# GD+M
# Methods 1C
## Composition

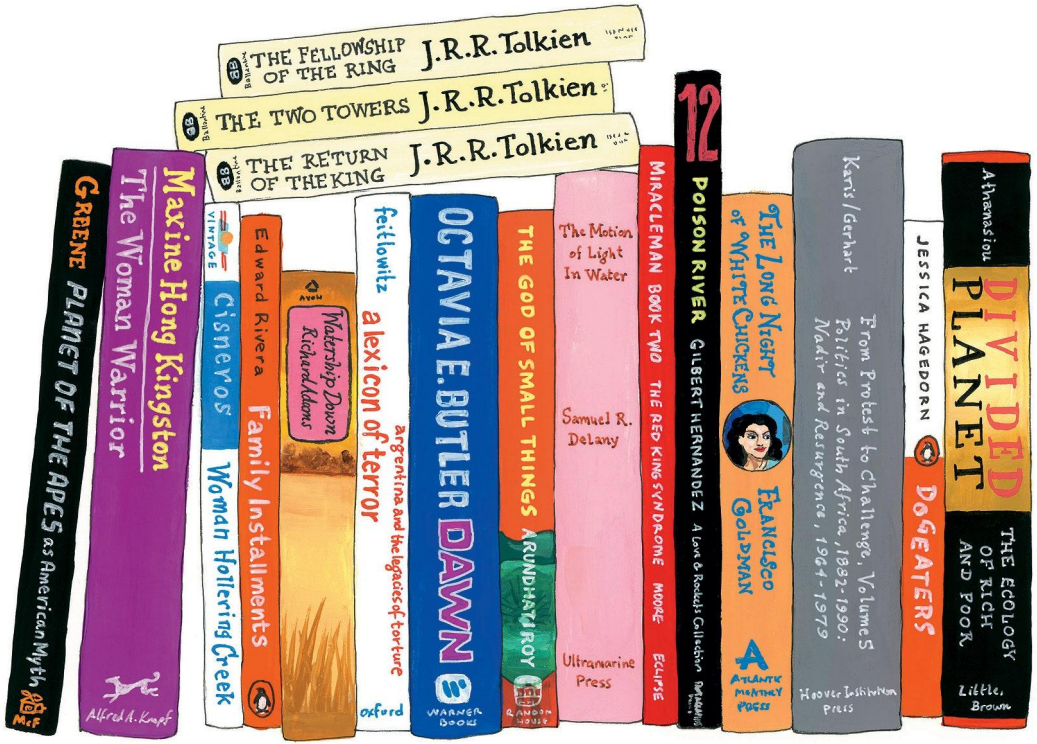


Illustration: Courtesy Little Brown and Company

A graphic composition is a way of placing out various graphic elements on a surface based on the effect you want to achieve and the story you want to tell. This is called a layout.

Whether to create attention, explain and simplify something complicated, or create a series effect etc.

Elizabeth Ashley Fox-Jensen
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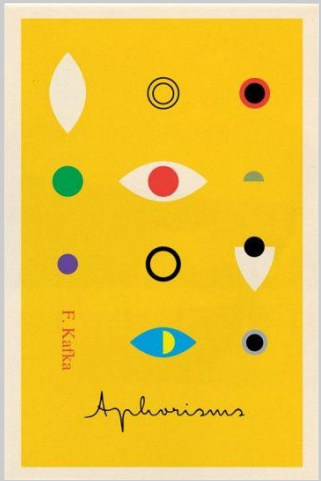
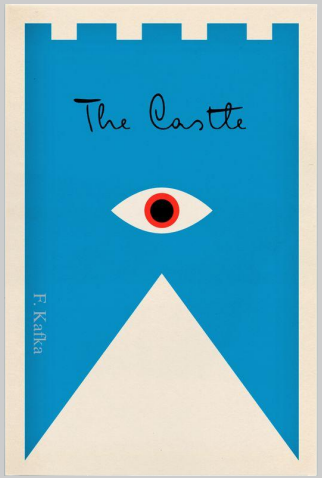
# Agenda

| | |
|---|---|
| 10.00-11.00 | Composition lecture |
| | *What's in the tool box? Balance, Hierarchy, Contrast, Scale,* |
| | *Playing with foreground and background, Grid, Tips & Tricks* |
| 11.00-11.10 | Short break, 10 min |
| 11.10-11.25 | Exercise individually |
| 11.25-11.45 | Reflection on exercise, share with class |
| 11.45-12.00 | Instruction of exercises for Homework/EXAM |

A book series design

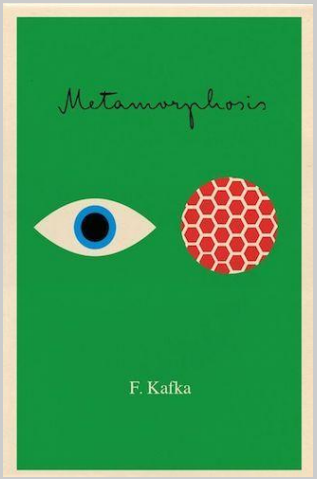
Easy to spot on the shelf in the bookstore or on amazon.com

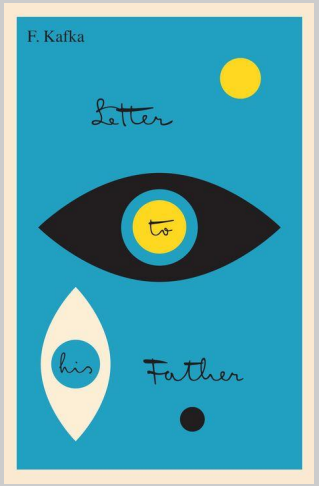








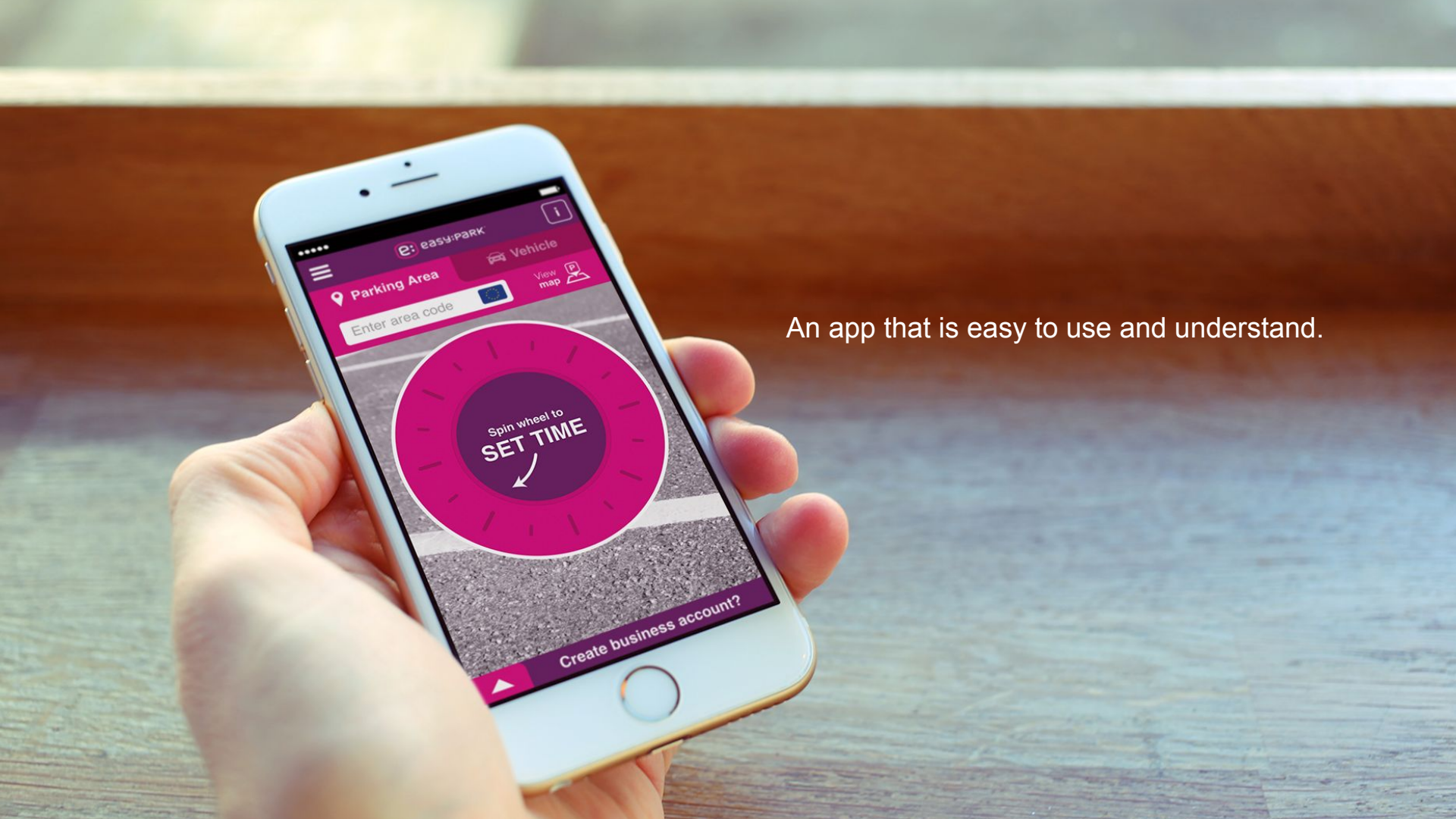




Covers by Peter Mendelsund

A good rule is to decide what should be in focus in your design.




Packaging design with
the material as part of the design.

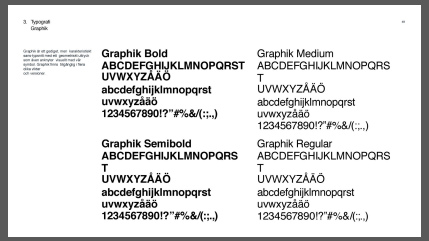



An app that is easy to use and understand.

