

Graphic Communications :

Lesson 1 Summary: Hierarchy & Visual Prioritization

What This Lesson Covers

This lesson establishes one of the most essential foundations of communication design: visual hierarchy. You'll learn how designers guide attention, build clarity, and create purpose-driven layouts by structuring information intentionally. The lesson also introduces the distinctions between art and design, the thinking behind communication design, and the role of the creative brief in organizing your goals. Through real examples and a hands-on demo, you'll see how hierarchy changes depending on the audience, context, and message.

Design vs. Art: Different Purposes, Different Mindsets

Art is personal expression — something you create for yourself. Design is communication — it exists for someone else. Design is driven by goals, problem-solving, and clarity. A designer's role is to take information and craft it into a clear, intentional message that resonates with a specific audience.



A Brief History: From Art to Commercial Design

The lesson references early commercial art examples like Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup cans, illustrating how consistency, repetition, and mass production laid the groundwork for brand identity. Advances in printing and reproduction made it possible to repeat visual elements reliably — a key part of brand communication today.

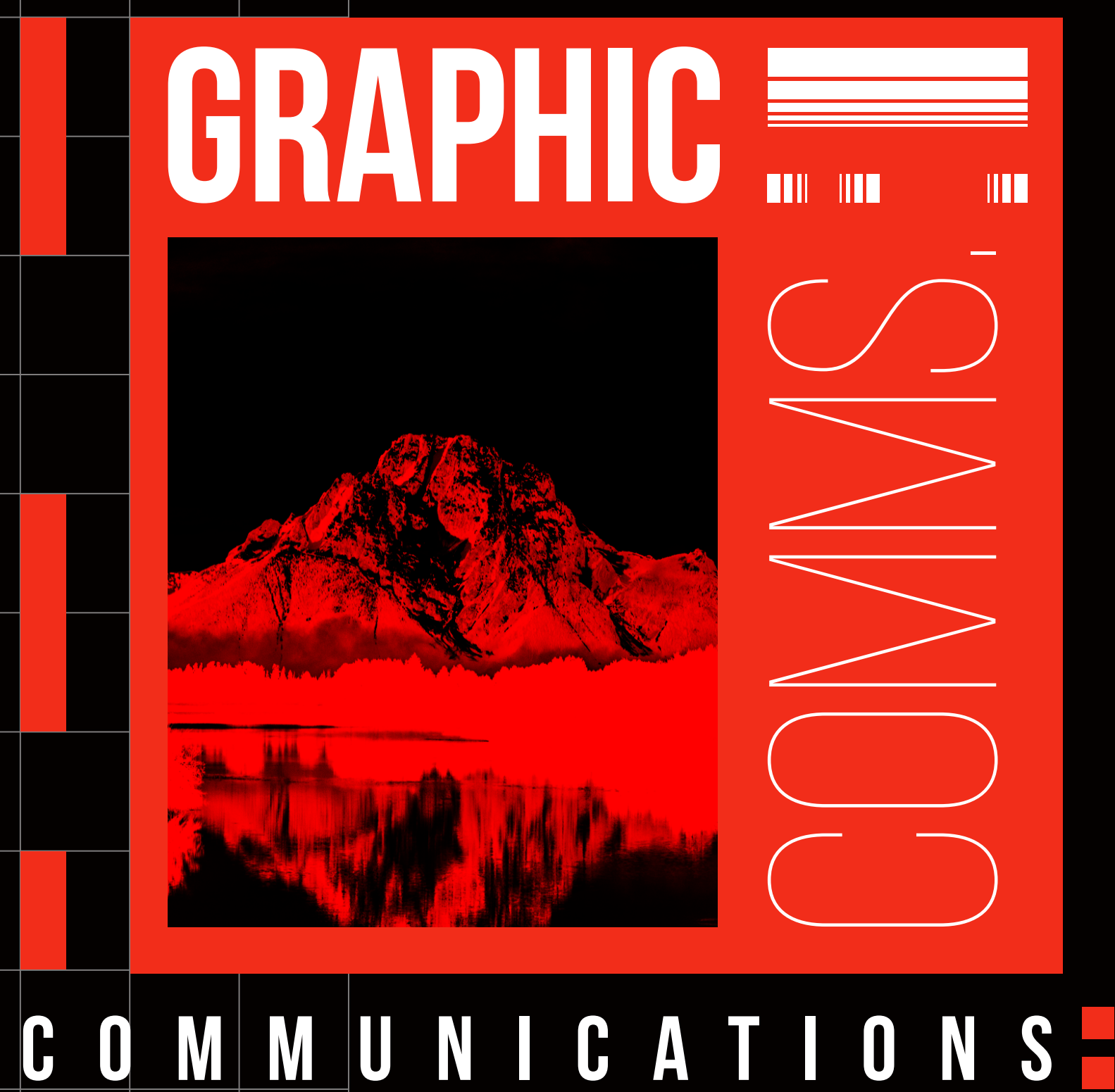


Three Pillars of Communication Design

Throughout this course, we structure design into three major components

- **Creative Toolkit** — hierarchy, color, layout, type, and style
- **Creative Execution** — layout foundation, tone of voice, expression, image manipulation, building brand toolkits
- **Creative Process** — briefs, research, goal-setting, sketching, planning, and producing purposeful solutions

These pillars help you think like a designer, not just decorate visuals.



Hierarchy: Creating Order From Chaos

Hierarchy is how you guide someone's eye through information. It communicates what is most important, what should be noticed first, and how a viewer should understand a design at a glance. Good hierarchy gives structure to your message, prevents visual noise, and helps your audience navigate content effortlessly.

The Designer's First Job: Define the Goal

Before designing, you must know:

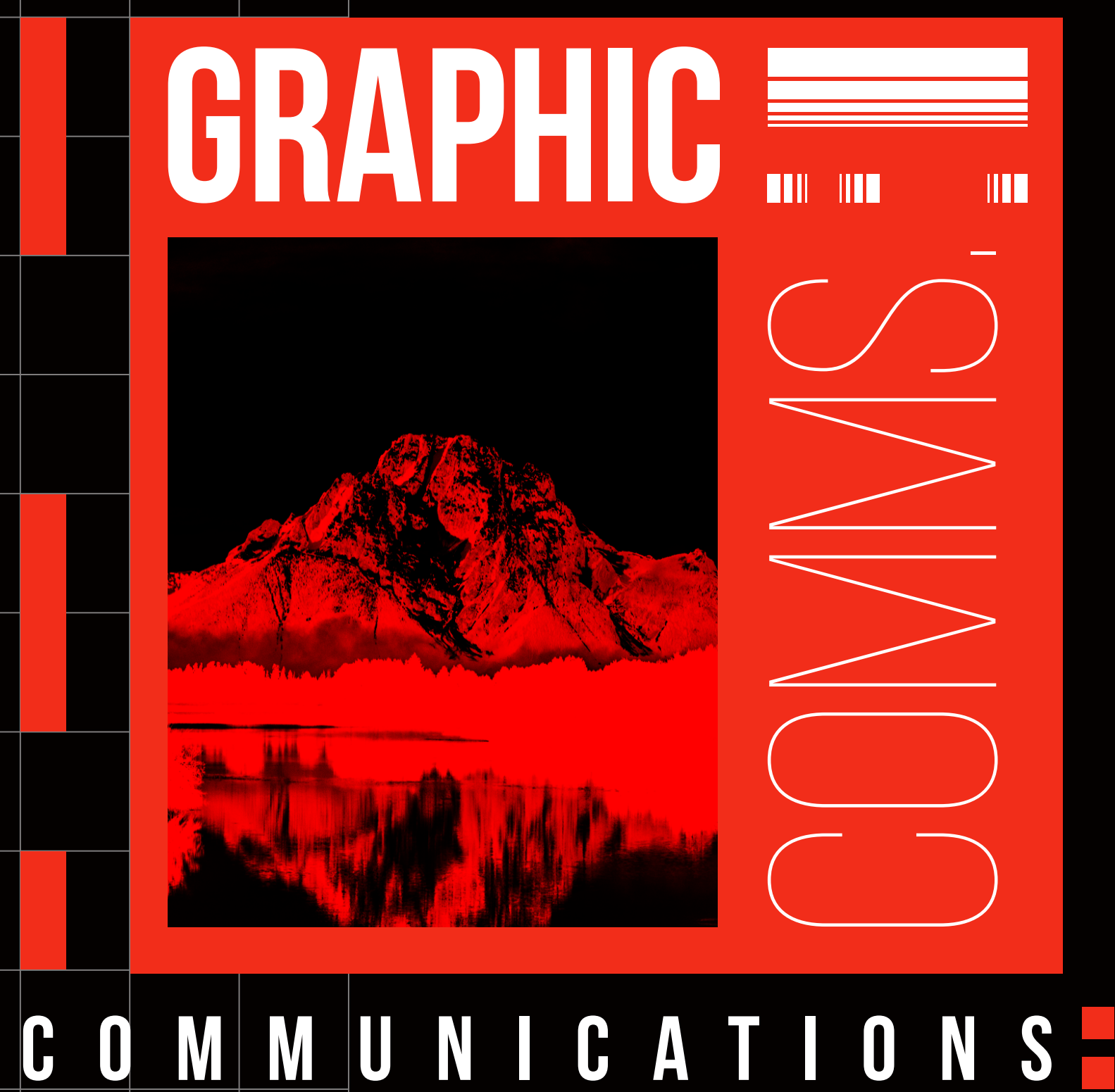
- What are you trying to say?
- Who are you talking to?
- What is the most important point?
- What secondary information supports it?

