https://www.are.na/design-seminar-contemporary-practice/david-reinfurt-np3t6ac8ocw

Anna

About David:

- Professor at Princeton
- Started/opened many companies
- Monograph with MIT Press
- Does a lot of different projects that are “not discreet from each other,” end up being linked somehow
- Independent Designer
    - Studied design in grad school – not in undergrad

Companies:

- ORG:
    - Small software company
    - Him + a few assistants
    - Commission and design small bits of software
    - Create iOS apps
    - Print version of Are.na
        - Basement studio
        - Snowman drinks – coconut slushies
- Dexter Sinister
    - Works with Stuart
    - Institute of contemporary arts in London
        - Redesigning identity and graphics
        - Make changes incrementally instead of all at once “low key changes”
        - 5 year change
        - Series of graphics, optical illusions, no one clear identity
- The Serving Library
    - Publishing project
    - Commission new writing around design and art “bulletins”
    - Free as downloadable PDFs
        - Timestamp of when it was downloaded, collecting data
        - This was an act of publishing
    - Once a year book publication – Roman Amsterdam
        - Translation of “obvious code” to English (Minari) October
        - Next issue: Halmers: naïve set theory – inventory of objects at the serving library with descriptions
        - Garage space in Gent, Belguim
        - “When it changed” – work coming full circle.

A *New* Program for Graphic Design:

- Published in Sept/19 – inventory press
- Graphic design course in Princeton
    1) Basic typography class
    2) Gestalt psychology
    3) Interface – the advanced class
- Before: grad school of architecture at Columbia
- At Princeton: non-design students could take it as an interesting course
    - Reset expectations of teaching design, can be applied to a lot of other subject matter

    - › *Students did not know if drop box was a t shirt company – lol*
- Liberty approached him, he did not want to write a book
    - › Plan: “speak a book”
    - › Would be a series of events (July 2017)
    - › Book was based on the three courses – 1 semester a day courses
        Events would be recorded, transcribed and then made into a book
        First edit was a disaster, content was repetitive and had errors

George Corrin:

- Liked to talk about design and drink martinis
- Designed debate set for ABC

Paul Rand:

- ABC logo, name change, pratt institute

** David design the interface for subway metrocard – an interface that has been around for 20 years

Slideshow:
(David played a slideshow video of all slides shown during the lectures made for the book, explained whichever slide someone said to stop on)
Slides:

- Inverted metal letter press
- Cheap mobile
- Business card software
- Muriel Cooper
- Scale model of Chicago exhibition
- Attempt to describe Gestalt
- Industrial artisian screen printer

Questions/Discussion:
Q: Where does the name dexter sinister come from?
Q: Students will look for rules of graphic design, but they don’t exist. Thoughts?
Q: What is it like teaching at Princeton? How do you address __ in your teaching?
Q: How do you ensure a design is successful for a wide audience?
Q: Thoughts on pentagram system for MIT?

<u>Sophie</u>
Intro: Reinfurt is an independent graphic designer working in NY, doing many different things that are not all distinct. One thing is never separate from the other; different projects are connected. They overlap.

Miscellaneous sentences: Teaching can be more publicly accessible activity, more outside situation, its not about what you convey but how you convey it. We need weight so we don't get blown away. Design presents itself as being made of rules; maybe there are; but he does not think it is that productive to teach them; the student wants to acquire the skill; Reinfurt wants to upscale their expectations. Rules are reductive. And there are no rules for gestalt, it’s about intuition. What drew him in (design) was a book in a library of pictures of all the technical pens that you can use. He was interested in the tools and techniques.

O-R-G: small software company; Reinfurt and assistants who design useless softwares such as apps and screensavers (in collaboration with an artist, commissioned by a contemporary art foundation). They do events in his studio space in NY: a launch for a print publication linked to are.na (first edition). The screensavers are sold off postcards: on it there is a download code where you get the screensaver. The public event is part of the work.

Dexter Sinister: in collaboration with Stuart Bailey. They work on a project for the Institute of Contemporary arts of London who do exhibitions, live events, music, talks and has a film program. Dexter Sinister re-designs their identity. They asked to be involved for 5 years. They are dealing with the exhibition graphics, printed material and website. The institute does not have one clear identity but a series of graphics about illusions.

The Serving Library: in collaboration with three other designers. It is a publishing project. They commission new writing around design and art; they offer those for free as PDFs on the website (15th issue now). When you download it, there is a time stamp (identified when it was downloaded). It also makes a public list of what PDF is downloaded and when: downloading as an act of publishing.

