

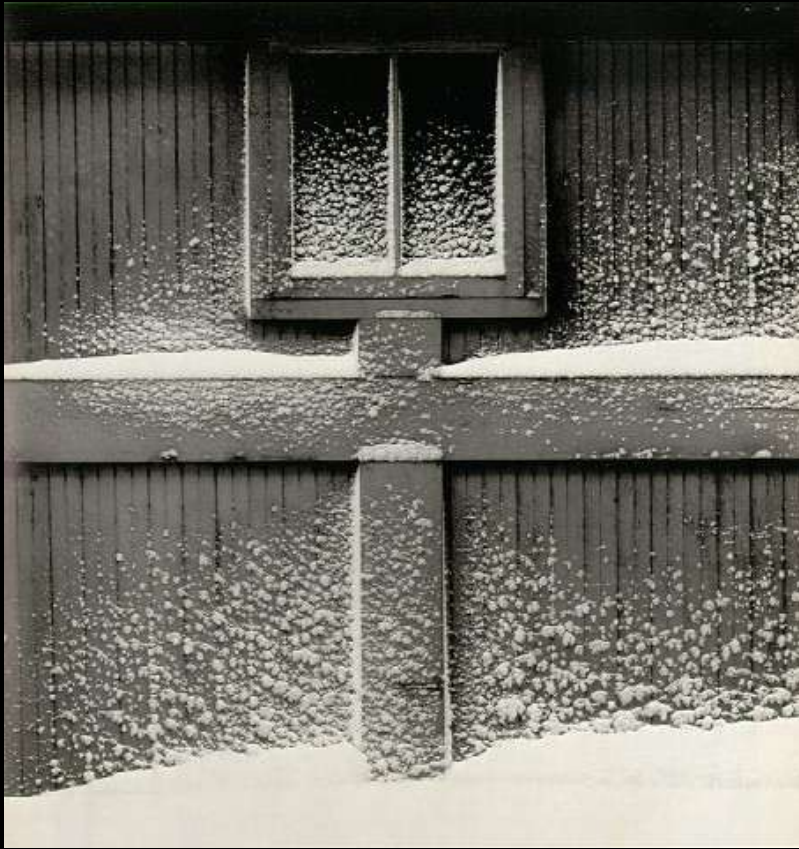
Balance in Design



“Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order, rhythm and harmony.”

— *Thomas Merton*

Balance in Design



Balance is important in life.

Work and play; diet and exercise; yin and yang.

A beautiful face is often a matter of the right balance of features.

Balance in Design



Balance is also a very important design principle.

It will help you create an aesthetically pleasing whole and help you better control flow in your designs.

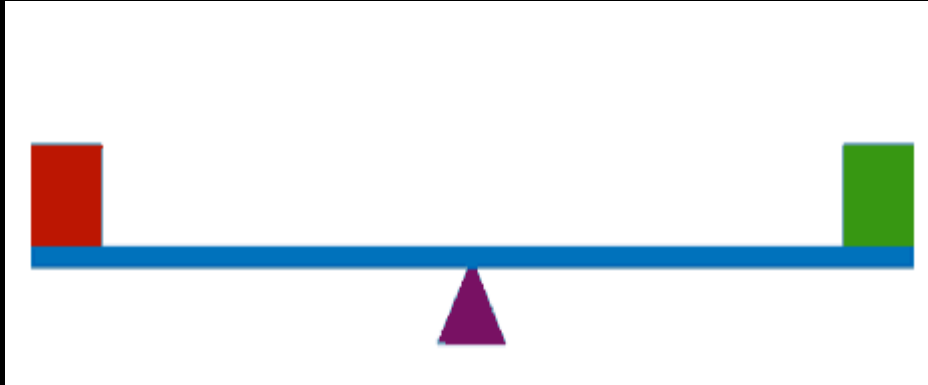
What is Balance in Design?



“ balance is the state of
equalized tension ”

— *Alex W. White from
“The Elements of
Graphic Design”*

Balance in Design



Let's take a step back from design and think about physical balance. Picture a lever with a fulcrum at the midpoint; a see saw perhaps.



If you place two equal weights the same distance away on opposite sides of the fulcrum, the lever will balance.

