

2.4 Design exercise: a primer on photographic composition

Objective

This exercise aims to learn and apply the Gestalt principles, a set of psychological laws that Gestalt psychologists formulated concerning how our brain organizes perceived information. These principles are largely applied in photography and design. The critical assumption of Gestalt psychologists is that our perception is holistic, i.e. our brain perceives whole constructs or objects based on the relationship existing between their elements. The world Gestalt has been translated in English to 'pattern', to relate to this crucial aspect of human perception.

For instance, when we look at a picture, our understanding of what the image is communicating is based on identifying compositional patterns, i.e. ways the image's parts relate to each other into a meaningful whole (Freeman, 2007).

Students can apply the same principles to designing physical or virtual artifacts (see some examples in Chapman, 2021).

- **Instructions**
- Read the slides to familiarize yourself with the Gestalt laws of perception and their application to photographic composition.
- Take a photo walk following the instructions contained in the presentation.

References

Chapman. C. (2021), Exploring the Gestalt Principles of Design, available <https://www.toptal.com/designers/ui/gestalt-principles-of-design>

Freeman, M. (2007), *The Photographer's Eye: Composition and Design for Better Digital Photos*, Focal Press.