

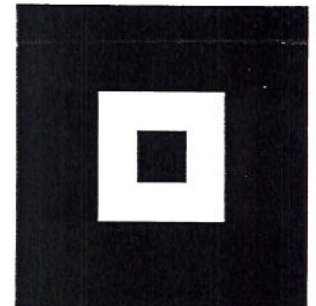
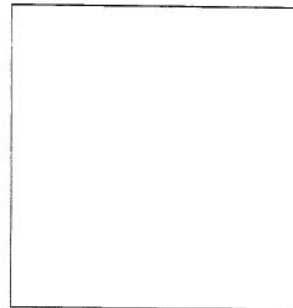
VALUE

Value refers to the relative lightness or darkness of a surface. The word *relative* is significant. The lightness or darkness of a shape is largely determined by its surroundings. For example, on a white surface, a gray square seems heavy and imposing (1.64A). The same gray square has less visual weight and seems luminous when it is surrounded by a black ground (1.64B). A **value scale** further demonstrates the importance of context (1.65). The solid gray line appears luminous when it is placed on a black background. As it crosses over the middle grays and into the white area, it seems to darken.

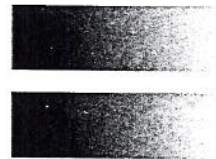
Contrast

Both communication and expression are affected by **contrast**, or the amount of difference in values. High contrast tends to increase clarity and improve readability (1.66). Low contrast is often used for shapes of secondary importance or when the message is subtle.

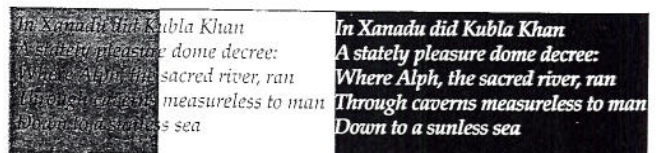
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1.64 Relative value.



1.65 Value scale.



1.66 Contrast affects readability.

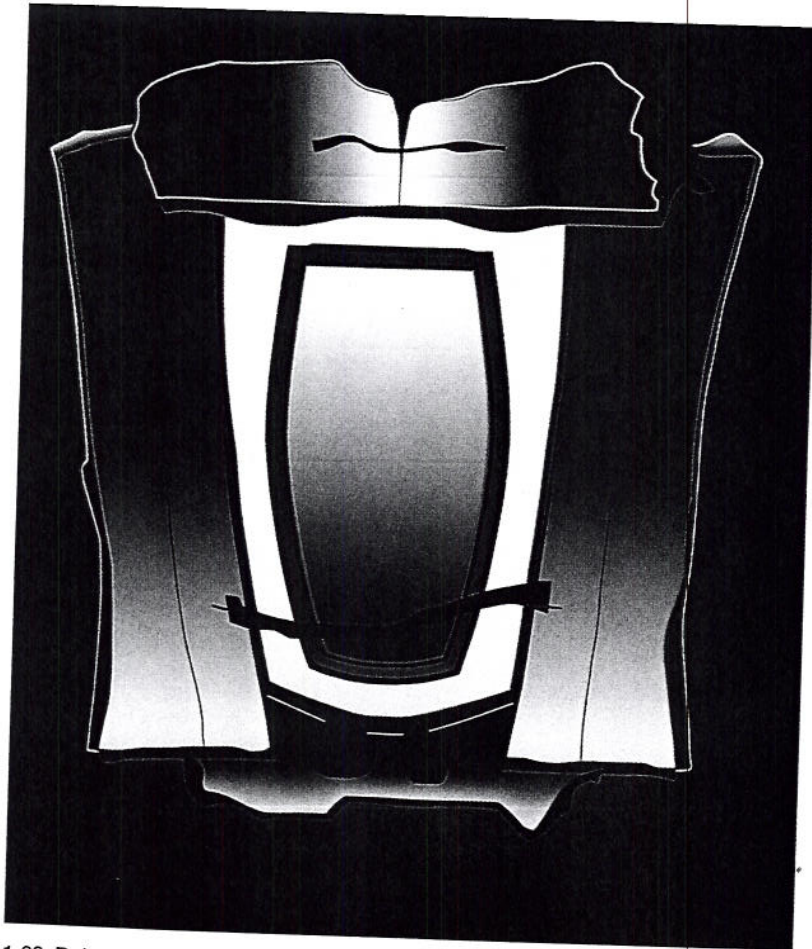
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1.67 Alice in Chains, "Dog's Breath" Website.
Sony Music Creative Services, Santa Monica, CA.
Graphic Interface Designer: Mary Maurer.



