

Intercultural
**DESIGN
BASICS**

Advancing Cultural and
Social Awareness through Design

by Susanne P. Radtke

BISPUBLISHERS

User instructions

The book comes with a learning app that offers hands-on, fun and interactive content!

Install the app in just 3 steps:

- Download the “Intercultural Design Basics” app from the Google Play Store or Apple’s App Store. As an owner of the book, you will receive our app for free!
- Find your website access code on the label on the front flap. Enter it on the following website:
www.intercultural-design-basics.com
You will then receive your personalized Play Store or App Store promo code.
- Now unlock the app using your promo code.

Point the camera of your smartphone or tablet at the QR codes in the book and off you go!

The following content is available on the app:

-  Videos (interviews with designers, workshops and animations)
-  Projections in augmented reality (visual input in 3D space)
-  Galleries and slideshows (learning – step by step)
-  Games (learning by doing)

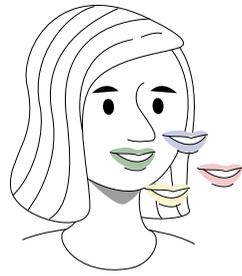
Have fun!

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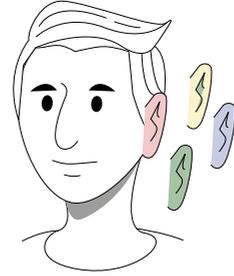
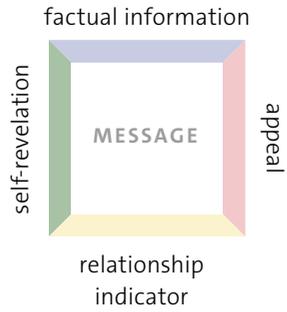
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SENDER
with 4 mouths



RECEIVER
with 4 ears

1.04 Communication
square according to
Schulz von Thun

The communication square

Signs serve first and foremost to communicate, to exchange information. At the end of the sixties, the communication theorist and philosopher Paul Watzlawick, working in a research team in California's Palo Alto, formulated five axioms to explain human communication. The most well-known of these five axioms states that we cannot not communicate. What that means, is that we are always transmitting non-verbal messages through our behavior, even when we are silent.

A follow-up model with a strong practical component was developed at the beginning of the 1980s by psychologist Friedemann Schulz von Thun. This model is used a great deal in communication courses, and according to the model, every message has four different facets.

We all know the situation where we are trying to communicate something, but our listener does not understand what we are trying to say (or cannot or does not want to understand). Our message might be very clearly and unequivocally formulated, and yet we don't get the intended message across. Why is that the case? Because there is no such thing as purely factual information. Every statement we make is imbued with our personal feelings, whether we are aware of that or not.

This is also the case in professional life, for example, at a lecture on a specific subject. We aim to address our listeners in the best way possible with an interesting topic, the **factual information**. We pay attention to how we come across on a personal level and to what we reveal of ourselves. That is the **self-revelation**. By going into contributions to the discussion, we show that we respect our vis-à-vis thus giving a **relation-**