A New Program for Graphic Design: Reinfurt taught 10 years at Princeton and still teaches two classes there now. 10 years ago, he was invited by the Design department to build a graphic design course. He was asked to come up with something new; he proposed a basic typography course, a course about Gestalt (the uses of perceptual psychology as a way to think about graphics and images), and a course about Interface. In 2019, Inventory Press approached him to make a book about the program. He did not want to write a book. He decided to perform a book rather than to write one. He did a series of 3 events; the book would be based on those.He would lecture one semester in a day, performed in a L.A space. Video recorded and transcribed, it became the book. It was edited afterwards but he tried to keep the tone of the speaking voice.

The book is not the history of graphic design; quite the opposite. Reinfurt encourage the students to make their own constellation of references.

Q&A:

Q: What is Gestalt?
A:

- A word that is difficult to define precisely in english. It is a way of talking about the relationship
- Gestalt of a room; general feeling.
- Gestalt; esoteric and fuzzy. Is there a set of tools to interpret it ?
- Gestalt you never take it apart.
- The word was used in the beginning of moving image: we see a person running when in fact it is a series of still images.
- Can gestalt be used in language ? Can a word or sentence be Gestalt ?

Q: How do you make your work successful for all audiences ?

A: It is not successful for all audiences. He does not reinvent. He is much more interested in following one thing to the next. Therefore a lot of the work does not speak to a large audience. But the MTA project, for example, is for all audiences.

Q: Does gestalt only apply to what we see, or what we feel ?
A: It applies to what we hear; a melody in our head, memory as an object.

Q: Do you think of Gestalt as a measure of the success of a design ?
A: More as an approach to analyze; not a precondition.

Q: Why make useless softwares?
A: The intention is to interject some noise into the process. Software often talks about frictionless interaction, easy as possible for the user. He is interested in making you stop and think about why are things are how they look. Being critical about the interfaces and softwares that we use. The choices are made for certain reasons. The postcards are out of date, physical. They make you stop and it takes more investment and effort and energy in wanting to do that. If you get that software, you care about it a little bit more. It counters the fact that we expect everything to be free online.

Q: Why putting a price on it?
A: It is to have others think about software more critically, to make concerted decisions when designing and using them. Selling a screensaver for 25$ is a little pricy, so it generates commitment. It deals with desire and consumer culture; he does not shy from it. We say: a 'user' of softwares… to make useless softeware is a way to reconfigure that.

<u>Reading Responses</u>:

1. Kyndall Thornton
    - Response: It was interesting to understand graphics as a visual syntax. The passage spoke of how different signs can communicate with one another when sharing similar visual "languages". I like the idea of there not being a set chronological order for these separate graphics to be read in and I like that not just one graphic can stand alone and have an idea be understood. Using the Gestalt theory and applying this concept of "temporal sequence" allowed projects to progressively create a system of a visual language.
    - Pull quotes:"finding how the human organism sees and organizes visual input and articulates visual output."
    - Questions
        - 1. Could Gestalt theory (or something similar to it) be used to create its own stand alone language that could be learned and used?
        - 2. Could visual imagery be designed to have multiple meanings depending on the audience viewing it?
        - 3. What can be a benefit to designing multiple images that have to be seen together in order to understand one message?

2. James Zerilli
    - Response: The idea of Gestalt psychology in relation to graphic design is a particularly interesting one; I think humans definitely do share a ‘visual language’ that can express ideas through basic shapes, and it goes hand in hand with many of the things I’ve learned since starting college. Seeing multiple examples and how they’re all brought together through having the same underlying psychological reasoning – Bauhaus shapes, scans of watches showing time passing despite being static, early multi-frame icons in Mac computers – is a very effective way of explaining visual language, and it certainly re-frames a lot of seemingly everyday design choices within my own surroundings. Something as ostensibly arbitrary as a spinning wheel or turning hourglass icon now makes a lot more sense from a functional point of view. After all, a computer likely isn’t frozen if it’s still displaying an animated icon. Simple design decisions like these manage to indicate exactly what’s going on without the need for intrusive text blurbs or causing any confusion, as the symbology is obvious enough for the average viewer and becomes part of a visual vocabulary, particularly when it’s repeated over time.
    - Pull quotes: “This language is visual and simultaneous rather than literal and sequential. It is both read and written; it has a vocabulary, a grammar, a syntax, even meaning.”
    - Questions
        - 1. Do you think more complicated symbols can become as easily readable as basic shapes (square, triangle, circle) through increased usage over time? In other words, does a symbol like the “spinning beach ball of death” have a shot of being as recognizable as a simple shape?
        - 2. How much can you take away from an image or visual cue while still having it be recognizable and conveying the intended meaning?
        - 3. Some symbols hold multiple meanings or different meanings across different cultures. Does visual language sometimes run the risk of being open to too much interpretation?
3. Zhongxuan Lin
    - Response：
      The history of spinning beach balls is intriguing to me. As the article states, the original icon was a watch-shaped image. There were lots of versions of spinning beaches, for instance, counting fingers and Yin Yang symbols. Finally, as Susan Kare was invited by Apple, she created that color swatch spinning beach balls. Although it does not have a direct relationship with the “waiting”, it shares some elements. The spinning animation reminds me about how clocks worked. The spinning animation refers to the pointers of the clock. And I am impressed by how this actually becomes a new symbol and replaces all the ideas of the waiting icon. It creates a new context and people now are designing based on this altered context.
    - Pull quotes:
      “Now, spinning beach balls have almost nothing to do with waiting, but this is the power of both context and repetition.”
    - Questions
        - 1. How could a designer create something which could change the old design into a new context and meanwhile, it becomes a fashion and standard which makes everyone in the world to initiate?
        - 2. How is Yin Yang related to the waiting icon?
        - 3. Since Yin and Yang never represent time, what is the thinking process between this icon and the concept of waiting?
4. Jennifer Aguirre
    - Response: In this reading, it made a very important point on Gestalt psychology and how this book introduces visual illustrations as a form to teach, and not to convince. Visual language

