

5-1

THE WHOLE AND THE PARTS

(right)

5-2

Giuseppe Arcimboldo.
Sixteenth century.

- The Gestalt school of psychology, which began in Germany around 1912, investigated how we see and organize visual information into a meaningful whole. The conviction developed that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This whole cannot be perceived by a simple addition of isolated parts. Each part is influenced by those around it.

WHOLE

As you read the word above, you are perceiving the whole word, not the individual letterforms that make it up. You can still examine each letter individually, but however you add it up, the *word* is more than the sum of those separate letterforms (Figure 5-1).



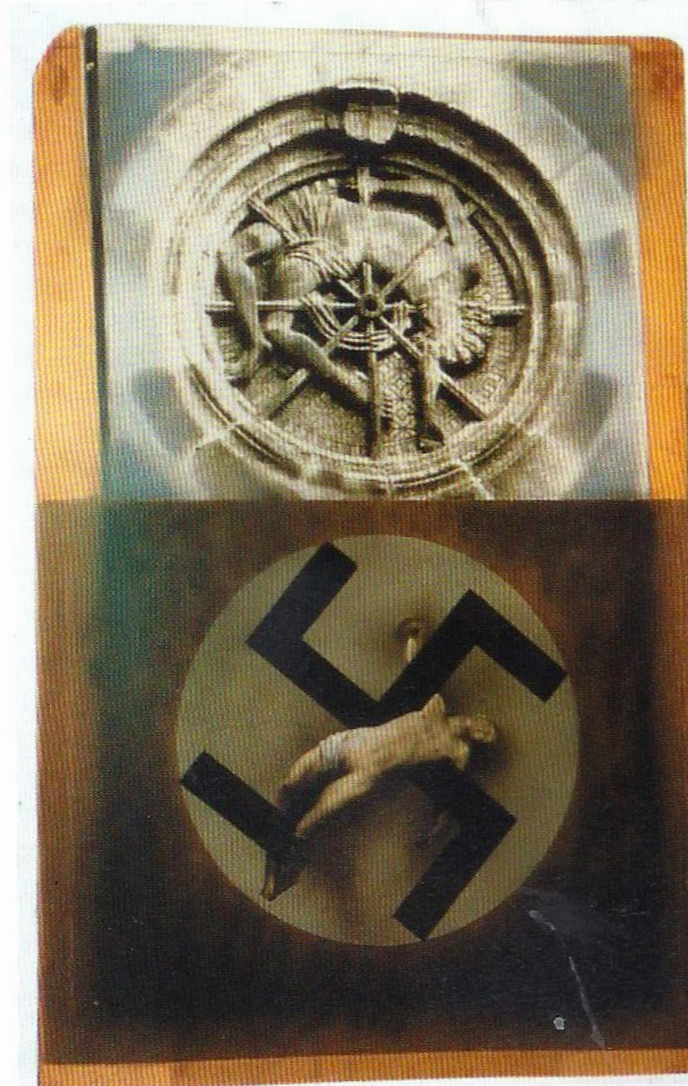
When you sew a shirt, you begin with pieces of fabric cut into parts. When the parts have been assembled, a new thing has been created. The collar, the facing, and the sleeve still exist, but they have a new “whole” identity called a shirt.

Giuseppe Arcimboldo, a painter from the 16th century, demonstrates the principle clearly in the portrait in Figure 5-2. A close examination reveals the separate parts that make up this head. A similar example is the contemporary alphabet made up of objects in Figure 5-3.

5-3

**Julius Friedman and
Walter McCord.**
Co-designers. Logo for
Images design firm.



**5-4**

“As in the Middle Ages . . . so in the Third Reich.”

Photomontage by **John Heartfield**, 1934. This powerful comment on Hitler’s regime makes beautiful and effective use of the gestalt principle of similarity that evokes a gestalt conceptual closure.

The early Gestalt psychologists and many other researchers into visual perception have discovered that the eye seeks a unified whole, or *gestalt*. Knowing how the eye seeks a gestalt can help you analyze and create successful designs. By knowing what connections the eye will draw for itself, you eliminate clutter and produce a clearly articulated design.

