to make a fat, short mark — is it a line? Are all lines the same? What you discover as you ask these questions and explore this element is that there are different types of lines and all lines have direction and quality. Establishing a vocabulary allows us to discuss the aspects of lines intelligently.

The first and most obvious category is line type. A line's **type** or **attributes** refers to the way it moves from its beginning to its end. Lines may be straight, curving, or angular. This is a simple difference that can be used to distinguish different types of line.

The second category is line direction. The **direction** of a line describes a line's relationship to the page. Horizontal lines move across the page, east to west or west to east. Vertical lines move up and down on the page, north to south and south to north. Diagonal lines look slanted in comparison to the edges of a page.

The final category that we will discuss is line quality. **Line quality** refers to how a line is drawn. The adjectives we use to describe the qualities of lines are the same we might use to describe music or a voice. A line may be delicate or bold, smooth or broken, thick or thin, regular or changing. All these adjectives, as well as many others, describe a line's visual quality.

It is important to remember that all three of these categories applied when you were asked to draw two lines on the page. For example, you may have drawn a thin, angular line that moved in a diagonal direction, or you may have drawn a smooth, curving line that moved in a horizontal direction. As you can see, these three categories — type, direction and quality — give us a vocabulary to completely describe the lines we draw.



Shape

You already know what a shape is. Looking at a jacket in the store, you may think, “Well I like the color, but I don’t like the shape.” Or you might like the shape of one car and not another. The general outline of something is a **shape**; it can also be defined as a closed form or closed path. There are many ways to depict shapes on a two-dimensional surface. One common way is with lines. Lines can be used to describe a flat shape, like a pyramid or a cube. A shape can be open or filled with color, tone, or texture. How a shape is drawn gives it a quality; a shape may be curving or angular, regular or changing, flat or volumetric, and so on.

We can translate the three-dimensional forms of the real world into representational two-dimensional shapes on a page by describing their particular edges using lines (Figure 2-2). We can also create non-representational shapes with lines (Figure 2-3). In this way, lines are used as outlines or edges, clearly defining the limits of forms. This method of describing shapes is termed *linear*. We apply this term to art when there is a predominant use of lines to describe shapes or when lines are used as a way to unify a design. The illustration for the Moving Announcement for Authors & Artists Group is linear; lines are used to describe the objects and map and to unify the illustrations (Figure 2-4).

There are ways other than using lines to create shapes on the two-dimensional surface. Color and collage are two examples. An area of color (or an area of gray created by black and white) that is *not* surrounded by a line, yet is clear and distinct, is considered to have a hard edge and can define a shape, as in this graphic identity by Harp & Company (Figure 2-5). The same is true for collage.

Collage is the act of cutting and pasting different bits of materials, like lace, paper, sandpaper, or photographs, onto a two-dimensional surface.

Figure 2-2

San Francisco Performances Poster
Design firm: Jennifer Sterling Design, San Francisco, CA
Art director/Designer/Illustrator: Jennifer Sterling
Copywriter: Corey Weinstein
Client: San Francisco Performances

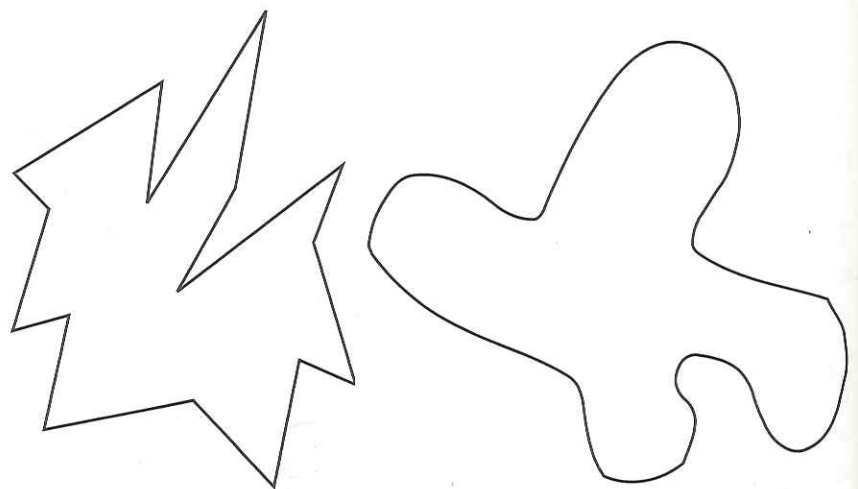
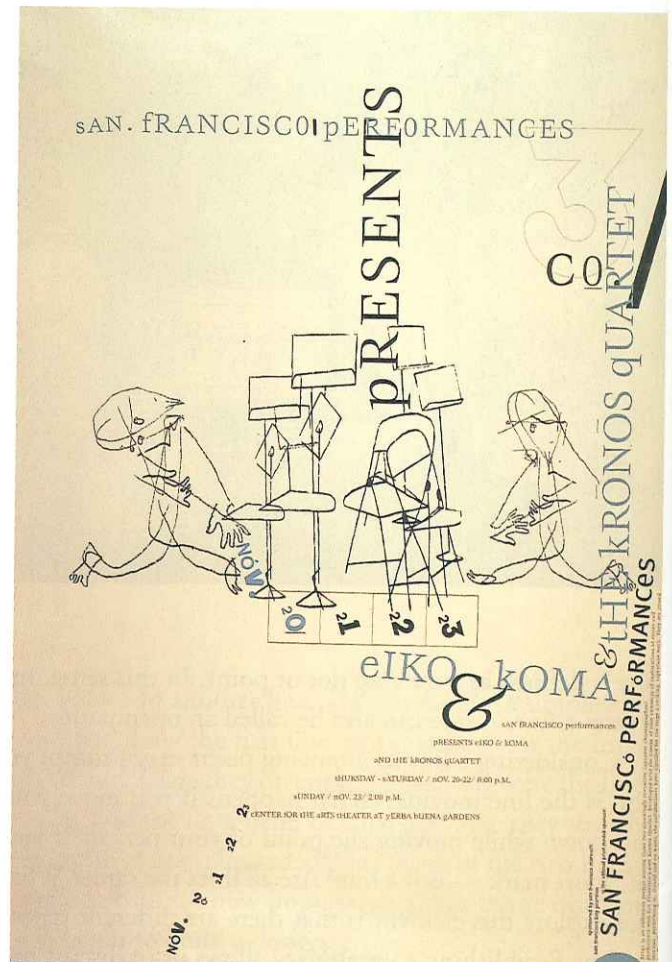


Figure 2-3

Diagram: Non-representational shapes
Illustration: William Stanke



Color

Do you always know which color shirt to wear with a suit, or do you have problems selecting colors for your wardrobe? Do you notice when people are wearing colors that do not suit their complexions? Do you have definite color preferences?

The whys and hows that relate to color come more easily to some than to others, but one thing is certain — the study of color deserves your attention. It is a powerful and highly provocative design element. If you have ever studied painting, then you know how difficult it is to learn to select and mix colors and create interesting and successful visual effects with color. Color is difficult to control when creating an original work, and even more so when a work is reproduced in print or viewed on the web or a computer screen.

We can discuss color more specifically if we divide the element of color into three categories: hue, value, and saturation. Hue is the name of a color, that is, red or green, blue or orange. Value is the range of lightness or darkness, that is, a light red or a dark red, a light yellow or a dark yellow. Shade, tone, and tint are different aspects of value. Saturation is the brightness or dullness of a color, that is, bright red or dull red, bright blue or dull blue. Chroma and intensity are synonyms for saturation.

