

Design on a Centerline



An image, a typeface and one line are all you need to set a classy scene. *Continued* ▶

Design on a centerline

For conveying quiet beauty, nothing is easier than a centered layout

Your client is a college whose art department has given you a small schedule to design and has a few requirements. It must convey the nobility of the school and the artistic spirit of the month's events. It must be handy to use, printable in-house and cheap. Oh, and please have it finished tonight.

How do you do a quality job on such a tight schedule? In the same way that you do any job—methodically. The difference is that you limit fonts and colors to the basics and your layout to a simple configuration.

The creative brief

From: Cindy Holland
Subject: August Schedule of Events card
Date: July 25, 2005 9:30 AM PDT
To: Dexter Mark Abellera

Hello Dexter,

Sorry for the rush here. Copy's below. We need something we can print in the office and pass out by hand, so we were thinking maybe they could be cards three to a sheet. It's Art Month, and the events are pretty varied, so we hope you can find an artistic look that ties them together and still feels like the school, which, as you know, is pretty traditional. Deadline's tonight.

Best,
Cindy

Delta College Art Department, August Schedule of Events

In an exceptional program that covers the artistic spectrum of the department, August is a month of the best presenters and lecturers, conversation, critique and beautiful art. Engaging and inspiring.

August 4, 2005, 7:30 p.m. -- Dialogues in Beauty, Deborah Witt -- Shima Hall Gallery

August 6, 2005, 6 p.m. -- Slide Lecture, Artist Judy Miller -- Mariposa Hall 2000

August 7, 2005, 5:30 p.m. -- Summer Show, Student Exhibition -- University Library Gallery

August 8, 2005, 4:30 p.m. -- Lecture, Graphic Designer James Rogers -- University West Forum

August 10, 2005, 7 p.m. -- Expand Your Horizon, April Breedon -- Shima Hall Gallery

August 12, 2005, 6:30 p.m. -- A Conversation With Beverly Mills -- Shima Hall Gallery

August 13, 2005, 2 p.m. -- Summer Arts & Crafts Fair -- Main Courtyard

August 17, 2005, 5:30 p.m. -- Close Encounters, Julie Packard -- University Library Gallery

August 19, 2005, 4:30 p.m. -- Lecture, Paintings & Prints, James Rogers -- University East Forum

August 20, 2005, 7 p.m. -- Nearly Reflecting, April Breedon -- Shima Hall Gallery

August 23, 2005, 5:30 p.m. -- The Shape of Color, Jason Untalan -- University West Forum

August 27, 2005, 7:30 p.m. -- Peter Kilmer Ceramics -- Mendocino Hall 2100

At left is the raw data, which you will visually “translate” into imagery. Highlight item by item. You’re looking for key words that will govern the design.

- (1) Parameters
- (2) Title and topic
- (3) Introduction
- (4) Dates and times
- (5) Event title and speaker
- (6) Venue

Summary

Card size
Printable in the office

Key words

Artistic and traditional

Look. Read. Learn.

Next step is to find one image—we have no time for more—that embodies the ideas of *artistic* and *traditional*. Remember that the image must represent many kinds of art.

Look beyond the obvious

When looking at objects, we tend not to get much past the surface—“that’s an interesting *mask*; there’s an old *book*.” But the designer must look deeper. Put words on what you see. What, exactly, makes the mask interesting? What colors say artistic? What kind of shape says traditional? What textures? What lines? Pay attention to sensual qualities like sound, smell, touch, and the intangibles of history, culture and tradition.

The ideal image not only makes the right message (artistic and traditional) but has bold physical properties (line, silhouette, color) that can have an impact on the design.



Mask Artistic, clay, warm, mysterious, emotive, suggests theater, too human



Mouse Cold, hard, high contrast, used for art but neither artistic nor traditional



Books Highly traditional, rich, tactile, irregular, desaturated colors, suggest scholarship and history but not artistry



Brush Calligraphic, lacquered, well used, desaturated colors, bold silhouette, traditional; a brush says *art* to everyone. This is our image.

Now relate image to page

Establish a relationship between image and page. Ask, what are the boldest characteristics of each, and, what properties do they have in common? Work with those.



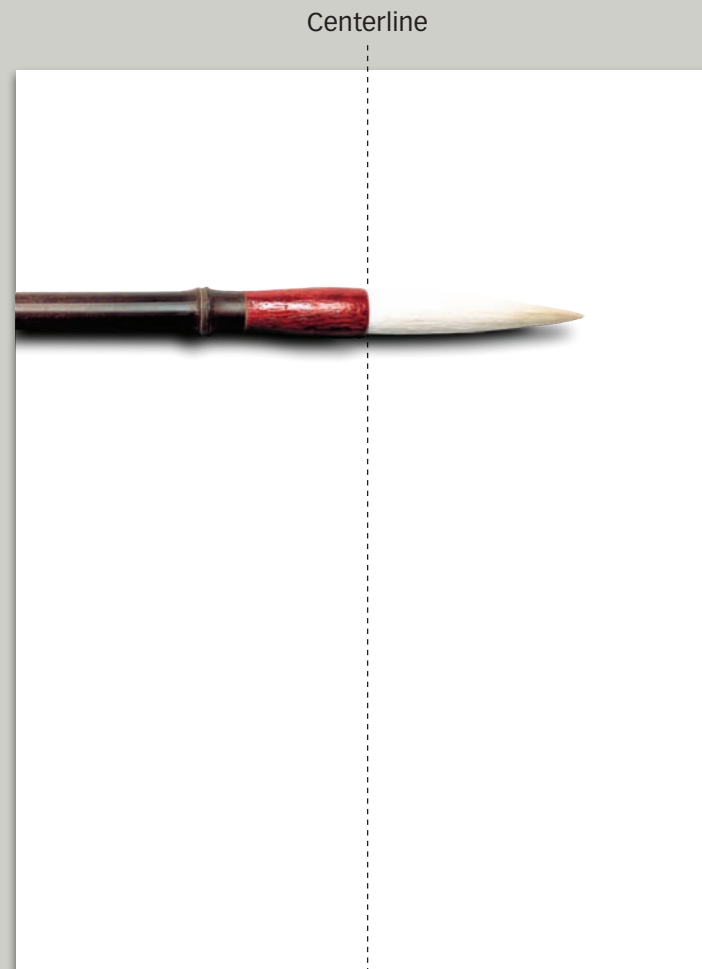
Work with what you have The page is a strong vertical line; the brush is an even stronger line. Placed parallel, they work together; crossing, they have friction and energy, and in this case the brush becomes a header, too. The centerline is the point of highest contrast (below and right.)



