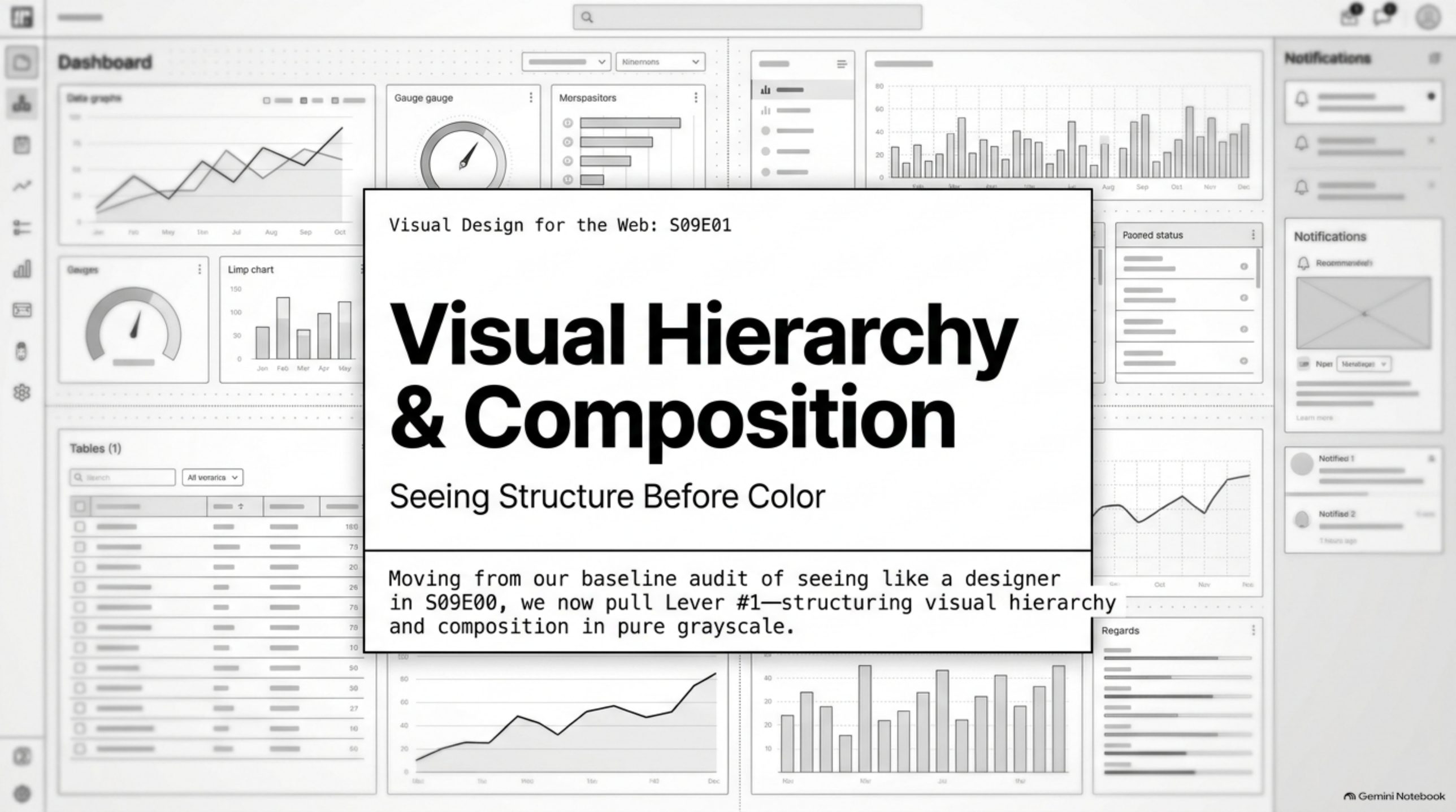

Dashboard
Gauge gauge
Limp chart
Tables (1)
Notifications
Notifications
Regards
Visual Design for the Web: S09E01
Visual Hierarchy & Composition
Seeing Structure Before Color
Moving from our baseline audit of seeing like a designer in S09E00, we now pull Lever #1—structuring visual hierarchy and composition in pure grayscale.
Gemini Notebook

1. THE PHYSICS OF VISUAL WEIGHT

ISOLATION: THE SPOTLIGHT

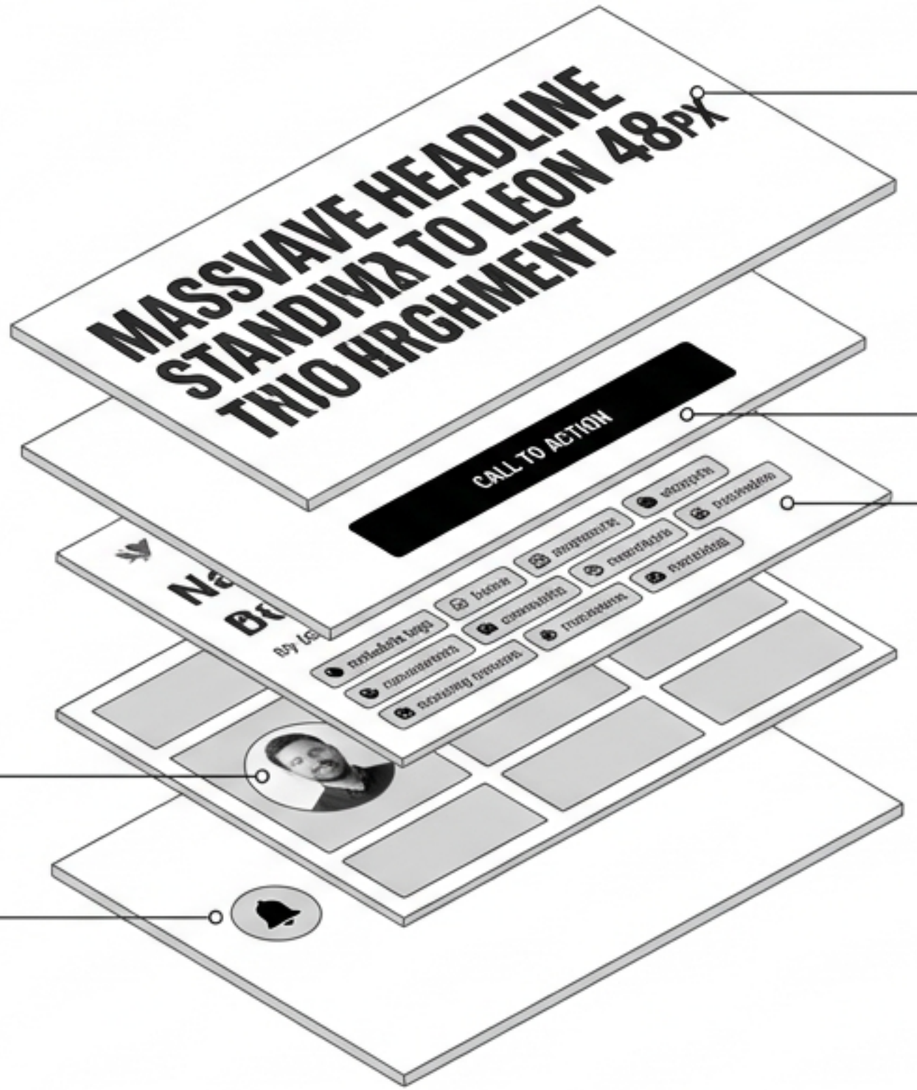
Active macro-whitespace framing an element.

NEGATIVE SPACE FRAMING

SHAPE REGULARITY: THE ANOMALY

Organic shapes disrupting strict grids.

GEOMETRIC DEVIATION



SCALE: THE ANCHOR

Size relative to context.

RELATIVE DIMENSIONS

LUMINANCE VALUE CONTRAST: THE MAGNET

Light vs. dark intensity.

VALUE DIFFERENTIALS

DENSITY: THE TEXTURE

Local visual clustering vs. micro-whitespace.