In paint or pigment such as watercolors, oils, or colored pencils, the primary colors are red, yellow, and blue. They are called primary colors because they cannot be mixed, yet other colors can be mixed from them. Mix red and yellow and you get orange. Mix yellow and blue and

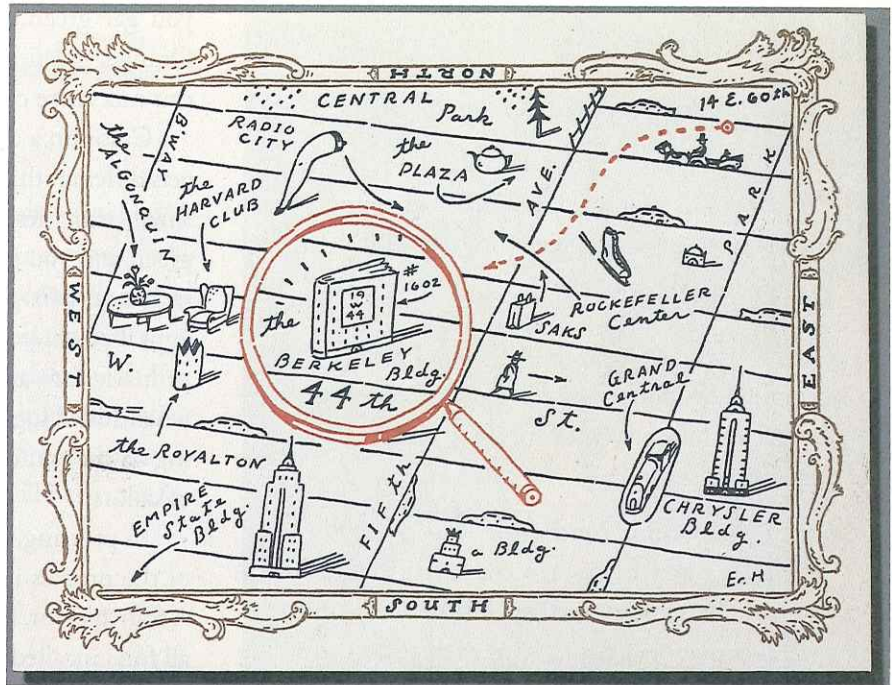


Figure 2-4
Moving Announcement
Design firm: The Valentine Group, Inc., New York, NY
Client: Authors & Artists Group

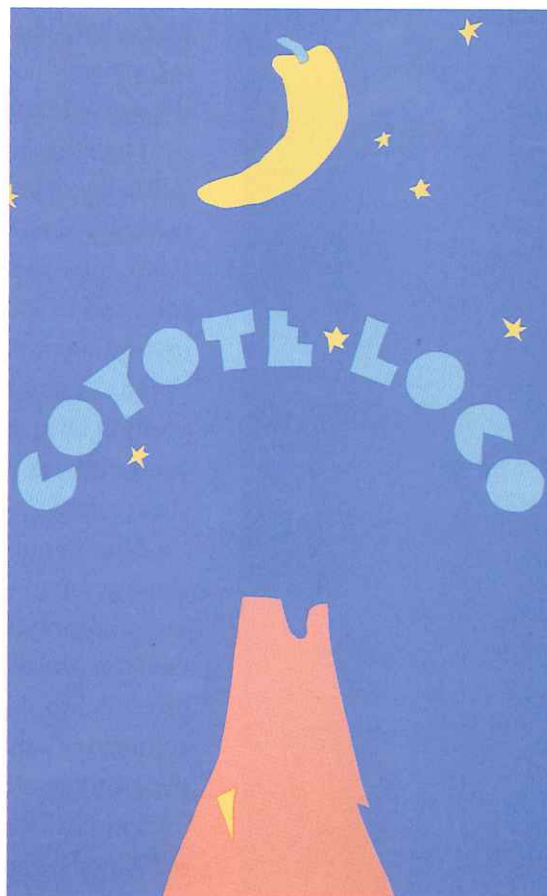


Figure 2-5
Graphic Identity
Design firm: Harp & Company,
Hanover, NH
Designer: Douglas G. Harp
Client: Coyote Loco Restaurant
and Cantina

The coyote is a worn-out cliché, it seems, for all things—food, clothing, etc.—to do with the Southwest. But its immediate association with this region is undeniable; our challenge, therefore, was to use this familiar icon, but to somehow give it a different spin. Here, the moon that the coyote is howling at is, in fact, a hot pepper.

—Douglas G. Harp, president,
Harp & Company



SUGGESTIONS

- Choose colors appropriate for your design concept.
- Choose colors that will communicate your client's spirit or personality.
- Make sure the colors will enhance the readability of the type.
- Examine the amount of color contrast in your design. Is there enough contrast to create visual impact?
- Create many color sketches (at least twenty). This is very easy to do on a computer. If you do not have a computer, make a line drawing, make several copies on a copier, and then color them with markers.
- Try to design the same piece with one color, two colors (a limited palette and budget), and then with full color.
- Analyze the use of color in successful contemporary and master design solutions.
- When designing with color on a computer, remember you are looking at an electronic page and the color will look different when printed on a reflective surface.
- Study the use of color in the history of graphic design.
- Study color symbolism in different cultures. Color symbolism is not universal — red may mean one thing in one culture and something else to another.
- Stay abreast of the trends in color. Look at recent CD covers, book jackets, magazines, and packaging.
- Visit a printer. Go to paper shows. Visit a design studio. Surf the web. Talk to printers, paper sales representatives, and professional designers about color and paper stock, special effects, special colors, and varnishes.

you get green. Mix red and blue and you get violet. Orange, green, and violet are the secondary colors. You can mix these colors and get numerous variations.

Color on a computer is made by mixing light, which acts different than pigment. When working with light, the three primaries are green, red, and blue. Mix red and green and you get yellow. Mix red and blue and you get magenta. Mix green and blue and you get cyan. White light is produced by mixing the three primary colors; these primaries are also called the additive primaries because when added together they create white light. When working on the computer's color palette, you can mix millions of colors.

In printing, yellow, magenta, and cyan are the colors of the process inks used for process color reproduction. A fourth color, black, is added to increase contrast. Using all four is called four-color process. Four-color process is used to reproduce color photographs, art, and illustrations. Printing inks can be matte, high gloss, metallic, fluorescent, transparent, opaque, or coated with varnish; printing inks also can be non-toxic, non-flammable, and non-polluting. There are books available that illustrate the various mixtures resulting from mixing two, three, or four colors. The Pantone Matching System, (PMS), offers many custom mixed colors with PMS books to illustrate the available colors.

There have been many scientific studies of color as well as many unscientific theories. (You may want to read the color theories of Josef Albers, Johannes Itten, and Faber Birren.) Most of what you need to know about color and its use in graphic design will come from experimentation, experience with print production, and observation. In graphic design, color depends on the use of printing inks, so color choices can be dictated by budget constraints, as well as a client's needs and a designer's or client's taste.

Allow your design solution to guide your color choices; some colors are more appropriate than others for certain problems or clients. For example, if you were to design a one-color logo for an insurance company you probably would not choose pink. In American popular culture, pink may be thought of as a frivolous color and therefore would not be appropriate. Notice the color choices that award-winning designers make and ask yourself why they made those choices.



Figure 2-6
"The Break-In"

Photographer: Jilda Morera, Jilda Morera Photography, Palm Harbor, FL

If you make keen observation a habit when looking at existing package, poster, film, or any other design, it will become an integral part of your design education. You may have noticed that gold, for example, is often used in the package design of cosmetics; it is associated with luxury and quality. Try not to lock yourself into using your favorite colors in all your design solutions. Experimentation, experience, and keen observation will help develop your ability to use and control color.

Value

Look at this black and white photograph, by Jilda Morera (Figure 2-6), a commercial photographer, who works both in black and white and in color. Notice all the shapes, details, and textures and ask yourself which formal element gives them depth or dimension. It is value. Value is the term we use to describe the range of lightness or darkness of a visual element.