Low contrast

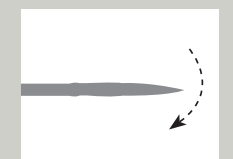
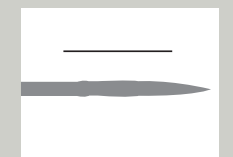


High contrast



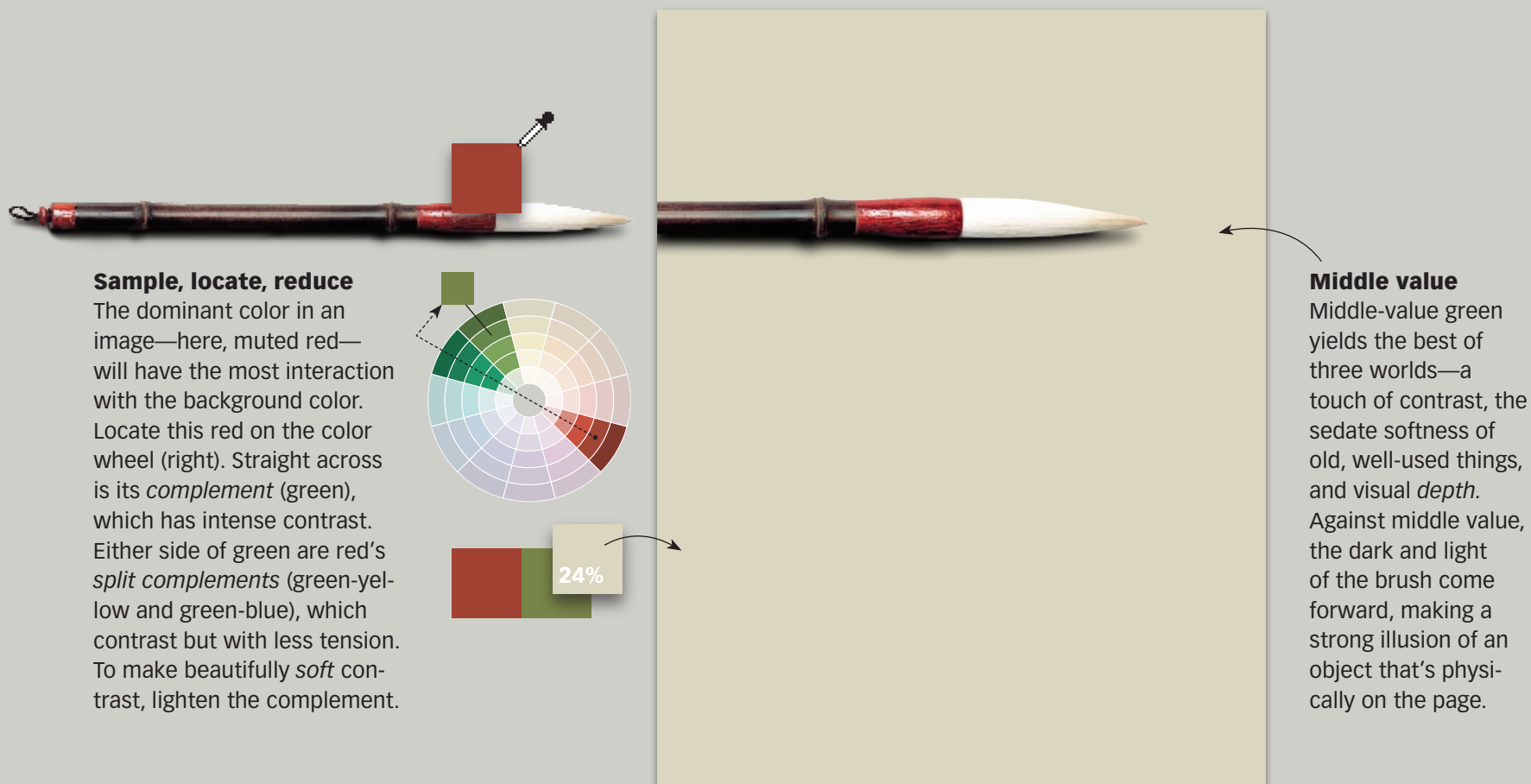
What size?

When you have only one image, it's natural to want it big. But pay attention. In this case, a bigger brush would isolate and deaden the space above it (below, top). Think of white as liquid, and let it flow (bottom).



Create a simple color palette

Create a color palette made of the image plus one additional color, which can harmonize or, in this case, contrast. For versatility, adjust the color to its middle value.

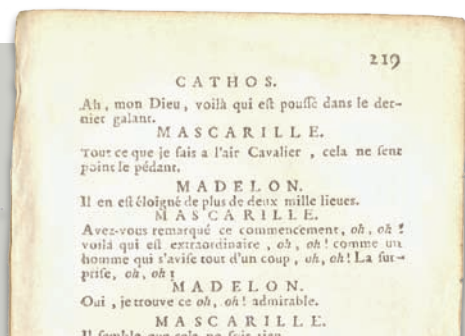


Sample, locate, reduce
The dominant color in an image—here, muted red—will have the most interaction with the background color. Locate this red on the color wheel (right). Straight across is its *complement* (green), which has intense contrast. Either side of green are red's *split complements* (green-yellow and green-blue), which contrast but with less tension. To make beautifully *soft* contrast, lighten the complement.