CLUSTERING COEFFICIENT

Gemini Notebook

MAPPING THE VIEWPORT: THE 3 DOMINANCE TIERS

Humans perceive a maximum of three distinct hierarchy levels before structural clarity collapses into noise.

RANK #1: DOMINANT (THE FOCAL POINT)

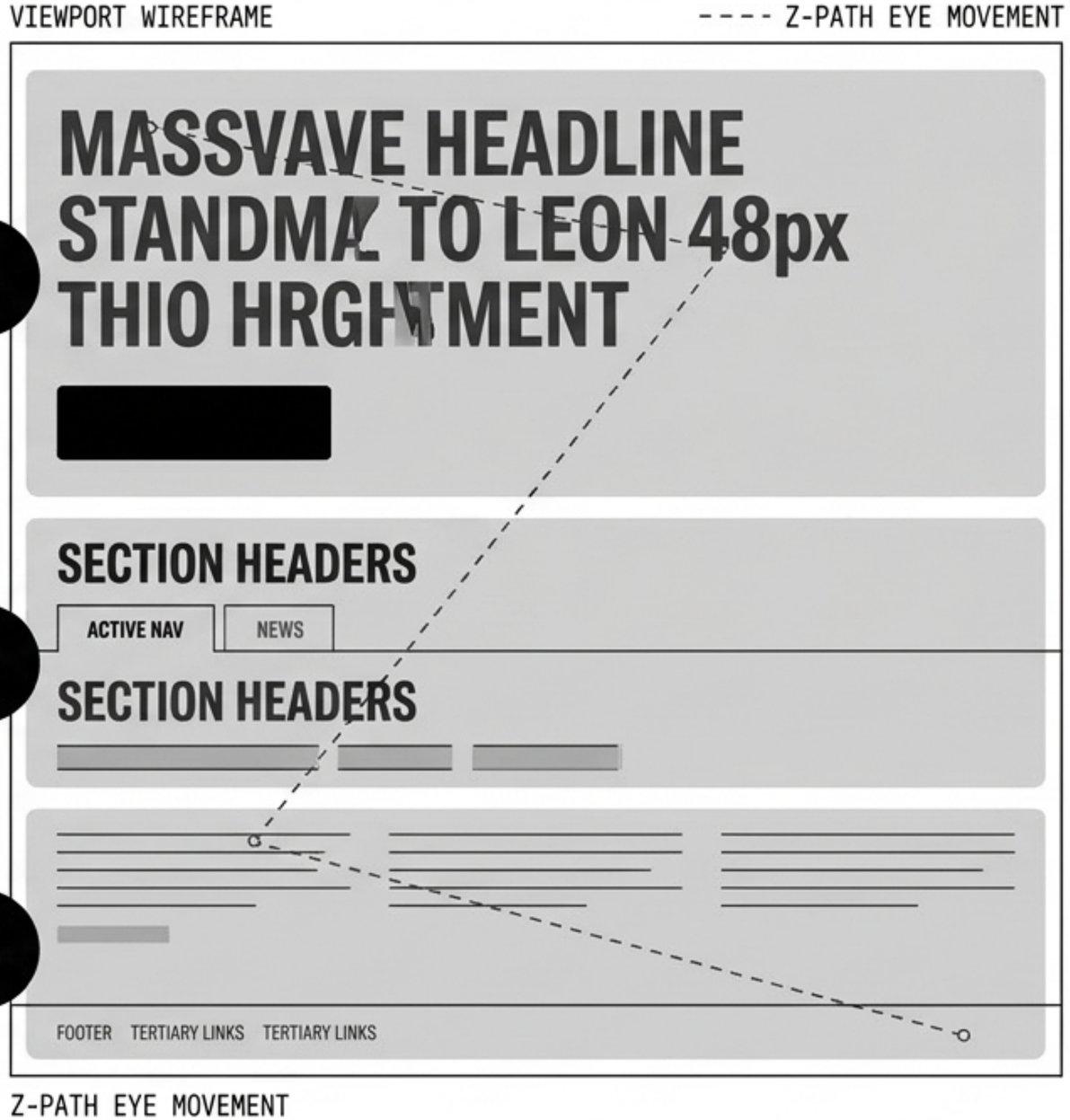
The single heaviest element. Immediate entry point.

RANK #2: SUB-DOMINANT (STRUCTURAL ANCHORS)

Section headers and secondary elements. Efficient scanning.

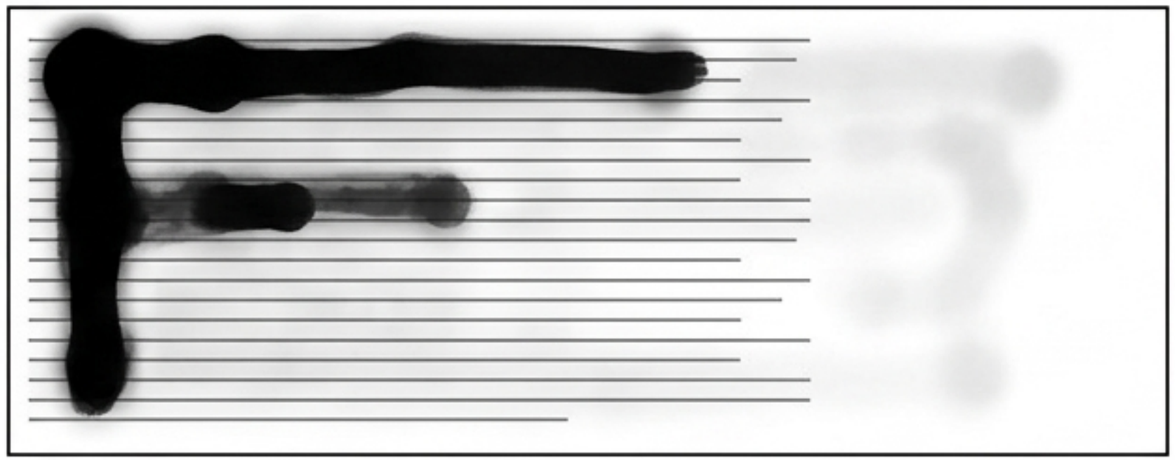
RANK #3: SUBORDINATE (METADATA/CHROME)

Body text, footers, tertiary links. Deep reading and context.



