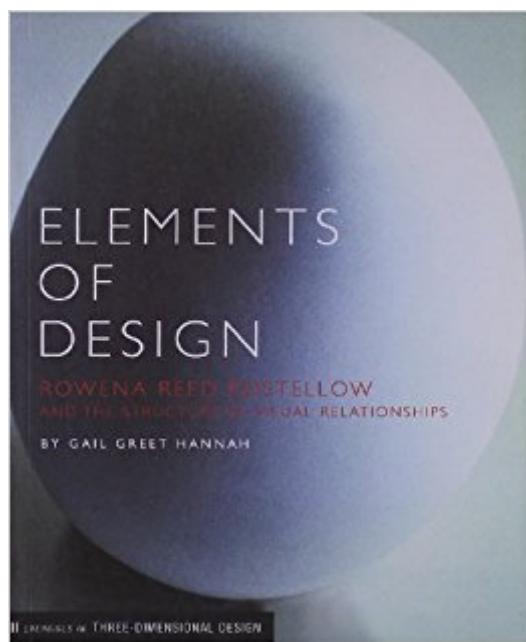


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# Elements Of Design: Rowena Reed Kostellow And The Structure Of Visual Relationships



## **Synopsis**

A hands-on book design students and designers alike will welcome. *Elements of Design* is a tribute to an exceptional teacher and a study of the abstract visual relationships that were her lifelong pursuit. Rowena Reed Kistell taught industrial design at Pratt Institute for more than fifty years and the designers she trained—and the designers they're training today—have changed the face of American design. This succinct, instructive, invaluable book reconstructs the series of exercises that led Kistell's students from the manipulation of simple forms to the creation of complex solutions to difficult design problems. It includes her exercises and commentary along with selected student solutions, and concludes with examples of work from former students who became leaders in the field, including such well-known figures as Tucker Viemeister, Ralph Applebaum, Ted Muehling, and many others.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"I feel so kindred to her process and philosophy. She poignantly illustrates that design is a life discipline. I wish I'd had the opportunity to study with her." --Interior Design "A loving tribute to an influential design instructor presented in lesson form. Part profile of a great instructor, part tutorial, this overview of Kistell's work remains a source of inspiration and coaching for future industrial designers." -- Design Issues "Any book about such an important figure deserves to be read again and again, especially its essays by such luminaries as Paola Antonelli and Judy Collins." -- Metropolis "An invaluable resource to students, designers and instructors, the book reconstructs

Kostellow's teaching methodology and exercises, which oncehelped shape American design and now resets the stage to do so again." --I.D. Magazine"This book collects, for the first time, her exercises on abstract visual relationships. The work is of interest to anyone involved in any aspect of design as it explores the fundamentals of form, structure, and space." --DesignLink

Gail Greet Hannah is a writer specializing in design and marketing. She was a friend of Rowena Reed Kostellow and worked with her to publish her teaching method. She lives in Cold Spring Harbor.

I am a Interior Design professor at a state college, and I have used this book in my Studio 1 for sometime. This book provides a really good way of introducing basic visual compositional theories to students, especially for beginning students. Some have said that the book is of no value and that it presents an old way of looking at product design. Well, that's just sad, and let me tell you why. There are two kinds of problems in the world, ill-defined and well defined.  $1+1=2$ : this is thought of as a well defined problem, the answer will always be 2. Design is subjective for the most part, and for a single problem there might be multiple answers, there are no perfect or no one answer for a design problem. Different people have provided methods of simplifying a design problem, making it easy for a designer to frame a design problem. One of the methods of framing and thinking about design problems are provided in this book. The idea of Dominant, Subdominant and Subordinant, is easy to understand for students. I believe that this book should be read by every design student (Interior Design, Architecture, PD, Industrial. Design etc.) Sure, it might not be of much value for a seasoned designer. Using this book with practical exercises is my recommendation.

The book content deserves 5 stars, but the publisher gets only 2. It's as if the publisher decided to shrink the book size by 20% to keep their costs down. The type is too small and not easy to read. Reading this book is like trying to read on a very crowded train. Not relaxing, difficult to focus on anything on the page. Good luck with that. I hope there are used books with larger type that exist.

It's a book that describes a design program introduction developed by Rowena Reed Kostellow, a remarkable North American designer in the twentieth century. The book is composed by six parts at which a biographical approach and a practical description is done in order to explain the development of the socalled "Foundation program". The biographic parts are based upon interviews done with many students and collaborators of Mrs. Rowena. I think the book

is good from the pragmatic point of view because of the complete series of exercises planned in a logic sequence, from the basics to the complex. Nevertheless, from the general point of view I guess it is a bit exaggerated the treatment given to the main character Mrs. Kostellow, as a kind of chosen one of the design, making by a parallel comparison, a stuff of mystic work of the design. Anyway I think this book have a great potential to be used as a constant source of inspiration and hint in the solution of design problems related with aesthetics issues.

To truly get the most out of this book, you need one of Rowena's dwindling number of students still left at Pratt teaching to stand over your shoulder. The exercises in this book can all produce amazing results in terms of beautiful abstract relationships but to "know" what is right or wrong with an object using this visual language really takes someone showing you what is wrong with a transition or how this proportion is too similar to that one or how this spacial relationship is not quite right. In the end, you need to know what is wrong in order to really be able to see what is right and it takes someone to show these things to you over and over again. The book is an excellent companion and record of Rowena's interesting and effective exercises, but it's difficult to use as a guide for someone not dialoguing with one of her former students and even that is challenging because each one delivers her gospel of 3D a little differently. Update: 02/12/2010 A couple more of Rowena's former students (Lenny Bacich and Dan November) have recently passed away. It's sad to see them go and I will always be reminded of them, and their visions of Rowena's legacy, when I return to this book.

This book provides a lot of great background information on Rowena Reed. The quality of the book and photos is excellent. The perhaps best and worst thing about this book depending upon your viewpoint is that about half of it is classroom exercises. They are all things that Rowena had her students do and is a great way to start actually doing instead of just reading. The reason why I say depends upon your viewpoint is because if you don't know or don't have the intention of doing the exercises it makes them useless. I believe that the exercises are great and if you are interested in more than just a history lesson give them a try. One catch is that there is no one to judge it after you are done, but it's better than not doing it at all.

This is a technical book that is an attempt to teach what RRK developed over a lifetime obsession with visual compositions. She did one thing, over and over, refining it over a long and productive career at Pratt, in Brooklyn. As such, I believe that it would best be used in the classroom, rather

than as a simple read for those who want to understand modern design. Being ignorant about issues in studio design - really doing it, rather than observing it like I do - I got a lot out of it. But I will need to refer to it and read through many more times to truly absorb the exercises. For what it is, the book is a masterpiece as an exercise in visual thinking and the method left its imprint on many of the greatest American designers from before WWII to the 1980s. Recommended, but for designers rather than design critics.

Good for beginners to dabble with

Great book new approach to design fundamentals and a great way to sketch in 3d and all aspects of aesthetic

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