

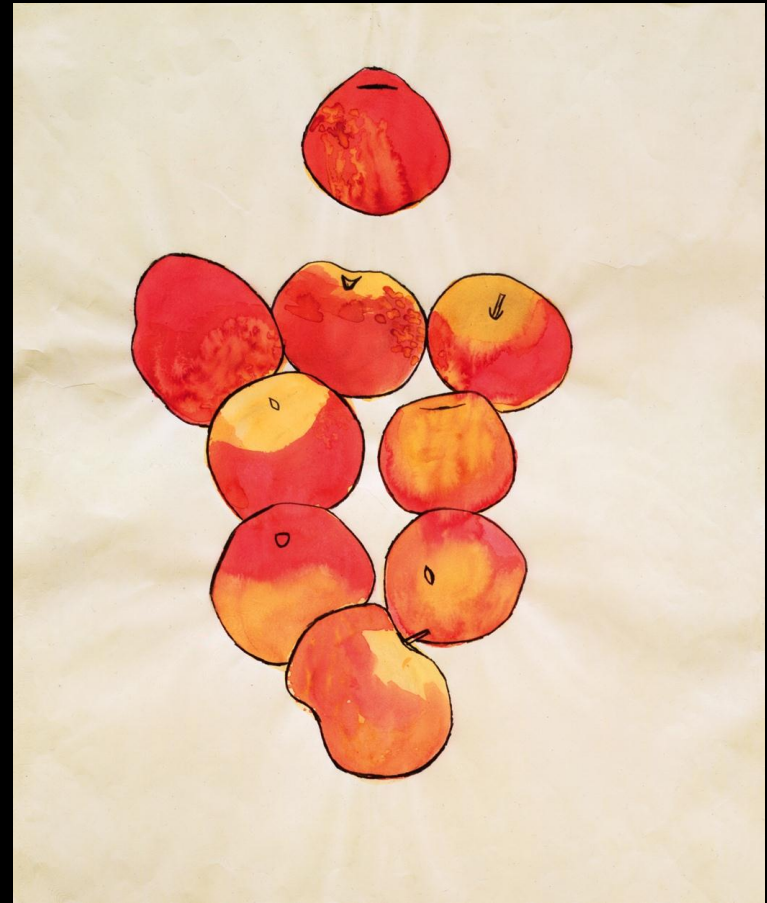
Design Elements

Chapter 8: Shape

Introduction to Shape

Shape— A visually perceived area created by an enclosing line or by color or value changes to define an outer edge.

- **Shape** can also be called a **Form**.
- **Shape** is more specific, as sometimes **Form** can refer to the visual organization of a work, including color, texture and composition.

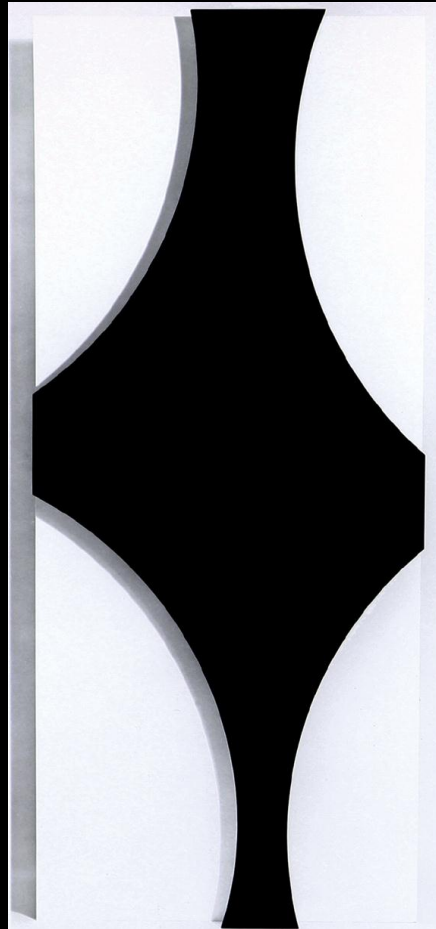


Ellsworth Kelly. Apples. 1949. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 2' 3/4 " x 1' 7 3/8 ". Collection of the artist. © Ellsworth Kelly from the exhibition *Cezanne and Beyond*, 2009.

Figure/Ground

Figure/Ground relationships allow us to recognize borders and boundaries.

- A **Figure**: an object or foreground element
- **The Ground**: The space or volume between figures or forms.



Ellsworth Kelly. Black Venus. 1959. Painted aluminum, 7' 1" x 3' 2 5/8". Private collection.



Francisco Costa for Calvin Klein.

