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# DES-112: GRAPHIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES (FORMERLY ART-123)

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**Effective Term**

Fall 2026

**BOT Approval Date**

06/12/2025

**Discipline**

DES - Design

**Course Number**

112

**Course Title**

Graphic Design Principles (formerly ART-123)

**Short Title**

Graphic Design Principles

**Credit Status (CB 04)**

D - Credit - Degree applicable

**Units**

**Activity Units**

3.00

**Total Units**

3.00

**Hours**

**Activity Contact Hours**

96-108

**Out of Class Hours Activity**

48-54

**Total Contact Hours**

96 - 108

**Total Out of Class Hours**

48 - 54

**Total Student Learning Hours**

144 - 162

**Distance Education**

Yes

**Distance Education**

**Distance Education Type**

Both Fully Online and Hybrid Online

**Fully Online Delivery Requirements:**

a. Students must be notified via the college schedule of classes and the syllabus for the class if proctored tests are required for this course



**b. Any planned face-to-face meetings, such as an orientation or study session, must be optional**

**c. The MSJC curriculum committee requires the use of accessible, asynchronous discussion as a component of every fully online course**

**Are you using publisher content?**

No

#### **Regular Substantive Interaction**

Instructor-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-content contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure regular substantive interaction (RSI) is maintained not only weekly but also for the duration of the course. Instructor interactions should be equivalent in time, quality and consistency to the engagement students would receive in a face-to-face course—for example, through announcements, discussion participation, personalized feedback, video messages, or other instructional communications. Instructors are expected to be responsive to student inquiries within a 24-72 hour time frame excluding holidays. RSI will be maintained through a variety of methods:

- Orientation - Students must be oriented to the online and face-to-face portions at the start of the course.
- Announcements - Announcements using the course management system must be posted at least weekly to keep students current on course events, due dates, materials, etc.
- Discussion Forums - Content-related discussion forums within the designated CMS will include appropriate instructor participation and will be initiated and maintained, with timely feedback provided. Instructors are required to monitor the discussions and related activities to provide guidance and direction. Open-ended discussion boards may be used to further learning and interaction.
- MSJC Communication – Instructor will use MSJC-administered communication tools (such as email or the designated CMS communication tools) to regularly communicate with and provide ease of access to students.
- Timely Feedback - Timely feedback on student work will be provided by the instructor, which may include comments and/or rubrics, within the Grades area of the designated CMS.
- Scheduled Meetings – Hybrid and synchronous courses will meet at regularly scheduled times. ADA Compliance - All course interactions and content must be designed with accessibility in mind and meet ADA requirements.

#### **Catalog Description**

This course is a critical examination on how to work with compositional space and interrelated basic principles, attributes, and elements of design through a digitally mediated format. Students will learn the relationships between form and space, color fundamentals, image studies, and visual logic as it relates to design disciplines. (formerly ART-123)

#### **Requisites**

##### **Recommended Preparation**

**Recommended Preparation (note that students can enroll in the class even if they haven't take the recommended course)**

ART-131.

#### **Codes**

##### **TOP Code (CB 03)**

1030.00\* - \*Graphic Art and Design

##### **CIP Code**

10.0303 - Prepress/Desktop Publishing and Digital Imaging Design.

##### **Repeatability Code**

No

##### **Grading Option**

Letter grade OR P/NP

##### **Minimum Qualifications**

| Minimum Qualifications | And/Or |
|------------------------|--------|
| Art (Masters Required) | Or     |
| Graphic Arts           | End    |

#### **GE Information**

##### **Check GE Types Requested**

AA/AS C - Humanities

## Learning Objectives

### Learning Objectives

| Learning Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Demonstrate appropriate message making through defining the basis of the communication through research and ideation techniques.                                                                                                                                             |
| 2. Select and assemble visual elements that demonstrate understanding of the principles of design to successfully craft aesthetically pleasing digital media.                                                                                                                   |
| 3. Differentiate effective visual language in describing works of visual communication.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4. Appraise works based on fundamental theories and methodologies of visual communication.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 5. Critique their own and other students' solutions to specific visual communications projects and offer creative suggestions; demonstrate knowledge of design vocabulary as well as the elements and principles of design composition through the critical evaluation process. |
| 6. Assemble projects using design elements with an understanding of global issues in design, including cultural differences and designing for accessibility.                                                                                                                    |
| 7. Examine visual hierarchy of information through the ordering of elements into a effective visual composition..                                                                                                                                                               |
| 8. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of digital and traditional tools and techniques for design and production.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 9. Develop communication sensitivity by listening to feedback from a diverse set of peers and using that feedback to make informed decisions for project revisions.                                                                                                             |