incorporated to graphic relationships, was considered as a fundamental in order to influence other aspects of design. It was a very important way in which humans see and organize their visual process to therefore produce a visual output. Referring to the digital watch they explained in the reading, you could take something so out of context and following the gestalt principle, you'll still be able to hold a temporal sequence in your head. Reading the design of the Apple Macintosh was also interesting because I didn't know they previously had iterations of the rotating color wheel. It's funny to see how something so simple can be so recognizable with Apple now. And even though I think we all hate that "color wheel of death", it's interesting to see how Apple just wanted the computer to communicate with the user that it's just loading and thinking.

- Pull quotes: "The square has associated to it dullness, honesty, and workmanlike meaning; the triangle, action, con(ict, tension; the circle, endlessness, warmth, protection."
- Questions
    - 1. How do you use Gestalt in your design?
    - 2. Can the meanings of simple form ever change?
    - 3. Can visual language ever become confusing as a starting point?

5. Eric Gottshall
    - Response: The implicit cognisance of visual signifiers and relationships is key to the Gestalt Psychology referenced here. Semiotics allows for an almost subconscious immediateness of the content at hand, negating the requirement for linear narration. In this instance, the whole becomes greater than its constituent parts, or rather, the conceptual whole can be referenced by an icon representing its constituent parts. Synesthesia, or the minds manifestation of color while absorbing external stimulus I feel bears meret here. How as designers, can we forge a synesthetic, emotional, or subconscious immediate sense of understanding within the viewer, while simultaneously having universal application? When the color pallet of Coca Cola is flashed on a screen, not only do we recognize its implications, but we can taste it, smell it, feel the residue left on our teeth. Perhaps what I find most interesting in this article is the didactic merritt of gestalt principles. If we can understand that within a visual atmosphere lies an immediate greater meaning, we can too reverse engineer its logic.
    - Pull quotes"For example, the Gestalt principle of Prägnanz (de$nitiveness, resolution, simplicity) is presented. It's a furry concept but handled with clarity and copious illustration."
    - " visual syntax, built up by the viewer and constructed from the dynamic relationships between the graphic forms."
    - Questions
        - 1. What visual elements do you routinely utilize for their effectiveness within Gestalt Psychology?
        - 2. When does Gestalt Psychology hamper the design process?
        - 3. Understanding that Gestalt principles in part call upon ones implicit correlations with certain objects, how do you account for a wide audience?
6. Jessica Pan
    - Response: In this week's reading, Gestalt psychology has many great tips and how this book includes 'visual language' organized into graphic relations. I think it's important for humans and designers to learn and organize their visual process to create a visual product, like for example, the digital watch that was mention in the reading, it just shows that you can express objects and ideas through basic shapes through gestalt teaching. Therefore, the design of Apple was also interesting in the design of the color of the wheel, for example, the design is made very simple it's like a spinning beach ball that can indicate of telling people to wait. Even there are design choices that we see in our surroundings that's been created to be recognizable and been the

same throughout history, like Coca-Cola, Wendys, and Burger King logo. There's only a slight design change in the logos, but the only thing that it's kept is the type and color that's used repeatedly over time.

- Pull quotes:
- “It’s a furry concept but handled with clarity and copious illustration. Some relationships—graphic relationships—are more salient, more assured, more resolved than others.”
- “It is now a recognizable graphic idea, a visual shorthand for waiting, invented out of thin air, and also only one of many possible answers.”
-
-
- Questions:
    - 1. Are there any new designs that effective for people to recongize?
    - 2. Do you think it will be more diffcult to recongize if the designs, like spinning of wheel the design was similar to the previous irelations change?
    - 3.

