

design::critique

Scout Books Cover Design Critique Guide

Overview ::

As we gather to critique each other's designs, consider the following questions, providing feedback to the group as appropriate. Remember to back up your opinions with *why* you think an aspect of the design works or needs improvement.

Project Objectives Reminder ::

A quick refresher of the project assignment and core objectives of this design project, directly from the project handout:

Assignment:

- Your assignment is to render both a front and back cover for a Scout Book to promote the VC program.

Objectives:

- **Creativity**—Designing for a design program is always hard. Create lots of thumbnail sketches of possible designs before committing to rendering one out more-fully. Push the boundaries of what you might normally create stylistically all while working towards a design that can positively represent the VC program. Being creative extends to the wording—what words or slogan best represent creativity and the VC program? Even though October is the month of Halloween, try to stay away from that theme as this design must work across all seasons.
- **Craft & Polish**—By keeping away from the computer and focusing on hand-rendered art, you might be pulled from your digital safety-net. Be OK with starting over or making mistakes. Create initial versions with pencil, inking them in after the design has settled. You will be able to tweak the final designs using a computer.
- **Following the Specs**—Design projects always have some sort of constraints or required format. Be sure to read the specifications listed below and work to ensure your artwork meets the requirements.

Critique Questions ::

- What do you think of the overall design?
- What works?
- What doesn't work?
- Is the imagery compelling, has focus, and tells a story?
- If type is used, does it work well? Is there a strong use of hierarchy and font style variation?
- What would you change in the design?
- Any other comments/recommendations?

About Critique ::

Assessment is part of designing: A designer needs to determine the value or significance of what he or she has created. In design, there is a bottom line: design must communicate an intended message to its audience, usually a mass audience. For this reason, it is imperative that a designer's work is on track, intelligible, and communicative.

Self-Critique During Concept Development ::

Here are six simple, general self-critique checkpoints during the concept development phase:

1 } Define the problem

- Restate the problem in your own words. Namely, what are you being asked to do?
- Did you solve the problem?
- Did you go astray? If so, how can you get back on track?
- What is your concept(s)?
- Explain how you solved the problem.

2 } How many sketches did you do?

Try to push your ideas. Perhaps your first sketches are intelligent; however, the point of doing many versions is to push your design-mind further—to stretch your imagination and problem-solving capabilities. There is always more than one great solution.

3 } Are your early sketches clear enough for someone else to be able to “read” them?

Thumbnail sketches are crude indications of your visual ideas. The keyword is *visual*. A sketch isn't a finish; although, it should have enough visual information be delineated clearly enough—for someone else to know what you mean, to visually interpret it.

4 } Did you explore the possibilities?

Do you have more than one idea or are your sketches variations on one answer? It absolutely pays to have more than one idea. In practical terms, if this were a real job, the client may not like your one idea and then you would be stuck without a backup solution. Besides, it's challenging to push oneself to come up with many ideas.

5 } Are your designs visually interesting?

Would your design capture someone's attention and hold it long enough to communicate the intended message? Creating graphic impact is necessary. Graphic impact is achieved when the elements and principles of the design language are utilized and serve the design concept. Graphic impact can be loud or soft, classic or unconventional. Ask yourself: Is the design compelling?

6 } Are your visual concepts fresh?

Did you redo things you've seen before or did you pave your own road? Fresh visuals aren't only innovative ones. Very easily, an interesting color palette, a disarming visual, and uncustomary type choice or combination can yield a fresh visual idea.

Source: Adapted from *Visual Workout Creativity Workbook* by Robin Landa and Rose Gonnella (pgs. 14–16)