## Learning Outcome Information

### Course Learning Outcomes

| Learning Outcome                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Students will explain and discuss appropriate visual design terminology towards finalized creative solutions through critique. |
| 2. Students will creatively use software applications to assemble functional real-world projects.                                 |
| 3. Students will examine various visual design possibilities using various visual design terminologies.                           |
| 4. Students will report on various designs in the world that show cultural and creative variances.                                |

## Content

### Course Activity Content

1. Visual Principles
  - a. Graphic Design Composition Basics
    - i. Contrast
    - ii. Alignment
    - iii. Repetition
    - iv. Proximity
  - b. Formal Visual Elements
    - i. Typography
    - ii. Texture
    - iii. Shape
    - iv. Scale
    - v. Point, Line, Plane
    - vi. Color
2. Beyond the basics of Composition of Graphic Design
  - a. modularity
  - b. unity
  - c. visual hierarchy
    - i. weight, relationships, consistency
  - d. spacing
    - i. Foreground, Middleground, Background
    - ii. Tilted Plane
    - iii. Overlapping

- iv. Layering and Transparency
  - v. Movement
  - vi. Contrast
- e. balance
- f. rhythm
- g. scale
- 3. Graphic Design Production
  - a. Exportation to print media of various file formats
  - b. Exportation to screen media using various file formats
  - c. Use of Bitmap Based Software in graphic design solutions
  - d. Use of Vector Based software in graphic design solutions
  - e. Classifications of letters and type in relation to imagery
- 4. Designer Knowledge for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
  - a. Prominent Figures/Designers from a global perspective
  - b. Critical Writings from designers of other ethnicities and sexual orientations
  - c. Design element perspectives from other cultures
  - d. Design Issues for Accessibility.
    - i. Print issues
    - ii. Screen-based issues
- 5. File Formats
  - a. Creation of files for Print
  - b. Creation of files for Web
- 6. Critique
  - a. How to assess the strength of a piece
    - i. Concept
    - ii. Execution
    - iii. Technical Proficiency
    - iv. following direction
    - v. composition
    - vi. aesthetic value
- 7. Designer Lectures (Include designers from a diverse population)
  - a. David Carson
  - b. Neville Brody
  - c. Paul Rand
  - d. Saul Bass
  - e. Nolen Strahls
  - f. Milton Glasier
  - g. Paula Scher
  - h. Bauhaus
  - i. El Lissitzky
  - j. Various modern design firms.
- 8. Design Styles (Use styles from various cultures and global locations)
  - a. Suprematism
  - b. Constructivism
  - c. Minimal
  - d. Art Deco
  - e. Modern
  - f. Post Modern
  - g. Experimental

## Methods of Instruction

### Method

Activity

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**Integration**

In class activities on various design problems that develop an understanding of using software to achieve a specific design goal by finding images, making design decisions, and properly exporting files.

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

Students will be given a brief, which is a project description on what has to be accomplished. The instructor will record video lectures that are subtitled for accessibility, describing software use for the activity. These will be placed in the CMS juxtaposed or within the brief that is held in the CMS ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met.

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**Method**

Critique

**Integration**

In-class critiques, done individually and in groups, of student work

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

Student's projects will be compiled into a PDF format or other format as needed and posted into the course management system in a way that other students and the instructor can give feedback on the various stages of work listed in the objective areas by discussing concept, strategy, inspiration, process, and self-reflection. This will typically be done in a shared space of the CMS or through a feedback form given to each student ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met. .

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**Method**

Lecture

**Integration**

Showcase designers from various backgrounds by introducing students to a broad spectrum of designers, including those from marginalized or underrepresented groups. This could involve studying historical figures as well as contemporary designers from different cultures, genders, races, and identities.

Use slide images or presentations to show work that explores design across cultures. Highlight design trends and aesthetics from non-Western cultures and underrepresented communities. This approach fosters global awareness and an appreciation for diverse design philosophies

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

The lectures on design figures, styles, and components will be made in captioned video format or by text with images to read. These will be placed in the CMS using accessibility guidelines for students to access in asynchronous time and ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met.

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**Method**

Projects

**Integration**

Assigned projects that integrate stock imagery, student generated imagery, and instructor directions through design briefs, where the students will demonstrate an understanding of using design principles in composition and arrangement of images and typography. These creative design projects may use a design process starting from written ideas to thumbnails to multiple revisions and finally to finished products.

