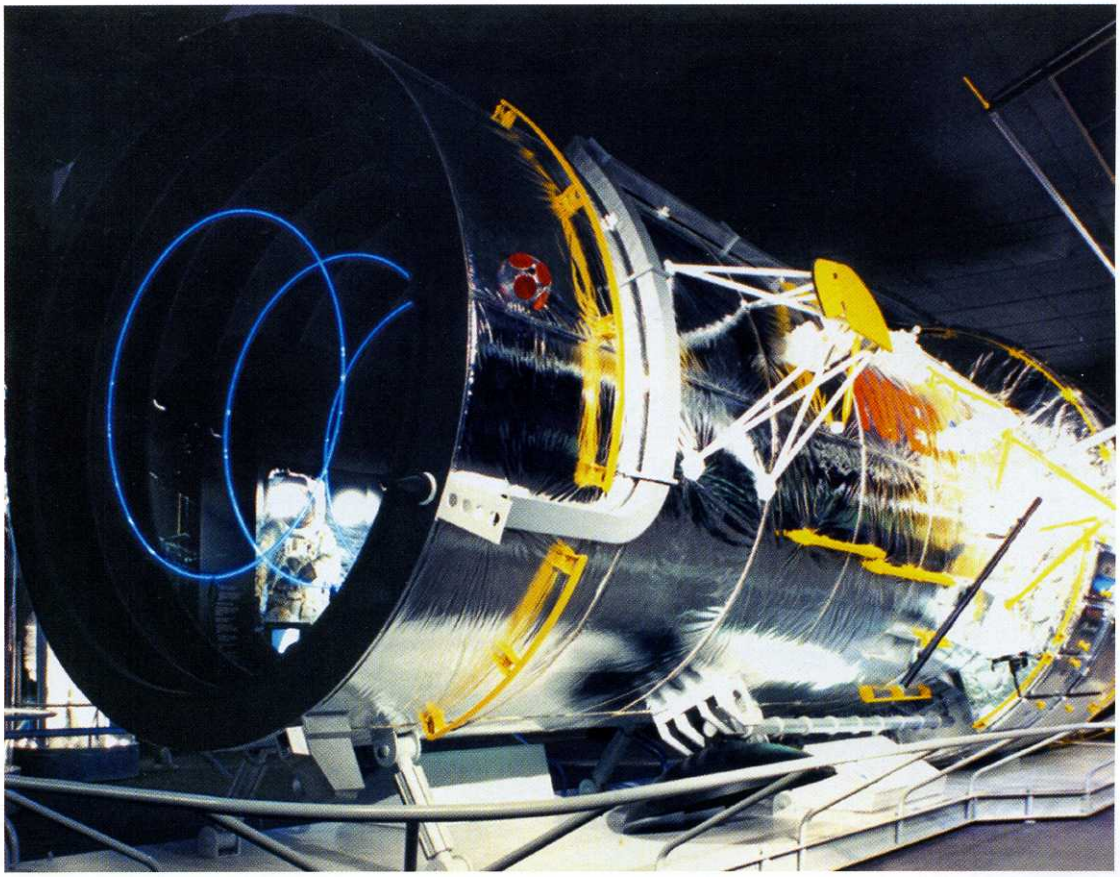
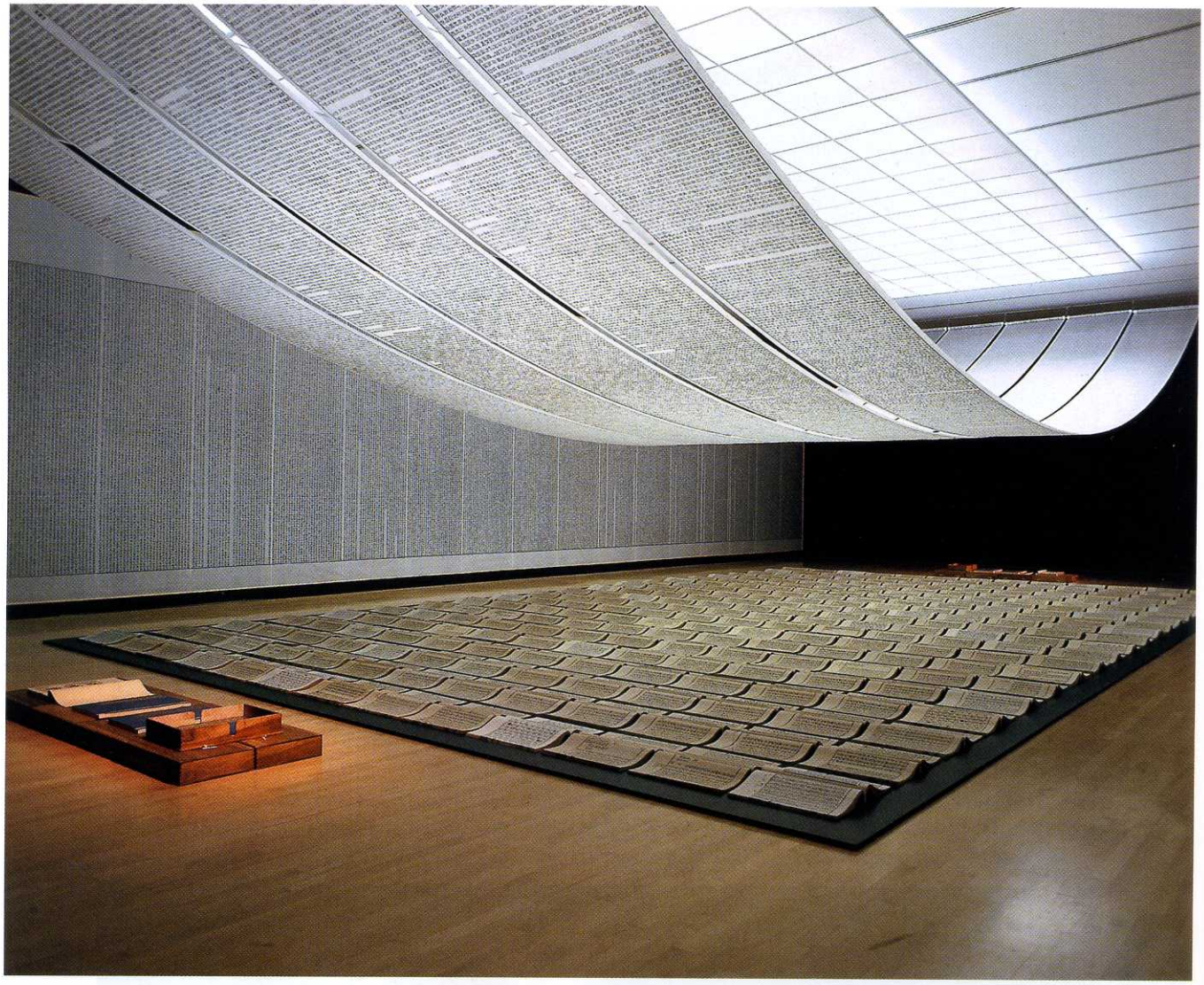


i.3 Bill Cannan & Co., NASA's Participating Exhibit at the 1989 Paris Air Show. To suggest the mystery of space travel and highlight individual displays, this NASA exhibition used dramatic pools of light within a mysterious dark setting.

i.4 Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Parsifal,* 1982. Syberberg combined live actors with oversized projections of dreamlike landscapes in his filmic interpretation of Richard Wagner's opera.



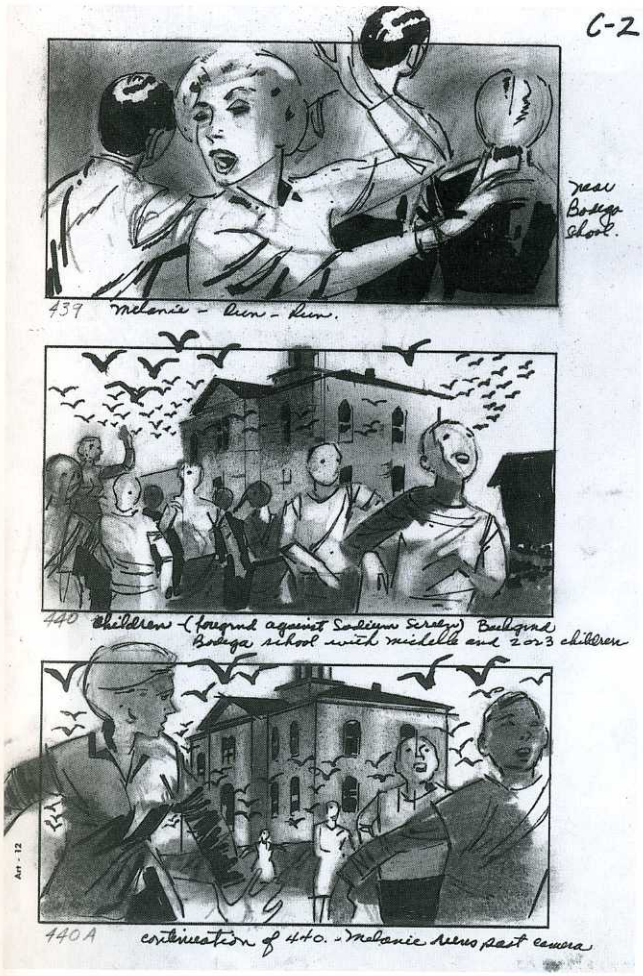
i.5 Xu Bing, *A Book from the Sky*, 1987–91. Hong Kong Museum of Art. Mixed mediums.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. As a beginner, your first steps are especially important. Free of the preconceptions or habitual patterns that can paralyze more advanced students, beginners enter the learning experience with an open mind and an intense desire to explore new ideas. With no reputation to defend, they can more easily make the mistakes that are so essential to learning. Having taught students at all levels, I have found that beginners of any age are the most courageous by far. The open, unencumbered "beginner's mind" is wonderfully receptive and resilient. As a result, remarkable changes can occur during your first year.

DEFINING DESIGN

As a verb, *design* can be defined four ways:

- To plan, delineate, or define, as in designing a building
- To create a deliberate sequence of images or events, as in developing a film storyboard (i.6)
- To create a functional object, as in product design (i.7)
- To organize disparate parts into a coherent whole, as in composing a brochure



i.6 Harold Michelson, Storyboard for Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Storyboards are used to plan the sequence of events and compose the specific shots in a film. Alfred Hitchcock, who began his career as an artist, preplanned his films with exacting care.

i.7 Designworks/USA, Home Pro Garden Tool Line. These five gardening tools are all based on the same basic combination of handle, blades, and simple pivot. Variations in proportion determine their use.

As a noun, *design* can be defined as

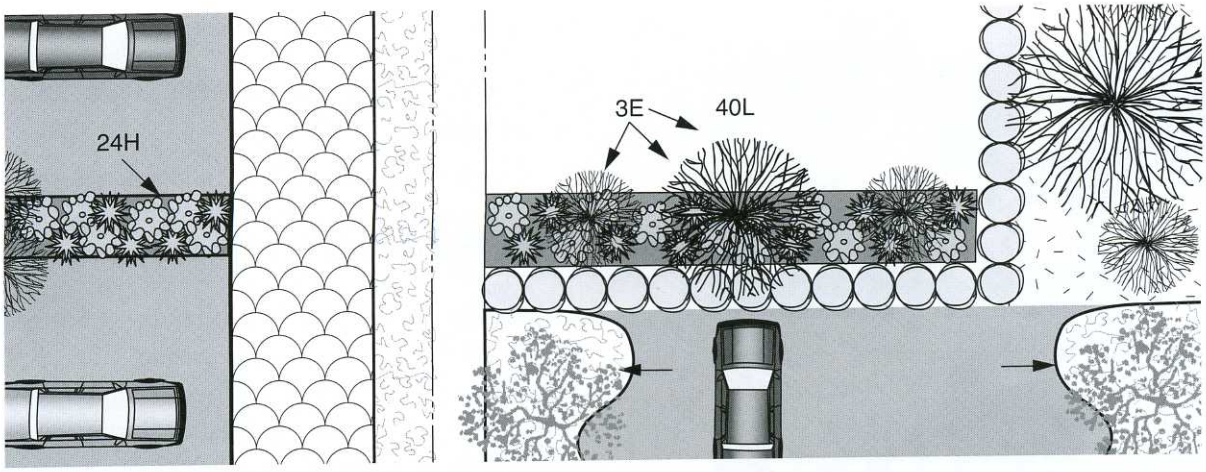
- A plan or pattern, such as the layout for a garden (i.8)
- An arrangement of lines, shapes, colors, and textures into an artistic whole, as in the composition of a painting or sculpture (i.9)

Design is deliberate. Rather than hope for the best and accept the result, artists and designers explore a wide range of solutions to every problem, then choose the most promising option for further development. Even when chance is used to generate ideas, choices are often made before the results are shown. Design creates a bridge between artistic intention and compositional conclusion. As painter Joseph Albers noted, "To design is to plan and to organize, to order, to relate and to control."

