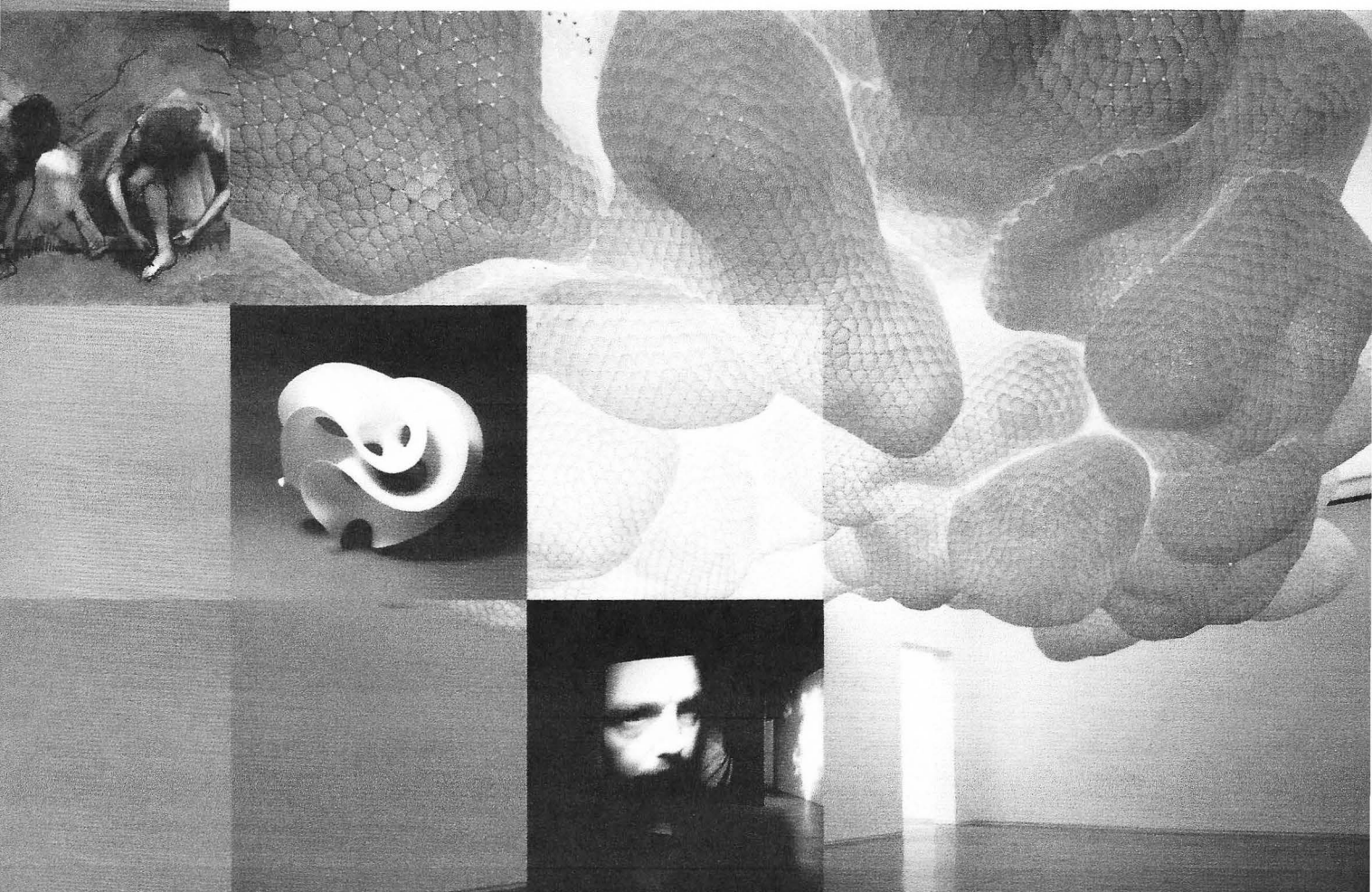


MARY STEWART

Launching the Imagination

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO BASIC DESIGN



FOURTH EDITION

Narrative and Nonnarrative

Just as a poet uses a few words to evoke a complex idea, so an artist can communicate complex thoughts and feelings through a single image. By contrast, the sequential artist can act like a novelist. Because the verbal and visual information is distributed over many images, ideas and emotions can be expanded when sequential art is used. In this chapter, we explore the uses, characteristics, and construction of multiple-image structures.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is one of the most ancient and effective forms of communication. It can serve four basic purposes:

- *Stories can increase self-awareness.* When we record our own story in an autobiography, we become more conscious of the patterns in our lives and can gain a better understanding of the individual events that break or reinforce these patterns.
- *Stories can provide inspiration.* By researching the life of another artist or discussing the past with an elderly relative, we find that our personal problems and conflicts are not unique. Everyone experiences a wide range of emotions, from exhilaration to despair. In reading another person's story, we can learn from his or her solution to a problem.
- *Stories can supply information.* News stories and documentary films provide us with information on current events and analysis of their implications. Art never occurs in a vacuum. Developing an understanding of the world around us can strengthen our ideas.
- *Stories can encourage understanding.* Abstract numbers and dry statistics are rarely as compelling as human experience. When we hear the story of a particular refugee in a specific war, the horrible effect of combat on civilians becomes personal. Such stories can help us understand the emotional meaning of an event.

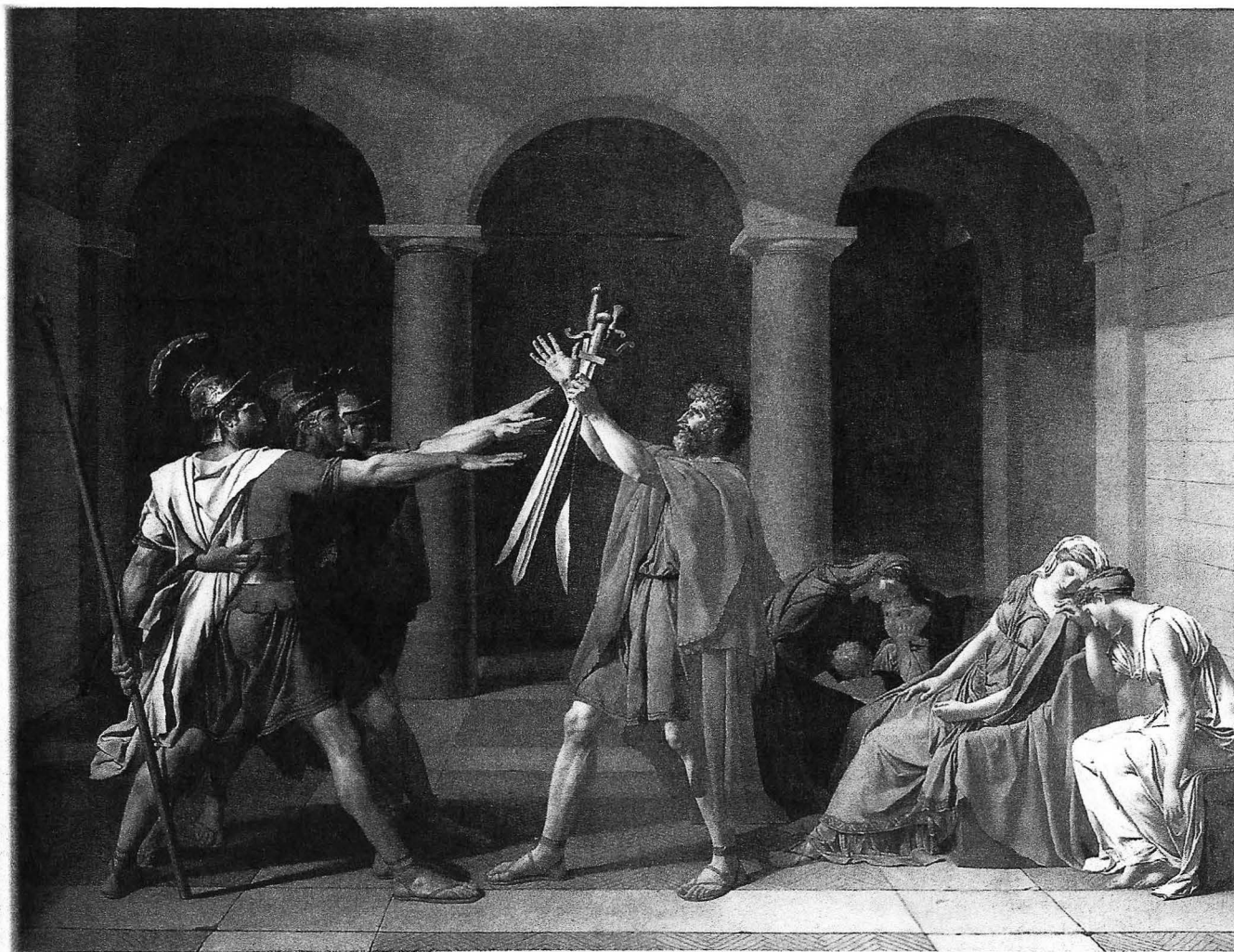
To increase our understanding even further, we may explore the biggest questions of all, through myths. A **myth** is a traditional story collectively composed by many members of a society. The creation of the world, sources of evil, the power of knowledge, and even the nature of reality may be explained through these grand expressions of the imagination. The *Star Wars* series, most comic books, and many types of performance art are inspired by myths.

