Gestalt Principles Studio Task #1 (Individual)

Due: Thursday, January 8, 2009

Goals

The goal of this assignment is to emphasize the form-shaping capabilities of the human visual perceptual system, particularly with regards to how designers may use these effects to create interesting designs.

Gestalt Theory

The Gestalt approach attempts to define principles of perception—a list of "perceptual laws" which determine the way human's perceive objects. It has formed the basis for further research into the perception of patterns and objects and has been used as a theoretical backdrop to inform the design of interfaces.

For example, in the figure on the right, note how a triangle is perceived in object A while a 3D sphere with spikes emerges in object C. Object D appears as one long shape although it's made up of three disparate sections.
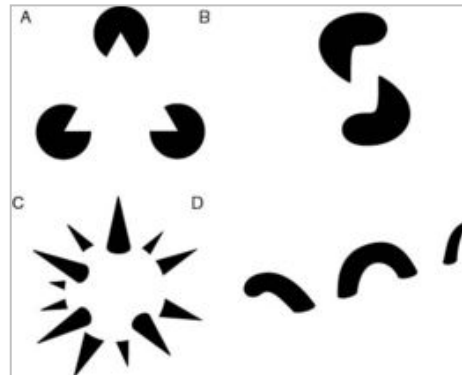
(Figure from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_psychology)

Assignment

Read the Gestalt excerpts from the Universal Principles of Design. You can find the restricted link here. The reading covers five Gestalt principles:

1. **Closure (p. 34):** A tendency to perceive a set of individual elements as a single, recognizable pattern, rather than multiple, individual elements.
2. **Good Continuation (p. 98):** Elements arranged in a straight line or a smooth curve are perceived as a group and are interpreted as being more related than elements not on the line or curve.
3. **Proximity (p. 160):** Elements that are closer together are perceived to be more related than elements that are farther apart.
4. **Similarity (p. 184):** Elements are similar are perceived to be more related than elements that are dissimilar.
5. **Uniform Connectedness (p. 200):** Elements that are connected by uniform visual properties, such as color, are perceived to be more related than elements that are not connected.

For this homework, we would like you to find examples of the **last four principles** (2-5) online in an existing interface. For example, Last.FM used to utilize the Good Continuation, Proximity, Similarity, and Uniform Connectedness principles for their top level menu bar:
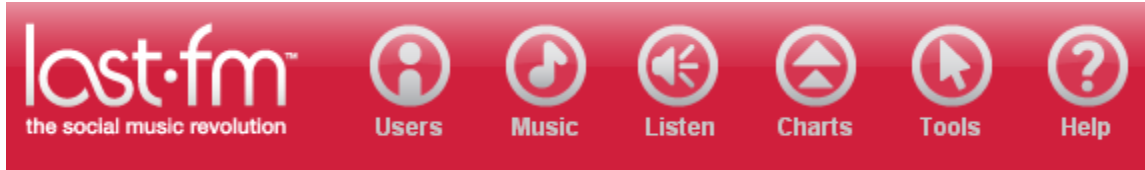
Place a screenshot of each example in an html or PDF document. You should have 4 (or more) screenshots in your write-up—one for each principle (even if a given interface utilizes more than one Gestalt principle like Last.FM, emphasize one for each example). Accompany the screenshot with a short textual description along with the original source link. The description should include which Gestalt principle (or principles) occur and a small critique of the interface.

Deliverables

1. **Studio Web Site Setup**
   Each student has been assigned an individual project directory. You can access your directory either via ssh or Windows. For more detailed instructions, go to http://www.cs.washington.edu/education/courses/cse441/CurrentQtr/howtos.html.

   SSH/SCP:
     Server: attu.cs.washington.edu (log in using your CSE Net ID)
     Directory: /projects/instr/CurrentQtr/cse441/students/<CSE_NETID>

   Windows:
     Map a drive to:
   \\ntdfs.cs.washington.edu\cs\unix\projects\instr\CurrentQtr\cse441\students\<CSE_NETID>
     When mapping the drive, select "connect using a different user name" and set User name to "CSEPCLAB\<CSE_NETID>" and the password to your CSE password.

   As this is the first studio design assignment, we would like you to create a top level html page (index.html) in this directory that will refer to each of the studio assignments you are given in class. Please create this index.html and include a link to this week's studio design html document (described below).

2. **Four Examples**
   Your four examples should be accessible online in your individual project directory as an html (or, if you prefer, pdf) page. This page should be linked off your index.html defined above. Please include screenshots of each example, as well as a short textual description. A "live link" to the source of the example should also be included for thoroughness.

3. Presentation

You must be prepared to present your work in class and lead a small discussion about what you found. The discussion will orient around the Gestalt examples posted in your index.html file.

Grading (100 Points)

These studio assignments are meant to inspire your creativity, flex your design muscles, and give you a chance share your own designs in class. The assignments are meant to be rather lightweight and fun. It's also an opportunity to earn points—but only if you do the work.

For this assignment, you will be graded on:

- [10] Creating a top level index.html, which links to the first studio assignment
- [80] An html/pdf page for this assignment, which covers at least one example per Gestalt principle including a screenshot, textual description, link to the original (20 points per example).
- [10] Your presentation