

## 3 Visual Language

### Five Key Elements of Static Images

This section deals with three subjects : The things you can put in your image.  
The ways you can best organise them.  
The best way to go about producing your presentation.

The things you put into your presentation are called **elements**. There are **five important kinds of element**.

#### Symbols

These are the things your viewers will see that will convey important ideas to them. Some symbols are recognised everywhere, e.g. ♂ for male, ♀ for female, ✓ for correct and so on. Some symbols can be found in the text you are basing your image on, e.g. a bolt of lightning that destroys or a bride's dress that celebrates a permanent love. Of course, you can modify symbols to add a new slant to their meaning, e.g. you could show the dove of peace lying on the ground with its feet in the air, or in flight, but dropping the olive branch which is on fire. The new meaning is the end of peace.

#### Colour

Colour has two uses. The first is as a **symbol** - *red* for passion, danger or blood, *green* for nature or jealousy, *blue* for clean or cool, *white* for good, *black* for evil and so on. Remember that your image is not supposed to look like a freeze-frame moment of the story, so as well as dressing a human figure in the symbolic colour, you have the option of making the body itself that colour.

The second use of colour is for **mood** or **atmosphere**. You can use colour to create a bright tone or a dark one. You can show emotional intensity by using very strong colours and a quieter mood by using paler versions of the same colours. You can show harmony and disharmony by choosing colours that blend or clash. You can highlight a contrast by using one kind of colour in one area and a different kind in another.

#### Lines

These can suggest **ideas** and **control the way** the viewer looks at the image. **Thick** and **thin** lines can be used to suggest strength or weakness. **Slope** matters : the **vertical** line suggests balance, stability, whereas the **tilted** line suggests instability and the possibility of falling. This is a way of suggesting movement from one thing to another. Lines can be simply lines or they can be formed by parts of the picture - a skyline, a river, a road, a fence, the edge of a building etc.

#### Human Figures

These can convey a huge amount of information : sex, age, race, status, attitude, feelings, wealth, attractiveness, as well as the one vital thing they do (or have done to them) in the story. Their **body language**, and especially their **eyes**, lead your eyes to important things. If you want to challenge your viewer, have your person stare straight out of the picture to make direct '*eye contact*'. You will probably remember the power of this look from appeals for aid to third world countries. If you have two figures you can show a **relationship** by how you place them : leader and follower, side by side, head to head, close or distant.

#### Lettering

Lettering is an important element. Most static images will incorporate some text and your choice of lettering has to be appropriate to the ideas of the words and of the whole image. Writing in **capitals** has been called a kind of shouting in print - do you want that? Letter **size** partly depends on the medium you have chosen : posters have to have bigger script than newspapers because we don't hold posters in our hands. The **font** itself can suggest strength, sensitivity, creativity and emotion, depending on the thickness, shape and slant of the lines.



# 21 Static Image - The Comic Strip

## Task 10 Comic Strip Example - 'Kapow'

1 Read the text below and study the images drawn by Josh Smits. You can see more of his illustrations at : [www.loudmouthproductions.co.nz](http://www.loudmouthproductions.co.nz). Answer the questions on the following page.



## 29 Static Image - Advertising

### Task 14 Examine Advertising Design

- 1 The cover of the *New Zealand Listener* magazine of Dec 21-27, 2013 used a bright red colour in its title as part of the design. The same red was used for the words, New Zealand Listener title, Lorde's dress, Lorde's lipstick and the baubles on the Christmas tree on the lower right hand side. This image was used not only on the cover of the magazine but also on its billboards to advertise the magazine.



### Task 22 Layout Example - 'The Makatu on Mrs Jones'

1 Consider this layout for a static image on the short story, 'The Makatu on Mrs Jones' by Witi Ihimaera. Read the notes that provide a commentary for Ihimaera's short story.