The relationship of one element (part or detail) to another in respect to lightness and darkness is called value contrast. This allows us to discern an image and perceive detail. We need value contrast in order to read words on a page. If the words on a page were almost the same value as the page, then it would be difficult, if not impossible, to read them. Most text type is black and the page white — it gives the most contrast.

Different value relationships produce different effects, both visual and emotional. When a narrow range of values, which is called low contrast, is used in a design, it evokes a different emotional response from the viewer than a design with a wide range of values, or **high contrast**. The **low contrast** of this catalog cover is achieved with a vellum overlay, a somewhat transparent covering over the photograph (Figure 2-7). The high contrast in

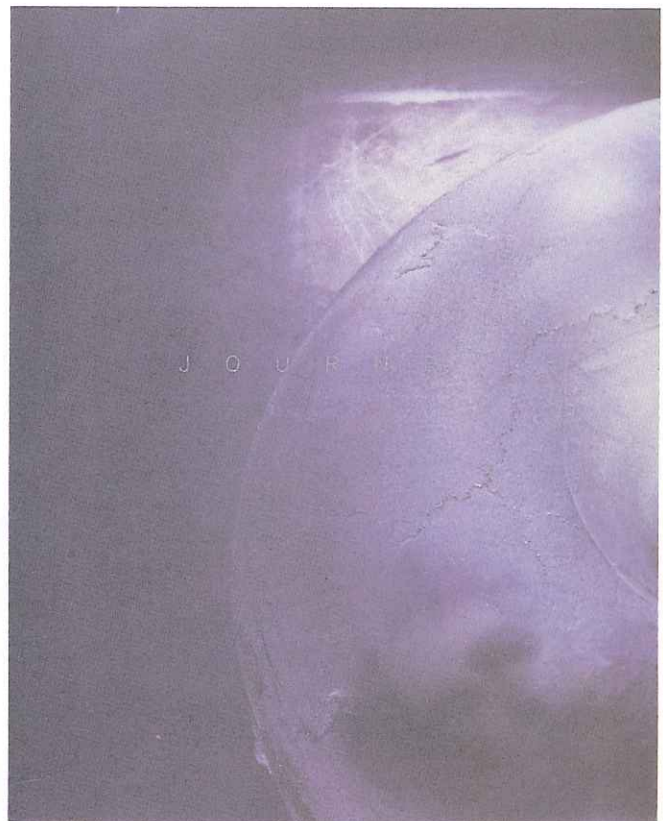


Figure 2-7

Bertil Valien Catalogue

Design firm: The Traver Company, Seattle, WA

Art director: Anne Traver and Margo Sepanski

Designer: Margo Sepanski

Client: The William Traver Gallery



these posters by Planet Design Company easily captures one's attention (Figure 2-8).

Texture

Sometimes you decide just by looking at a texture whether or not you want to touch it. Some textures are appealing, like velvet, while others, like rust, are not. Velvet, rust, linen, and hair all have texture. The tactile quality of a surface or the representation of such a surface quality is a texture. In art, there are two categories of texture — tactile and visual. Tactile textures are real; we can actually feel their surfaces with our fingers. Visual textures are illusory; they simply give the impression of real textures.

Tactile textures can be created in many ways. You can cut and paste textures, like lace or sandpaper, to a surface; you can create an embossing (a raised surface) by impressing a texture in relief; or you can build up the surface of a board or canvas with paint, which is called *impasto*. Creating the illusion of a texture or the impression of a texture with line, value, and/or color is called *visual texture*. One way to create visual textures is by grouping various lines together. Varying line qualities, types or attributes, directions, and lengths will yield a wide range of textures. Different drawing instruments will yield different line qualities, and the way you use the instruments will increase the variety. Visual textures can be created with direct marks made with pens, markers, pencils, computer

Figure 2-8

Couch Flambeau/P'Elvis Posters

Design firm: Planet Design Company, Madison, WI

Art director: Kevin Wade

Designers: Michael Byzewski/ Kevin Wade

A set of posters designed and hand silkscreened by Planet Design to promote Co-Principal Kevin Wade's band P'Elvis.



Figure 2-9

Poster for Rosarito to Ensenada

50 Mile Fun Bicycle Ride

Design firm: Studio Bustamante, San Diego, CA

Designer/Illustrator: Gerald Bustamante

Client: Bicycling West, Inc.

The client wanted to add another date to an already established ride, but did not wish to produce a separate poster. In order to convey all that information as simply as possible, I took the graffiti wall approach, painted a tandem bicycle, and surrounded the image with all the pertinent information, as condensed as possible. It is not unlike a wall one might find in Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico.

Materials: acrylic/spray paint on cardboard
—Gerald Bustamante, Studio Bustamante





Figure 2-10
 Gift box packaging for
 The Nature Company
 Design firm: Gerald
 Reis & Company, San
 Anselmo, CA
 Art director:
 Gerald Reis
 Designers: Gerald
 Reis, David Asari
 Client:
 The Nature Company

software, and paint or with indirect marks made by rubbing or blotting tactile textures. On the computer, you can digitize textures like lace or crumpled paper, or you can buy a CD of textures. Compare the rough visual textures of the type and visual in this poster to the many intricate visual textures in this package design (Figures 2-9 and 2-10).

The method for creating visual textures is closely linked to that for creating patterns. Pattern can be defined as a repetitive arrangement of elements, like a wrapping paper design or a plaid shirt. The unique and creative pattern in this poster by designer/illustrator Luba Lukova is an integral part of the visual message (Figure 2-11). Most textures create some sort of pattern, but patterns do not always have texture.

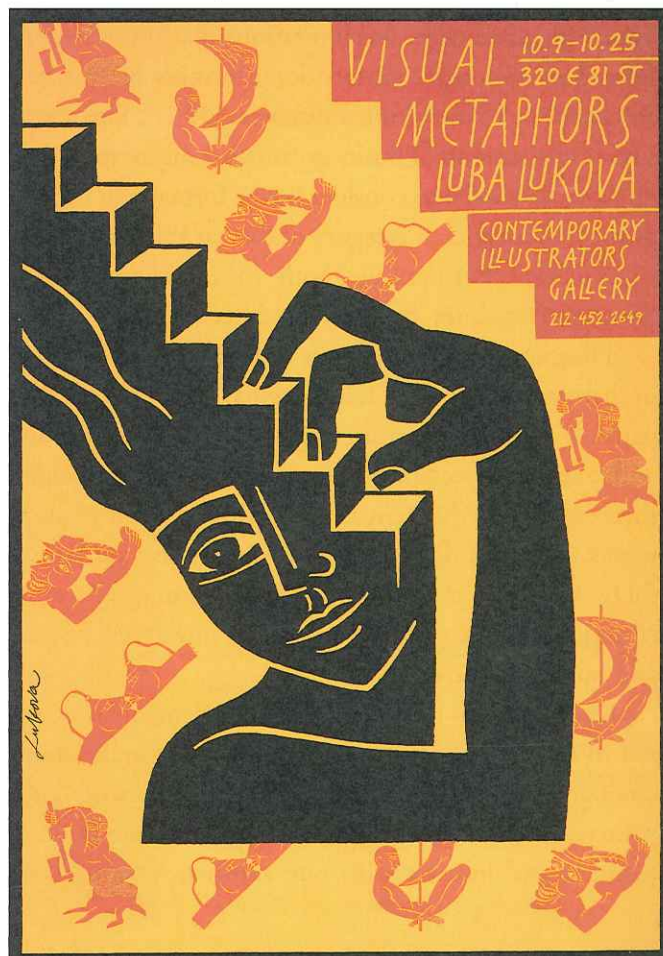


Figure 2-11
 Visual Metaphors, Exhibition Poster
 Design firm: Luba Lukova Studio, New York, NY
 Designer/Illustrator: Luba Lukova
 Client: Contemporary Illustrators Gallery



Format

Brochures, posters, business cards, book covers, shopping bags, envelopes, newsletters, magazines, and newspapers are just some of the many formats designers use. Whether it is a page or a business card, whatever you start out with is the **format**. The format is a vital element in two-dimensional design. Most beginning students take the format for granted, not realizing that it is an active element in design. If you think of an average page as two vertical lines and two horizontal lines joined at right angles, then the first line you draw on a page is actually the fifth line. Like that fifth line, all of the other formal elements are contained by, and interact with, the original shape of the format.