GESTALT PRINCIPLES

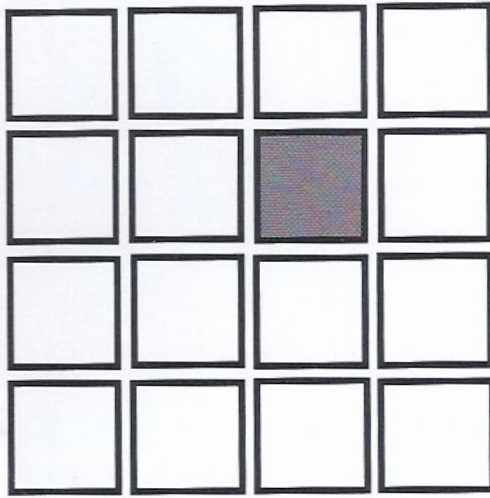
A designer works not simply with lines on paper, but with perceptual structure. Learn these gestalt perceptual principles and you can take advantage of the way object, eye,

and graphic creation interweave. A powerful and beautiful example can be found in the editorial illustration by John Heartfield (Figure 5-4). Many of the images in this chapter combine a variety of gestalt principles.

Similarity

When we see things that are similar, we naturally group them. Grouping by similarity occurs when we see similar shape, size, color, spatial location (proximity), angle, or value. All things are similar in some respects and different in others. In a group of similar shapes and angles, we will notice a dissimilar shape or angle (Figure 5-5).

similarity



(right)

5-5

5-6

Gordon Baer.

Freelance photographer,
Cincinnati, OH. *Two Old
Men.*



(right)

5-7

Saul Bass.

Trademark for Alcoa.
Courtesy, Aluminum
Company of America.

(right)

5-8

Margo Chase.

Logo for Esprit woman, a
romantic line, made up of
figures and hearts.



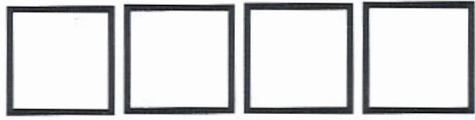
Similarity is necessary before we can compare differences. In the photograph by Gordon Baer (Figure 5-6), we are attracted by a similarity of sleeping forms and then begin an internal dialogue about their message. It is useful for the designer to know that the eye will notice and group similarities while separating differences. The symbol and logotype created for Alcoa by Saul Bass, a renowned American designer, relies on similarity of shape. Count the triangles in Figure 5-7. In Figure 5-8, contemporary designer Margo Chase uses a similarity of line quality to create a dynamic, unified logo for Esprit.

Proximity

Grouping by similarity in spatial location is called *proximity*, or nearness. The closer two visual elements are, the more likely we will see them as a group (Figure 5-9). The proximity of lines or edges makes it easier for the eye to group them to form a figure (Figure 5-10).



proximity



Continuation

The viewer's eye will follow a line or curve. Continuation occurs when the eye is carried smoothly into the line or curve of an adjoining object (Figure 5-11).

The eye is pleased by shapes that are not interrupted, but form a harmonious relationship with adjoining shapes. The symbol of the U.S. Energy Extension Service (Figure 5-12) uses continuation to emphasize the moving, dynamic nature of energy.



(left)

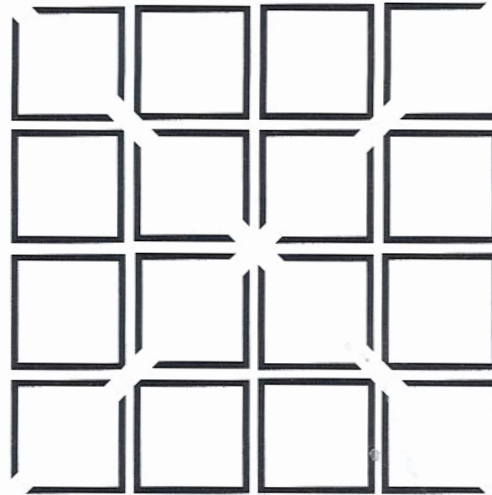
5-9

(right)

5-10

Stephan Kantscheff, Bulgarian designer, created this beautiful example of rhythm and repetition in symbol design. Courtesy of the artist.

continuation



5-11

5-12

George Jadowski,

designer, Danny C.

Jones, art director.

Symbol for the U.S. Energy Extension Service.



