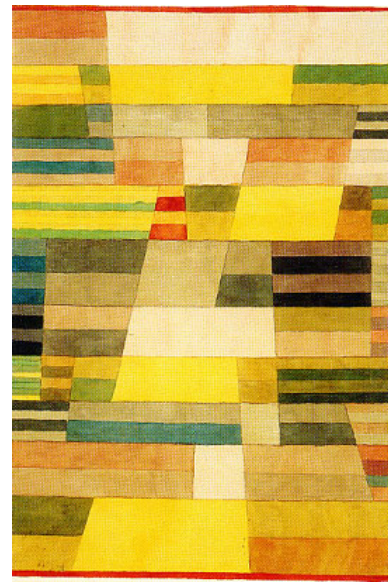
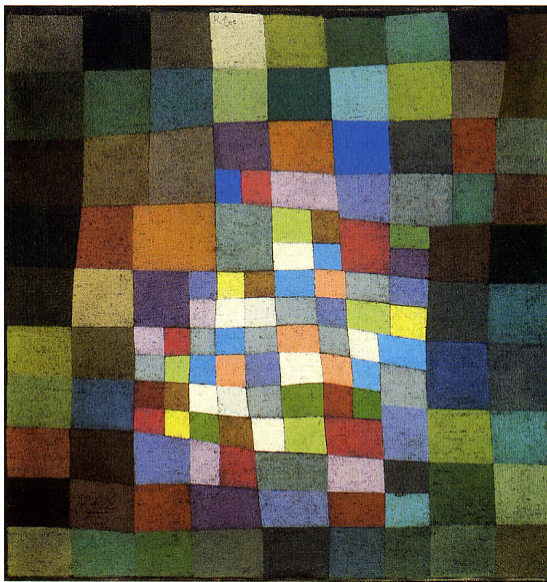


Digital Art I

Letter Grid Project



Artists and designers (as well as many other people) often use grids in their work, or as a tool to create their work: the idea of the grid is a very important and useful one in design. Grids can be more or less rigid and mechanical in nature. At the rigid and mechanical end we've got graph paper, for example: all the units are identical, as you've got two series of parallel lines at right angles to each other, with all lines being spaced equally within each set. Further towards the less mechanical and more "organic" end of the spectrum is some of the work of Paul Klee (known as a painter, but who also taught in the Bauhaus, one of the most important centers of design in the 20th century). Here are two of his paintings:



Many times, graphic designers use grids to place various elements – photographs, drawings, typographical elements – in an organized fashion: it may be that no grid lines are evident, and in some cases the average viewer may not even notice that a magazine or newspaper or webpage is designed using a grid. Note in the front page from a 1944 issue of The New York Times (see following page) that the sheet is divided into eight columns. Below the banner, all elements either fit into one of those columns or into two or more of those columns; no element takes up a non-whole number of columns (such as one and a third columns, for example).



As you can see from the student example at the top of page one, this project requires you to use a fairly mechanical grid in a very noticeable way. Note, though, that the grid is not to be defined visually by a visible mesh of lines. You *will* (or certainly *should*) use a visible mesh of lines to make your work process easier: those lines will be blue guidelines that are non-printing, that you can create easily in Photoshop.

File specifications:

- 9 in. x 12 in. (your choice of horizontal or vertical orientation)
- 320 Resolution
- RGB Mode

Overview of design concept and requirements:

You are to choose and use three typographical characters. These can be letters, numbers, or other symbols such as the ampersand or a question mark, and you can use a mix of letters and numbers etc. You can modify any or all of the characters (e.g., redrawing/redesigning them with the “Paths” tool if you like, but this is NOT required. Each of your three characters is to be used three times. You’ll be working with a nine-part grid in which each unit will be 3 x 4 inches: three characters times three uses of those characters = 9 grid units.

There’s another “three” in this project: you’ll be using a three-color scheme, employing two analogous colors (colors that are close to each other on a color wheel, and whose names you could hyphenate or use to modify each other: e.g., “yellow-green” or “reddish purple”) along with one contrasting (complementary: opposite or near-opposite on the color wheel) color. Each typographical character will appear once with each of the three colors. In others, if you’re using a “B,” an “E,” and a “?,” and if your color scheme is dark blue, light green, and orange-red, you’ll have one dark blue “B,” one light green “B,” one orange-red “B,” and so on with the other two characters.

The background grid will be filled with the three colors such that each color occurs in three grid units. Of course, each typographical character **MUST** stand out from its background: you cannot have a yellow “Y” on a yellow area of the background!

Note: You can use one font/typeface for all three characters, or two different ones, or three different ones. However, you **CANNOT** use different fonts for the same character in its various iterations (repeated uses). That is, if you’re using Arial Black for one “3,” your other two “3”s will also need to be in Arial Black. As noted above, you can modify/redesign one or more of your characters, but once you do so, you have to use the same modified version for all three appearances of that character.