Working with Multiple Images

In all forms of storytelling, multiple images can provide many advantages over an individual image. In Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (14.1), both the action and the emotion must be expressed within a single frame. To avoid mass slaughter, two warring Roman clans, the Horatii and the Curatii, have each agreed to send three warriors into a fight to the death. This heroic moment of self-sacrifice

is demonstrated by the three young Horatii warriors on the left. A tragic complication to this plan is borne by the wives of the warriors, who are huddled together in a triangular shape on the right. They are members of the opposing Curatii clan and will lose either their brothers or their husbands in the battle. The children in the background are caught in the middle.

Through skillful composition and careful selection of an emotionally charged moment in the narrative, David created a masterpiece that caused a sensation when it was first shown in 1786, and it continues to be studied today. The use of gesture, composition, and technique in this painting is stunning. Nonetheless, it is difficult to appreciate the painting fully or to understand the story without explanation. Employing only a single image, David had to rely on his audience for some knowledge of the event shown.



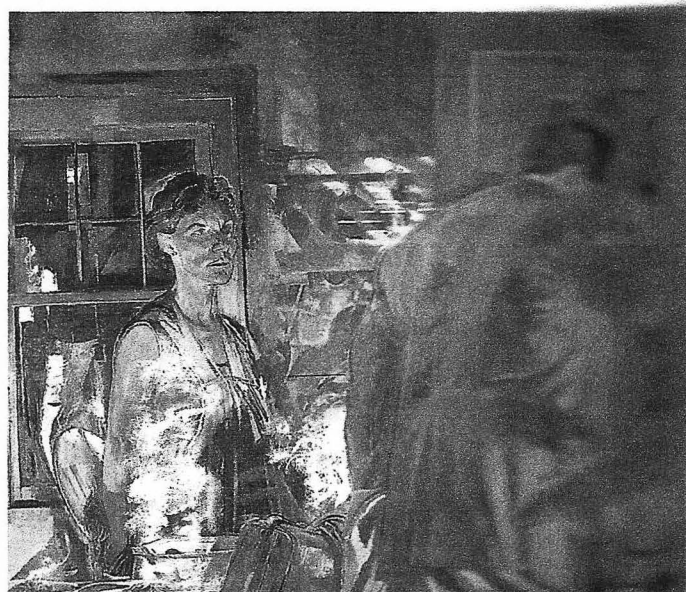
Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784–85. Oil on canvas, 14 ft × 10 ft 8½ in. (4.27 × 3.26 m).

By contrast, Jerome Witkin tells a story sequentially in the three paintings that constitute *Division Street* (14.2). Like David, he selected the colors, gestures, and actions most appropriate to the narrative and composed each frame with great care. Unlike *Oath of the Horatii*, however, *Division Street* requires little explanation. The argument in the first frame, the man's explosive departure in the second frame, and the angry woman in the third frame tell the story. This multiple-image narrative can speak for itself.

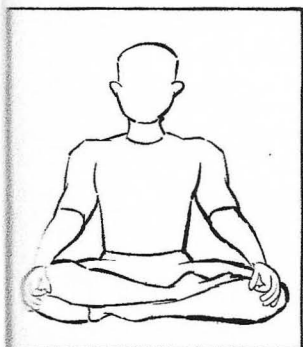
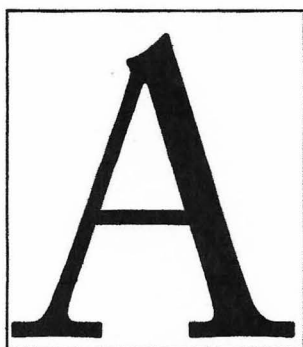
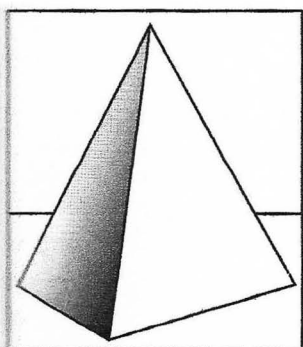
Multiple-Image Structures

In *Structure of the Visual Book*, Keith Smith describes three multiple-image structures commonly used by printmakers, photographers, and book artists.¹ A **group** is a collection of images that are related by subject matter, composition, or source. In figure 14.3, images of a pyramid, the letter *A*, a meditating man, and a pair of praying hands can be grouped by shape. Each is dominated by a triangle. The three individual illustrations in figures 14.4, 14.5, and 14.6 can be grouped by subject. All are part of the *Frog Folio*, a calendar produced by Dellas Graphics to showcase the work of contemporary illustrators. In a group, the order of the images is unimportant.

A **series** links multiple images together sequentially. Each image builds on the previous image and leads to the subsequent image. As a result, events are linked together like boxcars on a train. *Chance Meeting*, by Duane Michals (14.7 page 324), is a series of photographs. Like a short film, it tells a simple story. Simple narratives, such as fairy tales and fables, often use serial construction. Indeed, numerical repetition may be an essential part of the story. For example, when Goldilocks enters the house of the three bears, she samples three bowls of porridge. One is too hot, the second is too cold, the third is just right. She tries sitting on the three chairs, with a similar result. Finally, when she decides to take a nap, she finds the first bed too hard, the second too soft, and the third just right. As a story for children, "Goldilocks" and other such tales are simple and straightforward. Flashbacks, crosscutting, and other narrative complexities are avoided.



14.2 Jerome Witkin, *Division Street* [A Story Told in 3 Panels] 1984–85. Oil on canvas, triptych. Top panel 75 × 53 in. (190.5 × 134.6 cm), middle panel 81½ × 63 in. (206.2 × 160.0 cm), panel 87 × 63 in. (221.3 × 160.0 cm).