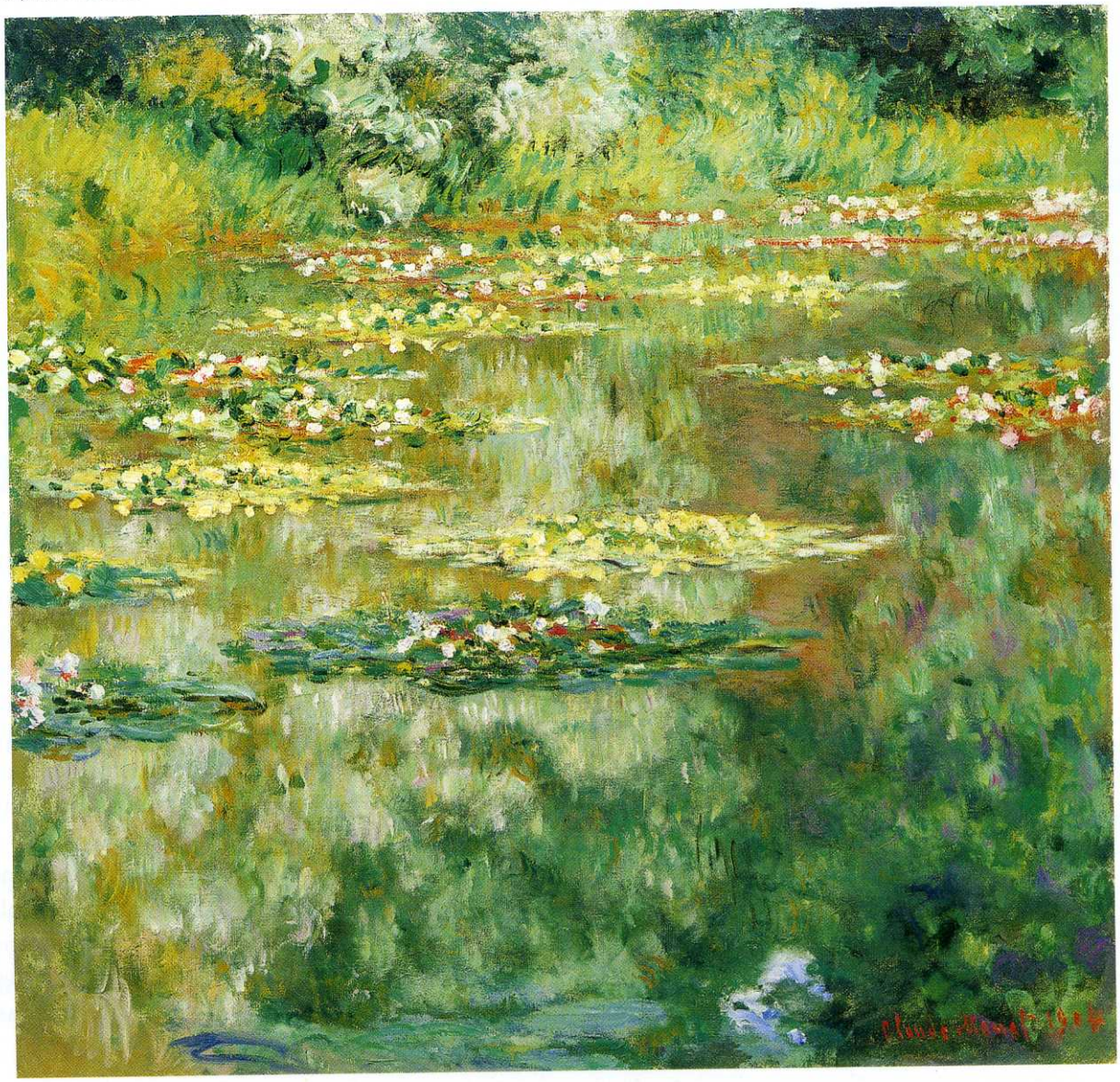
Two-dimensional compositions are constructed from lines, shapes, textures, values, and colors that have been arranged to create a unified whole (i.10). Lines, planes, volumes, masses, and space are the basic components of a three-dimensional composition (i.11). Time design (including video, photography, performance, kinetic sculpture, and the book arts) is based on the juxtaposition of images and events (i.12). A great idea never saved a bad painting. Art and design are visual forms of communication: without careful composition, a great idea may be lost.

Developing a wide range of solutions to every problem is the quickest way to master composition. Small, quick studies are often used to explore the possibilities. By translating a mental image into a rough sketch, you can immediately see whether the idea has potential. Furthermore, the best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas. By selecting the best rough composition from 20 sketches, you will have a better beginning point for your final design.

In the pages that follow, the basic elements, principles, and implications of design are explored in depth. Over 650 images supply visual examples from many cultures and in all areas of art and design. Fifteen interviews with living artists provide insight into the creative process.



i.8 Garden Design. An extensive layout is generally used for planning a garden. Matching the plants to the soil conditions, setting, climate, and overall intent saves money and improves results. In this case, the design is not an artwork in itself but, rather, a plan of action.



i.9 Claude Monet, *Waterlily Pond (Le Bassin des Nymphéas)*, 1904. Impressionist Claude Monet moved to the village of Giverny in 1883 and built an extensive water garden. The waterlilies he grew there inspired his last major series of paintings. Monet combined lines, shapes, textures, and colors to create a compelling illusion of a shimmering space.

i.10 Sam Francis, *Flash Point*, 1975. Surrounded by explosive energy, the white square in the center of this painting provides a unifying focal point.

Reading this book, however, is just the first step. True understanding comes through your own efforts, combined with the direction your teachers can provide. Remember that basic drawing and design courses provide the foundation on which all subsequent courses are built. You are a college beginner only once in your entire life: this is not a rehearsal. By using your time well, you really *can* get the rocket off the launching pad.

chapter one

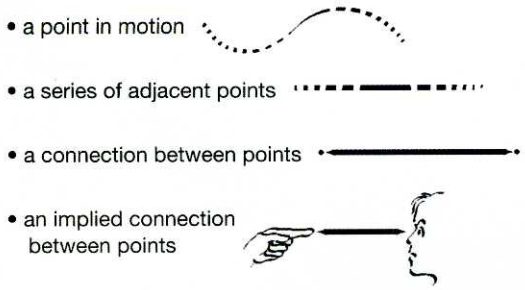
Basic Elements

Line, shape, texture, value, and color are the building blocks from which two-dimensional designs are made. Just as oxygen and hydrogen are powerful both individually and when combined as H_2O, so these visual **elements** operate both independently and in combination. In this chapter, we will explore the unique characteristics of the four most basic elements and analyze their uses in art and design. Color, the most complex element, will be discussed in Chapter Two.

LINE

Defining Line

Line is one of the simplest and most versatile elements of design. Line may be defined as



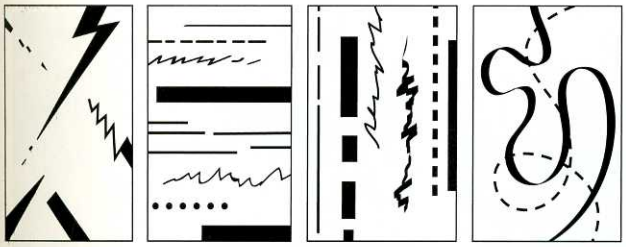
1.1 Line definitions.

The inherent dynamism of line is embodied in the first definition. The remaining three definitions emphasize the connective power of line. Lighter and more fluid than any of the other visual elements, line can add a special energy to a design. Simply by drawing a line, we can activate a space, define a shape, or create a compositional bridge.

Line Quality

Each line has its own distinctive quality. This quality is largely determined by the line's orientation, direction, and degree of continuity, and by the material used.

Orientation refers to the line's horizontal, vertical, or diagonal position. Diagonal lines and curving lines are generally the most dynamic (1.2A, 1.2D). Charged with energy, they suggest action and movement. Horizontal lines are typically the most stable, or static (1.2B). Vertical lines imply *potential* change. When verticals adhere to the edge of the design, they become tethered and thus



A Diagonal **B** Horizontal **C** Vertical **D** Continuous curve

1.2A–D Line orientation and continuity.

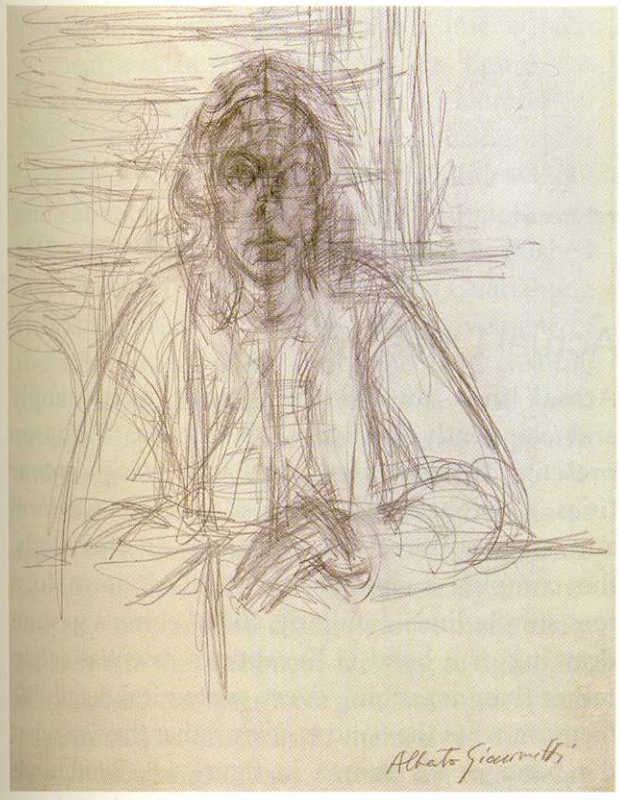
lose mobility. Free-floating verticals, on the other hand, seem ready to topple at any moment (1.2C).

Direction refers to the implied movement of a line. Line weight can be used to accentuate direction. Generally, a swelling line suggests forward or outward movement, while a shrinking line suggests inward movement. Notice how the top and bottom diagonal lines in figure 1.2A seem to push forward as they become thicker.

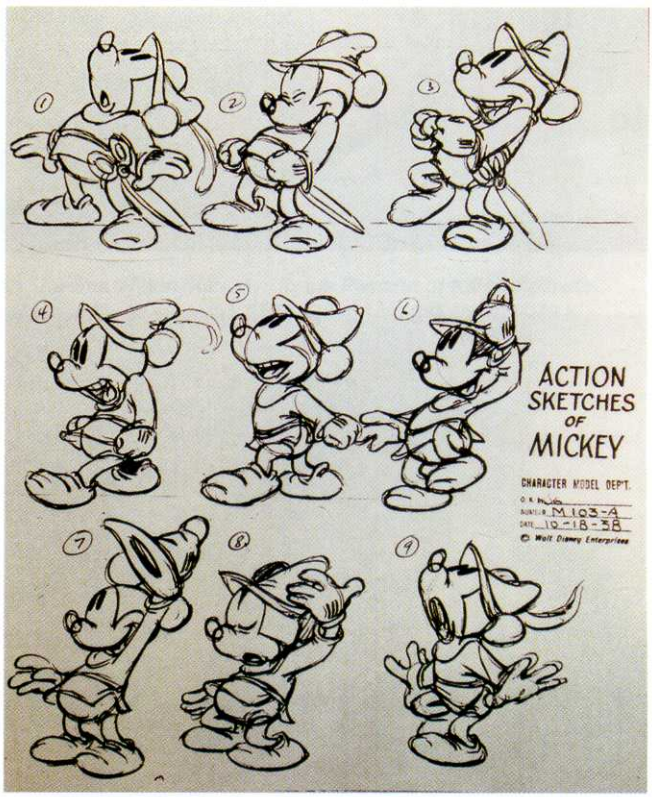
Continuity, or linear flow, can enhance direction. As shown in figure 1.2D, a continuous line tends to generate a stronger sense of direction than a broken or jagged line.