(top left)

5-13

Herb Lubalin (art director) and **Alan Peckolick** (designer) created this magazine logo in 1967. It makes a quiet but elegant usage of placement and continuation.

Family
Circle

(top right)

5-14

(left)

5-15

Pat Hughes and **Steve Quinn**.

This symbol for 1 + 1 Design Firm uses reversible figure/ground and closure.



(bottom right)

5-16

Stephan Kantscheff.

Symbol for the Staatliches Operettentheater in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Continuation can also be achieved through implied directional lines (Figure 5-13).

(bottom left)

5-17

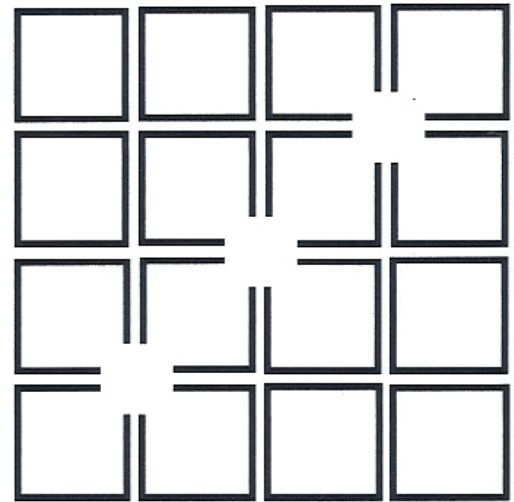
Herb Lubalin.

1965. This creation by an important 20th-century designer relies on an anthropomorphic identification with the shape of letterforms to bring closure.

Closure

Familiar shapes are more readily seen as complete than incomplete. When the eye completes a line or curve in order to form a familiar shape, closure has occurred (Figure 5-14). This step is sometimes accompanied

closure



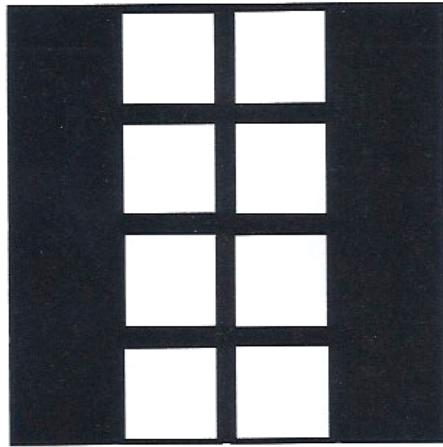
by a reaction, "Oh, now I see!" Figure 5-15 is a symbol created by the 1 + 1 Design Firm. Do you see the plus sign created by the figure/ground relationship? Part of the closure in this example includes a sudden connection with the name of the firm. This sort of connection is especially useful in trademark design. An elegant editorial statement is made in Figure 5-16.

Figure 5-17 by Herb Lubalin calls for active conceptual participation by the viewer.

MOTHER
CHILD



figure ground



Figure/Ground

The fundamental law of perception that makes it possible to discern objects is the figure/ground relationship. The eye and mind separate an object (figure) from its surroundings (ground). As you read this page, your eye is separating out words (figure) from ground (paper). Many times the relationship between figure and ground is dynamic and ambiguous, offering more than one solution to the searching eye, as we discussed in Chapter 3 (Figure 5-18). Remember that these gestalt relationships in graphic design



(left)

5-18

(right)