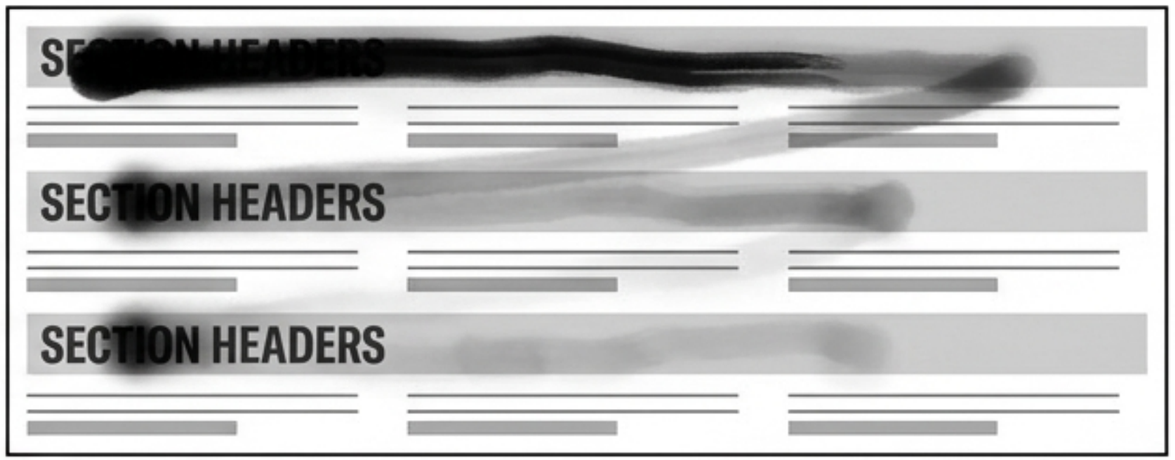
Gemini Notebook

2. SCAN PATHS: BREAKING THE F-PATTERN



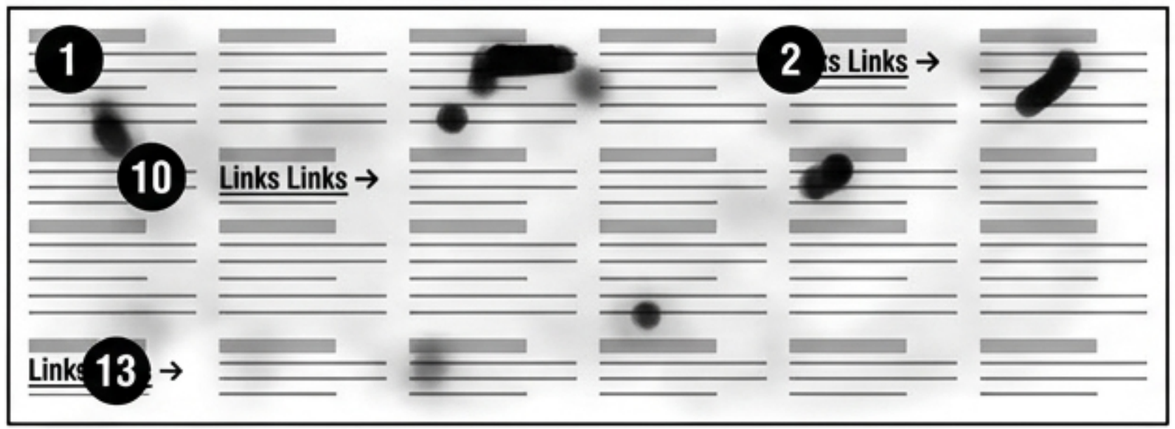
The F-Pattern (The Trap)

Right-side blindness caused by dense, unchunked walls of text. Users skip vital content.



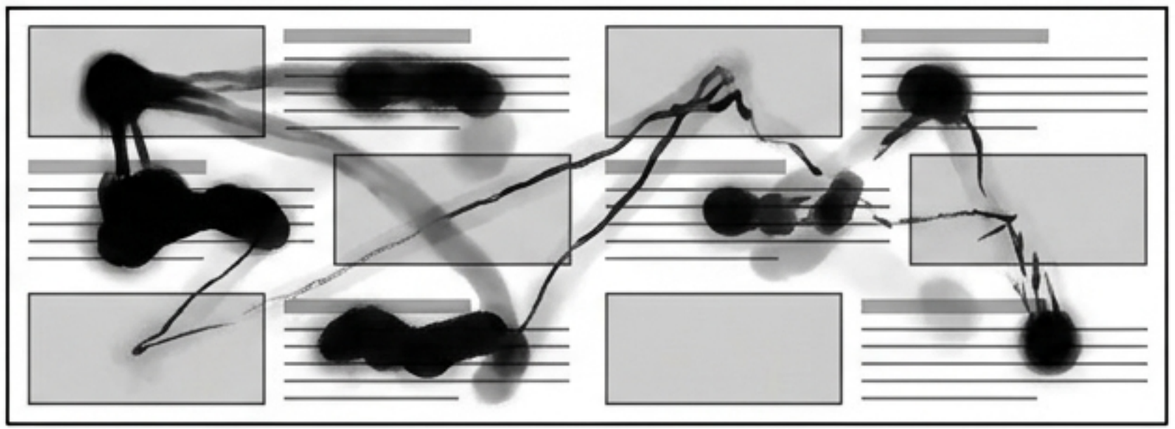
The Layer-Cake

Optimized horizontal scanning utilizing strong Sub-dominant (Rank #2) headings to chunk content.



The Spotted Pattern

Hunting for specific visual shapes (links, digits, bold text) in a sea of uniformity.

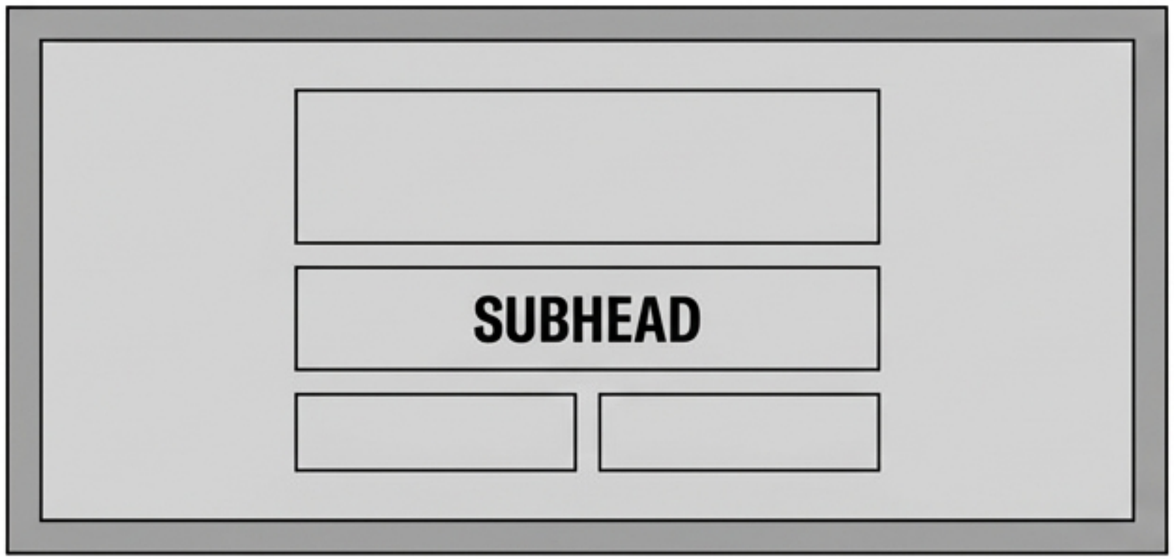


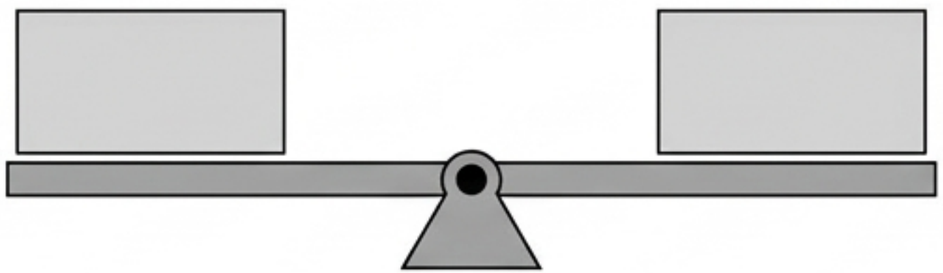
The Zigzag Stumble

Alternating image/text layouts create friction; users actively stumble over decorative images.