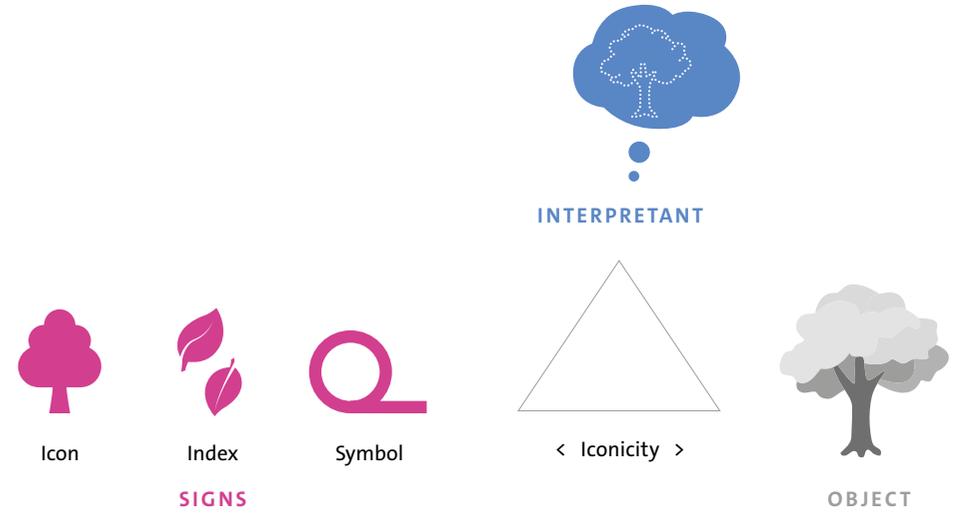
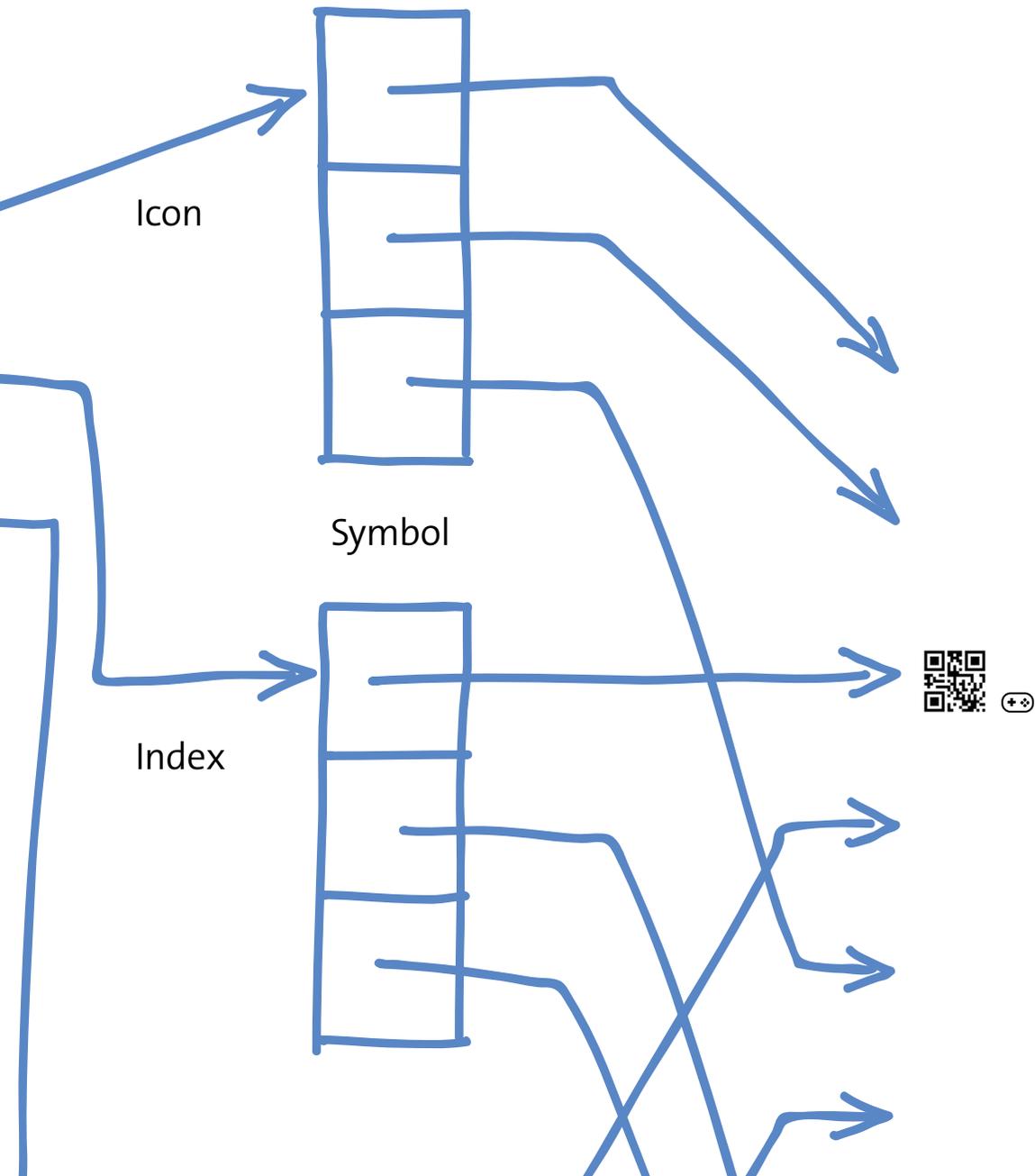
ship indicator. We focus on what it is we want to achieve in our listener. This part of the message contains an appeal.

