Creating and Using **Accessible** Visuals

Anna Croyle   Data Visualization & Reporting Specialist

Outline

★ Key Accessibility Mindsets

🖼 Alt Text

📄 Image Description

☑ What to Remember

Accessibility Mindsets

Access Benefits Everyone

	Permanent	Temporary	Situational
Touch	One arm	Arm injury	New parent
See	Blind	Cataract	Distracted driver
Hear	Deaf	Ear infection	Bartender

Image from Microsoft Inclusive Guidebook

Context

- What is purpose of your visual?

- What message is being conveyed?

- What does the audience *need* to know?

Simplicity

- Audience needs to **understand** the information
- Keep it simple and predictable
- Succinct and concise alt text

Flexibility

- Provide information in **multiple forms.**

- Users have the **flexibility** to engage with it the way they want!

Alternative Text

Examples & Applications

Image Alt Text

- The text "behind" the image

- Based on context of usage

- Provide concise meaning

- Remove images with no purpose or mark "decorative"

- Don't use images of text

What should I put in the alt text?

Keeping in mind **context** + **simplicity**, think about including...
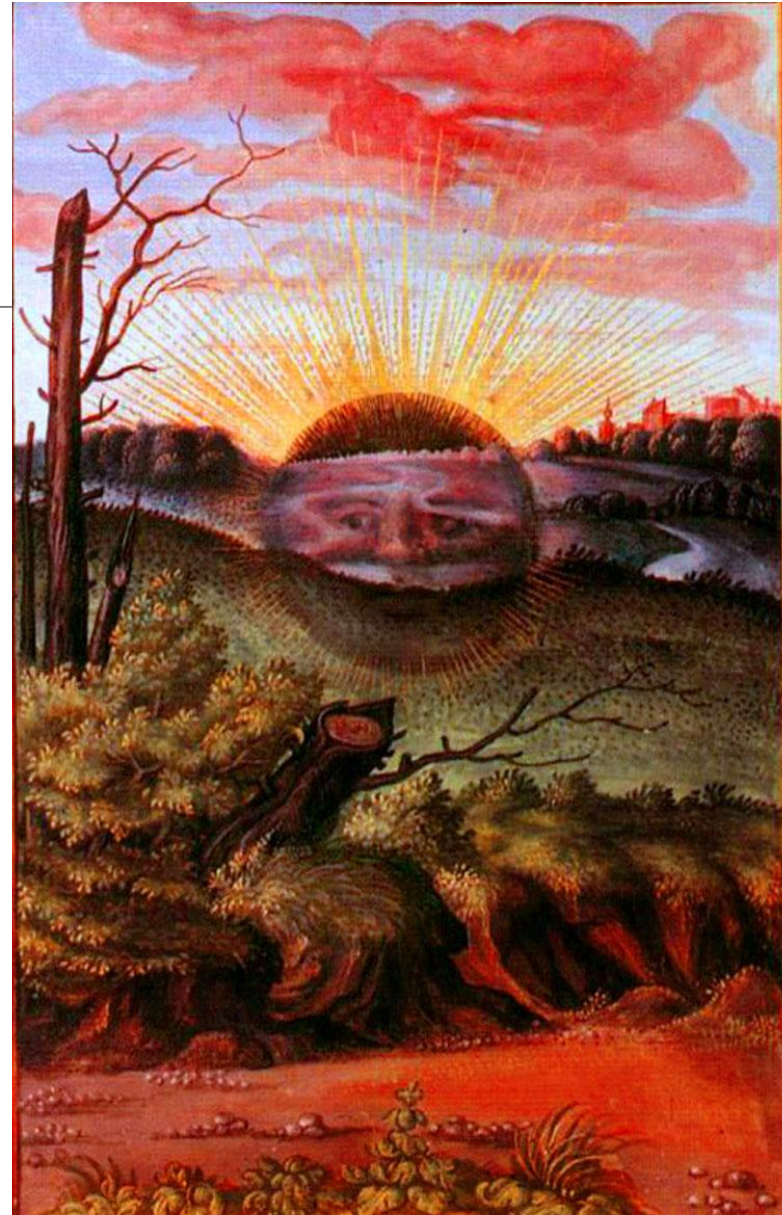
- Type
- Who
- Setting
- Color
- Emotion
- Interesting details

If the image does not provide important information, you can write "null" or mark as decorative