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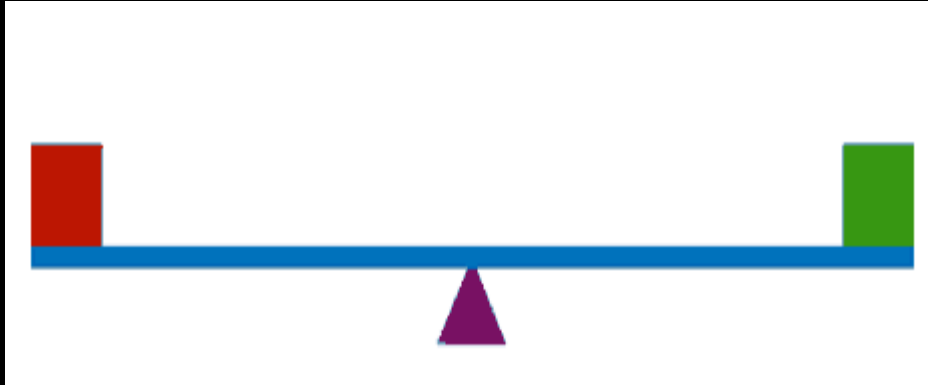


We can use a simple formula to express this.

$$F1 \times D1 = F2 \times D2$$

(where F is the force and D is the distance from the fulcrum)

Balance in Design



When the force x distance on each side of the equation is equal, balance is achieved.



In the example above the force (weight) of each object is the same as is their distance from the fulcrum so we have balance.

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What if the fulcrum is off center?



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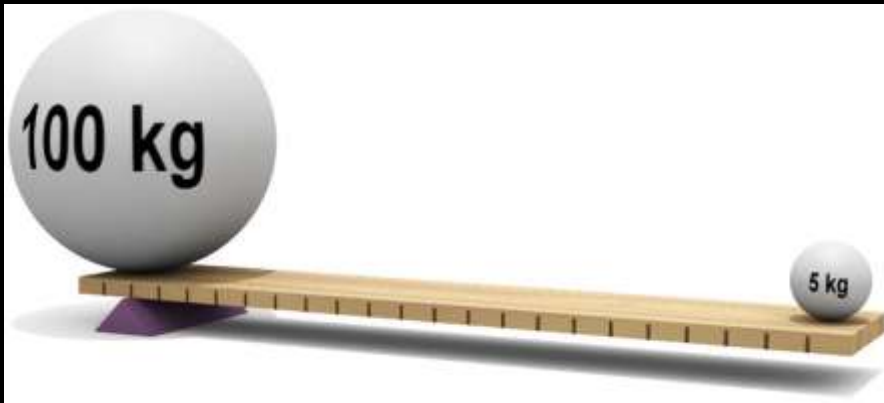


In that case the force of one of the objects needs to be increased in order to achieve balances.



An adult on a see saw must move toward the center if there's a child on the other side.

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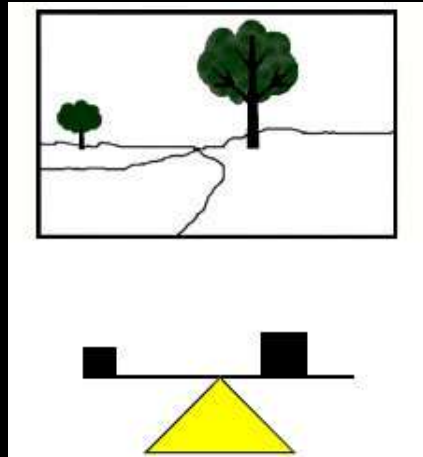


Nothing too difficult to understand even if I did lapse into physics momentarily.



Balance in design works the same way as a lever or see saw.

Balance in Design



Your design will have a vertical (or horizontal) axis and the weight of the various elements on either side of the axis and their distance from the axis will determine if your design is balanced.



Balance in Design



There are two kinds of balance that correspond to our lever images above,

namely **symmetrical** and **asymmetrical** balance,

but first what gives an element visual weight?

Visual Weight in Design Elements



The major difference in design balance and physical balance is that your visual elements don't have a physical weight.

They do however, have visual weight.

Balance in Design

Some things that affect visual weight :

Size – As you would expect larger elements carry more weight

Color – It's not fully understood why, but some colors are perceived as weighing more than others. Red seems to be heaviest while yellow seems to be lightest.

Density – Packing more elements into a given space, gives more weight to that space

