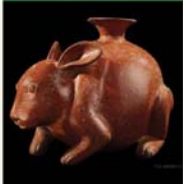# Launching the Imagination

A Comprehensive Guide
to Basic Design

fifth edition

Mary **Stewart**

Launching the
Imagination

A Comprehensive Guide to Basic Design

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Launching the Imagination:

A Comprehensive Guide to Basic Design

is dedicated to Scott Betz.

dedication

Launching the Imagination treats design as both a verb and a noun—as both a process and a product. By covering the process of creative and critical thinking and presenting the elements and principles used in creating a product, this book offers a unique resource for foundations courses.

The title *Launching the Imagination* suggests the goals of this book and of the foundations year as a whole. Through an immersion in 2D, 3D, and 4D concepts and problems, students learn to develop ways of thinking visually that will serve them throughout their studies and careers. They discover that design is deliberate—a process of exploring a wide range of solutions and choosing the most promising option for development. And they find inspiration in the work of others, analyzing the art of the past and the present for insights.

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HALLMARKS OF OUR NEW EDITION OF *LAUNCHING THE IMAGINATION*

Building on the strengths of the previous four editions, *Launching the Imagination*, fifth edition, is even more

- **Concise**. Content has been refined so that maximum content can be communicated as clearly and concisely as possible.
- **Colorful**. In addition to the full color used throughout the book, the writing is livelier than that in most textbooks. Analogies expand communication, and every visual example has been carefully selected for maximum impact.
- **Comprehensive**. *Launching the Imagination* is the only foundational text with full sections devoted to critical and creative thinking and to time-based design. The photo program is global, represents a myriad of stylistic approaches, and prominently features design and media arts as well as more traditional art forms.
- **Contemporary**. More than half of the visual examples represent artworks completed since 1970, and 120 represent works completed since 2000.
- **Compelling**. Four expanded profiles have been added to this edition. With at least three visual examples per interview, these new profiles follow the process by which leading artists and designers have developed their artworks. In Chapter 5, designer Steve Quinn describes the seven-step sequence he uses in developing websites, logos, and motion graphics. In Chapter 6, Jim Elniski describes *The Greenhouse Chicago*, an adaptive re-use home that is both highly energy efficient and beautiful. In Chapter 7, Kendall Buster describes stages in the completion of a complex sculpture, from preliminary drawing to installation. In Chapter 8, painter Carrie Ann Baade discusses the sources of her images and four major steps in their development. Five profiles have also

been retained from previous editions: illustrator Bob Dacey, painter Suzanne Stryk, metalsmith Marilyn da Silva, ceramicist David MacDonald, and composer Michael Remson.

- Over 100 new images have been added, representing major artists and designers including Janet Echelman, Lilian Garcia-Roig, Michael Mazur, Matthew Ritchie, Sarah Sze, Mark Tansey, Niklaus Troxler, Leo Villareal, Richard Wilson, and Yayoi Kausama.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER CHANGES

Each chapter has been updated and, where needed, reorganized to maximize clarity. Improvements include the following:

Chapter 1: A new section on point has been added, and a previous section on degrees of representation has been moved to Chapter 8, Constructing Meaning.

Chapter 2: Diagrams have been updated and the writing has been further clarified.

Chapter 3: The section on Gestalt better emphasizes six unifying compositional forces, and new compositional diagrams help to illustrate how these forces are used. The section on contrast and emphasis has been substantially revised and updated.

Chapter 4: The writing has been further clarified.

Chapter 5: The writing has been further clarified, and more contemporary examples have been added.

Chapter 6: The "Variations on a Theme" section has been expanded and updated.

Chapter 7: The writing has been further clarified, and more contemporary examples have been added.

Chapter 8: The section entitled "Degrees of Representation" has been moved from Chapter 1 and additional digital examples have been added.

Chapter 9: A new section on point has been added, and sections on line and mass have been updated.

Chapter 10: Sections on contrast and emphasis have been expanded and revised for maximum clarity.

