

Gestalt Principles in Contextual Design

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Abstract

Compatibility of new development with the existing physical context is an important issue in most urban areas and especially conservation areas. In many communities special design guidelines are developed to protect the existing identity of the urban areas against incongruent development.

Previous research on compatibility points at the great importance of details and small-scale cues than either the mass of buildings or their site organization. In this paper Gestalt laws of form perception are employed to analyse the street facades of buildings and to draw rules for compatible design. The Gestalt laws of simplicity, continuity, proximity and equality can be used in this analysis with specific design implications.

Details such as window, entry ways, facade treatment, ground level details as well as skyline, and vertical and horizontal rhythm of the facade can be examined considering these laws. Design guidelines drawn through the analysis could be of special application in conservation areas, and in fitting the new development with the old.

Key words: Compatibility, perception, building facades, Gestalt laws