1.68 Alfred Stieglitz, *The Terminal*, c. 1892. Chloride print, 3½ × 4½ in. (8.8 × 11.3 cm).



1.69 Deborah Remington, *Capra*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 6 ft 4 in. × 5 ft 7 in.
(1.93 × 1.7 m).

Photographers are especially aware of the importance of contrast. By using a filter or changing the print paper, they can quickly modify contrast. High contrast gives the *Alice in Chains* Website (1.67) a gritty immediacy. Each word and each shape are clearly defined and confrontational. The city in Stieglitz's photograph (1.68) is quieter and more atmospheric. This low-contrast photograph invites the viewer into a preindustrial world of horses and carriages.

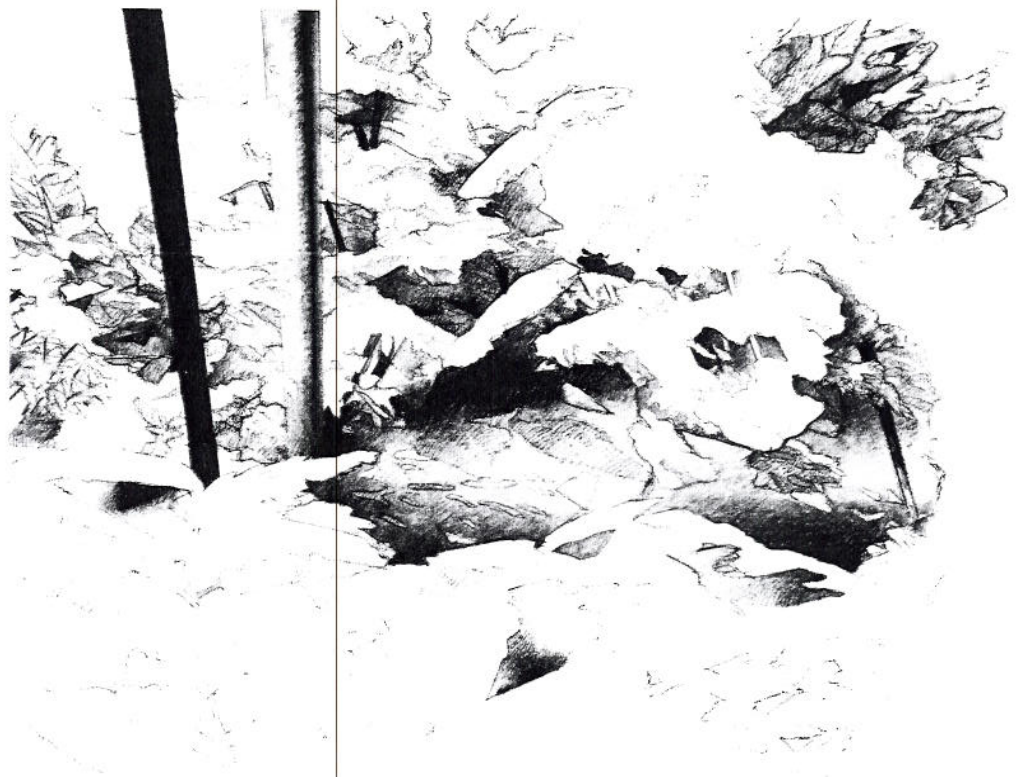
As demonstrated by Deborah Remington's *Capra* (1.69), value gradation can suggest a light source, create a sense of volume, or enhance the illusion of space.