Each **medium,** or material, can be used to produce a range of distinctive lines. Metallic graphite can be used to produce modulating lines of varying thickness. A felt pen produces a crisp, clean, emphatic line. Charcoal and chalk are soft and highly responsive to each change in pressure and direction. Brush and ink offers even wider variation in line width, continuity, and darkness. By experimenting with the range of marks each instrument can produce, we can use each medium more expressively.

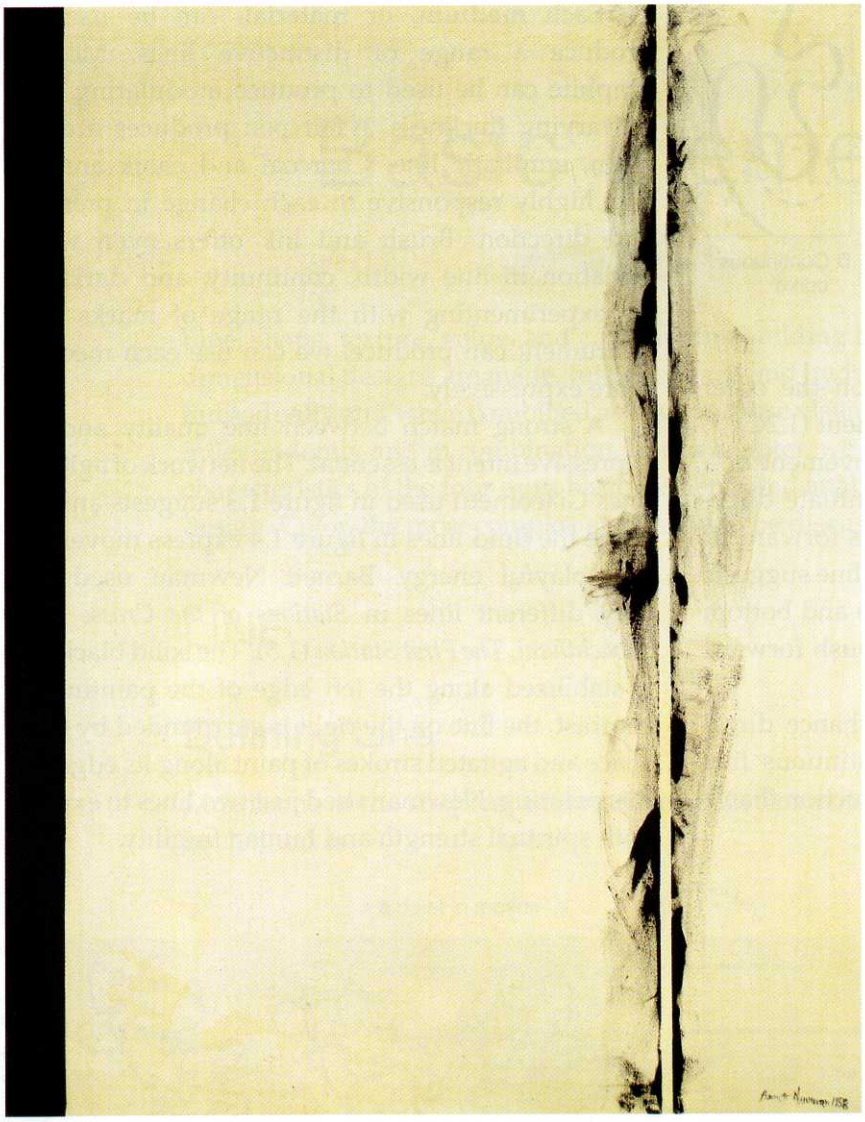
A strong match between line quality and the expressive intent is essential. The network of agitated lines Giacometti used in figure 1.3 suggests anxiety, while the fluid lines in figure 1.4 express movement and playful energy. Barnett Newman used two very different lines in *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani, The First Station* (1.5). The solid black line is stabilized along the left edge of the painting. In contrast, the line on the right is surrounded by open space and agitated strokes of paint along its edges. In this painting, Newman used just two lines to express both spiritual strength and human fragility.



1.3 Alberto Giacometti, *Annette,* 1954. Pencil on paper, 16⅜ × 11¼ in. (41.59 × 29.85 cm).

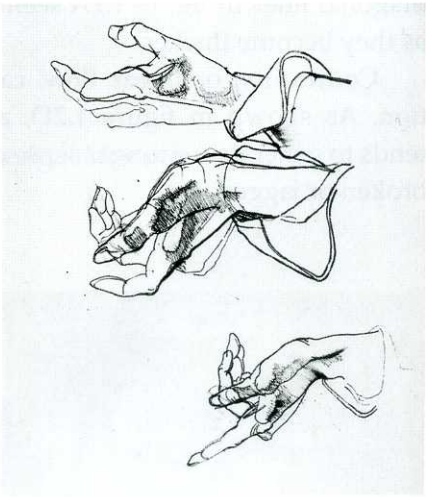


1.4 Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, original sketch of Walt Disney Mickey Mouse Cartoon, 1938. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.



1.5 Barnett Newman, *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani, The First Station,* 1958. Magna on canvas, 6 ft 5⅞ in. × 5 ft ½ in. (1.98 × 1.54 cm).

1.6 Eleanor Dickinson, *Study of Hands,* 1964. Pen and ink, 13⅜ × 10⅛ in. (34 × 26 cm).



1.7 Rico Lebrun, *Hand,* 1964. Pen and ink.

1.8 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two Women Helping a Child to Walk,* c. 1635–37. Red chalk on paper.

Actual Lines

Actual lines can describe complex forms simply and eloquently. In figure 1.6, Eleanor Dickinson presents different views of hands using **contour lines.** Contour lines define the edges of a form and suggest three-dimensionality. In this study, the complex anatomy was distilled down to a few simple lines. Similarly, Rico Lebrun's **gesture drawing** of a hand (1.7) captures essential action rather than describing every anatomical detail. We focus on what the hand is *doing* rather than on what the hand *is*. As shown in figure 1.8, Rembrandt often used economical lines to describe the spheres and cylindrical volumes from which figures are made. Because it communicates information using

1.9 Attributed to Tawaraya Sôtatsu, calligraphy by Hon'ami Koetsu, *Flying Cranes and Poetry*, Edo period (1615–1868). Ink on gray-blue paper, gold flecked, 7⅝ × 6⅝ in. (19 × 16 cm).

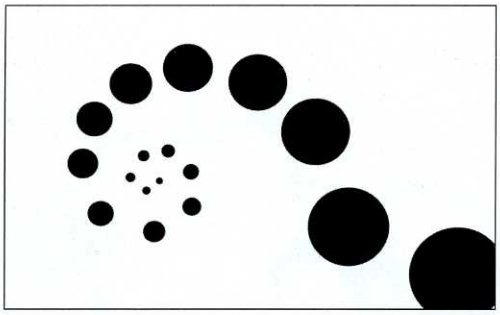
1.10 Wu Guanzhong, *Pine Spirit*, 1984. Chinese ink, color on paper, 2 ft 3⅝ in. × 5 ft 3½ in. (70 × 140 cm).

1.11 Jerome Witkin, *Kill-Joy: To the Passion of Käthe Kollwitz* (Kreischerville Wall) detail, 1975–76. Oil on canvas, 74 × 79 in.

basic volumes, this type of line drawing is often called a **volume summary.**

Calligraphic lines can add even more energy to a drawing or a design. The word *calligraphy* is derived from two Greek words: *kalus*, meaning "beautiful," and *graphein*, meaning "to write." Like handwriting, the calligraphic line is both personal and highly expressive. In figure 1.9, words and images are combined in a celebration of flight. Painter Tawaraya Sôtatsu and calligrapher Hon'ami Koetsu used variations in line weight and continuity to suggest the graceful motion of birds. This exploration of movement is pushed even further in *Pine Spirit*, by Wu Guanzhong (1.10). Fluid ink lines record the movement of the artist's hand while simultaneously creating an abstract landscape. There is a wonderful economy in each of these drawings. As in poetry, a rich story is told using minimal means.

Organizational lines are often used to create the loose linear "skeleton" on which a composition can be built. Ideas can be developed quickly through line, and compositional changes can be made easily. As shown in the Giacometti drawing in figure 1.3, these skeletal drawings have great energy and may be presented as artworks in themselves. In other cases, organizational lines provide the framework for elaborate compositions. In Jerome Witkin's *Kill Joy: To the Passion of Käthe Kollwitz* (1.11), the linear sidewalk, curb, street, and car divide the image into horizontal bands of explosive energy. The gray wall extending from the top to the center, the strip of gray at the far right, and the two mannequins in the foreground create strong vertical divisions. Diagonal streaks of white and a gray arrow on the street pull us toward the woman in red positioned near the center of the painting, while the blue and yellow shapes in the upper-right corner send us ricocheting back out again. German artist and antiwar activist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) fought against injustice and violence through her artwork: see figures 2.61, 2.62, and 2.63 on pages 61 and 62. Like Kollwitz, the woman in red provides solace to the wounded in a world that is filled with indifference and shattered glass.



1.12 A series of dots can create an implied line.

1.13 Minor White, *Sandblaster,* San Francisco, 1949. Gelatin silver print, 10⁷⁄₁₆ × 11⁷⁄₁₆ in. (26.51 × 29.05 cm).

Implied Lines

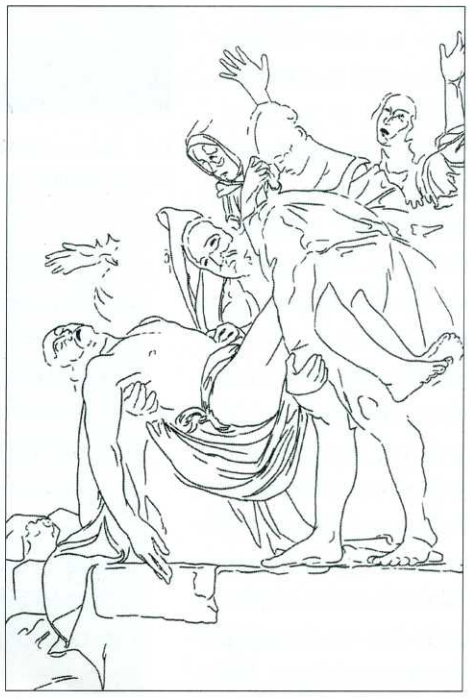
Lines can play a major role in a design even when they are implied rather than actually being drawn. Because **implied lines** simply *suggest* connections, the viewer becomes actively involved in compositions that use this type of line.

Fortunately, we have a natural inclination to seek visual unity. Given enough clues, we will connect separate visual parts by filling in the missing pieces. The visual clues may be quite obvious. For example, we can easily link the circles in figure 1.12 to create a linear spiral. In other cases, the clues are subtle. In Minor White's *Sandblaster* (1.13), the white arrow implies a connection between the numbers in the foreground and the worker's helmet.

This inclination to connect fragmentary information is called **closure.** "Lost and found" contours require an elegant form of closure. In a "lost and found" composition, the edges of some shapes are clearly defined, while other shapes appear to merge with the background. When presented with such an image, the viewer must create a mental bridge between the resulting islands of information.

Caravaggio's *The Deposition* (1.14A) uses closure extensively. A contour drawing of this image has many gaps, as details are lost in the shadows (1.14B). Used skillfully, this loss of definition becomes a strength rather than a weakness. Connections made through closure can stimulate the viewer's imagination and encourage a more personal interpretation.