Example 1: Title

Dark Sun, from Splendor Solis by Salomon Trismosin (ca. 1582), Public Domain
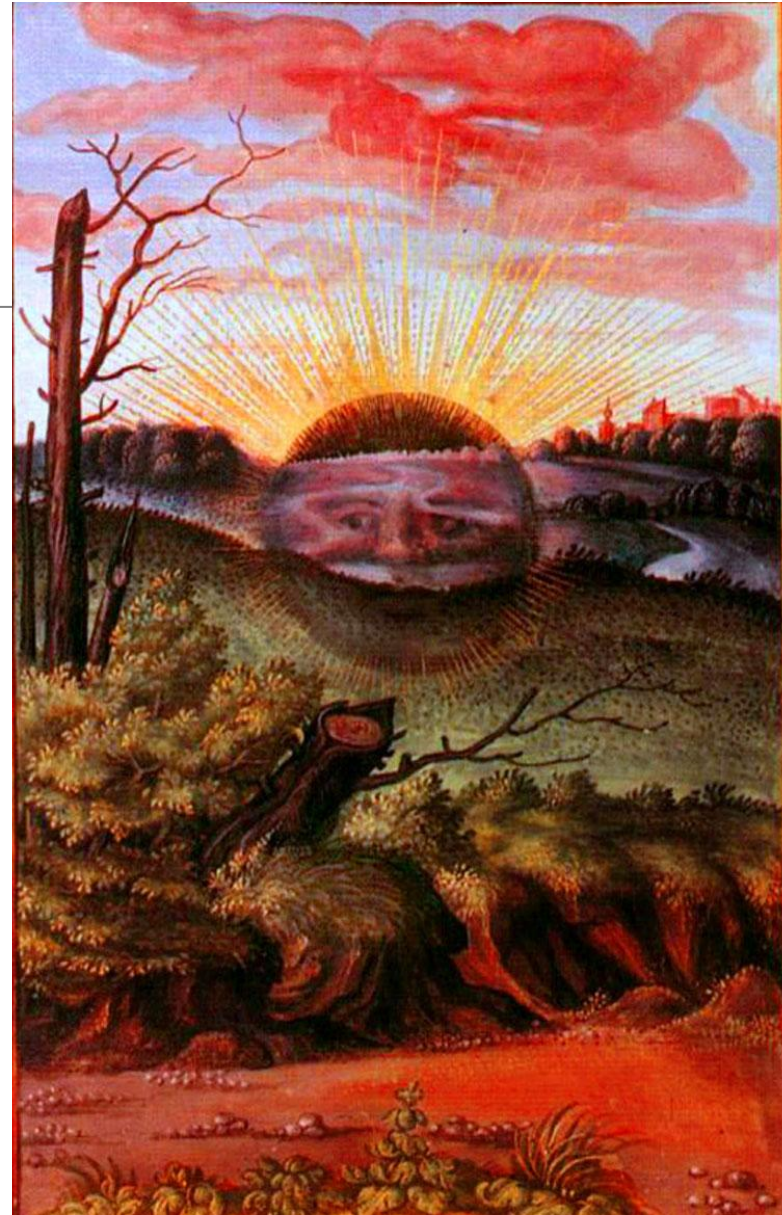
Image from the Splendor Solis Wikipedia page

Example 2: Description

A painting of a landscape, a black sun with a face peaks over the horizon.

Example 3: Description

A painting of a green landscape. A black sun with a serious face peaks over the horizon, with rays extending into a sky of red clouds.

Artificial Intelligence and Alt Text
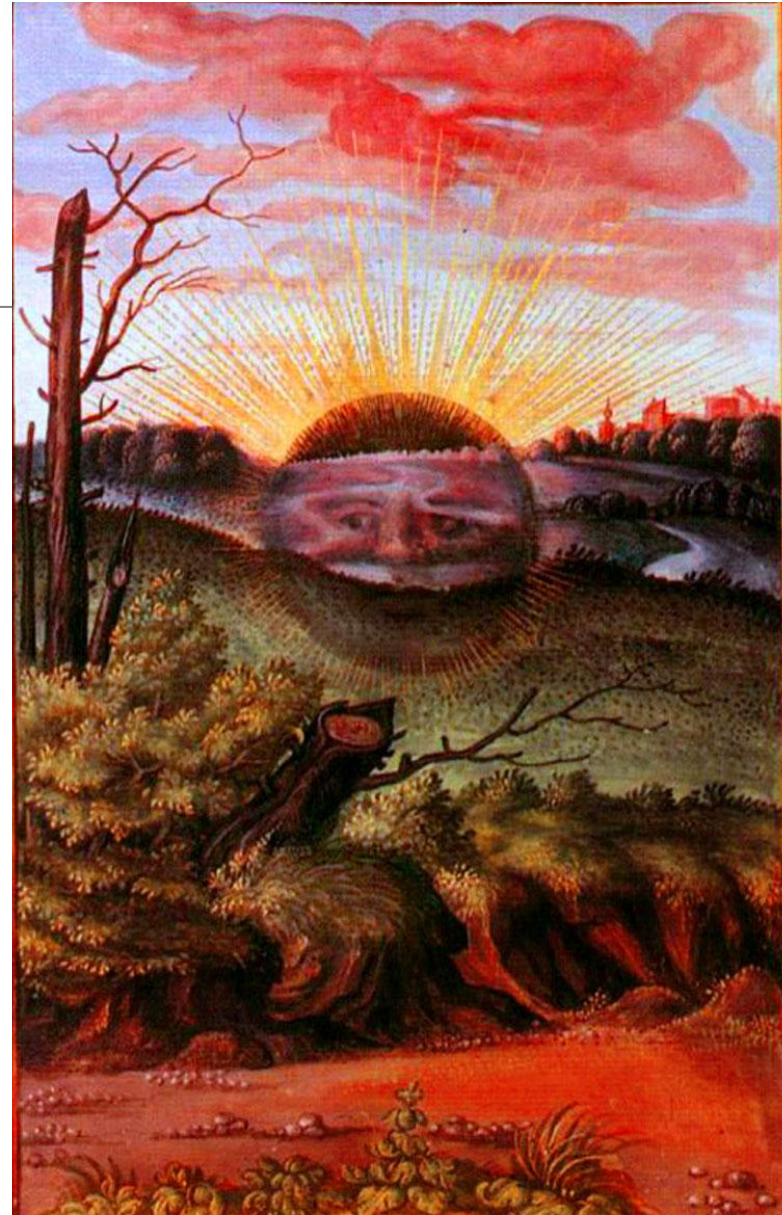
Image Descriptions

