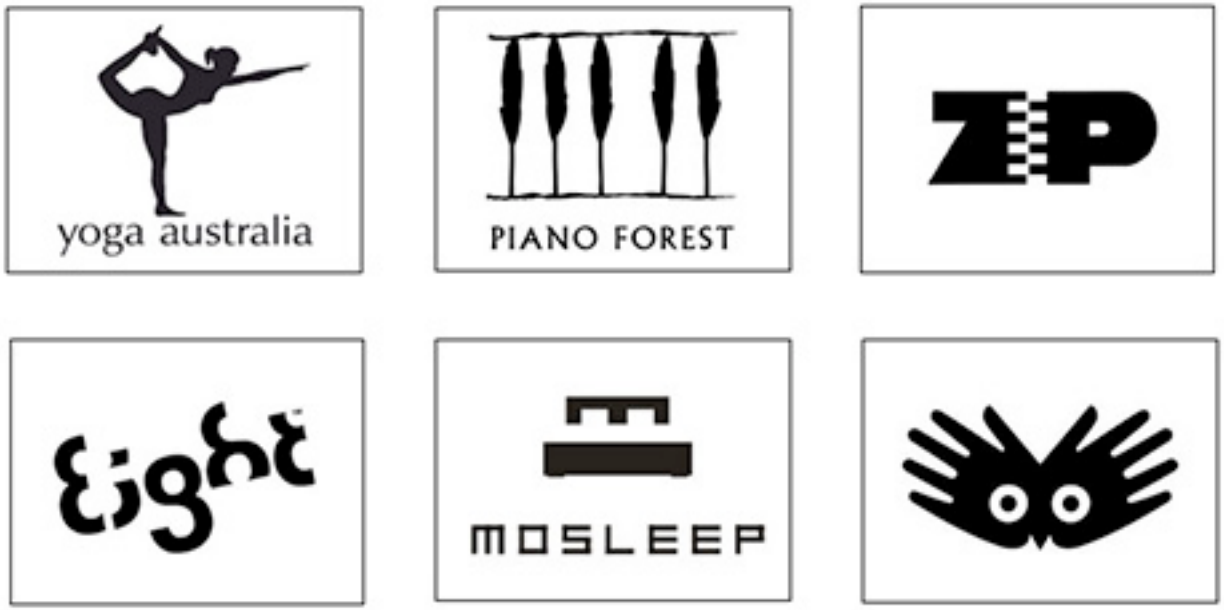
Gestalt Principles



The Gestalt Principles

"In the Gestalt theory of perception this is known as the figure/ground relationship. This theory asserts, in brief, that no figure is ever perceived except in relation to a background."

– Alan Wilson Watts, The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are

What is Gestalt?

One of the bright minds of gestaltism, Kurt Koffka, made the famous statement,

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

(what this actually means is the whole exists independently from the component parts.)

But what does that mean?

Gestalt

Gestalt is a psychology term which means **“unified whole”**.

It refers to theories of visual perception developed by German psychologists in the 1920s.

These theories attempt to describe how people tend to organize visual elements into groups or unified wholes when certain principles are applied.

Different Types of Gestalt Principles

Similarity

Similarity

Similarity occurs when objects look similar to one another.

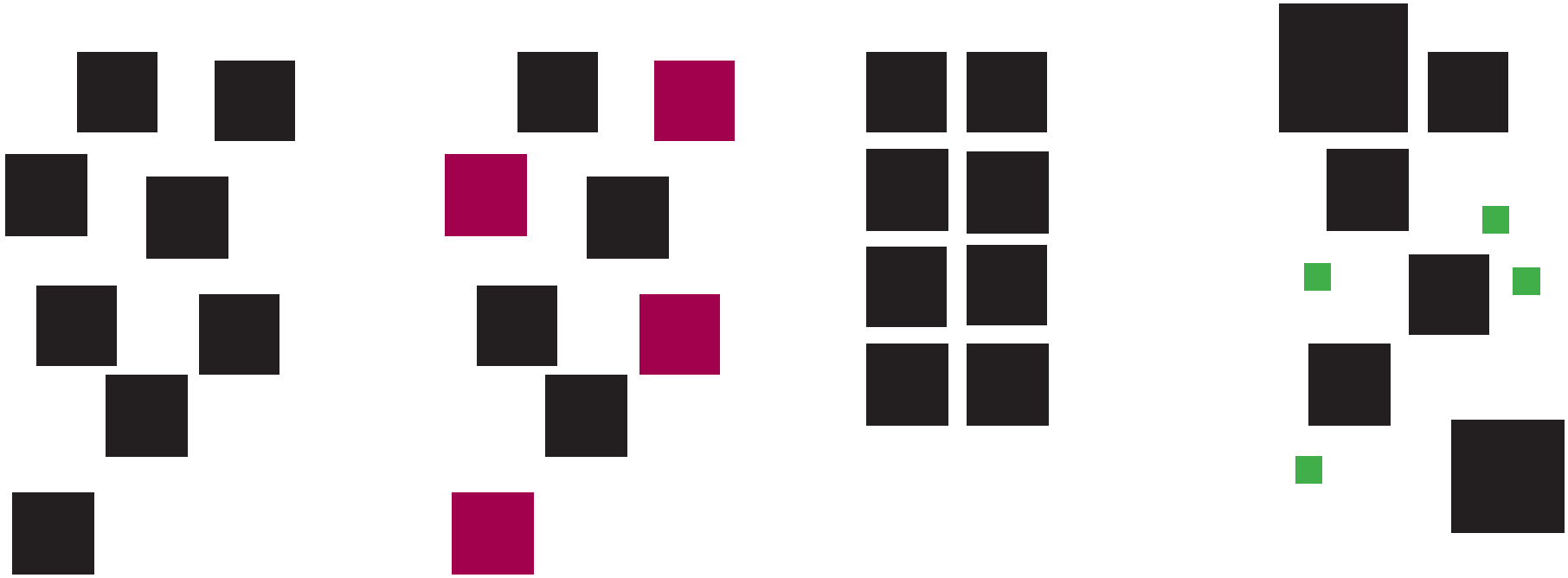
People often perceive them as a group or pattern.

This effect can be used to create a single illustration, image or message from a series of separate elements.

