STAGE 3: FEAR
Fear is the primary factor that can devastate creativity and arrest the development of new ideas or relationships. Fear invites the mind to question the heart and allows guilt, failure and past performance to smother the intimacy that is essential for connecting to ideas and people. If you have fallen in love, you begin to wonder if that person is right for you; if you have created a design project, you question if you are communicating the right message.

Fear and art are not strangers to each other. Painters such as Vincent van Gogh and Jackson Pollack lived tormented lives—their solution was to work through the fear and refuse to be paralyzed by it. Fear can greatly affect one's vision and the flow of intimate ideas and emotions, but its energy can be harnessed and utilized. Just as a bungee jumper repeatedly seeks out an adrenaline boost that changes from terror to thrill, truly creative and loving people take risks, because they know that the reward comes from overcoming fear, not giving in to it.

STAGE 4: TRUTH
True creativity and true love will happen only when one is committed to action. In relationships and with design, what looks easy probably isn't, because designing and loving are hard work. While euphoria can be decidedly more pleasant than fear, these fundamental emotions provide a balance and may actually result in a more realistic perception of the design or the relationship. After freeing yourself from the illusions that euphoria can inspire and overcoming the paralysis of fear that halts creativity, you move closer to the truth. With this newfound clarity, you can assess your condition and determine whether it still brings you joy. If not, you may need to return to the drawing board or just be friends.

IN CONCLUSION
Love is the emotion that inspires us to be intimate and creative, but neither intimacy nor creativity can flow without a commitment to imagination and to moving beyond our initial euphoria and fear. Working through tough emotions when you would rather walk away can ultimately be rewarding. The most creative individuals and the most successful relationships tend to defy convention, allowing themselves instead to trust intuition, to innovate, to love and to work with every ounce of the soul's passion toward making inspiration reality.

Elements of Design
The elements of design can be thought of as content—the design components. The elements discussed in this chapter are considered formal elements. Formal elements are general and abstract in nature; that is, they don't necessarily describe anything in specific terms. Formal elements can be used to represent or describe specific things. A line can represent a leaf, the human visual has shape, and a bowl of fruit has color. Described elements tend to be identified as what they represent, for example, a person rather than a shape. Studying the elements in formal terms is helpful in understanding how they function as descriptive components in a design composition.
In these three designs, size, color, and orientation of each design element is the same for each composition. However, changing the position of the elements changes their relationship and the resulting conversation. In visual 1-16a, the elements are independent of each other, but each is touching the edge of the composition. In this somewhat aloof conversation, the shape in the middle is trying to bridge the gap between the letter t and the chevron. Visual 1-16b brings the elements together, touching in a precarious grouping where the elements are dependent on each other in this curious balancing act. The resulting conversation is playful and mutually supportive. The elements in visual 1-16c have been carefully aligned and overlapped to create a new form that has three-dimensional qualities. The full identity of each element is concealed and each serves the newly created form.

**Shape and Space**

Shape can be defined as a figure or mass. In two-dimensional design, shapes possess width and length. When shapes possess volume, they move into the realm of three dimensions and are better described as form, which is mass that has volume. In either dimension, the configuration of the shape or form determines its meaning. For example, a shape constructed of soft, curved edges could be described as sensual; a shape constructed of angular edges and points could be considered crystalline. Shape configurations can be described on a basic level as geometric or organic (see Visual 1-17a and Visual 1-17b). Within these categories, other
categories that are more descriptive of the specific attributes of the shapes can be assigned. Examples include figurative, mechanical, or natural.

Shapes must reflect the intent of the message. Shapes exist as figures in or on a ground. Shapes are generally considered positive figures that displace space. This relationship of visual and ground—positive/shape, negative/space—is a fundamental association. But in a curious way, space around figures has shape too. To orchestrate a harmonic balance of the parts of a design, a sensitive relationship between its shapes, and the configuration of the space around the shapes, is critical. Experienced designers know the importance of paying equal attention to the shape of figures and the shape of ground. Chapter 2 covers in more detail various kinds of figure-ground relationships.

In the most fundamental terms, space can be thought of as an area activated by the other elements. Graphic design is a discipline concerned with the arrangement of elements in a given space. We tend to focus attention on the photograph, letterforms, or illustrated subjects in our design. But to present these graphic elements in a dynamic and visually interesting way, the space around the elements must also be designed. When a line or shape element is introduced into an area of space, it is said that the space is activated. Activating space can be attained subtly or overtly using line or shape (see Visual 1–18).

**Visual 1–17a**
Shape is often used in support of a message. In this instance, Cahan & Associates uses geometric shapes and the circular motif of a microscopic view as a visual metaphor for genetic engineering within this annual report.

**Visual 1–17b**
The organic quality of the shapes, lines, and letterforms in this bakery's logo supports the natural ingredients and organic quality of its baked goods. (Design by Morris Creative)
 Amidst the arrangement of large scale shapes, the soft curved line projects a quiet influence as it activates the area within the blue plane. The color reversal in the m activates the background, creating a figure-ground reversal. The curves in the m are activated as they contrast points in the blue and ochre shapes.

