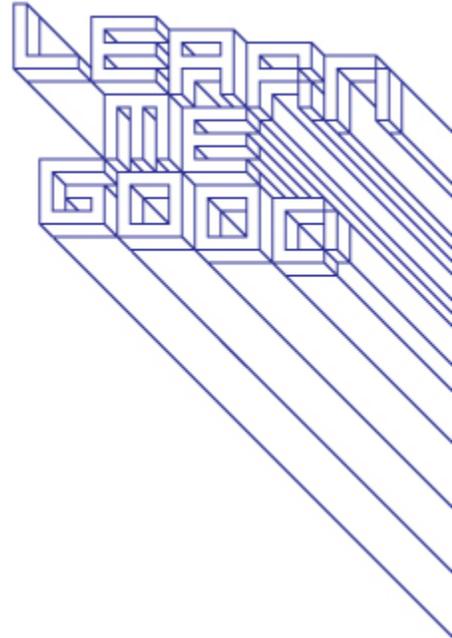


DART 221|2 B :
VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXT

SESSION: Fall 2020
INSTRUCTOR: Christopher Moore
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SCHEDULE: Mondays 13:30—17:30
DATE RANGE: 08|09|20—07|12|20
STUDIO: EV—7.745
DIGITAL LAB: EV—5.7815
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 13:00—15:00
[e-mail for an appointment]



Design permeates and underscores all aspects of our daily lives—from the clothes we choose to wear, to the paths we take to school or work—even the way we tie our shoes exemplify the design process. The word design literally means to mark out or to devise, suggesting a conscious effort to create a solution to a perceived problem, and to record this information in some way, shape, or form. While we may not physically sketch out our paths to and from school, we have an internal map or schema, which we call upon each time we head out the door. The design process is essentially a series of logical operations that are based upon a set of underlying rules, which have been pre-determined.

“...A building is not designed by putting together a series of rooms. Any (good) building has an underlying design concept that binds all the parts together into a whole. Without this it is not architecture.”

—Edmund N. Bacon (1910—)

In the quotation above, Bacon suggests that elementary units, when brought together, do not necessarily comprise a cohesive whole. Without a clear structure and set of guidelines, the building will not come together in a meaningful (or structurally secure) manner. All parts must inevitably relate back to the blueprint, the recipe, or master plan. Similarly, Daoist thinker Lao-Tse expresses this concept through an architectural metaphor:

“The reality of a room is to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and walls, not in the ceiling and walls [themselves].”

—Lao-Tse (604—531 BCE), *Book of Tea*

If we extend this concept to graphic design and typography, Lao-Tse might suggest that words and pictures on a page are meaningless without a sense of organization. Without language, syntax, and paragraph structures, individual letterforms present a random and chaotic message. Effective composition and layout “enclose” and encode the meaning in a format that is logical, legible, and easily understood.

Throughout the years, artists and designers have devised a number of systems to organize information. In Egyptian hieroglyphs, the scale and size of individual figures were depicted according to their rank in society—pharaohs, kings and queens appeared as giants, while servants and slaves were miniscule, by comparison. This system communicated not only physical descriptions and details, but also addressed familiar social and cultural values of the era. Likewise, twentieth century modernists used various grid systems to create rigid, geometrical structures into which information could be positioned. This idea was presented as a universal, neutral, and international system that would be theoretically suitable for any content/theme in locations throughout the globe. Of course, this system completely disregards regional and cultural differences, which are critical for effective communications.

At the heart of good design is communication—an understanding of audience, message and context in which the message will be received. By studying the basic components of visual language, one can become versed in the “tools” used to create compositional frameworks, and learn to make appropriate aesthetic decisions. The role of art in design is subservient, but nonetheless connected to the role of communication. One must be aware of the common visual tropes that speak to specific communities and individuals.

In this course, students will learn the basic language, history, and discourse of visual design, as it relates to contemporary practices. Composition, colour theory, and Gestalt principles will be addressed through a series of rigorous design exercises, leading from simple forms to complex page architectures. The focus of *Visual Communication in Context* is on training the observational faculties, and providing useful “rules” for revealing the underlying structures present in effective design communications.

“The most difficult things to design are the simplest.”
—Raymond Loewy (1893-1986)

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This studio course engages students in the study and application of graphic composition and visual communication. It focuses in particular on the elements and principles of layout and colour theory.

PLEASE CHECK BACK FOR FINALIZED COURSE OUTLINE.