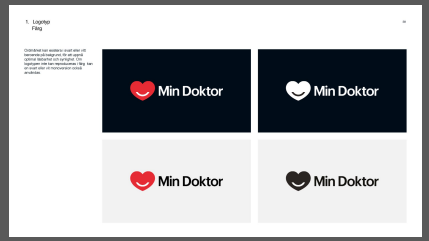
Super graphic spatial design for public space where the surface of the walls are part of the design.



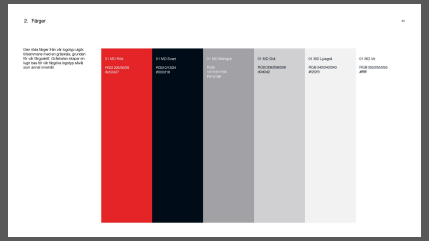
## Typography




## Logotype



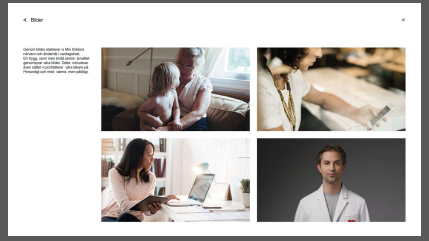

## Color palette



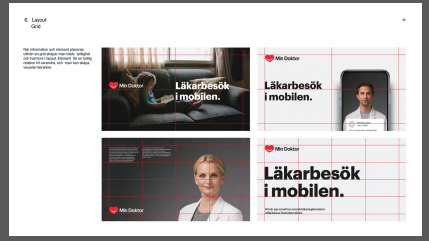

## Illustration or Symbols




## Photos




## Grid system




# Example of components

In most cases, companies and organizations have a graphic manual with visual guidelines. It can have varying content. These elements act as a toolbox for the graphic designer to start from.

The guidelines are there to give a uniform expression of communication.
It strengthens the brand and gives it a clearer identity. Regardless of whether you see a banner, poster, website, or video, you should recognize the sender.

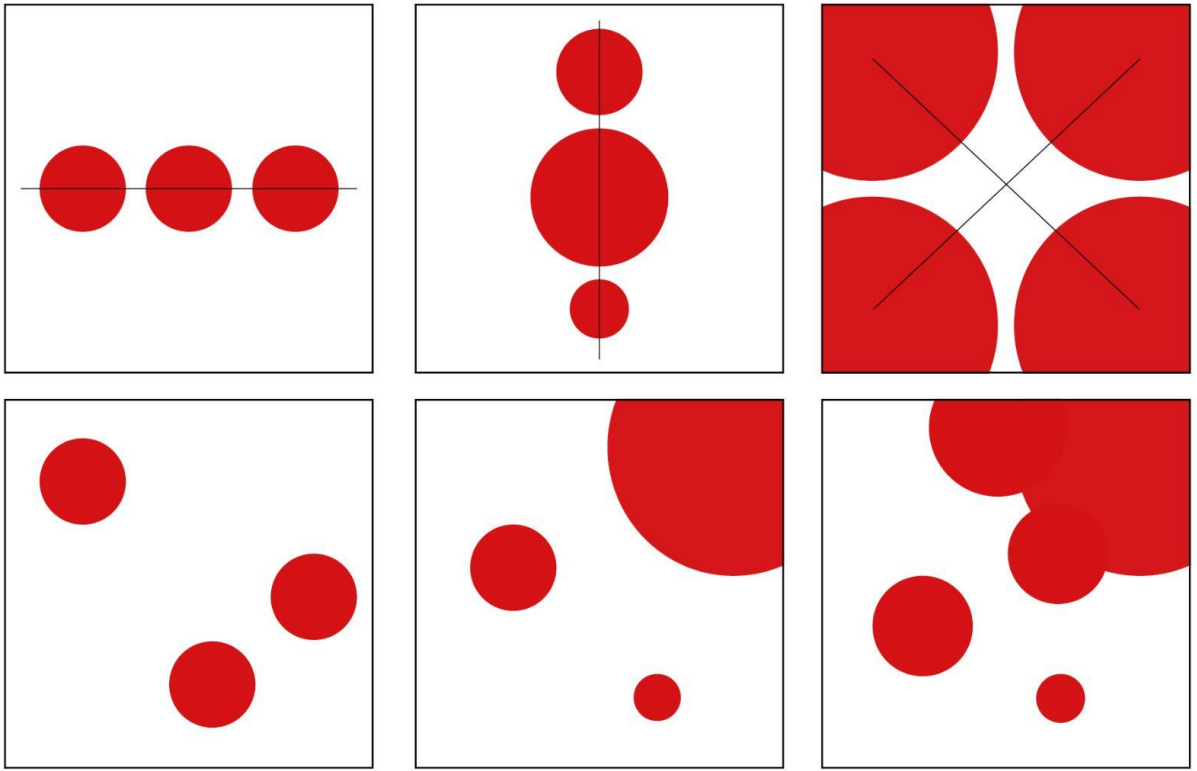
Left: Example from the Visual Guidelines of Min Doktor.



# Balance
# Symmetry vs asymmetry

By using a symmetric layout, you often get a harmonious composition. You divide the same number of elements on each side of a centerline.

According to the gestalt principles, the eye prefers a symmetrical composition.
But by using an asymmetrical layout, you can create more tension and can guide the eye to move as you want on the surface.
This often makes the composition more intriguing to look at.



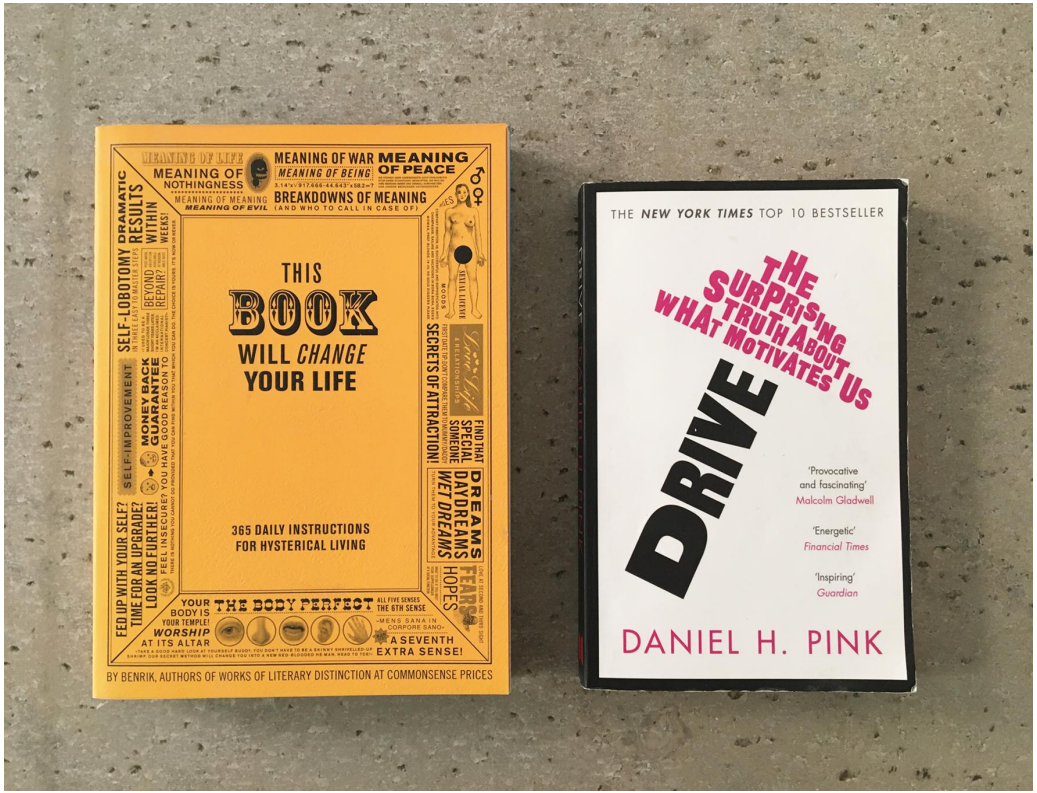
**Symmetry**

Elements are oriented along a common axis; the image mirrors from side to side along that axis. The configurations shown here are symmetrical from left to right and/or from top to bottom.

**Asymmetry**

Elements are placed organically, relying on the interaction of form and negative space and the proximity of elements to each other and to the edges of the field, yielding both tension and balance.

Chapter of Rhythm and Balance, page 49, Graphic Design The New Basics



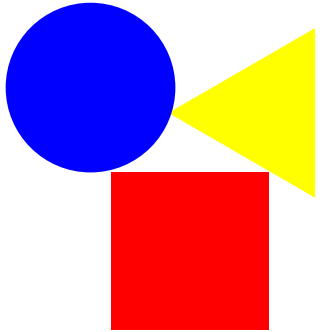

**Left: a symmetrical composition**
The eye are drawn to the title.
That is the primary information the designer want us to see. The yellow cover helps us to spot the book in the book store.

**Right: an asymmetrical composition**
The title is created as a typographical image of an arrow that is slanted.
It strives upward and the eye are drawn to the title “Drive”, then you read the undertitle in pink, and then the name of the author. After that you’ll notice the reviews to the right, and last the bestseller message. The designer has placed the elements to guide the eye to find them in a specific order.









The circle, triangle and the square were important graphic components.

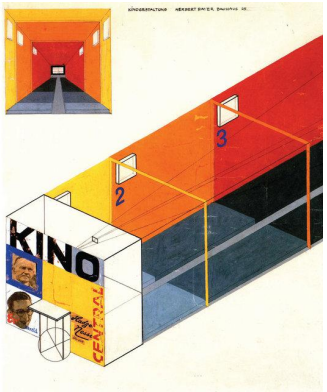
# Bauhaus school

Bauhaus introduced functionalism in typography and a so-called Bauhaus style of typography and graphic design emerged. Typical of the style was that it was based on simplicity, lacked serifs (sans-serif) and focused on the transmission of information.