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

Similarity

There can be similarity of shape, color, alignment, size, other possibilities (value, tone, or think of some of your own) or a combination



Similarity - Anomaly

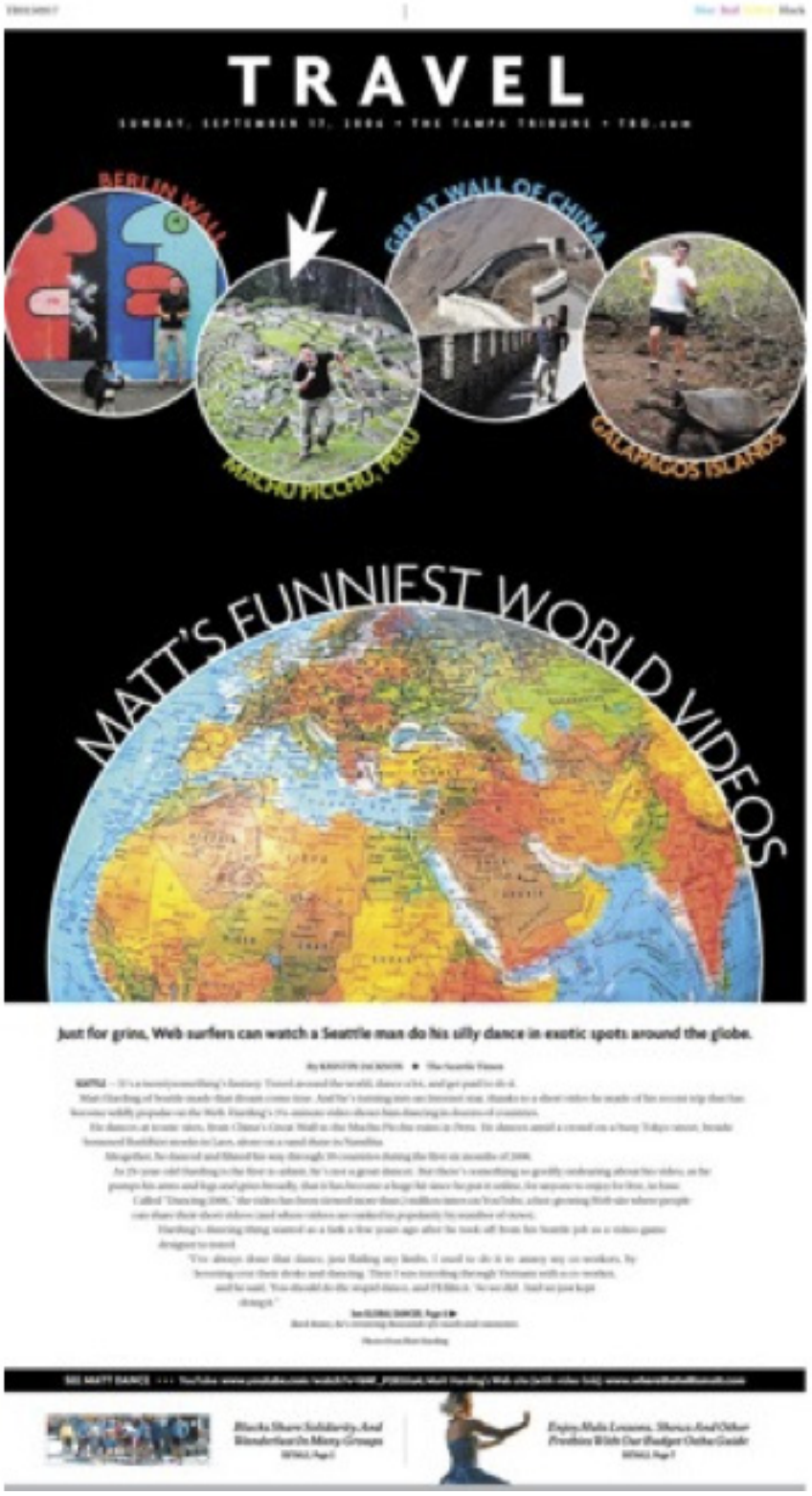
The green shape on the right becomes a **focal point** because it is dissimilar to the other shapes. This is an **anomaly** - when an element is emphasized because it is dissimilar, breaking the pattern of similarity.

Similarity

The similarity between different elements can be shape, color, size, texture or value.

The more commonality that individual elements have, the greater the sense of coherence, thanks to similarity.

The Beatles' album cover uses both similarity and anomaly.



Gestalt Principles

Elephant Men

Training to be a mahout is serious business in a land where the elephant population has shrunk. Now, along with the professionals, tourists can get a taste of what it takes to control a three-ton beast

By Anthony Mecir

Photography by Palani Mohan

A year ago, Barbara Graves, a senior public health official in her workaday life, went on safari to Africa and fell in love with elephants in the wild. Nothing unusual about that, except that Barbara's passion led to another trip halfway around the world to Thailand. She longed to get up close and personal, in fact, to actually drive an elephant.

Along with her daughter and an expatriate friend from Bangkok, she signed up for an elephant boot camp up in the hills of Northern Thailand. There, those who make the grade become mahouts, at least in the amateur sense.

"The main thing is that you get to really rub up against elephants. Hey, where else in the world can you do that?" asks Richard Lair, advisor to the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre, which started Thailand's first mahout school.