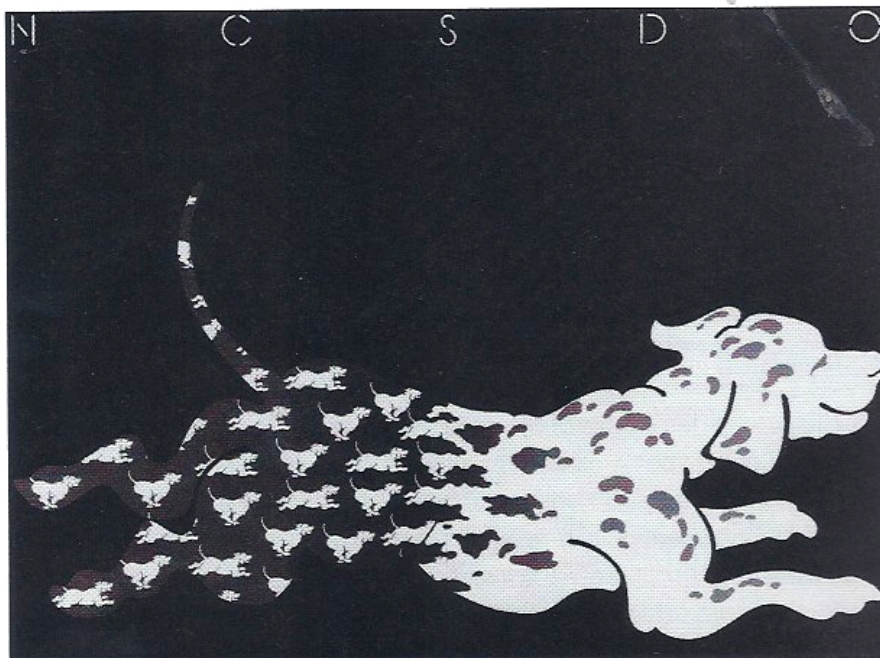
5-19

A. E. Arntson.

1985. This symbol for Interactive Financial Learning Systems uses a variety of gestalt principles.

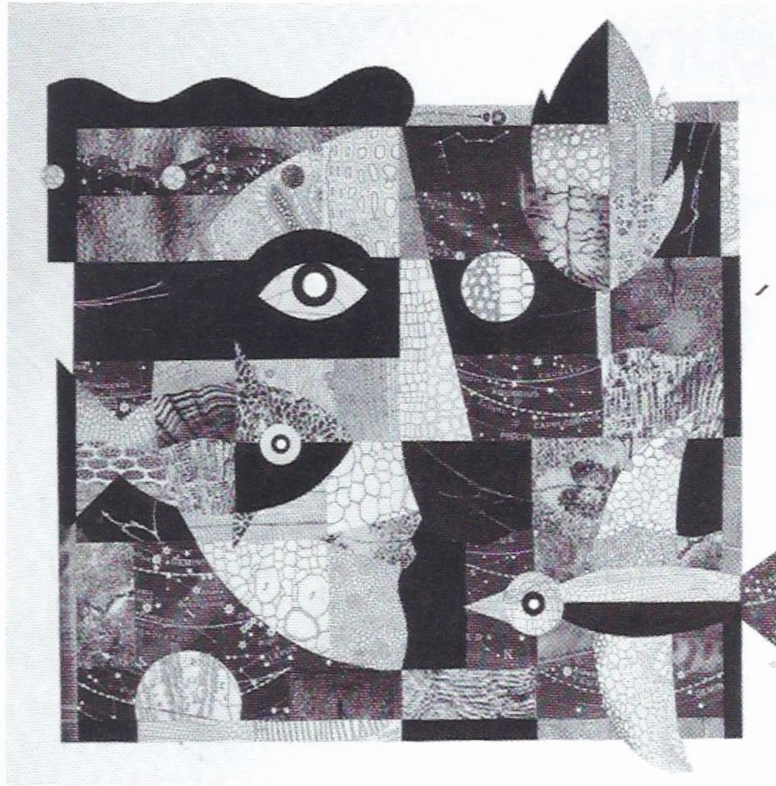
are always intended to help structure an appropriate communication. The most lovely design is not successful if it fails to present the subject appropriately. Figure 5-19 presents a fairly abstract symbolic notion of the delivery and exchange of information.

Sometimes referred to as positive and negative space relationship, this principle is crucial to shaping a strong design. You must be aware of creating shapes in the “leftover” ground every time you create a figure. Figure 5-20 uses this fact in an entertaining way, similar to the work of M. C. Escher.



5-20

Whitney Sherman, illustrator; **Martin Bennett** and **Mary Pat Andrea,** designers. North Charles Street Design Organization. This poster announces an upcoming move to a new location.



5-21
David McLimans.
Illustration courtesy of the artist.



5-22
 Lippincott and Margulies,
 Inc. Trademark for Case
 Corporation. The company
 recently adopted a new
 logo design.

Figure 5-21 is a contemporary illustration that also uses the figure/ground relationship as an inherent part of its rich structure.

In Figure 5-22, the logo for Case Equipment Company, the figure/ground relationship is remarkably strong.