Examples & Applications

Image Description

- Like alt text, they textually describe a visual

- Unlike alt text, they are…

  - Part of the standard text

  - Visible to all users

  - Typically more detailed

- If you have a particularly complex visual, you might need a more detailed description

A Familiar Example

Dark Sun, a page from the *Splendor Solis*, an alchemical illuminated manuscript by Salomon Trismosin (ca. 1582). It depicts a green landscape lit by the red light of dusk or dawn. A black sun with a serious face peaks over the horizon, and overlaps with the foreground. Its rays extend into a sky of scarlet clouds.

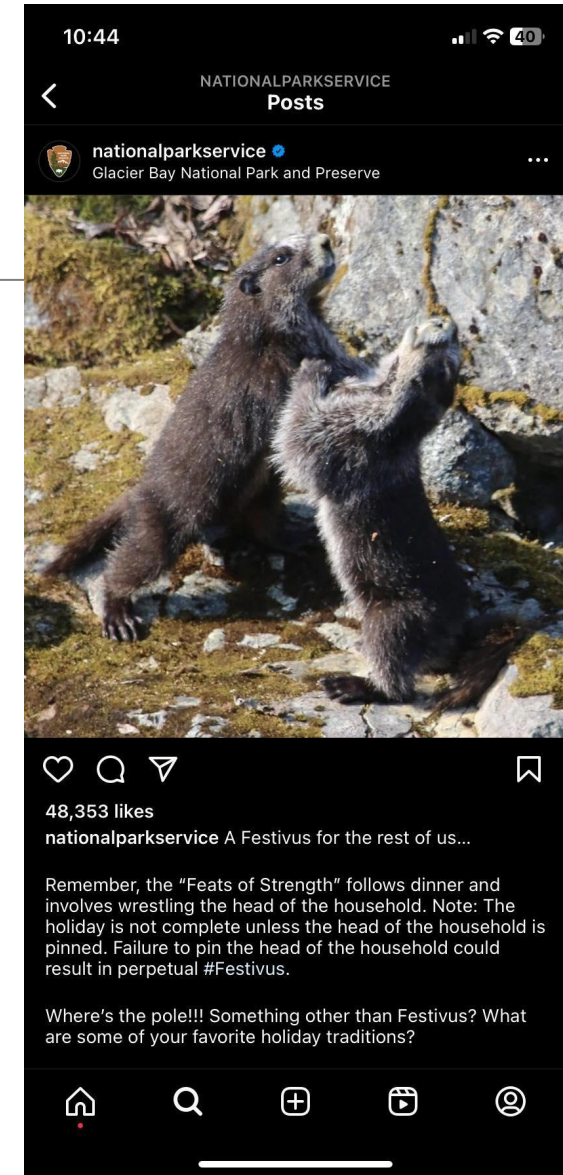# Example: National Park Service

> Image: Somebody stop this. Let's rumble! Two hoary marmots (Marmota caligata) play together in the warm sunshine at the West Arm of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Alaska.

