



Fine Art Techniques for Web Design

#1: Relationship/Synergy

Relationship — connecting force between elements.

Synergy — all elements work together

Relationship and synergy are essential for unity. They bring together the various elements of a design into a cohesive “whole.” Use design techniques such as unity, repetition, eye flow and proximity to achieve this.

Relationship/Synergy Example



This painting by Matisse demonstrates relationship and synergy. Notice how the artist creates a relationship between various elements by using proximity, white space, eye flow, and repetition. The elements seem to work together to create a unified effect.

Relationship/Synergy Web Example

<http://www.asasoftball.com/>

How are the elements throughout this web site visually related to each other. Do they come together to create “synergy”?

How might you create relationships between design elements in your own web sites?

<http://www.oasis.com/>

How does this site rate for “synergy?”

#2: Closure

Challenges the user to mentally complete a partially represented form.

Creates more dynamism and viewer interaction.



Do you complete the boxes in this example rather than seeing individual left and right brackets? Only the bracket on the far left hand side does not become a box.



The partial D in the logo becomes a true D with just a little mental work on the part of the viewer.

Closure Example



When you look at this picture do your eyes want to create a familiar shape out of the dots and blots? If you work at it long enough you will see a picture emerge. Some-times a partial picture is more interesting and interactive for a viewer. Remember this in your screen designs.

Closure Web Example

<http://www.margochase.com/>

Does the logo on this web site challenge you to complete letterforms? Do you like this effect?

Think of ways that you might use this in your own designs.

#3: Direction/Movement

Leads eye into and around page following a direction determined by the artist.

Good tool for presenting the content to the viewer.

Contrasting or diagonal direction creates dynamism.



Use lines, angles, directions to point to the next object in line. (Check the red Matisse painting to see how he used lines and angles to create direction and movement.)

Direction/Movement Example



This painting by Mary Cassatt makes strong use of direction and movement. Can you see where the direction leads us?

The artist uses vertical lines and the angles of the child's body to lead the viewer up into the picture. The direction then becomes more circular around the heads of the mother and child. Our focus stops on their faces.

How can you use direction and movement to make more dynamic screen designs?

Direction/Movement Web Example

<http://www.redken.com/en-us/>

Can you see the strong visual movement on this web page? What did the designer use to create this movement?

Can you think of other design elements that might help create a strong sense of direction and movement?

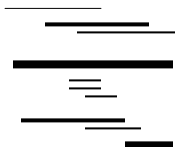
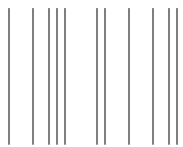
#4: Rhythm

Rhythm is achieved by the placement and interaction of various design elements.

An artist can change the rhythm of a piece by using elements of various sizes and directions to speed up or slow down the rate at which a viewer follows the visual information.

Rhythm creates a heartbeat or flow and is closely tied to direction/movement.

Rhythm Examples



Do you notice how a rhythm can be created using just lines? Replace these lines with photos, text, graphics, rules etc and you can see how to achieve rhythm in screen design. Contrast, alignment, proximity and repetition all contribute to rhythm.



Do you notice a distinct rhythm (or rhythms) in this work by Hal Morey? Does the rhythm make it more dynamic and visually interesting?

Rhythm Web Example

<http://swissposters.library.cmu.edu/Swiss/>

Do you notice a rhythm on this web page? What kind of rhythm(s) can you see (fast, slow)? What did the designer use to create the rhythm?

How might you use rhythm in your own designs?

#5: Perspective

Adds interest to a design by creating a sense of depth and drawing viewer in.

Converging lines and shapes convey a sense of movement into the distance.

Foreground objects are larger, more detailed and colorful than background objects.

Perspective Examples



These two paintings demonstrate how perspective is used to draw a viewer in. Notice the strong directional lines. In the painting on the right, the lines converge into the brightly lit building at the end. In screen design, where do you think your lines could converge?

Perspective Web Examples

<http://www.vanderryn.com/va/index.html>

<http://www.mdavidson.com/>

What design elements are being used to add perspective to these designs? Why is perspective being used and how does it enhance the designs?

What elements could you use to create a sense of depth and movement into the page?

#6: Value

Use various shades (values) of light and dark to emphasize elements, create interesting shapes and visual appeal.

Use contrasting values to create an illusion of depth (3-D).

Light values come forward, dark recede.

Value Examples



In this painting the artist uses value to create repeating and dynamic shapes. There is a strong contrast between light and dark.



Value is used in this painting to place emphasis on the dog (focal point). The light value assigned to the dog makes it come forward from the dark background.

Value Web Example

<http://www.compusmart.ab.ca/lklar/>

<http://www.commandaudio.com/overview/ca.html>

These two sites use value to add visual interest to their pages. How does value make these pages more appealing?

Aside from using value in the background, what other elements could have value applied to them?

#7: Texture

Adds interest to an area or form. Good for contrast.

Use texture in type, image, background etc.

In web design, texture can be a relief from the “flatness” of the screen.

Texture Example



Texture can add visual interest to a design. In this painting, Picasso uses texture to create visual variety and define interesting shapes.

How could you use texture to add interest to a web page?

