The Gestalt Principles

Gestalt in is a psychological term which means "unified whole". It refers to theories of **visual persception** developed by German psychologist in the 1920's. These theories try to descrip how people organize visual elements into **groups** or *unified wholes* when certian principles are decribed.

Principles:

Similarity

Similarity occurs when **objects look similiar** to one another. People often percieve them as a group or pattern.

The example above (containing 11 distinct objects) appears a **single** unit because all of the shapes have **similarity**.

Unity occurs because the tridangulear shapes at the bottm of the the eagles symbol **look similiar** to the shapes that form teh sunburst.

Anomaly

When simmalarity occurs when and object can be emphasised if it is dissimilar to the others. This is called and **anomaly**.

The figure on the right becomes a focal point becuase it is **dissimilar** to the other shapes

Continuation

Continuation occurs when the eye is compelled to **move through** one object and **continue** to another object.

Continuation occurs in the example above, because the viewer's eye will naturally follow a line or curve. The smooth flowing crossbar of the "H" leads the eye directly ot the maple leaf.

Closure

Closure occurs when an object is *incomplete* or a space is not *completely enclosed.* If enough of the shape is indicated, people precieve the whole by filling in the missing information.

Although the panda above is not complete, enough is presents for the eye to complete the shape. When the *viewer's perception completes* a shape **closure** occurs.
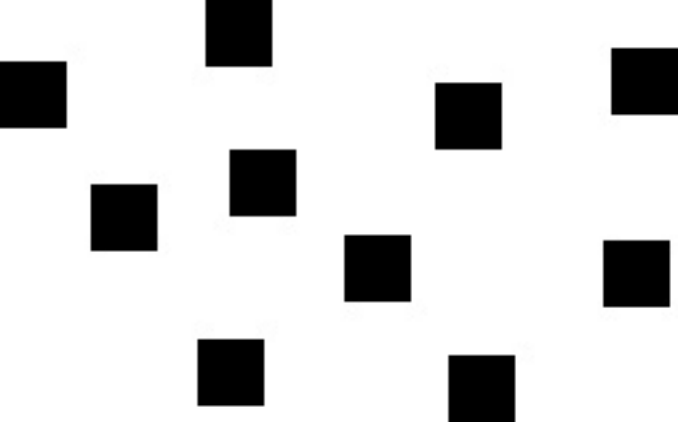
Proximity

Proximity occurs when elelments are placed close together. The tend to be preceived as a group.

When the squares are given **close proximity**, unity occurs. While they continue to be separate shapes, they are now perceived as **one group**.

Theses squares are placed without proximity.
The are perceived as separate shapes.

The fifteen figures above form a unified whole
(the shape of a tree) because of their **proximity**.

Figure and Ground

The eye differentiates and object from it's surrounding area. A form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as **figure(**object), while the surrounding area is perceived as **ground**(background).

Balancing the figure and ground can make the perceived image more clear. Using unusual figure/ground relationships can add interest and subtly to an image.

In this image, the figure and ground relationships change as the eye perceives the form of a shade or the silhouette of a face

Figure

The word above is clearly perceived as figure with the surrounding white space ground.

This image uses **complex** figure/ground **relationships** which change upon perceiving leaves, water and tree trunk.