If a client doesn't provide a brief, designers learn to create one — using simple questions like Who? What? Where? When? Why? to clarify messaging and build a hierarchy.

Audience Reading Patterns & Eye Tracking

Different cultures read differently: left-to-right, right-to-left, or top-to-bottom. How people read affects how they visually scan and absorb information. Designers use these natural reading habits to organize layouts, or occasionally break those rules deliberately to create intrigue or disruption.



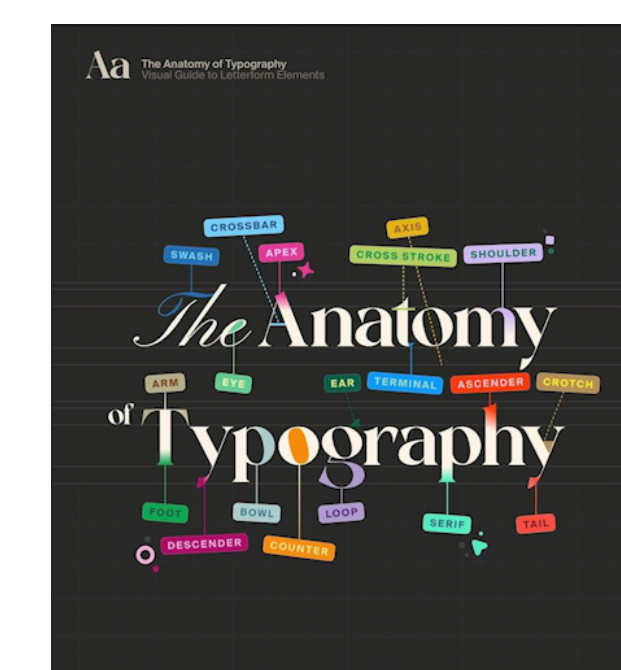
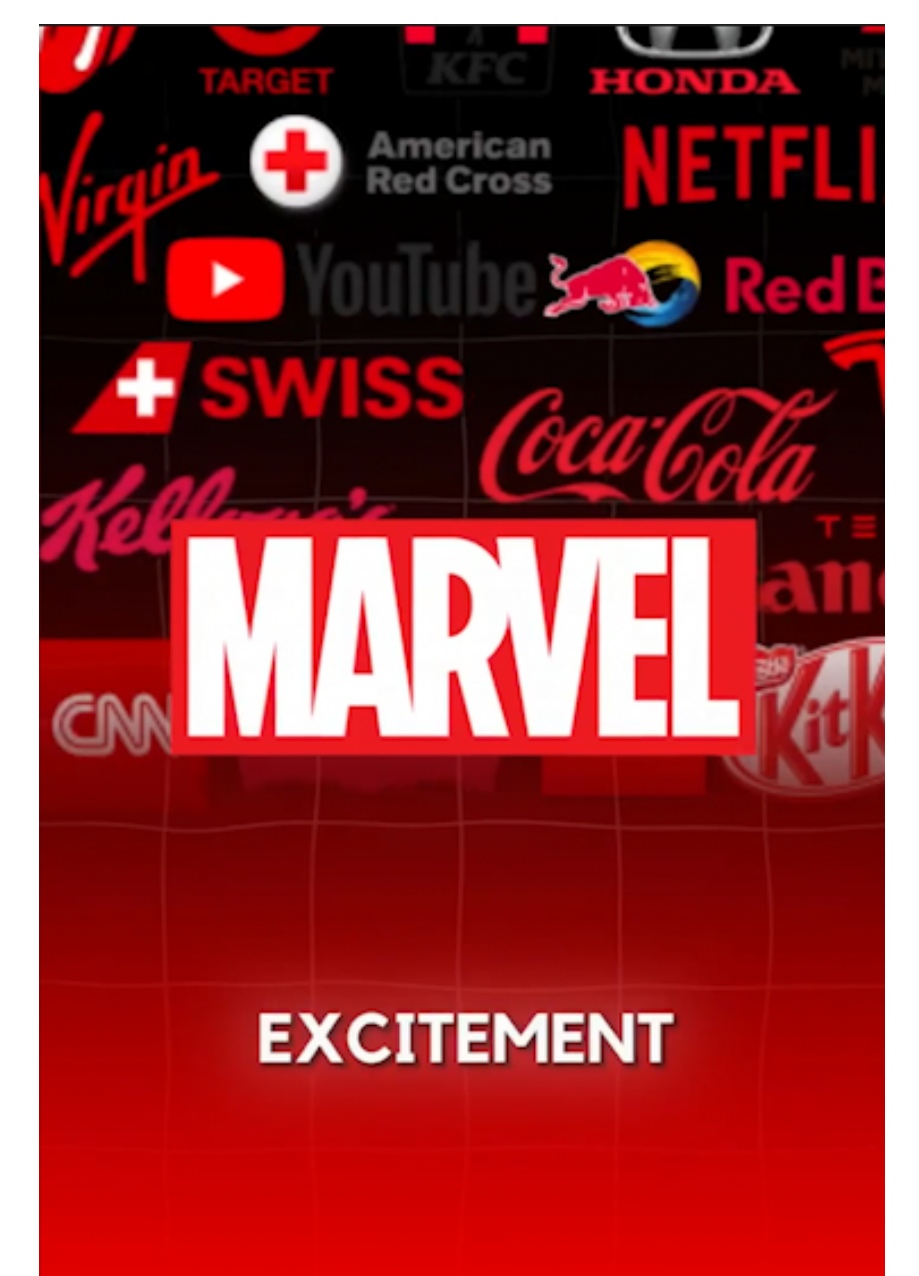


Volume & Visual Contrast

Hierarchy isn't only about making things bigger. Designers use contrast in many forms:

- Scale
- Color
- Typography and weight
- Shapes or visual anchors
- Negative space

Just like in a conversation where only one person should speak loudly at a time, a design becomes chaotic when every element competes at the same "volume." Contrast helps you signal importance and create a logical path for the viewer.



Breaking Down a Real Hierarchy

The lesson examines a commercial gin bottle label and breaks its components into the five W's plus "legal" and "surprises." From there, each element is ranked by visual priority. Key insights include:

- Large type and strong color contrast push "Killarney Peaks" to the top.
- Supporting information like "small batch gin" follows next.
- Secondary brand voices can appear quieter but still meaningful.
- Legal text sits at the bottom but must remain visible.

This example demonstrates how designers translate a raw content list into a purposeful hierarchy.

