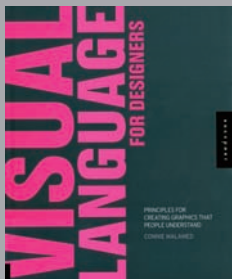
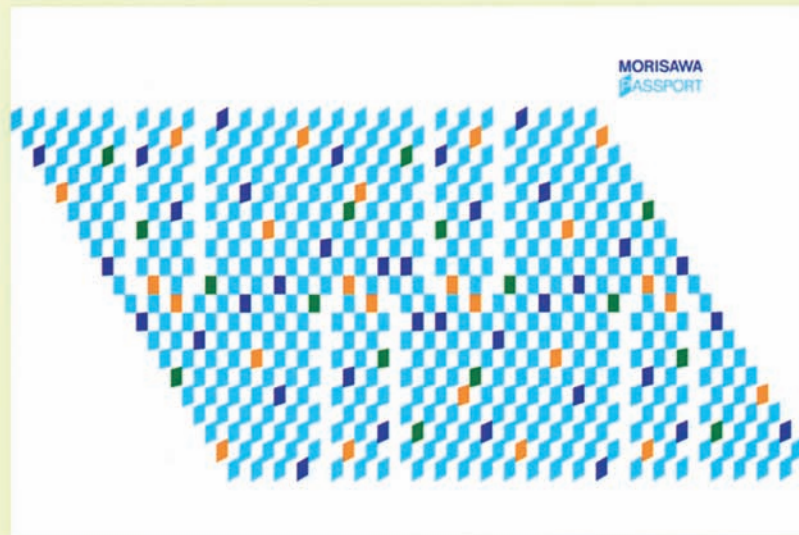
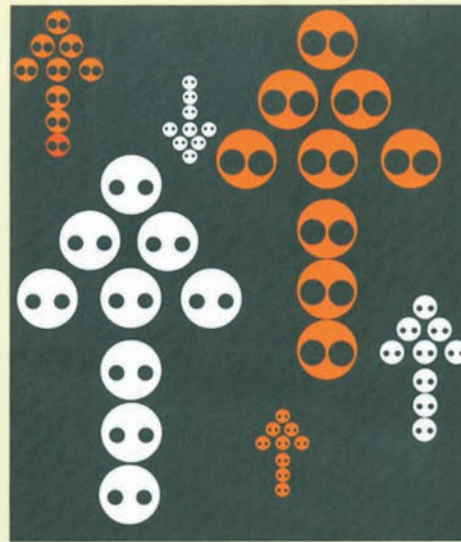


► This design demonstrates the principle of grouping, in which elements that are close together are seen as one perceptual unit. In an instant, our early perceptual system groups the circles into arrows.

Veronica Neira Torres,
Nicaragua

▼ In this identity design for a type foundry in Japan, the overall shape takes precedence over the smaller elements from which it is composed.

Shinnoske Sugisaki,
Shinnoske Inc., Japan



Applying The Principle

In the visual arts, the focal point, the magnetic area to which the eyes are drawn, is a principal aspect of a composition. "If a design has no focal point, drawing attention inward, it may seem to fall apart, making it difficult for the viewer to organize what is going on," write Paul Zelanski and Mary Pat Fisher in *Design Principles and Problems*. All of the elements within the frame of a composition have a relationship to one another and to the whole. The focal point can be the largest shape in a graphic or the one with the brightest color; it can be isolated from other elements or placed in a compelling position. We perceive it because our brains are wired to seek and detect differences. To our visual processing system, these differences are informative, causing the eye to pause and extract information. Creating several focal points with varying degrees of weight gives rise to a relative order of importance that guides the viewer's attention and eyes through the flow of information.

Several compositional techniques can be used to direct the eyes. Positioning and emphasis are two powerful ways to achieve this. Positioning refers to the importance associated with an element's location. Emphasis refers to the stress given to an element. In addition to structure, movement also guides the eyes. A picture tends to move and flow according to the directionality and energy of line, shape, and texture. For example, the downward flow of wine pouring from a bottle directs the viewer's eyes along the vertical axis into the wine glass. When the patterns of a texture move in a specific direction, this also guides the eyes. Position, emphasis, and movement provide a visual language for orienting and directing the viewer's vision along an intended path.



In addition, explicit techniques that are overlaid onto a graphic call attention to critical attributes and provide directional information. Explicit cues facilitate attention when used alone or in combination, as long as they are placed correctly and used judiciously. The designer should ensure that the chosen cues are appropriate to the cognitive characteristics of the audience. For example, a younger audience may not know that a dashed line implies directionality. Also, children are not as adept as adults at shifting their attention to important information.

Whether guiding the eyes through a graphic or directing the eyes to a specific location, designers should consider the informative purpose of the graphic, its degree of visual complexity, and the characteristics of the audience when deciding on an approach. Implicit, compositional techniques have an aesthetic dimension that will enhance promotional graphics. For instance, powerful lines that guide the eye are also appealing to the senses. Explicit cueing techniques that indicate location are appropriate in information and instructional graphics and diagrams.

The diagonal lines of this graphic draw the viewer into its kinetic center, as the eyes jump to several focal points derived from contrasts in color, shape, and size.

Shinnoske Sugisaki, Japan





Texture with Text

An appealing way to create texture is through the creative use of type, regardless of whether the type can be read. When type is repeated, varied, layered, or manipulated and altered, it creates an optical grain that conveys meaning. Often, the meaning is expressed on two levels: the words formed by the type communicate a literal message and the texture conveys meaning through design. Using type as texture is particularly appropriate in text-associated themes that relate to books, poetry, and language.

To create textures that are easy to discriminate, use a texture with a simple distinguishing homogenous feature separated from a contrasting region. There should be an easily perceptible difference where two objects or forms meet. Textures that are easy to discriminate might include those with different line orientations, contrasting rhythms of pattern, and regions composed of high-contrast patterns surrounded by regions of low contrast. The phenomenon of texture segregation provides many possibilities for communicating a message early in the perceptual process.

▲ Thick layers of overlapping type create poetic textures in this work for a collaboration exhibition by a poet and typographers.

Shinnoske Sugisaki,
Shinnoske Inc., Japan

► In this poster to commemorate the 200th year of the first reading room in Croatia, type is an appropriate design element for a textured background as it curves and bends through space. The glasses and their shadow emerge from the number 200.

Boris Ljubcic, Studio
International, Croatia