Indeed, the first time Barbara had to attempt scaling her

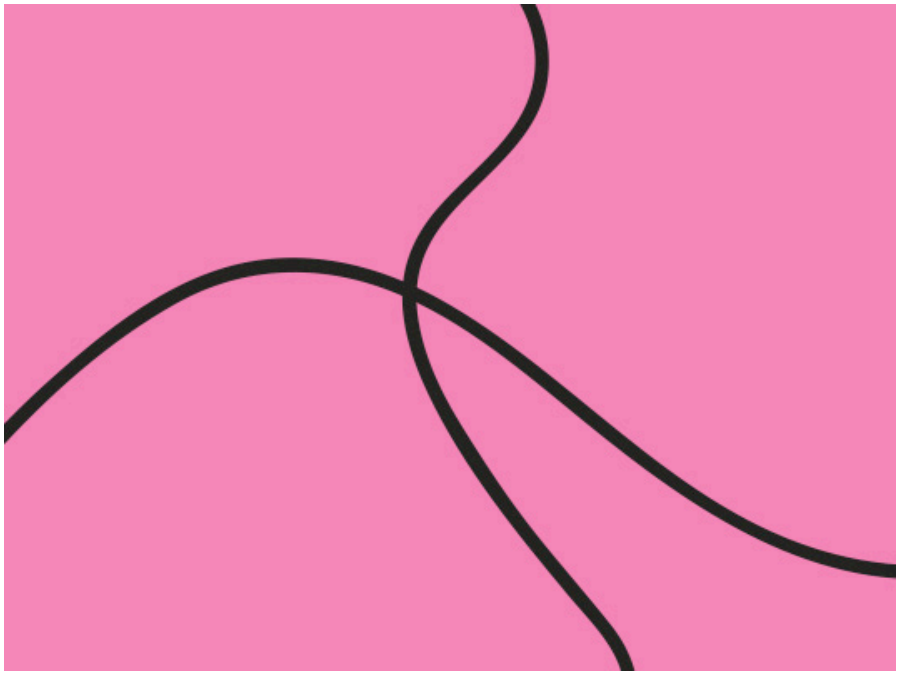
Gestalt Principles

Continuation

Continuation occurs when the eye is compelled to move through one object and continue to another object, preferring to see a single continuous figure than separate lines. We tend to perceive the simplest path, rather than a complex path.

This can be used to point toward another element in the composition, and is seen where a line is cut through one object, often in a curve, aligning perfectly with a secondary element.

This is actually 4 separate lines that meet at a central point. We prefer to see 2 intersecting lines rather than 4.

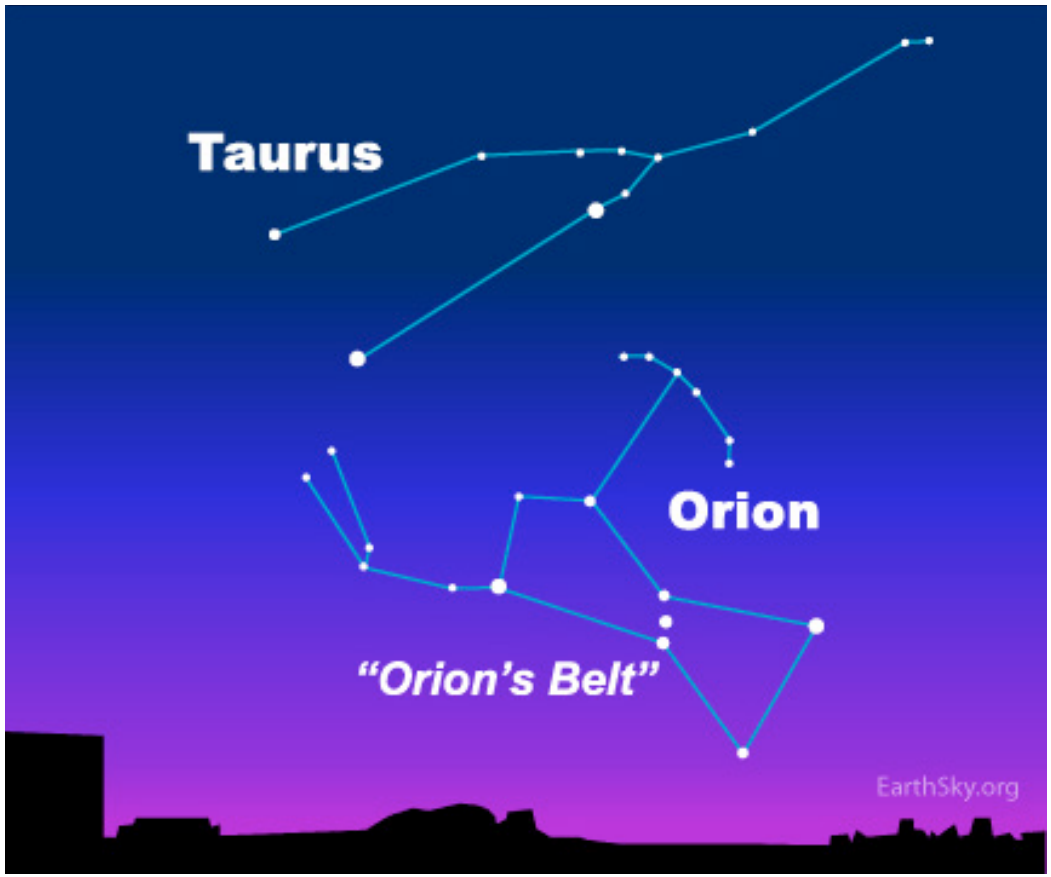


Continuation

Continuation occurs because your eye will follow the lines of the bee's path, as your eye tends to naturally follow a line or curve.

Continuation

Continuation is the underlying principle in the perception of the celestial bodies of the Zodiac.

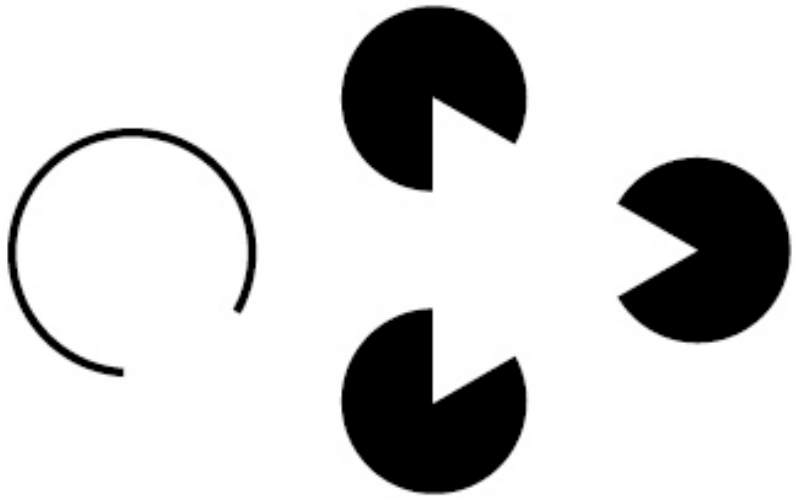


Closure

Closure is a common design technique that uses the human eye's tendency to see closed shapes.

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

This technique is often associated with stenciled artwork, but is also closely associated with logo forms.



Closure

When the viewer's perception completes a shape, **closure** occurs.