14.3 Grouping by shape.



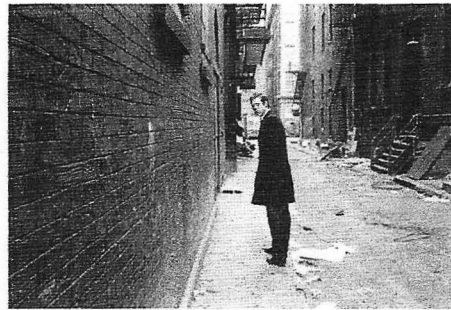
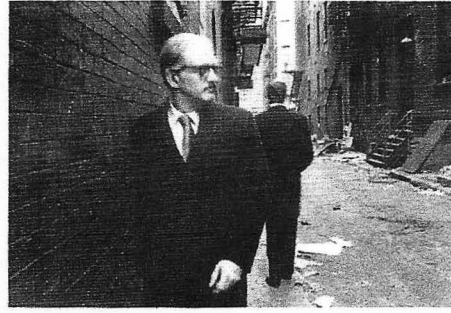
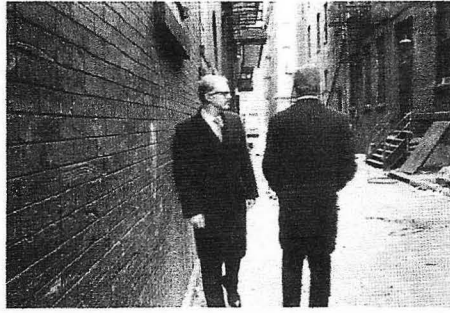
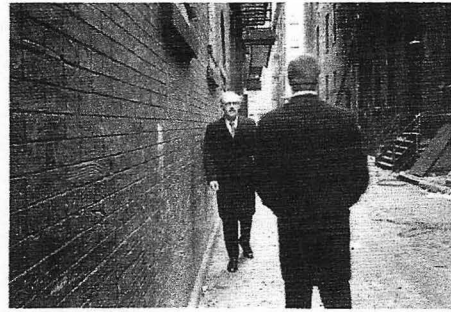
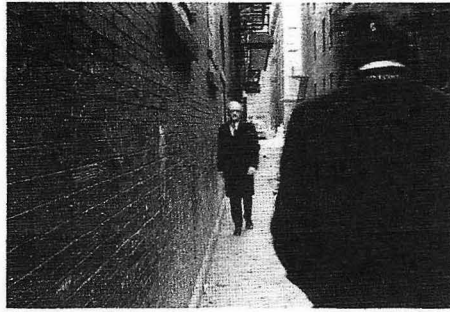
14.4 Bart Forbes, *Landmark*, 1999. Oil on canvas, 14 × 19 in. (35.6 × 48.3 cm).



14.5 Charles Santore, Cover of *William the Curious, Knight of the Water Lilies*, 1997. Watercolor, front cover 9 × 12 in. (22.8 × 30.5 cm).



14.6 Murray Tinkelman, *The Frog Jumps over the Moon*. Colored ink crosshatch, 9 × 12 in. (22.9 × 30.5 cm).



14.7 Duane Michals, *Chance Meeting*, 1969. Six prints, each $4\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ in. (12.4 × 8.3 cm).

As defined by Smith, a **sequence** is the multiple-image structure used by most popular filmmakers and comic book artists. In a sequence, multiple images are organized by *cause and effect*. In a simple sequence, action two is caused by action one. In a complex sequence, there may be a considerable delay between the cause and the effect. Actions five, six, and seven may all be caused by action one. Rather than film a simple line of boxcars in a train, we may now move among the cars, showing the conductor napping, two passengers playing cards, the engineer steering, and another passenger reading. These human actions may be combined with images of the landscape through which the train is traveling, the setting sun, or even images of the construction of the original train track. To understand a sequence, viewers may have to mentally connect many fragments of information.

From Scene to Screenplay

With a run time of an hour or more, a film or a television show is constructed from many sequences, each building the story using cause and effect. Let's analyze one example.

Jeremy and Angela are spending their honeymoon on the Orient Express. On the third morning of the trip, they awake to the sound of drunken singing in the adjoining cabin. Angela wants to confront the revelers, while Jeremy cautions her against getting involved. They begin to argue. Angela accuses Jeremy of indifference, while Jeremy says Angela is overreacting. Now focused on their own quarrel, they ignore the singers and instead continue their argument over breakfast in the dining car. Finally, Angela threatens to leave. Jeremy ridicules her threat, saying that she isn't

capable of traveling alone in a foreign country. Angela punches Jeremy in the nose. Jeremy then shoves his grapefruit into her face. Their fight disrupts the dining car. At the next stop, the conductor throws both of them off the train. Sitting in a deserted train station, they both begin to laugh at their ridiculous response to the drunken singers.

As described in *Story*, by Robert McKee, the **beat** is the most basic element in a story.² A beat is an exchange of behavior based on action and reaction. There are six beats in this story.

1. Angela responds to the singers: "I am not going to listen to those drunken louts for one more minute!" Then Jeremy responds to Angela: "Oh, take it easy. Let's get some breakfast; I bet they will be asleep when we return."
2. As they walk to the dining car, Angela says to Jeremy: "You really don't care, do you? If someone punched you in the nose, you would just walk away." Jeremy responds to Angela: "Don't be such a hothead. There is no reason to get angry about every little thing."
3. Over breakfast, Angela retorts: "If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen! I suggest we split up at the next station." Jeremy responds: "Are you kidding? You wouldn't last a day on your own."
4. Angela punches Jeremy, who shoves his grapefruit into her face.
5. The conductor reacts by throwing both of them off the train.
6. Sitting on their suitcases in the empty station, they finally respond to the situation by laughing.

Beats build **scenes**. Scenes generally occur in a single space in continuous time. Scenes build sequences. In filmmaking, a sequence is made from a series of scenes, which generally increase in emotional impact. In this story, a minor disagreement escalates into a major battle. Each action results in a stronger reaction, culminating in the couple's ejection from the train. Sequences build **acts**. An act is an even longer sequential structure. The **screenplay**, which is the written blueprint for the film, is constructed from multiple acts.

Key Questions

STORYTELLING

- How many ways might you use storytelling to expand or enhance an idea?
- What are the advantages of a single-image narrative versus a multiple-image narrative?
- How can a series of increasingly powerful beats heighten emotion in your narrative?

BOUNDARIES

When just starting college, few of us have the time, money, or expertise necessary to write a screenplay or direct a film. However, we can use the same principles to develop storyboards, videos, and visual books.

Conceptual Boundaries

It is wise to begin by defining the conceptual breadth of an idea. An idea that is overly ambitious or ill defined will be impossible to communicate well.

You already have extensive experience with conceptual boundaries. Just consider the questions you face when planning a 10-page art history paper:

- *What is the topic?* What historical period interests you most? In a course devoted to Western art from the Renaissance to Impressionism, you have many excellent choices and a dazzling array of images. Choose a topic that is manageable and interesting.
- *How should the topic be approached?* If the paper is on Impressionism, you could
 - Analyze the work of a single artist, such as Mary Cassatt or Edgar Degas
 - Compare and contrast paintings by Cassatt and Degas
 - Explore the impact of photography on Impressionist painters

By focusing on one aspect of a complex topic, you can develop an effective research strategy and complete the paper on time.

Defining conceptual boundaries is equally important in sequential art. Just as Impressionism is too big a topic to explore thoroughly in a 10-page paper, so reality is too vast to record fully in a 10-minute video. The following questions can help you define the conceptual frame of an artwork:

- *What to see?* Start with an interesting and easily accessible site. Explore several of the buildings on campus, then select one and begin your research. Find out the history of the building, look for distinctive architectural details, and find out what happens each day in the building.
- *When to see it?* Each time of day is distinctive, both visually and emotionally. How does the building look at sunset? What is its appearance at midnight? Select the moments in time that are charged with meaning, then watch closely.
- *And then what happens?* To answer this question, you must become a storyteller.