Focus on DEI in some of the work where students should always have conversations about ethical dilemmas in design, such as cultural appropriation, stereotyping, or perpetuating harmful narratives. Encourage students to engage in ethical decision-making and to respect the cultures they represent in their work.

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

The projects will have a clearly outlined design brief with links to each step of the project (e.g. ideas, thumbnails, revisions, final). Each stage of the project will be submitted online through the CMS in their various stages ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met, likely in the discussion board areas so that many people can give feedback.

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## Methods of Evaluation

### Method

Class Participation

### Integration

Class participation in critiques based on the instructor's observation of the student's analytic commentary on peer's design solutions. Students can be evaluated in a point system based on how many or how often they give feedback to their peers.

### DE Adaptations for MOE

Students will be required to critique others work in the development of their projects. Typically this is done at four stages: the idea stage, the thumbnail sketches, the revised/digital drafts, and the final draft. The first three will be done in the discussion board in the CMS, with feedback completed within two days and instructor grading done within the week. The final stage will be submitted as a project to the assignment area, however this is not about the assignment, the participation will happen in peer reviews of the assignment through the CMS. Grading should be done within one week.

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### Method

Class Performance

### Integration

Graded evaluation of student's design skills; specifically the creative solutions to class exercises and design case problems.

### DE Adaptations for MOE

Students will be required to submit design problems and essays through the assignment area within the CMS. These individual solutions or critical thinking on issues are not typically open in critique as they resemble a test or a lab. These projects are also typically very specific in the scope of what the student can do and they are being judged on their creativity to the solution, thoughts on readings, or execution of a directed process. Grading will be completed within one week through direct feedback or scored in a rubric form, ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met.

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### Method

Projects

### Integration

Graded evaluation of required work that demonstrates an understanding of the graphic design principles to be utilized. These are final works are that are graded based on the following criteria: 1. Deadline 2. Directions followed 3. Concept - clarity and originality of the design concepts, 4. Aesthetic - the aesthetic value of the work using current or experimental style, 5. Technique/Craft - the technical expertise of the product, usually showing capability of the software.

### DE Adaptations for MOE

Finished works that follow the creative process of developing work which align to project briefs will be graded in the CMS using the rubric outlined above ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met. Grading should be done in one week, on a point scale for each of the five criteria and have direct feedback within that criteria on strengths or weaknesses in the project.

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### Method

Oral Presentation

### Integration

Students can give presentations in class discussions or individually on design as a form of activism. Discuss how design can be used as a tool for activism and social change. Encourage students to question dominant narratives in the media and advertising, and to design with inclusivity and representation in mind. The presentations will be evaluated through the depth and relevance of content knowledge, use of appropriate visual aids, engagement with audience, use of appropriate vocabulary, and (since this IS a design class) creativity in presentation graphics.

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**DE Adaptations for MOE**

Students will use the discussion board within the CMS in order to give their presentation. It can be in document, slideshow, or video format. Grading should take one week after comments are generated from peers so that those can be graded as well. The instructor will ensure that all accessibility requirements are met in communications with the students.

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**Assignments****Assignment Type**

Other

**In-class and/or outside of class**

In-class

Outside of class

**Formative or Summative**

Summative

**Assignment**

Design THREE coffee/tea packages

**Overview**

In this project, you will design a package series for multiple coffee and tea packages from the same company for the use in a Keurig, instant coffee maker.

**Content (DEI FOCUS):**

Trace your cultural heritage as far back to when your family was not living in the United States (unless you are Native American in which case you can use that) and develop a design that resonates with visuals from that global location. This may mean that you have to do some research on the psychological effects of color or forms from those locations, being sensitive to public perceptions. Be ready to talk about this culture during your idea development stage so that the class can better understand why you are making the visual decisions you are.

**Goals/Project Steps**

**Step 1 (Oral Presentation)** - This is a separate grade (rubric linked here) that you will use to build a presentation for the class in powerpoint (PDF) style. Make sure to highlight at least THREE design elements we've covered (Color, texture, Contrast, Typography) to demonstrate the difference in cultural use in that location vs current design trends in the US.