Value Distribution

Value distribution refers to the proportion and arrangement of lights and darks in a composition. Careful use of value distribution can increase emotional impact. A composition that is 80 percent black simply has a different "feel" than a composition that is 80 percent white.



1.70 Ray K. Metzker, *Philadelphia*, 1963. Gelatin silver print on paper, 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (15.4 × 22.3 cm).



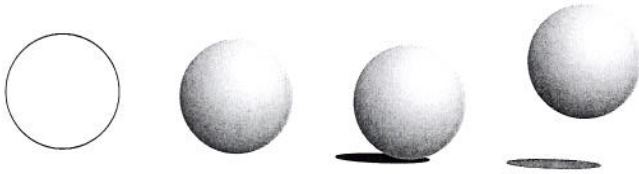
1.71 Conley Harris, *Doubles/Triples, Italy*. Charcoal drawing, 23 × 30 in. (58.42 × 76.2 cm).

Darker values are often used to create a sense of mystery or increase dramatic tension. For example, Ray K. Metzker's *Philadelphia* (1.70) is dominated by dark values. Surrounded by somber buildings in a silent city, the commuters huddle together under the brightly lit bus shelter like actors in a play.

Lighter values tend to suggest openness, optimism, and clarity. For example, lighter values dominate the bottom and right edges of Conley Harris' landscape (1.71), creating an expansive effect. The darker values at the center of the composition then pull us inward.

Value and Volume

When a full range of values is used, a two-dimensional shape can seem three-dimensional, or **volumetric**. Figure 1.72 shows the transformation of a circle into a sphere. We begin with a simple outline, then add the **attached shadows**, or values that directly define the basic form. Addition of a **cast shadow** in the third image grounds the sphere. In the fourth drawing, the separation between the shadow and the sphere creates a floating effect.

