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MCO450 – Visual Communications

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*(© Erica J Myers, 2016) Preparing to plunge into the Aegean Sea off the coast of Greece. This photograph encompasses the four visual cues. Color: The differences of the flesh tone, including the darkness of the ankles, where the water has moistened the skin, compared to the dry, ashen color of the upper calf. The hues between the aqua water and the tanned flesh. Even the hint of gold on the tips of the toenails. Form: The lines created by the sunlight under the water on the feet. The encircling of the ankles by the water line. The shape of the toes, heels, arches and legs. Depth: Depth in this photo is how clear the water is as it just barely covers the feet, yet more blue as it gets deeper. It is also the shadowing of the legs being apart. Movement: Movement is depicted by the encircling of the water around the ankles, the swirling of the light's reflection underneath the water on the feet, and the squiggly hues of the water to show the current of the water. Above all is the action of the photo, dipping the feet into the water indicates that the motion is plunging into the water itself.*

The four main types of visual cues are: color, form, depth and movement. "Light can intrigue, educate, and entertain, but nowhere is light so exquisitely expressed as through color." (Lester, Paul. Visual Communication: Images with Messages (p. 24). Lex Publishing. Kindle Edition.) Color is important because the myriad of hues and shades can bring objects not seen in black and white photography into view. Color can help distinguish many things about an object, person, or place. Lack of color could make things seem old and poor. Vibrant color can showcase youth and wealth. Heat can be expressed in colors. Most important about color is

the symbolism, such as red being passionate and blue being lonely. Take a lighting class and one will learn not to light anything with a green light, unless you want to infer that the person is sickly. Although green is supposedly calming, people often associate it with hospitals and health. Color can change the meaning of a visual presentation based on the viewer's perception of that color.

Form is when "the brain responds to another common attribute of images, which is the recognition of three types of forms: dots, lines, and shapes." (Lester, Paul. *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* (p. 32). Lex Publishing. Kindle Edition.) Form can also combine these elements and produce something that the brain will recognize, such as a pattern. It is human nature to find a face using shapes to depict a mouth and eyes. It is something that makes the visual message appear to have something familiar, or in common, with a recognition in the brain. A pizza in a octagon shape, instead of a circle, may trigger a recognition to, or a resemblance of, a stop sign. Form can combine sensing and selecting, to make something in that picture, artwork, advertisement seem familiar and connected to the viewer.

"Since perception is such a complicated combination of eye and brain properties, researchers have identified eight possible factors, used singly or in combination, that give viewers a sense of depth: space, size, color, lighting, textural gradients, interposition, time, and perspective." (Lester, Paul. *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* (p. 42). Lex Publishing. Kindle Edition.) Most viewers observe depth as space with the usage of shadows from a directional light source. Recently cellphones have implemented depth into cellphone photography, to match the photography from high-end DSLR cameras, by utilizing the bokeh feature. Bokeh blurs or distorts the background from the main subject of the photograph. Size can be used to make something appear farther or closer to the eyes. Color, especially in paintings, can distinguish a space, or distance, by mimicking the lighting pattern. For example, adding a tiny bit of black to a color and painting near the original hue can manipulate the brain into seeing a corner of a building or that an object is behind something in its shadow. In most photographs, depth is often perceived with the appearance or disappearance of light to create a distance, by creating a texture.

Movement is often the reason for photography. In paintings, movements can be perceived with a variety of textures, shades, and strokes. Even in cartoons and comics, movement can be achieved through the drawing of lines and sizes to depict speed and direction or proximity. "Recognizing movement is one of the most important traits in the survival of an animal." (Lester, Paul. *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* (p. 51). Lex Publishing. Kindle Edition.) Movement can symbolize danger, relaxation, satisfaction and depict immersion, extracting, and other physicality and sensation. It lets you know what action or reaction is taking place.

The combinations of these cues make visual communications affective by engaging the viewer to react.