How our listeners interpret our messages and how they see us as a person does not have to coincide with our intentions. Clarifying this discrepancy and improving the exchange of information is the declared aim of all communication models.

“One cannot not communicate.”

Paul Watzlawick

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Relevant for design practice are Peirce's three categories of the sign or the bearer of the sign: icon – index – symbol.

Let us look at the object "tree". The iconic sign counterpart would be every image that is similar to the tree as an object: a true-to-detail illustration or also a pictogram-like image of the tree.

The indexical sign refers to an actually existing object. It has a factual connection, but no similarity to the object. Leaves lying on the ground allude to trees, but they do not look like trees. An index is a sign that bears a temporal and a spatial relationship to its object or referent. A classic example is smoke, that stands for fire, or a fingerprint, which alludes to a specific person. Indices can also be symptoms like fever for illness.

The symbol refers to the object as the result of a rule or convention. Most symbols are based on an "unspoken" and culturally conditioned concurrence. The relationship is both conventional and arbitrary. The sign used on maps to refer to trees is a symbol that first has to be learned. Other symbols are traffic signs, religious symbols, logos, symbols used in the natural sciences and letters of the alphabet.

There is a subdivision in icon, the iconicity, which describes the similarity to the object. The degree of iconicity is reduced to the extent that the degree of abstraction of the image increases. The more abstract the image of the tree, the lower the iconicity. The abstraction process plays a considerable role in design in an increasingly complex world, as simplifying processes and efficient orientation are essential in the real and digital world.