Value – A darker object will have more weight than a lighter object

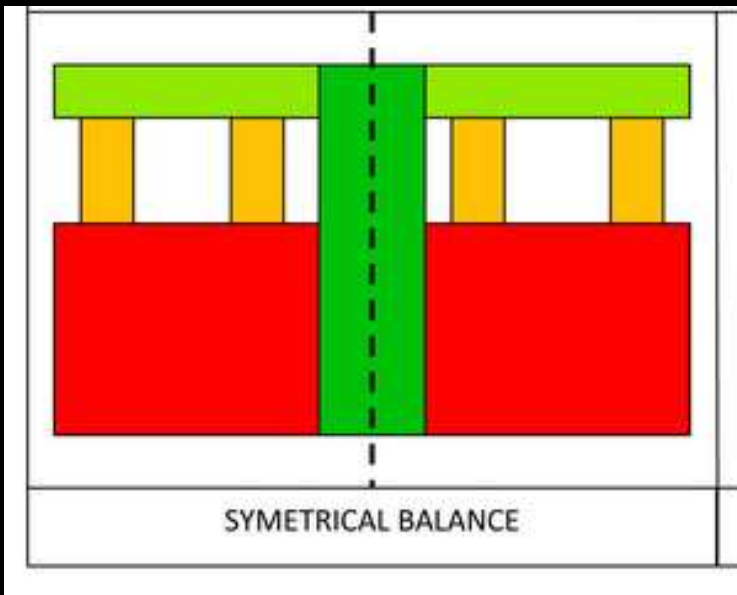
Whitespace – Positive space weighs more than negative space or whitespace

Symmetrical Balance



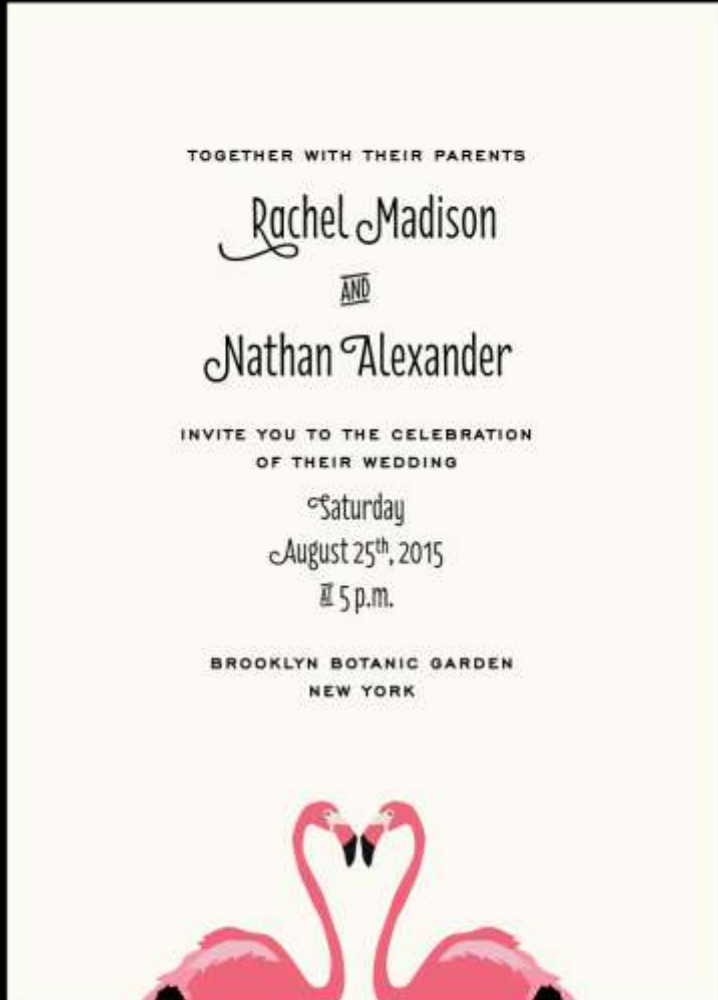
Symmetrical balance is like having our fulcrum in the center of the lever.

To achieve balance we need to have elements of equal weight on both sides of a central axis.



Symmetrical balance tends to be more formal and more static. It evokes feelings of consistency, elegance and classicism.

Balance in Design



Think of a wedding invitation.

They tend to use centered text in part because this helps achieve symmetrical balance, which leads to feelings of formality and elegance.

Exactly what a wedding is expected to be.

Symmetrical design balance is easy to see and relatively easy to achieve.

