

Dear Member,

Here are the results of our August competitions.

1. Theme competition - Movement

U3A Hillingdon Photo Group - August 24			
Photographer	Movement	Pos	Tot
Susan Madigan	Having Fun	1	12
Ian Brown	Preening Goose	2	9
Denise Buckingham	Running for the train	2	9
Steve Binysh	Skateboarding magic	2	9
Sue Finch	Tap Water	3	8
Brian Atkinson	Wizz kids.	3	8
Brian Hillier	Red 4 x 4	4	6
David Easton	The Chase is On	4	6
Susan Madigan	We have lift off	5	5
Sue Finch	Float Plane, Juneau	6	3
Andrew Longhurst	Flying Freya	7	2
Wendy Rogers	Rolling fog blocking the evening sunset.	7	2
Brian Atkinson	Action Barista	8	1
David Easton	Nearly blown away	8	1
Denise Buckingham	On the move	8	1
Ian Brown	Slow but Sure	8	1
Andrew Longhurst	Sunset on the Babbling Brook	8	1
Steve Binysh	Slow down too fast you gotta make the evening last		0
			84

2. Shot of the Month

U3A Hillingdon Photo Group - August 24			
Photographer	Shot of the Month	Pos	Tot
Ian Brown	Confusing the predators	1	9
Karol Schlachter	How GREEN is our waterway	1	9
Denise Buckingham	Painted Lady	1	9
Brian Atkinson	Waterfall on Skye	1	9
David Easton	Slow Horses	2	7
Susan Madigan	Walking on sea ice	2	7
Andrew Longhurst	Brimham Rocks Yorkshire	3	6
Brian Hillier	Low-tech Eclipse viewer	4	4
Steve Binysh	Playing the Stones at Folkestone	4	4
Kerol Schlachter	River Colne at Denham	4	4
Ian Brown	Cooling off	5	3
David Easton	Optimism	5	3
Brian Atkinson	Somewhere on the isle of sky	5	3
Margaret Dorigan	Henry Moore Sculpture at Kew	6	2
Margaret Dorigan	Lazy Summer Days	6	2
Sue Finch	Totem Pole, Juneau	6	2
Susan Madigan	At the edge of the world	7	1
Sue Finch	Alaskan Poppy, Juneau		0
Wendy Rogers	Bald Eagle on the "one sided" tree		0
Steve Binysh	Sharing is caring		0
			84

3. **Gestalt Theory - Why are some photos more popular**

I wanted to find out why some photos received more votes than the others, and I wondered if "Gestalt theory" might provide an answer.

Gestalt theory - Overview

Gestalt psychology is a school of thought that looks at the human mind and behaviour as a whole.

It suggests that structures, perceived as a whole, have specific properties that are different from the sum of their individual parts.

Founded by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka in early 20th-century Germany,

it helped shape modern ideas about perception, problem-solving, and how we make sense of the world.

Key Takeaways

- **Holistic Perception:** Gestalt psychology emphasizes that we perceive entire patterns or configurations rather than isolated elements. Our minds naturally organize sensory input into meaningful wholes.
- **Foundational Thinkers:** The movement was founded by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka in early 20th-century Germany. Their research challenged the idea that perception could be understood by analyzing parts alone.
- **Organizing Principles:** Gestalt theorists identified key laws of perception—such as proximity, similarity, closure, continuity, and figure-ground—that explain how we group and interpret visual information.
- **Practical Applications:** Insights from Gestalt psychology influence modern fields like design, visual arts, therapy, and cognitive psychology, guiding how we create and interpret patterns and layouts.
- **Enduring Influence:** Though developed over a century ago, Gestalt ideas continue to shape how psychologists and designers understand perception, problem-solving, and human experience as unified wholes.

So I took the following steps.

- In File Explorer, I copied the "Having Fun.jpg".
- Then opened the web browser "Google"
- Selected the option "Query Ai mode"
- Pasted the photo into the "Central panel, with a plus sign"
- What does Gestalt theory say about this photo called "Having Fun"

Then repeated the above for the other phoyo examples.

You may wish to do so with some of your photos.

3.1 Gestalt Theory - Having Fun - by Susan Madigan



Gestalt theory explains that your brain instantly groups the visual elements in this photo to perceive a single, energetic narrative of a girl having fun on a trampoline. Instead of seeing isolated patches of green grass, a floating person, and a black circle, your mind automatically organizes these pieces into a meaningful whole based on hardwired psychological principles. Here is how specific Gestalt principles apply to this image:

☀️ Core Gestalt Principles in Action

- **Figure-Ground Organization:** Your brain instantly separates the **jumping girl (the figure)** from the **lawn and bushes (the ground)**. Because she is in motion, sharply focused, and centered, she immediately becomes the primary focus of your attention.
- **Proximity and Continuity:** The girl is suspended directly above the oval trampoline. Even though there is physical empty space between them, your brain uses **proximity** to connect them instantly. The implied vertical trajectory creates a **continuous path of motion**, making it obvious she just bounced upward.
- **Law of Common Fate:** The girl's limbs are extended outward in a synchronized starburst jump. Because her hands, feet, and skirt are moving outward together from her center, they are perceived as a single, unified action of "celebration" or "joy."
- **Closure:** The trampoline is flush with the ground (an in-ground style). Even though the full depth of the pit beneath it isn't visible, your mind uses **closure** to fill in the missing data, understanding that it is a functional, bouncy structure.
- **Simplicity (Praganz):** Your mind eliminates complex visual clutter (like counting individual leaves on the bushes) and organizes the scene into the simplest, most direct interpretation possible: a child mid-jump, having fun in a backyard