**Line**

In formal terms, a line can be thought of as the moving path of a point. The path itself determines the quality and character of the resulting line. The path can be straight, it can meander and curve across itself, or it can follow the precise arc of a circle segment. The resulting lines from these point paths give a specific character and meaning to a line. Another aspect of line quality is determined by the tool that makes it—the sketched quality of a charcoal pencil line, the precision of a line drawn with a digital pen tool, the organic quality of a line brushed with ink, and so on (see Visual 1-19).

Lines of type can take the form of any configuration of a drawn line (see Visual 1-20).
Lines can have different qualities, depending on the tool that was used. Shown here are three examples of lines drawn with (from left to right) charcoal, a brush, and a digital pen tool. Note the different characteristics of each: the charcoal line could be described as rough and gritty, the brush-stroke line seems loose and casual, and the digitally drawn line is clean and precise.

Type can also be used in a linear way to describe a shape or form as it does in this poster promoting a Texas design exhibition. The result is playful and has a memorable, graphic impact. (Poster design by Mithoff Advertising)
Another way to think of line is the idea of line as edge. A good example of this is a horizon line that exists as the line distinguishing land from sky. An edge line can exist along the side of any straight or curved shape or as the result of shapes sharing the same edge. You can see an example of line as edge in Visual 1–18.

Line can also be implied, meaning it exists as the result of an alignment of shapes, edges, or even points. Implying the existence of a line in this way can be very engaging for the viewer. Implying lines also activates the compositional space (see Visual 1–21).

**Size**

Size serves scale and proportion. Size refers to the physical dimensions of an element or format. Determining the size of a typeface or a photograph or the dimensions of a poster or display is a basic decision that needs to be made within the context of the overall design objective. For some design venues such as CD packaging, magazines, billboards, and Web sites, size is a given. Where and how they will be viewed is a determinant of size. In packaging applications, the size of the product determines the size of the package (see Visual 1–22).

In other situations, the designer may determine the size of a work. Most design is first consumed through the eyes and then manipulated by hand. Books, magazines, and other publications, and packaging and product design are good examples. In these instances, size is a

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**Stefan Sagmeister**

Stefan Sagmeister's work is characterized by innovative and unusual concepts. Many of his design solutions incorporate interactivity, controversial subject matter, or a visual surprise.

His approach is perhaps best exemplified by *Made You Look*, a monograph of his work that was published in 2001. Designed by Sagmeister and his staff, the book incorporates many of the optical tricks, surprises and interactivity of the designer's CD packaging. In fact, the book's cover, when placed in its red slipcase, portrays what appears to be a photograph of a friendly German shepherd. When the slipcase is removed, the dog's sweet countenance changes to reveal a vicious alter ego, foaming at the mouth.
A native of Austria, Sagmeister received his master of fine arts in graphic design from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. He came to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar in the late 1980s, receiving his master's degree from Pratt Institute in 1990.

After working in the early 1990s at M&Co. under the mentorship of designer Tibor Kalman, he formed New York City-based Sagmeister Inc. in 1993. Since then, Sagmeister has become best known for designing graphics and CD packaging for popular recording artists such as the Rolling Stones, Pat Metheny, Aerosmith, and Lou Reed. In addition to winning many international design awards, Sagmeister has been nominated four times for the recording industry's Grammy award.

In addition to running a successful design studio, Sagmeister teaches at New York City's School for Visual Arts. He says that his students often inspire him, but they can also be his toughest critics. He was encouraged when a young designer responded positively to his book. "She said that after she read the book she wanted to do a lot of work. That's exactly how I felt when I was a student and I read a book I enjoyed," says Sagmeister. "I was very flattered."

Much of Sagmeister's work involves entertainment graphics and CD packaging for high-profile recording artists such as David Byrne. For Byrne's "Feelings" release, Sagmeister had a model maker create a doll of Byrne as well as various heads with different expressions. When opened, the jewel case reveals a folded insert depicting the expressions and a disc with arrows that let the user spin it to determine their current emotional state. The songs on the CD were color coded according to their emotional content, so that users could select a song appropriate to their mood.
function of portability and hand-eye manipulation. In other situations, viewing the message from a distance dictates the venue’s size (see Visual 1–23). Even when size is open for consideration, designers are forced to work creatively within externally imposed constraints. A savvy designer uses the comparison of sizes (scale and proportion) to control how the viewer perceives relative size (see Visual 1–24).