**Rough Draft** - Create imaging and visual layout ideas for coffee/tee packages. You can reuse a companies logo, and the size will be the same as the standard boxes on store shelves. Use visual research to come up with unique aesthetic ideas for the background, typographical structure, and imagery. In this stage, you will just be working with one coffee/tee type (like a breakfast blend). 10% of grade

**Revised Roughs** - Use visual research to further the typographical solutions, and expand to the entire box as well as different coffee/tea types. In stage one, you just worked with a breakfast blend. Here you will also describe the changes to the other packages like the dark roast, vanilla flavored, medium roast, etc. 10% of grade

**Digital Comps** - Explore various compositional, typographical, and color solutions. 10% of grade

**Final Presentation** - Create a product that is print ready at 300 DPI. You can check the final presentation link to see the rubric for grading. 70% of grade

10% Deadline

10% Directions Followed

20% Concept

20% Style/Aesthetic

10% Technique

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## Specifications

Final Composition will be adhered to the box and lids at 300 DPI in CMYK color. Please bring packages into class. Grading will be completed in one week.

### How assignment will be adapted in online format

All stages will be placed in the discussion board of the CMS where students can give each other feedback for the work through a formal critique. The final will be submitted through the assignment area as native file PDF and photographs of the boxes after being printed and constructed ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met. They are graded by the teacher with the rubric above with written feedback and done in one week.

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## Assignment Type

Writing

### In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

### Formative or Summative

Formative

### Assignment

Paper on Dollar Deconstruction

In this paper, you will have two activities. #1, you will need to read The Visent Download The Visent, from Firesigns: A Semiotic Theory for Graphic Design. #2, you will find any U.S. paper currency and deconstruct it using found gestalt elements. Write a paper that follows the following format:

#### PARAGRAPH #1

Write a paragraph about the three types of visents: summarize each being as detailed as possible.

#### PARAGRAPH #2

How do visents and the GESTALT principle relate? Can you show me any found examples?

#### PARAGRAPH#3

Take a current dollar bill. Please show all instances of visents in the design that contribute to gestalt. What are they, what type are they? Zoomed in and cropped elements of the dollar work here. Remember, it is ILLEGAL to replicate a dollar at its actual size. :-)

Paper on Dollar Deconstruction

In this paper, you will have two activities. #1, you will need to read "The Visent"

[LINK TO DOWNLOAD \(Accessible PDF\)](#)

#2, you will find any U.S. paper currency and deconstruct it using found gestalt elements. (Gestalt is discussed in your textbook under the Chapter "Gestalt.") If you did not attend or do not remember the class lecture, reference your textbook.

Write a paper that follows the following format:

#### PARAGRAPH #1

Write a paragraph about the three types of visents: summarize each being as detailed as possible.

#### PARAGRAPH #2

How do visents and the gestalt principle relate? Can you show me any found examples?

#### PARAGRAPH#3

Take a current dollar bill. Please describe all instances of visents in the design that contribute to gestalt. What type are they? Zoomed in and cropped elements of the dollar work here. Remember, it is ILLEGAL to replicate a dollar at its actual size, so resize before printing :-)

Submit your paper in .doc,.txt format or directly into the dialogue box for the assignment.

Grading

20% deadline

20% on following questions in paragraphs

60% on appropriately addressing the three types of visents and gestalt principles (20% each)

Grading should be completed in one week.

#### **How assignment will be adapted in online format**

Assignment is already adapted to online as it would be assigned outside of class in either case and turned directly into the CMS, ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met.

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#### **Assignment Type**

Reading

#### **In-class and/or outside of class**

Outside of class

#### **Formative or Summative**

Formative

#### **Assignment**

Objective:

To understand the core principles of graphic design, including key elements like typography, color theory, composition, and visual hierarchy. This reading assignment will provide foundational knowledge to help students create visually compelling designs.

Readings:

1. "The Elements of Graphic Design" by Alex W. White (Chapters 1-3)

FOCUS IN READING: Learn the basic elements of design: space, unity, page architecture, and more. Understand the importance of organizing visual elements to communicate a clear message.

2. Online Article: "The Principles of Design" (Smashing Magazine)

FOCUS IN READING: Explore the core principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, proportion, rhythm, and unity). Understand how these principles guide the overall visual structure of a design.

Task: Take the five images I have provided with the BEFORE and AFTER.

For each image identify the principle that was used to alter the images composition, quickly define in your own words what that principle is, then describe with a rich description how the work was changed. Then address if the image's composition was improved or worsened and explain what you might have done differently.

Grading Rubric:

10% deadline

30% on identifying the correct term

30% on describing the term and how it was altered in the image

30% on your solution or criticism

Please submit your paper in printed format during the next class session.