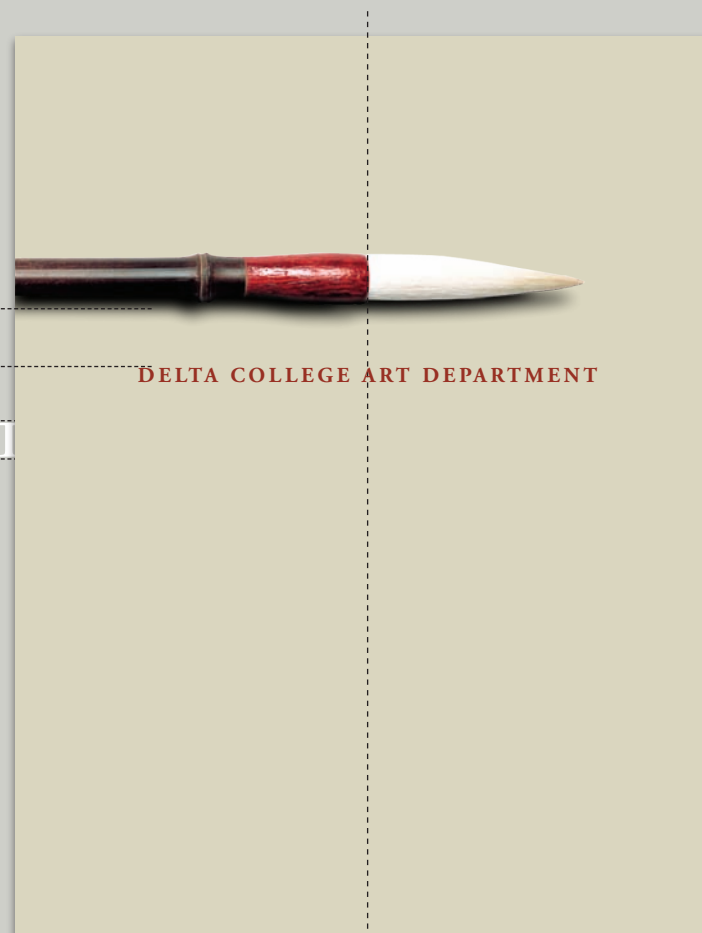
Middle value
Middle-value green yields the best of three worlds—a touch of contrast, the sedate softness of old, well-used things, and visual *depth*. Against middle value, the dark and light of the brush come forward, making a strong illusion of an object that's physically on the page.

Select one type family, and set it in one size

Here, the idea of *traditional* and the need for simplicity intersect; old books were often set in a single family of serif type, which here will convey tradition and minimize decisions.



Note the brush is used as a spacer.



Start with a bold statement Center the title in all caps with wide letterspacing, which conveys pre-eminence, power, permanence. Note in this case that all caps echo the straight line of the brush (above). Upper- and lowercase (below) has a busy line that sets a more conversational tone.

Delta College

Center the second title in small caps

Center the second title the same size as the first but in small caps, which convey the presence and authority of full capitals but at a secondary level.

Small caps True small caps are uppercase characters that have the same height and weight as normal lowercase characters (below), with which they blend beautifully. Not all fonts contain true small caps, in which case you must make your own. False small caps are serviceable but inconsistently light, because they are merely full-size caps reduced in size.

AUGUST sche

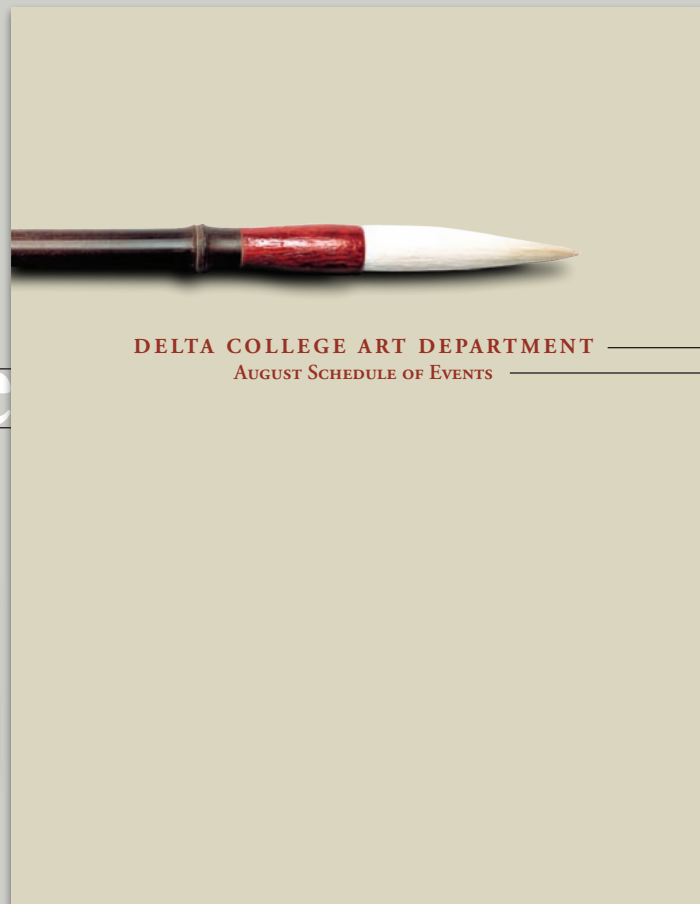
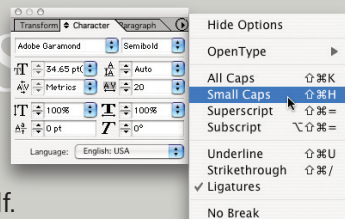
True small caps Consistent weight

These are part of the font.

AUGUST

False small caps Inconsistent weight

These you make yourself.