If you draw lines on a given format, like on a page or business card, the lines can be either parallel to the format or move in an opposing direction. For example, if you draw a horizontal line on a rectangular electronic screen, it will be parallel to the horizontal edges of the screen. However, if you draw a diagonal line on the same screen, the line moves in an opposing direction at the edges.

There are many categories of formats and each one — like shopping bags or magazines — has a different function, with advantages and limitations that must be considered in the design solution. Some formats, like posters, are meant to be seen from a distance. Others, like magazine advertisements or business cards, are meant to be seen up close. You need to consider how a format will be seen or used. Within each category of format there are differences as well. For example, both *TV Guide* and *Rolling Stone* are magazines, but they are different sizes.

There are as many different formats as there are ways to shape and fold paper. Take a regular 8½" x 11" sheet of paper. If you use the entire single sheet, you are working with a standard rectangle. If you fold it to create a folder, then you have a different format, with different requirements. Fold it a different way and you have yet another folder with new challenges. For each format, you must consider its size, shape, and where and how it will be seen and how it will be used.

Knowing how to use these formal elements is essential to building a design. Every choice you make about color or shape is important. All the formal elements comprise your team of players on the page; they are interdependent and interact with one another. Whether you

want to design a newsletter or a logo, the formal elements are always the same.

PART II: THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

Balance

You strive for balance in many aspects of your life: in your meals, in your budget, and between your work and play. When you arrange furniture and art objects in a room, you make decisions about balance. At times, you can be so sensitive to the position of things that you might move a couch or a vase for hours until it looks "right." This sense of balance functions similarly in graphic design.

Very simply, **balance** is an equal distribution of weight. When a design is balanced we tend to feel that it holds together, looks unified, and feels harmonious. When a design is imbalanced, it can make us feel uncomfortable. Understanding balance involves the study of several interrelated visual factors: weight, position, and arrangement.

When you make a mark on a page, that mark has a visual weight — it can appear to be light or heavy. **Visual weight** can be defined as creating the illusion of physical weight on a two-dimensional surface. To better understand this idea, imagine a mark on a page can be held in your hand and you can feel its weight. The size, value, color, shape, and texture of a mark all contribute to its visual weight.

Where you position the mark on the page also affects its visual weight. The same mark positioned at different points on a page — bottom right, bottom left, center, top right, or top left — will appear to change in visual weight because of its position. In visual perception, different areas of the page seem to carry more or less visual weight. For example, the center of the page is very powerful and can carry a good deal of weight. Several studies of this phenomena have been conducted, the most famous by Rudolf Arnheim.

There are basically two approaches to the arrangement of elements in a design. You can arrange all identical or similar visual elements so that they are evenly distributed on either side of an imaginary vertical axis, like a mirror image. This is called **symmetry**; it is always balanced.



The design of this poster, "Between The Wars," is symmetrical (Figure 2-12). All the elements are centered. Imagine a vertical axis dividing the poster in half. You can see an equal distribution of weight on either side of it. When you arrange dissimilar or unequal elements of equal weight on the page, it is called **asymmetry**. This spread from *Emigre* is asymmetrical but balanced (See. Figure 2-13). The arrangement of elements, their visual weight, and position contribute to the balance.

To achieve asymmetrical balance, the position, visual weight, size, value, color, shape, and texture of a mark on the page must be considered and weighed against every

other mark. The arrangement of all the elements — the **design** or **composition** of everything in relation to one another — is crucial to achieving asymmetrical balance. It is almost impossible to list ways to achieve asymmetrical balance because every element and its position contribute to the overall balancing effect in a design solution. If you move one element, you may affect the delicate balance of the design. The decision of whether to use symmetry or asymmetry in your design solution should be dictated by the subject matter, the message, and the feelings you wish to convey.

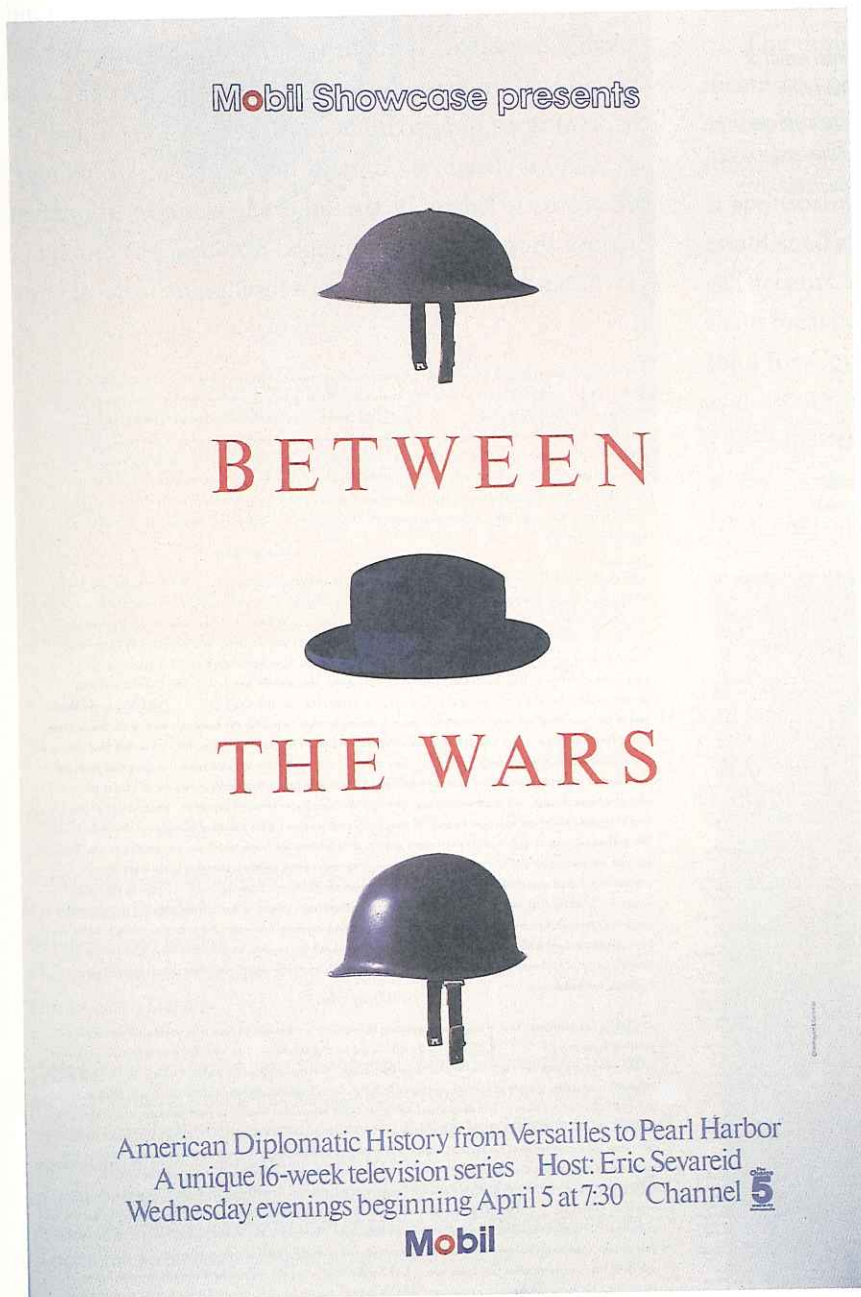


Figure 2-12
Poster, "Between the Wars"
Design firm: Chermayeff & Geismar Inc., New York, NY
Client: Mobil Corporation

This poster was designed to promote a television series on events during the period 1918-1940, with emphasis on the successes and failures of diplomacy. The hats symbolize the two wars, and the diplomacy between them.