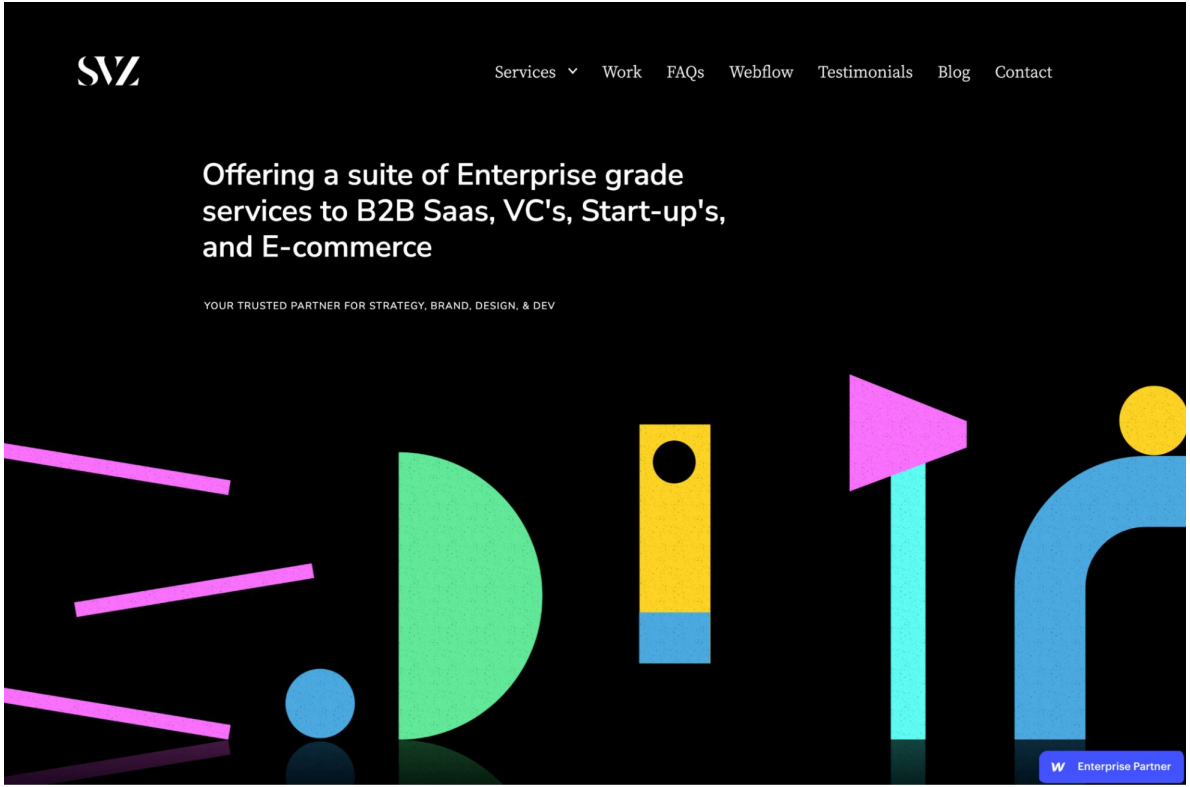
The **hierarchy** of messages governed the graphic composition where the most important would be the most visible. The layout was often asymmetrical.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bauhaus



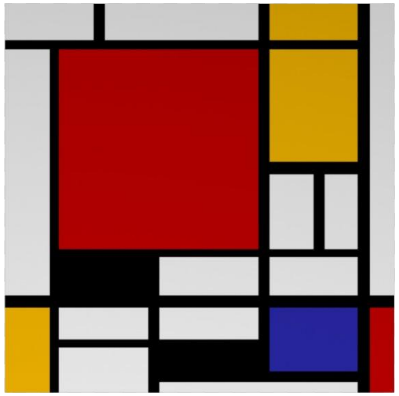




**Herbert Bayer**
Herbert Bayer,
Design for a Kiosk
and a Cinema, 1924.




**SVZ** Website 2023
Watch web page here

Web flow 2023 web design



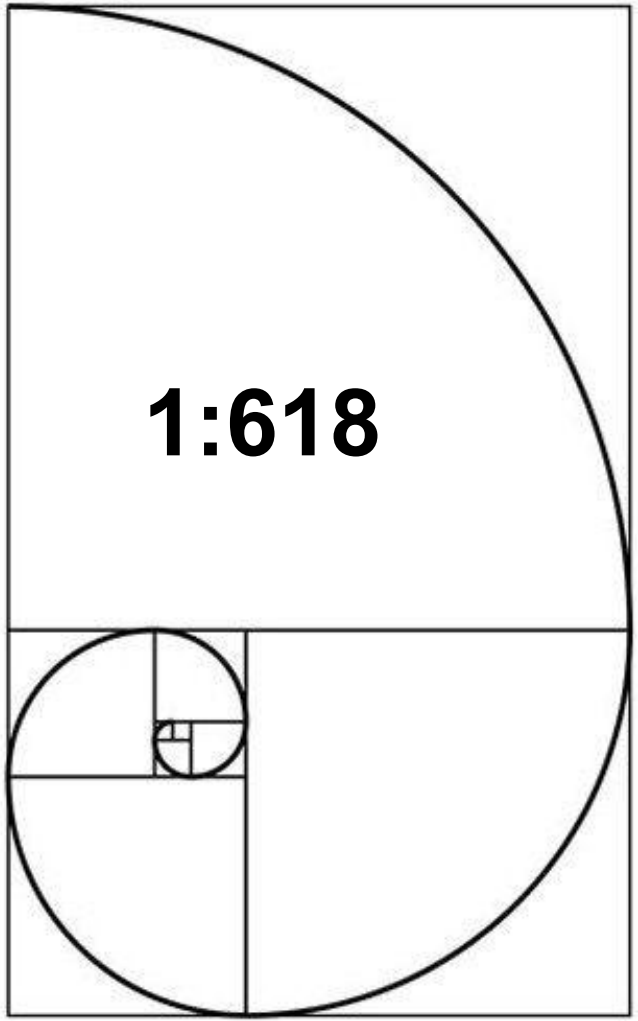
**Piet Mondrian**
Composition No. III, with Red, Blue, Yellow, and Black, 1929
(Founder of De Stijl art movement and group).



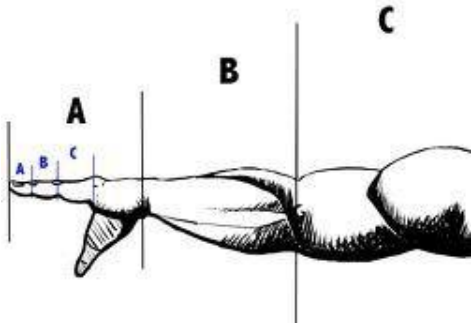

**Nick Jones – Web design based on grid and golden ratio**
http://narrowdesign.com

Bashooka inspiration
mondrian-style-website-designs-inspiration






# The Golden Ratio




**A measure for well balanced proportions.**
It's based on a size ratio that derives from nature.
The golden ratio is used in architecture, graphic design, photography, industrial design, etc.
It gives proportions a harmonious impression as we are used to seeing them on our own bodies and in our surroundings.

Example of the Golden Ratio in Nature

# Big headline

## Introduction lorem sit amet ipsum dolor sit.

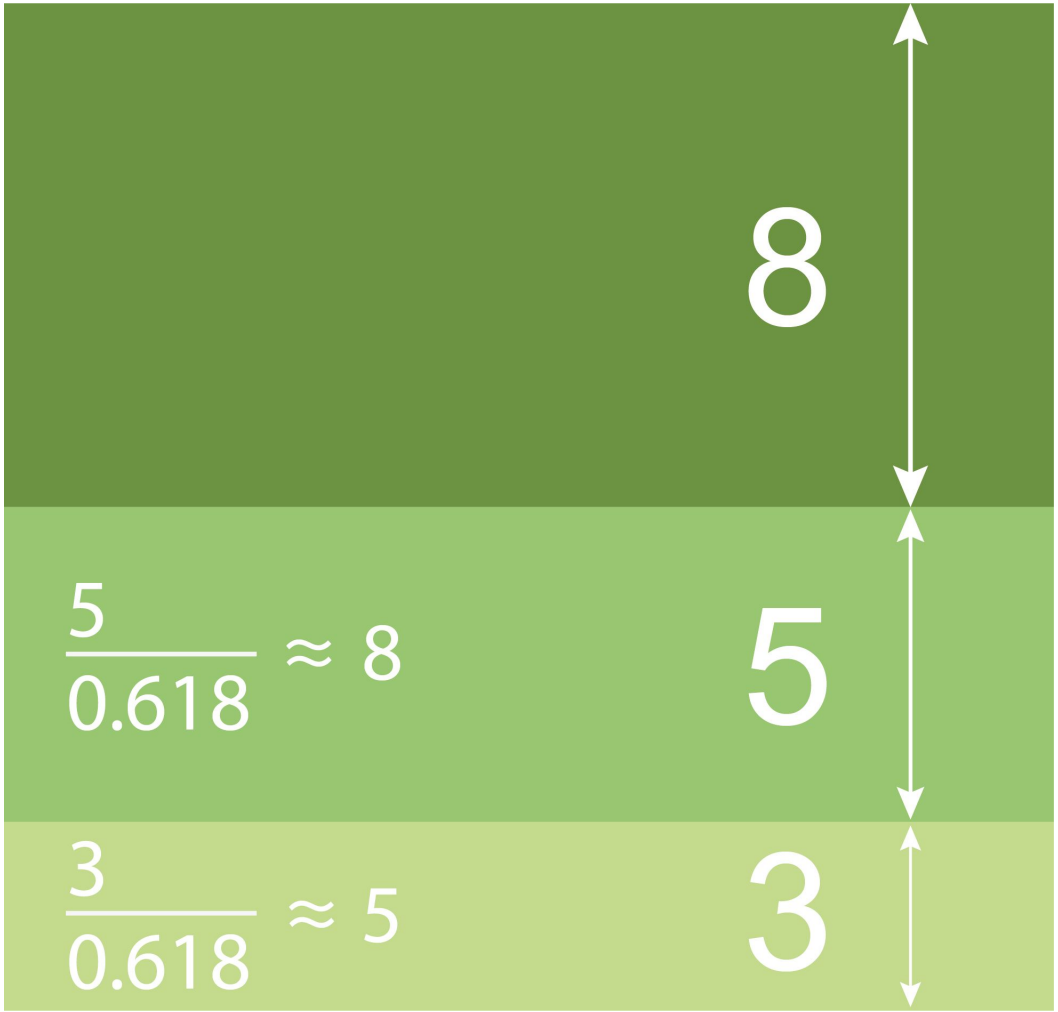
**Bodycopy Lautae sim ipsunt et velluptur, experferupti aut aut aliatium nobit, ilia venis iducid qui illa nobit facime nobitio. Ut essenim quunt occus arciend**

The golden ratio is also useful when choosing font sizes in order to get a balanced composition.