Predominance of Shape

“Two dimensional design
(Composition) is basically the
arrangement of *shapes*.”

The *color*, *texture* and *value* of
these shapes plays a key role.

Example: Still Life with Two
Bunches



Sydney Licht. Still Life with Two Bunches. Oil on linen,
1' x 1'. Courtesy Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York.

Volume and Mass

Working in Two and Three Dimensions

- **Volume** and **Mass** are used to describe 3-D works.
- Pictures have **shapes**
- Sculptures have **masses**.

Angle of Perception

- Flat work, like paintings can only be viewed from the front
- Sculptures can be viewed from all vantage points
- Each view creates a different experience.



Installation: Henry Moore and Julian Opie. © The Henry Moore Foundation. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2014/www.henry-moore.org. © 2014 Julian Opie, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London.

Combining Two and Three-Dimensional Work

Artists today try to break down divides by combining drawing, painting, sculpture and architecture

- **Installation Art** is an art form that uses both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms in a large format. Often this fills up an entire room or special space.

In this installation, there is a mix of massive abstracted figures juxtaposed with humorous line drawings similar to *Caryatids* – (Ancient sculptures of the female form that were used in Greek architecture as support pillars.)



Installation: Henry Moore and Julian Opie.

Naturalism and Distortion

Naturalism (Realism)— We create an image that imitates what we see.

Distortion — An artist intentionally changes or exaggerates the forms.

- A way to provoke an emotional reaction.
- Or it might be used to emphasize certain key design elements.

Bill Clinton #3. The Kerry Waghorn Studios. FACES IN THE NEWS © 2007 Kerry Waghorn. Dist. By UNIVERSAL UCLICK. Reprinted with permission, All rights reserved.



Distortion and Expression

- Distortion can be employed for an expressive effect.
- Can be dramatic or humorous
- Makes a point

Kitsch - a lowbrow manipulation that is an overstatement of expression. *Example:* Puppies with oversized eyes.



Noma Bar. *Pulp Fiction*. Three-color screenprint, 1' 11 2/5" x 1' 4 1/2". Limited edition of 10. Printed in Jerusalem.

Naturalism and Idealism

Naturalism shows nature and life true to what it is.

- It is concerned with actual real appearances.

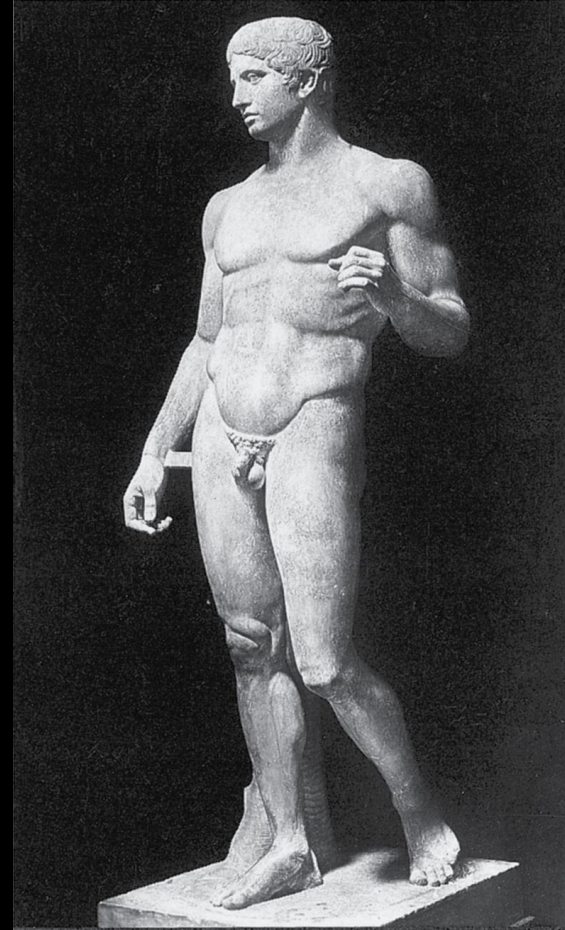
Idealism distorts to create the perfect or 'ideal' form.

- Idealism is a recurrent theme in art and in society.
- Ancient cultures (see: Greek and Roman images) have strived to depict the ideal body form.
- Used in fashion and advertising: idealized versions
- Represents the world not as it exists, but how the artist and society see it perfected.
- Governments often use idealized images to promote their political system. This is called Propaganda.

Naturalism vs. Idealism Examples



Catherine Murphy. Self-Portrait. 1970. Oil on canvas, 4' 1 1/2" x 3' 1 1/8". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (gift of Michael and Gail Mazur).



