Location, Location, Location

One dot – five positions, five effects

Based on: The ABCs of Form 05 – Position

In The ABCs of Form 05 you placed a shape in different spots and observed its **character** – how it affects you before you can explain why. Now we turn the question around: not the shape is at the centre, but the sheet around it. **How does the surface respond?**

A note before you start. As soon as you decide where something sits in a picture, you are composing. Composition simply means arrangement – and every arrangement has an effect. There are rules for composing, and they can be helpful. But a picture also affects people who don't know those rules. We can sense calm, tension, weight or direction without knowing how they came about.

That's why we don't start with rules, but with noticing effects: *How does your feeling change when the same element sits in different places? Does it seem calm or restless? Static or dynamic?*

You will need: five sheets of A5 paper (all upright or all landscape), a black pen and a piece of paper to put underneath.

Time: up to 15 minutes.

Tip: A5 is half an A4 sheet. Cut three A4 sheets in half and you'll have six – one to spare.

1 **Prepare several identical formats.**

You will put one dot on each of the five sheets. Try to keep the size (up to 1 cm) and tonal value (light – dark) of the dot as similar as possible. Only its position should change.

2 **Put a dot in the middle.**

Take the first sheet and put a dot roughly in the middle. Then do nothing more.

Where does your eye stop? How does the empty space around the dot feel? Does the sheet seem calm or restless to you, static or dynamic – or something else entirely?

Don't try to explain why yet. For now, just notice.

3 **Change only the position.**

On the next three sheets, put the dot in a clearly different place each time. Try positions that really feel different to you.

How does the sheet feel now – different from when the dot was in the middle?

Before you move on to the next sheet, give yourself a moment after each dot to take in its effect.

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4 Cross the border.

Take the fifth sheet and put a piece of paper underneath that sticks out beyond the edge. Now draw the dot across the edge – part of it lies on your sheet, the rest on the paper underneath. Then take the paper underneath away.

Do you still see a whole dot – or only half of one? Does something seem to carry on beyond the sheet? Has the empty space changed as well?

5 Compare.

Lay all five sheets side by side. Almost the same thing is on each of them. And yet five different situations have come about. Look from sheet to sheet:

- *Which sheet seems calm, which restless?*
- *On which sheet does the dot have a felt direction of movement?*
- *On which sheet does the empty space seem especially large?*
- *What character does the empty space have on each sheet?*
- *What would you most like to add?*

No effect is the right one or experienced the right way. So don't ask yourself what answer is expected here – ask instead: *What do I experience? How does it affect me?*

> **If you get stuck …** Put the dot where you like it least. That's an effect too – often the clearest one.
> More questions that help: Picture Conversation 12.

Why this exercise

An event on the sheet doesn't only work through its shape and appearance, but also through where it happens. Distances appear. Edges become more important. Our eye comes to rest or starts to move.

You can learn the rules of composition. You can perceive the effect of a picture straight away.

> *Finally, a question for yourself:*
> ***Which position has the strongest effect on you – and what do you notice there?***

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Your picture conversation

Many people enjoy painting from the gut – and when they show a picture, it often stays at “nice” or a like. Talking about pictures, your own and other people’s, is something you can learn. You can start here: write down your answers to the questions in your own words. What you write here is just for you – it doesn’t have to sound clever. Over time you’ll find words for what you see.

Picture Conversations is a series of 13 exercises – you’ll find the worksheets at ekke-scholz.de/en/picture-conversations.
New exercises and thoughts from the studio: **ekke-scholz.de/en/newsletter**

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