**How to calculate the Golden Ratio:**

Divide the dimension of the larger object by 1.618, and you'll get the measures for the smaller object according to the golden ratio.




**How to calculate the Golden Ratio:**

Divide the dimension of the smaller object by 0.618, and you'll get the measures for the larger object according to the golden ratio.

# Hierarchy




**3. Title of magazine**

**4. Titles of secondary articles**

**1. Image**

**2. Title of head article**

The first step is to decide the hierarchy of the content that you need to include in your design.

What is the primary message, what image is the most important, what is secondary? What should be big, what can be smaller, how can you divide the information?




# Contrast

With contrasts you can amplify parts that are essential for the story you want to tell with your design.
It also helps to create attention and interest.

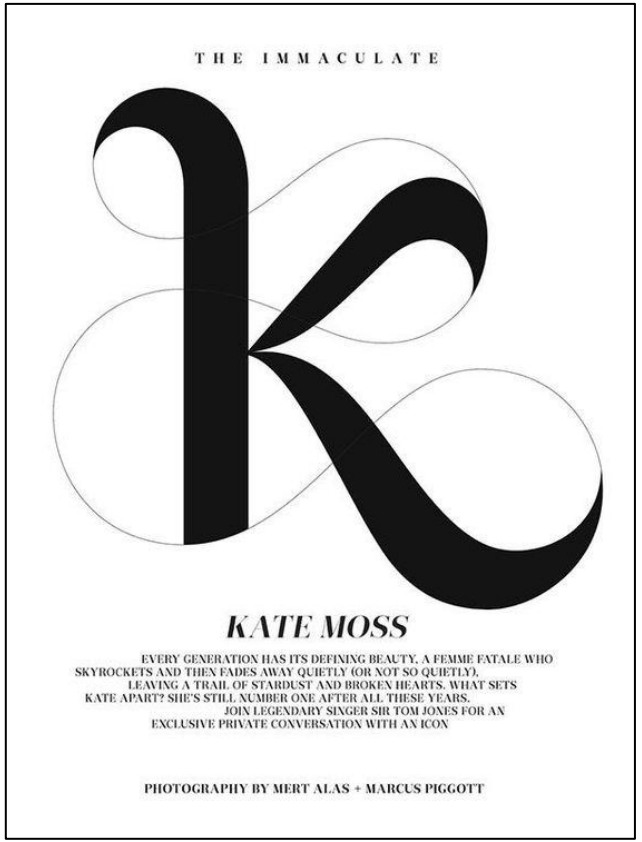
These are examples of contrasts that are very useful in graphic design.

**Big and small**
**Hard and soft**
**Colorful and pale**
**Old and New - Style breaks**
**Order and disorder**

https://www.exergian.com/iconic-tv.html

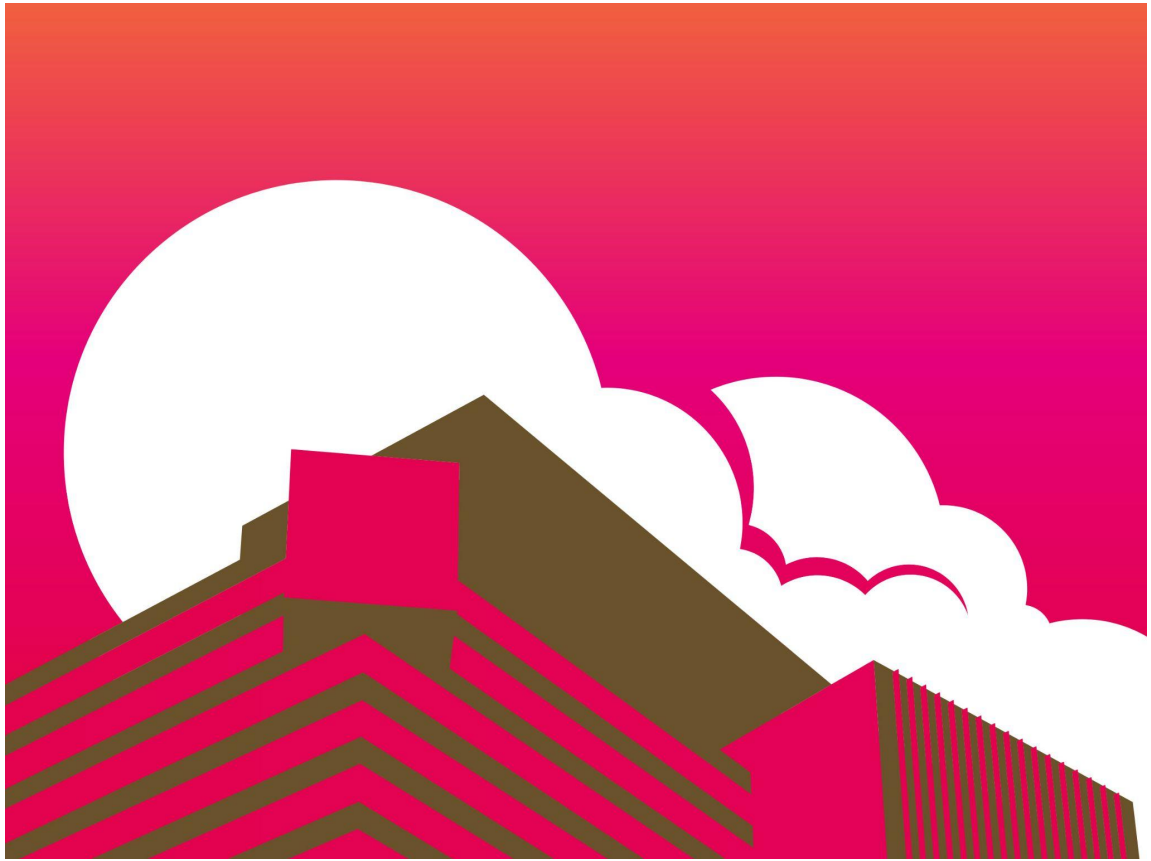
**Big and Small**



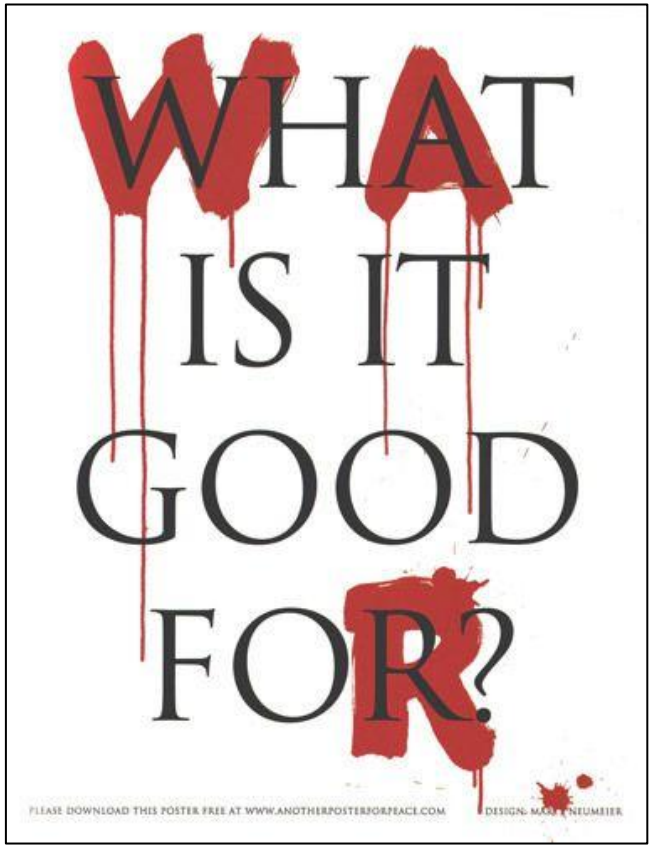

Big black letters AND small letters, thick lines AND light lines.
A lot of white space that makes the design breathe.

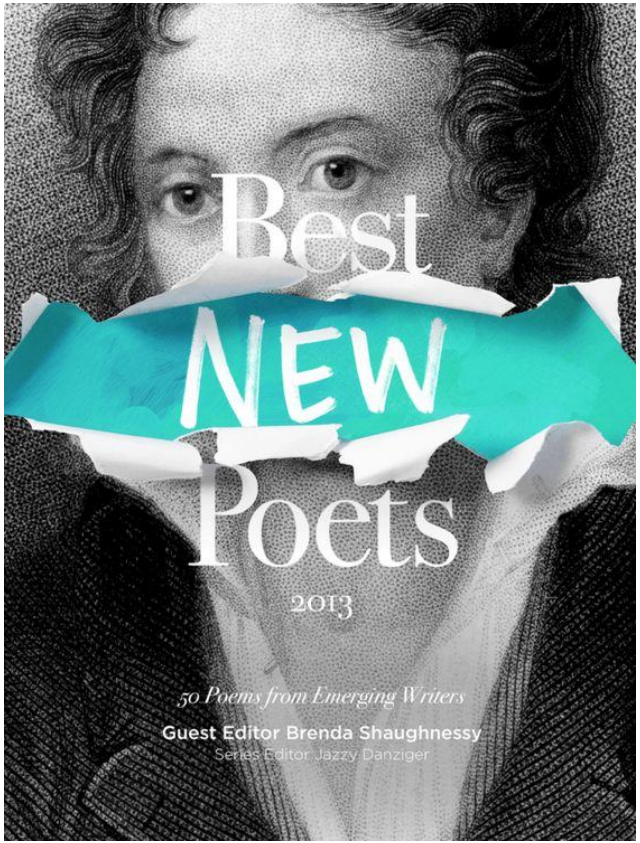
**Hard and Soft**



Squared and Round shapes. Contrasting colors.

