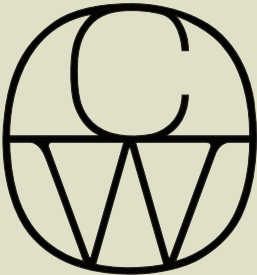


CREATIVE WORKS. STUDIO

THE ESSENTIALS OF
A VISUAL BRAND IDENTITY





Michelle, Graphic Designer
CREATIVE WORKS. STUDIO

THE ESSENTIALS OF A VISUAL BRAND IDENTITY

Your visual identity is the heart of your brand – the first impression that creates recognition, trust, and connection with your audience. Strong and authentic branding is not just about aesthetics, but about conveying your core values visually in a way that feels genuine and engaging.

This guide is designed to help you build a cohesive and strategic visual identity. We'll dive into essential elements such as logo, color palette, typography, image style, and graphics – and how to use them to create a strong, recognizable, and timeless brand experience.

Whether you're establishing a new brand or looking to refine your existing visual identity, this guide will provide you with valuable insights and inspiration to strengthen your brand story through design.

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01 LOGO & MONOGRAM

The logo is the face of the brand and serves as a visual landmark that creates recognition and trust. A strong logo or monogram should be unique, timeless, and reflect the brand's values, differentiating it from competitors.

Why is a strong logo important?

Recognition

Your logo is often the first thing customers see and the one they remember. A well-executed logo creates an immediate connection, allowing your brand to stand out in a crowded market.

Differentiation

A strong visual brand helps distinguish your brand from competitors. In a market where many brands offer similar products or services, it's crucial to have a visual identity that makes your brand unique and unforgettable.

Credibility

A professionally designed logo builds trust with your audience. People tend to trust brands that appear well-organized and thought-out, and a cohesive visual design supports that perception.

Emotional Connection

A well-executed logo and strong visual identity can create an emotional connection with your audience. The design can evoke specific feelings or associations that resonate with your audience's values, needs, or desires.

Logo Guidelines in a Brand Guide

Primary Logo

The main logo used across most platforms and materials. It should be presented in various color variants (full color, black/white, negative version).

Alternative Logos & Monograms

Secondary logos or simplified versions used in specific contexts. A monogram can be useful for small spaces, icons, or social media.

Scaling & Space

Minimum size for legibility. Clear space around the logo (no elements too close, to maintain its impact).

Logo Color Variations

How the logo should be used on light and dark backgrounds. Versions in the brand's primary colors.

Incorrect Use of the Logo

Prohibited changes (e.g., stretching, color alterations, adding effects). Examples of what NOT to do to ensure the logo always remains professional.

Types of Logos

When developing a logo, there are different styles to consider:



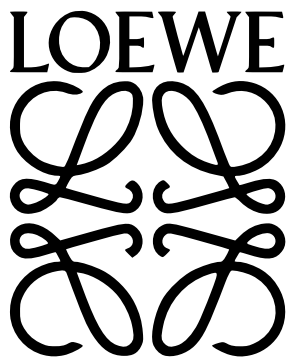
Wordmark

Text only, where the brand's name is the primary identifier



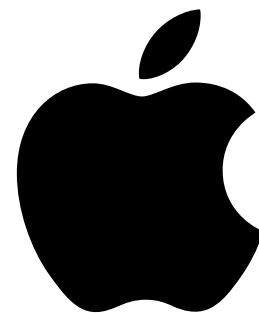
Lettermark/Monogram

Initials or abbreviations of the brand name, typically used for longer or more complex names



Combination Logo

A combination of text and an icon/symbol that creates a strong visual identity



Symbol

A simple graphic representation that can stand alone as the brand's identity



Emblem

Text integrated into a symbol, often used to create a classic or formal look

COLOR IS A **POWER**
WHICH DIRECTLY
INFLUENCES THE **SOUL.**



02 COLOR PALETTE

Colors create mood and emotions in the audience and play a crucial role in brand identity. A well-chosen color palette can communicate the brand's personality and ensure a consistent visual presence across platforms and materials.

Why is a well-thought-out color palette important?

Creates an Emotional Response

Colors can evoke specific feelings and associations, e.g., blue for trust and stability, red for energy and passion.

Strengthens Brand Recognition

Consistent use of colors makes the brand easy to recognize.

