

IAT 233

PROJECT ONE: Composition I Book Covers

(what is design?
why design?)
becoming comfortable with language +
process)

For me technology is not a way to digitize the world or put humans in a world of zeroes and ones. I don't see technology as an end in itself. At all. It's just a means to removing frictions and get you useful information. Technology for technology's sake means absolutely nothing to me. Technology on the other hand that reveals and supports real life activities is a good thing. I used to say this a lot – and I haven't for years – but technology with humanity is what I'm thinking about. Technology is less important than innovation.

Yves Behar (rebranded Paypal in 2014)

http://www.fuseproject.com/work/paypal/brand_identity/?focus=overview +

<http://www.dezeen.com/2014/04/30/fuseproject-yves-behar-creates-mobile-friendly-paypal-brand-identity/>

<http://disegnodaily.com/interview/extended-interview-yves-behar> fuseproject

This week we will begin quite easily, building on some things you should already know (specifically some knowledge of typography, graphic design and the use of the Adobe Suite – Illustrator in particular). This is intentional – allowing you to bridge from what you know to some degree, what you should have already learned.

In order to succeed on this project you must pay attention to TWO key things:

- I. that you are specifically designing to three CRITERIA (hierarchy, clustering, and asymmetrical balance). We will introduce these in the reading for this project. If you fail to do this reading, and/or fail to incorporate this new knowledge, rest assured you WILL fail this project. I do not particularly care what you already know about graphic design and typography, and that is not what I am asking you to show me this week. What I am looking for is: can you take instruction, and will you do the work to move your work FORWARD. And even if you think you already know what hierarchy, asymmetrical balance and clusters are, you are to design from within what we agree upon in THIS class those terms to mean (you'll need to do the readings this week to know this, and we quiz this content, to make sure you took the time to do so). If you work at understanding what these three things are this week and THEN incorporate them into the FORM, then you will be half way there.

That is where to put the effort and energy and focus. If, on the other hand you “mail it in” with this project, as in, just do something and hand it in: rest assured we will rip it apart in critique (not YOU, it). Just moving letters around is not enough. In this way, we begin from a project that YOU must do - that you cannot copy. And learning the APPROACH is what is important in any case, NOT the book covers themselves, or the form. Design ALWAYS has “method” – we are starting with an easy project that will test whether you are learning this method, or trying, or not.

2. Secondly; this is a course in SPACE, or in other words, in terms of this project – in COMPOSITION. Rest assured, from what I have seen over the years from students who arrive in this class from IAT 102 and elsewhere, you probably know very little about composition and how SPACE holds the pieces together in a MEANINGFUL AND CLEAR compositional whole. Pay attention to how your clusters of letters are in relation to EACH OTHER in the space of the page, and you will be on your way. Just move letters around without paying attention to this, you will have a mess and your critique will not go well.

THEN:

3. Understand the format of how this be evaluated - CRITIQUE. You will not hand this in anonymously and receive feedback a week or more later. You will ALL “pin up” (tape) your work printed out on the wall of the classroom and ALL will be able to see what EVERYONE did, and by comparison, how they did, and how YOU did. You cannot, will not be able to, hide. Now, the critique or “crit” will actually be conducted anonymously in that, as WE as a teaching staff evaluate each work, it will be on the wall with all others and we will NOT know you or who did the work yet. So, this is not about embarrassing anyone. Far from it. We promise NEVER to be cruel in critique, BUT, we will give you DIRECT and thus hopefully useful feedback in the class. If you attend the crit, take notes listen to ALL the feedback for ALL the work and not just your own, you should understand what to do next. But, rest assured by the end the crit, if you got it wrong EVERYONE in that room will be able to see that. If that is because you tried and did not get it right, try again next week! If it's because you just “mailed it in”, or don't care – all will see THAT as well, or it will be there for all TO see. And in this course in which teams matter so much, having people think that you DO CARE about your work, DOES matter. Have THAT be the outcome of the crit.