— Tom Geismar, Chermayeff & Geismar, Inc.



Emphasis: Focal point and hierarchy

We constantly are bombarded by visual information; even poster, magazine, and brochure has plenty of it. How does the reader or viewer absorb this information? How does the audience know what is most important? Most people are passive recipients and depend upon the designer to direct their attention. It is this need for direction that brings us to the importance of emphasis in design. Emphasis is the idea that some things are more important than others and important things should be noticed.

When you look at a well-designed poster, what do you look at first? You probably look at what the designer (and possibly the client) thought was most important. We call this point of emphasis the focal point — the part of a design that is most emphasized. The focal point of this poster (Figure 2-14) is the white “c,” and the words “new building.” We are then led to all the other elements in the design because they have been arranged according to emphasis. How does the designer choose a focal point? A focal point

Figure 2-13
Spread from *Emigre* 19
Designer/Publisher: Rudy Vanderlans
Typeface designer: Barry Deck

*Ever since I started conducting my own interviews, I have been intrigued with the idea of how to recreate the actual atmosphere or mood of a conversation. Usually, as a graphic designer, you receive a generic-looking, typewritten transcript, written by someone else, that you lay out and give shape to. Before I start the layout of an interview, I have spent hours transcribing the tape, listening to the nuances of the conversation, the excitement in someone's voice, etc. Much of the expressive/illustrative type solutions that I use in *Emigre* are a direct result of trying to somehow visualize the experience of having a conversation with someone. Although this approach is not always successful (some readers are put off by the often "complex-looking" texts), when it does work, and the reader gets engaged in deciphering and decoding the typographic nuances, the interview inevitably becomes more memorable.*

— Rudy Vanderlans, *Emigre*

clichés, and are almost authorless. By repeatedly appropriating things that are out in the environment, without any identifiable source, they become part of a universal popular culture. They speak very clearly to the audience. Everybody knows what they mean, and the context that the designer puts them in will give them a certain slant. The “Loaf” poster is a good example. It says: “He is an idle man,” and you have to decide whether you agree with that or not. When is he idle? Sitting in his lounge? Or is he an idle man who is working very hard physically, but not mentally? What does that mean? What do you think? What's your bias? ...**Edward Fella:** Or is he out of work? That was part of the discussion. The word “Loaf” has a double meaning. It is also a verb as in “Gee, all these people are loafing,” when the truth might be that they're unemployed because there is no work, that masses of people are idle for other reasons than the fact that they themselves are somehow **Loud dog bark!** There might be no demand for their physical labor. Those were the questions that Scott Zukowski was raising with that particular poster. Also, it is important to know that that poster was a critical exercise. It was not meant to convey a particular message, the way Paul Montgomery's lunchbox was meant as a product. So the two, even though they use the same imagery, were done in a totally different context. However, in Montgomery's case too, it was hardly condescending. It was the idea of celebrating the working man or the idea of work, that this was not something that should be ignored or marginalized or somehow made invisible.

Kathy: Hugh also touched on a related discussion about the use of French Post-Structuralism and literary theory. He assumes that because there is a Marxist element in the literary theory, it is strange for largely upper middle-class graduate students in the Midwest to be applying these ideas. He was questioning the appropriateness. I think probably a lot of those ideas are fairly workable without that particular brand of late 20th century European intellectual's Marxism. I think these ideas bend fairly well to an American social democratic populace. It can be anti-authoritarian, but in an American popular ethic, or better yet, a frontier individualist ethic, as opposed to the European late Marxist ethic. Hugh might contend that you can't separate it from the Marxism, but we feel you can.

Emigre: When I was in Switzerland, I met with many young Swiss designers who, each in their own way, were revolting against the legacy of designers such as Emil Ruder and Armin Hoffmann. They kept mentioning that Swiss Design “oversimplified” things, they mentioned that it “reduced the truth.” My comments on some of the Cranbrook work would be that it often overstates the contents. Sometimes you can't see the trees for the forest. Is it possible to overstate the designs by using too much personal or cryptic or ambiguous meaning? **Scott:** Of course you can overstate messages. You try to draw a line, but there is a lot of work produced at Cranbrook that goes way over that line. But those are the things that shape you, and you can always pull back. If you don't go out far enough, you will never know what's possible.

Ed: You know that adage about science taking very complex ideas and trying to simplify them, whereas philosophy takes fairly simple ideas and complicates them? Those are attitudes that exist within design, too. Sometimes, when there are



Richard Wilson, P. Scott McQuay and Peter G. Schuch
Page typeset by the Swiss Type Company, Geneva, for the New Cranbrook '90

Book Format Design Concept.

The intention of this book format is to raise some questions about normal syntactic expectations in our readers. These ideas began in the 1990's *The New Discourse*, published in March/April 1998. The basic page proportion is based on a classical or traditional text block centered horizontally with generous margins on all sides. The *Baden Book* by Betsworth body copy face is generously indented and justified, both old traditional book approaches. A centered axis runs through the copy block like a “back line” that defines the right half of the text from the left a fraction of a centered line space. In the essay, word pairs are interwoven through the copy block organized as the centered axis. This idea comes from the 1939 *Design Department Papers* The word pairs are qualities that describe to the range of possibilities in design: material/formal, geometric/organic, critical/typical, etc. The tripartite point created by this central fault line refers to the creative tension found in design in the resolution of seemingly oppositional values, philosophies and forces such as art and science or the visual and verbal. This visual theme suggests the multivalent, ambiguous and continuously changing nature of design. The centered axis is referenced in the other essays as a thin vertical space like a “tag line” on a *Neuhaus* blanketed that runs vertically through each centered copy block. The line should be almost minimal, almost not noticed. On the other hand, it always seems to indicate that the page's text is divided into two columns, so the reader must use if reading your comes from reading the full line across the tag line. The page numbers are reversed out of a set of black blocks that has also been fractured on the fault line of each page. Since the essays are all together at the beginning of the book, the centered text block of Bodoni is a constant in all the essays to unify the section. The book's title language continues, the idea of the fault line. Although each word itself remains in horizontal alignment, the frames that carry the words are fractured slightly as they cross the central axis of the type unit. The head and subhead are defined and interpreted to encourage alternate readings, including “The New Cranbrook Design” and “The Cranbrook Design Discourse.” A Victorian-era face called Egyptian by Betsworth is used in some of the book's subheads and as part of the caption text. It has a 19th century book text look to it. It is frequently mixed with an early Modern face called Geometric by Betsworth, a close relative of Futura. The text, quotes, captions and photos are positioned to just meet at their left or right edges, suggesting patches of type or photos “pasted” onto the page. This sort of magnetic attraction between elements is also a departure from layout “norms.” The images are generally centered in white space with generous margins, a traditional convention. The caption text faces are generally left-aligned. Bodoni Book and Egyptian the various faces differentiate the various elements of the captions. The attention to a conservative format raised in classical book design, but with subtle interventions to break the rules of normality. Hopefully, on a quick scan, the pages appear traditional, but when read will reveal subtle aberrations that make the reader conscious of the design or grammar of book text.

Katherine McDay

Fairly simple messages to convey, the philosophical approach, complicating them, makes them more interesting. Another approach to design when you have very complex messages to convey is to synthesize and simplify them. **Kathy:** Every project is different and requires a different kind of treatment. Once you leave Cranbrook, you have to be capable of doing the range of design approaches. **Ed:** Right! And nobody is advocating this “overstating” approach for a manual for, let's say, brain surgery. This “overstated” approach frequently is done for things that are cultural messages that would include a time, place, date and name, and where there isn't really anything in the information that's very complicated. But the culture that surrounds it, the context, is very complex, and that is what's put into these pieces.