Polyclitus. Doryphorus (Spear Bearer). Roman copy after Greek original of c. 450-440 b.c. Marble, height 6' 11". Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy.

Abstraction: Essence of Shape

- Abstraction**— A simplification of natural shapes to their basic character.
- Degrees of abstraction can vary widely.
 - ‘Reductive’ abstraction is where the subject is reduced to basic geometric yet recognizable shapes.
 - Abstraction has been in use for centuries.
 - An artist sees the potential in a shape beyond its literal name.



Rebecca Harvey. *Systema Naturae*. 1998.

Biomorphic Shapes

Not all abstraction is geometric.

Biomorphic— Abstract shapes that allude to natural, organic forms such as plants or the human form



Arshile Gorky. *Garden in Sochi*. c. 1943. Oil on canvas, 2' 7" x 3' 3". The Museum of Modern Art, New York (acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1969) © 2014 The Arshile Gorky Foundation/The Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

Nonobjective Shapes: Pure Forms

Nonobjective shapes –shapes that refer to geometric forms.

- Nonobjective work is critiqued solely on its visual design. (Composition, color, shape, pattern, etc...)
- Nonobjective work still carries emotional content and weight.



Auguste Herbin. *Jour (Day)*. 1953. Gouache on paper, 1' 11/8" x 10 1/2". © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photograph © Albright-Knox Art Gallery/Art Resouce, NY.

Visual Design and Shape Associations

- Thought: Can any shape truly be nonobjective?
- Most shapes will evoke a response or carry an emotional reference to the viewer.

Helen Frankenthaler. Over the Circle. 1961. Oil on canvas, 7' 1/8" x 7' 3 7/16". © 2014 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo courtesy Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Mari and James A. Michener, 1991. Photo credit: Rick Hall.



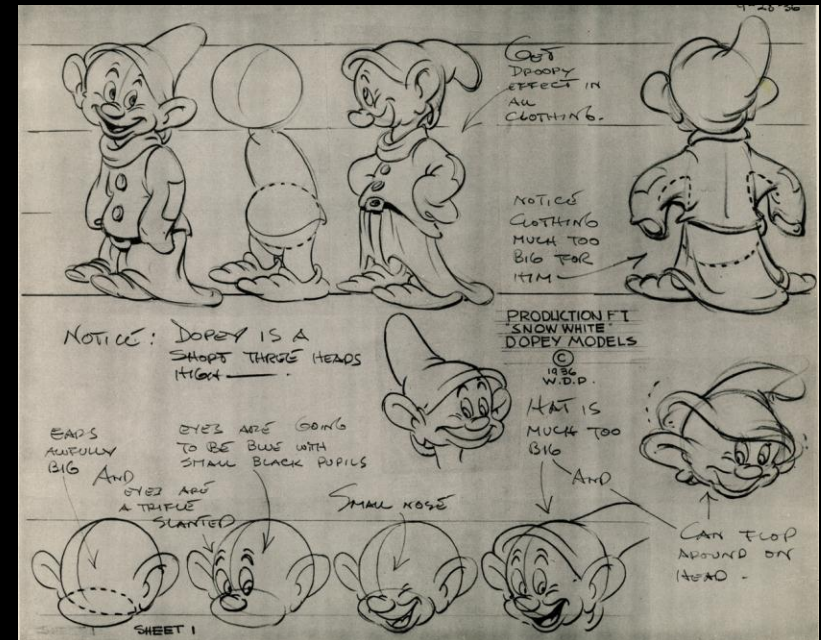
Curvilinear Shapes

Curvilinear— A continual curved form.

- Found in still life and figure painting as well as pop culture, animation and illustration.
- Can exist alone or in combination with other shapes



Mazda Miata. 1990



Walt Disney Studios. Snow White Models.