7. Elyssa Feerrar
    - Response: In this reading, themes of visual literacy, iconography, and gestalt psychology are discussed in relevance to design practice. The text attributes gestalt psychology to helping find “how the human organism sees and organizes visual input and articulates visual output”. The idea of communicating without resorting to verbal or written language is developed throughout the text when describing the abstract cover of ‘A Primer of Visual Literacy’; this way of communicating involves a ‘visual message’. The iconic ‘spinning beach ball of death’ is used as an example to further describe this idea, as this image, overtime, becomes a symbol for ‘wait’. A theme of the text seems to be that we as humans are driven to find communication everywhere, it has become a natural assumption that any loose organization of shapes, lines, colors, or images must have the intention to communicate--these things are speaking to us, what are they saying? This is evident in the abstracted book cover discussed in the beginning of the reading, there were several interpretations for what the book cover *must* be saying to us.
    - Pull quotes:
        1. “What the cover is “saying” cannot be articulated in English or any other written language. The six rows run through permutations of three primary visual forms borrowed from the Bauhaus. Square, circle, and triangle outlines repeat on each row with lines of each shape omitted. **This is not a written message, it is a visual message”**
        2. Graphic signs always indicate a relation to another graphic sign, and these dynamic relations constitute whole messages, the building blocks of what Dondis would call a **“visual language.” The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two.**
        3. “These two projects are related, superficially by both being watch face design projects, **but more emphatically they both have to do with the holding of a temporal sequence in your head over time as one gestalt— like a melody, or a sequence of discrete frames in a film**.” ---Gestalt: an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.
    - Questions:
        - 1. The reading talks a lot about using visuals as a means for communication. How does this way of communicating differ from written/verbal language? Does it have more positives than negatives?

- 2. There is an immediacy associated with a visual way of communicating. This immediacy traces back to primitive times, drawing seems to exist as the first tool of communication. How do you think our strategies have changed throughout history in using visuals to communicate?
- 3. How do you apply the idea of 'gestalt' to your own work? A big part of Gestalt theory seems to emphasize that the whole of anything is greater than its parts. Do you ever encounter projects or situations where the process is much more interesting than the finished result?
- 4. Because visual communication is so primitive, do you think people need to be less trained in visual literacy, does this way of communicating come more naturally to us than verbal communication? Do you think most people would try to find a message/phrase within the shapes on the cover of 'A Primer of Visual Literacy'; is it second nature for humans to *want* visuals to communicate?

8. Krystal Lau
    - Response: The reading goes into talking about Gestalt psychology and how that has been integrated into the design and architecture curriculum. Gestalt psychology has impacted the way we perceive things as well as the significance of understanding visual patterns. In a visual syntax, the viewer is able to connect a graphic symbol with a message, therefore creating a visual language without the direct use of text. An example of using iconography to convey a message, was with the creation of the first Macintosh computer. Because the first computer was slow, they used graphic design to create a variety of symbols that told the user when a computer was processing, such as a watch, counting fingers, an earth cursor, and an mpw cursor. The watch is now replaced with a spinning color wheel, "a recognizable graphic idea, a visual shorthand for waiting, invented out of thin air, and also only one of many possible answers. (pg.132)." The idea of using graphic symbols as an indication of a meaning or an idea has greatly affected the way designers communicated with their viewers and how they get the message across easily.
    - Quote: "Graphic signs always indicate a relation to another graphic sign, and these dynamic relations constitute whole messages, the building blocks of what Dondis would call a "visual language." The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two."
    - Questions:
        - 1. What are some examples of work that you like using Gestalt psychology?
        - 2. In your opinion, how has Gestalt psychology improved different design interfaces that we use today?
        - 3. With society preferring quick information nowadays, do you think there is more emphasis on using graphic signs than text in the design world today?
9. Anna Pittas
    - Gestalt theory was one of the first concepts when I started at Mason Gross. It holds a lot of significance towards my experience as an art student. It seems fitting that it is being used as a foundation for this type of book. I also feel the idea of a visual syntax is also very important, that is what we base almost everything in our lives off of. I think thats why they designed the cover that way, to prove that point. We are always looking for some kind of graphic or visual answer when sometimes there is not one. I really like their idea of scanning a watch to show the concept of time. The second hand appearing curved because it moved as it was being scanned. You know time was moving as the image was taken because of this distorted second hand. It is also to see this symbol in relation to the first Mac computer. Susan Kare created this symbol to communicate that the user would have to wait for the computer to boot up and it would take a

long time. Not only have we come a long way but it is interesting to see the common symbols used to portray certain language, relating directly back to visual syntax.