Texture Web Example

<http://www.davincipaints.com/default.asp>

WOW! Now this is texture! How does the use of texture make this page more interesting? Does it enhance the message they are trying to communicate (if there is one!)?

What other design elements could you apply texture to?

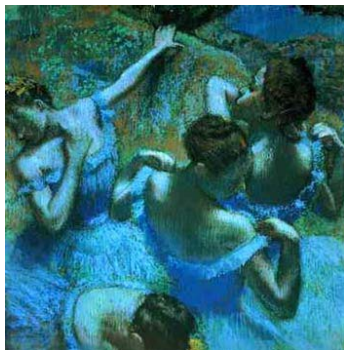
#8: Cropping

Cropping creates a more dynamic, interesting view of an object. It can be used to direct the viewer to look at a specific element.

Like closure, cropping encourages viewer participation by challenging them to complete the cropped shape.

In web design, experiment with interesting crops for photos, graphics, and logos.

Cropping Examples



O'keeffe (right) uses cropping to create a strong focal point and interesting shapes. Degas (above) increases viewer interaction by cropping the dancers at the edge.



Cropping Web Examples

<http://www.guggenheim.org/>

Look at how dynamic the photos at this site look when they are cropped in different ways. As a viewer, do you find them intriguing to look at?

Be sure to experiment with cropping in your own designs: photos, type, graphics etc. It can create some very dynamic effects.

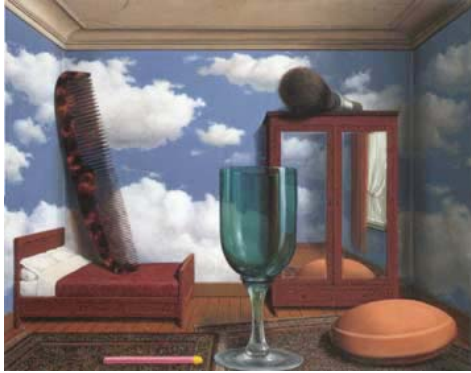
#9: Scale and Proportion

Scale is relative size of each element in relation to the page, the real size of the element and the scale of other elements.

Elements that are not in the correct scale or proportion create visual interest and surprise the viewer.

An unusually proportioned/scaled element can communicate an important message about that element (e.g. vulnerability, power).

Scale and Proportion Examples



The use of out-of-scale objects is original and surprising.



This figure is elongated and out of proportion. Does this communicate something about the person?

Scale and Proportion (2)



This painting by Van Gogh shows elements that are not accurately scaled relative to real life. The people look so small relative to the large tree. What might Van Gogh be trying to communicate about the people and the tree?

Scale and Proportion Web Examples

<http://www.centuryinshoes.com/home.html>

A large out-of-scale element can make a real visual impact. Where do your eyes go when you look at this page?

When you work on your web designs, try to find ways to use large scale elements for dramatic impact.

#10: Figure-Ground

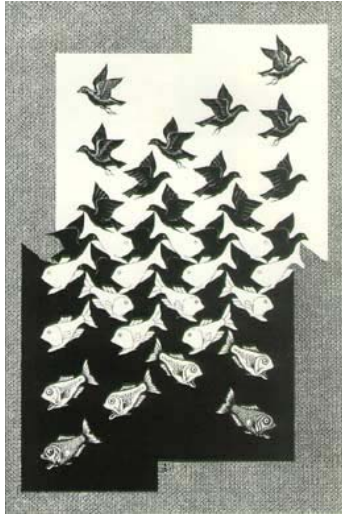
Use of dimension or element that may be read in more than one way (Escher). Creates an interplay between background and foreground.

Encourages viewer participation by challenging them to question whether an element is in the background or foreground.



Do you see a goblet or two faces here?

Figure-Ground Examples



Escher is the master of figure-ground illusions. His works encourage the viewer to work in order to understand them.

In screen design you might use figure-ground in logos or to create interesting background shapes.

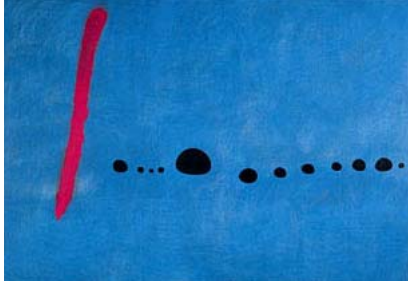
#11: Format

Format refers to the “canvas” the artist works on. It defines the working space. The canvas should be considered as a design element in itself.

Artists (and web designers) plan carefully where they place elements relative to the whole “canvas.”

In screen design, the entire screen is your canvas.

Format Examples



Here are two very different approaches to handling the “canvas.” In the painting above, the canvas is an important design element that contains the design. In the painting on the right, the buildings appear to continue beyond the canvas.

Format Web Examples

<http://www.brainstormventures.com/about.htm>

<http://www.seidler.net.au/principles.html>

Notice how these two web sites use different approaches to using the screen “canvas” or format. Why do you think they chose to use the format in these ways?

#12: Grid

Fine artists will sometimes use a grid as an underlying structure on which to base their design.

Grids are good organization tools. It's ok to break out of grid to create interest.

In web design, you might use a grid for consistency and repetition.

<http://www.acehosts.com/index.html>

That's All Folks!

The End