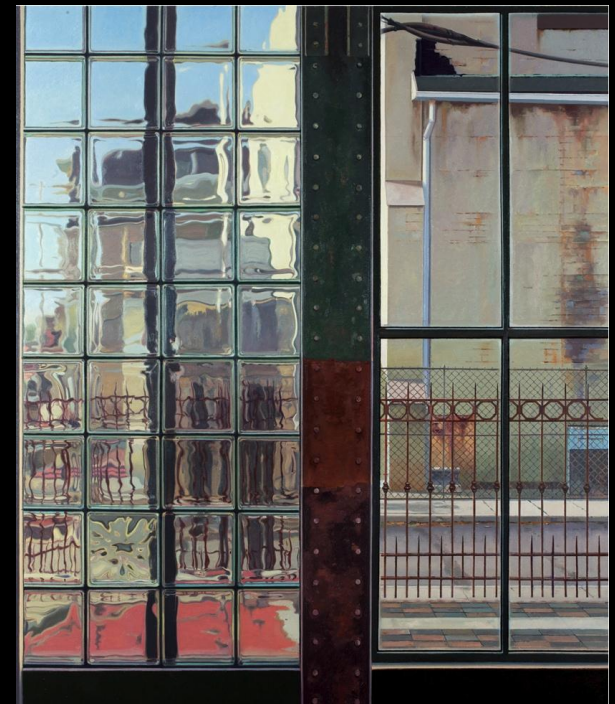
Rectilinear Shapes

Rectilinear — Forms that have straight lines, rectangular planes and sharp edges.

- Often thought of as man made or manufactured things.
- Straight edges give a sharp angular feeling.



Rocio Romero. Prefabricated Home (“LV Home,” designed as a second vacation home).



John Moore. Post. 2011. Oil on canvas, 5' 10" x 5'.

Rectilinear and Curvilinear Combined

Most art and design combines both rectilinear and curvilinear shapes.

Example: Architectural design

Nationale-Nederlanden Building. Prague. 1996.
Architects: Vladimir Milunic, Frank Gehry. The
Metropolitan Museum of Art (1984).



Positive/Negative Shapes

Positive Shapes (Figure)--

The main shape or subject depicted in a picture.

Negative Shapes (Ground)—

The space in which this figure or positive shape is placed.

- Both negative spaces and positive shapes must be carefully planned.

Utamaro. Ten looks of women's physiognomy/enjoyable looks. The Japan Ukiyoe Museum, Matsumoto, Japan.



Planned Negative Spaces

- Negative shapes are very important in letterform and typography.
- Positive and negative shape relationships are important in all design work.

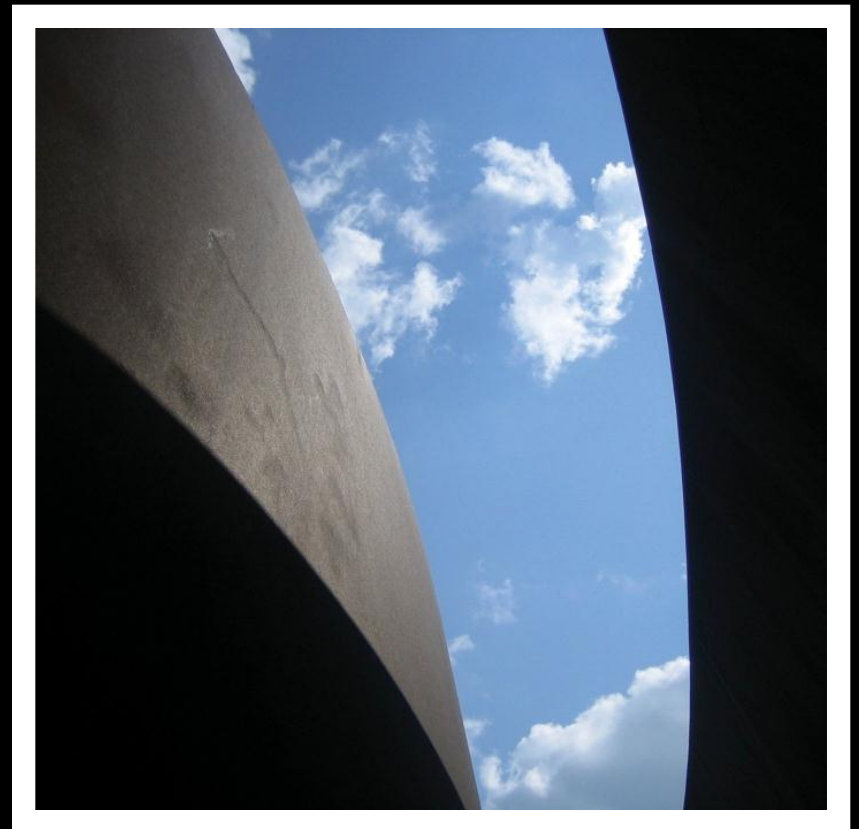


Aaron Siskind. Chicago 30. 1949. Silver gelatin, 1' 1 7/8"
1' 5 5/8". International Center of Photography, New York.

Using Negative Space in Three Dimensions

- Negative space is very important to consider in sculpture.
- The negative space or open space plays against the positive materials.

Richard Serra. Joe.
The Pulitzer Foundation, St. Louis. © 2014
Richard Serra/Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York. Photo © Kate Pentak.