But the ENTIRE crit will be about the two issues above

- a. did you use hierarchy, clusters and asymmetrical balance
- b. AND did you attempt to think about spatial composition? i.e how the parts RELATE to each other.
- c. so you should NOT be surprised about what we expect to see.

3. **Start your process hand-drawn and import to Illustrator:**

There are different ways to “work digitally”. Understand that the software you are using will determine your output almost entirely, IF YOU LET IT. And your work will look, well, pretty much like everyone else's out there. The idea with your work in a creative field, in the creative industries, is for your work to STAND OUT !!

So, again, there are very different ways to work digitally, and this project, this first this term using design software, should be an opportunity for your to consider this each time out. Your generation has gotten used to the essential fact that software like “Adobe Illustrator” is just THERE as if it always has been – it hasn't, it has been around for about 15 years. FIFTEEN !! But, over time, students have simply swallowed that the software determines your outcome. It shouldn't.

Without YOU behind the software, there is little creativity and the output will look like it. Maybe there was a time when simply learning Illustrator and Photoshop was challenging enough that you had no focus left to consider anything else, but now, if you wish to do well in this class - stand out by considering the tools you use and how YOU make decisions about HOW you use them.

You can work in a very digital way, and yet still work in a very HANDCRAFTED MANER, a hand-made, and (this is important) HUMAN WAY. For Design, this is extremely important.

So, let me make this simple: in doing this project, do your compositions BY HAND, on paper FIRST before you even open up Illustrator. This is YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS. And why Hand sketch? Because it is FAST – you can work through fifty ideas and then SEE easily the best one to pursue, or the better ones (based on the criteria of composition, hierarchy, clusters, asymmetrical balance); AND, because, it starts your process WITH CREATIVITY and not just the rote act of opening and using software.

And, at the same time, this gets you SKETCHING, which is something we will need to get better at and you will use and do all term and if you go into professional design, every day of your working lives. DESIGNERS SKETCH.

Understand this: SKETCHES ARE REALLY JUST NOTES, SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE BEAUTIFUL. They are for YOU, for YOUR PROCESS.

SO, DON'T START ON ILLUSTRATOR, START WITH SHEETS OF PAPER, or even your Moleskine and see how many different compositions you can come up for the front cover, back and spine. Each is its OWN composition, and then work at all three of them working TOGETHER as one unified composition of parts, all of which "work". Can you come up 20, 30, 50 different compositions? Sketching each one maybe only takes a few minutes, so, why not ?

THEN:

take an i-Phone photo of the sketch that is the composition you think works best to develop further in Illustrator that you are making the composition to show HIERARCHY, CLUSTERS AND ASYMETRICAL BALANCE as the criteria for why select THAT composition, and then just drop it directly into Illustrator onto an artboard, and actually get the vector work in there as a layer to begin working from and then adjusting using the extreme accuracy of the Illustrator software. Then, this should not be it either. It's not a one to one result, copy-paste. This gets you STARTED WELL, but THEN you have to use your eye and make adjustments, and intelligently try to achieve a HARMONIOUS COMPOSITION using space. This method will give you something to START FROM only. The work will continue.

And thus, using an INTELLIGENT approach to the software you now have an advantage, a HUGE advantage over others who will not do this – you will not be starting from a blank screen and an empty artboard – which is the scariest part of designing a composition. For a beginner, the empty artboard is the scariest part.

This first project begins an approach to design that will be the basis of how you will work through this course and then the rest of your careers if you go into design or anything even remotely aligned to it. WE CALL IT THE "DESIGN PROCESS".

What I just shared with you is a way of working which is "process-driven". Those who are process-driven on this project will have better results than those who don't. And those who don't will most likely grade at no better than a C on this project as a result. And even if you don't see the immediate results in this project, but worked intelligently and in a process-driven manner – DON'T GIVE UP!! Keep working in this way each week and eventually IT WILL PAY OFF and your work WILL stand out. If it didn't show up in week one at the crit, get better at it and do it better in week 2's project.