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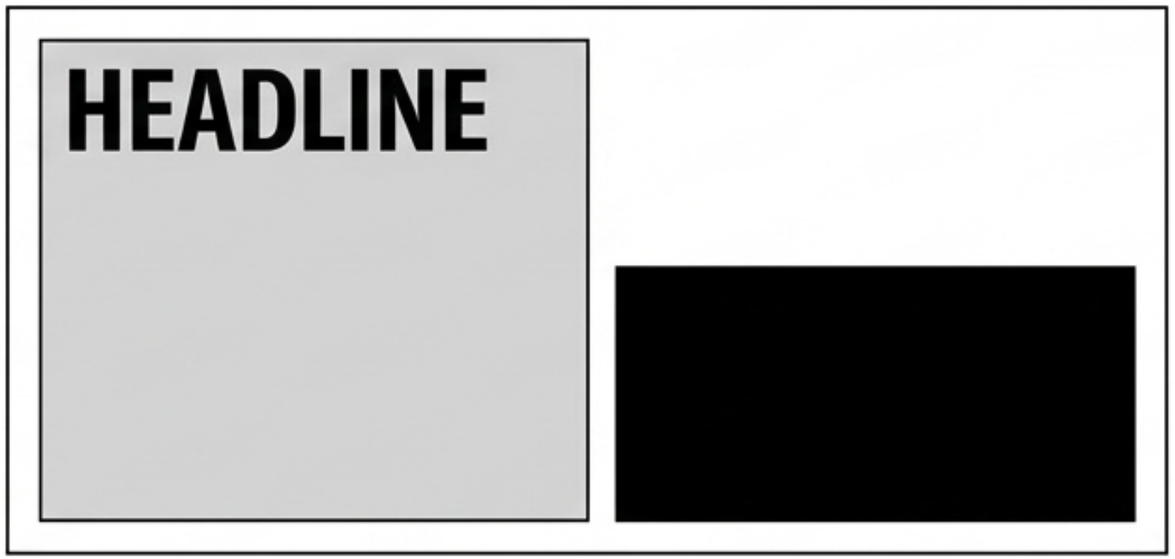
ENGINEERING VISUAL BALANCE

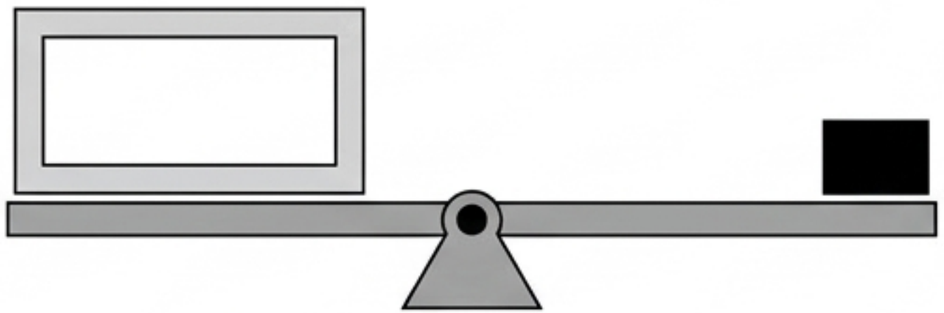




Symmetrical Balance (Static)

Elements mirrored on a central axis. Safe, quiet, but often mimics a generic template.





Asymmetrical Balance (Dynamic)

A large, quiet area of macro-whitespace counterweighting a compact, high-contrast element. Feels bespoke, energetic, and deliberate.

Gemini Notebook

3. GESTALT CURES FOR TEMPLATE BOXITIS

Stop drawing boxes. Use psychological laws to create structure.

PROXIMITY: Elements closer together are perceived as related.
Rule: Ensure related items are closer to each other than to anything else.

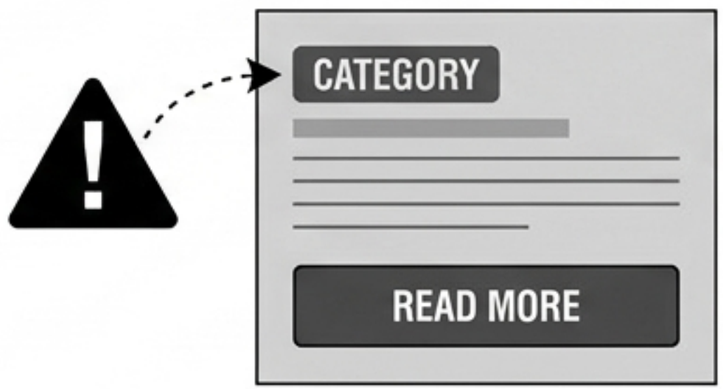


WRONG



RIGHT

SIMILARITY: Elements sharing visual traits belong together.
Warning: Prevent static "eyebrow" text pills from mimicking the visual weight of clickable buttons.



WRONG



RIGHT

Gemini Notebook

ERADICATING UI CLUTTER

TEMPLATE CLUTTER



GESTALT STRUCTURE



COMMON REGION

Containing elements within a shared background value cures heavy border clutter. You don't need a 1px solid border if a subtle tonal shift does the same job.

UNIFORM CONNECTEDNESS

Elements visually connected by lines or shared continuous shapes overpower proximity. Use sparingly for distinct interactive groupings (e.g., active states).

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SIMPLICITY BY DEFAULT

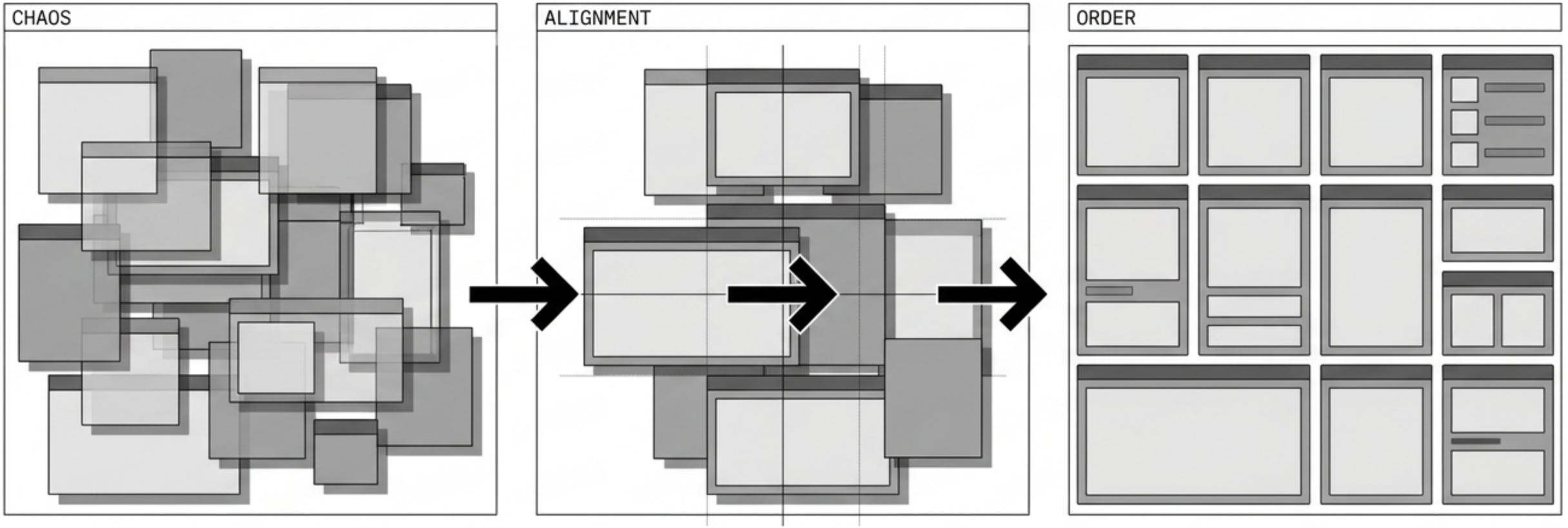


FIGURE-GROUND

The eye must instantly separate the focal object (Figure) from its background (Ground). Avoid ambiguous overlapping elements that confuse depth.