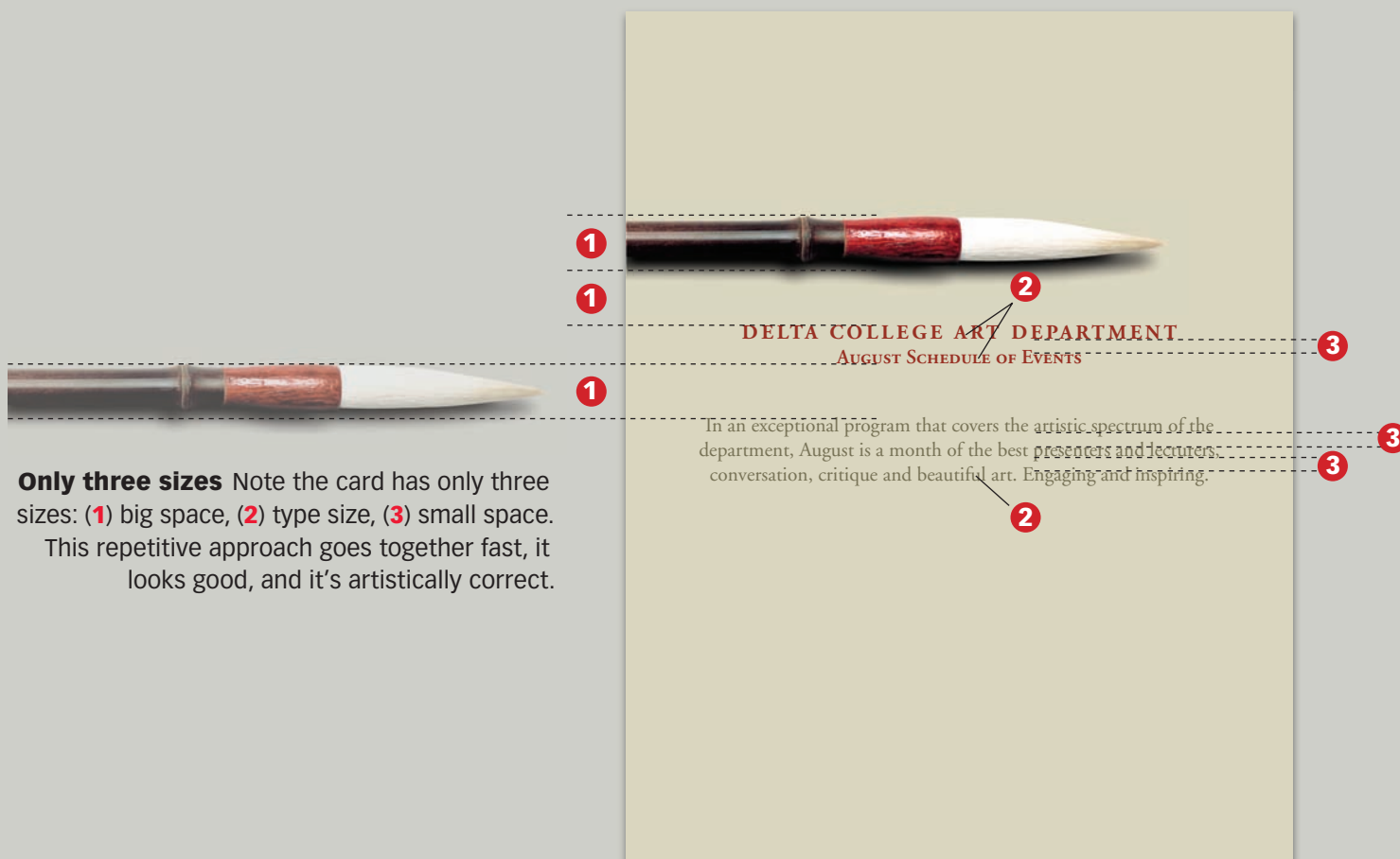


DELTA COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT
AUGUST SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Wide letterspacing
Normal letterspacing

Repeat, repeat, repeat

As you add copy, keep the card simple by repeating what's already on the page—same typestyle, same size, same spacing, all centered.



Only three sizes Note the card has only three sizes: **(1)** big space, **(2)** type size, **(3)** small space. This repetitive approach goes together fast, it looks good, and it's artistically correct.

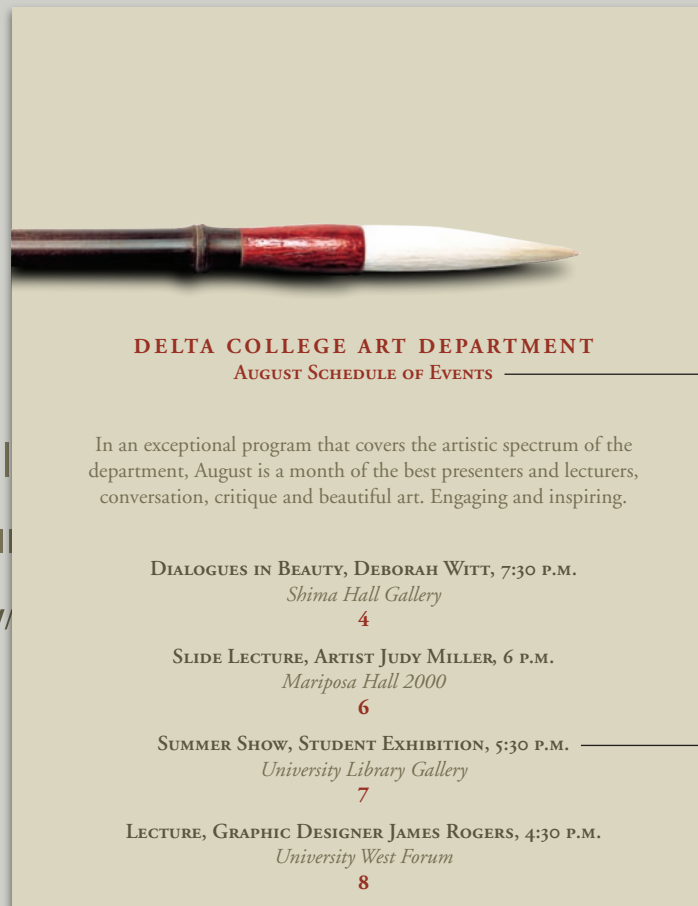
Differentiate elements by changing styles

Differentiate titles, venues and dates by assigning each a style—light, italic or bold—but do not change the size or spacing.

The beauty of a good type family is in its variety of styles. Here, names are set in one style, venues another, dates a third. The similarities keep them together, the differences keep them apart; all harmonize beautifully.

|||||In an exceptional program|||||
 |||||DIALOGUES IN BEAUTY|||||
 //|||Shima Hall Gallery|||

Clearly visible in the diagram above are the different textures and rhythms within a type family, each of which has a unique “voice.”



Consistency within elements
 The headline encompasses the events below it, so keep the relationship in size and style, but differentiate by color. Green on green has less contrast and lower visibility, therefore lower hierarchy.

Use old-style numerals

If they are available (not all fonts have them), use beautiful old-style numerals, which blend with upper- and lowercase characters and convey both artistry and tradition.

