

MESSAGE FROM ERIC

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A SECRET TO STRENGTHENING YOUR DESIGN

As artists, we know that the outline of an object gives it its identity. The outside edge of an evergreen tree triggers the brain to recognize it as a tree without having to understand all the detail and form. The outline gives the main clue as to what the object is. Value plays a part here too, but not to the same degree as the outside edge.

Similarly, a cube can be recognized as a cube even if it is painted all in one value; no three-dimensional aspect is indicated, there are no value shifts. In my terminology, it is painted “flat.”

However, if that cube is near the Area of Dominance, it is a good idea to give it form in order to catch the viewer’s eye. If we assign each plane of the cube a different value, the cube looks three dimensional. With each value shift assigned to each plane on that cube, a new shape is made. (I am using the term “shape” in its abstract sense; don’t confuse a shape with an object.)

There is another important design concept at work here: The principle of Conservation of Values, which simply means to limit the number of values in your painting. This keeps the painting from becoming cluttered. Having a limited number of values in a painting strengthens it.

By limiting the values in a painting, we necessarily limit the number of shapes. In our cube example, we may combine the two sides of the cube into one value. Thus, a new single shape is created from those two sides. Limiting the number of values and limiting the number of shapes are flip sides of the same coin.

So, when painting the cube, if it is near my Area of Dominance, I may render the form completely and show all the value shifts. The three-dimensional aspect of it will draw the viewer’s attention. But if I am painting another of the same type of cube further away from the Area of Dominance, I may use only two values, so as not to compete in visual strength with the first cube. Another cube towards the periphery of the painting may be painted in just one value. The viewer will still recognize it as a cube by its outline.

Strengthen your design by limiting the value shifts, and consequently, the number of shapes, as you move away from the Area of Dominance.

Keep your brush wet!



ERIC



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