Students coming into IAT 233 too often are used to things being too easy – you do the work, you hand it in, you get a grade. And in SIAT this is much worse for you, because all too often YOU didn't even do this, because YOU worked in a TEAM – which means some of you may actually have done very little toward the project or its creative outcome at all. Which is why you will ALL struggle to some degree in the first weeks of this course. And it is this BEHAVIOUR IN YOU THAT WE ARE TRYING TO CHANGE. And understand that until you do, your work will receive the hard criticism it deserves within this field – outside of the SIAT BUBBLE, your work will be viewed by experts in this field as laughably or sadly bad. Harsh but true – better you know now. Surprise me if you think this is not true of you.

You MUST improve your skills in this area, it is a basic skill that all applicants will have.

So, get out the pencil or pen and ten sheets of white paper at 8.5 x 11 or larger (or in your Moleskine) and challenge yourself to try 5-10 different compositions on each page, that show us that you are thinking about the relationship of the parts within the composition using hierarchy, clusters and asymmetrical balance. And then, the more challenging part – pick the best 1-3 to get started working on in Illustrator to finalize (this is where you may opt to show it QUICKLY to the TA or Instructor for some quick feedback, in your composition sketched before importing into Illustrator).

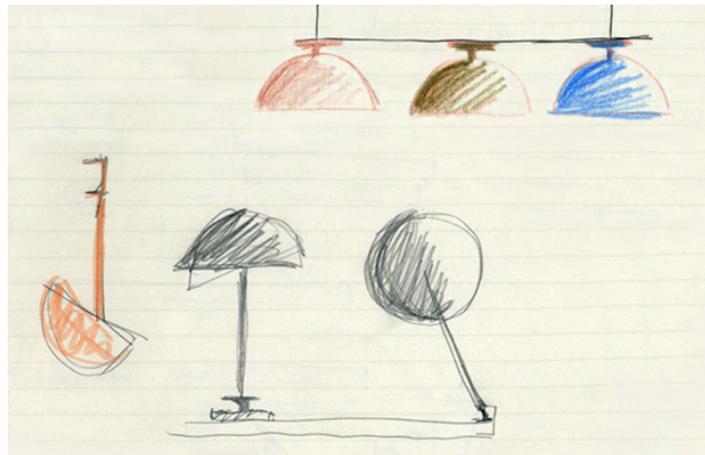
You are to bring this process work with you to class. If it's on separate sheets tape it at end after your 3 finished works for us to see. Circle on the process sheets the ones your developed. Maybe it is parts from a few, circle those. There will be enough space indicated on the whiteboards for all to pin up their three finished book covers, plus some process.

You will "pin up" (i.e. securely tape on all four comers using rolled-up masking tape) your three book cover compositions, and to the side you will pin-up your process sketches, circling the initial compositions your pursued from this analog work.

This week we will see your sketches. Don't worry about this. Don't worry if you don't think your sketches are "good". They don't need to be. They are meant to be unfinished. Your three final book covers should be HIGHLY finished.

The sketches are still for you. We just want to see you actually working in this way and see who didn't, or who skipped this step, or who is pretending to do this step as if checking a box. If you do this step and do it well, you are almost certain to do better on the project, and over time, in the course. And in this way, you are learning this new way of working, and we can see how you got there. For us, it will be like following bread-crumbs to see how you got to the final work.

Be patient. You are learning a new language.



Inga Sempe sent me the sketch above. She thinks she is a terrible sketcher, but says, "I don't care. They are not for anyone else, they are for me and my thinking process". The lamp drawn is part of the new collection being produced for the Swedish company Wastberg. You can see what she has to say on this topic herself if you go the 2:30 mark of the interview I did with her in Paris office in spring of 2013: <http://sfudutchdesign.ca/interviews/IngaSempe> .

No matter how BAD your sketches are in your own mind: it is an essential skill of a designer PERIOD. Learn to hand-draw and integrate it into EVERY project this term. Your team will benefit from it in the grading in this course WITHOUT QUESTION.