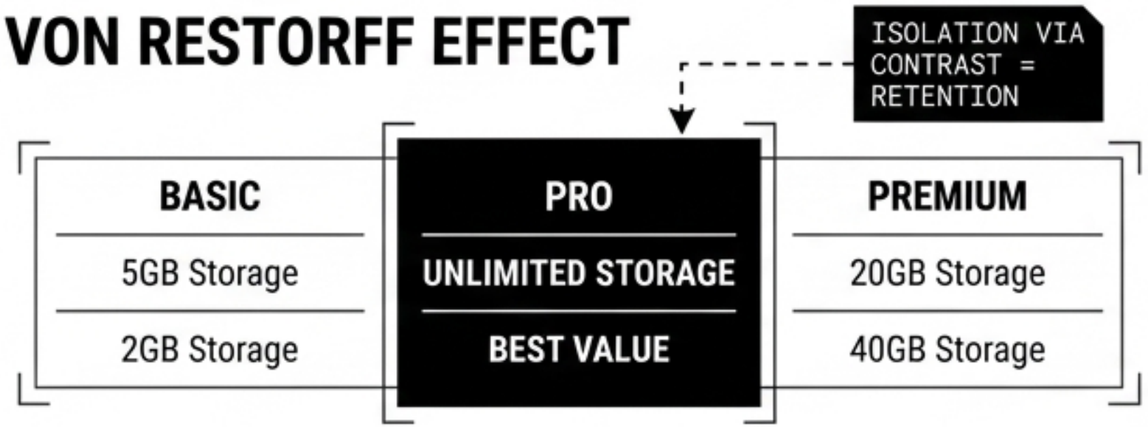
PRÄGNANZ
(LAW OF SIMPLICITY)

The brain processes complex shapes into the simplest possible forms. Complex UI flourishes increase cognitive load; simple geometric alignment speeds up comprehension.

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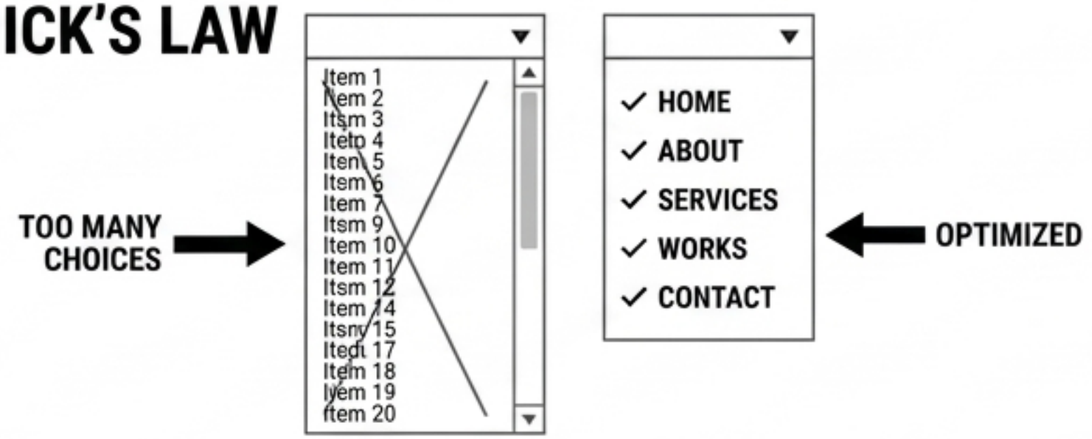
PSYCHOLOGICAL LAWS OF COMPOSITION

VON RESTORFF EFFECT



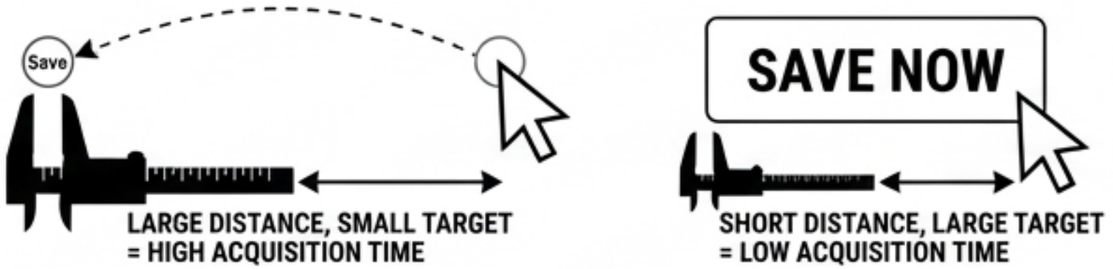
The isolated, contrasting item is remembered.
Use for the single primary CTA.

HICK'S LAW



More choices = exponential cognitive friction.
Streamline navigation arrays.

FITTS'S LAW



Target acquisition time dictates CTA size and proximity.
Make critical actions large and close.

SERIAL POSITION EFFECT



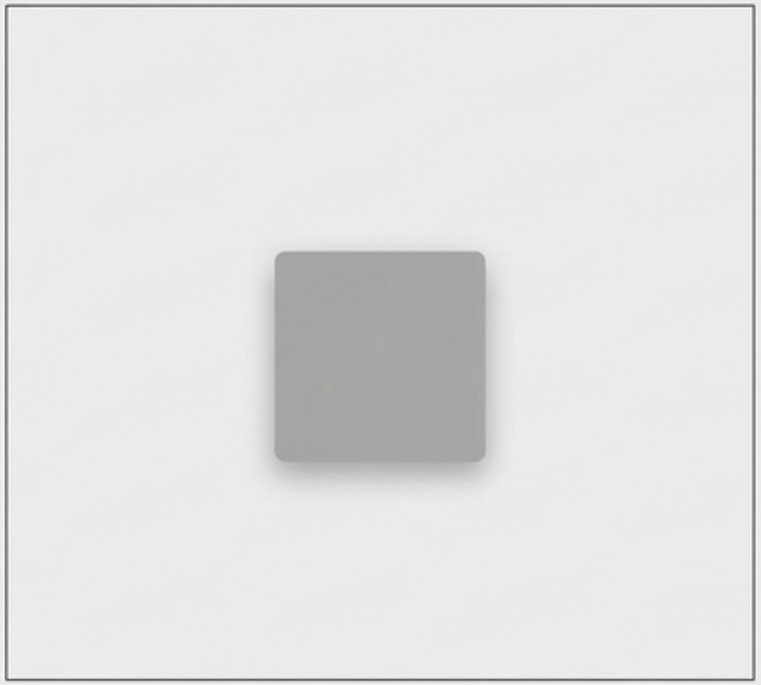
We remember the first and last items best. Anchor critical navigation items on the far left and far right.

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4. THE STYLE MATRIX (PURE MONOCHROME)







WARM EDITORIAL

Asymmetric 5/7 split. Generous macro-whitespace. Massive, high-contrast headline dominance (Rank #1).

CRISP SWISS / TECHNICAL UTILITY

Left-aligned index rail. 1px precise keylines. Tabular, data-dense scan precision.