Screenshot from the National Park Service Instagram
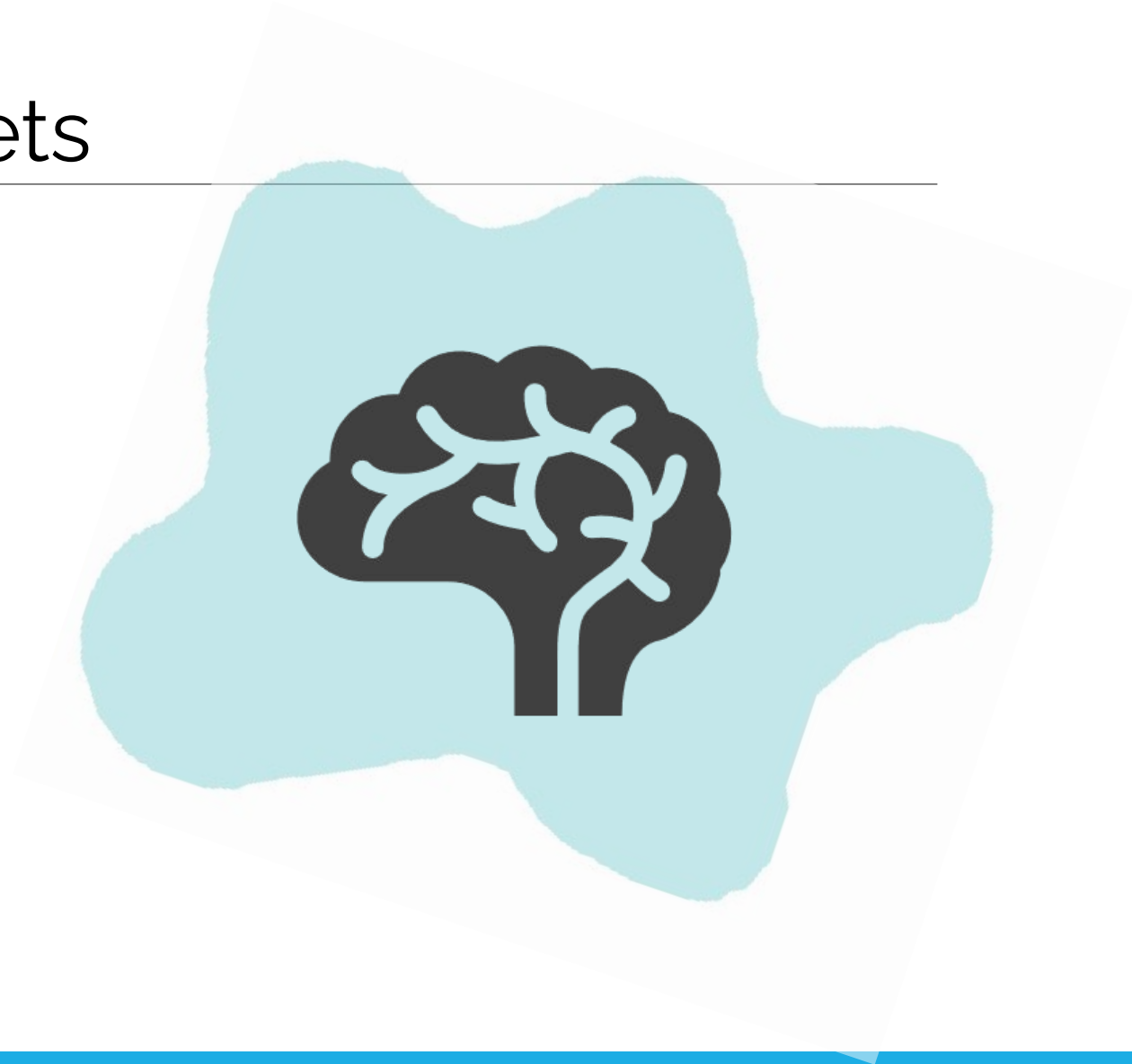
Summary

What to remember

Key Accessibility Mindsets

Context

Simplicity

Flexibility

Alt Text vs. Image Description

	Alt Text	*Image Description*
Location	Attached to an image's metadata	Part of the text
Visibility	Used by screen readers	Viewable to any user
Length	~125 characters or less	More variable
Detail	Key information	More in depth if needed

Questions about
alt text or text descriptions

Upcoming Workshops

Wed, 10 AM: Accessibility and Brightspace

Wed, 1 PM: Structured Content

Fri, 10 AM: Color & Contrast

Tue, 10 AM: Captioning

Readings

- [Do No Harm Guide, Urban Institute](#)

- [Data Visualizations, Harvard University](#)

- [An Accessibility-First Approach, Smashing Magazine](#)

- [How to Write Alt Text and Image Descriptions for the visually impaired, Perkins School for the Blind](#)

Thank you!

Please reach out with any questions or thoughts, anna.croyle@oswego.edu

For more guidance on accessibility, check out SUNY Oswego's **Digital Accessibility** page