Chapter 11: More contemporary examples have been added.

Chapter 12: More contemporary examples have been added.

Chapter 13: More contemporary examples have been added.

Chapter 14: Narrative analysis of *A League of Their Own* has been added as well as new examples from the world of advertising.

Chapter 15: The writing has been further clarified, and more contemporary examples have been added.

SUPPLEMENTS

Online Learning Center

The Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/LTI5e offers student resources for each chapter of the text, including chapter objectives, vocabulary flashcards, activities, studio projects, and short quizzes.

Instructor's Center

Led by Mathew Kelly from Central College, a remarkable team of collaborators has developed an extensive Instructor's Manual that provides advice on course construction, critique skills, and technical resources. It includes over 70 assignments divided into 4 sections: two-dimensional design, concepts and critical thinking, three-dimensional design, and time design. Lecture PowerPoints provide a great resource that instructors can tailor to their individual needs.

MyArtStudio at www.mhhe.com/ArtStudio

Students have access to MyArtStudio, a rich and comprehensive website with interactions that allow students to study and experiment with various elements and principles of art. Students can view videos of art techniques and artists at work. Exercises on the Online Learning Center guide students to MyArtStudio at appropriate points in the text.

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part one

Concepts and Critical Thinking

part two

Three-Dimensional Design

part three

Author Mary Stewart with **Labyrinth** book.

Author, artist, and educator Mary Stewart is a professor in the Department of Art at Florida State University. Her drawing, prints, and visual books have been shown in over 90 exhibitions nationally and internationally, and she has received two Pennsylvania Arts Council grants for collaborative choreography. A cofounder of Integrative Teaching International, she has given over 50 lectures and workshops on creative inquiry, curriculum design, educational leadership, and storytelling.

As represented here, her *Continuum Series* connects the macroscopic with the microscopic. Fragments of towering trees are juxtaposed with images that suggest activity at a cellular level. In this series, Professor Stewart seeks to explore ways in which we construct and express knowledge, both of ourselves and of the world around us.
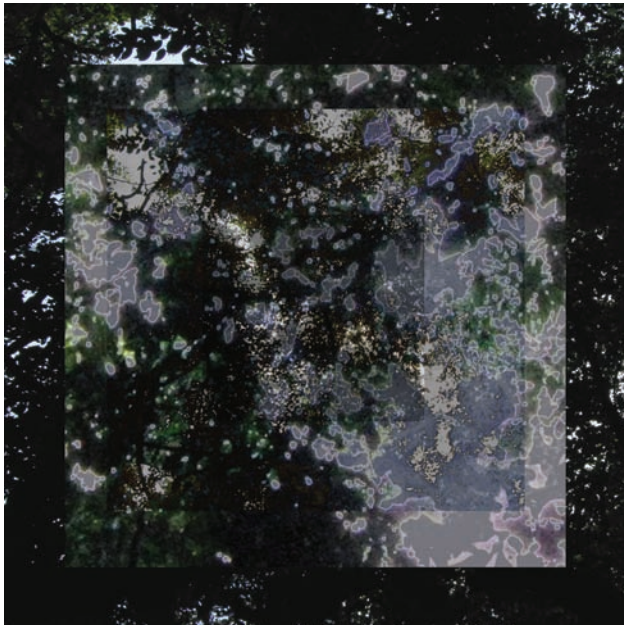
Mary Stewart, *Continuum #4,* **2012.** Digital collage, 44 × 44 in.
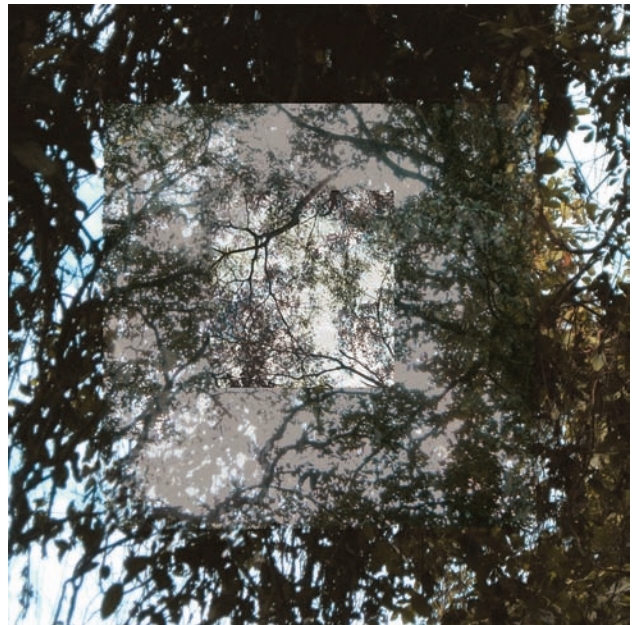
Mary Stewart, *Continuum #8,* **2012.** Digital collage, 44 × 44 in.