**Color**

Color describes the intrinsic hues found in light and pigment. Hues are distinguished in common discourse by names such as maroon, olive, or ochre. In industry, there are numerous systems designed to categorize, name, and classify color for various applications. As an element, color heightens the emotional and psychological dimensions of any visual image. Colors carry cultural meaning that immediately communicates without the aid of words or pictures (see Visual 1–25).
Designed to be viewed at a distance, the large scale of a billboard doesn’t necessarily mean more room for more information. Billboards usually contain relatively little text and imagery because they need to deliver a message that can be perceived at a glance by passing motorists and pedestrians. Enhancing the readability of the message is an effective graphic device of reversing the type out of the background using high-contrast colors. (Billboard design by Rives Carlberg)

These snowboard designs use scale change and proportion to create variations on the theme of city nightlife. In the example at left, the type and overlapping shapes create a sense of proportion with a human scale. The middle example uses a diminishing scale to create a sense of perspective and motion. At right, cropping and changing size of type establishes a scale that seems larger than the physical space it occupies. (Snowboard design by Jager Di Paola Kemp)
Color can support a seasonal theme as it does in these garment and invitation designs for independent fall and winter carnivals. Although the name and logo remain essentially the same for both events, the difference in color palettes immediately establishes each as a special, and separate, seasonally themed event. (Event logo by Olika)

Color can also convey an attitude or mood. Color enhances compositional space by controlling color contrasts. Color can have a role in supporting all of the visual principles and can be applied to the other elements (see Visual 1-26). It can help to create emphasis and variety, support an established hierarchy, and activate shapes and space. In Chapter 3 I go into more detail on how color can be used to manage a composition and convey an attitude or mood.

**Texture**

Texture refers to the quality and characteristic of a surface. Texture can be tactile and visual. Like color, texture cannot function as a design element on its own. It enhances the other elements, relying on shape and space to exist (see Visual 1-27).

Texture provides designers with an opportunity to create variety and depth in a composition and helps differentiate figure from ground when a design is complexly layered (see Visual 1-28). Lines of text, painted surfaces, or applications of dry media such as pencil or charcoal, or actual surfaces photographed or digitally scanned replicate actual texture but function as visual texture. Illustrators and photographers often make images that simulate real texture (see Visual 1-29).

There are instances in design in which texture is a tactile experience. Perhaps the most common example is the feel of paper surfaces within magazines and books or as it is used for business cards and letters, as well as on packaging and other products that are designed to be handled. The paper surface specified by the designer plays an important role in the way the user interacts with the product. A variety of materials such as paper, plastics, metal, glass, and
Color can be used to manage hierarchy by establishing position in space, as in this restaurant signage, where the brightly colored lime jumps forward in space, even though it is considerably smaller than the orange directly behind it. (Restaurant signage design by Sibley/Peteet)

Combining drawn line and shape elements with the clean lines and shapes in the radial designs results in a rich contrast of visual texture. These motifs were successfully used to communicate the rich, mid-eastern flavor of the music within this compact disc packaging. (Package design by Sagmeister Inc.)
visual 1–28

In this poster a sense of dimension is created by adding layers of differing textured shapes that camouflage the type forms. The effect creates a delay in the read of the information. Textures and shapes create unity through variety in a visually active design. (Poster design by Wolfgang Weingart)

visual 1–29

Artist Jim Carroll’s illustration technique combines photography, layers of type, and painted and scratchboard surfaces to create rich, textural imagery.
wood play an important role in determining the perception of quality and function of the design. Texture can be arranged using its direction to create a pattern. Patterns of texture can be arranged to achieve visual tension and movement.

**Typography**

Typographic forms are elements unique to communication design because they play a dual role. On a formal level, they function as shape, texture, point, and line (see Visual 1-30). But, of course, typographic forms also contain verbal meaning. It is critical that word forms communicate a verbal message as well as function effectively as graphic elements in a composition. When typographic elements are managed only with regard to their verbal meaning, the design can lack visual impact. When type is manipulated with a treatment that enhances its message, that message is perceived on a sensory as well as an intellectual level (see Visual 1-31).
defining the language of design

visual

This comparison illustrates two treatments of the same word, with dramatic differences. In the example at top, the word *ITCH* is understood primarily by reading its verbal meaning. Beneath it, the same word is rendered with textural lines that communicate visually what the word says verbally. The verbal meaning "scratch the itch" is enhanced with a visual embellishment.

In primary and secondary school, we related to typography as words in books that contain information to be learned. We write letters to make words, sentences, and paragraphs that express our thoughts and ideas. This information is almost exclusively presented in horizontal lines, stacked in columns arranged on a sequence of pages. After years of relating to type in this way, it is understandably challenging to think of type as a visual form that can assume other configurations. Exercises that provide an opportunity to work with type in unusual and creative ways help reorient your thinking toward type as a potentially dynamic element in design composition. I further discuss typography in design in Chapter 4.

**SUMMARY**

The principles and elements of design function as a visual vocabulary. And, in that sense, learning to use them is like learning a new language. It can be overwhelming to understand how to use them in your own design. Study them individually at first and gradually learn to combine them in more complex ways. It also helps to study the work of contemporary designers and design through the twentieth century.

The exercises for this chapter stress one or two main principles, limiting the elements used to solve them. Once you have mastered the vocabulary of any language, you can communicate in that tongue. The visual language is complex and fluid. It is fluid because it is influenced by cultural, social, and technological change. Using it is an ongoing learning process, but the principles and elements do not change. When you have gained a working knowledge of them, you possess the means to powerful communication.