135678 ABCDEFGH


Use old-style numerals in text

Above, standard numerals are uppercase and monospaced to align in columns for accounting use and more. Beautiful old-style numerals, below, are meant for use in text. Smaller like lowercase letters, they're more varied and often descend far below the baseline. Also like letters they have different widths and are called non-lining, because in columns they don't line up.

135678 JAMES ROGER

Ascenders

Descenders



DELTA COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT
AUGUST SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

In an exceptional program that covers the artistic spectrum of the department, August is a month of the best presenters and lecturers, conversation, critique and beautiful art. Engaging and inspiring.

DIALOGUES IN BEAUTY, DEBORAH WITT, 7:30 P.M.
Shima Hall Gallery
4

SLIDE LECTURE, ARTIST JUDY MILLER, 6 P.M.
Mariposa Hall 2000
6

SUMMER SHOW, STUDENT EXHIBITION, 5:30 P.M.
University Library Gallery
7

LECTURE, GRAPHIC DESIGNER JAMES ROGERS, 4:30 P.M.
University West Forum
8

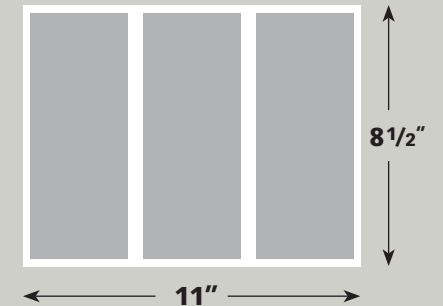
Red dates tie to the brush and headlines and define the centerline.

The finished card Continue your way down the centerline until the job is beautifully complete.



For desktop printing . . .

While a full bleed (far left) is ideal, to print 3-up on a standard desktop printer you'll need to allow a quarter-inch (or so) margin on all sides.





Front



Back

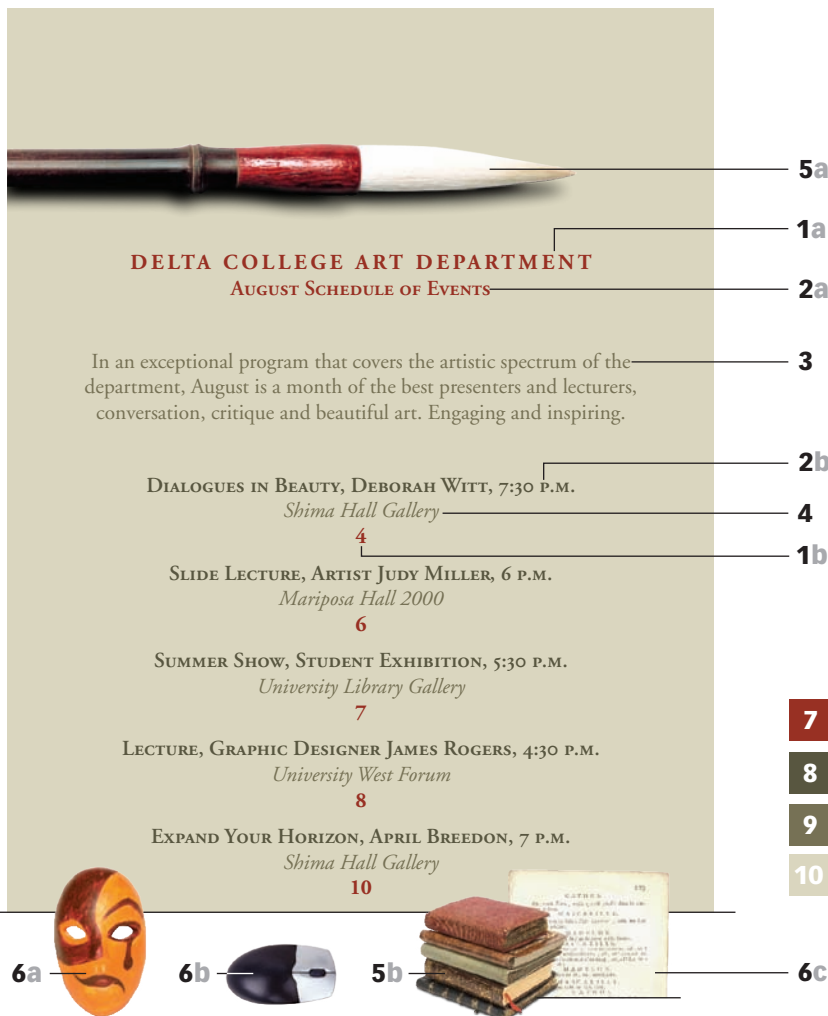


1 Print 3-up on a heavy 8 1/2" x 11" sheet. Trim.

2 Mail in an envelope . . .
A #9-size envelope—slightly smaller than the standard #10—is a perfect fit.

3 . . . or send as a postcard,
which has the benefit of its visual appeal. The card is too long to get postcard mailing rates, though; it requires first class.

Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 (a-b)** [Adobe Garamond Bold](#) | a) 8 pt
b) 8 pt
- 2 (a-b)** [Adobe Garamond Semibold SC](#)
a) 8 pt, b) 8 pt
- 3** [Adobe Garamond Regular](#) | a) 8/9.6 pt
- 4** [Adobe Garamond Italic](#) | a) 8 pt

Colors

- 7** C25 M90 Y95 K25
- 8** C33 M29 Y55 K60
- 9** C33 M29 Y55 K40
- 10** C14 M11 Y25 K0

Images

- 5 (a-b)** [Photos.com](#) | [a](#) [b](#)
- 6 (a-c)** [istockphoto.com](#) | [a](#) [b](#) [c](#)



Subscribe to Before & After

Did you learn from this article? Subscribe, and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher

Vincent Pascual Staff designer

Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Editorial board **Gwen Amos, Carl Winther**

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678

Telephone 916-784-3880

Fax 916-784-3995

E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com

www <http://www.bamagazine.com>

Copyright ©2005 Before & After magazine, ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass this article around, but you may not alter it, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review. If you do this, please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To feature free Before & After articles on your Web site, [please contact us](#). For permission to include all or part of this article in another work, [please contact us](#).

