

Assignment #1: Visual Expression

Worth: 10%

Objective

Different visual displays cause us to respond in different ways. Some displays, for example, are calming. Others stimulate tension.

A graphic designer can influence readers' responses by employing visual elements such as points, lines, shapes, symbols, and colors in purposeful ways. The aim of this assignment is to examine how the **sensory** and **semiotic** features of a graphic can be used to express concepts.

Notes

- 1) You may do this assignment alone or in groups of two;
- 2) You may resubmit this assignment for additional credit.

Part I



You see two words, *mother* and *child*. Obviously, these words are made up of letters. And each of the letters is made up of shapes. Our visual processing system senses these shapes, puts them together to recognize letters, puts the letters together to recognize words, and the words trigger meanings. The words are arbitrary in that there a different sequence of letters could just as easily stand for the concept mother. For example, in French we use the words *mère* and *enfant*.

Words are one example of **symbols**. Colors, shapes and sounds can also be symbols. A certain green, for example, suggests the Starbucks brand. **Semiotics** is the study of symbols and how they convey meaning. On the other hand, the shapes that make up the letters and the spaces between the letters are **sensory** features. These sensory features too can suggest feelings.

Study this image and:

1. Identify another symbol. Explain why the symbol is arbitrary.
2. Identify one or more sources of sensory information. Explain why the information is sensory.
3. Briefly explain why this graphic is elegant. Do you think it is beautiful – why or why not?

Your answer should be two or three short paragraphs and should include the image, which is located on the website.

Part II

■ ■ ■ ■ Using four black squares, create compositions that express these concepts: serene, playful, and tension. For each concept, develop six sketches and select the most effective solution. In words, briefly discuss why you selected the composition in terms of sensory information. Your sketches can be done with either pencil-and-paper or black construction paper, scissors and glue.

Implement two of your solutions in Design By Numbers.

(Please turn over to page #2)

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Part III

Using *Design By Numbers*, express the concepts of spring and autumn. Your solutions should be animated in some fashion.

Briefly discuss the merits of your solutions, focusing on your use of **sensory** and **semiotic** information. Discuss the combination of these two forms of information in your display.

Create a *single* web page that shows:

- 1) Thumbnails images of the animation, suggesting the progression of time,
- 2) The written discussion, and
- 3) The DBN code.

Design your page to present all this information in a clear and interesting manner and make your work meaningful to outside readers.

What to hand in?

Please submit a paper report consisting of:

- 1) The cover sheet;
- 2) Your answer to Part I;
- 3) The sketches for Part II and your discussion of the selected sketch, and a URL to the implemented solutions;
- 4) An URL to the webpage for Part III.

Grading Guidelines

Part I (8 points)

- Concise, interesting answers to the questions
- The image is incorporated effectively with the answer

Part II (8 points)

- Six sketches are appropriately presented and one selected for each concept
- A thoughtful discussion of how the selected solutions stimulate the concept

Part III (24 points)

- Spring and Autumn are expressed with DBN
- A thoughtful discussion of the solutions is presented
- The code is shown on the page
- The composition of the page, consisting of animations, code, and discussion, is ordered, meaningful, and interesting