REALITY:

Yet; In past semesters many students seem to skip right past all of this – the critical stuff that ought to be the point. Why?

Because they do not yet have a PARADIGM FOR DESIGN. We will need to teach you this, because SIAT is not yet succeeding IMO in getting this across in first year or elsewhere in second year.

So, let's step back, already and consider what I am asking you to do and how this course might differ from what you have had before.

Just DOING the work, handing it in is NOT the point, and it WON'T be good enough. Why?

Probably because you were focused on the wrong things, and NOT thinking about what REALLY is being asked of you. THIS PROJECT IS ACTUALLY ASKING YOU TO DO SOMETHING NEW, but many of you will not think it is. It is – it is asking you to make COMPOSITIONS and you have not yet been trained to do this. You have been trained only to make forms and use the software. If that is what you give me, plus some style. You will fail the project.

Students do badly on this project when they think that the level of work they did before is enough (it's not) and that what I am asking of them can be solved by what you already know (it's not)

That's all.

Just be clear about what we ARE asking for –and make sure that is what you are spending your time on.

SO:

A big take-away this week: is to first TRY to focus on what matters and the criteria for which you will be evaluated. And you DO NOT need to wait to class for US to start this: you should be able to evaluate how you did enough to select which of your sketches was worth pursuing, based on the CRITERIA, and which were not.

Just objectively, no emotions, no nervousness and anxiety and panic. Just ask: how did I do (before and after the crit)? Evaluate for YOURSELF.

The point of this week is NOT whether you could follow directions – I don't want “yes men” or workers in a factory, I want Thinkers, Doers, and in the professional realm of Design, this is by no coincidence what they want from you as well. This work is not for me, or the course, or the degree, it's for YOU, to develop YOU, professionally, personally – let that process begin.

BE TEACHABLE. What we are setting then, are strategies for LEARNING - YOUR Learning. **The project briefs will be a little longer for this reason – because not only will they cover what to do, but how to LEARN by doing it.**

And so, here we are on page FOUR of this project BRIEF and we have not yet even begun to discuss WHAT you will be making. Yes, this week, you will working on (from the model, “Design Method we will show in class) #8: Developing Preliminary Form; **but, the APPROACH we take to that form, and the way we frame it, and the METHOD we use to get there is really the end goal – not the form.**

Yes, you will be evaluated on that form this week, in the, end, yes, design usually ends up with some kind of form – but in your mind, until it gets to market and is PRODUCED, the “Implementation” phase, ALL form is to be thought of provisional, a sort of “what-if”, as PRELIMINARY and not art we admire. Yes, we took four pages to get to the “what”, and that is how YOU should be designing in this class, right from the start on this first project – thinking of and on your method and your approach, and process. In your previous “design” classes, you may have thought of “the poster”, the “magazine layout” as the point, but, in THIS class, we are taking you to a much more sophisticated and complex understanding of what design is, what it CAN be and **YOU need to shift your thinking as to what you THINK it is. It's NOT the poster. Or in this case, the book cover.**

You've been warned.

OK, what AM I making ?!!

Design starts with “CONSTRAINTS”:

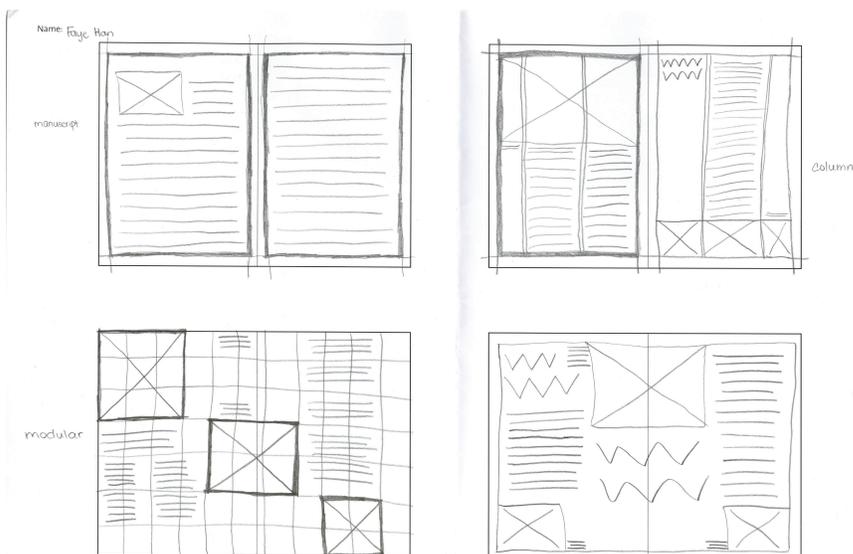
a common and limited set of CONSTRAINTS which will allow us to isolate and evaluate how you did in the crit when we see your work in comparison to the class