A



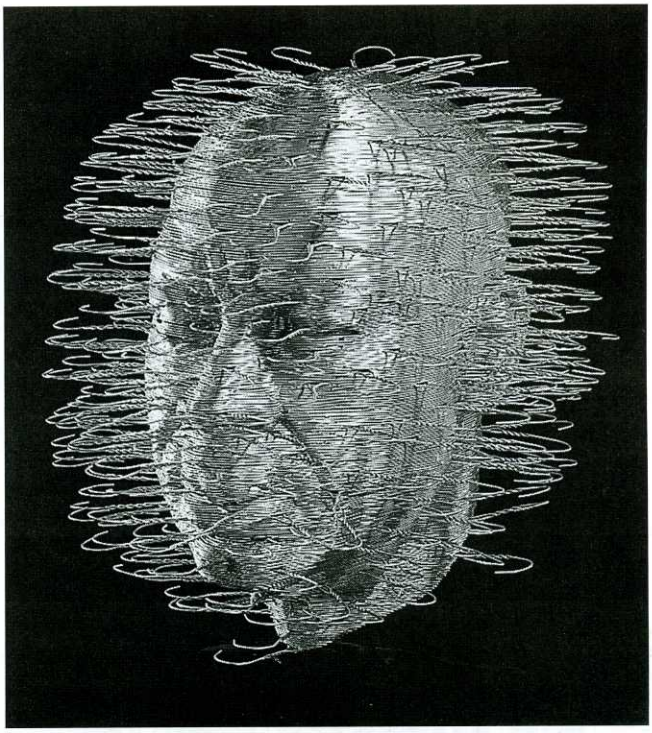
B

1.14A and B Caravaggio, *The Deposition,* 1604. Oil on canvas, 9 ft 10⅛ in. × 6 ft 7⅞ in. (3 × 2.03 m).

Linear Networks

Multiple lines can add detail to a design and create a convincing illusion of space. **Hatching** produces a range of grays through straight parallel lines. An even wider range of grays can be produced through **cross-hatching,** in which

1.15 Jacques Villon, *Baudelaire*, c. 1918. Etching, printed in black, plate 16⅝ × 11 in. (41.4 × 28 cm).



1.16 David Mach, *Eckow*, 1997. Coathangers, 2 ft 2¼ in. × 1 ft 11½ in. × 2 ft 5½ in. (67 × 60 × 75 cm).

multiple lines are placed at various angles to one another. Jacques Villon used both hatching and cross-hatching in his portrait of poet Charles Baudelaire (1.15). The head is divided into a series of faceted planes. Hatching defines each shift in the surface of the head, while cross-hatching creates the shadows.

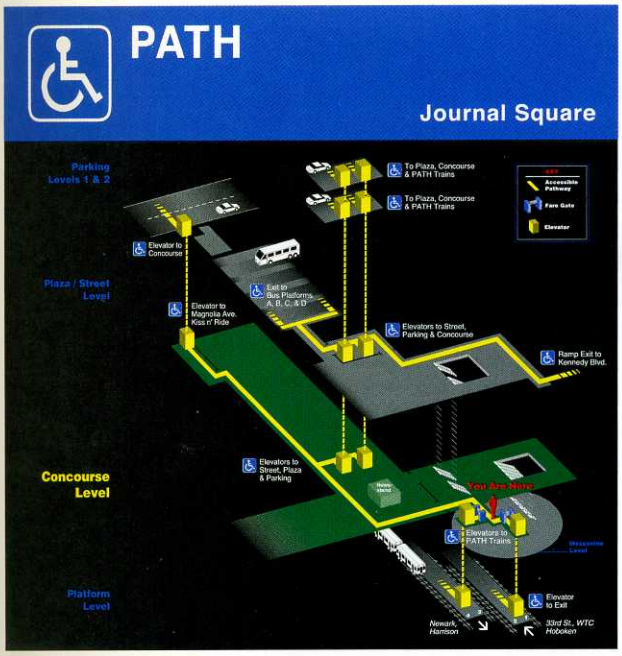
Cross-contours can create an even more powerful illusion of three-dimensionality. Often created using curving parallel lines, cross-contours "map" surface variations across shapes or objects. In figure 1.16, David Mach created a cross-contour sculpture by bending coat hangers into the shape of a human head. In two-dimensional design, we can use drawn lines to produce a similar effect.

Hatching, cross-hatching, and cross-contour are often combined. In *Head of a Satyr* (1.17), Michelangelo used all of these techniques to visually carve out the curves and planes of the head.

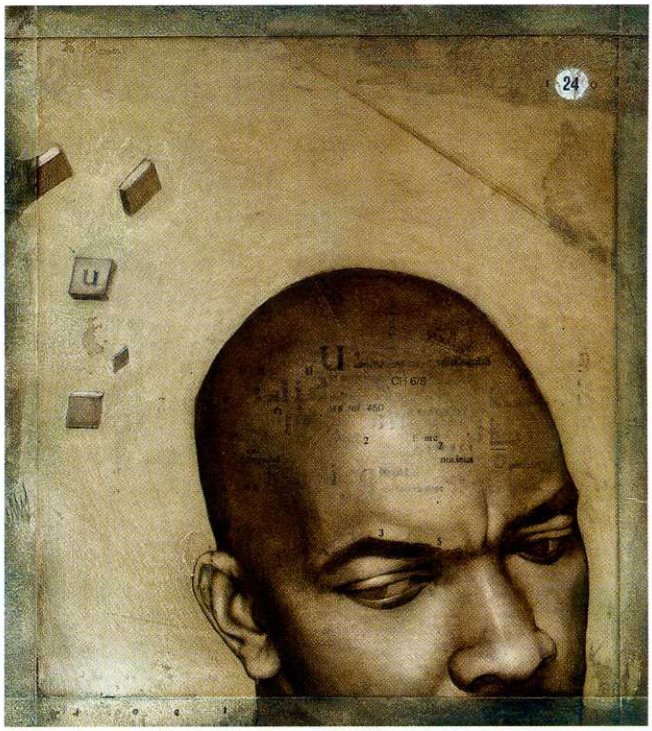
1.17 Michelangelo, *Head of a Satyr*, c. 1620–30. Pen and ink over chalk, 10⅝ × 7⅞ in. (27 × 20 cm).

1.18 Jackson Pollock, *White Light*, 1954. Oil, enamel, aluminum paint on canvas, 48¼ × 38¼ in. (122.4 × 96.9 cm).

Linear networks play an equally important role in abstract and nonobjective art. Jackson Pollock dripped and spattered house paint to produce *White Light*, shown in figure 1.18. Seeking universal meaning rather than conventional representation, Pollock spontaneously generated many layers of lines on a large piece of canvas. He then trimmed the canvas, discarding the weaker sections of the design. The remaining lines seem to flow in and out of the painting. Clusters of silvery enamel form swirling, textural masses that are punctuated by explosions of red and yellow.



1.19 PATH Station Maps, Louis Nelson Associates, Inc., NY.
Graphic designer: Jennifer Stoller.



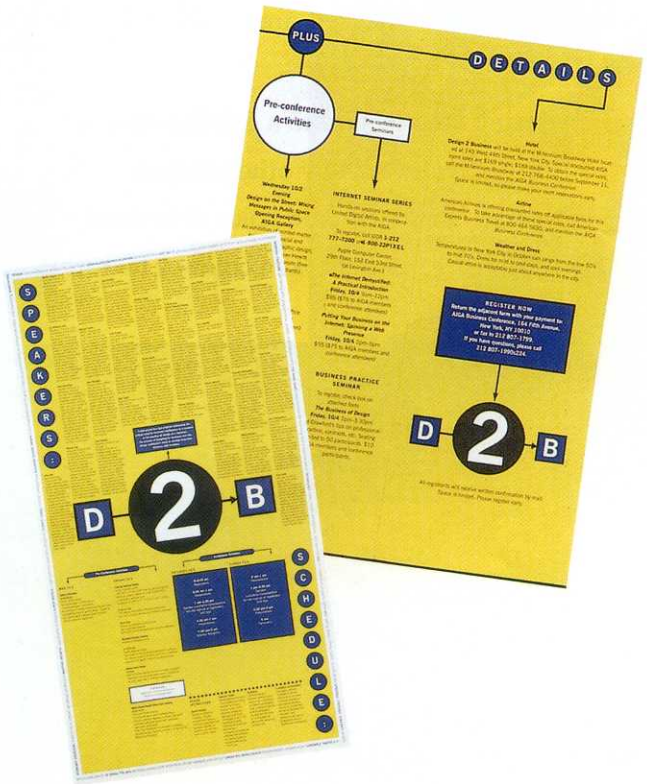
1.20 Joel Peter Johnson, *Self-Portrait.* Oil on board, 9 × 8 in. (22.86 × 20.32 cm).

Using Line

Line can be used to define, enclose, connect, or dissect. Line serves all of these purposes in a New York City subway map (1.19). A curved line has been combined with an angular line to define the wheelchair logo. Another line encloses this logo within a square, emphasizing its importance. Diagonal lines connect the subway entrance to the elevators, while vertical lines dissect the drawing to highlight the location of the elevators. Using this map, a person in a wheelchair can navigate through a busy station and catch the right train.

In a sense, the first line we draw is actually the *fifth* line in a rectangular composition. In his *Self-Portrait* (1.20), Joel Peter Johnson used drawn lines to echo the four pre-existing edges of the composition. His head breaks out of this linear boundary. As a result, the portrait appears to extend beyond the painting's edge and into the world of the viewer.

Lines can serve many purposes at once. In an advertisement for the American Institute of Graphic Arts (1.21), vertical dotted lines at the upper left and lower right highlight the speakers' schedule. A horizontal line creates a connection between the *D* and *B* in the "design to business" logo and separates the top and bottom of the overall layout. Even the columns of text can be read as vertical and horizontal lines.



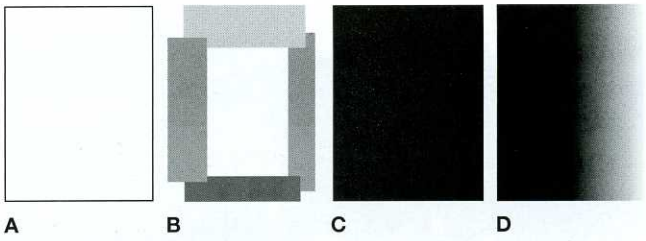
1.21 Brochure from an American Institute of Graphic Arts Conference "Design 2 Business, October 5–6 '96 NYC."
Design Firm: Pentagram, NY.

When orientation, direction, continuity, and medium are effectively employed, line can be used to create compositions that are both sophisticated and thoughtful.

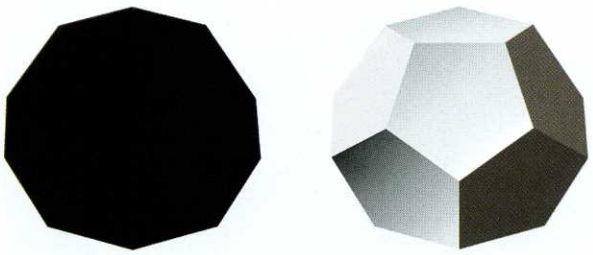
Key Questions

LINE

- What is the dominant orientation of the lines in your design—diagonal, vertical, or horizontal? What is the expressive effect?
- What happens when lines are repeated or when lines intersect?
- How would the composition change if one or more lines were removed?
- Consider using line to direct attention to areas of compositional importance.



1.22A–D Any form of enclosure can create a shape.



1.23 Variations in lighting can transform a shape into an illusory volume.

SHAPE

Defining Shape

A **shape** is a flat, enclosed area (1.22A–D). Shapes can be created by

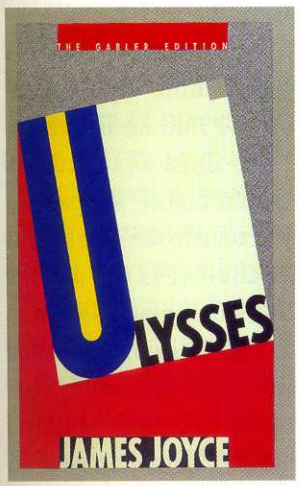
- Enclosing an area within a continuous line
- Surrounding an area by other shapes
- Filling an area with solid color or texture
- Filling an area with broken color or texture

A three-dimensional enclosure is called a **volume.** Thus, a square is a shape, while a cube is a volume. **Gradation,** or **shading,** can be used to make a two-dimensional shape appear three-dimensional, or volumetric. For example, in figure 1.23, a flat, circular shape becomes a faceted polyhedron when a series of gray tones is added.

Both flat and gradated shapes can be used to create an arresting image. In Aaron Douglas's *Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction* (1.24), flat silhouettes combined with transparent targets create an energetic panorama. We can

1.24 Aaron Douglas, ***Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction,* 1934.** Oil on canvas, 5 ft × 11 ft 7 in. (1.52 × 3.5 m).