- Pull quotes
    - “The square has associated to it dullness, honesty, and workmanlike meaning; the triangle, action, con(ict, tension; the circle, endlessness, warmth, protection.”
    - “All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole.”
    - “What you see is a major part of what you know, and visual literacy can help us to see what we see and to know what we know.”
- Questions
    - 1. Is Gestalt psychology a foundation for all art forms?
    - 2. Is the idea that visual syntax is basically how we communicate in general, an art form in itself?
    - 3. Can gestalt psychology be used in design meant for a large audience? What if someone does not understand it? Is it then not successful?

10. Fred Quayenortey
    - "Currently in Process" is what I a assume to be the excerpt from the graphic design textbook, "A Primer of Visual Literacy." Through this reading the author, Donis A. Dondis, breaks down this visual recognision by disassembling forms down to their key shapes and analyzing what they mean and how we are naturally led to read them. I found it interesting how the reading went from the basic forms to the watch and the meditation from the different projects. Eventually leading to the "wheel of death," which now has a while different connotation that it's original intention
    - "All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole...The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two." p.3
    - "The square has associated to it dullness, honesty, and workmanlike meaning; the triangle, action, con(ict, tension; the circle, endlessness, warmth, protection." p. 5
    - Questions
        - 1. The limitations on typesetting caused by the printing method initially sound disastrous, but the authors describes it more as an added "spark." At what point can this affect how the book is taken/read?
        - 2. The author makes a great not about symbols and their reliance to eachother for meaning. It makes you think of logos as well. Without having a set or basis to operate in, is our only tie to it's meaning the learned thing of what it represents? Or is it meaningless on its own?
        - 3. Thinking about the initial intention/meaning of the "spinning beach ball," what causes such a change in a symbols meaning? As I am only in my twenties, I have never really known a time when it was a positive symbol
11. Eric Molloy
    - Response I feel Gestalt pyschology is something I have always intuitively known. Although now that the ideas behind Gestalt pyschology have become known articulated and documented, I now realize it is something I have always instrinsictly paid attention too my whole life. I enjoyed this reading because it offered a hollistic approach to living lives as designers. Gestalt phschology suggested that the sum is greater than the whole of the work’s parts. The reading reminded me to think how my design’s work as a whole and to not center my attention on one spot as if it were disconnected from the whole. In the simplest terms, gestalt theory is based on

the idea that the human brain will attempt to simplify and organize complex images or designs that consist of many elements, by subconsciously arranging the parts into an organized system that creates a whole, rather than just a series of disparate elements. Our brains are built to see structure and patterns in order for us to better understand the environment that we're living in.

- Pull quotes"Gestalt psychology has contributed valuable research and experimentation in the area of perception, collecting data and searching the signicance of visual patterns, as well as $nding how the human organism seesand organizes visual input and articulates visual output. Together, the physical and the psychological are relative and not absolute."
- "All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole."
-
- Questions
    - 1. Do you believe Gestalt pyschology is something that is subjective, or is validyly true?
    - 2. If a design is not referential of the content it is interpreting is it worth preserving it it has become a societal norm?
    - 3. How does our evolution and boilogy tie in the principles of Gestalt theory?

12. Gabriella DiLollo
    - Response:
      I recall learning about Gestalt psychology when I began my Visual Thinking course here at Mason Gross. It is definitely a core concept in the world of graphic design. The passage discusses how Gestalt psychology is practically discussing a visual language. In design we experiment with how to communicate with shapes in a way that we can successfully put forth a clear message. The example of the digital watch is a great example of using simple forms to get a point across in a literal way. What I thought was interesting was the development of the "spinning ball of death" as it has been referred to since I was in middle school. The first symbol being a literal clock indicating time passing or waiting, is far off from the spinning 'beach ball' at first glance. However the concept of waiting is still projected. This is through the context of when it appears and the repetition of the spinning is related to the rotation of a clock in a way.
    - Pull quotes
      "Now, spinning beachballs have almost nothing to do with waiting, but this is the power of both context and repetition. It is now a recognizable graphic idea, a visual shorthand for waiting, invented out of thin air, and also only one of many possible answers.:"

      "All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole."
    - Questions
        - 1. Can Gestalt psychology hit a point where it goes too far? Things in the design world are continuously more minimalistic.
        - 2. Will a visual language continue to be something understood by the mass public or will it only be people with design knowledge?
        - 3. Will text become obsolete in the 'sign world'?

13. Sheila Leonard
    - It's interesting to read about Gestalt's psychology connecting to graphic forms and visual syntax. The article talks about design students seeking graphic design rules to help guide them in their quest to fully understand the "correct" things to do in the design field even though there really aren't any. The examples of shapes and graphic relationships reminds me of Visual Thinking 1A and 1B at Mason Gross. Many projects were about finding how one line or a few could

represent “balance” or “pressure” through only simple graphic forms. Also, I created pieces with limited shapes for words like, “loud” or “confused”, that really push the visual syntax since people can look at simple graphic lines or shapes and understand what moods and feelings are meant to be felt while looking at the pieces.