What is *Launching the Imagination* about, and how can it be useful to you?

In this book, we will explore

- the components of visual construction,

- ways that these components can be used,

- characteristics of creative and of critical thinking,

- ways to increase your creativity,

- the physical characteristics of various materials,

- ways in which you can use materials to express ideas,

- the components and power of visual storytelling,

- contemporary approaches to visualization.

Because studio courses require hands-on work, we will treat design as a noun *and* as a verb.

As a noun, design may be defined as

- a plan or pattern, such as the blueprint for a house;

- an arrangement of lines, shapes, colors, and textures into an artistic whole, as in the composition of a painting.

As a verb, design can be defined as

- to plan, delineate, or define, as in designing a building or a functional object;

- to create a deliberate sequence of events, as in designing a film storyboard;

- to organize disparate parts into a coherent whole, as in designing a brochure.

Design is deliberate. Rather than simply hoping for the best and accepting the result, artists and designers explore a wide range of solutions to every problem, and then choose the most promising option for further development. Inspiring examples and informative text can help accelerate your learning process. In this book, over 625 images supply visual examples from many cultures and in all areas of art and design. Nine lively interviews with living artists provide insight into the creative process. Idea generation and critical thinking are thoroughly discussed in Part Two, and key questions (posted at the end of various sections of text) provide a way for you to self-assess your projects as they develop.

How high can you fly? How far can you travel? Will you work traditionally, in a specific discipline such as painting, printmaking, or ceramics? Or will you combine disciplines to create new forms of expression? Having mastered the basics of visual thinking, you will have the versatility and critical judgment needed to pursue a personal path.

Launching the
Imagination

A Comprehensive Guide to Basic Design

Lilian Garcia-Roig, *Water and Rock Flows,* **2010,** oil on canvas, 48 × 48 in. (121.9 × 121.9 cm).

Two-Dimensional Design

Creating objects and images is engrossing and exhilarating. Through our studio work, we can heighten our attention, engage our emotions, and build a sense of accomplishment. These personal rewards make art one of the most popular hobbies.

A *career* in art and design demands more from us. As art and design professionals, we must translate our personal insights into public communication. The ideas and emotions a professional wishes to express must engage an audience, whether the encounter occurs in the silence of a museum or in the chaos of a city street.

This ability to communicate visually is developed through years of study plus relentless practice. As professionals, we must develop our visual awareness, create new concepts, and master various techniques. We spend hours in the studio, refining ideas and inventing alternative solutions to each visual problem.

The elements and principles of design are the building blocks from which we create images and express ideas. Chapter One presents point, line, shape, texture, and value. Chapter Two is devoted to the characteristics and compositional impact of color. Chapter Three introduces a wide range of basic organizational strategies, known as the principles of design. Chapter Four expands these basic principles and devotes attention to the illusion of space and the illusion of motion.

Part One

Basic Elements

Point, line, shape, texture, value, and color are the building blocks that make up two-dimensional designs. Just as oxygen and hydrogen are powerful both individually and when combined as H_2O, so these visual **elements** operate both independently and in combination. In this chapter, we explore the unique characteristics of the five most basic elements and analyze their uses in art and design. We discuss color, the most complex element, in Chapter Two.