1. You are to produce a set of three book covers. You will choose one (existing) book title from the period 1920-1970, and do THREE distinct versions of the cover, where the layout composition changes but the title and author (the “copy”), does not.
2. **Be very clear that we expect THREE distinct compositions.** The title (header) and sub-title (sub-head) and author cannot be created once and simply copied and pasted onto the new board – we expect to see COMPLETELY NEW and substantially different compositions of the clusters of letters, using different combinations of the weights and measures to create the HIERARCHY within the cluster (i.e. a semi-bold italic with a regular). But you use the same author, title etc. for all three boards. The copy stays the same – how you use it to form a composition changes in each.
3. **Think about your PROCESS (the approach you will take, how you will begin, etc.) and not just about DOING this – I would myself sit down with a piece of paper and pen and sketch out quickly the variety of compositions possible FIRST. This is quite different from opening up Illustrator and moving things around. I would suggest YOU work in the way, I just suggested it. But, most won't anyways.** And as each bad decision adds up you will end up with a weaker and weaker project unless you THINK about what you are being asked to do, and you ask YOURSELF if you are doing what we ask and going about it in a way that will get results. Why do it this way? Because you can quickly try out multiple compositional possibilities FAST AND you can see them side-by-side and decide what you think works better. Then once you choose your three approaches you can evolve those further once they start getting set into Illustrator. **Remember: designers START BY SKETCHING.** You make something that did not exist real by doing so.
4. **So, in other words; BE INTENTIONAL !! Don't just move things around on the page.** AND don't just use visual effects – that's what we refer to as “style” and it's NOT acceptable. Let the TYPE do the talking by paying attention to the quality of the type and the use of the three criteria (hierarchy, clustering and asymmetrical balance).
5. **These book covers MUST incorporate the new understanding you should gain this week from the content below as to what is: hierarchy, clusters, and asymmetrical balance. And they MUST be conscious of the spatial/compositional RELATIONSHIPS of the parts TO EACH OTHERS across the space of the page. That's the key to the project: are you using hierarchy, clusters, and asymmetrical balance AND are you thinking of how the cluster of stuff (words/letters) relate to each other across the space they are in? And further does the space between get enlivened when you design the relationship of the parts to each other? That's the project.**
6. You may use only type. No images. You may only use a SANS SERIF font. The typeface is set: Akzidenz Grotesk, we will provide it to all. Great care MUST go into the choice and use of type and we expect to see a range of use of WEIGHTS AND MEASURES. If you randomly pull a poor version of the font off the web and carelessly plunk it down, you will not get “typography”, you will be LETTERS ON A PAGE – and they are NOT the same thing. You only have type to work with, so if you screw it up or are careless with it, you are taking something important for granted. AND it's the one piece that is supposed to carry over from IAT 102. We do expect to see that you understand something about type, but more importantly that you CARE about type. If you don't - we will see that quite clearly. If you did not learn to care about it in IAT 102, or learn much about it then, you have the week to IMPROVE in this area. Again, another suggestion: and many will NOT

do this either. And bad decisions continue to add to each other each time you avoid taking the time and the CARE.

