

## Creativity Templates in Art Perception

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How do people decide what is creative and what is not?

Goldenberg, Mazursky, & Solomon studied creativity characteristic mainly in marketing advertisements and in product innovations.

These authors found creativity templates, which are abstract patterns that are well defined, objectively verifiable, and generalizable. These patterns describe the components of the advertisements or the product and the linkings between them. Templates appear in most creative advertisements and new products, for example 89 percent of the award-winning and contest-finalist advertisements – use templates. Moreover when templates guide the innovation process the idea created is with high probability, a creative one.

Our aim was to check whether templates exist and achieve similar results in other fields. We chose the most creative and subjective field – art, and to be more specific creativity perception in graphical art. Do people use templates while judging creativity of art pieces? What people refer to when they judge art?

Within the area of graphical art we choose photography. We used a set of 23 photographs that were awarded in the web as "the best pictures of 2003". Fifteen subjects from various countries chose the 5 most creative photographs from the photograph set and were asked to explain why, in their opinion, those images were creative.

Only 35 from the 72 explanations we had, described the photographs' objects and their linkings. We analyzed only those explanations.

A total of 43% of the 35 explanations contained templates. There were three types of templates: Diagonal link, Properties tension, and Unification.

Diagonal link (DL) is a connection of two components generated by the connection of every one of them to intermediate component. DL is similar to a transitive connection. It was the least frequent template in the experiment (8.6% of the 35 explanations).

Example:

Photograph:



Subject's explanation: "The back light is illuminating the fog in a very intense manner such that it almost appears as fire".

The DL in this explanation: The back light affects the fog, the fog looks like a fire. The conclusion is somewhat transitive: the back light looks like fire.

The other two templates are new templates revealed in this study.

Properties tension (PT) appear when the main components in the photograph have contrasting properties. This pattern was the most common one (19.9%).

Example:

Photograph:



Subject's explanation: "...the eyes of the cat look bad and the field of grain looks kind..."

The PT in this explanation: The main components in this photograph, the cat's eye and the field have the same color, but their properties (bad, kind) are contrasting.

Unification appeared in 14.4% of the explanations; in it one component in the photograph functions as another external object.

Example:

Photograph:



Subject's explanation: "A child jumps into a bunch of dead leaves as if it was a swimming pool".

The unification in this explanation: A main component in the photograph looks like a pile of dead leaves but treated by the boy like a swimming pool.

To conclude, we found that people's explanations about the creativity of an art pieces can be attributed to three patterns. Art perception is not as unconstrained as could be imagined.