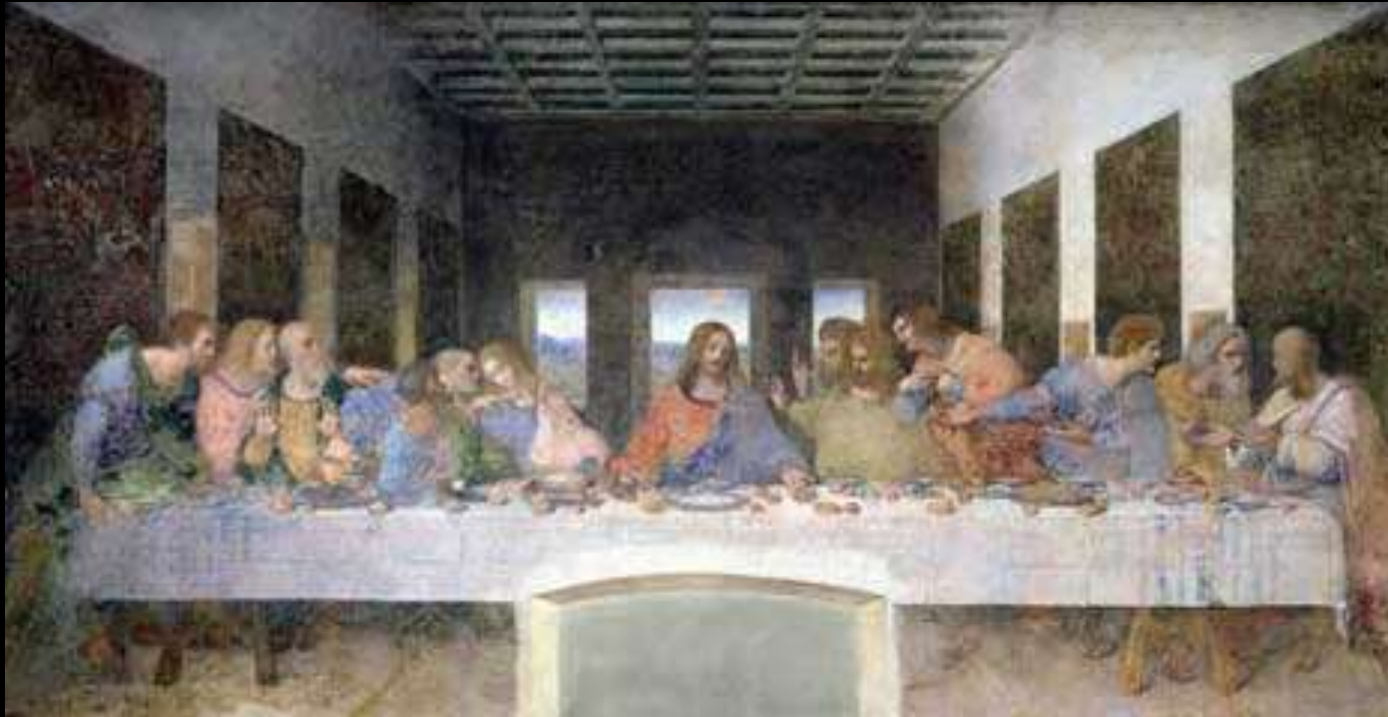
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Leonardo DaVinci's **Last Supper** is a great example of symmetrical balance in art.

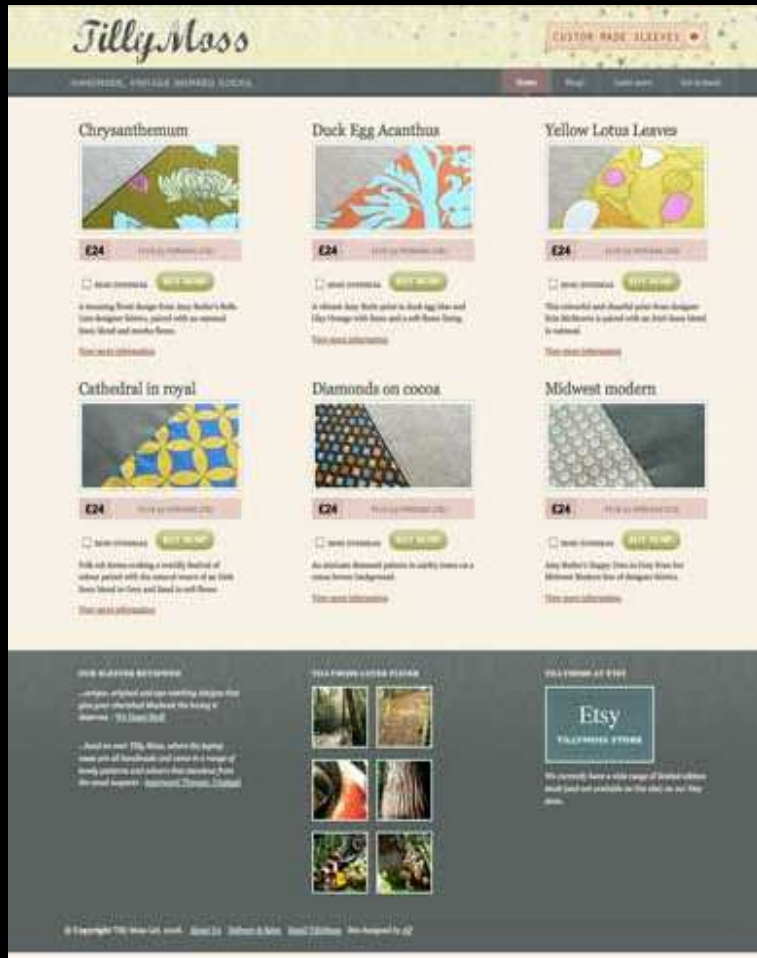
For everything on the left side of the painting there's something of equal weight on the right.