Developing a Story

In 1908, the White Star Line began construction of three identical Atlantic ocean liners. The *Olympic* was launched in 1910; the *Titanic* was launched in 1911; the *Gigantic* was never completed. The *Titanic* struck an iceberg during her maiden voyage and sank on April 15, 1912. She had lifeboat capacity for 1,178 people; there were 2,201 on board. The *Californian*, less than 10 miles away, did not respond to her distress signals. The *Carpathia*, 58 miles away, sped to the scene. Arriving four hours later, *Carpathia* rescued 711 people from the freezing lifeboats. The *Olympic*, *Titanic*'s sister ship, provided reliable service until she was scrapped in 1937.

These are the basic facts. No narrative, however, is limited to facts. Even a newspaper reporter must make choices about the organization of facts and determine the most important aspects of a story. Fiction offers even more options. Using a familiar journalistic device, let's list a few basic questions:

- *Whose story is it?* That of ship designer Thomas Andrews, who perished? Of J. Bruce Ismay, director of the White Star Line, who survived? Of the captain of the *Carpathia*, who became a hero? Of the captain of the *Californian*, who was reviled?

- *When should the story begin and end?* We know that the iceberg was spotted at 11:40 P.M. and that the collision occurred soon after. A storyteller, however, can start at any point in time. How does the story change when we begin with initial planning of the "unsinkable" ship? What happens when we start the story just as a survivor comes to consciousness after being rescued?
- *Where does the story occur?* Each cabin, deck, and lifeboat contains its own specific characters and its own particular story.
- *Why did the tragedy occur?* Was the captain pressured to complete the crossing in record time, causing him to increase the ship's speed, despite the danger? Was faulty construction the cause?
- *What is the story really about?* Courage? Arrogance? Injustice? Sixty-two percent of the 325 first-class passengers survived, while only 25 percent of the 706 third-class passengers survived. Whereas the sinking itself is the most obvious event, this tragedy contains many stories.

Knowing where to start the story is essential. If the story is devoted to the construction of the ship and the arrival of the passengers, the most dramatic events (the sinking itself, the rescue, and the inquiry into the cause) may be lost.

Emotional Boundaries

In theater and performance art, communication often depends on a connection between the imaginary world on stage and the tangible world of the audience. This was demonstrated beautifully in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, performed by Syracuse Stage in 1999. The play explores a range of cultural conflicts between the native Yoruba population of Africa and a group of British colonizers. The king has died, and the king's horseman, a powerful leader in his own right (14.8), must commit suicide so that he can guide the king in the world beyond life. Attempts by the British government to stop this ritual are disruptive and tragic.

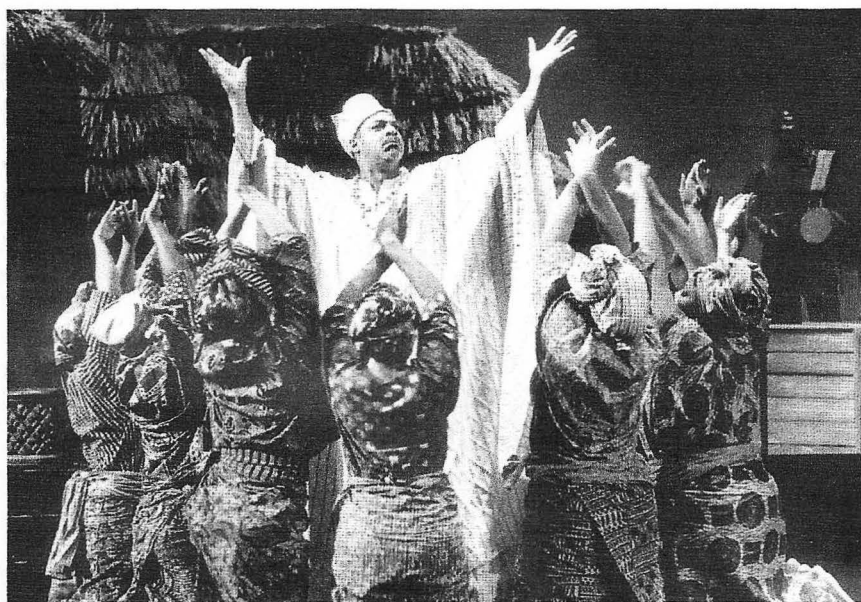
To feel the full impact of the event, the audience must emotionally connect to the Yoruba world, which

revolves around a village market. As we enter the theater, a dramatically lit stage piled with fruit, colorful baskets, and bolts of fabric invites us into this world.

One by one, seven female actors enter, assume the poses of various vendors, then freeze. The play begins with the sound of drumming coming from behind the audience. As the women become animated and the market comes to life (14.9), we are enveloped in the Yoruba world. Additional actors sing and dance down the aisles, finally joining the company on stage.

Establishing an emotional connection between the image and the audience is even more important in filmmaking. When we see a play, the entire stage is visible and each member of the audience frames the scene a bit differently. In a film, the image is created by a flickering beam of light rather than by a live actor. The film frame is defined by the director. By using a close-up, the director can place the actor directly in front of us. A distance shot pushes the actor away, reducing the emotional connection.

14.8 Scene from *Death and the King's Horseman*, 1999. Performed by Syracuse Stage.



14.9 Scene from *Death and the King's Horseman*, 1999. Performed by Syracuse Stage.

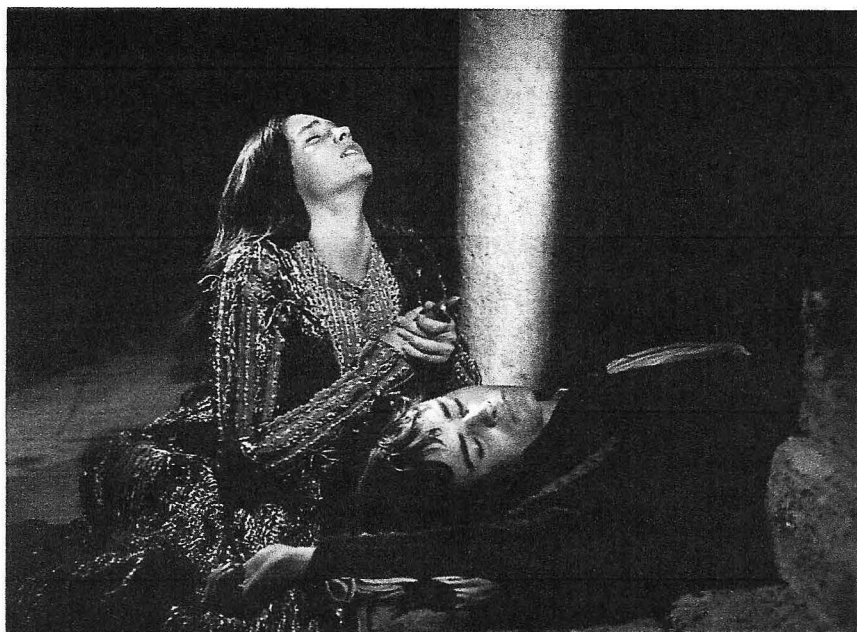


Style

In a sense, the style of an artwork provides another boundary. **Style**, the way in which filmic elements are selected and arranged, determines the overall ambience and can help indicate historical setting. Any story can be told in many ways. Three cinematic interpretations of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* provide a striking example of the importance of style. Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (14.10) is closest to the written play in style and interpretation. There is some editing of the original text, but the lines spoken were written by Shakespeare. While the musical score is a distinctly modern interpretation of Renaissance music, the beautiful settings, opulent costumes, and graceful dancing that fill the screen are based on historical models.