7. You MAY try incorporating some linear bars as you will see 1920's-1930's Constructivist designers (such as Jan Tschichold) use. But use judiciously and sparing and do not let these take over the composition. Understand that hierarchy applies to ALL visual elements on the page – a bar that is 2 mm thick and 10 cm long is substantially “heavier” than one that is 1mm thick and 10cm long – it's essentially a square root in visual terms.
8. You may use NO other shapes, as for example, circles.
9. You may use ONLY three colors: white, black and red. Choose your red carefully. Look at Constructivist examples and sample (Jan Tschichold). You may not use gradients.
10. You may investigate “reverse” backgrounds (i.e. black as opposed to white), but in no more than one of your three covers. You do not need to do one reverse at all, and understand that if you do, it adds some measure of complexity that you must account for (don't ask us, just figure this out, or don't do it). In general I would recommend against it – it's a style trick and makes things more complicated.
11. The overall dimensions of each book cover is to be printed on a common sheet of 8.5 x 11 inches copier paper oriented in the horizontal direction. If you find there is a good reason to change these dimensions, such as your design is better when you do, by all means change the dimensions, BUT, the layout must still be horizontal (landscape) and no bigger than 8.5 x 11” overall.
12. You need COPY (words) in order to work with the ONLY design elements you have to make the form: letters/type.
We'll provide some guideline here is to what the copy should and should not be (again to create a shared set of constraints to evaluate). Details as to what copy directly below here in # 11.
But understand that the copy is by-and-large arbitrary (could be just about anything and doesn't really matter as long as it's in the set parameters), in what it says (i.e. what the title of the book is). But make no mistake we will be HEAVILY evaluating you on the skills and ability you have with TYPOGRAPHY as to how much you know and how well you use typographic approaches in making these somewhat arbitrary letters come to life. If in the final form you show us, they really are just letters, sitting on the page, with no typographic sensibility at all (what you SHOULD have learned in IAT 102), then you will receive negative feedback on this aspect.
13. **The Copy:**
 - a. **You need a title, an author and perhaps a sub-title.** This copy will used on the front cover, and the spine only.
 - b. On the back cover you may use ONLY “Ipsum Lorem”, in order to make a well-designed “body copy” block (think large paragraph as you would see on the back of a book, but do NOT write the words of descriptions, just use Lorem). This part is often overlooked and done badly. Take the time to design this well as well as the front. <http://www.lipsum.com> .
 - c. **The title and author needs to come from a Published book by a recognized author in the field of LITERATURE** (and NOT science fiction, spec fiction, or fantasy – please guys let's expand our nerd repertoire a bit here), published in the years 1920-1970 ONLY – what we refer to as the “modernist era”. I don't want to see any books you read in high school, and that includes George Orwell. , So, for example, a book by Ernest Hemingway, or Ezra Pound, or W. Somerset Maugham, Albert Camus, Henrik Ibsen, Herman Hesse, would all qualify. Example: author = T.S. Eliot. Title = The Four Quartets. Subtitle = new poetry.
 - d. **pay attention to the SHAPES that the title and/or sub-title make.** If too short it will be blocky and have little possibility to do good hierarchy; if too long, it will be a shape which you cannot make work in the space. You almost certainly need a book title with a sub, or a longer title. But, this is one part that you CAN control. This is where the copy is “arbitrary”, but will make a difference. Take the time to think about this.