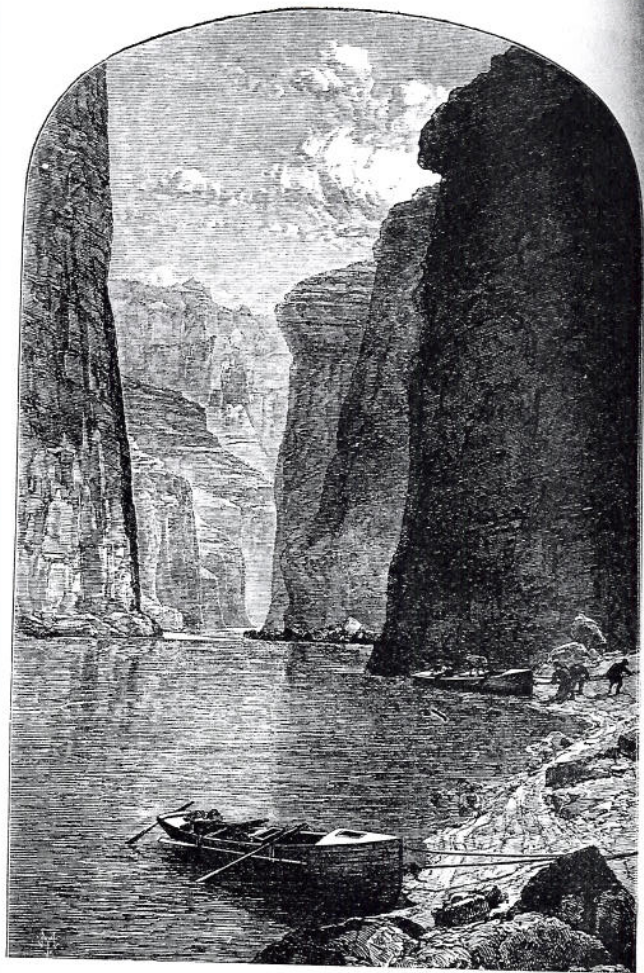


1.72 From shape to volume through use of lighting.

This illusion of space is so convincing that objects can appear to extend out from a two-dimensional surface. The earliest oil painters often used **grisaille**, or a gray underpainting, to create this illusion of space. Color was then added, using transparent glazes or layers of paint. A detail from van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (1.73) shows both the grisaille painting and the full-color painting. The two statues in the center were painted using a range of grays, while color has been added to the kneeling figures on the right and left. Variations in value give all of the figures a remarkable dimensionality.



1.73 Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece* (closed), completed 1432. Oil on panel, approx. 11 ft 6 in. × 7 ft 7 in. (3.5 × 2.33 m).



1.74 Thomas Moran, *Noon-Day Rest in Marble Canyon*, from *Exploration of the Colorado River of the West*, by J. W. Powell, 1875. Wood engraving after an original sketch by Thomas Moran, 6½ × 4¾ in. (16.5 × 11 cm).

Value and Space

When combined in a composition, very dark, crisp shapes tend to advance spatially, while gray, blurry shapes tend to recede. For example, in Thomas Moran's *Noon-Day Rest in Marble Canyon* (1.74), the dark values in the foreground gradually fade until the cliffs in the background become gray and indistinct. This effect, called **atmospheric perspective**, is one of the simplest ways to create the illusion of space.

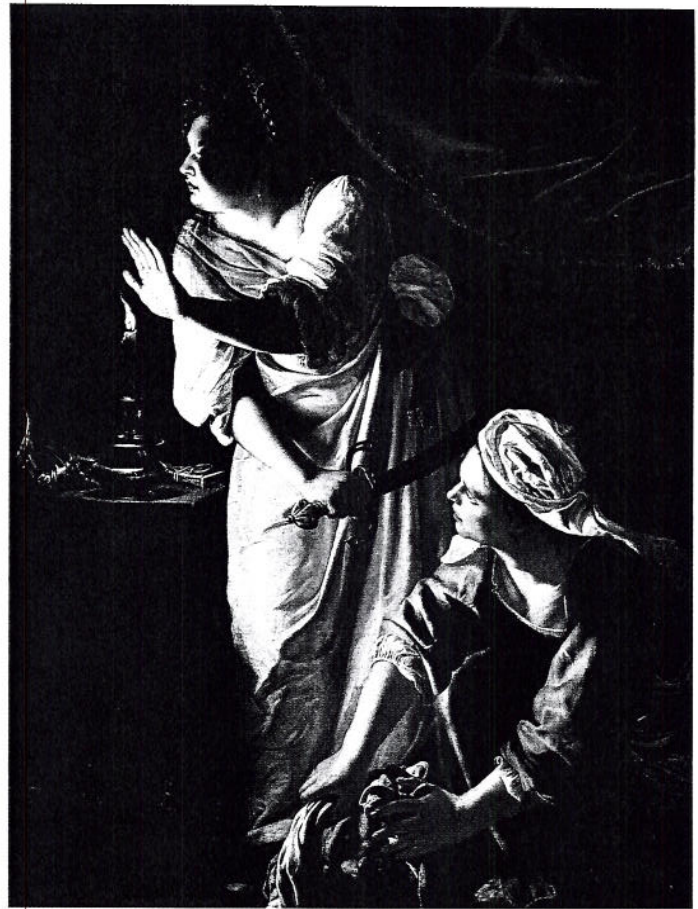
Chiaroscuro (literally, "light-dark") is another way to create the illusion of space. A primary light source is used to create six or more values. A dark background is added to increase contrast. In *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*

by Artemesia Gentileschi, (1.75), the highlighted areas are clearly delineated, while darker areas seem to dissolve into the background. The resulting image is as dramatic as a theatrical stage.