1.25 Diego M. Rivera, *Detroit Industry, North Wall*, 1932–33. Fresco, 17 ft 8½ in. × 45 ft (5.4 × 13.7 m).



1.26 Cover of *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, 1986. Designer: Carin Goldberg.

1.27 Cover image from *The Penguin Pool Murder*, a Hildegarde Withers Mystery, by Stuart Palmer. Art Director & Designer: Krystyna Skalski; Illustrator: John Jinks.

1.28 Gustav Klimt, *Salomé*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 70⅛ × 18⅛ in. (178 × 46 cm).

almost hear the speaker in the center and feel the movement of the crowd. In Rivera's *Detroit Industry* (1.25), a combination of size variation and shading suggests volume and increases the illusion of space. One-point perspective (which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four) has been used to increase visual depth even further.

Graphic designers are equally aware of the expressive power of both flat and gradated shapes. In a cover for *Ulysses* (1.26), Carin Goldberg used crisp, simple shapes to create a design that evokes the modernism of Joyce's novel. Primary colors, combined with the slanted title block, immediately attract attention. Krystyna Skalski and John Jinks used a very different approach for their cover for a mystery novel (1.27). Here, the graduated, figurative shapes and swirling green bands suggest a complex and twisted plot.

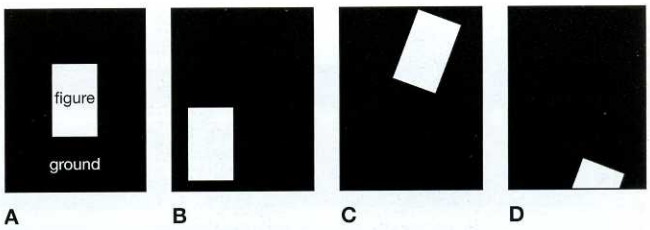
Gustav Klimt combined flat and volumetric shapes to create *Salomé* (1.28). In this horrific tale

from the biblical New Testament, John the Baptist has been imprisoned for his criticism of the royal family. Salomé, the king's niece, performs a stunning dance and the delighted king grants her a single wish. In revenge, Salomé asks for John's head. The tall, vertical shape of the painting is similar to the size and shape of a standing viewer. Flat patterns and color surround the volumetric figures, while two curving lines add a sinuous energy to the center of the design.

Types of Shape

The size and shape of a soccer field are very different from the size and shape of a tennis court. In each case, the playing area defines the game to be played. It is impossible to play soccer on a tennis court or to play tennis on a soccer field.

Similarly, the outer edge of a two-dimensional design provides the playing field for our compositional games. The long, horizontal rectangles used by Douglas and Rivera create an expansive panorama, while the vertical rectangle used for Salomé compresses the sordid drama into a narrow, claustrophobic column. Thus, creating a dialogue between compositional shapes and the surrounding format is our first concern.



1.29A–D Various figure/ground relationships. When centered, the figure tends to be static. As it moves to the bottom left, it becomes more dynamic, and becomes even more so when it is diagonally positioned near the top or bottom edge.

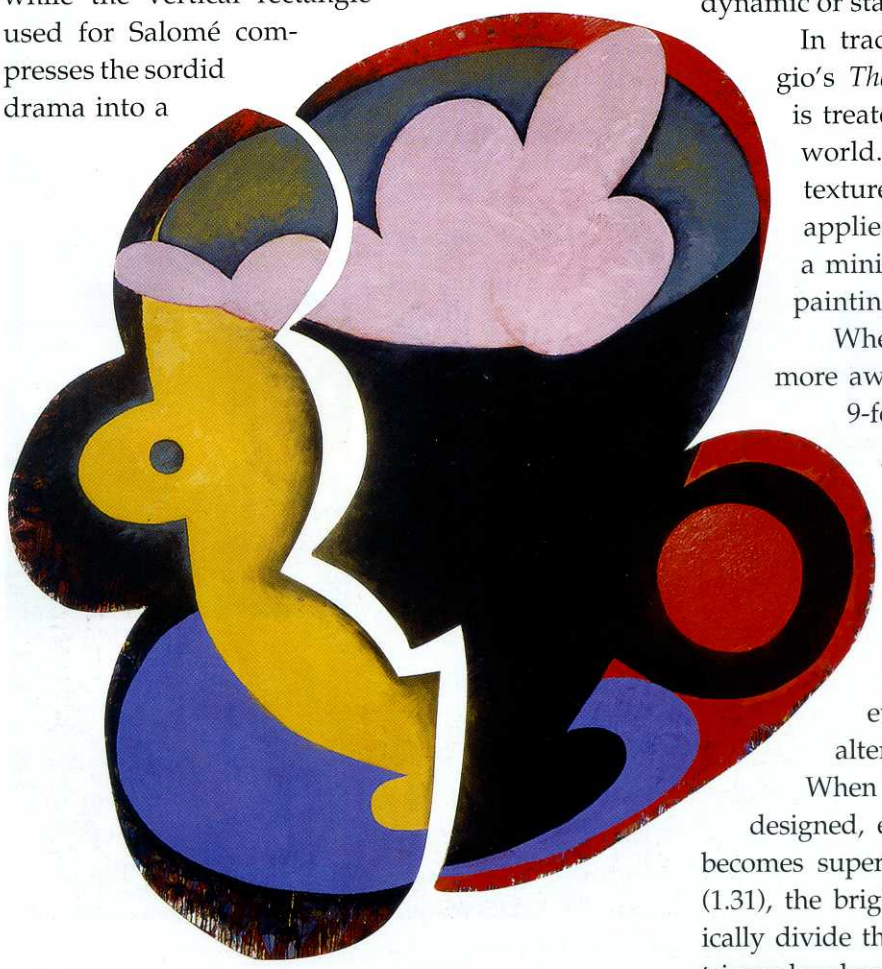
Figure and Ground, Positive and Negative

As shown in figure 1.29A, a shape that is distinguished from the background is called a **positive shape,** or **figure.** The surrounding is called the **negative shape,** or **ground.** Depending on its location relative to the ground, the figure can become dynamic or static, leaden or buoyant (1.29B–D).

In traditional paintings such as Caravaggio's *The Deposition,* the entire composition is treated like a window into an imaginary world. To increase this illusion, the canvas texture is sanded down before the paint is applied, and heavy brushstrokes are kept at a minimum. We are invited to see *into* the painting, rather than focusing on its surface.

When a shaped format is used, we become more aware of the artwork's physicality. The 9-foot-tall teacup in Elizabeth Murray's *Just in Time* (1.30) is monumental in size and loaded with implication. The painted shapes connect directly to the shaped edge, emphasizing the crack running down the center of the composition. This is no ordinary teacup. For Murray, this crack in everyday reality invites us to enter an alternative world.

When the figure and ground are equally well designed, every square inch of the composition becomes supercharged. In Bill Brandt's photograph (1.31), the brightly lit arm, face, and breast dramatically divide the black ground, creating three strong, triangular shapes. These triangles energize the design and heighten our awareness of the compositional edge.



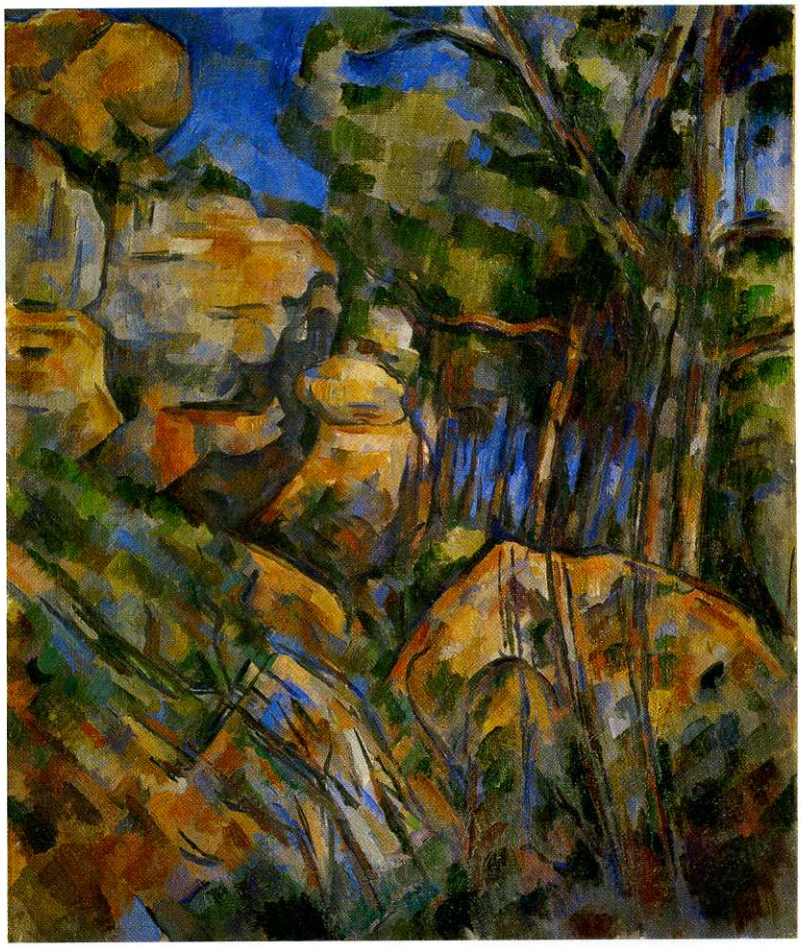
1.30 Elizabeth Murray, *Just in Time*, 1981. Oil on canvas in two sections, 106 × 97 in. (269.24 × 246.38 cm).

1.31 Bill Brandt, *Nude*, 1952. Gelatin silver print.

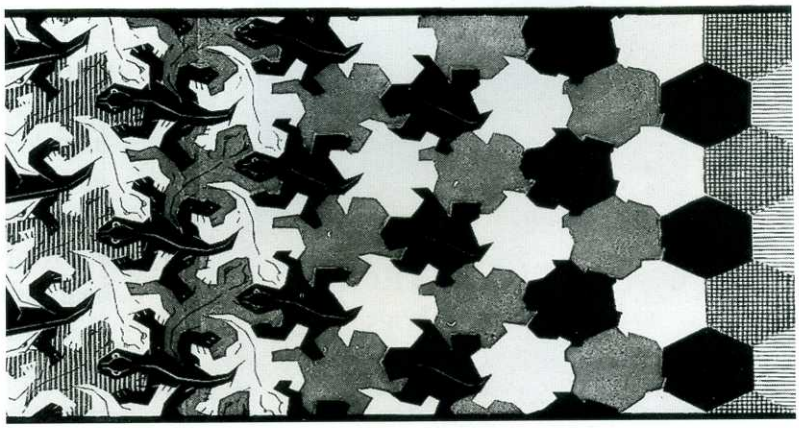
An ambiguous relationship between figure and ground can add surprising energy and power to a design. In Paul Cézanne's *Rocks Near the Caves above the Chateau Noir* (1.32), the trees and cliffs begin to break apart, creating a shifting pattern of planes and spaces. Completed just one year before Einstein published his special theory of relativity, this painting served as a springboard into a new art movement known as Cubism.

Figure/ground reversal pushes this effect even further. **Figure/ground reversal** occurs when first the positive then the negative shapes command our attention. As shown in a fragment from *Metamorphosis II* (1.33), M. C. Escher was a master of figure/ground reversal. The organic shapes on the left become an interlocking mass of black and white lizards. The lizards then evolve into a network of hexagons. Combined with the figure/ground reversal, this type of metamorphosis animates the entire 13-foot-long composition.