**Colorful and Pale**




**Old and New "Style break"**

Contrast in colors and hand painted letters AND classic serif typography.

**Order and Disorder**

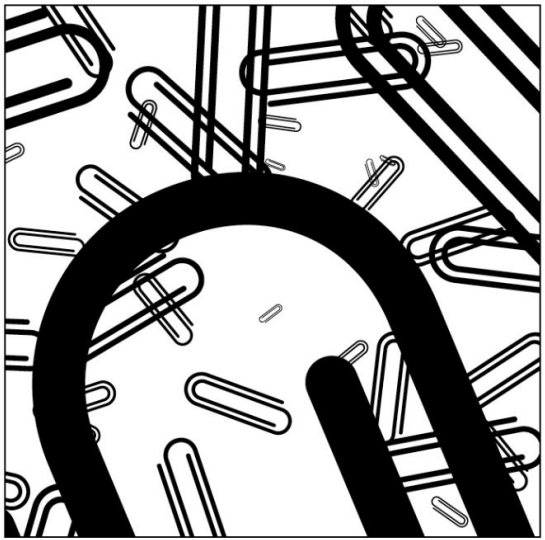



Order with blue circles in the same color and size and the choice of an easy read typeface.
Disorder with the letters in the word PLAY and WORK.

# Scale



A graphic element can appear larger or smaller depending on size, placement, and color of the elements around it. When elements are all the same size, the design feels flat. Contrast in size can create a sense of tension as well as a feeling of depth and movement. Small shapes tend to recede; large ones move forward.







With scale you can create depth and tension, by making some objects bigger and other smaller.

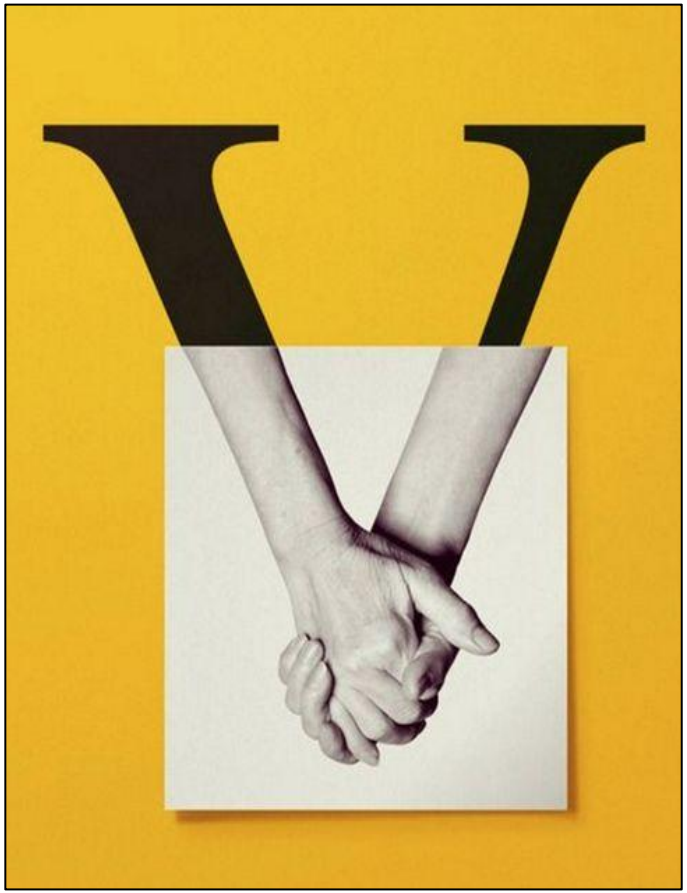



Film titles Catch me if you can

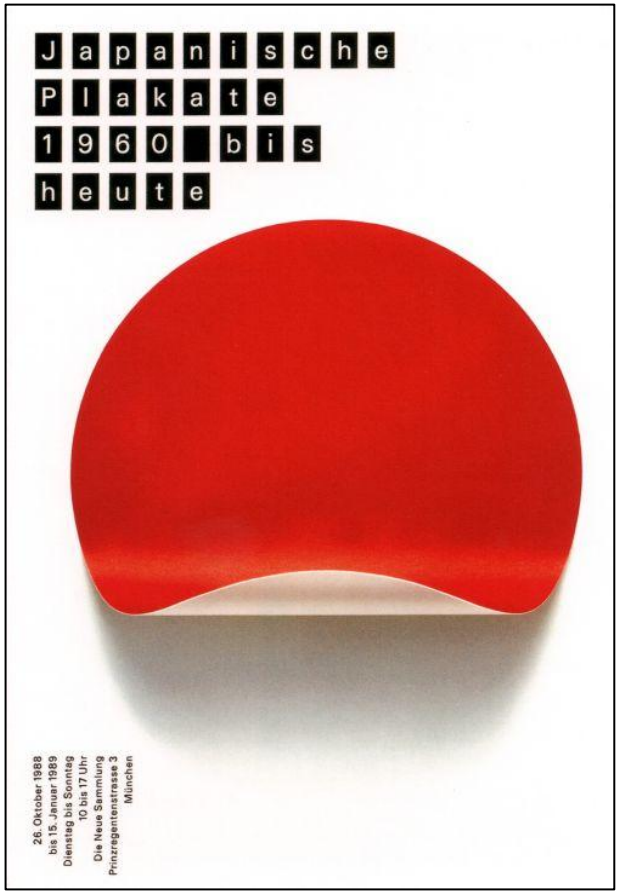



# Playing with foreground and background

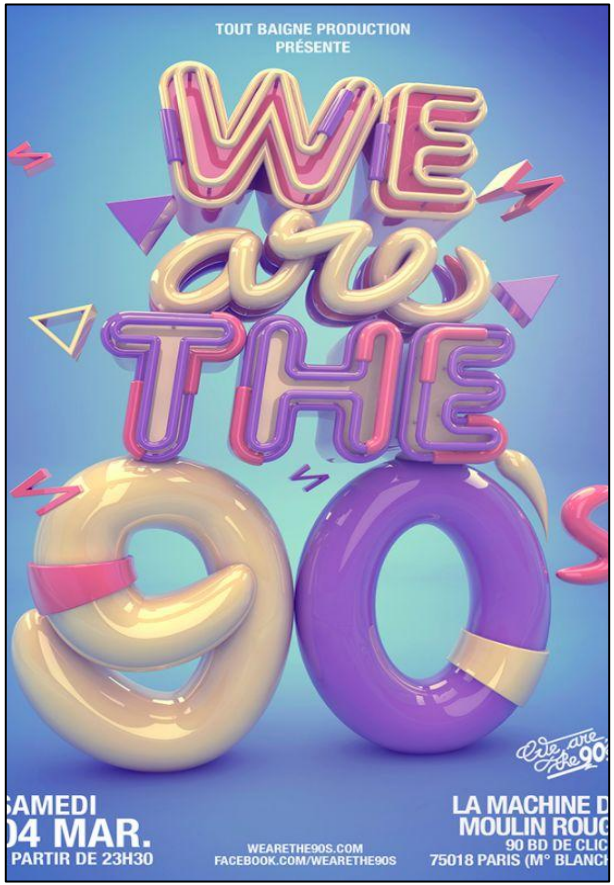
Playing with the surface is a common trick in graphic design.
By creating depth, adding 3D graphics, mixing different objects and creating shadow effects, you can attract the eye to your design.