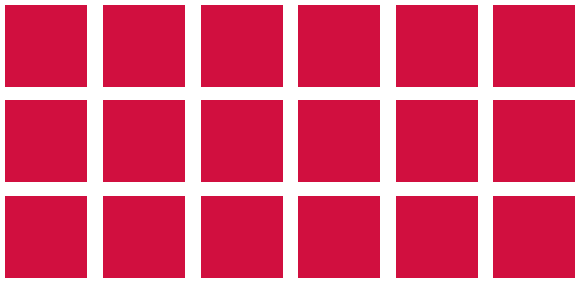
WEEKEND POST
CULTURE | COUTURE | CUISINE | CRITICS | COMICS
OSCAR WEEK
THE THIN RED LINE
Best Supporting Posties
Mark Ruffalo
TRAVEL
BOOKS
FIRST NATIONAL FIRST NOVEL
Pilaros
It's not a trend, it's a tradition!

Proximity (also known as grouping)

Proximity occurs when elements are placed close together. It is when the close arrangement of elements creates a group association between those objects.

If individual elements are also similar, they will tend to be perceived as a single whole, even though they are separate elements.

When the squares are given close proximity, **unity** occurs.



While they continue to be separate shapes, they are now perceived as one group.

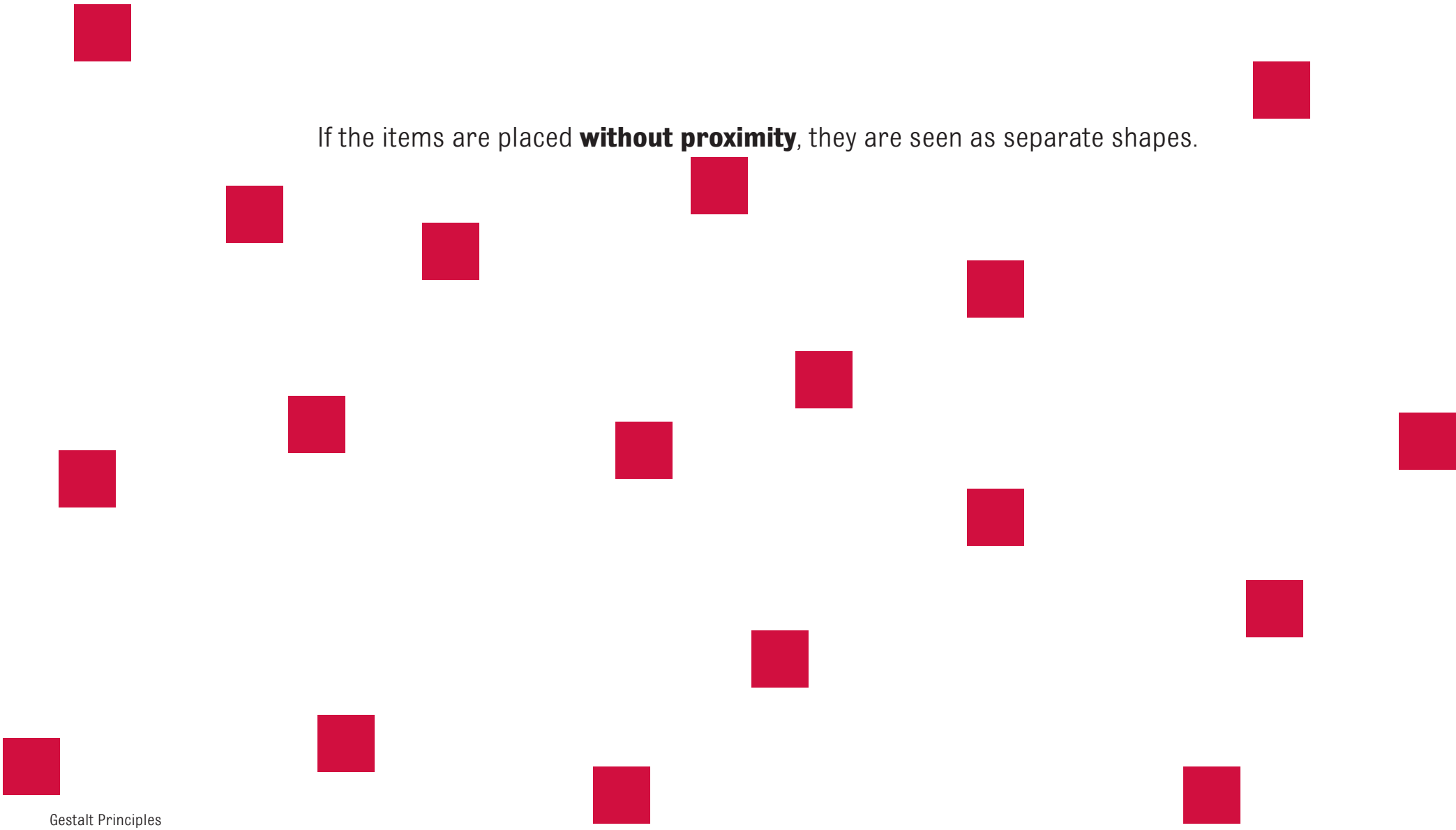
Proximity

Shapes don’t have to be regular or the same size to create proximity.

Proximity or grouping can be achieved with a lot of different commonality including shape, color, texture, size or any other visual attribute.

