

Instructions for Emphasis with Scale and/or Proportion Photomontages

It is important for a designer to know how to control the attention of someone viewing their work. This assignment will investigate how to control attention through emphasis with the help of scale and/or proportion - how to make objects easy or difficult to notice.

Make a photomontage where you determine what will be noticed first, second and last (a hidden object). Explore how to make an object look completely out of scale.

Control of Attention

A designer needs to know how to control the attention of the viewers of their artwork. You cannot succeed in art without this knowledge.

Dominance / Emphasis

Dominance or emphasis describes a situation where something is more important or more noticeable than its surroundings. Information is rarely of uniform interest in art (except in wallpaper). Most art is used to communicate - to tell a story or present a point of view. There is usually a focal point, a place where the action begins. You should be able to control what will be noticed first and where the viewer's attention will go from there.

Subordination / Background

When there is dominance there must be subordination (things lower in ranking). In art this means that some things get more attention and some get less. Figure dominates ground for instance.

There are three methods for controlling emphasis in a visual image: **contrast**, **placement** and **isolation**.

Contrast

The objective of contrast is to produce maximum visibility. The more contrast there is the more noticeable an object is. You can achieve contrast by stylizing the following:

Color / Value - The strongest contrast in art is the difference between black and white. Color contrasts can be strong, but usually not as strong as value contrasts. Bright colors attract attention more than dull colors. There is room for a great deal of manipulation in color and value. That is one of the reasons that color is so difficult to use well.

To make something stand out use strong value contrasts. If color is used to make it bright, preferably use it against a dull background. Different colors that are the same value do not show as much as you would expect.

Size - When it comes to being noticed **BIGGER** is always better. There is a place for all different sizes in the scheme of things. It is not always desirable to be noticed first. Learning how to use size to control emphasis is important. Size also relates to relative scale.

Shape - An unusual shape can call attention to itself, but it is not as strong a contrast as size or value/color. Other contrasts such as direction and texture can also be used to control emphasis. Taken together all of these contrasts affect visibility, regardless of where the object is placed.

Placement

Where items are in relation to the format and each other can affect emphasis. We will study this more under the next assignment - Gestalt. Yet, it is a good idea to get a start about gestalt with this emphasis photomontage.

To the Format - The most important place in the format, by far, is the **center**. That is where the viewer looks first. The further from the center, the less noticeable an object becomes.

As objects contact the outside edges they become slightly more noticeable. That is because they relate to the format, which is always a dominant shape in any composition.

Objects that overlap the edge of the format call more attention to themselves. They seem to be going out or coming in to the composition. This works well if it is not overdone and the format shape is simple and clear.

To the other objects in the composition - Once you establish a primary focal point you can use proximity, similarity and continuance relationships (gestalt) to control what is to be noticed next.

Proximity - An overlapping, touching or close object is likely to be seen next (in that order) after a primary object.

The more visible (contrasting) the object is, the more likely this is to happen. **Where** you place objects is important.

Similarity - An object that is the same color, size, and/or shape will form a group with the primary object and be seen next.

The more alike the two objects are the stronger the link. Texture can also be an effective similarity device.

Choose images carefully. It may be necessary to exchange or modify elements to make similarity relationships clearer.

Continuance - If the primary object points or looks at another object, this can direct the viewer's attention to the secondary object. Proximity and similarity may be stronger but when two or more techniques are used together the effect is the strongest.

Eye direction, variations in line direction, reduction of size of objects, repetitive gaps and various perspectives are a few other ways to work with continuance in a composition.

Isolation

Isolation is a kind of placement - where something is put. An item that stands apart from its surroundings will be more noticeable. This is not likely to make an object be noticed first, but can make one object stand out. Where you put objects in the format and in relationship to other objects can strongly affect emphasis.

Controlling Emphasis

The primary object should stand out from its surroundings by contrasting against it (light against dark and vice versa) and be a different color and texture from the background.

To control what would be seen second, you would use a visible object (not as much as the first object) that was in a close proximity relationship to the first.

To hide an object in a composition, reverse all of the characteristics of the primary object. Make it small and low in contrast to its surroundings. It should be in similar color, value and/or texture to what is behind it.

Scale and Proportion

Scale deals with size. It refers to how large or small an item seems compared to what is considered normal or standard to its size.

Proportion is the relationship between parts of a whole unit or between two or more items perceived as a unit. Things would be considered out of proportion or the ratio between parts would be different sizes within the whole unit.

It is possible to make an object appear different in scale without changing its size.

Assignment for Emphasis with Scale or Proportion

1. Create a photomontage from magazine imagery utilizing emphasis with scale and/or proportion. If you scan the images and put them together via the computer, you must have the original magazine imagery to back up your collage. The point of the assignment is to work with what you have access to, rather than the unlimited sources on the Internet or in creating your own images.
2. Format size - 7" x 9" - landscape (horizontal) or portrait (vertical) with a 1/2" border in a color of your choosing.
3. **Make sure there is a first item seen, a second item and a hidden third item.** There must be at least three photographic images used - one for the out of scale object, one for the background, which could include the second seen item and one for the hidden item.

Suggestions

1. Look for a main subject. Aim for it to be large, clear, colorful and/or have high contrast. Next look for a background to use with the first image that will make it look out of scale. It is much easier to make something look large and show up first, than to make it look small. The background should be large enough to fill up most of the format for the main subject. It is possible to piece several pictures and/or colored papers together for a background. Make your main subject at least 10 times its normal size.
2. To do that you have to place the main subject in the background, so that it is clear where it is in space. If you put it on top of other items it will look close, not large. Set the object into the background by letting some features of the background appear to be in front of the subject. This may require some careful cutting and/or cutting a slot in the background and setting the subject in the slot.
3. The second item to be seen can be a feature of the background or a separate image collaged with the others. Test the effectiveness of your choices by asking at least two other people what they notice first, then second in your image, before gluing anything down. If you have planned carefully, they should see what you have arranged for them to see.
4. Hiding a third item requires you to place that object against a similar looking area in the image. Look for place with texture and find an object to hide that is similar in color and texture. The hidden object must look out of place where it is hidden. Have some fun and see how visible an object you can hide.
5. To make the illusion of scale work well it is important that you control where the objects are in space relative to one another.