POINT

Defining Point

A **point** is a basic mark, such as a dot, a pixel, or a brushstroke. When we add a point to a blank sheet of paper, we create a dialog between this basic visual element and the surrounding space. This dialog sets a compositional game in motion. In this section, we explore two types of points. A **focal point** is the primary point of interest in a composition. By its size, compositional location, orientation, or color, a focal point activates the design and thus attracts viewer attention. A collection of points creates an **array**. We can create rich textures and entire images using an array.

Using Point

Because points are both simple and powerful, they are often used in logo design. Logos must read clearly in both small and large scale and must be easy to remember. For example, the Think Point Design logo in figure 1.1 is dominated by a circular shape combined with three words. The addition of the small point at the top of the logo adds a splash of darker green and

1.1 Andy Beard and Sharon Sandercock, Think Point Design logo, 2012. Size variable.

1.2 Pentagram Design, Corella Publishing logo, 2006. Size variable.

1.3 **Michael Bierut, lead designer, Pentagram Design, Mohawk Paper logo, 2012.** Digital media, size variable.

1.4 **Charis Tsevis, *Obama*, 2007.** Photo mosaic, size variable.

suggests movement. This quickly communicates a simple message: "Think Point Design is an innovative company and always on the move." By contrast, the point in figure 1.2 transforms a simple black-and-gray shape into a cheerful parrot's head. We immediately want to find out more about Corella Publishing, the business it represents. Our final example is a logo for Mohawk Paper (1.3). Green, orange, violet, blue, and aqua points combined with lines of various colors create an energetic M. This combination of lines and points also refers to the process by which paper is produced and printed as it moves past the inked cylinders. Using a series of colorful points and lines, lead designer Michael Bierut provided a fresh identity for a well-established company.

An array of points can create an entire image while retaining the energy of the individual parts. Magazines often use this approach for their covers or posters. In figure 1.4, Charis Tsevis combined images of hundreds of everyday people to create the image of American President Barack Obama. Many wear blue or hold blue signs further stating their support. The image suggests that Obama is a man of the

people rather than a remote politician. In our final example, Paddy Japaljarri Stewart has created an Australian landscape from hundreds of colorful points. Using a traditional Aboriginal approach, *Bush Cabbage Dreaming at Ngarlu* (1.5) presents an imagined aerial view of the outback. Based on Dreaming, a spiritual practice that is uniquely Aborigine, each mark records the journey of an ancestral presence across the earth.

1.5 **Paddy Japaljarri Stewart, *Bush Cabbage Dreaming at Ngarlu* (detail), 1986.** Acrylic on canvas, 47½ × 93½ in. (120.5 × 237.5 cm).

LINE

Defining Line

Line is one of the simplest and most versatile elements of design. Line may be defined as

1.6 Line definitions.

The first definition emphasizes the unique dynamism of line. The remaining three definitions emphasize its connective power. Lighter and more fluid than any of the other visual elements, line can add a special energy to a design. Simply by drawing a line, we can activate a space, define a shape, or create a compositional bridge.

Line Quality

Each line has its own distinctive quality. This quality is largely determined by the line's orientation, direction, and degree of continuity, and by the material used.

    Orientation refers to the line's horizontal, vertical, or diagonal position. Diagonal lines and curving lines are generally the most dynamic (1.7A, 1.7D). Charged with energy, they suggest action and movement. Horizontal lines are typically the most stable, or static (1.7B). Vertical lines imply *potential* change. When verticals adhere to the edge of the design, they become tethered and thus lose