The abstraction process

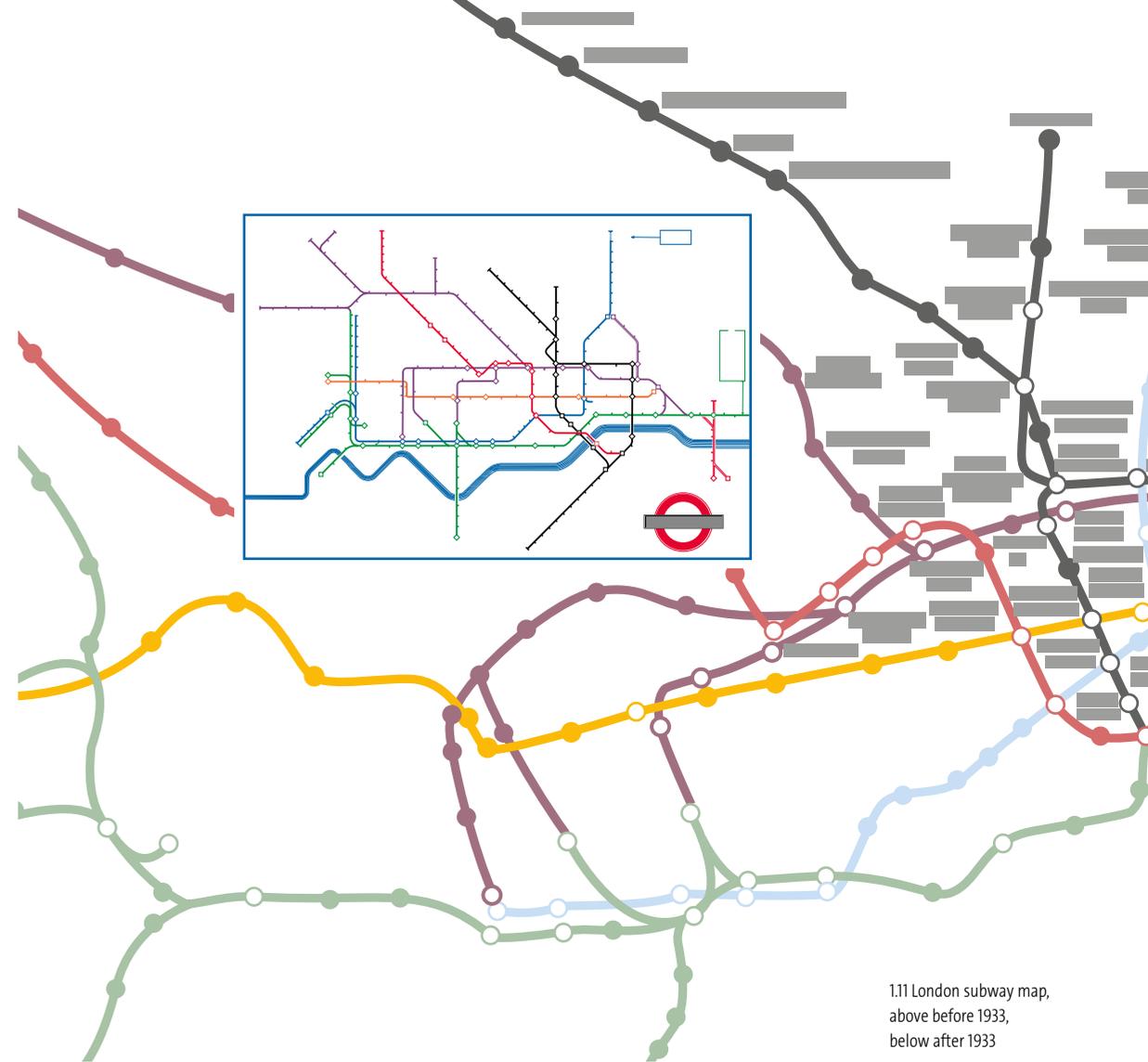
The London Tube map is an example that has cult status among cartographers, as the technical draughtsman Harry Beck did away with the topographically authentic illustration in favor of a schematic one. He focussed on the essential elements like stations and line intersections and standardised the lines into horizontals, verticals and diagonals at 45° angles. This ground-breaking route map was introduced in 1933 and set a standard that influenced all such maps that followed.

At the beginning of the 20th century, minimalistic illustrations of nature were also preferred and, proceeding from Impressionism via Expressionism to Constructivism, the way was paved from figuration to abstraction. Piet Mondrian, together with Wassily Kandinsky, is among the founders of abstract painting, whereby Mondrian went the way of geometric abstraction, freeing himself gradually from the figura-

tive. Instead, Kandinsky wanted to express individual and spiritual experience, but later on as a Bauhaus lecturer developed a set of rules for his language of form that was universal.

There is basically no applied design without abstraction, as a message must be clear and unequivocal so that it can be decoded as free from disruption as possible by the receiver: think back to the Shannon-Weaver Model. But, unlike in art, design products are always directed at a use or an act.

- Focus on the essential elements
- Reduce the amount of elements



1.11 London subway map, above before 1933, below after 1933



1.10 Logo development of "Pelikan", pen manufacturer

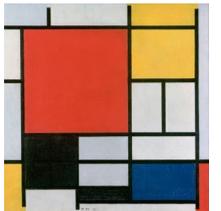


1938



2003

1.12 Piet Mondrian, Blossoming apple tree, 1912 / Composition No. 11, 1913 / Composition 1920



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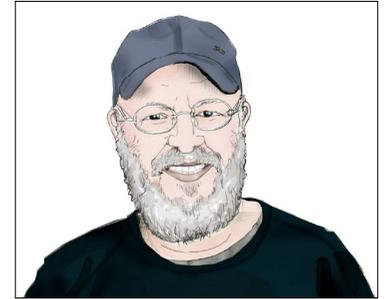


1.22 Poster "Stay home", 2020

1.23 Poster "Superhero doctors", 2020

Please describe your educational background, including your studies, work/study, and travel.