Who: Killarney Peaks
What: Small Batch Gin

Why: Limited Release
When: 2018

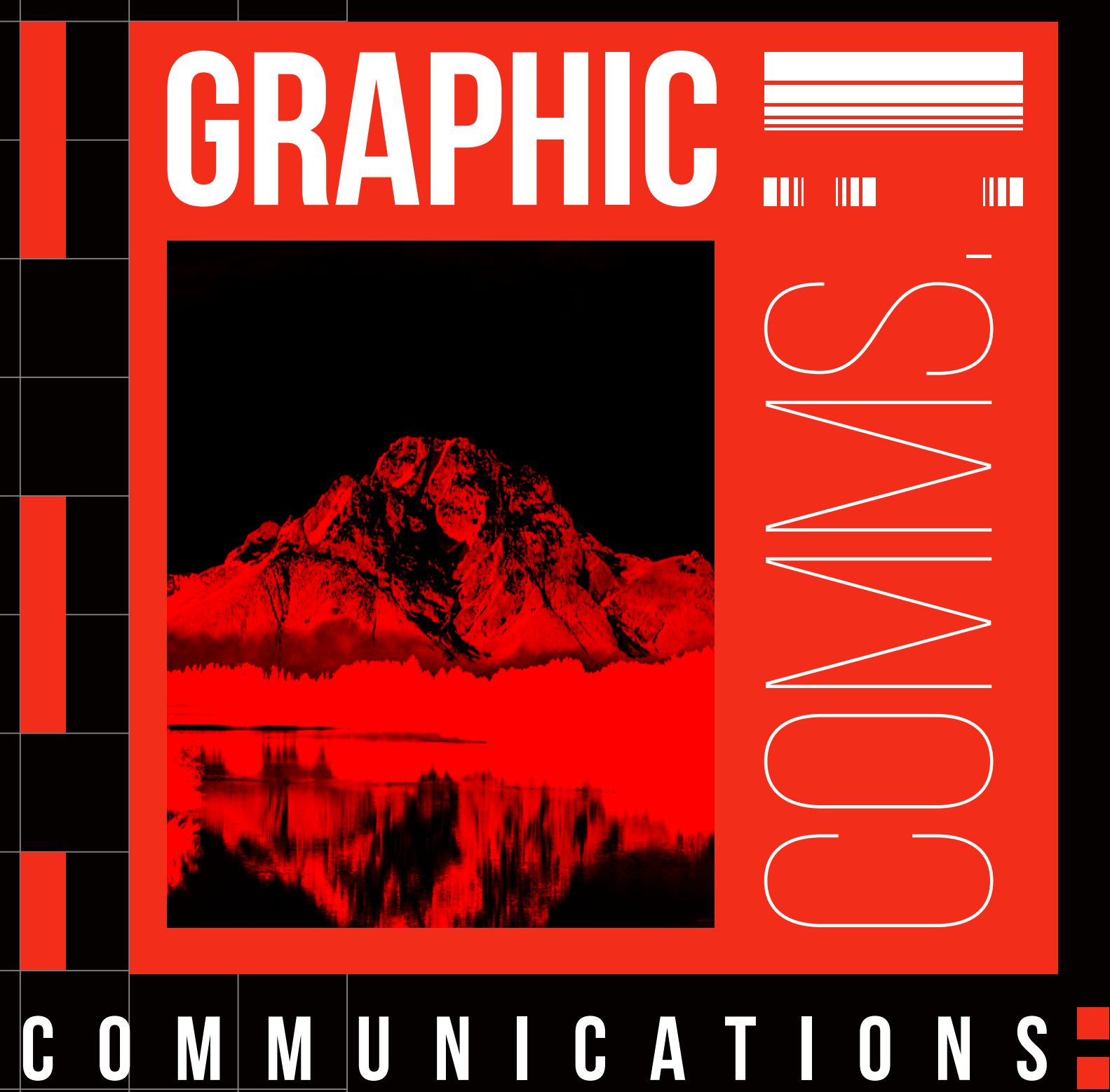
Who: Nomad Spirits
What: crafted from local botanicals and peated ferns