West Side Story (14.11) offers a very different interpretation of the story of Romeo and Juliet. Set in New York City in the 1950s, this film uses warfare between rival gangs to create the tragedy, rather than the familiar conflict between the Capulets and the Montagues. While the story is based on Shakespeare's play, the dialogue is distinctly American. The spirit and emotion of the original were retained, but the dialogue, setting, and specific actions are modern. Even the characters have new names, as Romeo becomes Tony, the leader of the Polish Jets, and Juliet becomes Maria, affiliated with the Puerto Rican Sharks.

An unusual combination of these two sensibilities is found in *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* (14.12). Now set in contemporary California as a struggle between the skinhead Montagues and the leather-clad Capulets, the film begins with a prologue delivered from a television screen by a newswoman. The words of Shakespeare are often delivered as a scream, and familiar characters are transformed in amazing ways. For example, when we first meet Mercutio, he is wearing high heels, a silver-sequined mini-skirt with a halter top, and a white wig. The words of Shakespeare have been retained, but the setting, characters, and action have been shifted to create a bizarre contemporary variation on a sixteenth-century play.



14.10 Franco Zeffirelli, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1968. Romeo and Juliet.



14.11 Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, *West Side Story*, 1961. Tony and Maria.



14.12 Baz Luhrmann, *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, 1996.

Key Questions

BOUNDARIES

- How many ways can you “frame” your story?
- Of these options, which set of boundaries will provide the best balance between focus and richness? Too tight a boundary may result in a constricted story, while too loose a boundary may result in chaos.
- How important is an emotional connection to your audience? How can such a connection be created?
- How many stylistic variations are possible within the framework you have set?
- Of these variations, which style will result in the strongest story?

CAUSALITY

Every story is constructed using a chain of events. In traditional narrative, the first event causes the second, which results in the third, and so on until the conclusion is reached. This chain of events is called **causality**. As in a crossword puzzle, the storyteller presents us with a series of clues, which we construct into meaning.

When the relationship between cause and effect is clear, the puzzle is easy to solve. When there is an extended delay between cause and effect, or when relationships among events seem arbitrary or irrational, the solution becomes much more elusive.

Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog), by Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel, presents such a puzzle. A quarrel between two lovers is presented through a bizarre sequence of illogical events. As the film opens, a man smoking a cigarette calmly sharpens a straight razor. A sliver of cloud passes across the full moon. The man grasps a woman's face (14.13) and slits her left eye with the razor. He then bicycles down the street wearing a nun's uniform. The uninjured woman welcomes him to her apartment. Ants crawl out from a hole in his hand. A severed hand appears on the street below. A crowd gathers. A policeman gives the severed hand to a woman,



14.13 *Un Chien Andalou*. Woman's eye being slit.



14.14 *Un Chien Andalou*. Mule's head on piano.



14.15 *Titanic*. Young Rose preparing to jump.



14.16 *Titanic*. Elderly Rose at ship's railing.

who places it in a box. The crowd disperses. The woman, still standing in the street, is then hit by a car.

As the film continues, the man harnesses himself to a piano filled with slaughtered mules (14.14), shoots a double image of himself, and strolls along a beach with the woman, collecting and then discarding debris. While these two characters dominate the story, the film as a whole is as mysterious and disturbing as a surrealist painting.

In contrast, a series of very clear cause-and-effect relationships fuels the lovers' quarrel in James Cameron's *Titanic*. The film begins with a prologue showing a contemporary expedition to salvage a precious diamond from the sunken wreck. Rose, an elderly woman who survived the disaster, then describes the voyage she remembers. Through her memories, we

meet the primary characters. Young Rose is a pampered society woman betrothed to the rich and arrogant Cal. Jack is an independent but impoverished artist who has won his passage back to America in a poker game.

Conflicts between Cal and Rose are apparent from the start. Rose is intelligent and strong-willed, with a love of art and ideas. Cal is arrogant and domineering; he demands obedience. Rose feels trapped, and, in despair, she climbs over a railing on the ship and prepares to jump (14.15). Jack saves her. The resulting romance develops through a sequence of cause-and-effect events and reaches a climax with a battle between Cal and the lovers on the sinking ship. Rose survives, and in a classic **denouement**, or summation, the film ends as the elderly Rose again climbs a ship's railing and flings a diamond back into the sea (14.16). Beautifully filmed and carefully edited, the three-hour film easily sustains our interest. In this case, the traditional narrative structure served the director's purpose. There is no ambiguity: the actions and emotions of all of the characters are shown clearly.

Each film has its own purpose and its own power. *Un Chien Andalou* is suggestive, rather than descriptive; mystery is an essential part of its meaning. *Titanic* gains meaning from the escalating conflict between Cal and Rose. In each case, the director made the right choice for the film content.

Key Questions

CASUALTY

- How rational is the chain of events in your story?
- When is rationality needed, and when is an irrational structure the right choice?
- What starts the chain of events? How does the chain of events end?
- How do the beginning and the ending contribute to the overall meaning of your story?

CHARACTER-DRIVEN NARRATIVE

We strongly identify with the trials and tribulations of others. As a result, character-driven narratives that are biographically based can be especially engaging. *Citizen Kane*, commonly included in lists of the greatest American films, is a classic example of this approach.

The Opening Sequence

Because most narratives are so dependent on the interplay between cause and effect, the first image that is shown substantially affects each subsequent action. As a result, many directors use the opening sequence to create a sense of anticipation that will pull the viewer into the story.

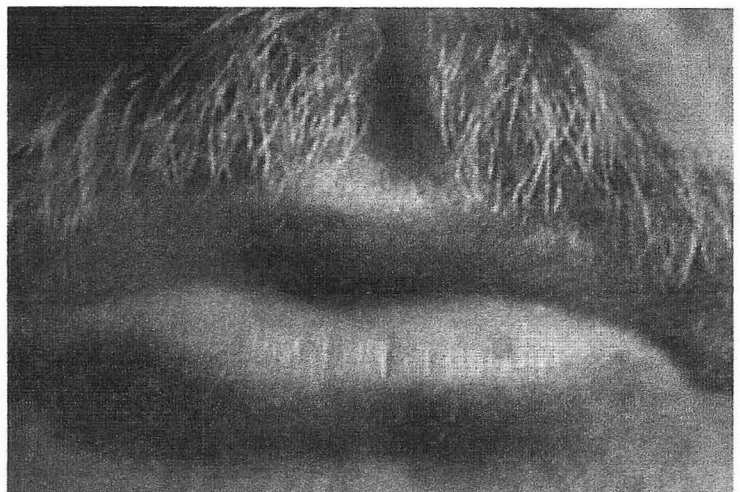
Citizen Kane actually uses three opening sequences to set the story in motion. Each builds on the previous sequence, creating a powerful domino effect. From the very beginning, we are swept into a complex story.

In the first opening, we see the dim silhouette of a castle behind a gate dominated by a “No Trespassing” sign. Through a series of dissolves, we move in closer (14.17), accompanied by slow, ominous music. As the music reaches a climax, a light in a window blinks off. The camera zooms in on a glass globe containing a tiny cabin in a snowy landscape. In an extreme close-up, we now see a man’s lips move (14.18) as he whispers the word “rosebud.” The globe falls to the floor and shatters. A nurse enters the distorted room and, after taking his pulse, pulls a sheet over the face of the man. Charles Foster Kane is dead.

The second opening is dramatically different in style, narration, and pacing. It is a newsreel, showing the major events in Kane’s life (14.19). All the basic information about the man is presented through the narrator’s brisk voice-over: Kane’s fortune came from a Colorado gold mine, he was a powerful newspaper editor, he had an affair with a shopgirl, and he failed in his attempt to be elected governor. This sequence presents the facts of his life but misses the meaning. A



14.17 Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*. Castle gate.



14.18 *Citizen Kane*. Kane's lips.