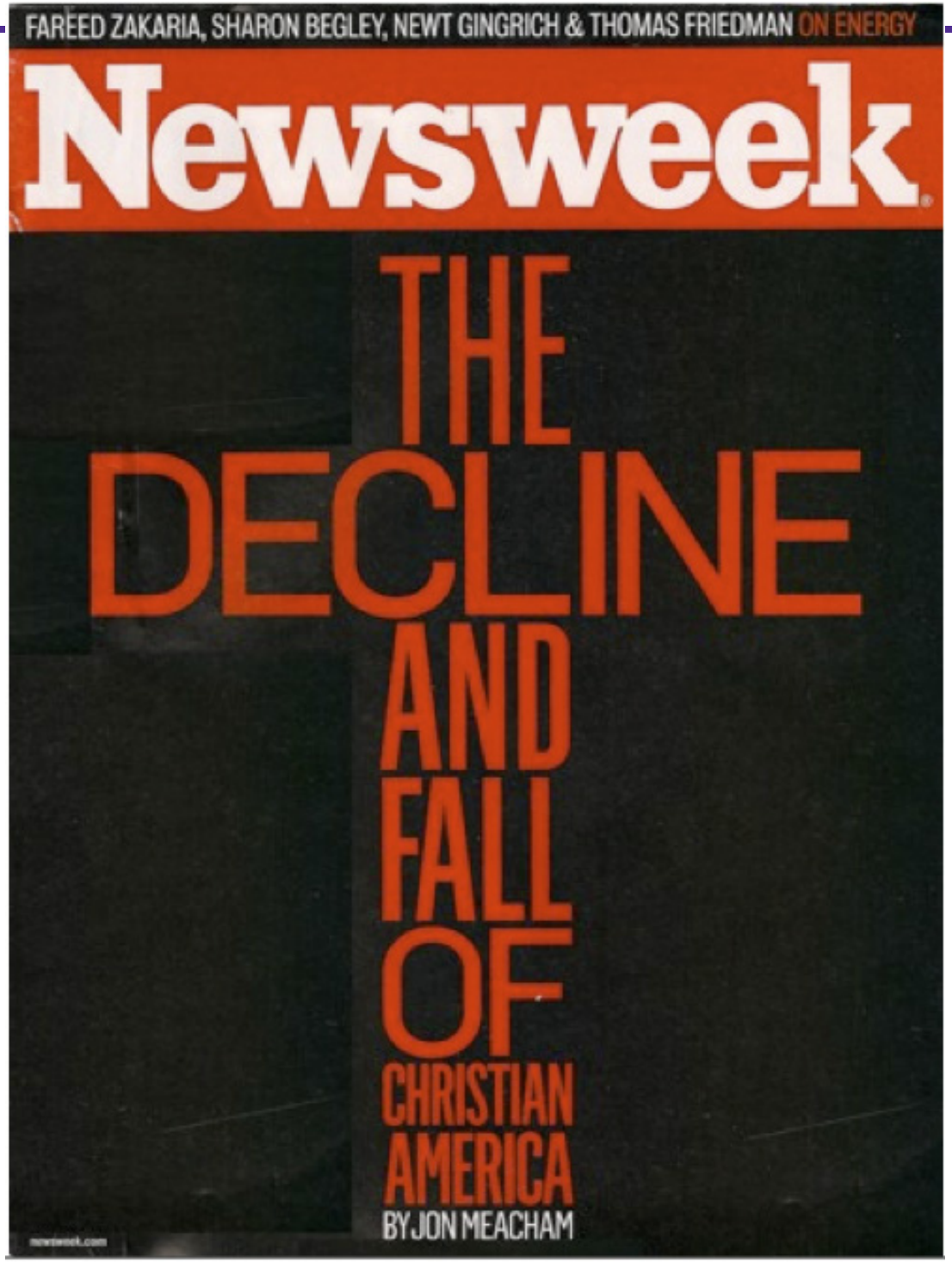
Proximity

If the items are placed **without proximity**, they are seen as separate shapes.



Proximity

This item is seen as a whole (tree) due to the proximity of the shapes (people)


FAREED ZAKARIA, SHARON BEGLEY, NEWT GINGRICH & THOMAS FRIEDMAN ON ENERGY
Newsweek
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA
BY JON MEACHAM

Figure/Ground

The eye differentiates an object from its surrounding area.

Figure/Ground often uses the idea of light and shade to help create an images that jumps out of a series of shapes.

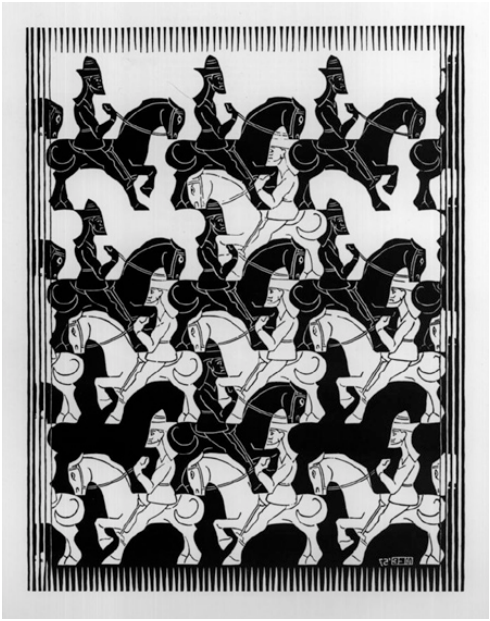
A form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as figure (object), while the surrounding area is perceived as ground (background). Remind you of positive/negative?

Figure/Ground

This principle describes the eye's tendency to see and separate objects from their surrounding background.

It works because human eyes want to see the figure (foreground object) and background (ground) as two different planes of focus.

Everything that is not figure is considered ground, which can be used to create some interesting visual effects and tricks, particularly when the designer or artist introduces deliberate ambiguity.



Figure/Ground

Figure/Ground

In this image, the figure and ground relationships change as the eye perceives the form of two dogs or the Seattle Needle.

Figure/Ground

This image uses complex figure/ground relationships which change upon seeing the white bird or the black bird. We also see the yin/yang.

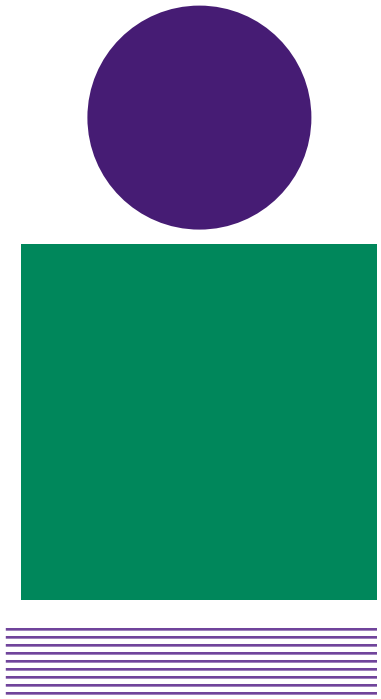
The Laws of Symmetry

Symmetry states that the viewer should not be given the impression that something is out of balance, or missing, or wrong.