- “I’ve often found students are hungry for rules to graphic design”
- Questions
    - 1. Why do designers crave answers to graphic design rules? Are they scared that what they will do isn’t considered “correct” or “good design”?
    - 2. What makes a visual language successful?
    - 3. Can complex shapes ever accomplish what simple shapes say?

14. Sara Reed
    - Response
    - Gestalt psychology is not something that’s thought about when interacting with an interface, but that is the very purpose of it. The visual language of Gestalt is intrinsically understood. Examples like the wristwatch symbol on early apple computers that instructed you to wait were a bit more literal, whereas basic shapes like a square representing dullness are more ambiguous. Nonetheless, these connections are made and understood through visual literacy.
    - Pull quotes
    - “ Now, spinning beachballs have almost nothing to do with waiting, but this is the power of both context and repetition”
    - “Graphic signs always indicate a relation to another graphic sign, and these dynamic relations constitute whole messages”

    - Questions
        - 1. Does Gestalt psychology need to immediately make sense to be effective, or can people adapt to a less apparent representation of something over time? (ie: spinning beach ball)
        - 2. Is Gestalt psychology necessary in successful design?
        - 3. Where is Gestalt psychology used in life that people might not be aware of?

15. Matt Simonetti
    - Response

      The idea of visual literacy is something that I, and most other people I’m sure, take for granted. Maybe this has to do with the fact that we as humans, and all other living things with eyes, are hardwired to respond to visual stimuli just to survive in the first place. What Dondis wrote about the square, triangle, and circle representing honesty, conflict, and protection, respectively, speaks to this idea. All things in the natural world take the form shapes, many of which are organic, but many as well are geometric. I can’t help but think that examples of geometry in nature are by design, not coincidence. That said, it’s no wonder that this type of visual language—shape—is a prime fundamental of graphic design.
    - Pull quotes

      “The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two.”
    - Questions
        - 1. Although the reading deals mostly with Gestalt, shapes and their relation to design and visual understanding, how big a role does color play in visual understanding? Could color have anything to do with why the “spinning beach ball of death” is the most effective icon for waiting, rather than other icons which describe the passing of time more literally?

- 2. Dondis wrote “Every visual pattern has a dynamic quality that cannot be defined intellectually, emotionally, or mechanically by size or direction or shape or distance.” Does this suggest in part, that emotional literacy has little to do with visual literacy?
- 3. Are visuals more effectively understood if they are paired with other sensory stimuli? For example, watching an explosion happen while at the same time hearing the sound it would make, or a different sound altogether.

16. Caitlin McGowan
    - Studying Art the Gestalt psychology is something that has always been taught or lessons have stemmed from this. This artistic language that is spoken to humans is taken differently in visual aspects or perception. In graphic design signs and visuals are alwats relating to another graphic sign and dynamic relations what Dondis calls a “visual language.” Gestalt theory discusses the way the brain takes on illustration and shape. It even discusses how peolle are always looking for rules of graphic design when there arent necessarily any specific rules to abide by.
    - Pull quotes
    - “It’s a furry concept but handled with clarity and copious illustration. Some relationships—graphic relationships—are more salient, more assured, more resolved than others.
    - “The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two.”
    - Questions
        - 1. Can Gestalt psychology become too defined in terms of rules (ex. Step by step instructions)?
        - 2. Is all successful design followed by Gestalt?
        - 3. How does design evolve and diverse throught gestalt?
17. sherry
    - The reading covers two main topics, gestalt psychology and iconography where both elements have ties to visual literacy and patterns. Gestalt psychology defines how humans “sees and organizes visual input and articulates visual output”. Visual recognition is simplified by Dondis A. Dondis in a *Primer of Visual Literacy* where the meanings of the triangle, square, and circle are explained in a brief manner, “The square has associated to it dullness, honesty, and workmanlike meaning; the triangle, action, conflict, tension; the circle, endlessness, warmth, protection”. The reading goes into the evolution of the wait cursor. In its beginning stages, it was presented in the form of a wristwatch whose hands would circulate to ensure the user that something is happening but needs time to load. Later, this icon was replaced with a spinning colorful beach ball. The meaning behind the beach ball had nothing to do with the actual beach ball but with the power of the immediate context and recognition after being used as a visual shorthand for waiting.
    - “This disk graphic was ungenerously christened the “spinning beach ball of death” by users who worried that their system had frozen whenever the ominous yet colorful graphic appeared.”
    - Questions
        - 1. Why was the beachball chosen as the waiting cursor?
        - 2. Besides design and art, when else is the gestalt psychology used?
        - 3. According to this quote from the reading “Now, spinning beach balls have almost nothing to do with waiting, but this is the power of both context and repetition. It is now a recognizable graphic idea, a visual shorthand for waiting, invented out of thin air, and also only one of many possible answers” can we create visual shorthands and symbols from any image that comes to mind, as long as it is recognizable?
18. Sarah Poon