3.2 Gestalt Theory - Preening Goose - by Ian Brown



Gestalt theory states that subconsciously processes visual elements into a unified, organized whole rather than seeing them as disconnected parts. When looking at this photo of a preening goose, your mind applies several specific psychological principles to instantly interpret the image:

1. Figure-Ground Relationship

- **The Principle:** Your brain instinctively separates a primary focal object (the figure) from its background environment (the ground).
- **Application:** The high-contrast, sharply focused goose and the bright water droplets instantly stand out as the **figure**, while the dark, blurry background water and riverbank recede as the **ground**.

2. Law of Proximity

- **The Principle:** Elements that are positioned physically close to one another are automatically grouped into a single collective unit.
- **Application:** Because the individual water droplets are densely packed right next to the goose's wings, your brain doesn't see thousands of separate floating dots. Instead, it groups them together into a **single, unified arc of splashing water**.

3. Law of Continuity (Good Continuation)

- **The Principle:** The human eye naturally follows lines, curves, and smooth, continuous paths rather than abrupt or jagged changes.
- **Application:** The trajectory of the water droplets forms a clear, sweeping arc. Your mind effortlessly tracks this smooth curve from the water surface up and around the goose, intuitively mapping out the **path of the splash**.

4. Law of Common Fate

- **The Principle:** Visual elements that appear to be moving together in the same direction or speed are perceived as a single group.
- **Application:** Although this is a frozen snapshot, the dynamic spray of water clearly radiates outward from the goose's body. Your brain perceives a **synchronized, explosive movement** because the droplets share a common path of action.

5. Law of Closure

- **The Principle:** When presented with an incomplete shape, the brain automatically fills in the missing gaps to perceive a complete, familiar form.
- **Application:** Parts of the goose's back and lower body are obscured by heavy spray and chaotic water ripples. Despite this missing visual information, your brain instantly fills in the blanks so you recognize the **entire shape of a whole goose**, rather than disjointed fragments of feathers and a head.

3.3 Confusing the Predators - by Ian Brown



Gestalt theory explains that the zebra's stripes disrupt a predator's visual processing by breaking down the core rules of perception, making it difficult to distinguish where one animal ends and another begins.

When zebras huddle tightly together like this, their patterns interact with the brain's organizational mechanisms:

Breaking the Core Gestalt Principles

- **Similarity & Proximity:** Naturally, our minds group items together that look alike (**Similarity**) and are physically close (**Proximity**). Because the black and white stripes across all the zebras are virtually identical, the predator's brain visually merges the individual animals into one massive, shifting texture rather than separate targets.

Continuity & Closure: The law of **Continuity** suggests that the eye flows naturally along lines and curves.

The intersecting, contrasting angles of the stripes create false paths and edges. This completely disrupts **Closure**, which is the brain's ability to easily outline and recognize a single, whole animal form.

The Confusion Effect and "Motion Dazzle"

In Gestalt terms, this visual breakdown causes a sensory bottleneck.

When a herd stands together or begins to move, it triggers an optical illusion known as **motion dazzle**.

The predator is flooded with conflicting motion signals, preventing them from judging the speed, direction, or exact boundaries of a single zebra.

3.4 How GREEN is our waterway - by Karol Schlacter



Gestalt theory says your brain organizes this complex image into a unified whole by using patterns, lines, and color grouping rather than focusing on separate leaves, dirt, or drops of water.

The photo provides a textbook example of how the mind instantly simplifies chaotic natural environments into a structured layout.

Gestalt Principles in Action

- **Law of Similarity (Color Grouping):** Your brain immediately links the solid chartreuse surface of the water with the rich green tree canopy. Because they share a vibrant green palette, you perceive the entire scene as a singular, unified ecosystem rather than separate elements of water and wood.
- **Law of Continuity (Leading Lines):** The concrete bank on the left and the parallel line of trees on the right create powerful paths that guide your eyes. Your brain assumes the waterway and the dirt path continue smoothly into the distance, far beyond the frame of the photo.
- **Figure-Ground Organization:** The massive, flat expanse of the green waterway serves as the primary "Figure" (or central subject) because of its striking color. The sky and the surrounding treeline recede into the background as the "Ground".

How Green is the Waterway?

The waterway is **completely carpeted in an intense chartreuse green.**

This striking visual effect is caused by a dense, unbroken layer of **duckweed** or a **surface algal bloom.**

It is so solid and vibrant that it creates a natural optical illusion, making the river surface look like a solid grassy lawn you could walk across.

5. A reminder of the dates for our next competition - :The River Thames"

- Entries by Midnight Sunday 20 Sep
- Votes by Midnigjht 26 Sep

6. Our next Group meeting will be on Monday 28 Sep
The presentation will be :The Photographic Triangle" by Gowan Clews.

Kind regards,
Brian Hillier
Photography Group Leader