Top Dog

Creating differences

Based on: The ABCs of Form 07 – Size · 03 – Fill and Tone

Part 3 is about likeness and difference.

A picture can consist of very similar shapes – similar in size, similar in darkness, similarly spread out. *What happens when one of them becomes different – and more and more different?*

Try it out and notice how a single difference can change the whole sheet.

You will need: two sheets of A4 paper and a soft pencil (for example 4B).

Time: about 20–30 minutes.

1 **All alike.**

On the first sheet, draw six to eight similar, simple shapes, loosely spread out – roughly the same size and the same darkness. Then look.

How is your attention spread? Does your eye get caught anywhere?

2 **One becomes different.**

Choose one of the shapes and change just one property, for example:

larger · smaller · lighter · darker

Then pause.

- *What has this one difference done to the whole sheet?*
- *Does the changed shape draw your eye more strongly?*
- *Have the other shapes become less important as a result?*
- *Or do you hardly notice a change?*

3 **Even more.**

Strengthen the same difference further. Make the large one even larger, the dark one even darker. Pause after each step.

- *What happens as you keep strengthening the difference?*
- *Does the shape draw your eye more and more?*
- *Do the others become less important as a result?*
- *Does it eventually rule the place?*
- *Or do you notice something else entirely?*

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Two areas.

Take the second sheet. On one side, draw many similar shapes close together. On the other side, draw only a few similar shapes with larger gaps between them. Then look.

- *What happens between the two areas?*
- *Does one carry more weight for you?*
- *Does one draw your eye more strongly?*
- *Does your eye wander back and forth between the two?*
- *Does a direction appear?*

Strengthen the difference once: make the dense area even denser or the loose one even looser. Then weaken the difference again.

What changes?

If you get stuck … Make one shape just a little larger or darker – and then a little more. At some point the balance tips. More questions that help: Picture Conversation 12.

Finally, a question for yourself:
Which difference had the greatest effect on your sheet?

Your picture conversation

Talking about pictures is something you can learn. Write down your answers in your own words – just for you, no one has to read them. Over time you'll find words for what you see.

Why this exercise

Differences change how we perceive a picture. A single shape can gain more weight through a difference and draw the eye more strongly. But whole areas can also differ in how strongly they act.

Between such areas something can happen that might be described as a **gradient**: one area carries more weight than another, and our eye begins to move between them.

You don't need to know any rule of composition for this. You can perceive the effect – and keep working with it.

Keep your sheets. In Picture Conversation 10 you go the opposite way and keep working on them.

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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