14.19 *Citizen Kane*. Newsreel.

reporter named Thompson is sent to solve the mystery, to determine who, or what, “rosebud” was.

We get closer to Kane in the third opening. Thompson begins his search at the Thatcher library, a forbidding place of echoing rooms and silent sentries. Walter Thatcher was both Kane’s guardian and his nemesis. As Thompson reads Thatcher’s journal, the words dissolve into a snowy scene in Colorado. When the scene ends, young Charlie is taken from his parents to begin his new life in Chicago. Each of the openings tells us more about Kane, and each expands the sense of anticipation.

Conflict

Inner conflict or conflicts between characters often generate the cause-and-effect relationships on which a narrative is built. *Citizen Kane* relies on both types of conflict. The pivotal mystery, which is set in motion by Kane’s death, is reinforced when Thompson is given his assignment to “find rosebud: dead or alive.” Who was Kane, and why was “rosebud” so important to him? As the story unfolds, we are offered a wide variety of opinions.

1. In *News on the March*, Kane is called a communist by Thatcher, a fascist by a man in a labor rally, and finally “an American” by Kane himself.
2. The Thatcher diaries, read by Thompson and shown in close-ups on the screen, include a confrontation between the newspaperman and the banker. Thatcher is appalled by Kane’s support for the working class and points out that, as a capitalist, Kane has much to lose if reforms occur. Here, Kane defines himself more emphatically: “You don’t realize that you’re talking to two people. As Charles Foster Kane, who has two thousand, six hundred and thirty-one shares of Metropolitan Transfer, I sympathize with you. Charles Foster Kane is a dangerous scoundrel; his paper should be run out of town. . . . On the other hand, I am the publisher of the *Inquirer*. As such, it is my duty to see that decent, hardworking people are not robbed blind by a bunch of money-mad pirates.” Kane clearly realizes that his motivations are contradictory. Welles uses a series of increasing close-ups to demonstrate the increasing tension between Kane and Thatcher (14.20–14.22).



14.20 *Citizen Kane*. Kane addresses Thatcher jovially.



14.21 *Citizen Kane*. Kane becomes agitated.



14.22 *Citizen Kane*. Kane is enraged.

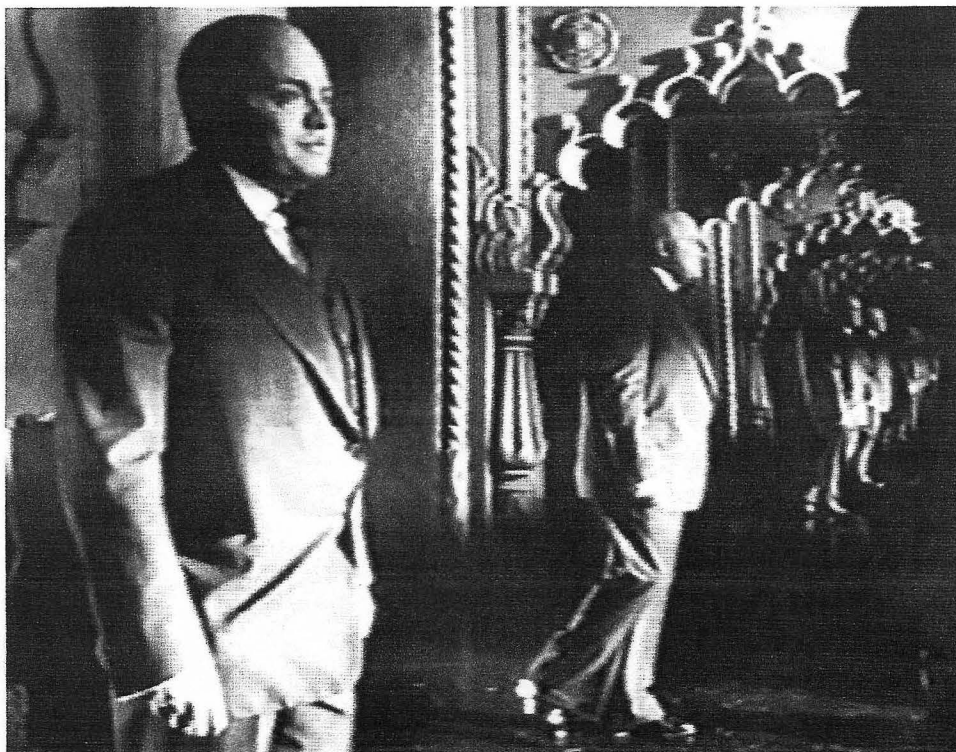
3. Thompson next visits Bernstein, Kane's business manager. His memories reveal a critical aspect of Kane's character. With the publication of his first edition of the *Inquirer*, Kane inserts a "Declaration of Principles" pledging honest reporting and support for the working man. For Bernstein, Kane was a man of principles.
4. Leland, once Kane's best friend, offers quite a different assessment of the man. Kane, he says, "wasn't a brutal man—he just did brutal things." Kane "never had a conviction, besides himself." Kane "never actually gave you anything—he just left you a tip." At the end of the interview, Leland offers a more compassionate assessment: "He did everything for love. All he ever wanted was love. He just didn't have any to give."
5. Two final interviews complete our picture of Kane. His former wife, Susan, focuses on Kane's attempt to transform her into an opera singer. Susan is initially excited by this prospect but is soon overwhelmed by the gap between her modest ability and the demands of the profession. It is only after she attempts

suicide that Kane allows her to end her singing lessons. Raymond, the butler, offers a final memory. When Susan finally walks out on him, the elderly Kane awkwardly lunges around her bedroom, ferociously destroying mirrors and hurling books to the floor. He stops only when he picks up the snow globe seen at the beginning of the film, and for the second time in the film, he utters the word "rosebud." He then departs, endlessly mirroring himself as he walks through his castle (14.23).

While the mystery is revealed to the audience at the end of the film, Thompson never does learn the meaning of "rosebud." Nonetheless, the memories of Kane's associates have deepened his understanding of a complex and contradictory character and provided us with a remarkable film.

The Closing Sequence

Especially with a mystery story, the closing sequence is as important as the opening sequence. A powerful closing can reveal an elusive truth, resolve outstanding conflicts, pose a question, or hammer home an important point.



14.23 *Citizen Kane*. Mirror.

NONNARRATIVE

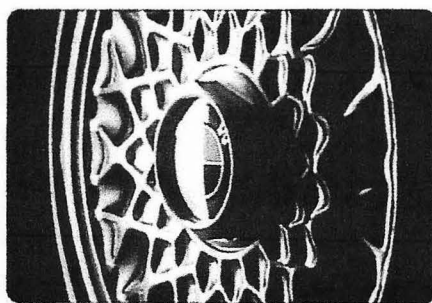
Titanic is a familiar type of popular film. It tells a fictitious story, based on a series of actions and reactions. The opening and closing sequences provide an effective framework for the story of Rose, Jack, and Cal. The characters are believable, and the plot is plausible.

Many forms of sequential art, however, are nonnarrative in structure. For example, the elegant contours and gleaming chrome of an expensive car provide both the form and the content in figure 14.32. There is no story: viewers are simply shown a series of beautiful close-ups. Evocative artworks of this kind often require more audience participation and encourage an open-ended response.