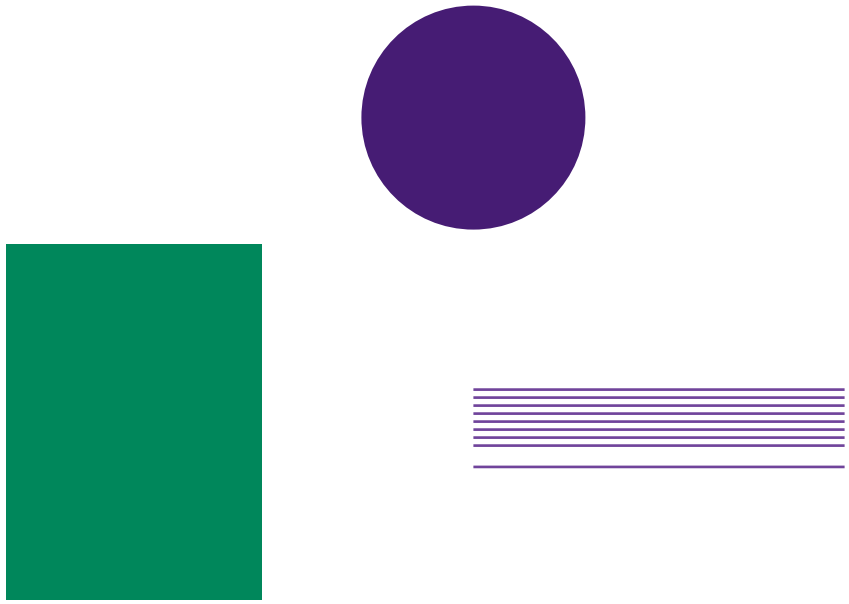
If an object is **asymmetrical**, the viewer will waste time trying to find the problem instead of concentrating on the instruction.

This image of the color wheel provides a sense of order and balance, and allows the viewer to focus on the shape and color.

The Laws of Symmetry



Symmetrical

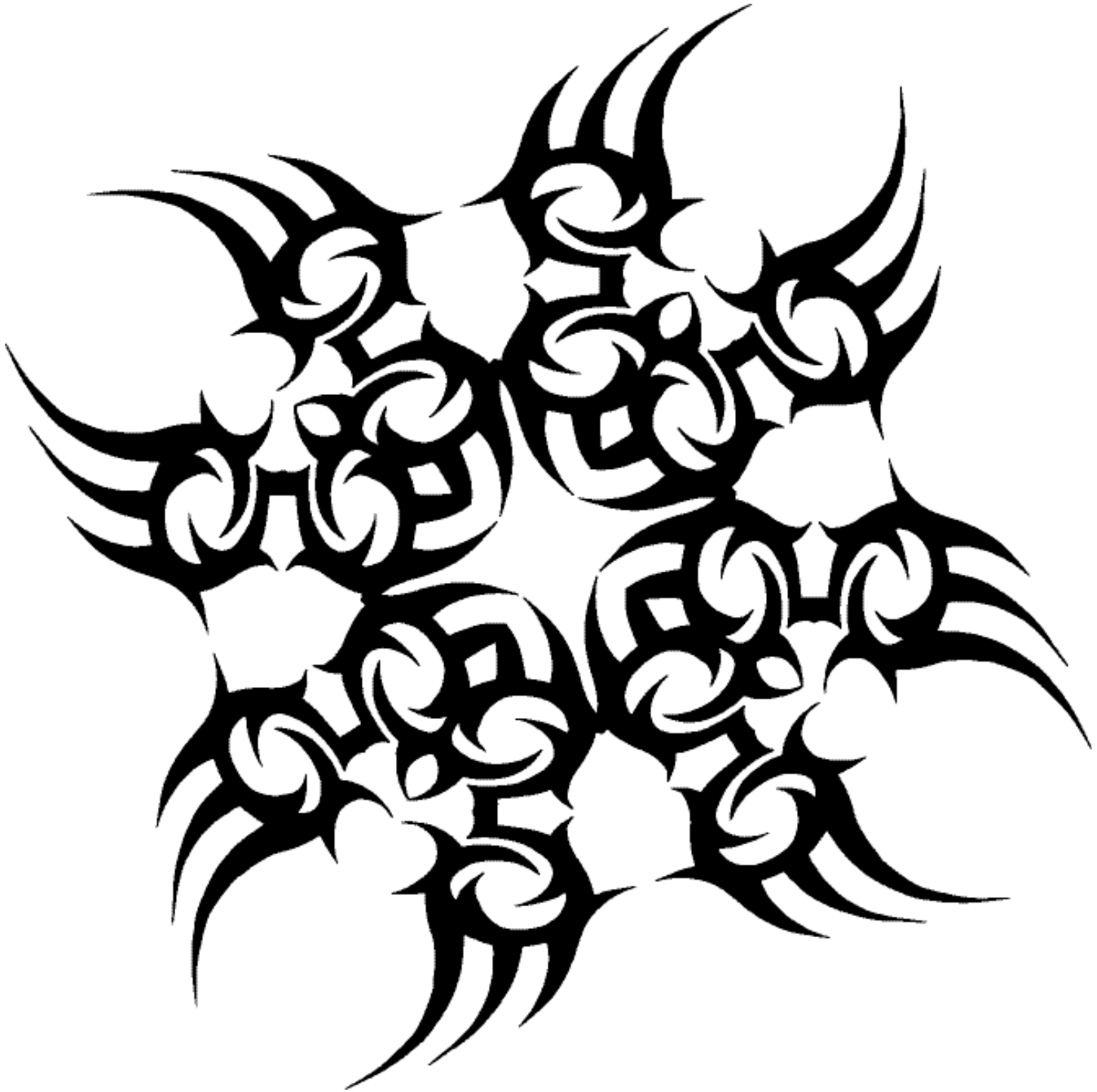


Asymmetrical

The Law of Symmetry

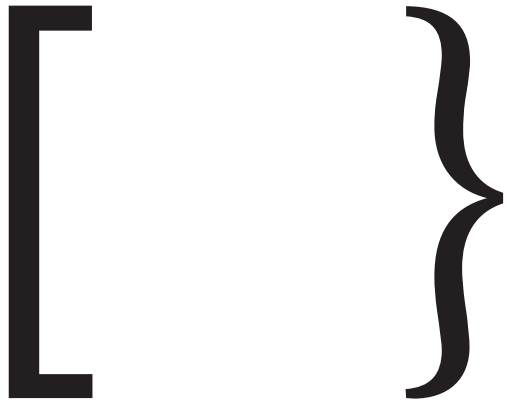
The law of symmetry captures the idea that when we perceive objects we tend to perceive them as symmetrical shapes that form around their center. People tend to prefer symmetry.

ButterflyUtopia.com



The Law of Symmetry

When there is discord–the 2 sides are NOT similar, it is **asymmetric,** and causes us to focus on what is different.