! Baby cries!

Emigre: Part of the work produced at Cranbrook is explained as a reaction against Modernist ideas. In the book (*Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*), it is stated that there are “serious doubts about the function of the International Style as a means of visual communication,” and that students have “challenged the sterility of this ‘universal design.’” But most of the work that you do here, in a reaction to Modernist ideas, is work that is played out in very ideological projects. It is not played out, for instance, in corporate identities, which is really where, in your eyes, Modernism has failed. The Cranbrook book shows posters for the most part; there is not one corporate identity shown.

Kathy: In the alumni part of the book there are several logotypes. But yes, we really chose to publish the more polemical work. People come to Cranbrook after doing very systematic, program-driven work as professional designers. The idea is that during the two years at Cranbrook, you can involve yourself in more personal, more culturally oriented work. One thing that might not show up, but is certainly embedded in my own personal process, and I think it probably comes out in a lot of the critiques I give of work, was in an ongoing project called the “Vernacular Message Sequence.” This project was more or less the foundation of our approach to graphic design, although we didn't show too many examples of this in the book. This project's sequence goes from the extremely analytical, reductivist approach, where you are working on a message analysis and coming up with hierarchies and structure as the entry point, before proceeding to the more creative expressive personal phases of the project. The project covers the full range, from the highly objective to the highly subjective. I believe that today, everybody learns this in undergraduate school, or has learned it on the job, before they come to Cranbrook, so we don't spend too much time doing that anymore. It's embedded in their thinking. It might not be visible in the final manifestation, but hopefully, as you approach the content, as you are reading it, you will get an intuitive sense of that structure. Nobody is following grids much, currently, but that thinking is embedded in our students' methodologies.

! Baby cries!

Scott: Are you saying that it might be interesting to see some work produced here that would challenge a more systematic approach? **Emigre:** Yes, I would find it interesting to see the experimental work that is done here applied to, let's say, a huge corporate identity, instead of posters only.

Scott: I think it is possible. It's one of many things possible, but it doesn't necessarily have to be studied here. Many of us have come to Cranbrook to more or less de-professionalize, and that means also ceasing to work on systematic projects for while, to give our brain cells a little bit of a break and to look into other directions. **Kathy:** Scott Santora has taken the experiments of his student work and is beginning to apply them to his professional work. Of course it is not quite as radical, but that is because he is working with different parameters, with strict program criteria.

Emigre: But most of the work done by Cranbrook graduates is still for art institutions or culturally oriented projects. **Kathy:** Not all of it is, but yes, you will see that an awful lot of the work in the book is for somewhat culturally connected clients. One thing we talk about a lot here is the message, and how it is the designer's duty to take somebody else's message and give form to it, and how your design is only as interesting as the message. So one thing that people do when they leave here is look for the interesting clients who have something worth saying, as opposed to, for instance, discount shoe stores. If it's banal going in, it's going to be banal coming out, no matter how fine a designer you are. So on the one hand it's a process of natural selection. The work of the people that leave here is more appropriate for culturally connected things, but they're also very consciously seeking out interesting, worthy clients.

GRAPHIC DESIGN SOLUTIONS



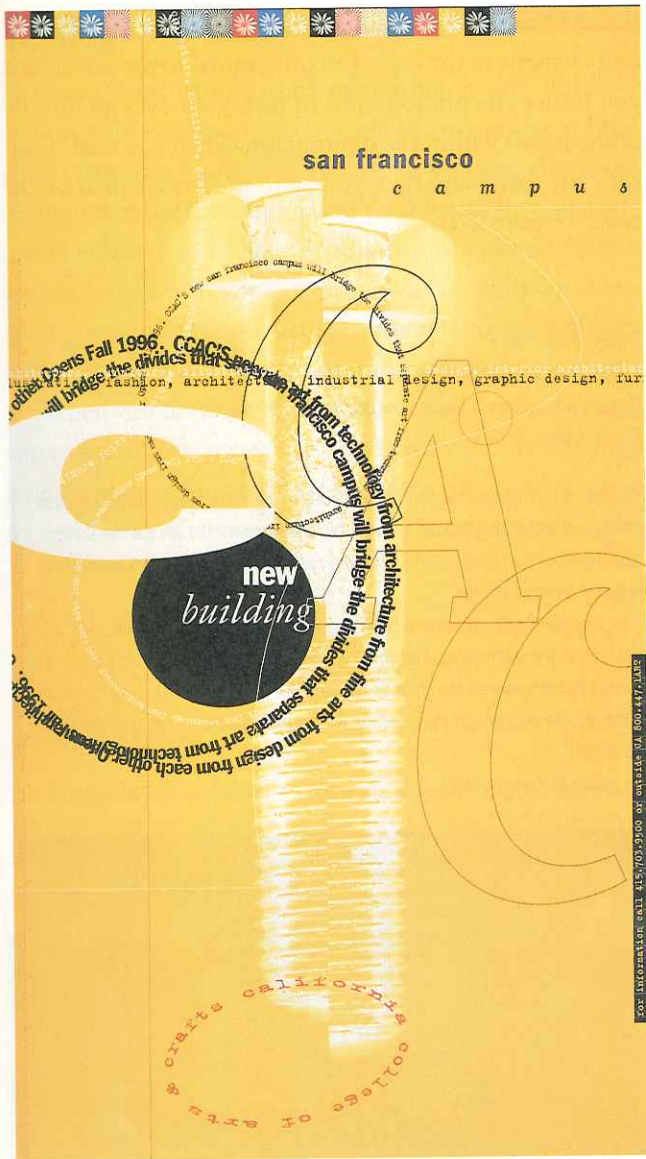


Figure 2-14
California College of Arts & Crafts New Building Poster
Design firm: Morla Design, San Francisco, CA
Art director: Jennifer Morla
Designers: Jennifer Morla & Petra Geiger
Client: California College of Arts & Crafts

California College of Arts & Crafts' new San Francisco Architecture and Design building required a recruitment announcement poster. The imagery of the large bolt and energetic typography collide to symbolize the process of creating the new campus. In addition, the measuring rules and printers registration bar act as a metaphor for the entirety of the design disciplines.

(or point of focus) is usually determined by the relative importance of the chosen element to the message and by what the designer believes will attract the viewer.

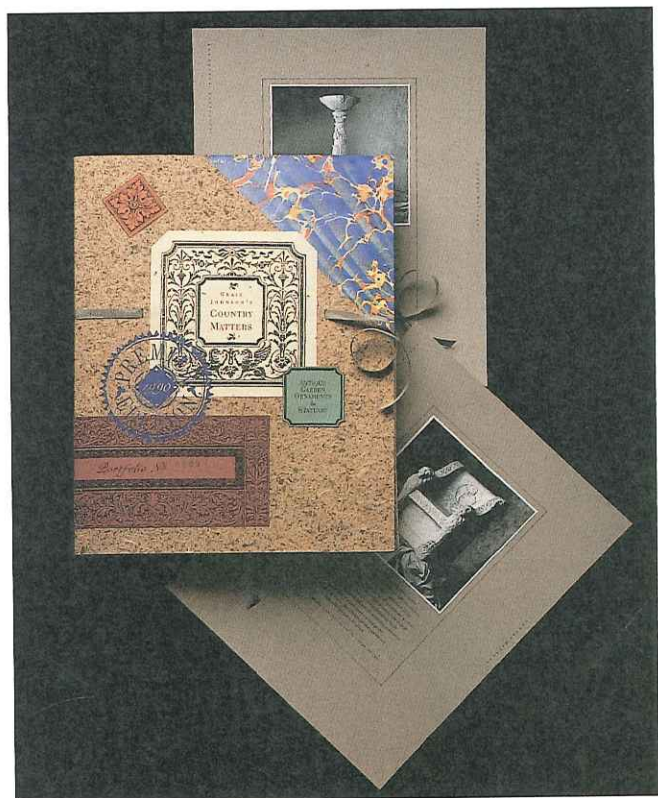
The designer usually has a main message to communicate and other peripheral information or messages. For example, on a poster promoting responsible drinking, the message "drive sober" is much more important than who is sponsoring the poster. A primary focal point can be established along with supporting focal points, which we call accents. Accents are not as strongly emphasized as the main focal point. You first notice the title of this gift portfolio for Country Matters because it is centered, framed, and lighter in value than the rest of the cover (Figure 2-15). The other typographic and decorative graphic elements — the subtitle, date, decorative square in the upper left — are all accents.