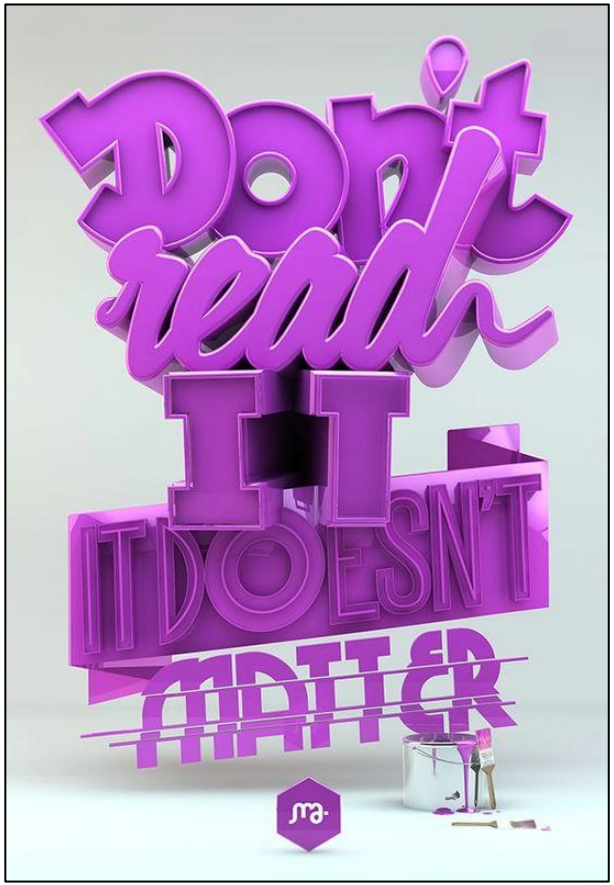


Connection background and foreground

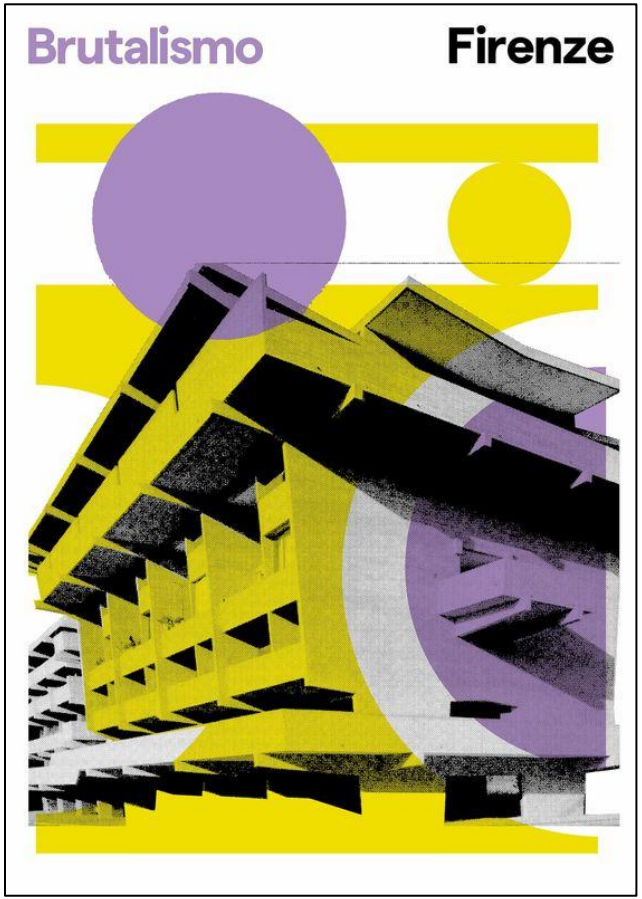



Depth with shadows for a 3D-feeling



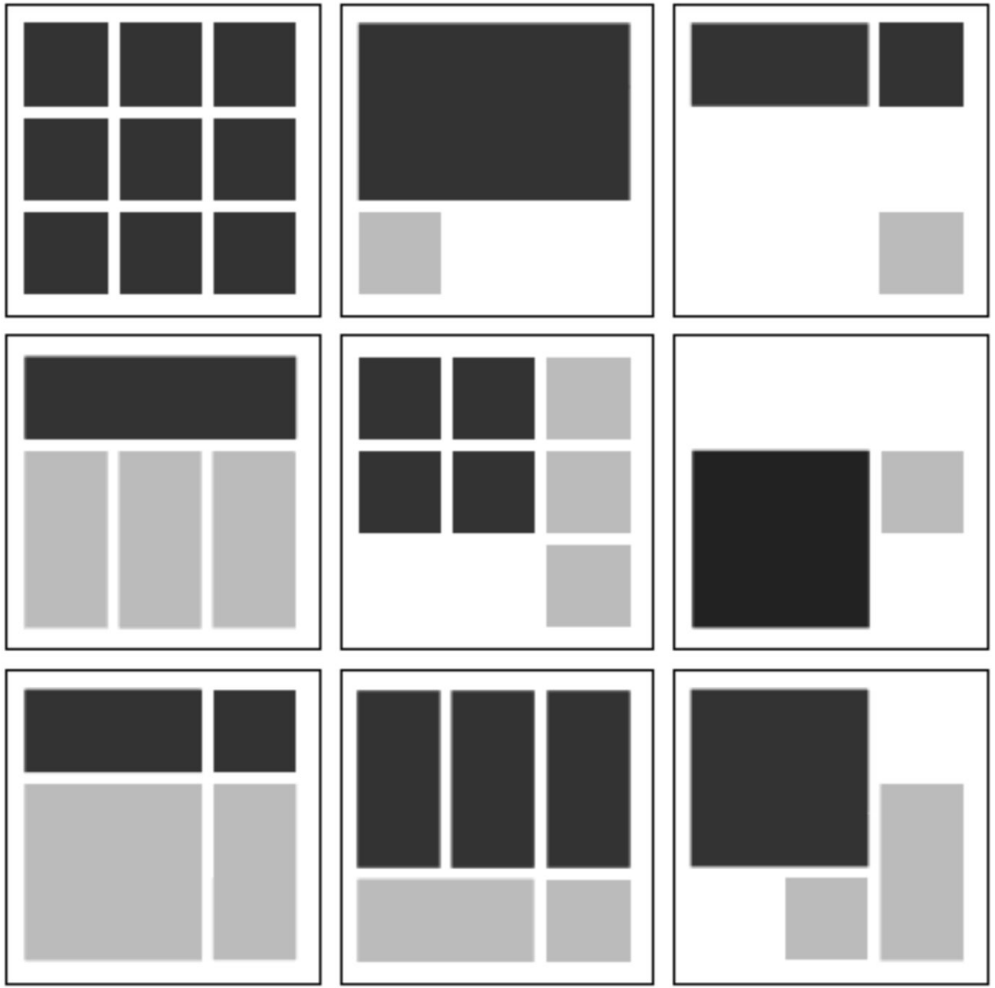

Depth and texture with 3D-modulated typography




Layers



Cutouts



# Grid

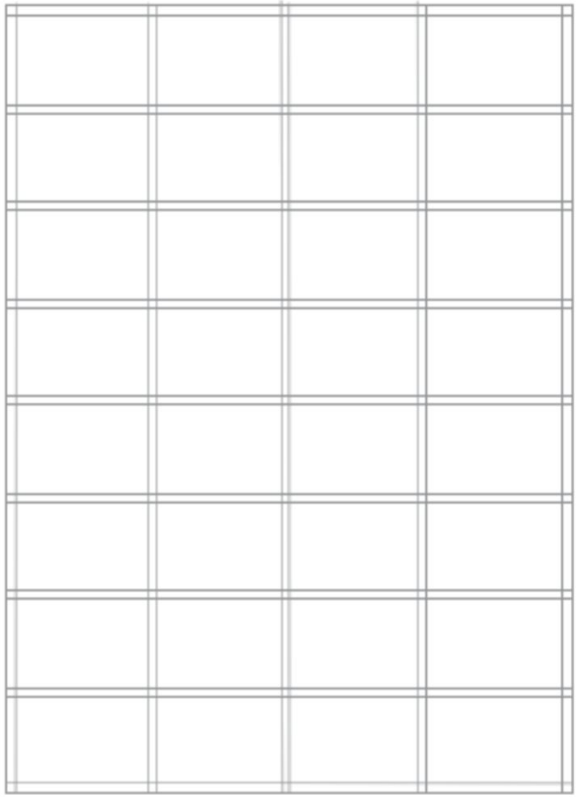
A grid consists of fields and spaces that act as a basic template. Designers often start from this when designing compositions, layouts, and patterns.

It is a tool that is often used in graphic and web design. The designer decides at an early stage which type of grid is best suited depending on needs of functionalities etc.

A grid based layout can often contain objects such as images, headings and paragraphs, graphic shapes, logos, and more.

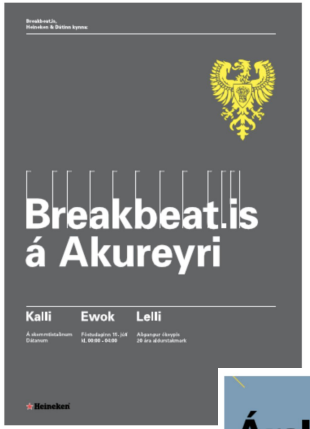
Chapter of Grid, page 188: Graphic Design The New Basics, Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips

# Print design



Ragnar Freyer



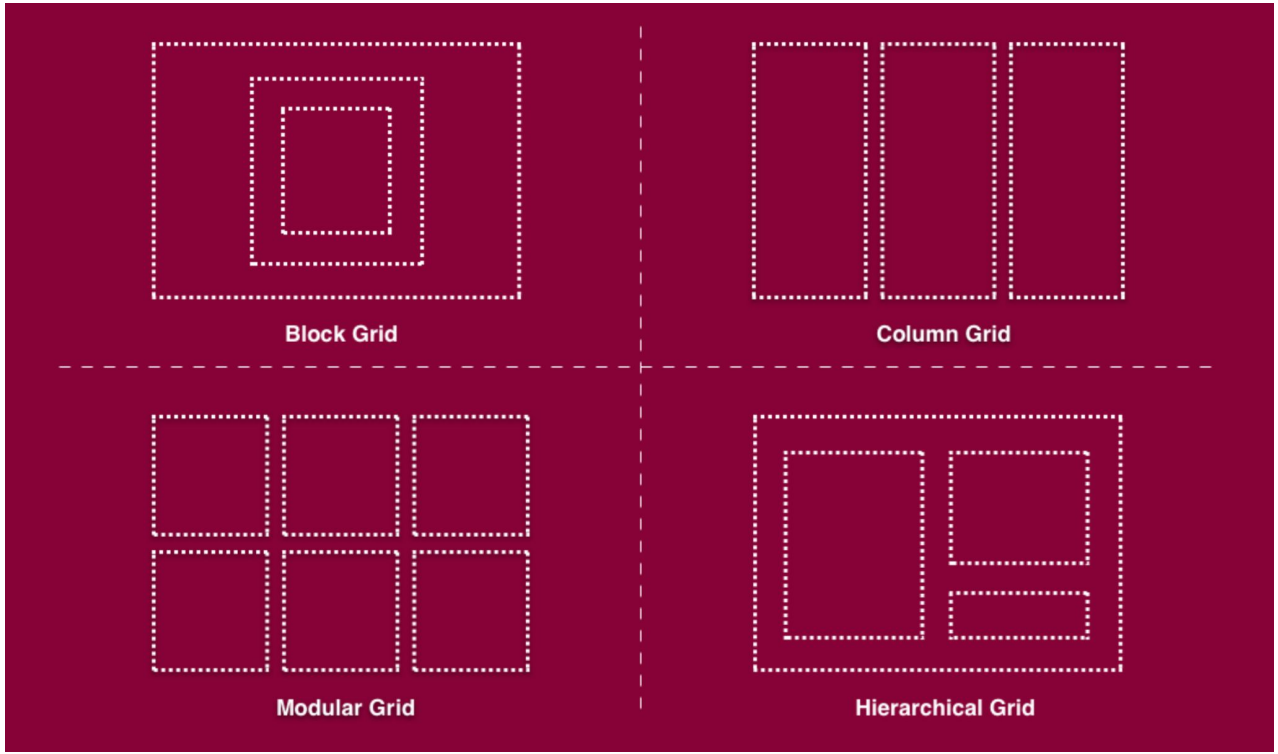




Chapter of Grid, page 190: Graphic Design The New Basics,
Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips