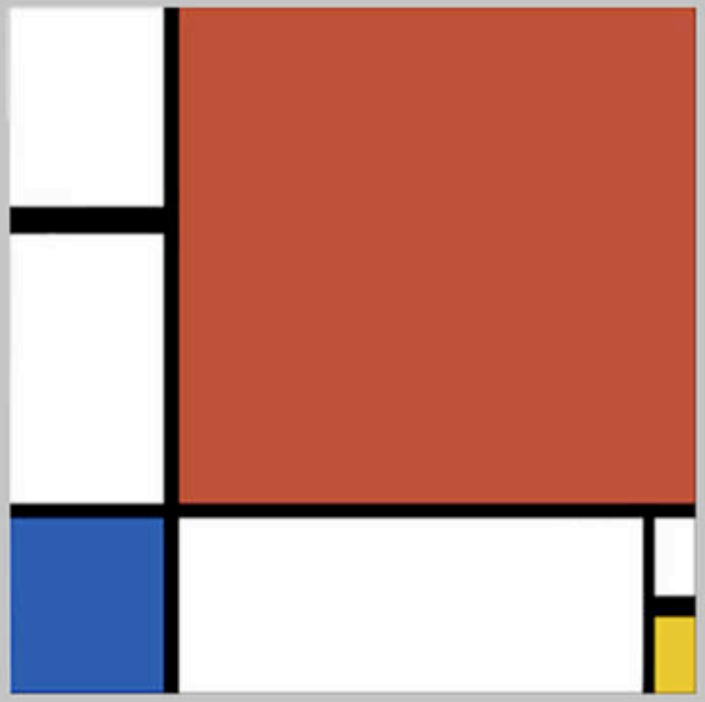


Figure 19. *Composition II; Composition I; Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow*, 1930. Fukuoka City Bank, Ltd.

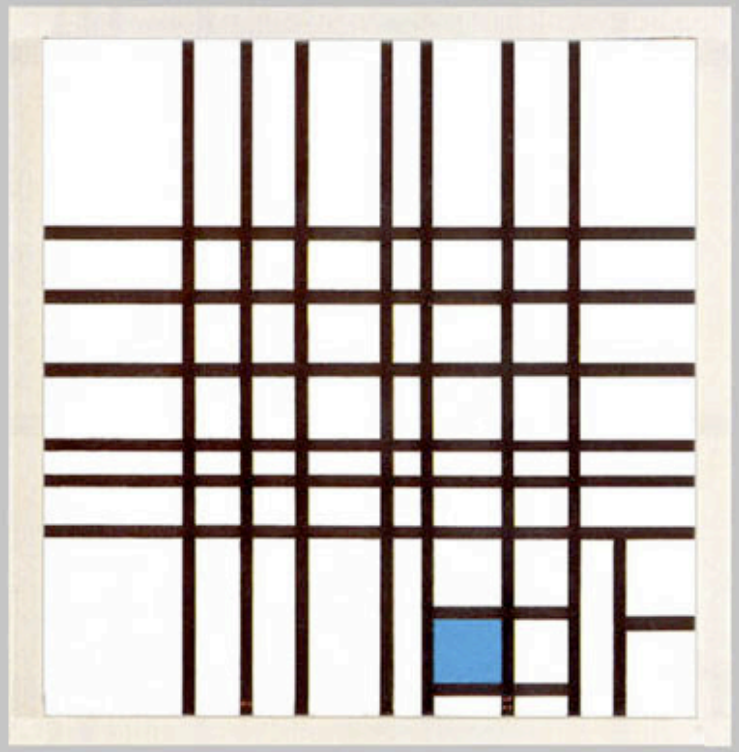


Figure 2. *Composition with Blue*, 1937-42. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Isomorphic Correspondence

Isomorphic Correspondence is how we respond to some images, based on our experiences in the physical world.

Sharp, pointed shapes or something scary communicate danger or pain

A cute puppy or a serene scene may relax you. We're responding to the meaning of the image, associating it with memories we have.

Isomorphic Correspondence

Isomorphic correspondence can make us think of something while looking at something else

Name the Gestalt Principle

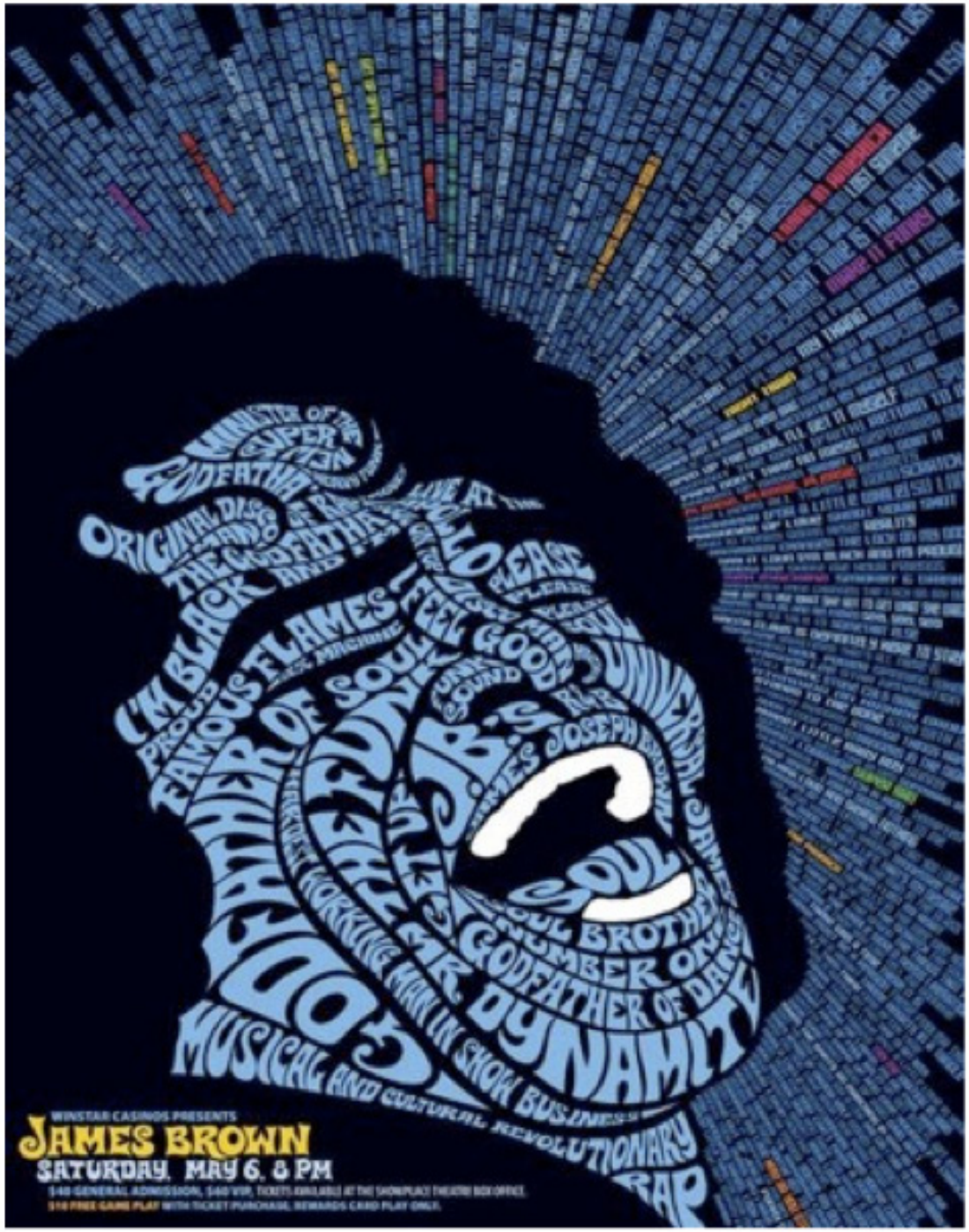
Look at the following images. Name the Gestalt Principles you see in each one. There are more than one in each image!