14. There are really FOUR spaces that need to be considered and designed for composition: the front cover, the spine, the back cover, and finally, how all three of THOSE work together as one across that whole SPACE of the "spread" across all three. How things flow across this space matters.
15. You must trim off the white surrounding box outline created by the roller wheels of the printer. You must CAREFULLY trim the excess paper using a cutting matt (some in studios if you don't have one yet), and a sharp utility knife (which you need for the rest of the course anyways, so get it now).
This kind:
<http://www.xacto.com/products/cutting-solutions/knives/knives/Light-Duty-Snap-Off-Blade-Utility-Knife.aspx>
and NOT, this kind:
<http://www.xacto.com/products/cutting-solutions/knives/knives/Double-Knife-Set.aspx>
And, yes, after you trim the edges off, it is no longer exactly 8.5 x 11", it is slightly less than 8.5 x 11 and that is fine.
16. The layout software MUST be Adobe Illustrator.
17. In your printed-out copies you bring to class: quality matters, the quality of the print job, the color quality, quality of paper, even down to how STRAIGHT you hang it on the wall at start of crit. You need to roll up FOUR pieces of masking tape, one per corner, per page and then align each of the three pages in a straight line in relation to each other with about 2-3 inches between the three pages (do NOT put them edge to edge). No student names or numbers on them please. So, arrive to class with your 12 pieces of tape already rolled and ready to put on the backs of the pages to get them up FAST and clean.



**note: this is NOT what you work should look like. It's just an example of start by sketching. This composition is actually TERRIBLE !!*

DESIGN PROCESS: So, why three versions of the same thing?

Answer: do the reading !!!

This is the way designers work, which allows them to work through ideas and keep an open mind. If you DON'T do this, you are simply are NOT designing. So, start that process this week. This employs what we refer to a "lateral processing" as opposed to "linear process", which we will discuss more in depth below. You should therefore not just DO three versions, but, be thinking AS you are doing them of what you are investigating, what you want to try, what is your INTENTION, what is your APPROACH with each individual

version. By doing so, we often end up with one being better than the other. That's the goal. If that's where you end up, fine. Good. But, all should be reasonable, competent and following the assigned METHOD. Challenging ourselves to think of multiple ways to solve any problem ensures that we don't just come up with the easiest or most obvious "solution" and hopefully allows our creativity to find a new way we did not originally see.

LANGUAGE versus STYLE:

This week you will work with three visual properties to organize your work using shared principles that all will follow. Next week we will go further developing your abilities with these three in composition - and we will add a few more of these established visual properties to make the SPACE work better.

So for this week, get good at, care about:

- + HIERARCHY
- + CLUSTERING
- + ASYMETRICAL BALANCE

and then next week we will add in:

- + UNDERLYING STRUCTURE
- + OVERLAPPING PLANES
- + TENSION + LOCKING
- + RULE OF THIRDS
- + HOTSPOTS
- + CONTRASTS

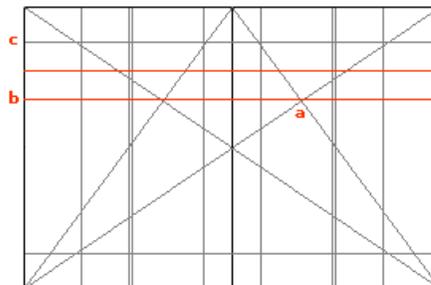
These elements will begin to tie your hierarchal SPACE together to create a CLEAR composition. Finally, really think about the clusters you make as SHAPES and be able see not just the individual quality of the letters in relation to each other, but also the overall SHAPE that each cluster makes and how the shapes relate to each other across the space.

SHAPE as it turns out will be a MAJOR definer of space for us throughout the term and will apply across all forms of visual and experiential design, including architecture and urban scale. LOOK AT SHAPES.

Read below to understand what we mean by "hierarchy, clusters + asymmetrical balance", then start trying to make that work for you. As you work through the project this week constantly keep asking "how's my hierarchy?". Etc. So, you should be evaluating your own work and results before you get to class and not just thinking we will do all of the evaluation.

READING AND QUIZ:

Before and as you do the project make sure you do the readings. There will be quiz in class on them to make it clear that it is important and valuable to you that you do the readings. If you do not, you will not only fail the quiz (5% of term's grade), it will be quite clear in what you produce that you did not and you likely will fail the project as well (5% of term's grade). You can LITERALLY put yourself 10% behind in this course by being lazy about this. Do the readings.



A 'hanging line' is then created by drawing a line across from the bisecting lines (a).

Dividing the space between line (b) and the top of our content area (c) gives us our hanging line.