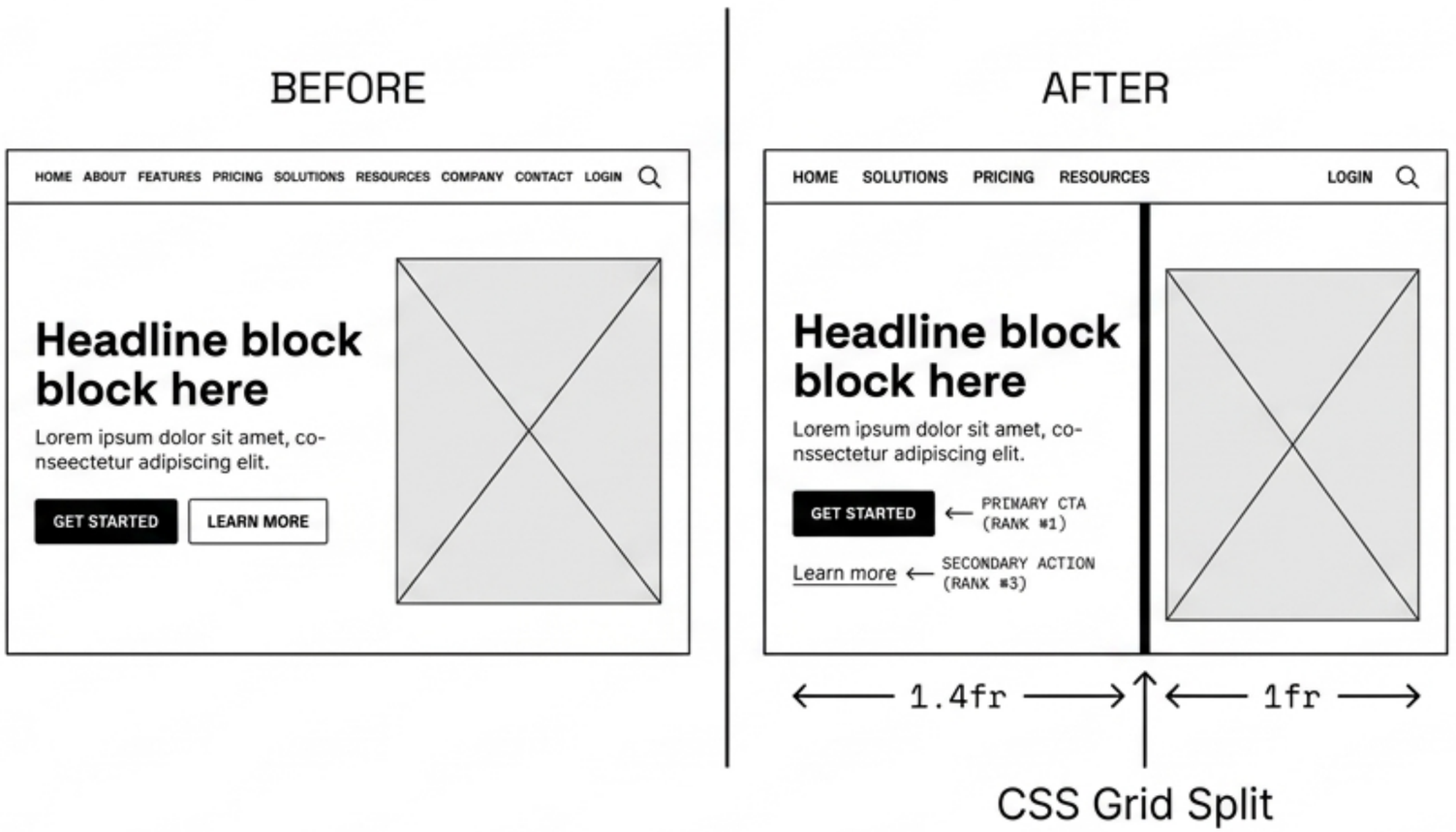
TACTILE CRAFT BRAND

Soft tonal surface elevation. Absolute isolation of a single hero artifact centered in space.

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5. LIVE TRANSFORMATION: CANOPY (PART 1)

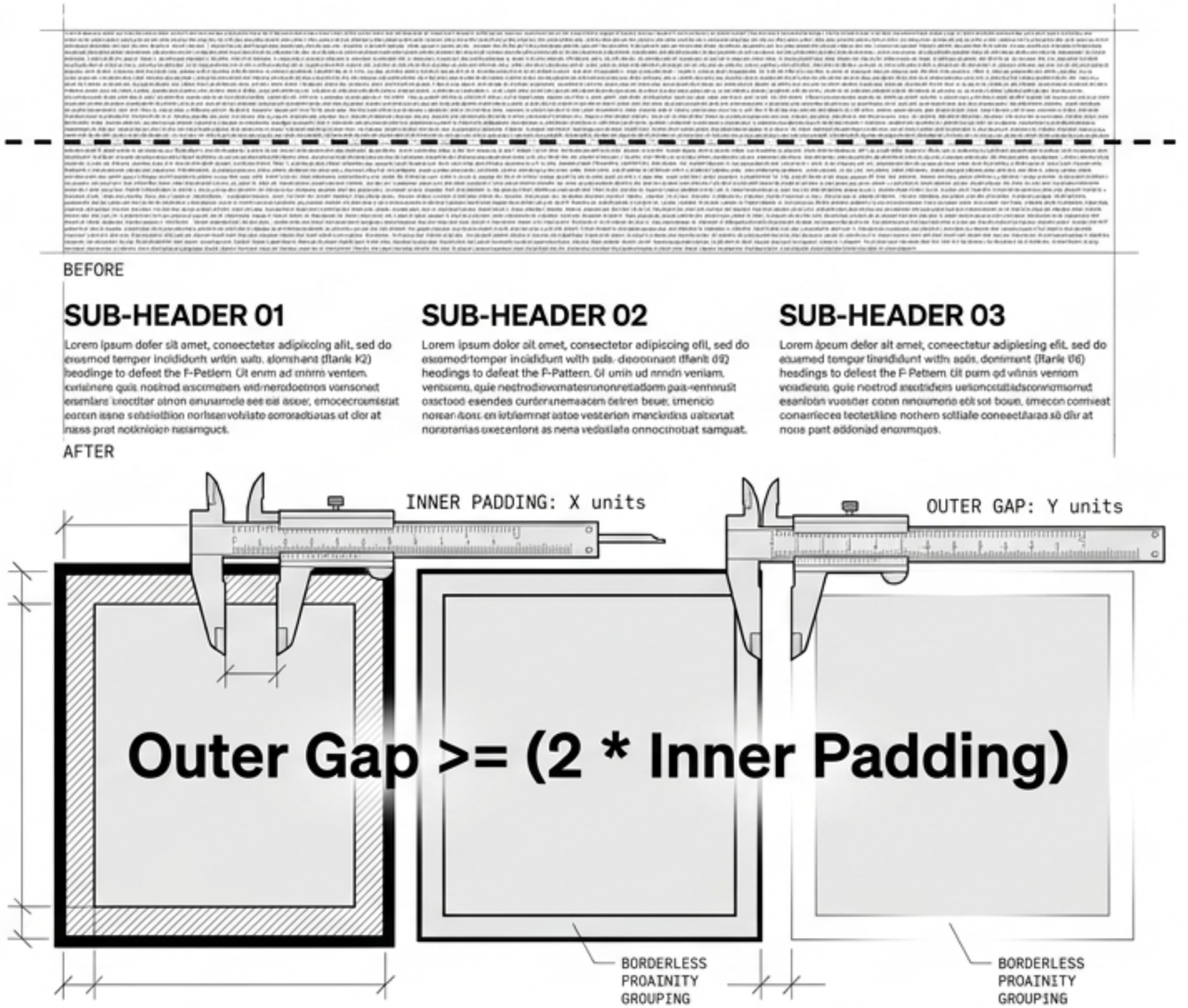
- **Streamlining Navigation**: Applying Hick's Law and Serial Position to reduce navbar choices from 9 to 5.
- **The 1.4fr 1fr Split**: Shifting the hero to a precise asymmetrical CSS Grid split.
- **Focusing the CTA**: Isolating a single filled primary CTA (Rank #1) and relegating the secondary action to a quiet text link (Rank #3).



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LIVE TRANSFORMATION: CANOPY (PART 2)

