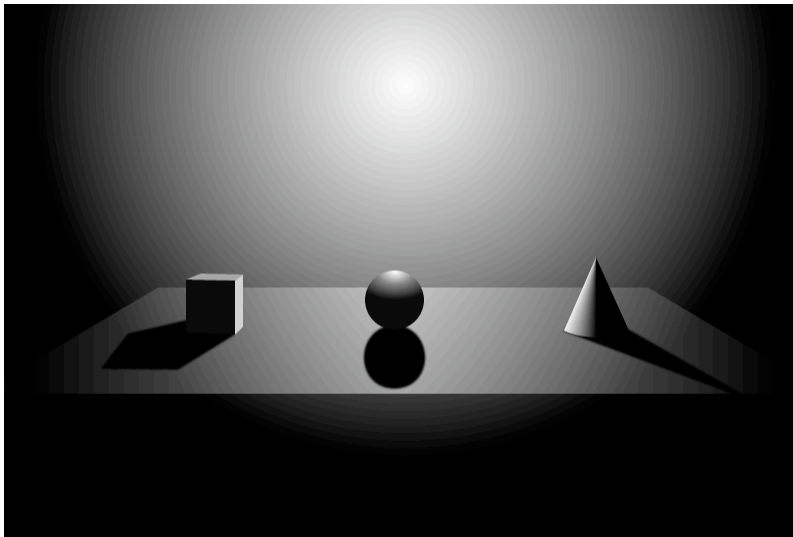


DESIGN PRO

Issue #6 - Light and Shadow

An extra touch of realism and depth



Drawing is like making an expressive gesture with the advantage of permanence

-Henri Matisse

If you've been playing around with different designs for a while and have found you've been repeating yourself a bit, or perhaps you simply want to expand your horizons, there very well may be an area that you haven't even touched on yet: Lighting!

Adding light to a scene, objects or logos can transform very plain designs to very interesting ones if done correctly. Now I'm not expecting you to break out some super-expensive 3D modeling package unless of course you want to, because adding light is typically a matter of a couple simple tricks that can usually be done easily in most any design package. For an example of

a way you could spice up a design using these techniques, let's say you have a flat view of a globe somewhere in your design. By itself it may look relatively interesting, but to make it really stand out as well as look more realistic, you could add a highlight on it to create the illusion of a spherical shape rather than just a circular one.

Now let's look at how we would go about doing this by way of show and tell. I've created an image as I'm sure you've already noticed, above. This was done entirely in my 2D graphics application. What I did was create the illusion of a light source in the background by creating a

radial gradient. Simple enough! Next, I created a floor object by creating a rectangle and moving the bottom two points outward, creating the illusion of perspective, and giving my objects something to cast a shadow upon. Then I went about placing in these primitive objects (created with the pen, or vector tool), taking note of the ground plane's perspective and making sure the objects matched. Then I determined where the light was coming from, and in turn where the highlight and shadows would be, so I took my best guesses here. To create the shadows, I again used the pen tool to draw out where I thought the shadows

would be, colored them black, and added a little blur to the edges to soften them a bit. To add the surface highlights on the box, I simply colored the surfaces brighter where I thought more light was going to strike, and vice versa. For the Sphere, I created an elliptical gradient contained inside the object and placed it near the top, white on the inside, black on the outside. And lastly for the cone shape, same story, only I used a conical gradient, with its origin

at the tip of the cone while adjusting the colors accordingly.

Now, this kind of thing may seem quite difficult, but a great way of practicing is by tracing; just trace (with the pen tool) on top of an actual image of a lit object on a table or some other surface to learn about the way light reacts to surfaces better, and in the process you'll almost certainly learn something new or come up with some new design ideas along the way.

My objects don't have anything attached to them but yours certainly can, for instance company icons, letters, or you could even have the icons or letters standing by themselves casting their own shadow, or perhaps you don't even need a shadow at all. Whatever pleases your eyes the most is the way to go. Now get out there and practice! :-)

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