TRADEMARKS

The interplay of gestalt principles occurs in all areas of design but is clearest in the creation of logo and symbol trademarks. Here, form and function are closely related. We have examined form. Next we consider function. The project in this chapter will ask you to relate these two considerations.

FUNCTIONS

Symbols and trademarks have served many functions in history. The early Christians relied on the symbol of the fish to identify themselves to one another secretly. In the Dark Ages, family trademarks were used. No nobleman in the same region could wear the same coat of arms. These “arms” came to mark the owner’s possessions. Peasants used simpler “housemarks,” which were especially useful because few people could read (Figure 5-23). Also, each medieval craftsman inscribed a personal mark on his products and hung out a sign showing his calling. During the Renaissance, the three golden balls of the Medici family symbolized moneylending. The Medici mark can still be seen today, pirated by modern pawnbrokers. More recently, in the western United States, each cattle rancher had a brand or mark. Many still do (Figure 5-24).

Today, trademarks are widely used by corporations. The trademark is any unique name or symbol used to identify a product

accidental resemblance; especially: a visual sign of something invisible. . . . An arbitrary or conventional sign used in writing or printing operations, quantities, elements, relationships, or qualities.” Historically important symbols include national flags, the cross, and the swastika.

The symbol is a type of trademark used to represent a company or product. It can be abstract or pictorial, but it does not usually include letterforms. It represents invisible qualities of a product, such as reliability, durability, strength, or warmth.

A symbol has several advantages, including:

1. Original construction
2. Simple gestalt resulting in quick recognition
3. A strong association that “colors” the symbol’s interpretation.

Figure 5-25, a symbol proposed for the California Conservation Corps, demonstrates all three qualities.

A pictogram is a symbol used to cross language barriers for international signage. It is found in bilingual cities, such as Montreal, for traffic signs. It is also found in airports

and on safety instructions inside airplanes. It is pictorial rather than abstract (Figure 5-26).

Symbols can also be examined in the light of semiotics, where an image takes on a culturally accepted meaning that goes beyond its merely recognizable shape, as just discussed. An *icon* is a sign that bears a direct relationship to the object described. Realistic drawings and photographs are examples. Semiotics goes on to define an *index* as a sign that bears a direct relationship to the object, without simply showing that object. For example, the shadow of a building indicates its presence. This can be a useful way to approach the creation of a mark. Symbol, icon, and index all are considered good approaches in the creation of a trademark symbol.

Logos

The second category of trademark is called *logo* or *logotype*. The logo is a unique type or lettering that spells out the name of the company or product. It may be hand lettered, but is usually constructed out of variations on an existing typeface. Historically, it developed after the symbol, because it requires a literate audience.

When you create a logo, choose type that suits the nature of your client and audience. A successful, unique logo is often more difficult to design than a symbol, because it entails both visual and verbal communication. Figure 5-27 was created for *Reader’s Digest* by one of the most respected and influential logo designers, Herb Lubalin. The clean, bold type style makes it easy to see the play on similar shapes that creates the “family connection” hidden in the word. Figure 5-28 was created for Ditto Company, a duplication products manufacturer. Compare this type style with the one before. Each is distinctively suited to its use.

The advantages of a logotype include (1) original construction and (2) easy identification with company or product.

5-25

Michael Vanderbyl.

Symbol proposed but not adopted for the California Conservation Corps.
Courtesy of the artist.



A *combination mark* is a symbol and logo used together. These marks can be more difficult to construct with a good gestalt because of their complexity. They are often used, however, because they combine the advantages of symbol and logo.

In all these marks, gestalt principles help create a unified and striking design. With good gestalt, form and function interweave in a powerful whole.

Exercises

This assignment is best done with graph paper, or you may want to use a vector graphics program with the grid turned on, utilizing guides and rulers (Figure 5-29).