I was born in Israel and grew up in a crisis-torn region there, and experienced several wars in my youth, such as the Six-day War when I was ten years old. On the other hand, I was brought up in a household where it was very normal to fix things, as my father worked in construction. I was taught by my parents to make the world a better place. After I was in the military for 4 years, I traveled in the United States for a year. It was there that I discovered photography and its importance for me. I started to study Visual Communications in my twenties and graduated with a BFA when I was 26. I worked in several agencies before establishing my own agency in 2001. My political poster art developed parallel to that, as well as my comprehensive worldwide teaching.



Yossi Lemel

Studied at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, Israel
Currently Senior Lecturer at Holon Institute of Technology, Israel
2001 Established Lemel Cohen Creative Factory, Tel Aviv Yafo, Israel

What countries or cultures have you worked with closely and/or lived in? Have you had formative experiences in other cultures?

Communication – and language in particular – is a very important factor in my worldwide workshops. I communicate a lot with my students. I speak English, German, French and Hebrew and don't need a translator in most of the countries I teach in. But in some countries, such as Mexico, Turkey, Korea and others, students are not really fluent in English and I have to use translators. This is practical but makes the communication less direct and authentic, and only a part of the message is conveyed. My most formative experiences have been in Poland, as their visual culture – mainly in poster design – feels very close to my own art. It's almost as if the design there shares my own DNA.

What did you know about these countries/cultures before you started working together?

In my school days I was already exposed and influenced by late-seventies poster art from Poland; its Polish School of Poster Art. I was also influenced later in my design studies by the illustrator Seymour Chwast and his strong iconic visual language. As a designer, you have to be curious and to expand your horizons. Before I teach in another country with a culture that I don't know much about, I read as much as I can.

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Overview

➤ The point is the smallest element in design. Geometrically, it has no expanse and merely describes the position on a surface and in a space. In mathematics, the point is zero-dimensional.

➤ The line is made of many points and can be defined as the pathway of a moving point. The line always has a direction based on the reading direction and this lends it a dynamic quality. It has a length, but not a width. If you draw a line, then you create a boundary between two areas. Lines demarcate, separate and give order. They can be straight, curved or bent.

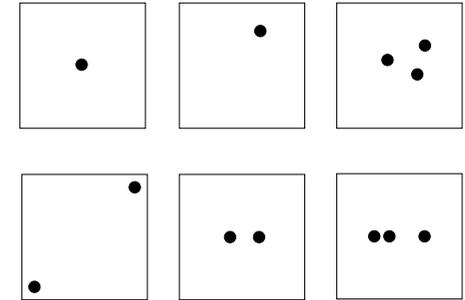
➤ The plane consists of rows of points. It has a size and a surface area that is defined by its width and length. We can only generate a figure-ground relationship and a positive-negative effect and create proportions using surfaces. The three basic forms square, circle and triangle are the bases for every other geometrical form.



I BASIC ELEMENTS

THE POINT
Position: dimension 0

II STATES

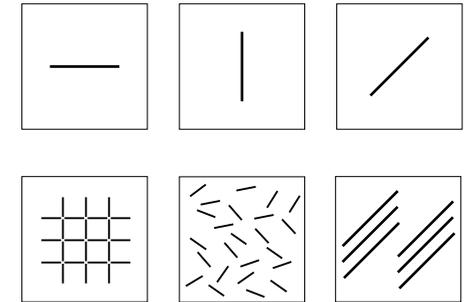


Symmetry, asymmetry, tension

Contrast, attraction/ balance, imbalance

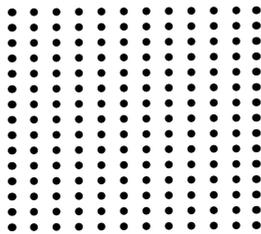


THE LINE
Direction: dimension 1

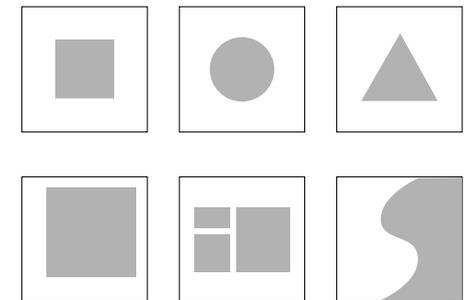


Stability, instability, direction

Order, chaos, rhythm



THE PLANE
Proportion: dimension 2



Square, circle, triangle

Figure-ground relationship, proportion, positive-negative effect





2.05 Still from an animation



The foundations of design are shaped by
 ↗ the psychology of perception and/or Gestalt psychology and Gestalt laws
 ↗ the neurosciences.