Figure/ground reversal requires a carefully balanced dialogue between opposing forces. Escher generally achieved this balance by using light and dark shapes of similar size. In figure 1.34, Sam Francis achieved a similar balance

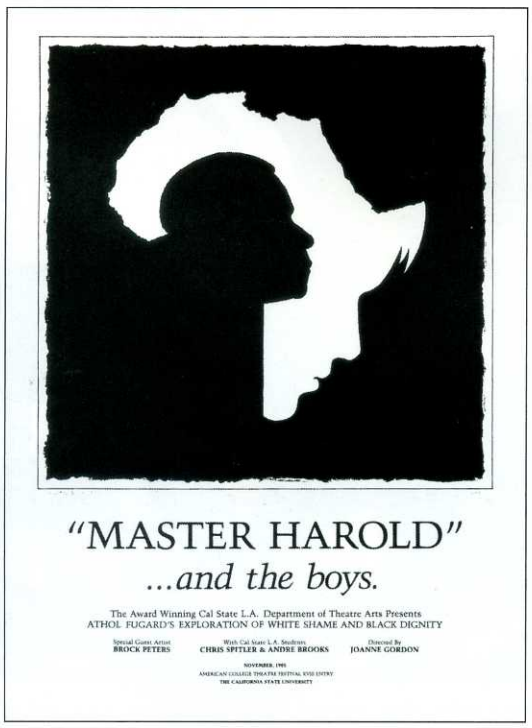


1.32 Paul Cézanne, *Rocks Near the Caves above the Chateau Noir,* 1904. Oil on canvas, 21.3 × 25.6 in. (54 × 65 cm).



1.33 M. C. Escher, part of *Metamorphosis II,* 1939–40. Woodcut in black, green, and brown, printed from 20 blocks on three combined sheets, 7½ × 153⅜ in. (19 × 390 cm).

1.34 Sam Francis, *Flash Point*, 1975. Acrylic on paper, 32¼ × 22⅞ in. (82 × 59 cm).



1.35 David McNutt, *"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys*, 1985. Poster.

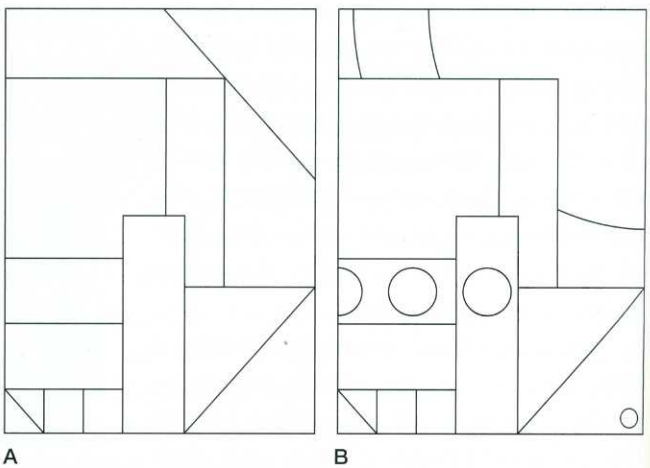
between a very small white square and a much larger red rectangle. The crisp boundary and central location strengthen the square. Despite its small size, it holds its own against the larger mass of swirling red paint.

Graphic designers often use figure/ground reversal to create multiple interpretations from minimal shapes. In figure 1.35, David McNutt used a single white shape on a black ground to create the head of a master and a servant within the outline of Africa. Used to advertise a South African play, the poster immediately communicates a dramatic human relationship within a specific cultural context.

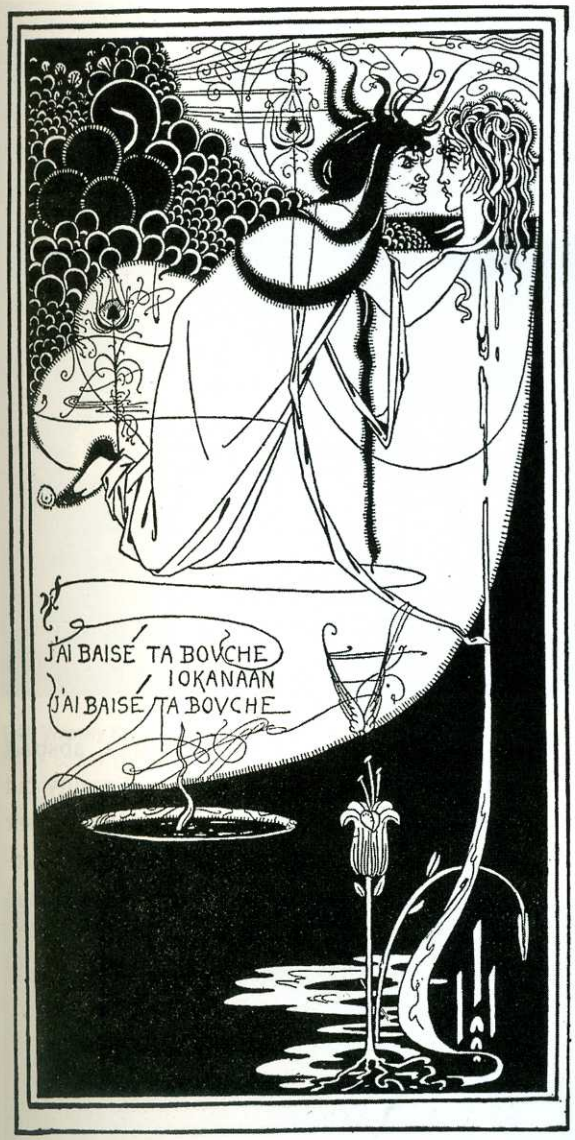
Rectilinear and Curvilinear Shapes

Rectilinear shapes are composed from straight lines and angular corners. **Curvilinear shapes** are dominated by curves and flowing edges. Simple rectilinear shapes, such as squares and rectangles, are generally cooperative. When placed within a rectangular format, they easily connect to other shapes and can run parallel to the compositional edge (1.36A). Curvilinear shapes, especially circles, are generally less cooperative. They retain their individuality even when they are partially concealed by other shapes (1.36B). As a result, curvilinear shapes can be used as targets that emphasize areas of special importance in a design.

Aubrey Beardsley (1.37) combined rectilinear and curvilinear shapes to create another interpretation of the Salomé story, described on pages 11–12.



1.36A and B Rectilinear and curvilinear shapes. Rectilinear shapes can easily be fit together to create a unified design. Curvilinear shapes tend to be more individualistic.



1.37 Aubrey Beardsley, ***Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist*, 1894.** Line block print, 11 × 6 in. (27.9 × 15.2 cm).

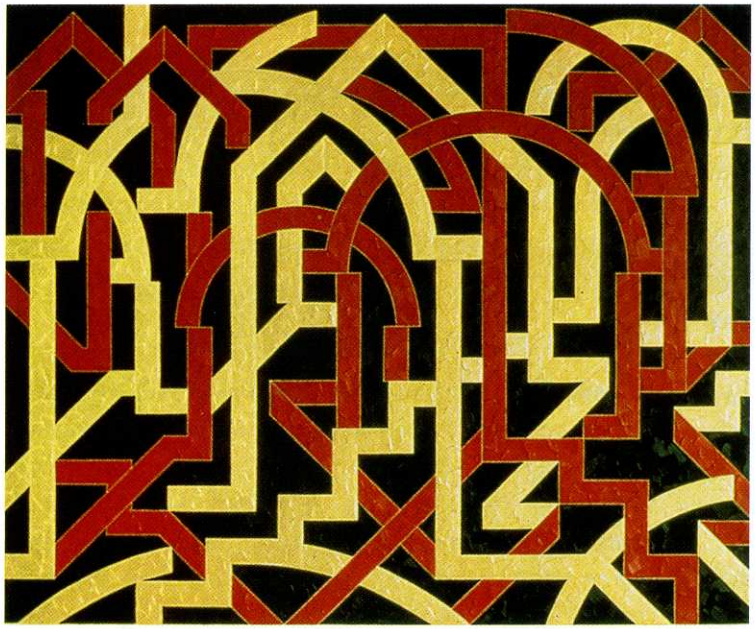
Using an internal boundary line, he emphasized the composition's rectangular shape. Within this boundary, curving black and white shapes create a series of complex visual relationships. A bubble pattern dominates the upper-left corner. In the upper-right corner, Salomé clutches Saint John's head. Extending from the head down to the flower, a white line follows the transformation of the dead saint's blood into a living plant. This line creates a conceptual and compositional connection between the top and bottom edges.

A very different combination of rectilinear and curvilinear shapes activates Robert Rauschenberg's *Brace* (1.38). The central image of three baseball players is surrounded by layered rectangles to the right, left, and bottom. A solid line extends from the catcher to the top edge. Vigorous brushstrokes add power to the painting. Occupying only a small fraction of the composition and surrounded by vigorously painted shapes, the circle *still* dominates the design: we *have* to keep our eyes on the ball!

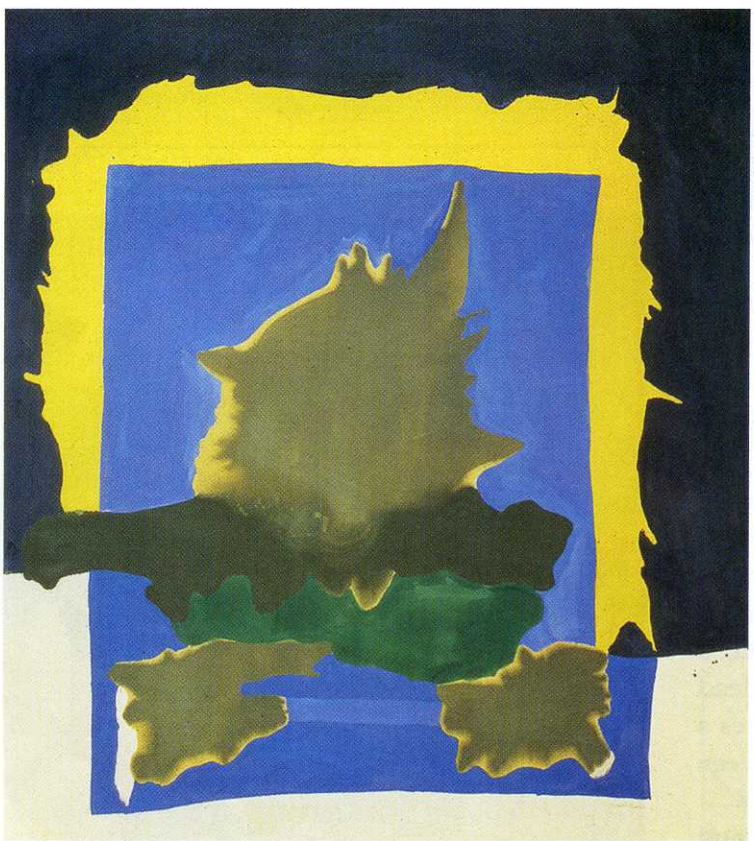
Geometric and Organic Shapes

Geometric shapes are distinguished by their crisp, precise edges and mathematically consistent curves. They dominate the technological world of architecture and industry, and they appear in nature as crystalline structures and growth patterns. In Valerie Jaudon's *Tallahatchee* (1.39), geometric shapes provide a clarity, harmony, and universality comparable to a musical composition. **Organic shapes** are more commonly found in the natural world of plants and animals, sea and sky. As shown in Helen Frankenthaler's *Interior Landscape* (1.40), organic shapes can add unpredictable energy, even when the composition as a whole is based on rectangular shapes.

1.38 Robert Rauschenberg, *Brace*, 1962. Oil and silkscreen on canvas, 60 × 60 in. (152.4 × 152.4 cm).



1.39 Valerie Jaudon, *Tallahatchee*, 1984. Oil and gold leaf on canvas, 6 ft 8 in. × 8 ft (2 × 2.4 m).



1.40 Helen Frankenthaler, *Interior Landscape*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 8 ft 8⅞ in. × 7 ft 8⅝ in. (266 × 235 cm).

Degrees of Representation

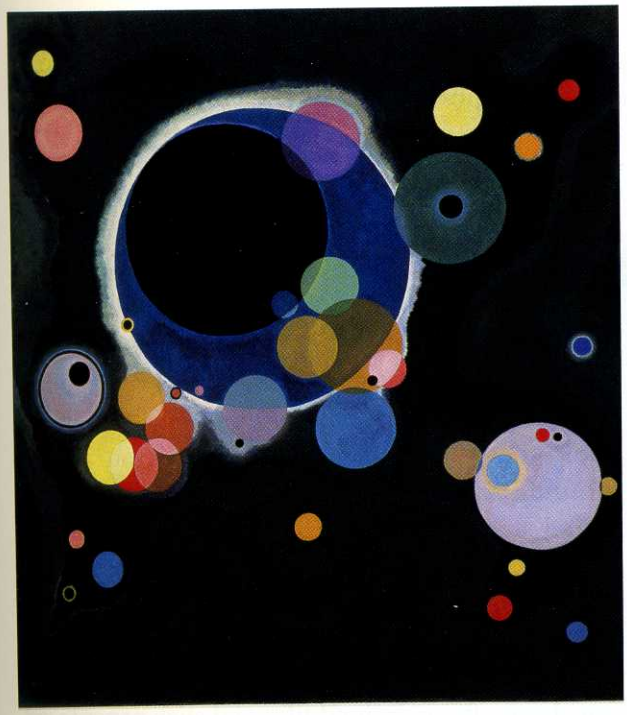
Nonobjective or **nonrepresentational shapes,** such as circles, rectangles, and squares, are **pure forms.** Pure forms are shapes created without direct reference to reality. Artists often use pure form to embody elusive emotions or express universal meaning. For example, in *Several Circles* (1.41), Wassily Kandinsky sought to express his complex spiritual feelings. For him, the simple circular shapes were as poignant and expressive as music.