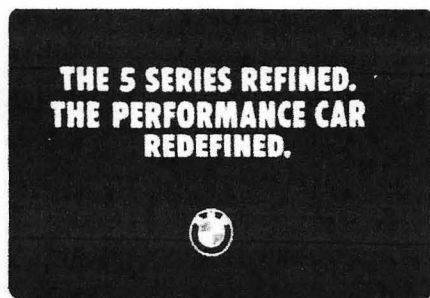
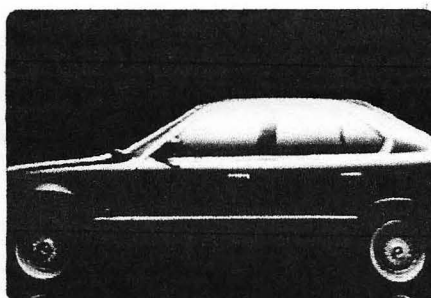
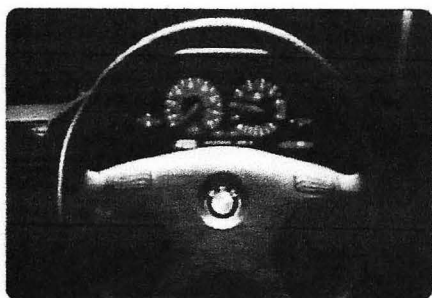
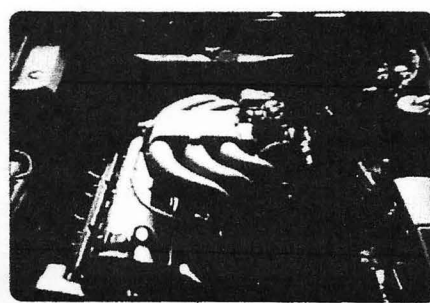
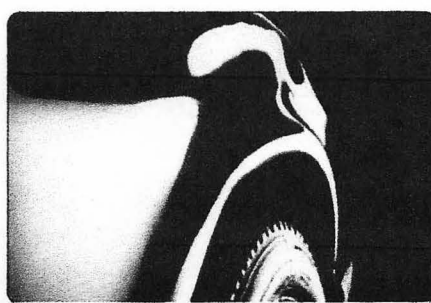
Three common approaches to nonnarrative are the categorical approach, the rhetorical approach, and the abstract approach. A **categorical** approach is based on the exploration of a single concept, action, or emotion. *Giving Fear a Proper Name*, a visual book by Susan Kae Grant, uses text from a diary to explore fear. Contained within a clear Plexiglas box, the book itself is like a fet-

ish. Handmade paper and inserted objects cause the book to open on its own, and the tiny toy revolver that dangles from a bookmark string simultaneously suggests self-protection and self-annihilation.

This catalogue of terror begins with kainophobia, the fear of change (14.33). From the diary, we learn that Grant has moved to Detroit, a profoundly foreign environment for her. On the first page of a double-page spread, she writes of "moving forward looking backward . . . I can never say good-bye." On the facing page, she is shown in profile, facing left, with her face pierced by straight pins and accompanied by a tiny compass and a plastic groom, suggesting a wedding cake. Topophobia, the fear of place, comes next. Grant now writes that she "stares in disbelief out smashed vacant beauties/violet oppressive depression surrounds me/people are angry, filled with hate." Her face in the photograph has now become a target. Eremophobia, the fear of solitude, follows. A close-up of her ear is shown, pierced by pins, while a plastic



[MUSIC]



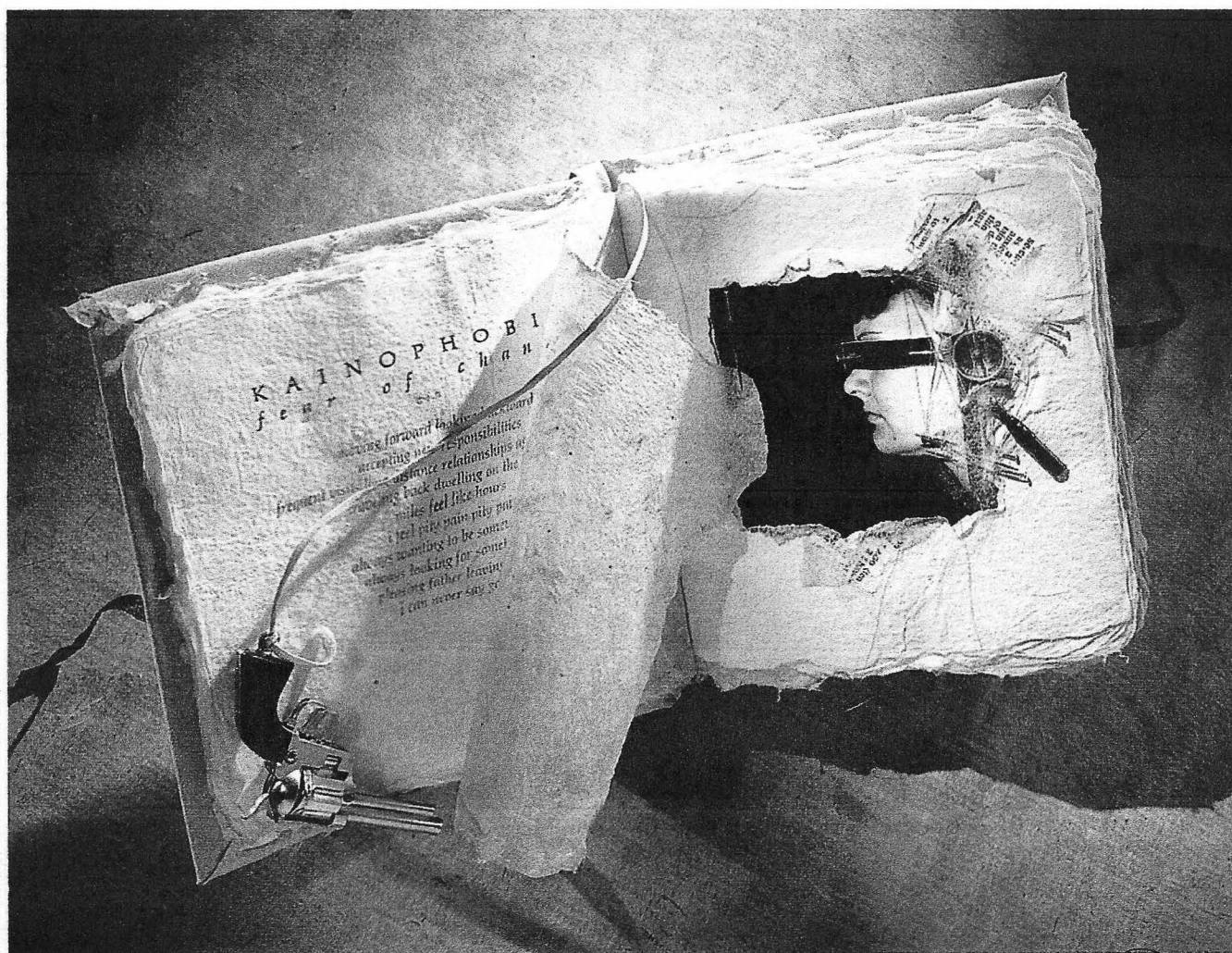
14.32 Agency: WCRS Mathews Marcantonio, London. Production: Park Village Productions, London. Music Production: Jeff Wayne Music, London. Details: TV, 60 seconds, color. First appearance: June 3, 1988. Country: England. Language: English. Advertiser's Supervisor: Martin Hainge. Account Supervisor: Hugh Smiley. Creative Director: Alfredo Marcantonio. Art Director: Paul Garret. Agency Producer: Simon Wells. Production Company Producer: Chris Harvey. Production Company Director: Roger Woodburn. Cameraman: Joe Coe. Lighting Director: Keith Goddard. Editor: Patrick Moore. Music Composer: Trevor Jones.

toy phone dangles like an earring. The book continues, with pages devoted to the fear of sleep, fear of being alone, fear of being observed, and so forth. In each case, increasingly painful words accompany a photographic self-portrait of some kind. The book ends with the fear of infinity. Now in profile facing right, Grant is accompanied by a pair of dice and a map of Texas, which will become her new home. Using fear as a category, then relentlessly exploring various types of fear, Grant transformed her personal experience into powerful communication.