## Web design

Block Grid:
A classic option for single posts and articles




Column Grid:
Divided yet equal

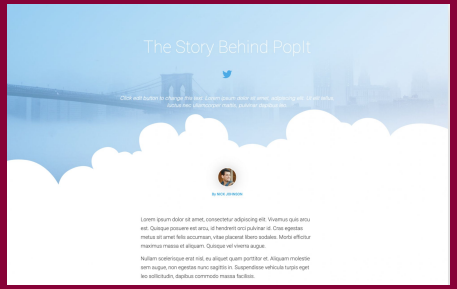
Modular Grid:
Perfect symmetry

Hierarchical Grid:
Organized yet freestyle

https://elementor.com/blog/grid-design/
https://elementor.com/blog/wireframe-website/

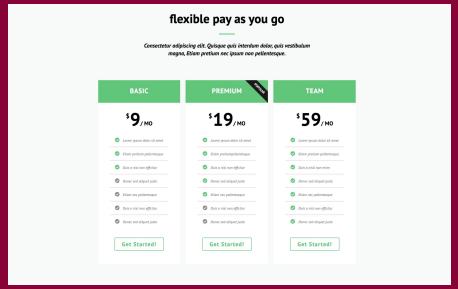
# Web design

## Block Grid:
A classic option for single posts and articles



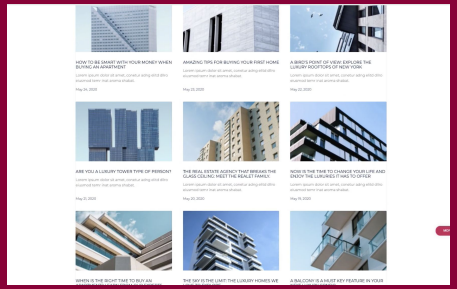

Block Grid

## Column Grid:
Divided yet equal




Column Grid

## Modular Grid:
Perfect symmetry



Modular Grid

## Hierarchical Grid:
Organized yet freestyle

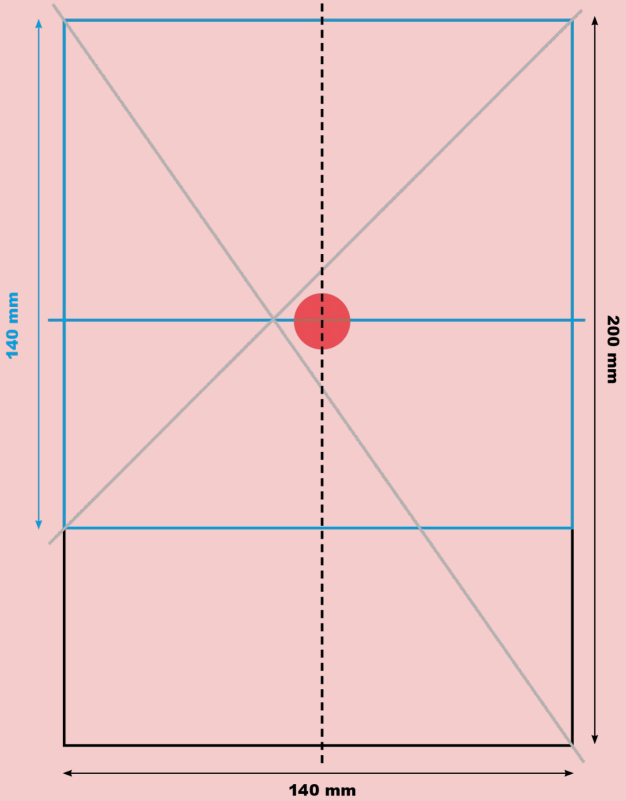


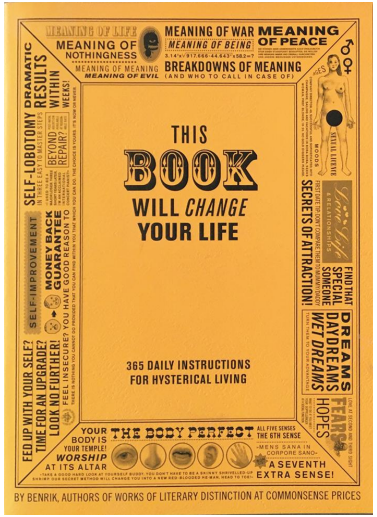

Hierarchical Grid

https://elementor.com/blog/grid-design/
https://elementor.com/blog/wireframe-website/

# Optical center

**How to measure the optical center**

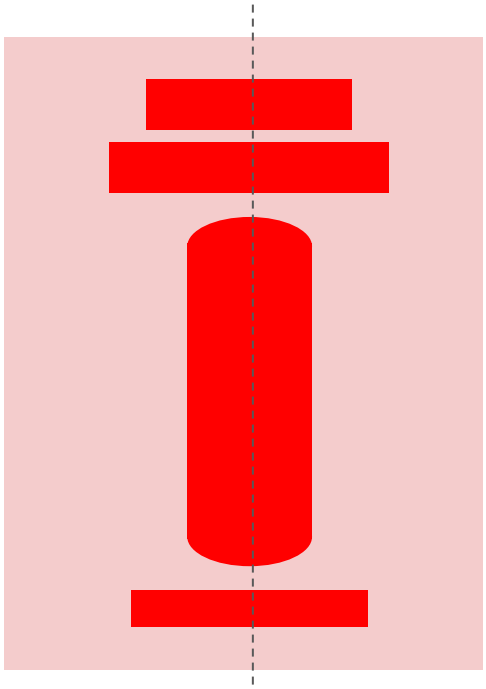


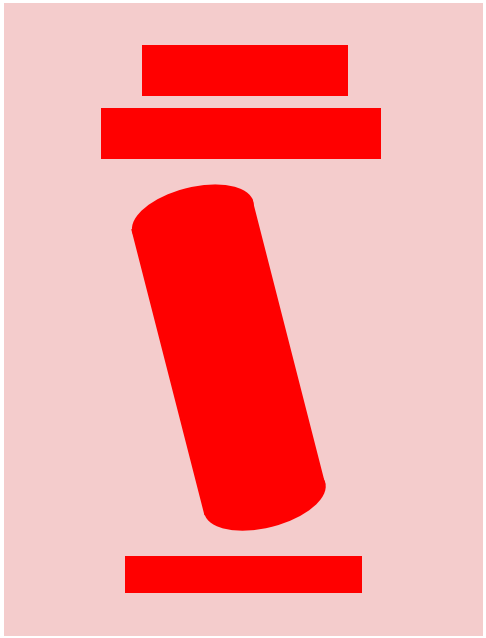

When placing an object in the middle of a surface, it feels more pleasing to the eye if the object is a little higher up than right in the middle.

1. Draw a rectangular format (here 140 mm width, 200 mm height).
2. Draw a diagonal line from the upper left corner to the lower right corner.
3. Measure the short side on the surface.
4. Take that measurement and measure from the upper left corner.
5. Make a small mark.
6. Draw a diagonal from that mark up to the upper right corner of the surface.
7. Draw a horizontal line at the place where the two diagonals intersect.
8. Now you know what height the center point has.
9. Draw a vertical centerline from the top to the bottom of the surface.
10. The optical center is where the vertical line and the horizontal line intersect.

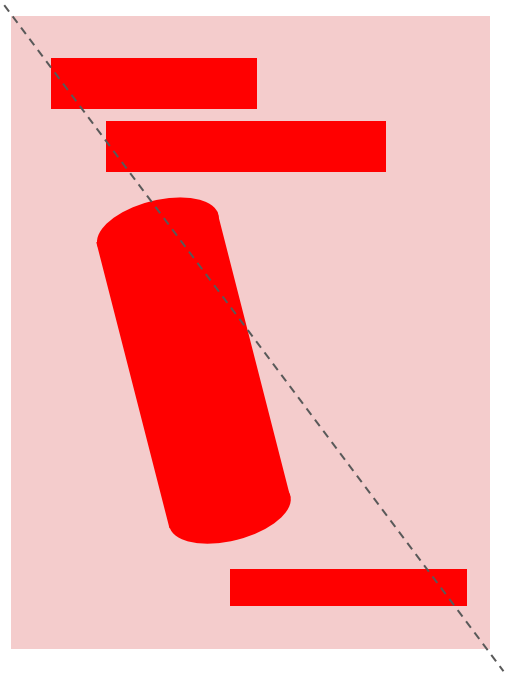
# Activate the surface



**Centered layout**



**Centered layout**
A slight rotation of the cylinder makes the layout more interesting to the eye.



**Asymmetrical layout**
based on reading from left to right. The diagonal layout lead the eye from top left corner down to the right corner.

**Exercise:**

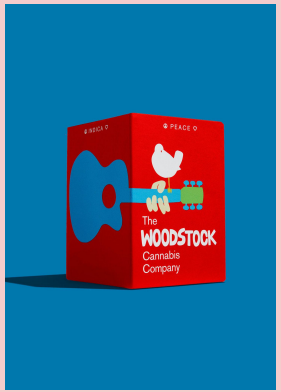
# What's in the designers head?