Representational shapes are derived from specific subject matter and strongly based on direct observation. Most photographs are representational and highly descriptive. For example, in Ansel Adams's *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome, Yosemite Valley* (1.42), each variation in the cliff's surface is clearly defined.

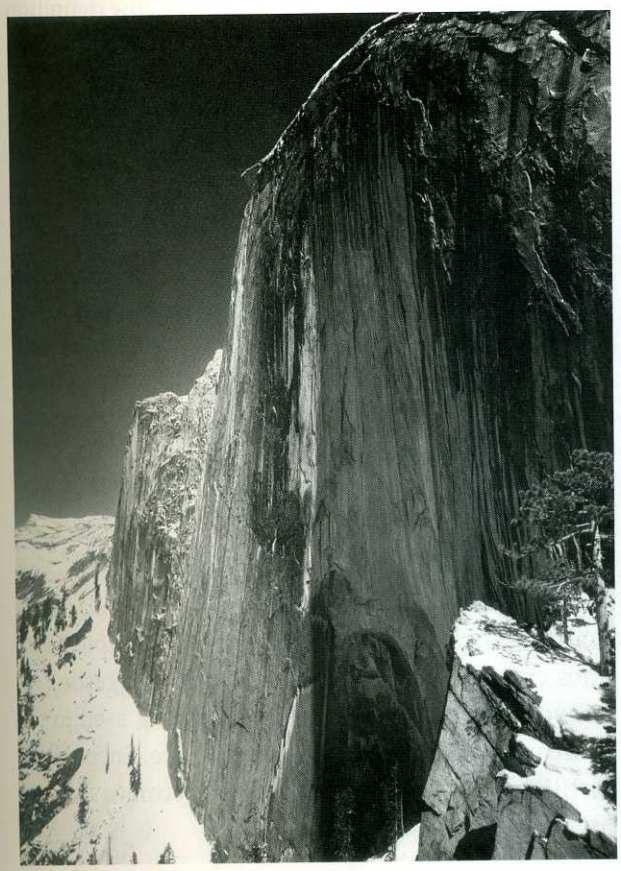
Between these two extremes, **abstract shapes** are derived from visual reality but are distilled or transformed, reducing their resemblance to the original source. In *Seventh Sister* (1.43), Robert Moskowitz deleted surface details from the rocky mountain. His abstracted cliff is a general representation of a vertical surface rather than a descriptive painting of a specific cliff.

Reference to reality is a traditional way to increase meaning in an artwork. Drawing on their experience in the physical world, viewers can connect to the illusion of reality presented in the painting. In a nonobjective image, lines, shapes, textures, and colors must generate all of the meaning. Because there is no explicit subject matter, some viewers find it more difficult to understand nonobjective images.

By contrast, abstract images can combine the power of association with the power of pure form. Charles Demuth's *. . . And the Home of the Brave* (1.44) demonstrates this. A factory has been turned into a series of lines and geometric shapes. Variations on red, white, and blue add a symbolic connection to the American flag. Painted during a period of nationwide unemployment, the factory is dark and

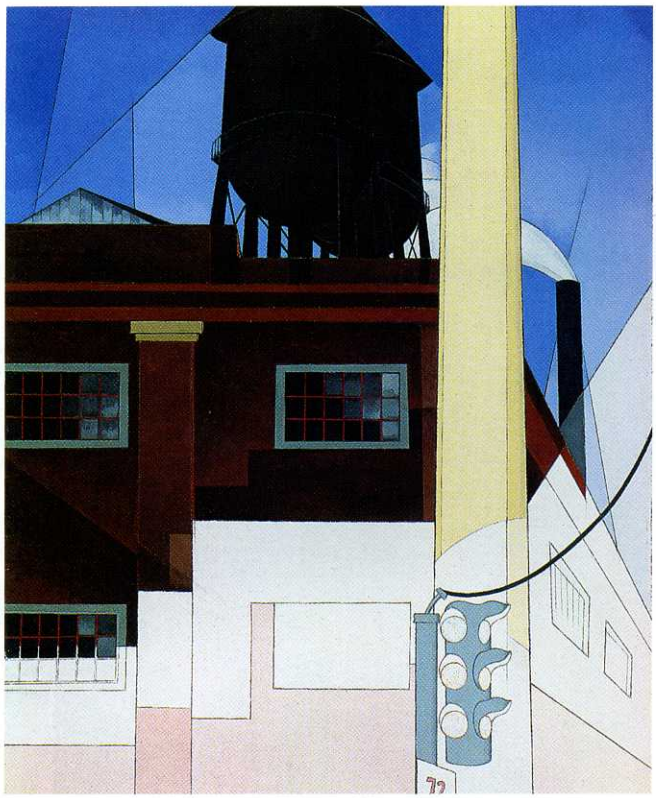


1.41 Wassily Kandinsky, *Several Circles,* **1926.** Oil on canvas, 55¼ × 55⅝ in. (140.3 × 140.7 cm).

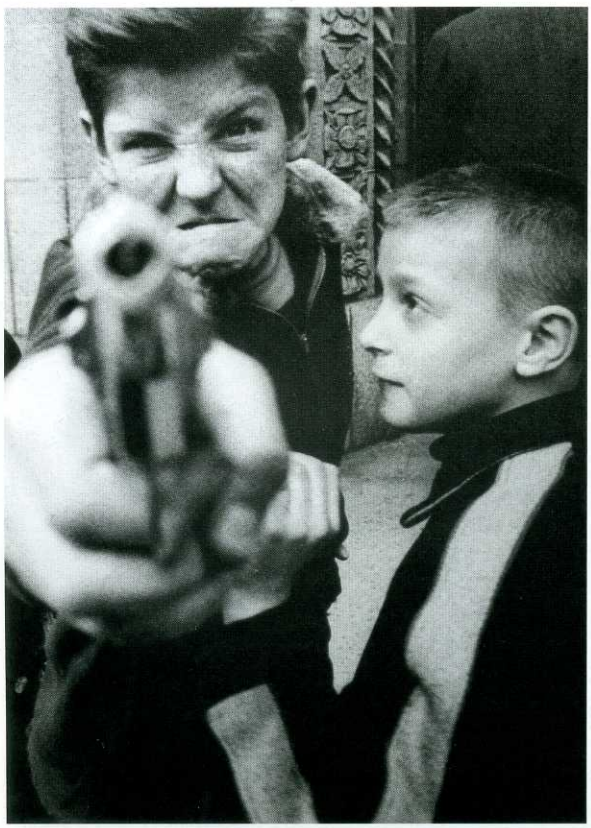


1.42 Ansel Adams, *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome, Yosemite Valley,* **1927.** Photograph.

1.43 Robert Moskowitz, *Seventh Sister,* 1982. Oil on canvas, 108 × 39 in. (274.3 × 99 cm).



1.44 Charles Demuth, . . . *And the Home of the Brave*, 1931. Oil on composition board, 29½ × 23⅝ in. (74.8 × 59.7 cm).



1.45 William Klein, *Gun 1, New York*, 1955. Gelatin silver print, 15¾ × 11¾ in. (40 × 29.8 cm).

forbidding. The ironic title (which is based on a line from the American national anthem) adds a subtle political statement.

Degrees of Definition

Definition is the degree to which a shape is distinguished from both the ground area and the positive shapes within the design. **High definition** creates strong contrast between shapes and tends to increase clarity and immediacy of communication. For this reason, the diagrams used in this book generally feature black figures on a white ground. **Low-definition** shapes, including soft-edged shapes, gradations, and transparencies, can increase the complexity of the design and encourage multiple interpretations.

Definition is an inherent aspect of photography. In addition to variations in focus, the photographer can choose finer-grained film and slick paper to create a crisper image, and coarser-grained film and textured paper to create a softer image.

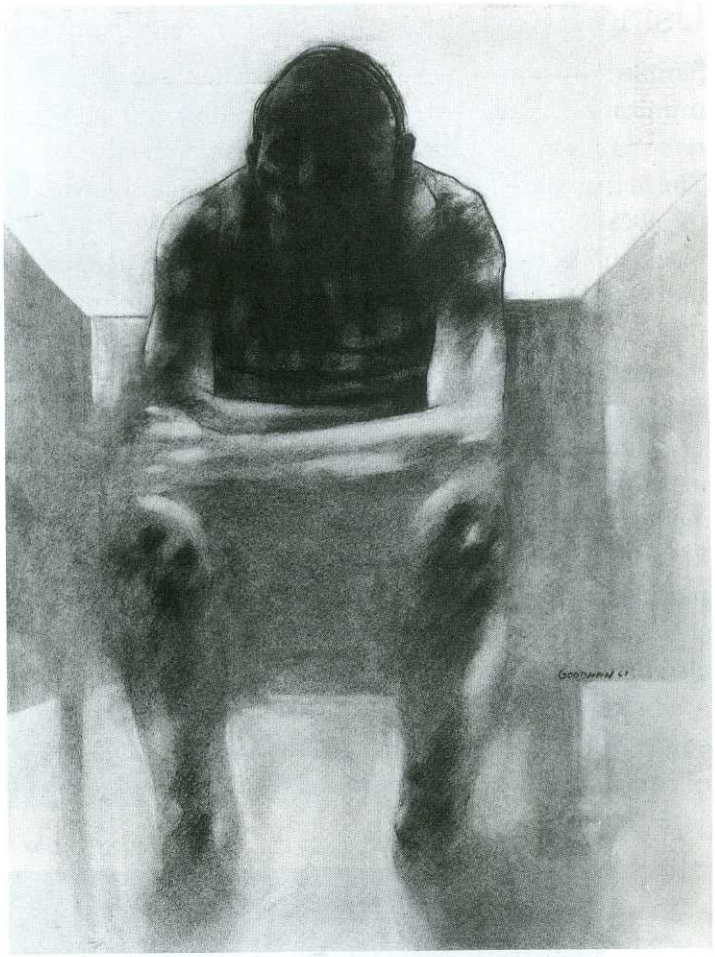
Variations in photographic definition can substantially affect meaning. We normally expect to see high definition in the foreground and low definition in the background. In *Gun 1, New York* (1.45), William Klein reversed this expectation. Pointed directly at the viewer's face, the gun itself is blurred, menacing, and monstrously large. Even more disturbing, however, is the scowling face of the boy holding the gun. Fierce and sharply focused, his face epitomizes both fear and rage.

Definition also plays an important role in drawing. Many mediums, including graphite and charcoal, can be used to create strong, clear lines as well as soft, fuzzy shapes. In Sidney Goodman's *Man Waiting* (1.46), charcoal was used to create a mysterious figure in a threatening space. The darker, more clearly defined shapes in the upper torso seem to push toward us, while the legs, hips, and chair dissolve into the background. Similarly, in Juan Muñoz's *Raincoat Drawing* (1.47), simple white lines create a frame above the couch, suggesting an unexpected interior space. The shading used in the staircase increases the illusion of space. Encouraged to fill in the details, the viewer becomes actively involved in both drawings.

Key Questions

REPRESENTATION AND DEFINITION

- Which will best express your idea: representation, nonrepresentation, or abstraction?
- Variations in definition can increase the illusion of space. Will your design benefit from greater depth?
- Definition can also direct the viewer's attention to specific areas in the design. How can definition enhance meaning in your design?