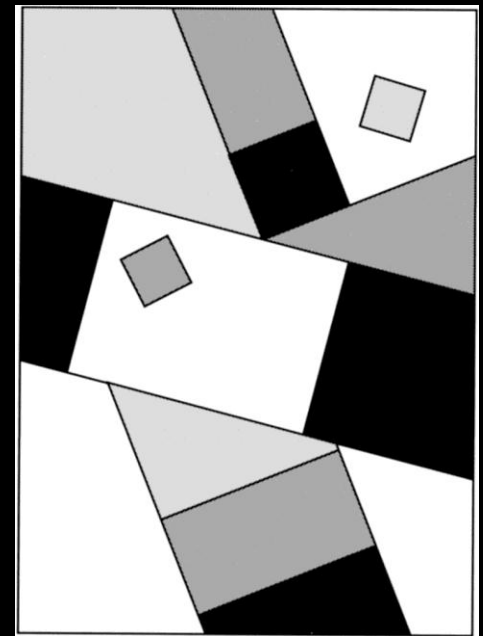
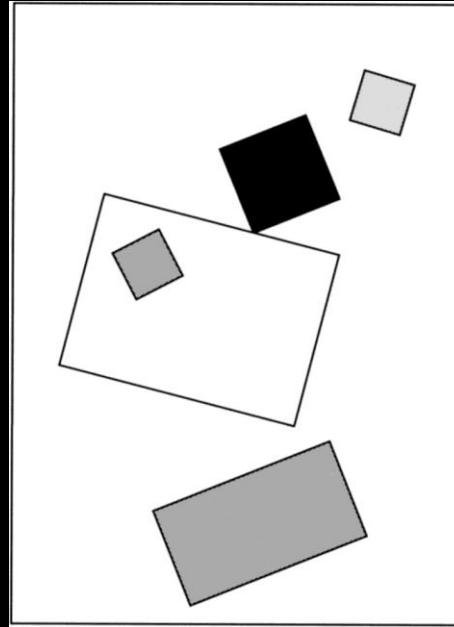


Isolation or Integration

Integration between positive and negative shapes is something we strive for.

A shape placed randomly on a piece of paper will look “pasted-on” or poorly considered.

You need to design the placement of shapes for interest, tension, etc... This is done by looking, thinking and doing or experimentation.

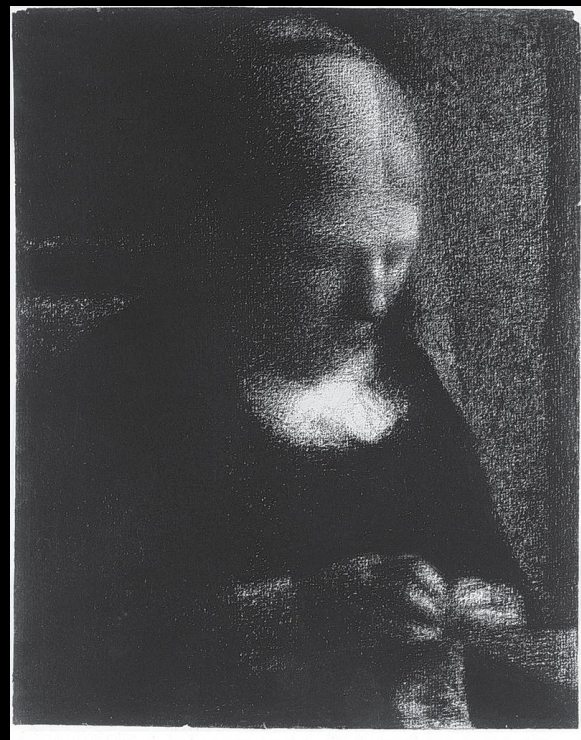


Emphasis on Integration

These two examples by Georges Seurat demonstrate how areas of positive and negative play against each other to create an image.



Silhouette of a Woman.
1882–1884. Conté crayon on paper, 1' x 8 7/8".
Collection of McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas
(bequest of Marion Koogler McNay).



Embroidery: The Artist's Mother (Woman Sewing). 1882–1883.
Conté crayon, 1' 5/8" x 9 7/16". Metropolitan Museum of Art
(Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1951; acquired from The
Museum of Modern Art, Lillie P. Bliss Collection, 55.21.1).

Ambiguity

- It is possible to integrate positive and negative shapes so they have no visual distinction.
- We become conflicted in our response.
- We refer to this as *Ambiguity*. It is both figure AND ground.



Hans Hillmann. Poster for the film The Bartered Bride.
1972. Source: Print, March/April 1988, p. 105.