The Gestalt laws were formulated in the 19th century by German Gestalt psychologists based on empirical studies. The neuronal processes in perception did not come into the equation until the 20th century, above all through imaging techniques. Up to the present day, Gestalt laws are implemented in design praxis, but are also applied in the automated perception of objects using artificial intelligence.

Human perception comes from our five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. More than 50% of the human brain is used to analyze and interpret visual stimuli. Optical stimuli hit the retina of the eye, are translated into nerve impulses and processed by the brain. This sounds simple, but the exact way in which the brain processes optical information has not yet been fully researched. Not only the biological sensory system is involved in the process of perception, our previous experiences and our own psychological makeup play a role. In Constructivism, a philosophical school within epistemology, it was postulated that each of us “constructs” the world in our own head.

In one experiment, kittens were exposed for months to an environment consisting only of horizontal stripes. Afterwards, they were unable to perceive of vertical elements in a room such as chair legs and they bumped into them. As a result of the experiment conditions, their brains had not developed any direction-sensitive neurons that reacted to vertical stripes. So how we perceive something not only has to do with external stimuli, but also with our sensory system, which is shaped by our previous experiences.

Although it is clear that our brain reacts to perceptual stimuli and that its structure changes by being exposed to repetitive impressions, it is less known that we can also influence the neuronal plasticity of the brain, for example through meditation, which increases the density of neurons in the hippocampus. What that means is that we can change the way our brain works just by using the power of our imagination. If we allow our way of seeing things to be guided, we will see our surroundings with “new” eyes and to quote Wassily Kandinsky: “If the point of departure is correct and the direction well chosen, the goal cannot be missed”.

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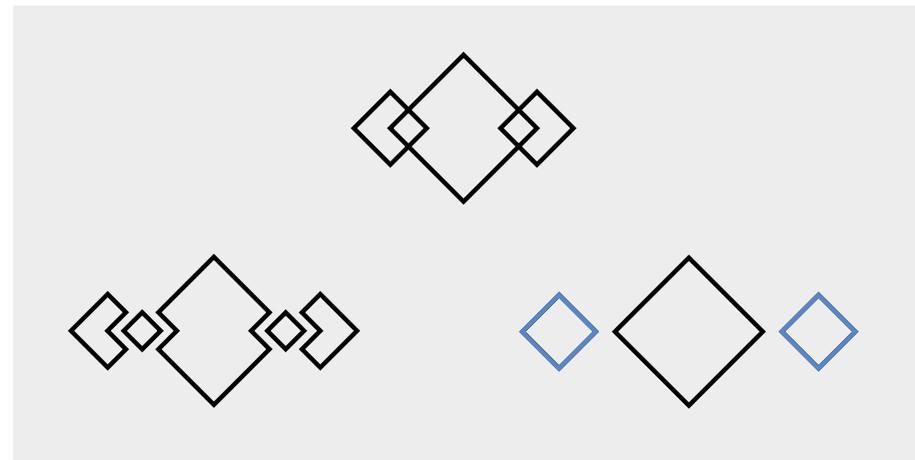
“Good Design”

Is there such a thing as a “good design”? What exactly is meant by it and is this term – which was coined in the 1950s – not long since outdated? The Swiss artist, architect, designer and Bauhaus student Max Bill, as well as the renowned American graphic designer Raul Rand and others, devoted themselves almost simultaneously to the credo of simplicity, functionality and timelessness.