Figure 2-15
Catalog
Design firm: Pentagram Design Inc., San Francisco, CA
Art director: Kit Hinrichs
Designer: Susan Tsuchiya
Photographer: Barry Robinson
Client: Country Matters

Country Matters is a business that sources unique garden ornaments from around the world for sale to U.S. clients. They approached Pentagram for a catalog. The market is so exclusive, however, that an ordinary catalog would hardly have been appropriate. Instead, a "gift portfolio" was devised.

Each object was photographed and tipped into leaves of recycled paper with descriptions written in the manner of an art catalog and printed letterpress. The portfolios were individually numbered and addressed to clients.

—Alison Merkley, Project Manager, Pentagram Design Inc.



It is important to remember that if you give emphasis to all elements in a design, you have given it to none of them. You will just end up with visual confusion. How can you establish a focal point? What type of elements dominate a page and in what way? The position, size, shape, direction, hue, value, saturation, or texture of a component can make it a focal point. Here is a list of possible ways to make something a focal point:

- make it brightest
- make it a different color
- make it in color if everything else is in black and white or vice versa
- make it go in a different direction
- make it a different value
- position it differently
- give it a texture or a different texture than the other elements
- arrange all the elements to lead to it
- make it a different shape than the other elements
- isolate it
- make it clear and the other elements hazy
- reverse it
- make it an opaque color and other colors transparent
- make it glossy and the other elements dull

Establishing a **visual hierarchy**, which means arranging elements according to emphasis, is directly related to establishing a point of focus. It goes beyond a focal point to establish a priority order of all the information in a work.

- A. Where do you look first?
- B. Where do you look second?
- C. Where do you look third?

John Rea, an advertising/creative director calls these questions the “ABCs” of visual hierarchy, where a few elements take emphasis or priority over other elements. To establish a hierarchy, decide on the importance of the elements that are part of your design. Use factors such as position, size, value, color, and visual weight to make sure your audience sees these elements in the order of impor-

tance. Create a flow of information from the most important element to the least. On this annual report cover, first you notice the photograph. In fact, your eyes go directly to the hands within the photograph. Then you read “Cancer Care, Inc.” and then you go to the last element on the cover (Figure 2-16).

Figure 2-16

Cancer Care, Inc. Annual Report

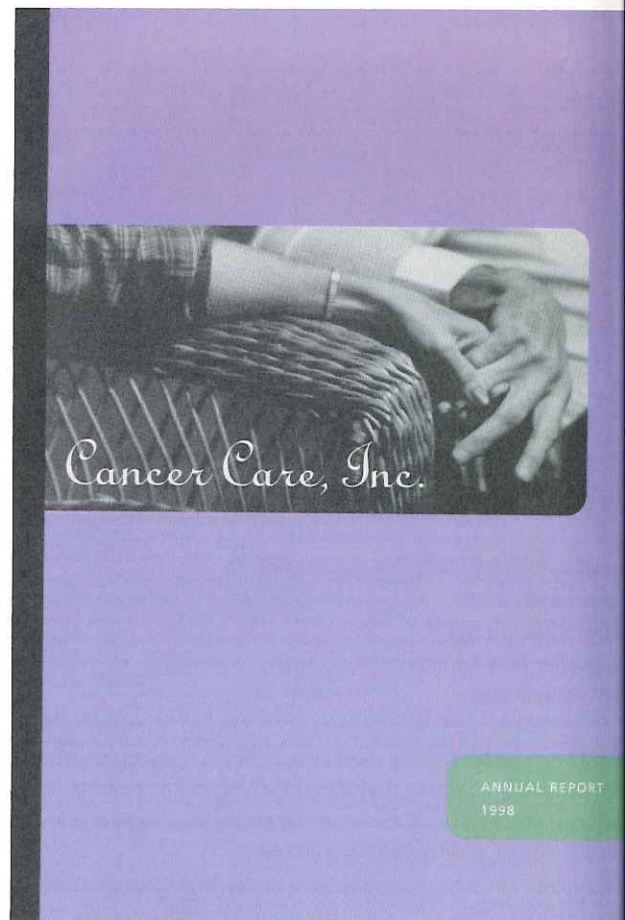
Design firm: Lieber Brewster Design, Inc., New York, NY

Client: Cancer Care, Inc.

The special challenges we incurred included a limited budget allowing for three colors and saddle-stitch binding. Also, we were required to use Cancer Care's existing black and white photos showing people really touched by Cancer Care, rather than stock photos.

A usual challenge occurred on press when the solid color on the cover would not print without streaking. Pressmen worked for two days adjusting the press to correct this problem as the creative director stood by. In the end, with the problem resolved, the annual met the deadline and received compliments from the Cancer Care staff.

— Lieber Brewster Design



Rhythm

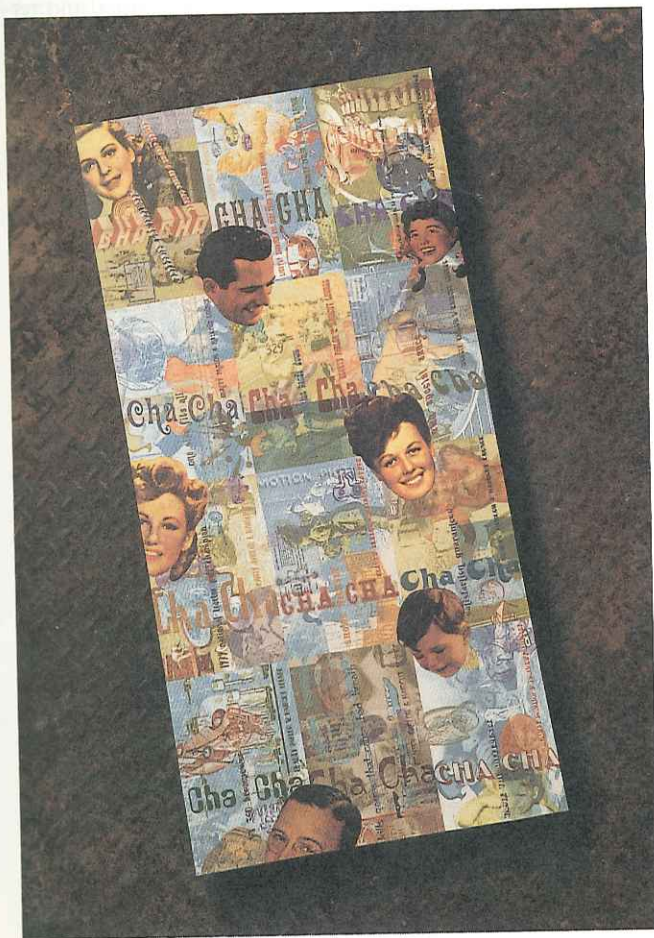
In music, most people think of rhythm as the “beat” — a sense of movement from one chord to another, a flow, accent patterns, or stresses. In design, you can also think of rhythm as the beat, but a beat established by visual elements rather than by sound. Rhythm is a pattern that is created by repeating or varying elements, with consideration given to the space between them, and by establishing a sense of movement from one element to another.