Before & After is made to fit your binder

Before & After articles are intended for permanent reference. All are titled and numbered.

For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–14\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

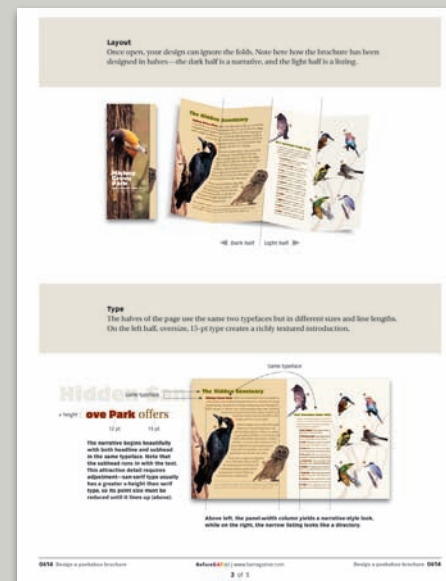


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 16–22\)](#)



Design on a Centerline



An image, a typeface and
one line are all you need to
set a classy scene.

Your client is a college whose art

department has given you a small
schedule to design and has a few
requirements. It must convey the
nobility of the school and the artistic
spirit of the month's events. It must
be handy to use, printable in-house
and cheap. Oh, and please have it
finished tonight.

How do you do a quality job
on such a tight schedule? In the
same way that you do any job—
methodically. The difference is that
you limit fonts and colors to the
basics and your layout to a simple
configuration.

The creative brief

From: Cindy Ireland
Subject: Art Schedule of Events card
Date: JULY 25, 2005 9:30 AM PDT
To: Dexter Mark Adlerka

Hello Dexter,

1 Sorry for the rush here, Cindy's below. We need something we can print in the office and pass out by hand, so we were thinking maybe they could be cards three to a sheet. It's Art Month, and the events are pretty varied, so we hope you can find an artistic look that ties them together and still feels like the school, which, as you know, is pretty traditional. Deadlines's tonight.

Best,
Cindy

2 Data College Art Department, August Schedule of Events
In an exceptional program that covers the artistic spectrum of the department, August is a month of the best presenters and lectures, conversation, critique and beautiful art. Engaging and inspiring.

4 August 4, 2005, 7:30 pm -- Dialogues in Beauty, Deborah Witt -- Shina Hall Gallery
August 6, 2005, 6 pm -- Slide Lecture, Artist Judy Miller -- Meriposa Hall 2000
August 7, 2005, 5:30 pm -- Summer Show, Student Exhibition -- University Library Gallery
August 8, 2005, 4:30 pm -- Lecture, Graphic Designer James Rogers -- University West Forum
August 10, 2005, 7 pm -- Expand Your Horizon, April Breezon -- Shina Hall Gallery
August 12, 2005, 6:30 pm -- A Conversation With Beverly Mills -- Shina Hall Gallery
August 13, 2005, 2 pm -- Summer Arts & Crafts Fair -- Main Courtyard
August 17, 2005, 5:30 pm -- Close Encounters, Julie Packard -- University Library Gallery
August 19, 2005, 4:30 pm -- Lecture, Paintings & Prints, James Rogers -- University East Forum
August 20, 2005, 7 pm -- Nearly Reflecting, April Breezon -- Shina Hall Gallery
August 23, 2005, 5:30 pm -- The Shape of Color, Jason Untalan -- University West Forum
August 27, 2005, 7:30 pm -- Peter Klimer Ceramics -- Mendocino Hall 2100

At left is the raw data, which you will visually "translate" into imagery. Highlight item by item. You're looking for key words that will govern the design.

- (1) Parameters
- (2) Title and topic
- (3) Introduction
- (4) Dates and times
- (5) Event title and speaker
- (6) Venue

Summary
Card size
Printable in the office

Key words
Artistic and traditional

Look. Read. Learn.

Next step is to find one image—we have no time for more—that embodies the ideas of *artistic* and *traditional*. Remember that the image must represent many kinds of art.

Look beyond the obvious

When looking at objects, we tend not to get much past the surface—“that’s an interesting *mask*; there’s an *old book*.” But the designer must look deeper. Put words on what you see. What, exactly, makes the mask interesting? What colors say artistic? What kind of shape says traditional? What textures? What lines? Pay attention to sensual qualities like sound, smell, touch, and the intangibles of history, culture and tradition.

The ideal image not only makes the right message (artistic and traditional) but has bold physical properties (line, silhouette, color) that can have an impact on the design.



Mask Artistic, clay, warm, mysterious, emotive, suggests theater, too human



Mouse Cold, hard, high contrast, used for art but not artistic nor traditional



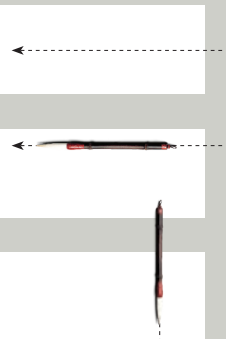
Books Highly traditional, rich, tactile, irregular, desaturated colors, suggest scholarship and history but not artistry



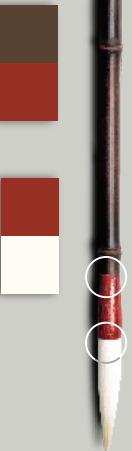
Brush Calligraphic, lacquered, well used, desaturated colors, bold silhouette, traditional; a brush says *art* to everyone. This is our image.

Now relate image to page

Establish a relationship between image and page. Ask, what are the boldest characteristics of each, and, what properties do they have in common? Work with those.



Work with what you have The page is a strong vertical line; the brush is an even stronger line. Placed parallel, they work together; crossing, they have friction and energy; and in this case the brush becomes a header, too. The centerline is the point of highest contrast (below and right).



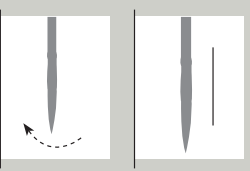
Low contrast



High contrast



Centerline



What size?

When you have only one image, it’s natural to want it big. But pay attention. In this case, a bigger brush would isolate and deaden the space above it (below, top). Think of white as liquid, and let it flow (bottom).

Create a simple color palette

Create a color palette made of the image plus one additional color, which can harmonize or, in this case, contrast. For versatility, adjust the color to its middle value.