1.46 Sidney Goodman, *Man Waiting*, 1961. Charcoal on paper, 25⅝ × 19⅛ in. (65.1 × 48.7 cm).

1.47 Juan Muñoz, ***Raincoat Drawing*, 1992–93.** Mixed media on fabric, 49⅜ × 40⅛ in. (124.94 × 101.92 cm).

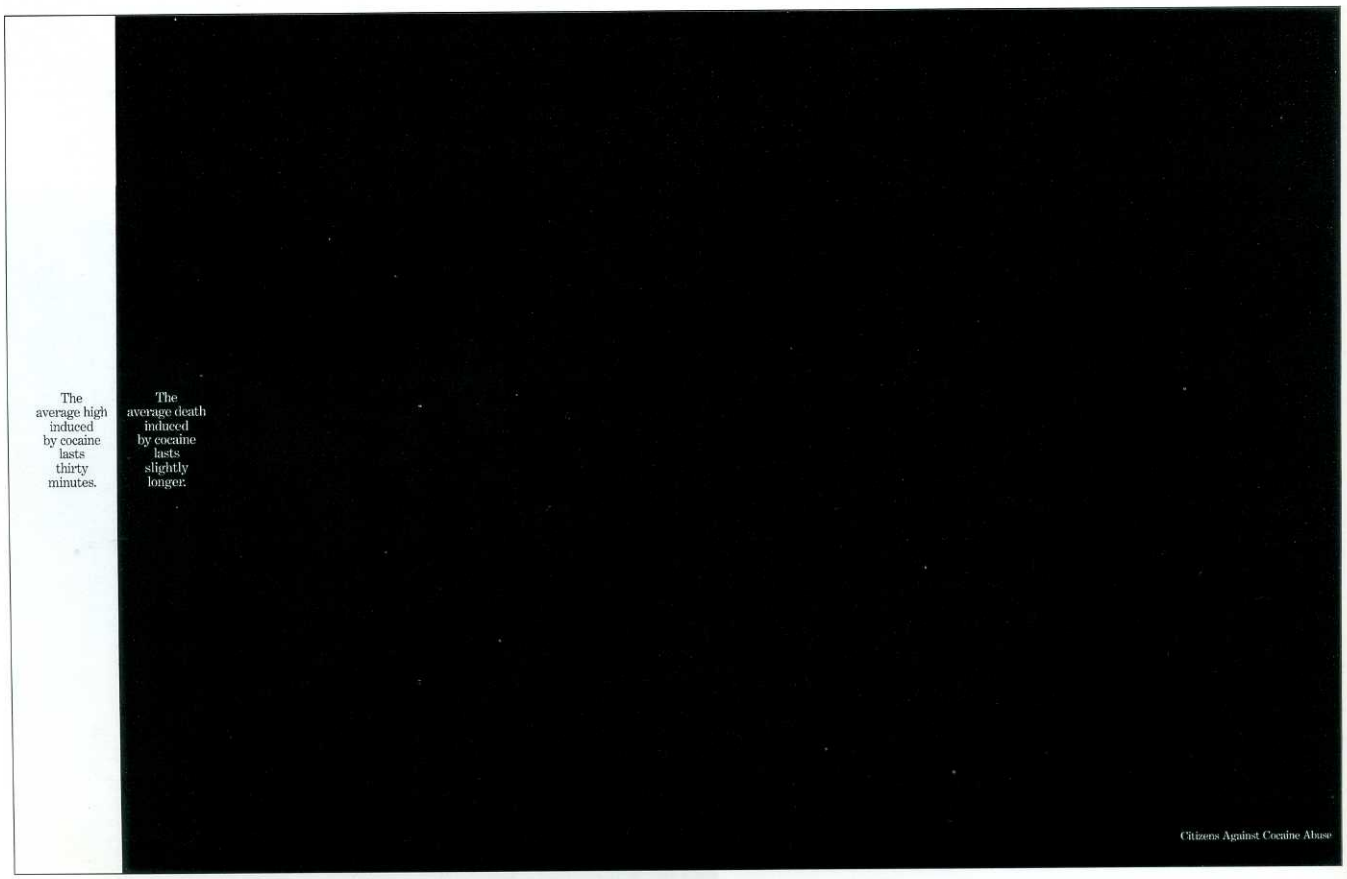
Using Shape

Simple shapes are often used when clear, direct communication is needed. Gary Goldsmith used just two shapes in an ad for an antidrug campaign (1.48). The text on the left reads "The average high induced by cocaine lasts thirty minutes." The text in the black shape on the right reads "The average death induced by cocaine lasts slightly longer." When these two sentences are compositionally combined, the narrow white band and the large black rectangle suggest the division between life and death.

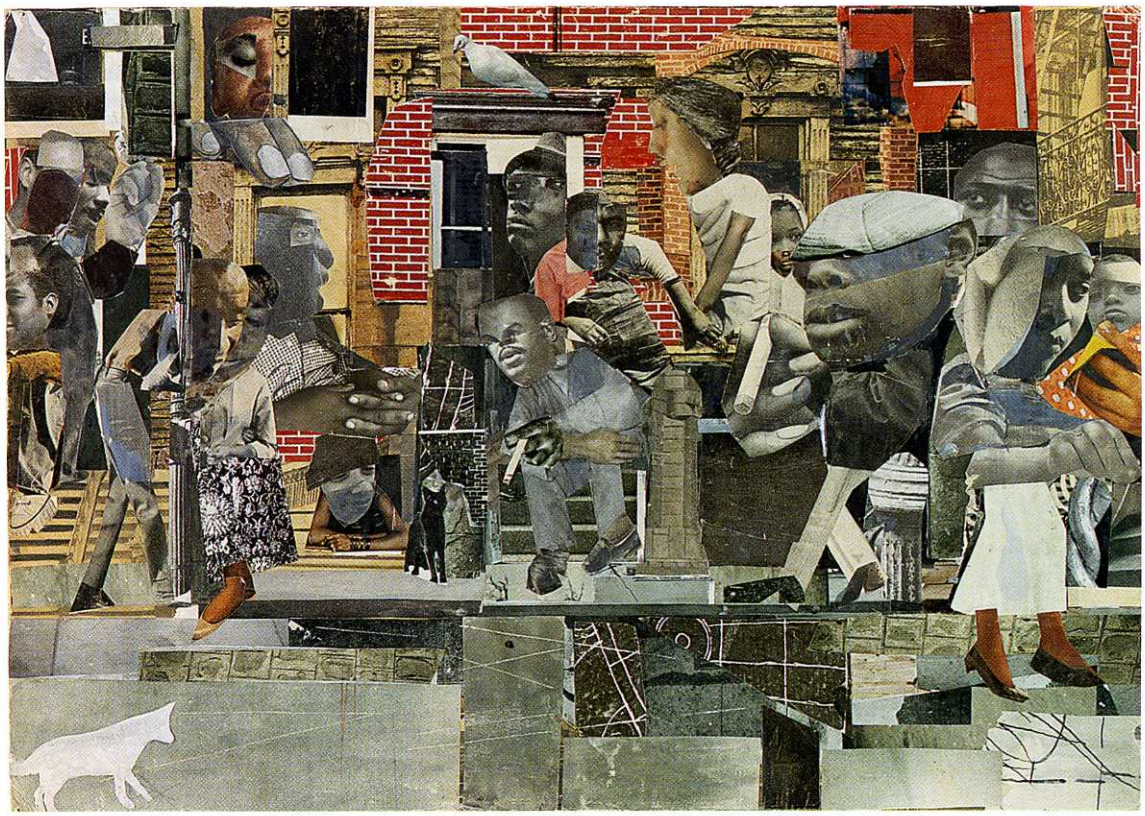
More complex shapes are often used when the message is subtle or contradictory. **Collage** is one method for creating such complex shapes. Constructed from visual fragments initially designed for another purpose, a collage combines two kinds of shapes: the shape of each piece of cut paper and the shapes created by the information printed on the paper.

In Romare Bearden's *The Dove* (1.49A), the outer edges of each cut fragment create a lively pattern of curvilinear and rectilinear shapes. The lines and textures printed on these photographic fragments create a second set of shapes. A linear diagram of this artwork demonstrates the complexity of the resulting composition (1.49B). Combining his perceptions of contemporary Harlem with childhood memories, Bearden used this interplay of the cut edges and printed textures to create a rich composition from the shifting shapes.

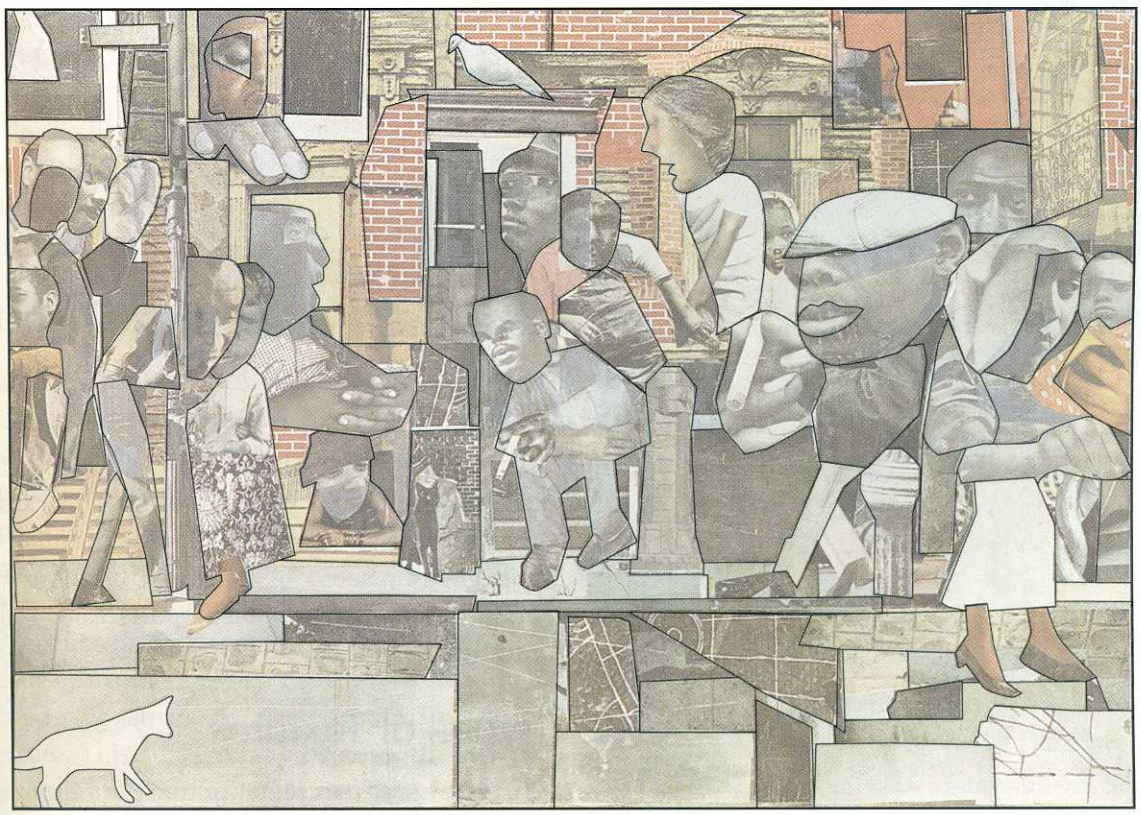
In *Target with Plaster Casts* (1.50), Jasper Johns combined simple shapes with sculptural objects to create an equally complex composition. A series of concentric circles creates a clearly defined target at the center of the painting. Nine sculptural fragments of a human figure line the upper edge—an ear, a hand, a mouth, and so forth. To add further complexity, scraps of newspaper were embedded in the colored wax from which the painting was constructed. Equally attracted to the representational body parts above and the symbolic target below, we must reconcile two very different forms of visual information.



1.48 Ad by Citizens Against Cocaine Abuse: "The average high induced by cocaine lasts thirty minutes. The average death induced by cocaine lasts slightly longer." Art Director & Designer: Gary Goldsmith; Copywriter: Neal Gomberg; Agency: Goldsmith/Jeffrey; Client: Citizens Against Cocaine Abuse.



1.49A Romare Bearden, *The Dove,* 1964. Cut-and-pasted paper, gouache, pencil, and colored pencil on cardboard. 13⅜ × 18¾ in. (34 × 47.5 cm).



1.49B Romare Bearden (compositional diagram). Printed and cut shapes work together to create a complex composition.