When you draw evenly spaced vertical lines on a page, you establish a steady repetitious rhythm because the lines have the same amount of space between them and our eyes move from one element to another consistently. If you

Figure 2-17

CHA CHA Beauty Parlor and Haircut Lounge Poster
Design firm: Planet Design Company, Madison, WI
Art director: Kevin Wade
Designer: Darci Bochen

CHA CHA Beauty Parlor and Haircut Lounge is a truly one-of-a-kind hair salon. To help create a fresh and funky image, we developed this poster. With budget being an issue, we also printed a direct mail campaign on the back of the poster, which was then cut into twelve ready-to-send direct mail cards.



vary the distance between the lines, you establish a different type of rhythm, one with variation or dynamics.

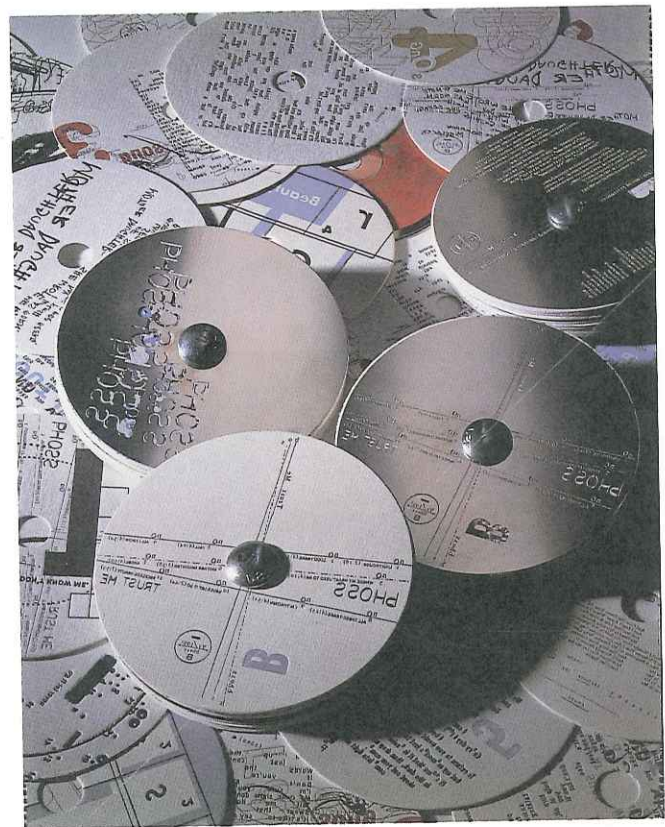
The key to establishing rhythm in design is to understand the difference between repetition and variation. Repetition occurs when you repeat visual elements with some or total consistency, as on this CHA CHA poster (Figure 2-17). Several elements — the heads, the repeat of the word “CHA CHA” create the rhythm along with the background colors and layers. Variation can be established by changing any number of elements, such as the color, size, shape, spacing, position, and visual weight of the elements in a design, as in this CD design (Figure 2-18).

Unity

When you flip through a magazine, do you ever wonder how the graphic designer was able to get all the type, photographs, illustrations, and graphic elements to work together as a unit? How does a designer successfully organize all the elements in an advertisement? There are many ways to achieve what we call **unity**, where the elements in

Figure 2-18

Bhoss “Trust Me” CD
Design firm: Jennifer Sterling Design, San Francisco, CA
Art director/Designer/Illustrator: Jennifer Sterling
Copywriter: Deonne Kahler



a design look as though they belong together. Achieving unity relies on a basic knowledge of the formal elements and an understanding of other basic design principles, such as balance, emphasis, and rhythm. In other words, the designer must know how to organize elements and establish a common bond among them.

Unity is one of the goals of composition. Unity allows the viewer to see an integrated whole, rather than unrelated parts. We know from studies in visual psychology that the viewer wants to see unity; if a viewer cannot find unity in a design, he or she will lose interest. We borrow the term *gestalt* from Gestalt psychology to describe this concept of visual unity and wholeness. Unity contributes to memorability, total effect, and clear communication; it is about how well a design holds together.

This packaging design system created by Louise Fili has unity, both as a system and as independent pieces (Figure 2-19). Each package design has unity on its own, through compositional movements — circular movements, in the typography and graphic elements — echoing one another. All the elements are used consistently on each package — typography, illustration, position, composition, and color.

One or more principles (or devices) may be employed to get the desired results for unity. Here are some of them.

Correspondence: When you repeat an element like color, direction, value, shape, or texture, or establish a style, like a linear style, you establish a visual connection or correspondence among the elements. The designers of

this folder and poster use several elements, type, lines, and a grid, to establish correspondence (Figure 2-20).

Continuity is related to correspondence. It is the handling of design elements, like line, shape, texture, and color to create similarities of form. In other words, continuity is used to create family resemblance. For example, if you were designing stationery, you would want to handle the type, shapes, colors, or any graphic elements on the letterhead, envelope, and business card in a similar way to establish a family resemblance among the three pieces. A certain level of **variety** can exist and still allow for continuity. Let's say, for example, you used the same design on the letterhead, business card, and envelope, except the letterhead is printed in red, the envelope in green, and the business card in blue. Your design would have both variety and continuity.

All the elements on the cover page for Marko Lavrish's promotional piece are arranged on a central vertical axis (Figure 2-21). The other designs in this promotional incorporate an exciting variety of typographic arrangements, including "Volume 01" and "Volume 02," where the individual letters are aligned in vertical rows.

Grid: Subdividing the format into fixed horizontal and vertical divisions, columns, margins, and spaces establishes a framework for organizing space, type, and pictures in a design. This is called a grid. It may be used for single page formats or multipage formats. This grid gives a design a unified look. (The grid is examined in depth in Chapter 5.)

Alignment: Visual connections can be made between and among elements, shapes, and objects when their edges or axes line up with one another. The eye easily picks up these relationships and makes connections among the forms. All the elements on this label design for the California Grape Seed Co. are aligned on a central vertical axis (Figure 2-22). Besides the type alignment, other design decisions contribute to unity in Fili's design solution — color, fonts and patterns.

Flow: Elements should be arranged so that the audience is led from one element to another through the design. Flow is also called **movement** and is connected to the principle of rhythm. Rhythm, in part, is about a sense of movement from one element to another. In Jennifer Sterling's signage (See Figure 2-23) the arrangement of type and visuals move your eyes from one element to another across the elongated horizontal format and back again.

Figure 2-19
Bella Cucina Packaging
Design firm: Louise Fili Ltd., New York, NY
Art director/Designer: Louise Fili





Figure 2-20

Area Seccession Poster

Design firm: Concrete Design Communications Inc.
Toronto, Ontario

Designers: John Pylypczak, Diti Katona

Client: Area, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Manufactured by Wiesner Hager in Austria, this line of furniture was inspired by the Viennese Secession. The Canadian distributor, Area, needed a vehicle to promote the line.

We responded with a two-sided poster that folded down into a 10" by 10" folder. Printed economically in one color, the poster uses quotes by artists and architects of the secession.

—Diti Katona, Concrete Design Communications Inc.

Figure 2-21

Lavrisha/La Brecque Promotional

Design firm: Jennifer Sterling Design, San Francisco, CA

Art director: Jennifer Sterling

Designers: Jennifer Sterling, Amy Hayson

Illustrator: Jennifer Sterling

Photographer: Marko Lavrisha

Copywriter: Eric La Brecque

Client: Lavrisha/La Brecque



Figure 2-22

California Grape Seed Co.

Design firm: Louise Fili Ltd., New York, NY

Art director/Designer: Louise Fili