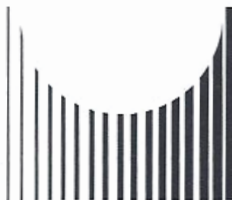
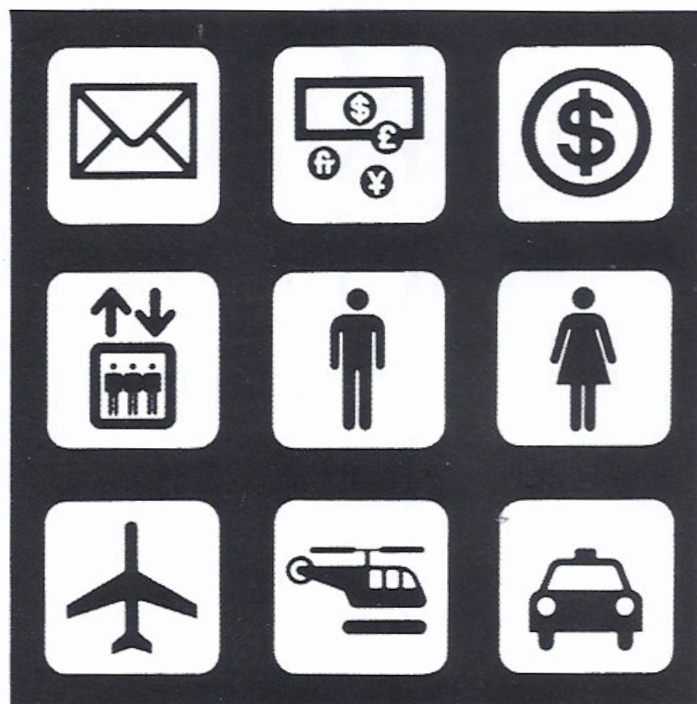
1. Select a circle $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (4 cm) in diameter (or slightly more), and practice overlapping two of them to create new and varied shapes. Then try three circles. Do not use line, only shape and black and white values. Reverse one out of another for more interesting effects.
2. Place a circle in various positions within a square. Do not use line. Use black and white shapes. Experiment with size and border violations.
3. Set up a series of vertical lines so the white lines gradually grow small while the black lines expand. Start by making a series of vertical lines $\frac{1}{4}$ " (5 mm) apart. Each line can then be thickened.



Families
A READER'S DIGEST PUBLICATION



Ditto



5-26

Roger Cook and Don Shanosky.

(Cook and Shanosky Associates). Department of Transportation pictograms prepared by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA).

(far left, top)

5-27

Herb Lubalin.

Trademark created for *Reader's Digest*. Assigned to Military Family Communication, publisher of *Families* magazine.

(far left, bottom)

5-28

Logotype for Ditto Corporation. The Ditto trademark is a federally registered trademark of Starkey Chemical Process Co. of LaGrange, IL.

((bottom right)

5-29

Eric Weubben.

Line variations using an anomaly, or change, in an expected pattern.

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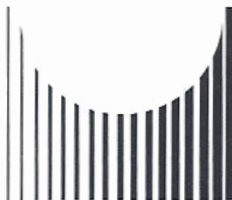
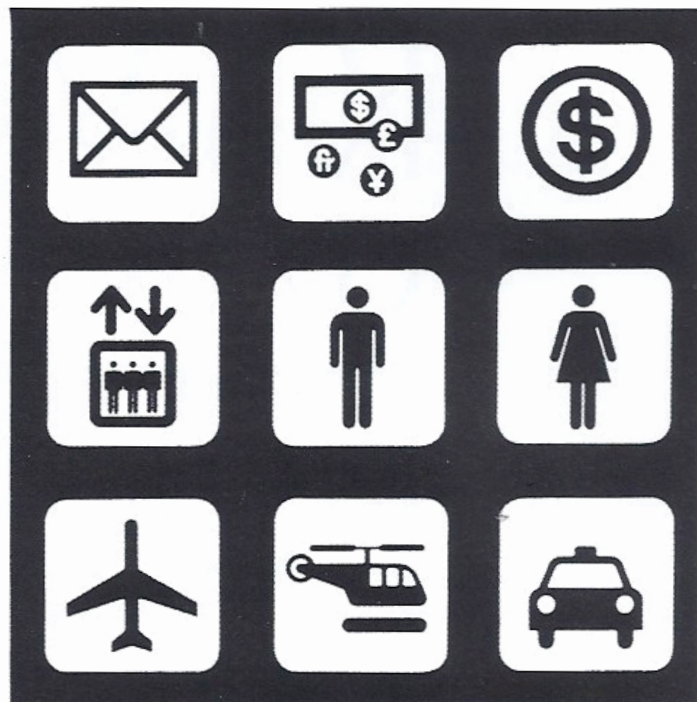
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