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### **How assignment will be adapted in online format**

This assignment will be the same in online format but the paper will be submitted directly to the CMS instead of printed, ensuring that all accessibility requirements are met. Grading will be completed in one week.

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## **Course Materials**

### **Textbooks**

Dabner, David (2023). Graphic Design School: The Principles and Practice of Graphic Design, 8th Edition Wiley. ISBN: 0500297428

White, Alex (2022) The Elements of Graphic Design: Space, Unity, Page Architecture, and Type. 3rd ed. Allworth. 1621537595

## **Class Size Information**

### **Class Size**

30

### **Class Size Category**

F - Individualized, skills#based instruction/field practice 30

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

**Course Design and Materials:** Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

**Inclusive Learning Environment:** Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

**Accessible Instruction:** Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

**Equitable Teaching Practices:** Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogies:** Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

**Ongoing Reflection and Improvement:** Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

### **Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.**

This course relies heavily on exposing students to as many diverse perspectives in creative endeavors along lines of gender identity, sexual expression, cultural identity, racial identity, etc. We accomplish this by showing students works of art from each of these categories throughout the full spectrum of design history as well as modern cutting-edge designs. Going beyond simply showing these design solutions, students are then required to examine their own personal identity and synthesize original works of art that reflect these values. Students will then communicate to the instructor and to each other how they have responded to these varied examples and identities in their projects.

### **Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.**

Assignments, Instruction, and Content will all be delivered using Universal Design as the main concept. This will entail providing each student with multiple platforms and paths to the information needed to reach the Learning Objectives. This course will use the CMS, printed material, direct instruction, and supplemental instruction to ensure all strategies for learning are addressed. Evaluations will use explicit rubrics which are distributed at the time the work is assigned and where applicable, alternate forms of evaluations such as oral presentation, written presentation, and visual presentation will be applied.

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## Interactions

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.**

Student-to-student interaction will be an integral part of each class session, as collaborative learning and group feedback are essential to the creative process. This interaction will primarily take place during both formal and informal critiques, which will be held weekly. During these critiques, students will present their individual design projects, engage in group discussions, and provide constructive feedback on the work of their peers, fostering a dynamic environment for creative growth and improvement. Students will highlight other possible choices for the use of design elements in each solution, since there are always multiple ways of solving problems in this course. Since this class focuses much on Design Principals, as opposed to other classes, like Design Thinking, students should also evolve eachothers solutions using other students' project files. For example, groups can be assigned and three terms can be assigned to apply to an initial file given to a group. Each student must use a specific design element to make an iteration to that file. The rest of the group can then discuss if the changes were good or not based on their collaboration.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.**

Instructor-to-student interactions will take multiple forms throughout the course. These will include lecture presentations on historical and contemporary design trends, such as the evolution of typography or the use of color theory in modern branding. One-on-one instruction will be provided during studio sessions to offer personalized guidance on design elements like composition and balance. Written feedback will be given on completed projects, addressing aspects such as layout, hierarchy, and use of negative space. Additionally, skill demonstrations—whether in class or through video format—will cover techniques like grid systems, image manipulation, and typography/image alignment.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.**

Student-to-content interactions will be a daily part of this graphic design course, as the content is woven into every activity. Students will receive clear instructions and design concepts, such as the use of typography, color schemes, and composition techniques, to incorporate into all projects and assignments. They will interpret the various project prompts, applying design principles like contrast, balance, and alignment to create visually compelling work. These projects will be evaluated based on their creative execution and how effectively they connect to the design challenges and possibilities presented in each assignment.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).**

In this class, a student could engage in metacognitive activities by reflecting deeply on both their design process and decision-making strategies. For example, after completing a project, they might analyze the effectiveness of their use of design elements like color harmony or typography. They would question why they chose certain visual strategies and assess whether those decisions effectively communicated the intended message or brand identity.

During critiques, they could engage in self-assessment by comparing their work with peers, considering how alternative approaches to layout, negative space, or visual hierarchy might have influenced the final outcome. Journaling is another metacognitive tool they could use, documenting challenges they faced—such as balancing aesthetics with functionality or translating abstract concepts into visual language—and how they adapted or evolved their workflow as a result.

They could also evaluate their creative problem-solving skills by reflecting on how they applied feedback, managed time across iterative stages, and maintained consistency with design principles while innovating. This form of self-regulation and critical thinking would lead to more conscious, strategic improvements in future projects

Key: 229