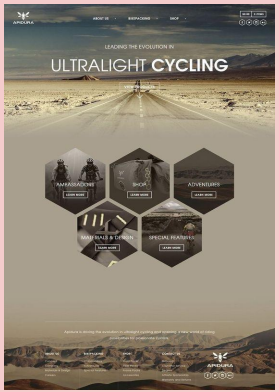

**1. Poster**




**2. Poster**




**3. Package**



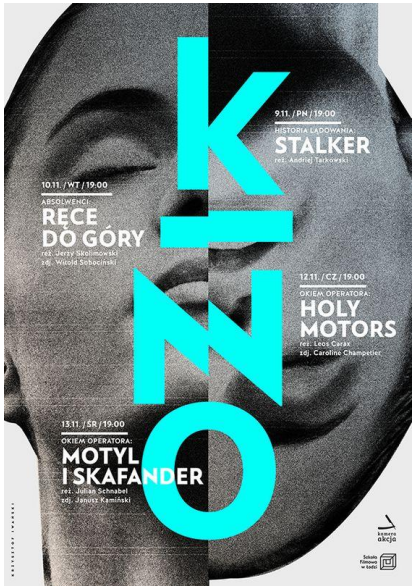

**4. Website**

**Individual exercise, 15 minutes**

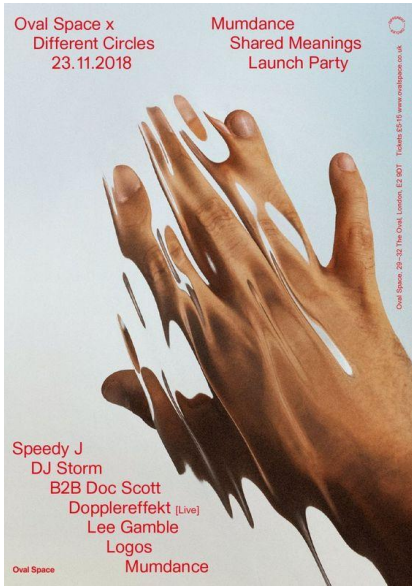
1. Analyze the contrast and composition techniques that the designer has used.

2. Make notes and share orally with Class.

## 1. Poster



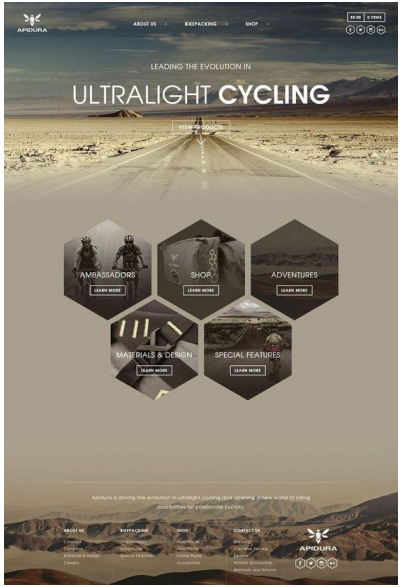

## 2. Poster



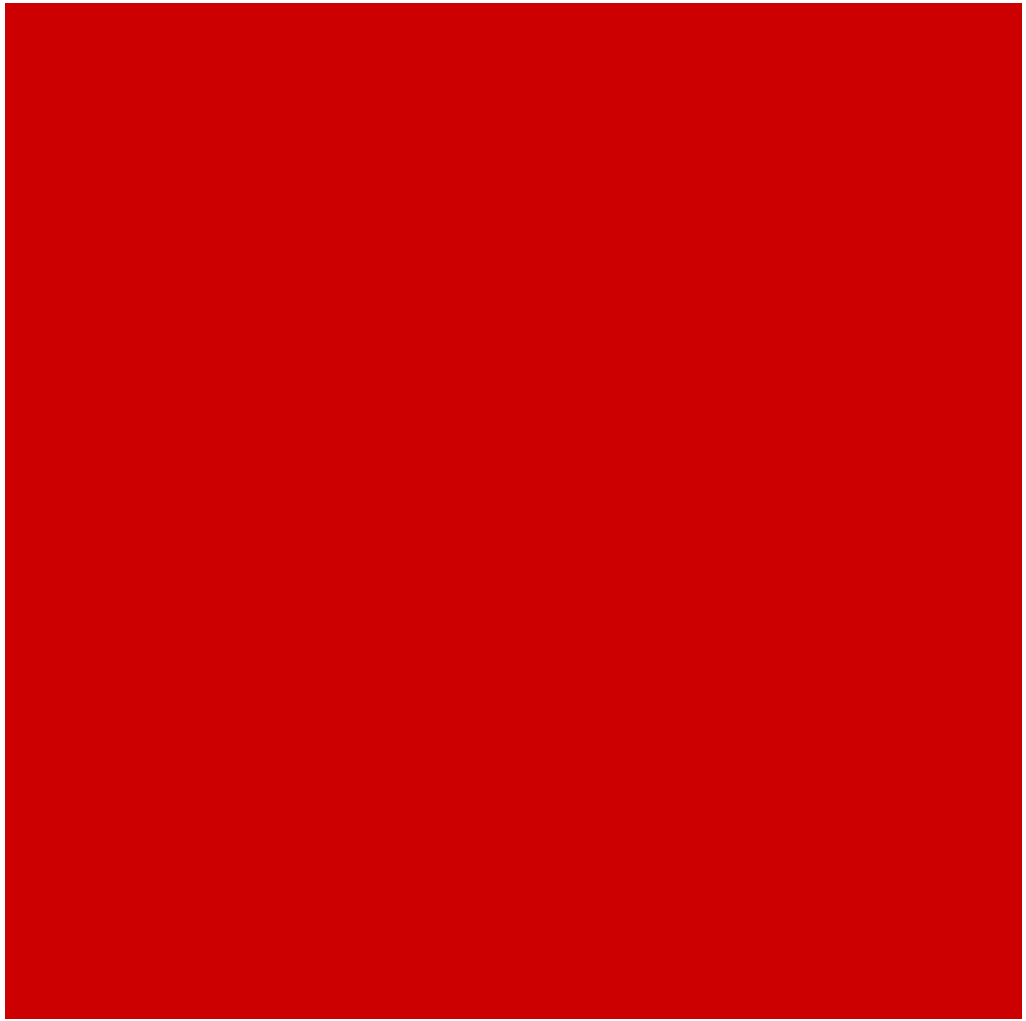

## 3. Package




## 4. Website




1. Analyse what designer techniques can you find that has been used by the designer?
2. Write them down to share with the class after the break.

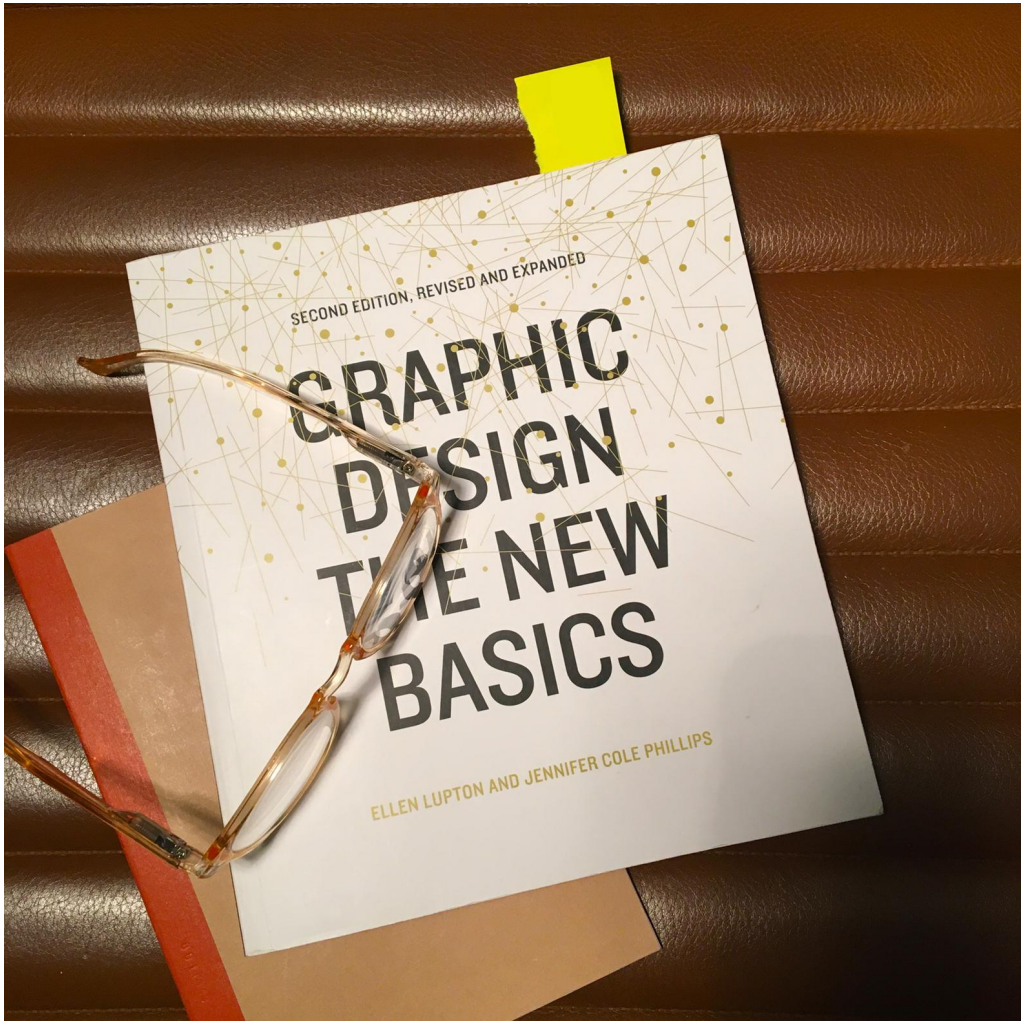


# Exercise Methods 1C Composition

1. Create two different compositions, one symmetrical and one asymmetrical. Select one of the following feeling sets:
**Loud** and **Quiet**
**Order** and **Chaos**
**Safety** and **Insecurity**

2. Use colors or black and white to increase and heighten the contrast between the two contradictory feelings.

MORE DETAILS IN CANVAS




# Course Reading

Read these Chapters in
Graphic Design the New Basics:

**Rhythm and Balance** 48 to 59
**Scale** 60 to 67
**Color** 80 to 97
**Framing** 116 to 127
**Grid** 186 to 199
**Pattern** 200 to 213

Links to literature, blogs and videos
on Course Literature on Canvas




# Thanks!

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