Where: Ireland

Legal: 700ml 46%

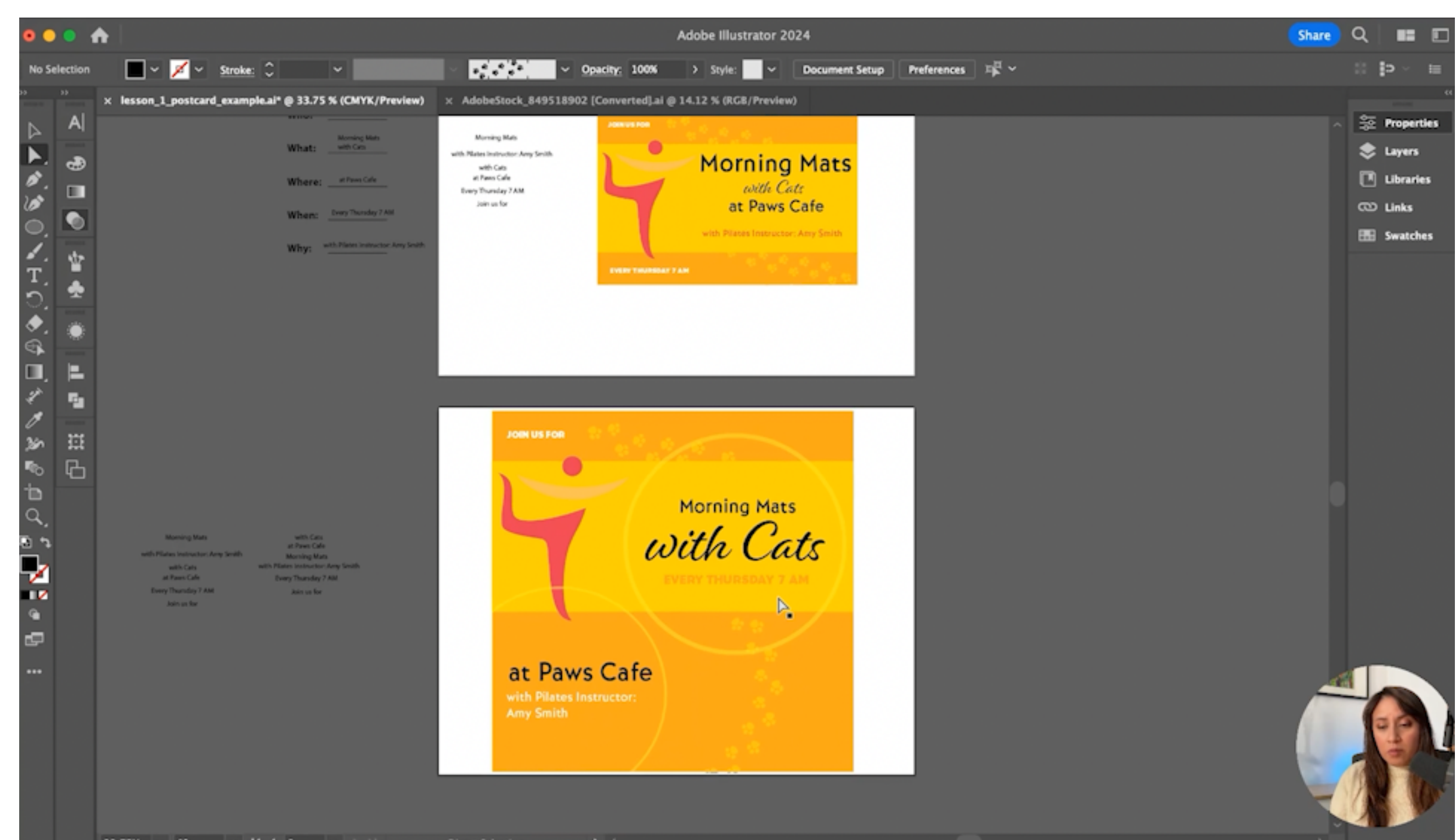
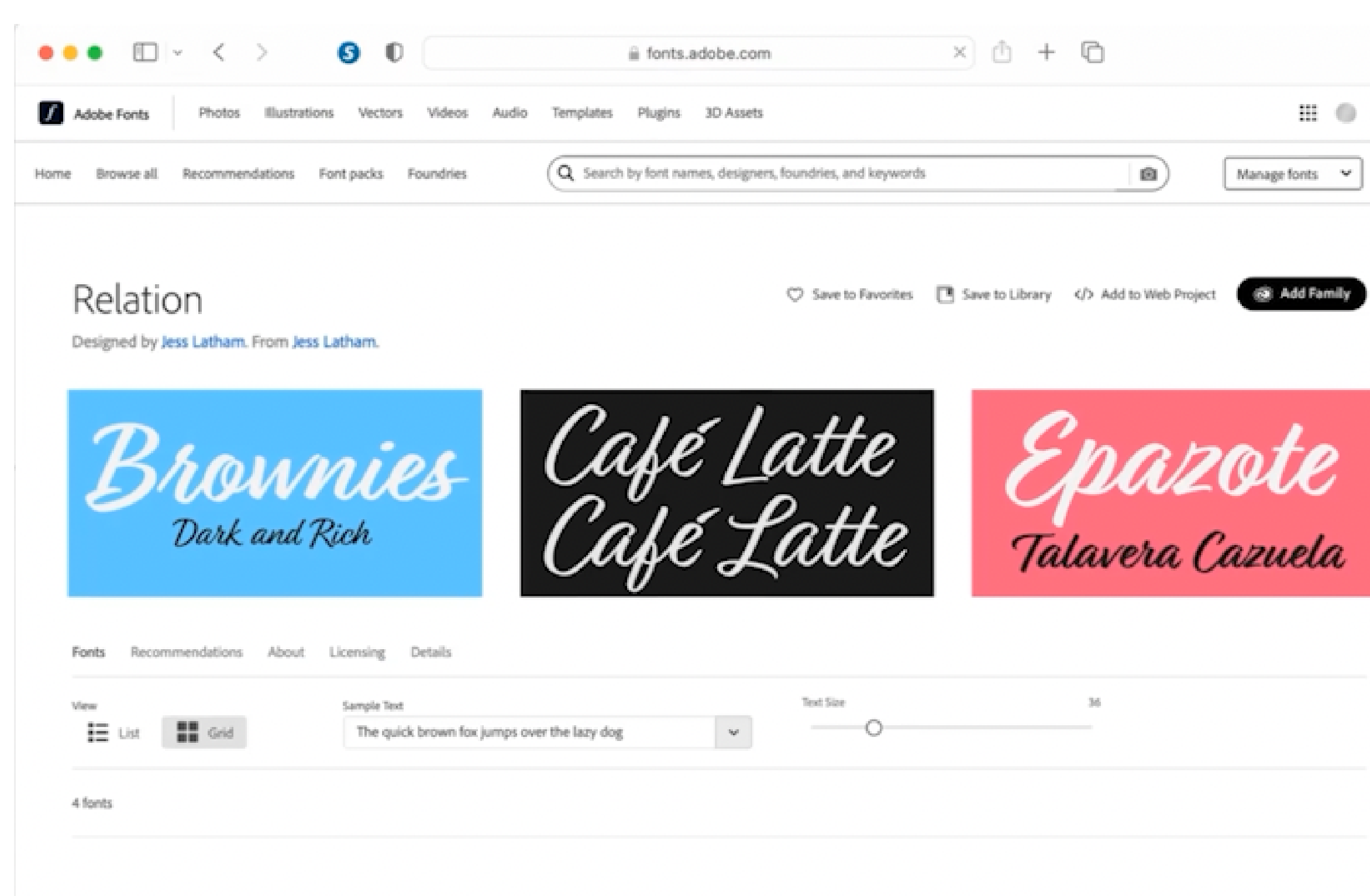
Surprises: from wandering in wander your world capture the wonder





Using Adobe Fonts to Support Hierarchy

Browse, filter, and activate Adobe Fonts. Designers select fonts that enhance meaning, maintain consistency, and reinforce the brand voice. Matching fonts across elements helps avoid “too many voices,” while subtle differences create hierarchy.



Applying Hierarchy in Practice

the construction of a postcard for a fictional Café + Pilates Studio collaboration. Key takeaways include:

- Begin with a raw type list organized into the five W's.
- Reorder the list based on the audience's priorities.
- Use scale, boldness, and color to emphasize the most relevant information.
- Keep typefaces limited to maintain cohesion.
- Use shape language, negative space, or graphic accents to support flow.

This demonstrates hierarchy in action, not as theory but as a usable tool.

Changing the Hierarchy for a New Audience

Great design may appear effortless, but it's the result of careful thinking: defining the message, organizing priorities, tailoring communication to the audience, and building clarity through visual language.