- Response
    - I find it interesting how gestalt psychology has a role in art and design. The most famous example of gestalt was the optical illusion of a vase that could be represented as two side profiles. Having the standard shapes: square, triangle, and circle, being deconstructed down to the symbolism behind them was also interesting. It gives an explanation why certain objects/ideas become such a staple in our life. Another similar instance of the spinning wheel of death is the phone icon on the Apple devices. The old telephones that were connected to the landlines are being replaced by smartphones, and been ingrained in history by using the the shape of it as an abstract icon.
- Pull quotes
    - “All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole.”
- Questions
    - 1. What are the steps of creating a new visual language?
    - 2. What’s a good situation to create an impactful visual language?
    - 3. When did the idea of Gestalt was introduced in art?

19. Jillian Mulhern
    - In this passage “Currently in Process” about a graphic design textbook, it discusses the topic of Gestalt psychology. To define it simply, gestalt psychology was a movement in psychology that valued research and experimentation through perception, specifically visually. In other words, it was a movement to visually think. This idea has been practiced in various cases, one of the more recent ones being visual thinking, a series of mandatory classes we took our freshman year at mason gross. The idea of “visually learning” and it being a “visual language” comes into play. When practicing this movement freshman year, I originally thought it would be useless knowledge but using examples such as the loading icon that has us visually understand what we are doing and we recognize the act of waiting is super interesting. Something specifically practiced in Visual Thinking 1-A was using black lines to represent words such as breaking, anger, etc. This expanded my horizons as to what else I could use to interpret action, feeling and adjectives other than the typical visuals.
    - Pull quotes
        - “All things visual are not just something that happens out there. They are visual events, total occurrences, actions that incorporate the reaction into the whole.”
    - Questions
        - 1. What are the most successful ways to represent visual thinking (aka Gesault psychology?
        - 2. What makes a visual representation successful?
        - 3. At what point is something too visual and not successfully? Is there such a thing?
20. Victoria Chi
    - I notice that many designers seek after that one thing: an object, symbol, shape. They do this so that the viewer can make sense of their design. It’s interesting to move away from text and use two or more symbols to describe the purpose of your design. Using two familiar objects to create a conversation between them and a meaning that is unfamiliar. Or, pulling a meaning from a familiar object, shape, symbol that’s actually like the third or fourth definition of a word; in other words, using the tertiary or quaternary meaning instead of the very obvious primary one. Susan Kare’s solution to creating a symbol that would have the computer user understand that the computer is “thinking,” came from more than just one idea; the passing of time, a clock, a circle

or wheel, was combined to create the “spinning beach ball of death.” Yet, it is now widely recognized as a “loading” symbol and we can’t imagine anything else being a better solution.
- “The context of one symbol makes it easier to read the other, and meaning exists not in either alone, but rather in the gap between the two.” (126)
- “The square has associated to it dullness, honesty, and workmanlike meaning; the triangle, action, con(ict, tension; the circle, endlessness, warmth, protection.” (128)
- Questions
    - 1. The graphic for the exhibition went in a slightly different direction because another artist executed the same idea before. Should designers always be sure that what they’re creating hasn’t already been done, even when almost everything has been done before?
    - 2. Some of the best designers are those that created a symbol or graphic image that became known worldwide. Doesn’t this give more power to designers who are given these big opportunities to create a graphic image that is potentially seen and learned by the world?
    - 3. What about the “design solutions” that are “unseen” from the world? Are they not solutions because no one’s observing them?

21. Tyler Lee
- Since the beginning, mankind has always relied on a visual language of imagery as a means of communication. Even after the development of written language, the implementation of symbols have continued. After all, alphabet and letterform fall under the guise of symbols and cognitive recognition. But while we have these pre-established symbols, the addition of familiar imagery continues to provide a sort of relief within the way interpret material. Our everyday is surrounded by moving pictures, icons, and digital imagery, and the requirement for visual literacy is at an all time high. Without a clear understanding of how to make or read in visuals, interaction becomes a very difficult thing to form. With the invention of products like the Mac, visual communication was essential to the proper use of the computer, whether that meant knowing where and when to click, or simply not creating customer frustration with the product. When the computer needs to tell someone to wait, that spinning beach ball of death pops up. An unrelated subject to computer processing, but after years of usage, it’s become a symbol that explicitly lets the user know, “wait”. The symbol consists of a circle with curved colored lines inside it, that’s it. Simplicity in design enhances the handling by creating graphic relationships that are easily recognizable by the brain. There’s always been a huge emphasis on the Gestalt principles in design because it illustrates how shapes, even the most basic ones, can “modify space and arrange or derange balance”.
- “Some relationships—graphic relationships—are more salient, more assured, more resolved than others”
- Questions
    - 1. What are some other groundbreaking and trendsetting visuals in the modern era?
    - 2. With a further increase in technological capabilities, has the watch scanning process been re-attempted at a maxed out resolution/time (for further effect)?
    - 3. Throughout the ever-growing digital landscape, symbols and iconography are becoming more and more utilized. With its prevalence in current language (with emojis) and the “buttons” on various UI’s, what do you think the future holds for this concept and usage of symbols?

