

Visual Thinking ~ by Trudy Thomson

This presentation is based on the psychology of visual thinking -- how we respond to visual messages and assign meaning

Everything around us -- our visual world of advertising, graphic design, as well as arts and crafts in most any medium -- can be placed on a continuum.

This continuum moves from Realism (could be photographic, illustrative or painterly and is very detailed) > Representational Imagery (refers to specific objects as more suggestive line, form, and shape) > Impressionistic or Expressionistic Renderings > Abstract (without reference to pictorial content).

Compositional Elements provide a sense of stability or excitement.

When compositions are symmetrical -- have strong vertical and horizontal lines -- we feel safe and secure; this is referred to as "leveling"

When compositions are asymmetrical but balanced -- we are more likely to explore the "territory" of the composition

When compositions are diagonal or elements are positioned off the expected axis, our interest is peaked; this is referred to as "sharpening".

Circular movements carry our eyes around a composition and can give us a sense of completion

Visual Styles can soothe or stimulate. For instance...

Simplicity, regularity, continuity and repetition are settling and soothe.

Complex, irregular, and spontaneous organic shapes stimulate interest.

Bright and bold attract immediate attention.

Painterly details invite inspection.

Sequential and episodic elements prompt identification.

Random and sporadic elements spark curiosity.

Motion and movement encourage exploration.

Whimsical images prompt viewers to giggle.

To summarize, three overriding principles associated with Visual Thinking are:

Symmetrical compositions impart stability vs asymmetrical composition which "sharpens" and stimulates interest.

There is a continuum of styles from realistic through representational to abstract.

There is a wide range of visual techniques that can be used to either soothe or stimulate attention.