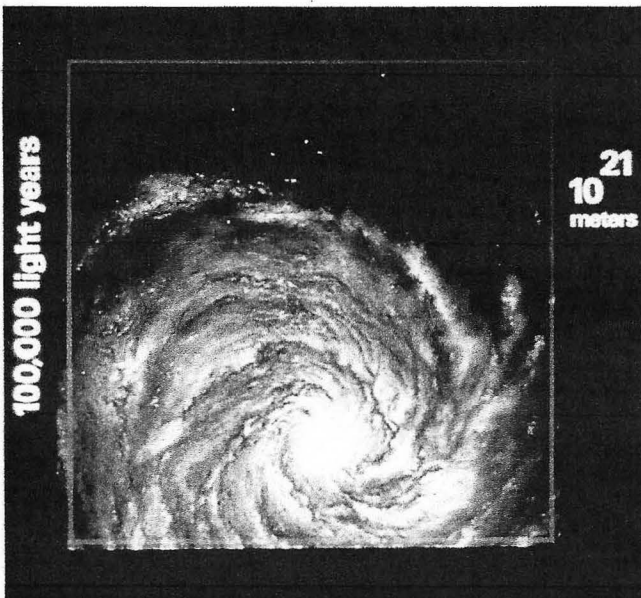
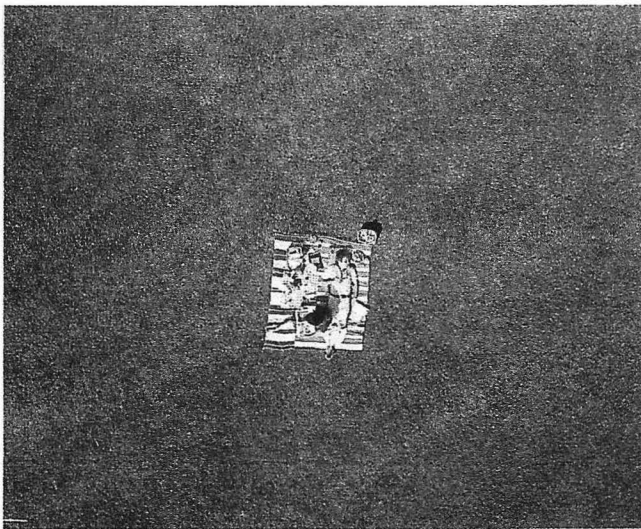
In a rhetorical approach, sequential images are used to present an argument. One example is *Powers of Ten*, by Charles and Ray Eames (14.34). This 9½-minute film provides an elegant exploration of "the relative size of things in the universe." The

central image is framed by a dark border, which includes information on the spatial position of each shot on the right and its numerical equivalent on the left. Beginning with a shot of a man asleep in a park, the camera gradually moves out to the farthest reaches of the known universe. Physicist Philip Morrison provides the narration, describing the meaning of the image at each step.

The process is then reversed, and the speed is greatly accelerated. Returning to the sleeping man, the camera now moves through his skin, into his blood, down to a cell, and finally into an atom in the man's right hand. The beautiful images entice us, while the mathematical narration teaches us. Moving from astrophysics to nuclear physics, this film presents an analysis of the distance between the largest and smallest spaces known.



14.33 Susan Kae Grant, *Kainophobia, Fear of Change*, from *Giving Fear a Proper Name: Detroit*, The Black Rose Press, 1982–85. Edition of 15, printed letter press with silver prints. Mixed mediums, handmade paper, simulated bulletproof case, 5 × 5 in. (12.7 × 12.7 cm).



14.34 Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of Ten*, 1977. Film frames.

Words for the World, by Ed Hutchins, presents a social argument using equally simple means. By filling a small metal pencil box with 16 special pencils, he makes a plea for tolerance and peace. A map of the world is printed on the top of the box. Various texts are printed on the pencils, in languages ranging from Arabic to Zulu, each accompanied by an English translation. The phrases are simple: "It doesn't hurt to listen." "The time is always right for justice." "We all live under the same sky." The message, however, is compelling. What words will we write with these pencils? What words can we say to each other? Hutchins is promoting a change in behavior rather than knowledge of the cosmos.

Finally, sequential art may be purely abstract. In a well-designed book or film, changes in color, shape, texture, and movement can provide all the information needed for a compelling piece. *Blacktop*, another experimental film by Charles and Ray Eames, provides one example. An outdoor basketball court has been washed. As the residue is rinsed away, the film records the movement of soap bubbles and water over the asphalt surface. The delicate Bach harpsichord music that is used as the sound track suggests that this act of washing the asphalt is as elegant as a Balanchine ballet. And in the hands of these inventive filmmakers it is.

Key Questions

NONNARRATIVE

- Create rough storyboards exploring categorical, rhetorical, and abstract approaches. Which of these nonnarrative strategies is best suited to the idea you want to express?
- What is the glue that holds your nonnarrative together: an alphabet (as in *Giving Fear a Proper Name*), mathematics (as in *Powers of Ten*), or some other unifying force?
- When using an abstract approach, what aspect(s) of your subject will you accentuate?

SUMMARY

- Storytelling is one of the most ancient and effective forms of communication. Stories can increase self-awareness, provide inspiration, supply information, and encourage understanding.
- Multiple-image structures can be used to express complex ideas using narrative and nonnarrative approaches.
- The group, series, and sequence are the multiple-image structures most commonly used by printmakers, photographers, and book artists.
- The beat, scene, sequence, and act are used by filmmakers and playwrights to create screenplays.
- By establishing effective boundaries, we can develop more effective stories. Common questions include the following: Whose story is it? When should the story begin and end? Where does the story occur? Why did it happen? What is the underlying theme or message in the story?
- A change in style can substantially affect communication.
- Ideas and emotions can be communicated through a straightforward series of causes and effects or through a series of seemingly unrelated images.
- The opening and closing, personal perspective, and characters used can make or break a story.
- Television advertisements can present complete ideas in 15 seconds. Hard-sell, soft-sell, rational, emotional, serious, humorous, realistic, and exaggerated approaches are the most common strategies.
- Categorical, rhetorical, and abstract are common nonnarrative approaches.

KEY TERMS

abstract
acts
beat
categorical
causality
denouement

emotional (advertising)
exaggerated (advertising)
group
hard-sell (advertising)
humorous (advertising)
myth

rational (advertising)
realistic (advertising)
rhetorical
scenes
screenplay
sequence

series
serious (advertising)
soft-sell (advertising)
style
testimonial (advertising)

STUDIO PROJECTS

To apply the concepts from this chapter in the studio, check out the Projects page in the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/stewart4e. The following is a sample of the chapter-related assignments that are described in step-by-step detail.

Casuality and Duration. An introduction to narrative. *Countdown.* Exploring ways to compress, expand, and accelerate time.

Before and After. Understanding narrative implications of objects and interiors.

House of Cards. Exploring nonlinear narrative.

Launching the Imagination treats *design* as both a verb and a noun—as both a process and a product. Design is deliberate—a process of exploring multiple solutions and choosing the most promising option. Through an immersion in 2-D, 3-D, and 4-D concepts, students are encouraged to develop methods of thinking visually that will serve them throughout their studies and careers.

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TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES:

The **Online Learning Center** offers additional teaching and learning resources, such as studio projects for each chapter, at www.mhhe.com/stewart4e.

Launching the Imagination is available in a comprehensive volume or in split volumes containing either 2-D or 3-D design. Coverage of problem solving and creativity appears in all three volumes. This title is also available as an eTextbook on CourseSmart.

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