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The entire painting is balanced around the central figure of Jesus Christ, which makes perfect sense given what the painting is about.

Balance in Design

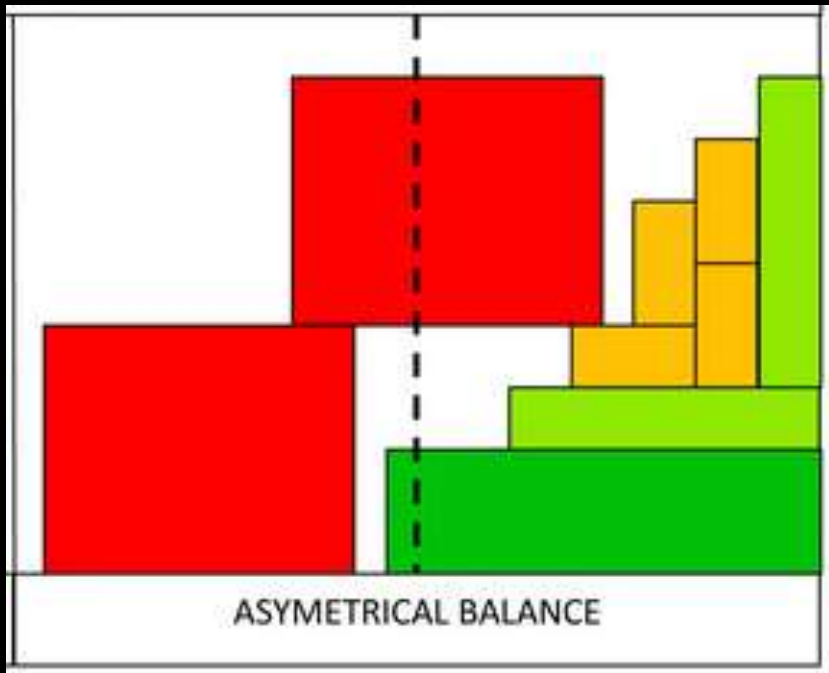


It's easy to see the balance in the home page of Tilly Moss.

Equal weights exist on each side of the middle column.

The central part of the page is **symmetrically balanced** both vertically and horizontally lending elegance to the products.

Asymmetrical Balance



Asymmetrical balance is like having our fulcrum off center.

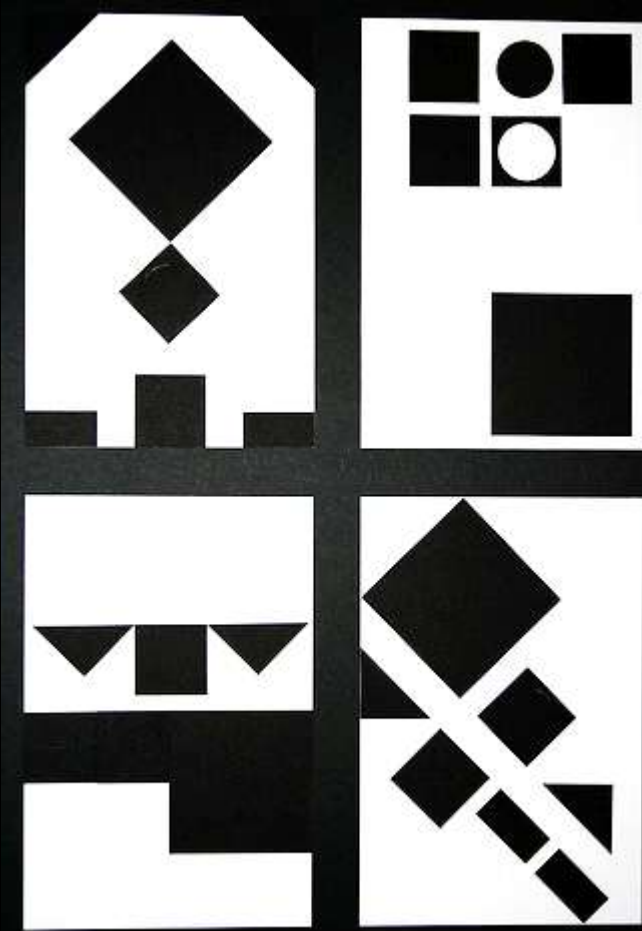
Unequal weights need to be placed on either side of the fulcrum in order for balance to be in equilibrium.

Asymmetrical Balance



Visual weight will not be evenly distributed around a central axis and often you'll find one dominant form on one side of the axis offset by several less dominant forms on the other.