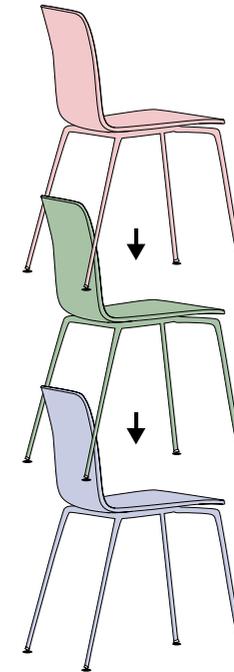
This period of Functionalism was followed by countercurrents that can be attributed to Postmodern-

nism. Emotion and fantasy became socially acceptable again and let the design world breathe a sigh of relief, as if liberated from an overly tight corset made of design premises.

Logos that once seemed to be carved in stone have become flexible today and are adapted to fit in with different applications and messages. The working world of designers is also marked by flexibility; they work in workspaces that are not tied to one location and form global networks together.



2.23 Law of continuity



2.24 HAL Tube Stackable, Vitra, Jasper Morrison, 2010

Design solutions are the outcome of different social and economic conditions and no longer have universal validity in the international context. The way in which we perceive things is, of course, subject to change, but the Gestalt laws and the basic principles governing perception are intercultural. This connects us beyond the constantly changing aspects of style.



2.25 Malaysian bicycle rickshaws, known as “Bejaks”



2.26 Hans (Nick) Roericht, Stacking tableware TC 100, Design 1958/59

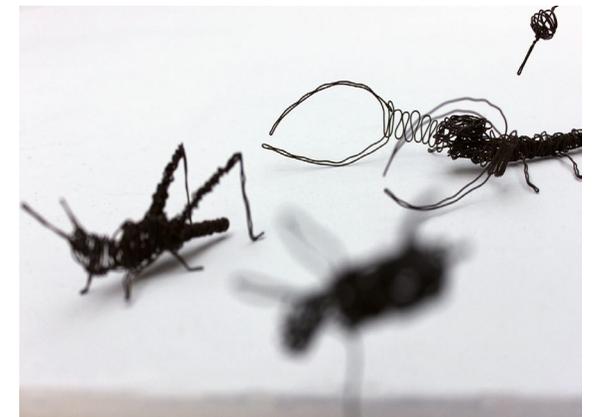
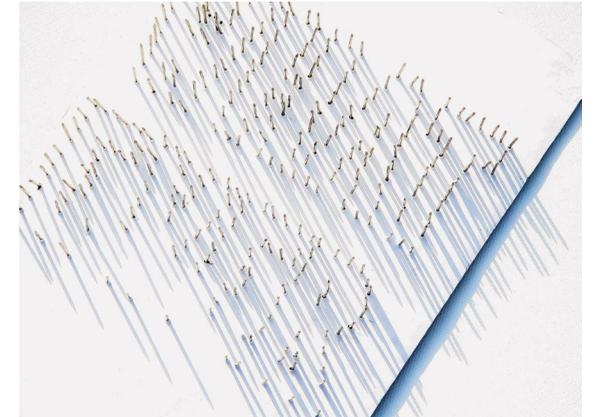
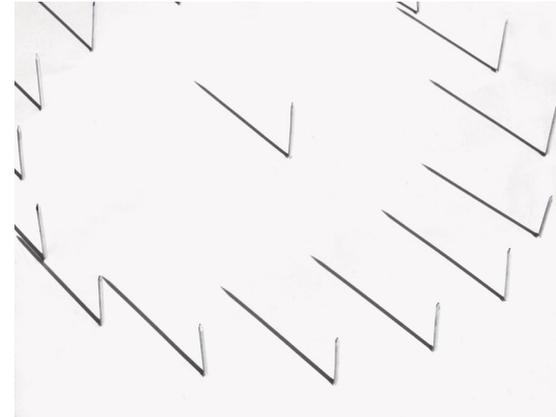
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Daniela Kirchlechner, Berlin

From two-dimensional to three-dimensional

Assignment

“Draw” a three-dimensional object using wire and present it in a setting using light and shade!



2.31 The line in space – light and shade | Giving form, light + shade + photographic composition