Sample, locate, reduce
The dominant color in an image—here, muted red—will have the most interaction with the background color. Locate this red on the color wheel (right). Straight across is its *complement* (green), which has intense contrast. Either side of green are red's *split complements* (green-yellow and green-blue), which contrast but with less tension. To make beautifully soft contrast, lighten the complement.

Middle value
Middle-value green yields the best of three worlds—a touch of contrast, the sedate softness of old, well-used things, and visual *depth*. Against middle value, the dark and light of the brush come forward, making a strong illusion of an object that's physically on the page.

Select one type family, and set it in one size

Here, the idea of *traditional* and the need for simplicity intersect; old books were often set in a single family of serif type, which here will convey tradition and minimize decisions.

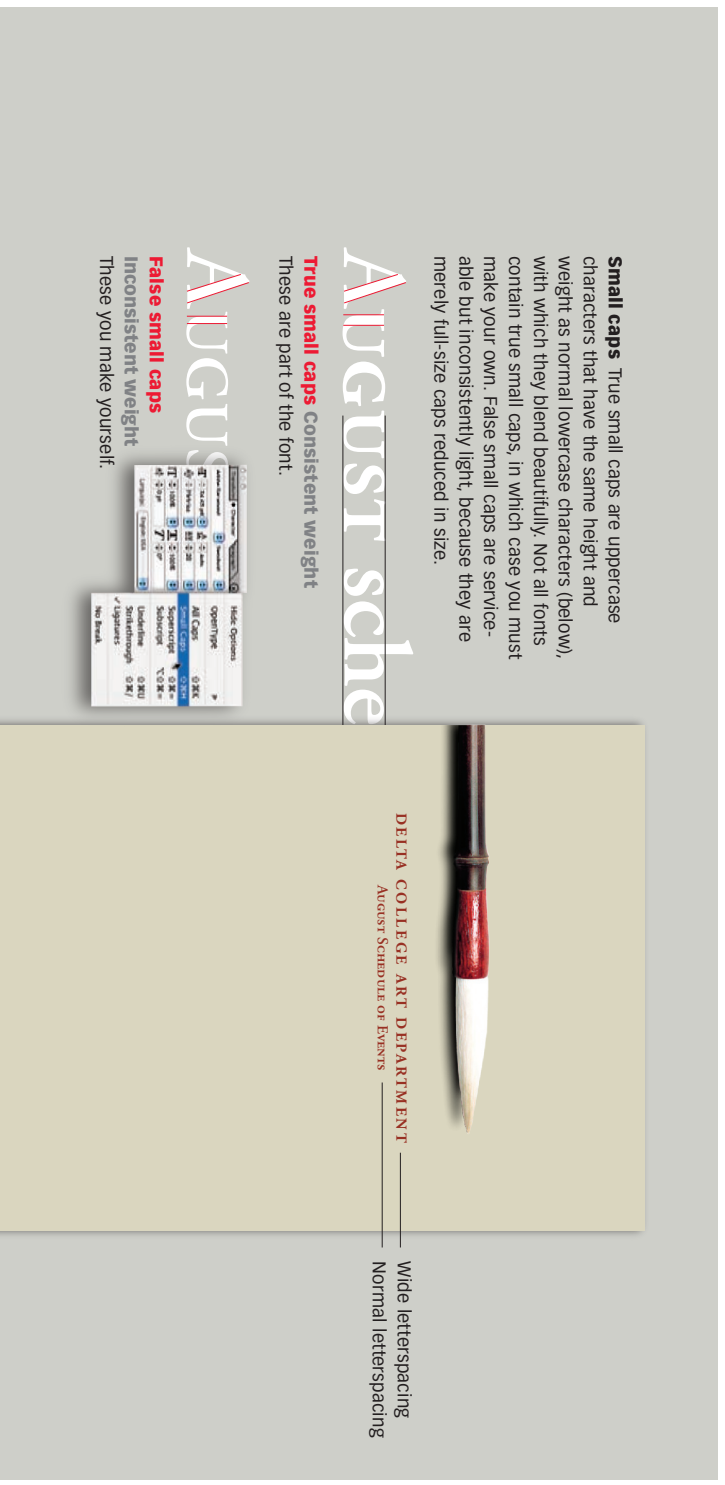
Note the brush is used as a spacer.

Start with a bold statement Center the title in all caps with wide letter spacing, which conveys pre-eminence, power, permanence. Note in this case that all caps echo the straight line of the brush (above). Upper- and lowercase (below) has a busy line that sets a more conversational tone.