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Asymmetrical balance is more dynamic as there's more visual variety in design elements.

It's more interesting because of that variety, but also more difficult to achieve.

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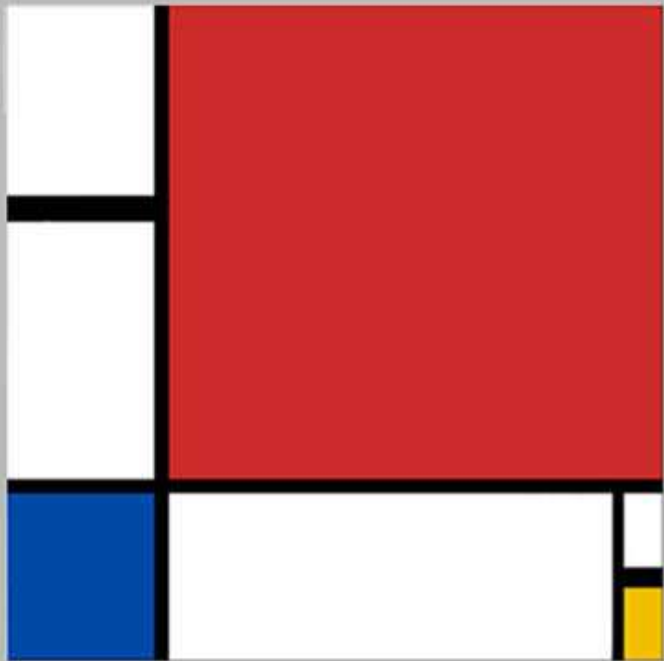


Figure 19. *Composition II; Composition I; Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow*, 1930. Fukuoka City Bank, Ltd.

Elements in asymmetrical design will have more complex relationships between them and the overall design will use more whitespace to equalize the balance.

Asymmetrical design evokes modernism and feelings of forcefulness, vitality, and movement.

Balance in Design



In Kandinsky's *Composition #8* the dominant element is the dark circle in the upper left.

No single element on the right side of the painting carries the same weight as this circle, but the dense line work on the right side carries enough weight together to give a counterbalance to the painting.

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Notice how the left side of the painting contains more whitespace, since the circle already carries enough weight for that side.

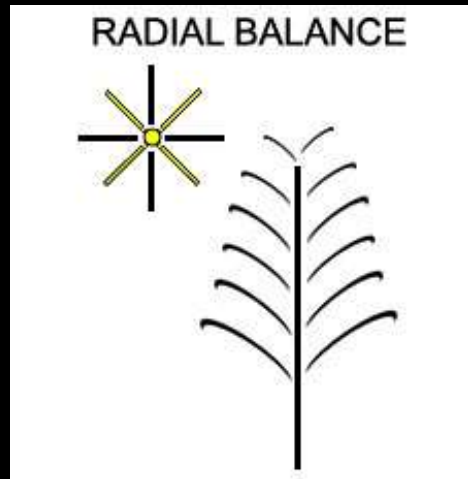
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Equilibrium is achieved on the home page for the Ernest Hemingway Collection, by balancing the larger content area on the right with a variety of objects packed closer together on the left.



The darker color of the elements on the left adds to their weight as does the idea of there being a full cup of coffee in the center of the left hand side.

Radial & Mosaic Balance in Design



Most of the time you'll be dealing with either symmetrical or asymmetrical design, but two other types of balance are worth mentioning:



- **Radial balance** –
- **Mosaic balance** –

Radial Balance

Work History

- Elite Mortgage Group
4704 Hixson Pike Suite 100
Hixson, TN 37342
423.875.5887
Receptionist
- Tony K' Us
2020 Highland Rd # 400
Chattanooga, TN 37421
423.877.9861
Sales Associate
- Spencer's Gifts
2100 Hamilton Place Blvd # 276
Chattanooga, TN 37421
(423) 553-0015
Sales Associate

Education

- Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising
919 S. Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90015
Graphic Design Major
- Chattanooga Central High
5728 Highway 58
Hixson, TN 37421
Humanities/Fine Arts Major

Computer Skills

- Photoshop
- Illustrator
- InDesign
- Word
- Excel

Extracurricular

- People to People
- Student Ambassadors 2006
- Student Ambassador Award 2007
- CIS Art Vanguard Award 2007
- CIS Service Learning Award 2007

Mission

- Keep learning
Be creative
Take risks
Make the world beautiful

Radial Balance Traits:

- Professional
- Multi-tasker
- Goal going
- Efficient
- Clever
- Fast
- Hard Worker
- Adventurous
- Witty creative
- Use to learn
- Ambitious
- Keen
- Adaptable
- Professional
- Organized