Communicates the Brand's Values and Personality

The color choice can signal whether the brand is luxurious, sustainable, playful, or serious.

Ensures Consistency Across Materials

A defined color palette makes it easy to create a cohesive thread in all visual communication.

The Structure of the Color Palette in a Brand Guide

Primary Colors

The key colors that represent the brand. Used most frequently on the logo, website, marketing materials, etc.

Secondary Colors

Complement the primary colors and create flexibility in the design. Can be used for backgrounds, graphic elements, icons, etc.

Neutral Colors

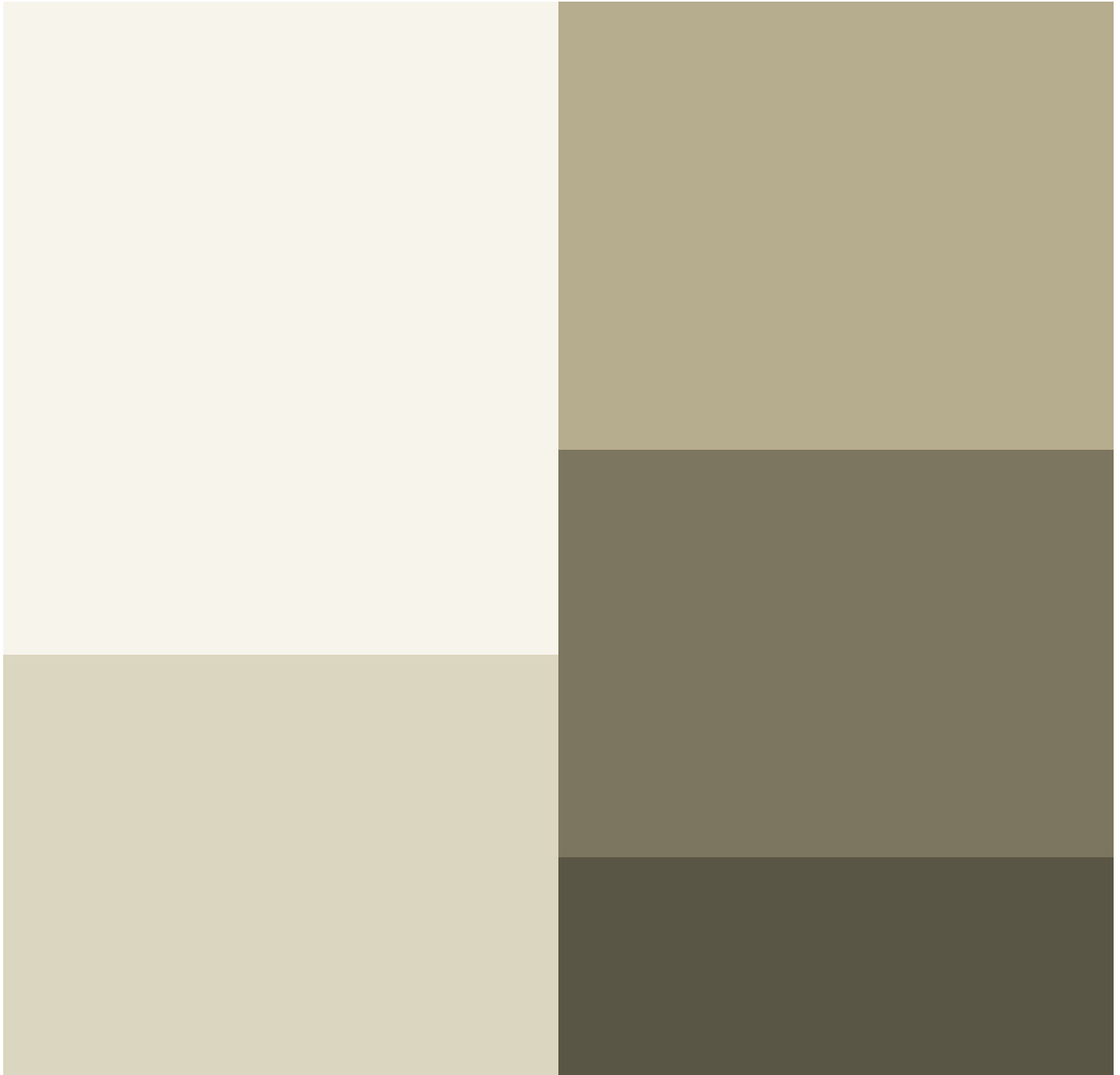
Typically black, white, gray tones, or beige shades. Used for text, backgrounds, or to balance the stronger colors.