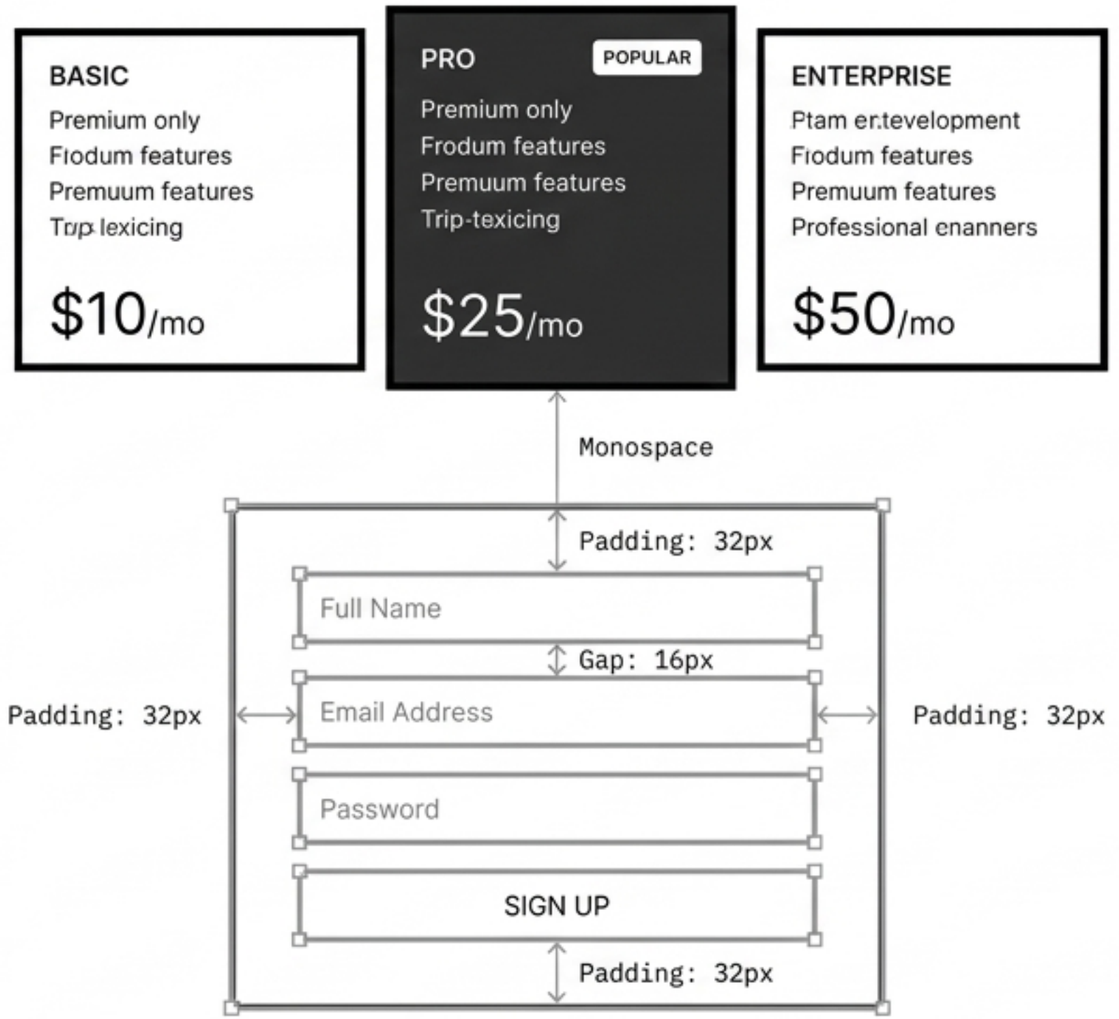
- Curing Boxitis: Removing heavy feature-card outlines. Grouping achieved purely through >= 2:1 outer-to-inner proximity rules.
- Layer-Cake Chunking: Breaking up a massive paragraph of editorial text into scannable chunks with sub-dominant (Rank #2) headings to defeat the F-Pattern.



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Live Transformation: Canopy (Part 3)

- Spotlighting Pricing: Elevating the middle tier using value contrast (dark fill) and Von Restorff isolation.
- Streamlining the Form: Consolidating inputs into a unified Common Region.
- Development Hooks: Built with strict Figma Auto Layout logic, mapping 1:1 with Webflow and CSS Grid behaviors.

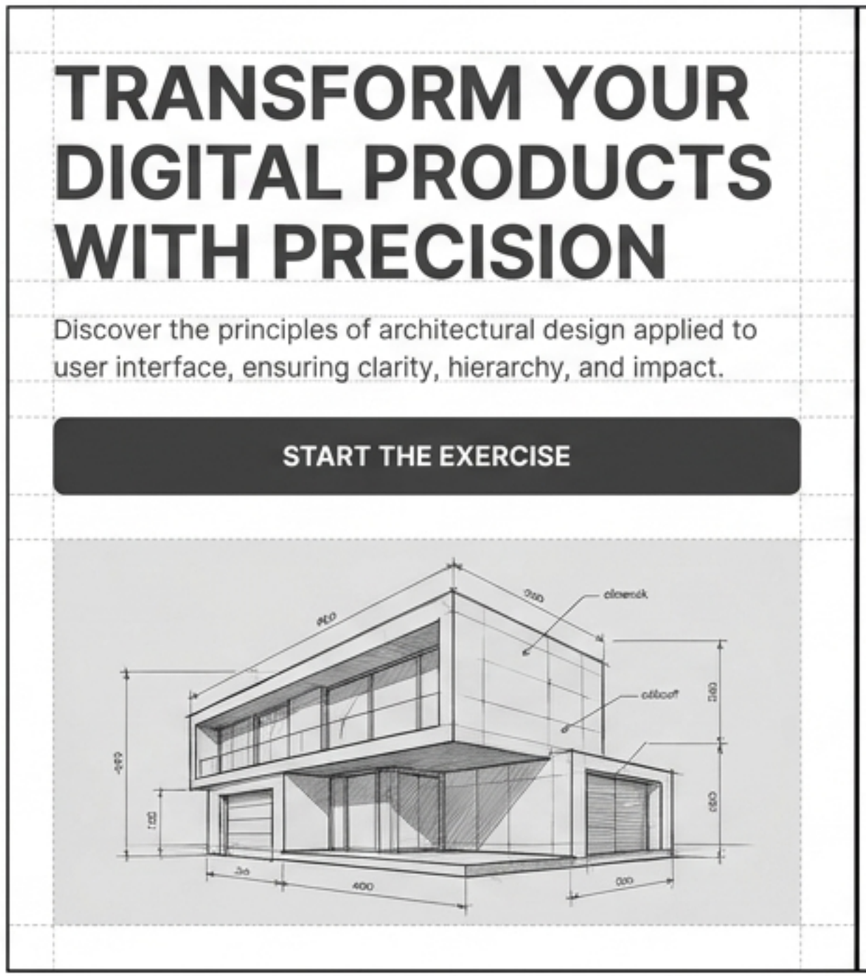


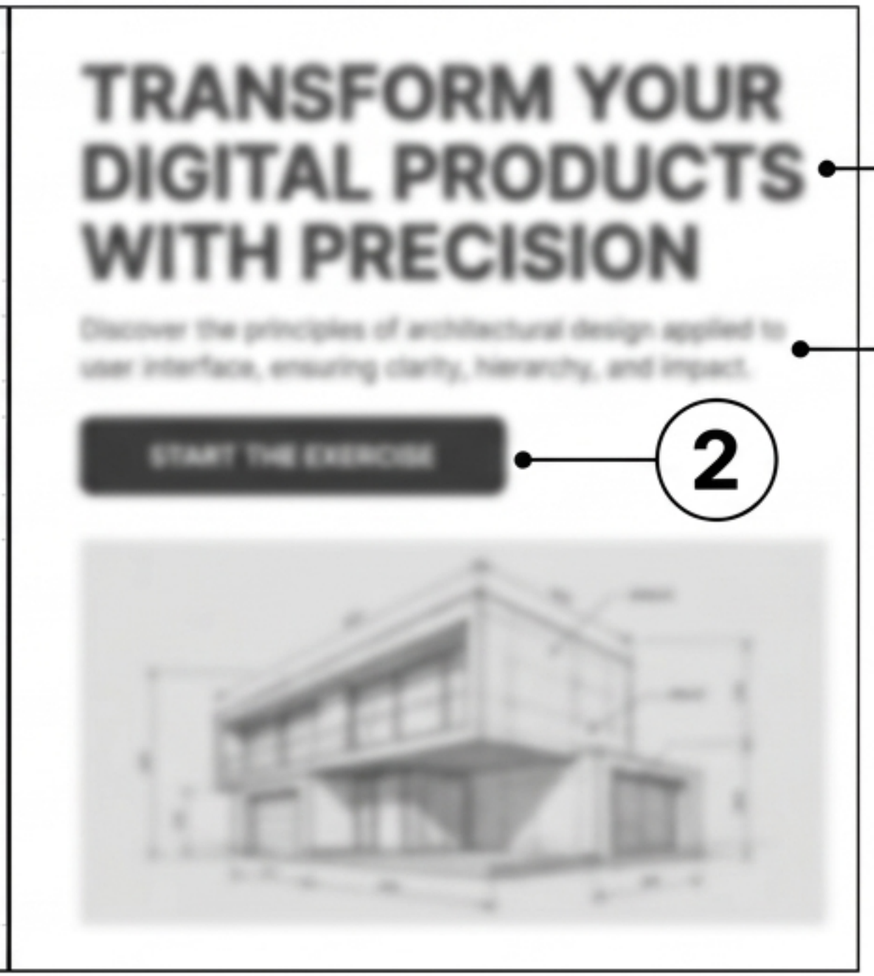
Gemini Notebook

6. Hands-On Exercise: The Squint Test

The ultimate diagnostic tool for visual hierarchy.