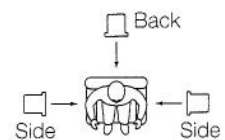
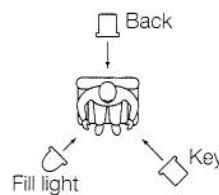
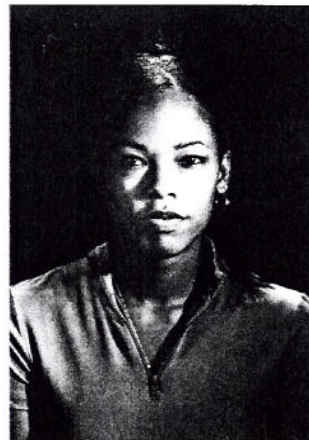
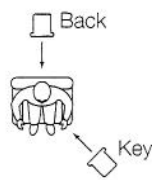
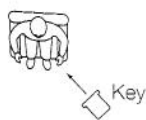
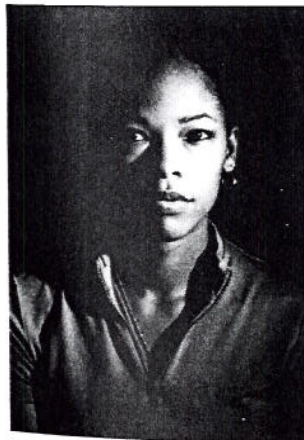
Value and Lighting

Filmmakers and set designers are especially aware of the expressive uses of value. Working with a wide range of lights, including sharply defined spotlights and more diffused floodlights, they can increase or decrease the illusion of space, emphasize an object or an action, and influence our emotional response to a character.

Four common forms of lighting are shown in figure 1.76. As described by Herbert Zettl in *Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*, a key light is the primary source of illumination. Placing this light at a 45-degree angle can enhance the illusion of space. Addition of a back-light separates the actor from the background and adds definition. When a fill light is added, the contrast between light and dark becomes less harsh, and the actor may appear less formidable. In theatrical performances, powerful side lighting is often used to increase drama while enhancing dimensionality.



1.75 Artemesia Gentileschi, *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1625. Oil on canvas, 72¼ × 54¾ in. (1.84 × 1.42 m).



1.76 John Veltri, *Lighting Techniques from Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*, 3rd ed., by Herbert Zettl, 1999.



1.77A



1.77B



1.77C



1.77D

All of these aspects of lighting are used expressively in the film *Casablanca*, directed by Michael Curtiz. The lighting is fairly dark when we first enter Rick's Cafe Americain, the saloon where most of the action occurs. In this dark and mysterious place, a man will be shot, a seduction will be thwarted, and a romance will be rekindled. The piano player, Sam, and the audience members closest to the stage are brightly lit as he sings an optimistic song (1.77A). The two villains in the film, Major Strasser and Captain Renault, are often strongly side-lit (1.77B), which makes them appear more formidable and enhances the texture in their faces. By contrast, much softer light is used for the face of the heroine, Ilsa, who is emotionally and politically fragile.

Indeed, value and lighting is used to accentuate Ilsa's emotions throughout the film. When she tries to explain to Rick the reason she had left him in Paris two years earlier, Ilsa wears a pure white dress and enters the darkened saloon like a virginal beam of light (1.77C). Later, when she visits Rick in his apartment, shadows cover her face, accentuating her conflicted emotions as she tries to decide whether to remain with her husband, Victor, whom she idealizes, or return to Rick, whom she loves. In the final scene at the airport, diffused lighting again emphasizes Ilsa's vulnerability (1.77D). She and Victor disappear into the foggy night, escaping from Casablanca, while Rick and a reformed Captain Renault stroll away together to join the Foreign Legion.

Key Questions

- What is the advantage of a wide value range? What is the advantage of a narrow value range? Which works best in your design?
- What happens when you invert the values — that is, the black areas become white and the white areas become black?
- Would your design benefit from a stronger illusion of space? If so, how can value be used to increase the illusion of space?