A Diagonal   **B** Horizontal   **C** Vertical   **D** Continuous curve
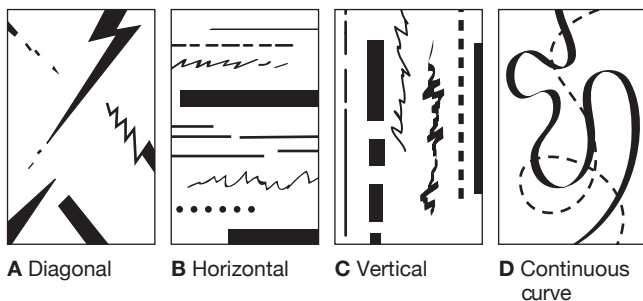
1.7A–D Line orientation and continuity.
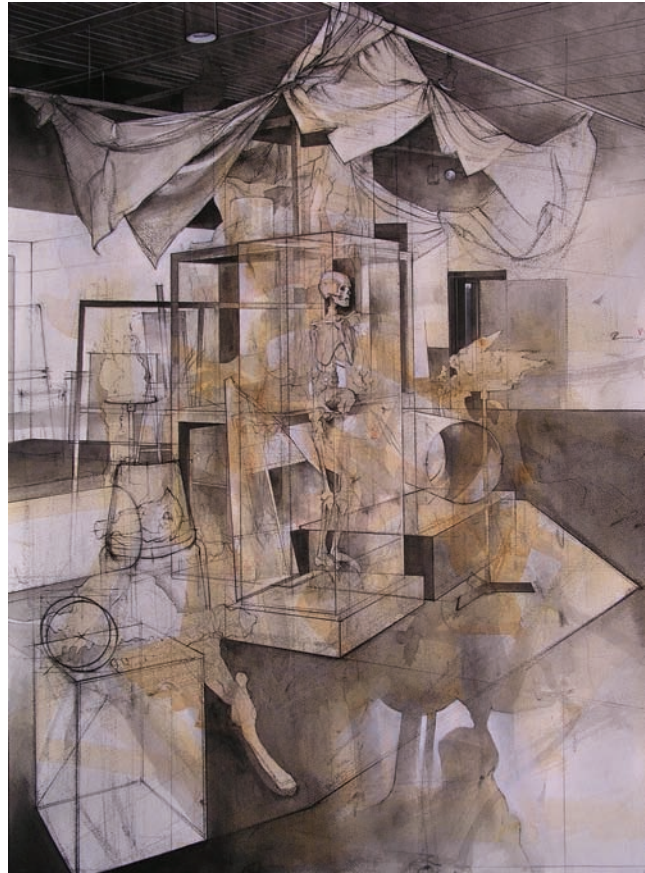
1.8 Kevin Haran, *Still Life with Skeleton*, **2004.** Charcoal, ink, and acrylic wash on Arches paper, 30 × 22 in. (76.2 × 55.9 cm).

mobility. Free-floating verticals, on the other hand, seem ready to topple at any moment (1.7C).

    Direction refers to the implied movement of a line. We can use line weight to accentuate direction. Generally, a swelling line suggests forward or outward movement, and a shrinking line suggests inward movement. Notice how the top and bottom diagonal lines in figure 1.7A seem to push forward as they become thicker.

    Continuity, or linear flow, can enhance direction. Figure 1.7D shows that a continuous line tends to generate a stronger sense of direction than a broken or jagged line.