You are strongly advised to use bold, heavy typefaces. **DO NOT** use any specialty typeface that incorporates shadows, cut-outs, or other decorative flourishes. This project is all about **shape** (including the shapes of **negative space**): thin letters and numbers (etc.) will not work well for our purposes. One of the design aims is to use each character in each grid unit such that you’ve created an exciting composition, within that small space, where the shape (the letter) is about equal in area to the negative space in the unit (where the background shows through).

Visual/Design Goals

Your primary design goal is to achieve a sense of **continuity and flow** across the boundaries of your grid units. You’ll achieve this partly by means of color use and partly by creative and attentive placement, scaling, and rotation of the various colors.

In addition, you’ll be aiming for a composition that feels **harmonious and well-balanced**. You also will want to create one or more (two or three might be ideal) areas of special visual interest to draw the viewer’s eye and attention: we’ll call these **focal points**.

An important auxiliary goal of your project, with specific relation to the characters, is to enable an attentive and careful viewer to figure out what your three characters are. You don’t want to make it too easy, nor should you make it absolutely impossible for such a viewer to do so. In part because of this goal, and also for other design reasons, you are allowed — in fact, very strongly **ENCOURAGED**, if not **REQUIRED** — to scale your typographical characters to various degrees and to rotate and crop them. We shouldn’t see any of your characters in their entirety in any one grid unit, let alone seeing them floating around surrounded by lots of “empty” space.

While it is virtually impossible to do this project well without rotating and scaling your characters, you are **NOT** to distort them. For that reason, make sure that, when using the “Free Transform” (Control-T) command, you always hold down the “Shift” key and drag from a corner, rather from a side, when scaling characters to a larger or smaller size. Note that the “Free Transform” (Control-T) command will let you not only change the size of a character; it will also allow you to move and to rotate the character. You’ll be using this command a lot!

Technical and Procedural Strategies and Suggestions:

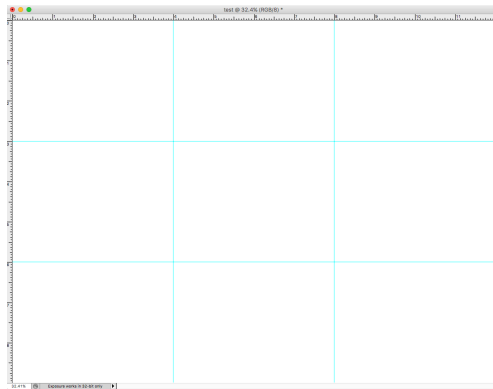
Make sure you have View – Ruler on.

Make sure you have Snap to Grid and Snap to Guides on.

Make guidelines at 4 and 8 inches in the long (12 inch) dimension and make guidelines at 3 and 6 inches in the short (9 inch) direction. You will thus be marking out nine 3 x 4 inch units with guidelines. If you have Snap to Guides on, when you use the rectangular marquee tool to select any one of your nine 3 x 4 inch units, the tool will snap very accurately to the boundaries defined by the guidelines you've made: this will be extremely helpful.

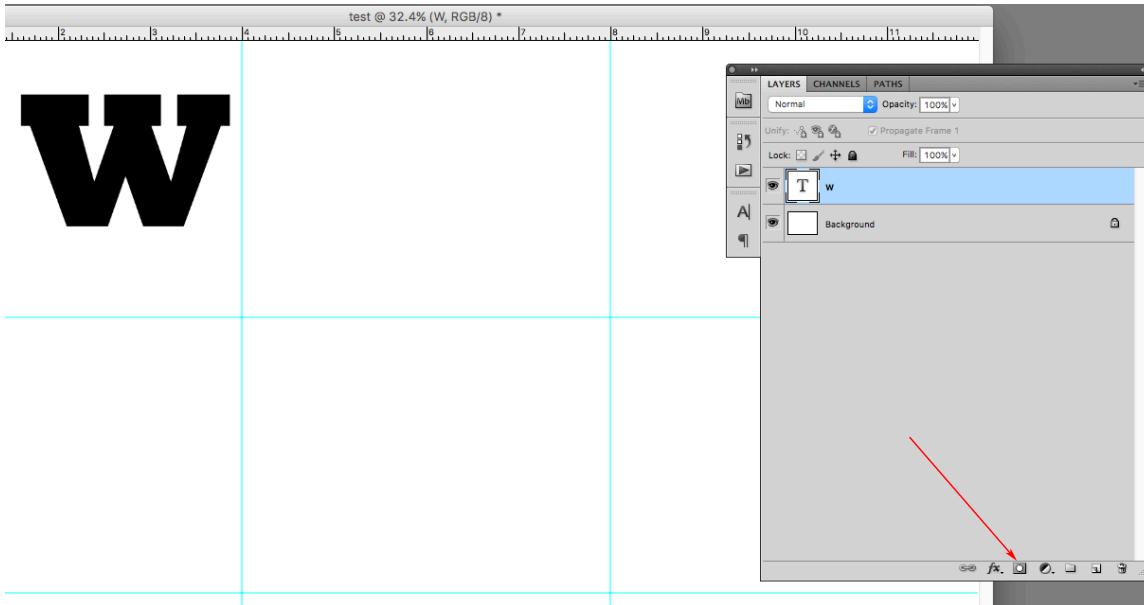
Alternate (and HIGHLY recommended!) method:

Go to “View” — “New Guide” and type in the appropriate values for horizontal and vertical guidelines. If you decide to make your image horizontal in format it will be 12 inches wide and 9 inches tall, and you'll need vertical guidelines at the 4 and 8 inch marks, along with horizontal guidelines at the 3 and 6 inch marks.

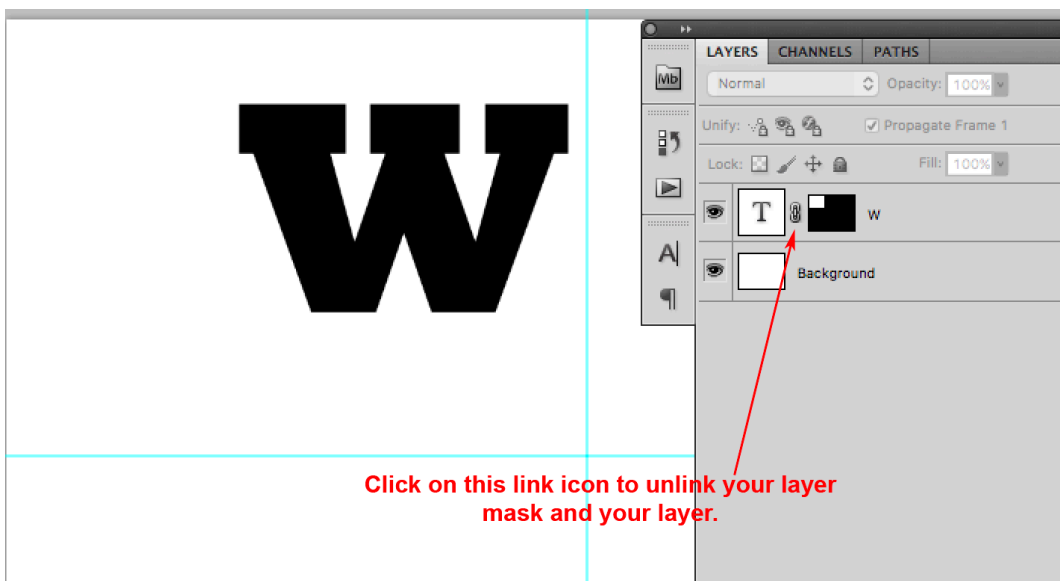


It works very well to put all your background colors on one single layer. Use the rectangular marquee tool to select each unit for filling. You can readily use the “Replace Color” command (under Image — Adjustments)

On the other hand, you'll want to have a separate layer for each of the nine characters (3 different characters each used 3 times) your project will include. Unless you choose to modify or create your own typographic characters (e.g., using “Paths”), each character layer will be created automatically when you go to the TYPE tool and type in a single character. Once you specify a large point size for the characters (something around 150 pts. is usually a good start), type the character, and highlight it, you can scroll through many font/typeface options and try out many of the bolder and more promising ones. Once you've chosen a typeface for this characters, a good next step is to marquee the unit in which you're using and then click on the “Add layer mask” icon at the bottom of your layer palette.



When you click the “Add layer mask” icon with an area selected, the program will make a layer mask that automatically fills with black (hiding what’s on the layer) everywhere beyond the selected area. It will also automatically link the layer to the layer mask: you’ll need to get rid of this link by clicking on it. The plan is to have a layer mask on each character layer that stays put, making it so that you can move, scale, and rotate your character without having to worry about the character showing up beyond the bounds of the grid unit to which it belongs.



Once you’ve done this, you’ll be able to make all the changes you desire to the size, placement, and orientation of the character on this layer, and it will always be “cropped” by the layer mask so that it won’t extend beyond the boundaries of the grid unit. This visual “cropping” by the layer mask is essential. You should be aware that the whole character is still always present on the layer itself, and this, too, is essential. It means that you can restore part of a character that may be hidden by the layer mask by moving the character around (and/or resizing it or rotating it) until it falls within the unmasked area of the grid unit again. You can see how this works in the two screenshots below. The layer mask stays in place, while the letter “W” is moved, rotated, and re-scaled from the first version to the second.