DELTA COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT

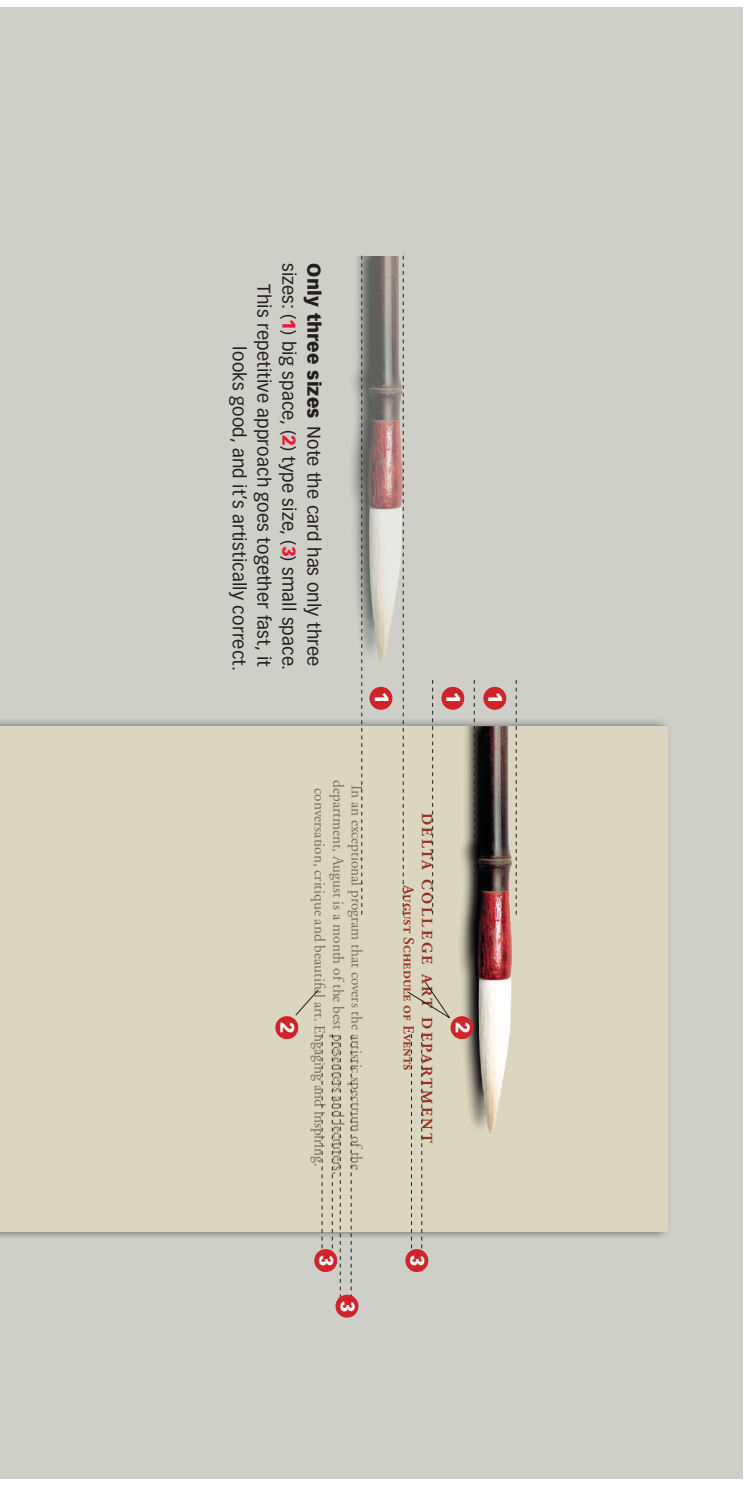
Center the second title in small caps

Center the second title the same size as the first but in small caps, which convey the presence and authority of full capitals but at a secondary level.



Repeat, repeat, repeat

As you add copy, keep the card simple by repeating what's already on the page—same typestyle, same size, same spacing, all centered.



Differentiate elements by changing styles

Differentiate titles, venues and dates by assigning each a style—light, italic or bold—but do not change the size or spacing.

DELTA COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT
AUGUST SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

In an exceptional program that covers the artistic spectrum of the department, August is a month of the best presenters and lecturers, conversation, critique and beautiful art. Engaging and inspiring.

DIALOGUES IN BEAUTY, DEBORAH WITT, 7:30 P.M.
Shirna Hall Gallery

SLIDE LECTURE, ARTIST JUDY MILLER, 6 P.M.
4
Merrypop Hall 2000

SUMMER SHOW, STUDENT EXHIBITION, 5:30 P.M.
6
University Library Gallery

LECTURE, GRAPHIC DESIGNER JAMES ROGERS, 4:30 P.M.
7
University West Forum

Consistency within elements

The headline encompasses the events below it, so keep the relationship in size and style, but differentiate by color. Green on green has less contrast and lower visibility, therefore lower hierarchy.

Use old-style numerals

If they are available (not all fonts have them), use beautiful old-style numerals, which blend with upper- and lowercase characters and convey both artistry and tradition.

DELTA COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT
AUGUST SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

In an exceptional program that covers the artistic spectrum of the department, August is a month of the best presenters and lecturers, conversation, critique and beautiful art. Engaging and inspiring.

DIALOGUES IN BEAUTY, DEBORAH WITT, 7:30 P.M.
4
Shirna Hall Gallery

SLIDE LECTURE, ARTIST JUDY MILLER, 6 P.M.
6
Merrypop Hall 2000

SUMMER SHOW, STUDENT EXHIBITION, 5:30 P.M.
7
University Library Gallery

LECTURE, GRAPHIC DESIGNER JAMES ROGERS, 4:30 P.M.
8
University West Forum

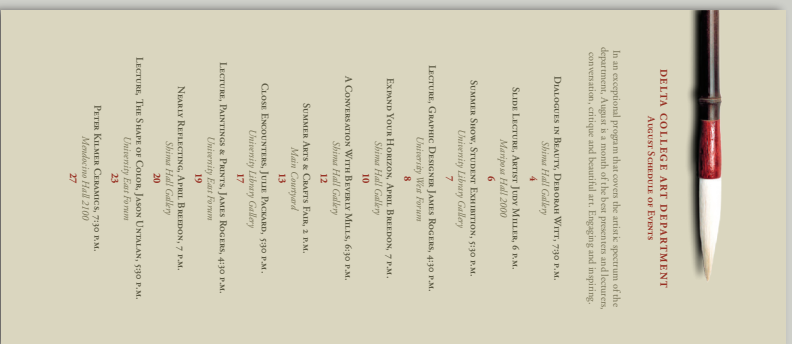
Red dates tie to the brush and headlines and define the centerline.

Use old-style numerals in text

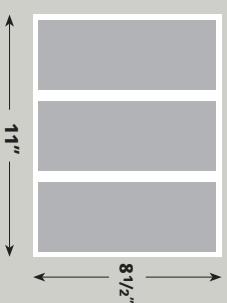
Above, standard numerals are uppercase and monospaced to align in columns for accounting use and more. Beautiful old-style numerals, below, are meant for use in text. Smaller like lowercase letters, they're more varied and often descend far below the baseline. Also like letters they have different widths and are called non-lining, because in columns they don't line up.

Ascenders
135678 JAMES ROGERS
Descenders

The finished card. Continue your way down the centerline until the job is beautifully complete.



For desktop printing . . .
While a full bleed (far left) is ideal, to print 3-up on a standard desktop printer you'll need to allow a quarter-inch (or so) margin on all sides.



1 Print 3-up on a heavy 8 1/2" x 11" sheet. Trim.



2 Mail in an envelope . . .
A #9-size envelope—slightly smaller than the standard #10—is a perfect fit.



3 . . . or send as a postcard, which has the benefit of its visual appeal. The card is too long to get postcard mailing rates, though; it requires first class.