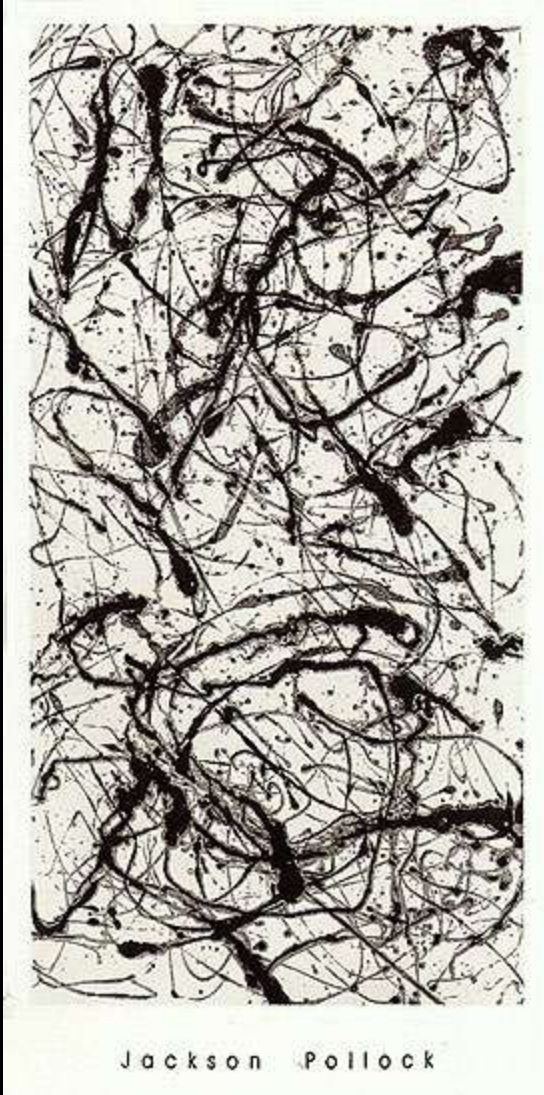
Thank you. No gamble involved.

Radial balance – all elements radiate in or out from the center.

Think beams of light coming from the sun.

It's easy to maintain a focal point in radial balance as it will always be the center.

Radial Balance



Mosaic balance – many elements on the page create a sort of balanced chaos.


Think of a Jackson Pollock painting.

Mosaic balance lacks hierarchy and can look like noise.

It's harder to define a single focal point in all the chaos.

Summary

Things we know about tomorrow:



10,000 Traffic Signals Controlled by a Computer...

Imagine a computer that could solve the downtown traffic problem. This is the long-range potential of a new kind of computer invented by Westinghouse, one that could control ten thousand traffic signals, and save more cars with fewer delays. This computer "learns" by experience, tries new approaches when necessary, adapts instantly to changing problems. Right now it's at work in industry. One pilot model has

been running a refinery process, not to produce the greatest number of tons, not to produce the highest profit per ton, but to produce the highest total profit for the equipment. This new-concept computer will improve the making of cement, paper, and almost anything else made by a continuous process. Compared to standard computers, the new type will be smaller, simpler, more reliable. You can be sure...if it's

Westinghouse



Leach and

As in life balance in design is important. It's one of the principles of design.

A balanced design has a unity of composition and helps the design make a single impression on the viewer and just feels right.

Summary



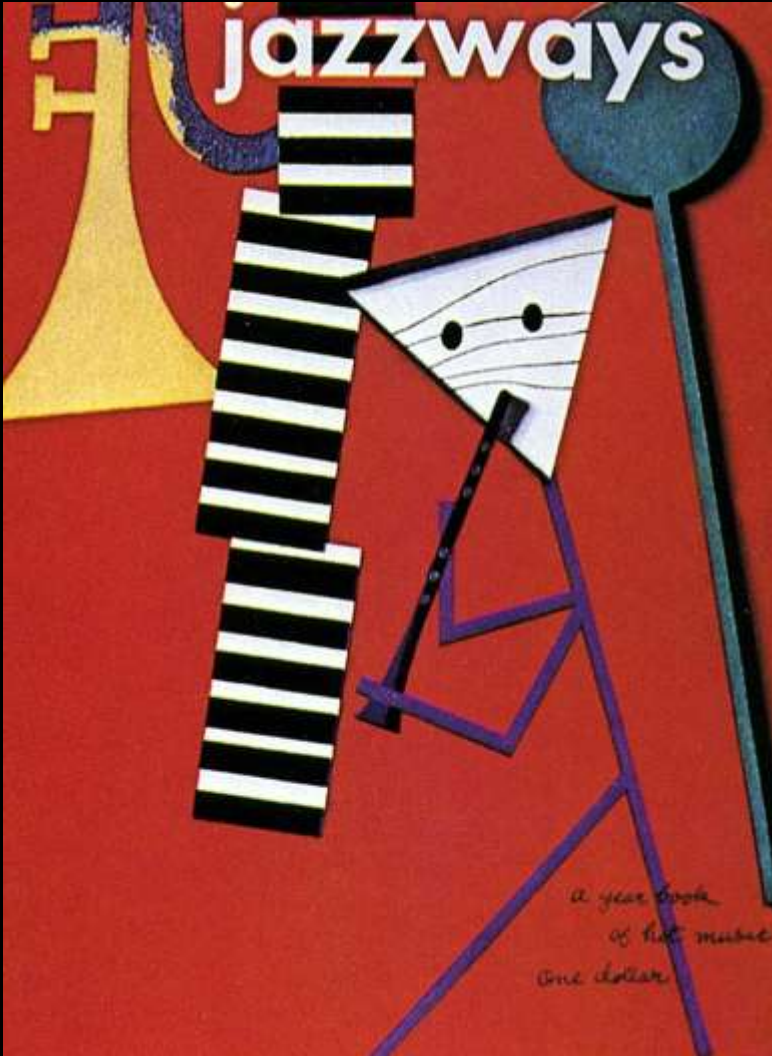
In unbalanced design the individual elements tend to dominate instead of the whole.