    An artist can use each material to produce a range of distinctive lines. We can use metallic graphite to produce modulating lines of varying thickness. A felt pen produces a crisp, clean, emphatic line. Charcoal and chalk are soft and highly responsive to each change in pressure and direction. Brush and ink offers even wider variation in line width, continuity, and darkness. By experimenting with the range of marks each instrument can produce, we can use each material more expressively.
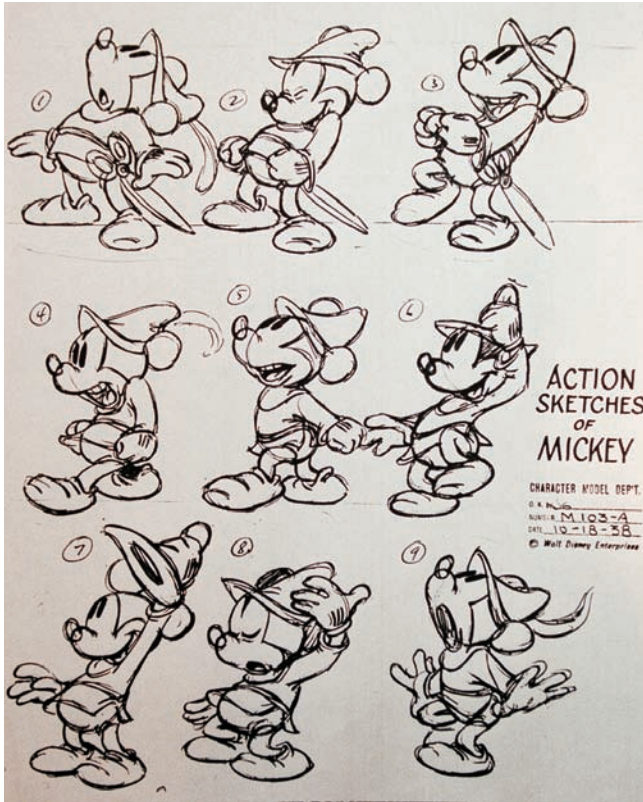
1.9 Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, original sketch of Walt Disney Mickey Mouse Cartoon, 1938. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

1.10 Michael Mazur, *Canto XI (Overview of Hell)*, **from the portfolio** *Dante's Inferno*, **1999.** Etching and aquatint, 25⅛ × 19⅝ in. (63.8 × 49.8 cm).

A strong match between line quality and the expressive intent is essential. In figure 1.8, Kevin Haran used vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines to map out the positions of various objects in a still life. Spheres, cones, and the detailed skull become focal points in this complex composition. The fluid lines in figure 1.9 express movement and playful energy. Michael Mazur used a variety of lines in his *Overview of Hell* based on Dante's *Inferno* (1.10). As described by poet Dante Alighieri, Hell is divided into nine circular levels, beginning with Limbo at the top and descending through Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Anger, Heresy, Violence, Fraud, and Treachery. Mazur defines these levels (and the tormented souls they contain) using curving black brushstrokes combined with textured passages and open white shapes. This variety of lines helps to distinguish the various levels and activates the entire image.

Actual Lines

Actual lines can describe forms simply and eloquently. In figure 1.11, Eleanor Dickinson presented different views of hands using **contour lines**. Contour lines define the edges of a form and suggest three-dimensionality. In this study, she distilled complex anatomy down to a few

1.11 Eleanor Dickinson, *Study of Hands*, **1964.** Pen and ink, 13⅛ × 10⅛ in. (34 × 26 cm).
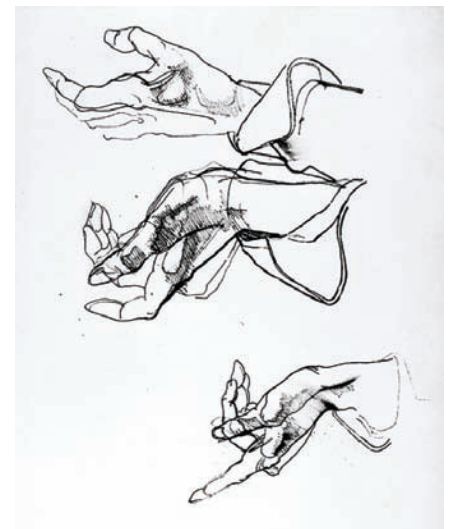
1.12 Rico Lebrun, *Hand*, **1964.** Pen and ink.

1.13 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two Women Helping a Child to Walk,* **c. 1635–37.** Red chalk on paper.

simple lines. Similarly, Rico Lebrun's **gesture drawing** of a hand (1.12) captures essential action rather than describing every anatomical detail. We focus on what the hand is *doing* rather than on what the hand *is.* As figure 1.13 shows, Rembrandt often used economical lines to describe the spheres and cylindrical volumes from which figures are made. Because it communicates information using basic volumes, we often call this type of line drawing a **volume summary**.