PREGAME
Beware of the Wildcats
GO BIG RED!

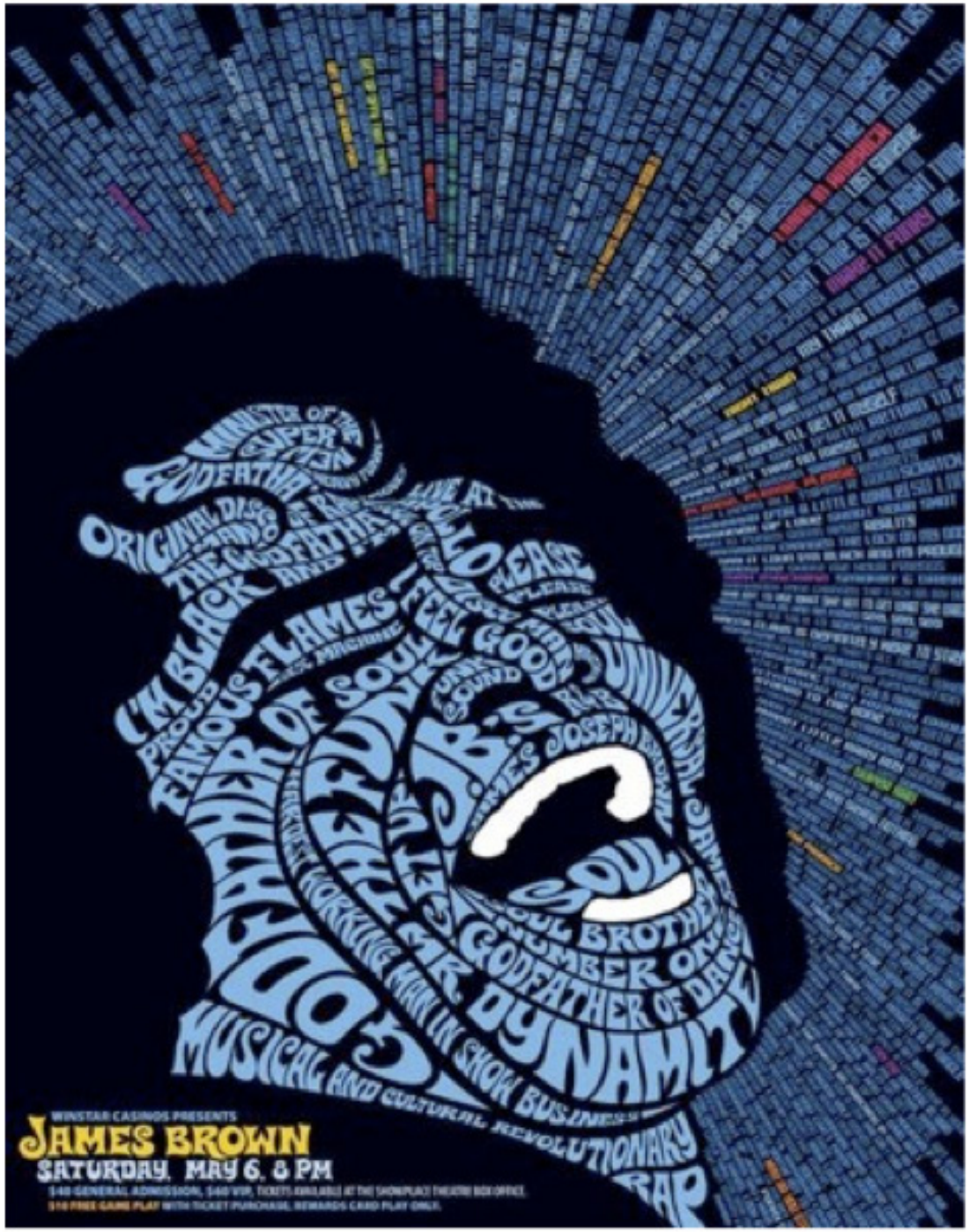
Similarity
Proximity
Continuation
Closure
Figure/ground
Isomorphic correspondence

Loretta Lynn
JUNE 4, CANYON AMPHITHEATER

Similarity
Proximity
Continuation
Closure
Figure/ground
Isomorphic correspondence


WINSTAR CASINO PRESENTS
JAMES BROWN
SATURDAY, MAY 6, 8 PM
SOUL
DYNAMITE
MUSICAL AND CULTURAL REVOLUTIONARY
RAP

Similarity
Proximity
Continuation
Closure
Figure/ground
Isomorphic correspondence



The Gestalt Principles

Similarity
Continuation
Closure
Proximity
Figure/Ground
Symmetry
Isomorphic Correspondence

And remember - using the opposite of one of the principles can also create an interesting design and/or imagery.

The Gestalt Principles

Gestalt can help identify design problems.

There are many ways to achieve good design, but when we encounter vague, ambiguous and difficult design messages, the Gestalt Principles can help us define the problem and identify the solution.