The parts become more visible and there are many messages instead of a singular unified message.



This becomes confusing to the viewer and can hinder getting the message intended across.

Summary

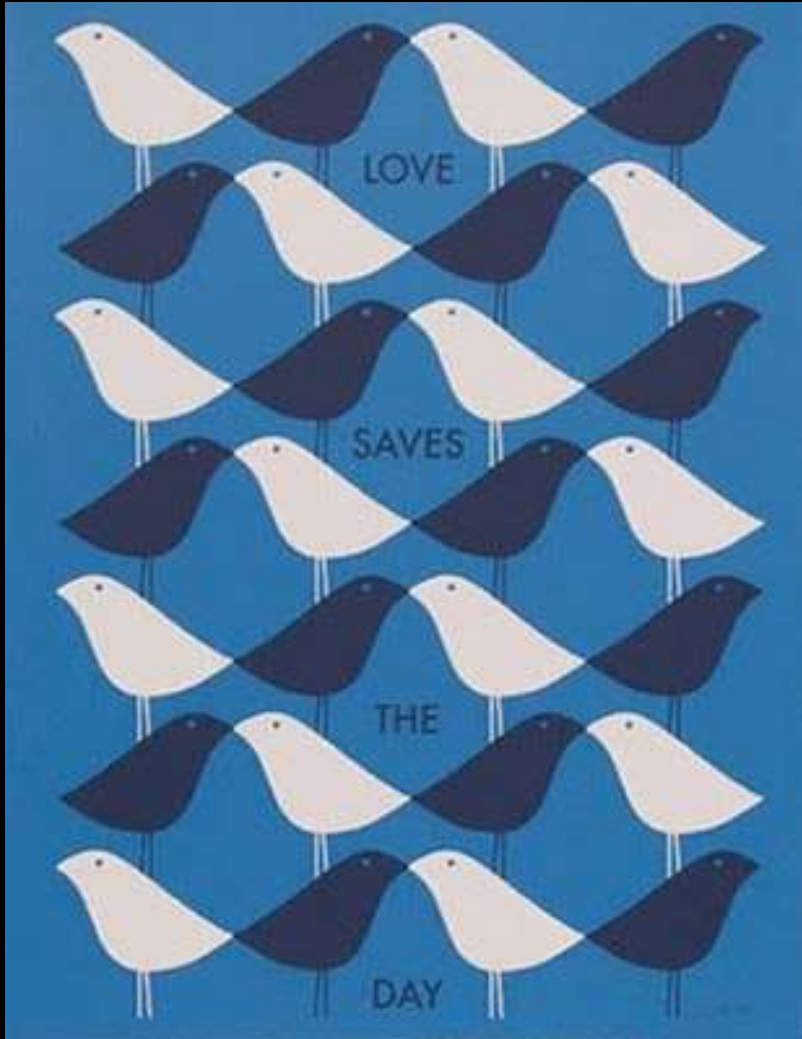


Your own judgment can go far in achieving balance in your designs.

Train your eye to see balance in the compositions of others.

Which elements of the composition look heavier or lighter and why do they appear that way?

Summary



By training your eye and learning to control the weight of different elements you'll be able to achieve balance in your compositions and create more appealing designs.

Balance in Design



Lecture courtesy of
Vanseodesign.com

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October 28, 2009

Modified Feb-2013

By [Stephen Copel](#)