- Step 1: Strip all color (`saturate(0)`).
- Step 2: Apply an 8px blur to your canvas.
- Step 3: Read the remaining blobs. Do they visually command attention in the exact order of Rank 1, Rank 2, and Rank 3?



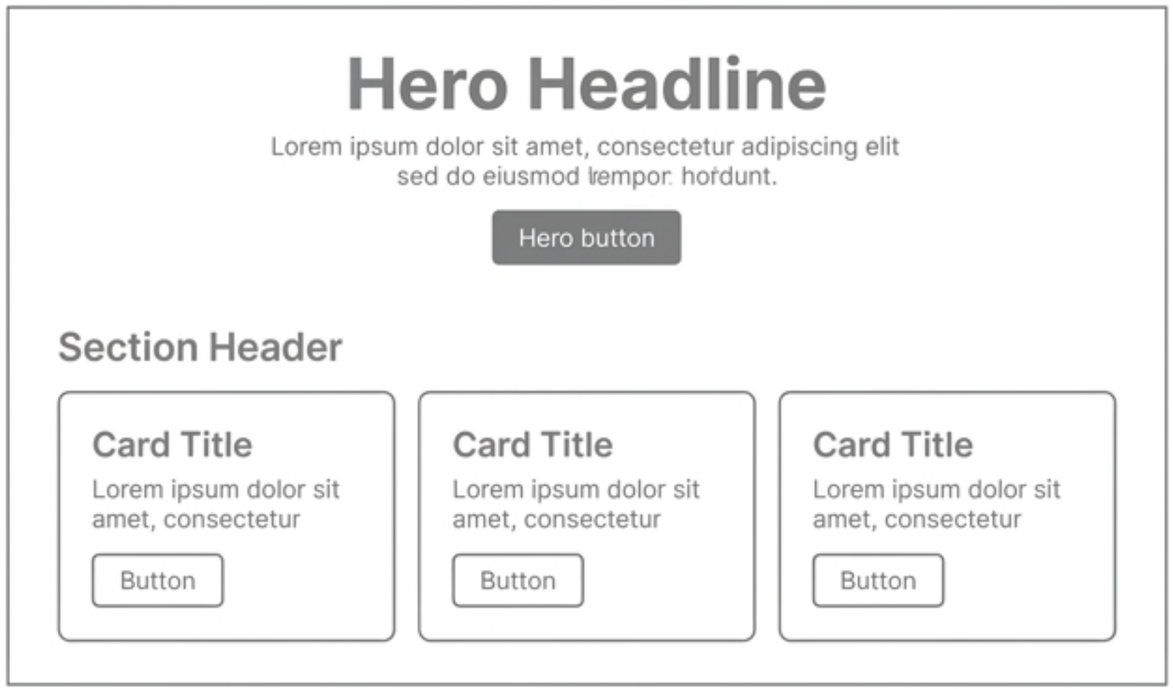


Gemini Notebook

15-Minute Workshop



Broken Layout



Your Workspace

Task: Take the provided “Broken” Hero + 3-Card layout in Figma, your website builder, or CSS.

Constraints: - Grayscale only.
- Tune ONLY size, value, and spacing.

Goal: Force the layout to pass the 8px Blur Squint Test so that the Primary CTA, Section Header, and Card Titles read in exact hierarchical sequence.

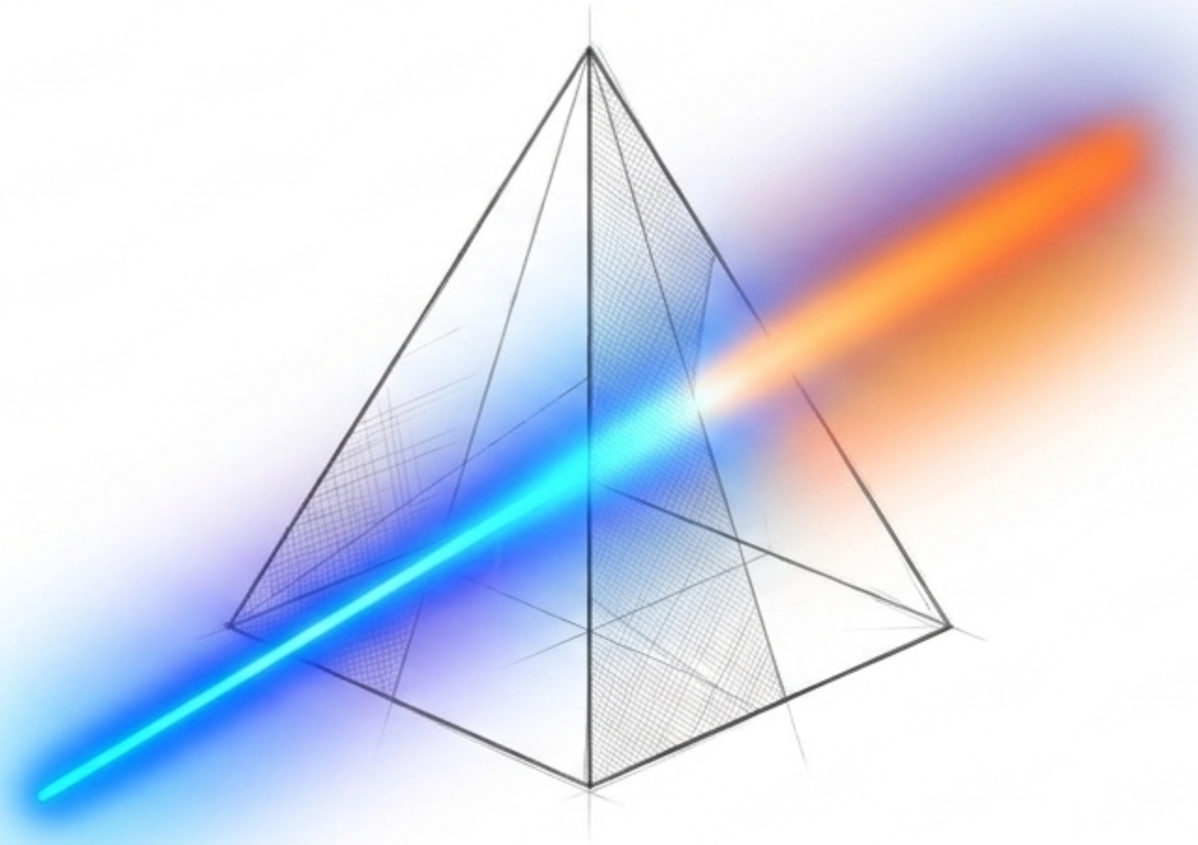
Gemini Notebook

7. The Architecture Rules (S09E01 Reference)

Max 3 Hierarchy Tiers	Never exceed 3 levels of dominance per viewport section.
Proximity Ratio: >= 2:1	Outer padding/margin must be at least twice the size of inner padding.
The CTA Rule: 1	Maximum of 1 primary filled CTA per viewport screen.
Navigation: 5-7 Max	Limit top-level nav items to defeat Hick”s Law.
Active Macro-Whitespace	Treat whitespace as a structural block, not just “empty” space.

Gemini Notebook

Next Up in S09E02



Colour and Contrast

Now that the concrete has cured and the structural hierarchy is mathematically sound, we introduce Lever #2. We will explore how hue, saturation, and contrast ratios guide emotion and direct action.

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