22. Rushika Raman
- Response: I’ve seen Gestalt Psychology applied to design before, but it’s never been so clear to me until this reading. It starts off talking about a visual language, recognizable by all humans that designers then bend and mold to create things that are still recognizable but convey a

different message. I appreciate the argument that signs and symbols, especially now, rely on each other's existence to be understood. I agree that designs rely on each other to be comprehended and that recognizable objects can be malleable. This brings me to the example about the watches in which the speed of the camera captures a moment that alters the idea of time and the ability to read it. Watches and clocks are a normal part of a human's day, but with alteration obstructing the readability of it, what does it really become? Just a watch with numbers on it, I guess. The most fascinating part of the reading was the relation to real world situations like the Macintosh loading symbol. They had to start with something the human eye would recognize as time passing and eventually it turned into something that has nothing to do with time, but it took elements of each thing and incorporated it. For example, what I saw in it was repetition, inspired by a clock or counting fingers. Then the idea of a circle being endless and looping around so one never knows the start and end and then the spinning to show that some type of function is happening. Overall, it was very interesting to me how these symbols have become so universal from what seems like the simplest parts of our days.

- Pull quotes:
    - " Graphic signs always indicate a relation to another graphic sign, and these dynamic relations constitute whole messages, the building blocks of what Dondis would call a 'visual language.'"
    - " This should mark the limits of your perception, and it should be at the tipping point where the time is no longer legible."
- Questions
    - 1. Where do you think that point comes, where the most recognizable object becomes unrecognizable? Does it vary based on the design?
    - 2. Does every symbol and design rely on another or can they sometimes be independent?
    - 3. How does one create a strong visual language?

23. Katie Makar

- *Currently in Process* is about visual languages and Gestalt psychology in graphic design. It is interesting how over time images can gain their own inherent meaning. One section of the reading talked about how we have grown to associate different character traits with different shapes — squares are dull but honest, triangles signify conflict and tension, and circles signify warmth and protection. It is interesting how many people seem to be driven to find meaning everywhere, a circle is not just a circle but a signifier for something greater. This is seen in the author's compulsion to find a meaning for the shapes on the cover of *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, where he eventually discovered the shapes were not spelling something out in words but rather calling back to the Bauhaus. Simple images can come to have their own meanings, this is the basis of visual language. It is especially interesting when society comes to a consensus on the meaning of an image, like Apple's "spinning beach ball of death" being a near universal symbol for waiting.
- Pull quotes
    - " Some relationships—graphic relationships—are more salient, more assured, more resolved than others."
- Questions
    - 1. If viewers prescribe a different meaning to a piece's visual language than the creator intended, is the original meaning still valid?
    - 2. Can society come to accept the meaning of different visuals quickly or is it important that these meanings form over time?

        - 3. Will viewers always strive to find meaning in simple shapes, or can a circle sometimes just be a circle?

24. Andrew
    - The article was very interesting. The begining detailed this book that had very particular rules involving gestalt psychology. It seems like the way the author was describing it, the book valued aesthetics over functionality, which is very interesting for me. It kind of reminds me of apple products. For example, the charger is very thin, and easily breakable, however apple is never going to make them thicker because it would ruin the aesthetics. It also talked about how the book used a combination of generic shapes (circles, triangles, rectangles, etc), and shapes that aren't easily defined.
    - Pull quotes
        - "I've often found students are hungry for rules to graphic design. And although I don't believe such rules exist, I do like that A Primer at least makes a few attempts."
    - Questions
        - 1. The article kept talking about this book, but doesn't really show us much of it besides see shapes that were used in it, and the cover. Is there somewhere we can access the book for free? I'm very curious about how the typography is handled.
        - 2. It's interesting that the author says that rules for graphic design don't exist, I was wondering if people agreed with it, and what their thoughts were.
        - 3.
25. Your Name
    - Response
    - Pull quotes
    - Questions
        - 1.
        - 2.
        - 3.
26. Your Name
    - Response
    - Pull quotes
    - Questions
        - 1.
        - 2.
        - 3.

1.