Calligraphic lines can add even more energy to a drawing or a design. The word *calligraphy* is derived from two Greek words: *kalus*, meaning "beautiful," and *graphein,* meaning "to write." Like handwriting, the calligraphic line is both personal and highly expressive. In figure 1.14, painter Tawaraya Sôtatsu and calligrapher Hon'ami Koetsu used variations in line weight and continuity to suggest the graceful motion of birds. Gu Gan's *No.1 Calligraphy and Painting in Harmony* (1.15) provides a contemporary combination of calligraphic text, delicate drawing, and bold brushstrokes. It seems that we are simultaneously viewing a landscape close up and in the distance.

Artists often use **organizational lines** to create the loose linear "skeleton" on which an artist can build a composition. The artist can develop ideas quickly through line, and easily make compositional changes. The Haran drawing in figure 1.8 shows that these skeletal drawings have great energy and can be presented as artworks in themselves. In other cases, organizational lines provide the framework for elaborate compositions. When we analyze Alfred Leslie's *The Killing Cycle* (1.16), we can see an underlying framework. A dead man on a diagonal board connects a single woman in the lower left corner to the four figures in the upper right. A horizontal line supports these four figures, while their bent arms and legs create even more diagonal lines. The diagonal lines add energy to the composition while the horizontal line adds stability.

1.14 Attributed to Tawaraya Sôtatsu, calligraphy by Hon'ami Koetsu, *Flying Cranes and Poetry,* **Edo period (1615–1868).** Ink on gray-blue paper, gold flecked, 7⅜ × 6⅜ in. (19 × 16 cm).

1.15 Gu Gan, *No.1 Calligraphy and Painting in Harmony,* **2005.** Ink on self-made Chinese paper, 26 × 26 in. (66 × 66 cm).

1.16 Alfred Leslie, *The Killing Cycle #5: Loading Pier*, **1975.** Oil on canvas, 9 × 7 ft. (2.7 × 1.8 m).

Implied Lines

Lines can play a major role in a design even when they are implied rather than actually being drawn. Because **implied lines** simply *suggest* connections, the viewer becomes actively involved in compositions that use this type of line.

Fortunately, we have a natural inclination to seek visual unity. Given enough clues, we will connect separate visual parts by filling in the missing pieces. The visual clues may be quite obvious. For example, we can easily link the circles in figure 1.17 to create a linear spiral. In other cases, the clues are subtle. In Minor White's *Sandblaster* (1.18), the white arrow implies a connection between the numbers in the foreground and the worker's helmet.

This inclination to connect fragmentary information is called **closure**. "Lost and found"

contours require an elegant form of closure. In a "lost and found" composition, the edges of some shapes are clearly defined, and other shapes appear to merge with the background. When presented with such an image, the viewer must create a mental bridge between the resulting islands of information.

Caravaggio's *The Deposition* (1.19A) uses closure extensively. A contour drawing of this image has many gaps, as details are lost in the shadows (1.19B). Used skillfully, this loss of definition becomes a strength rather than a weakness. Connections made through closure can stimulate the viewer's imagination and encourage a more personal interpretation.

Linear Networks

Multiple lines can add detail to a design and create a convincing illusion of space. **Hatching** produces a range of grays through straight parallel
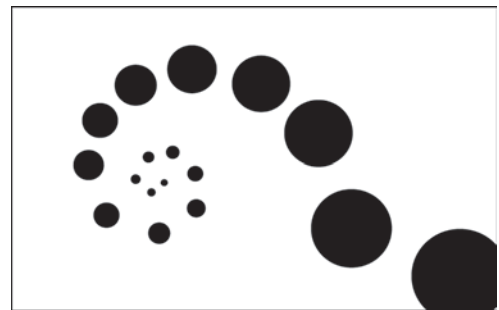
1.17 A series of dots can create an implied line.

1.18 Minor White, *Sandblaster,* **San Francisco, 1949.** Gelatin silver print, 10⁷⁄₁₆ × 11⁷⁄₁₆ in. (26.51 × 29.05 cm).