

VALUE

**A PRINCIPLE, YET MISUNDERSTOOD
ELEMENT OF DESIGN**

**WITHOUT
LIGHT,**

WE CANNOT SEE ANYTHING

ART + DESIGN

. . . is about seeing



The colors look wild and yet there is some depth to the figure, some planes of the face defined.

The Woman with a Hat (la Femme au Chapeau) [1905]
Henri Matisse

VALUE

One of the most important concepts to **know** and **understand** as a visual artist is that pictures, scenes and still images are arrangements of value:

Light

Dark and

Gray shapes

VALUE

It is these light, dark and gray shapes
that the human mind assembles
a cohesive picture.

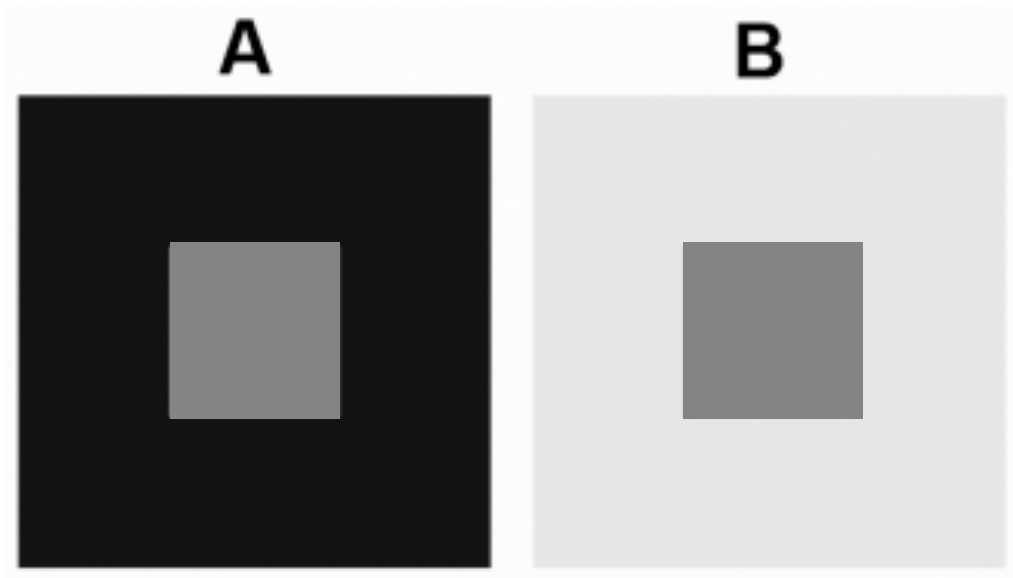


VALUE

Being able to see the world
as **shapes of value**,
especially colored shapes and objects,
is a master skill to cultivate as a visual artist.

It's important to the artist because ...
in order to compose and arrange shapes in our pictures,
**we must first see and understand
their inherent gray scale value.**

VALUE IS RELATIVE



Compare values and relate them to the other values in a scene, not as individual pieces. In other words, be aware of what is next to or surrounding a value or shape.

Often when there is strong value contrast between a shape and what surrounds it, your mind will perceive the value to be much lighter or darker than it truly is.

Which center square is lighter, A or B?

This classic optical illusion demonstrates the power of relative values.

VALUE

The lightness or darkness of tones or colors.

- **White is the lightest value**
- **Black is the darkest**
- **Middle Gray is the value halfway between these extremes**



White



Middle Gray



Black

ART + DESIGN

... is about seeing

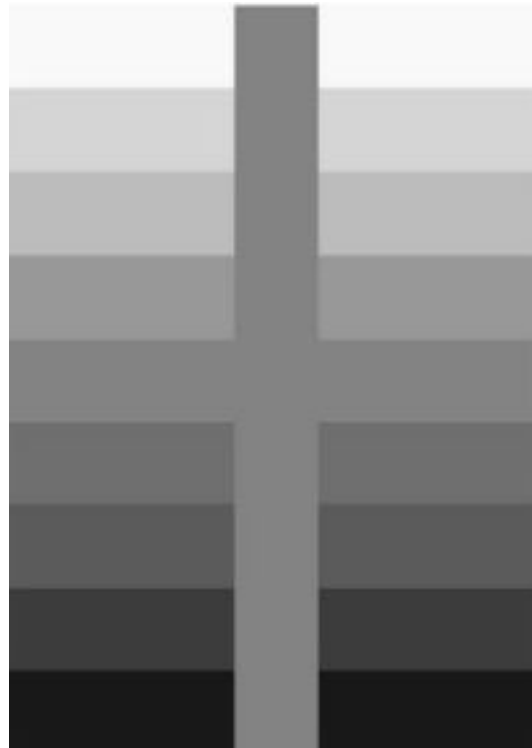


Viewed in grayscale it becomes more apparent that it's the relative values of the colors that give the piece dimension.

The Woman with a Hat (la Femme au Chapeau) [1905]
Henri Matisse

VALUE IMPORTANCE

Value is *more important* than color to the design and success of an image



SOME FACTS

- Value is the **relative degree** of light and dark.
- In design it refers to the amount of light **reflected** or **absorbed** by a pigment or surface.
- Although value is perhaps easiest to see in black and white, **it is also a part of color.**
- Value is described as being high (**light**), medium or low (**dark**).
- There once was a notion that we could not differentiate between more than **9 gradations of value.**

That is not true, but when working it isn't practical to manage more than about that number.

- *In fact, the **average person can differentiate 30 – 40 gradations of gray between black and white.***
- *Someone with exceptionally high value acuity may be able to differentiate up to 150 gradations.*

ABOUT VALUE

- **Values create depth in a composition**
 - **low** (dark) values create shadows that can give the appearance of volume and depth to two-dimensional objects
 - **high** (light) values create highlights, which can also give images the appearance of volume
- **Value can also be used to set the mood of a work, creating a light and airy sense through the use of light values or a somber tone through the use of predominantly dark values.**

ABOUT VALUE

- **Chiaroscuro** is the term for the *use of value* to create the illusion of actual light and shadow of a three-dimensional form, on a two-dimensional surface
- **Chiaroscuro** is derived from the Italian words **chiaro** (light) and **scuro** (dark), “light / dark” and refers to the modeling of forms using only value without any lines outlining the forms

CHIAROSCURO



Dark



Light

CHIAROSCURO



Dark



Light

CHIAROSCURO



Christ Healing the Sick (Hundred Guilder Print), detail of an etching by Rembrandt showing the use of chiaroscuro c. 1643–49.

An outstanding master of chiaroscuro was **Rembrandt**, who used it with remarkable psychological effect in his paintings, drawings, and etchings.

CHIAROSCURO



Some evidence exists that ancient Greek and Roman artists used **chiaroscuro** effects, but in European painting the technique was first brought to its full potential by Leonardo da Vinci in the late 15th century in such paintings as his Adoration of the Magi (1481)

<https://youtu.be/QxNqWZPzsGw>

CHIAROSCURO

- In its most dramatic form—as in the works of those Italian artists of the 17th century who came under the influence of Caravaggio—it was known as **tenebrismo**, or **tenebrism**. Caravaggio and his followers used a harsh, dramatic light to isolate their figures and heighten their emotional tension.
- **Tenebrism** is a form of severe or exaggerated chiaroscuro. The term, Tenebrism, comes from the Italian terms tenebroso meaning "the dark manner" and from tenebrae meaning darkness. In Tenebrism images are dominated by dark shadows, abrupt value changes and quite bright (almost startlingly so) highlights. Little mid-range gray is used; rather, the extreme ends of the value scale dominate.