Accent Colors

Used sparingly to highlight important elements (CTA buttons, details in graphics, etc.). Adds life to the design without taking focus away from the primary colors.

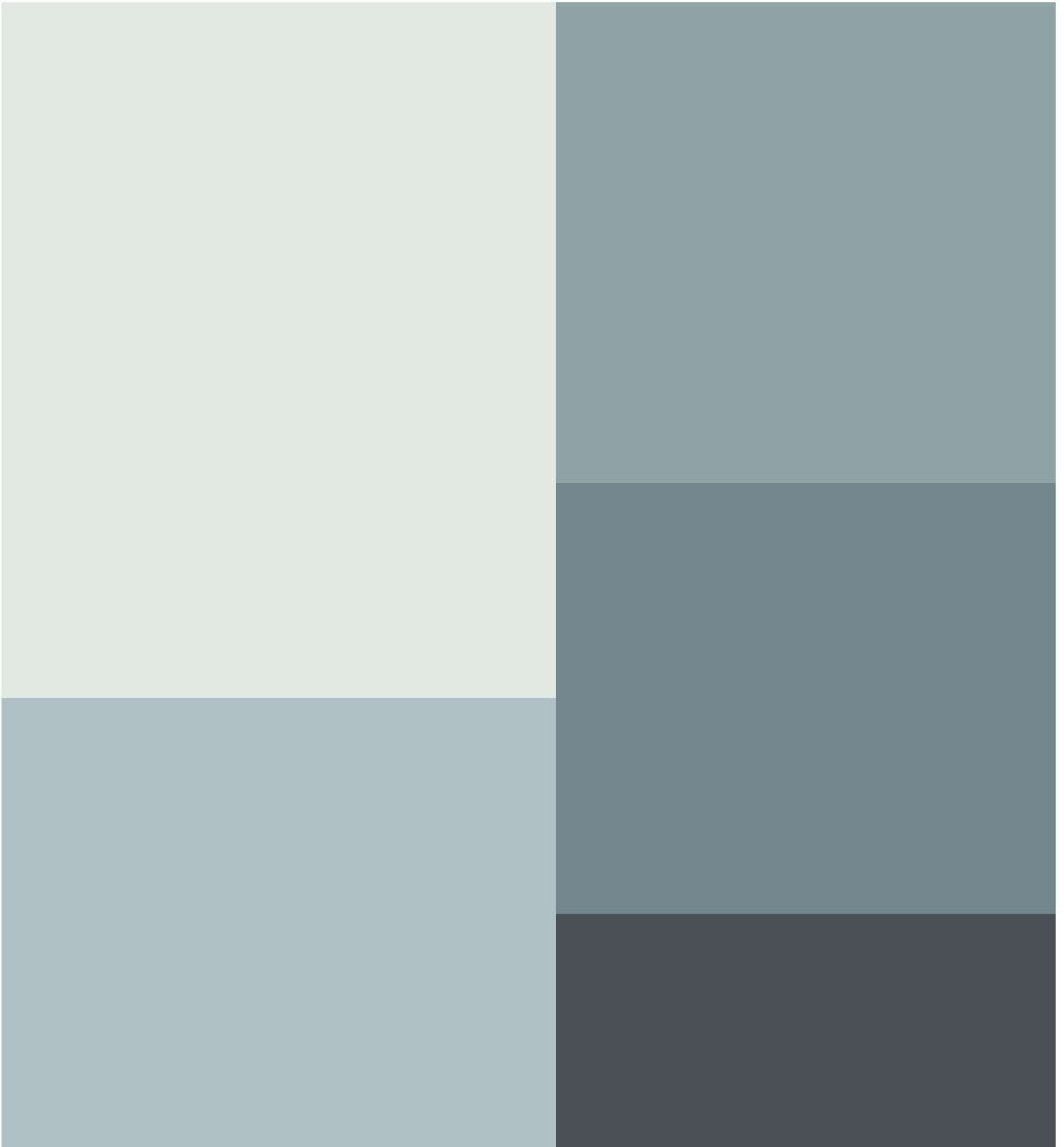
Color Palettes and Their Meaning in Brand Mood

Colors influence how a brand is perceived, create moods, and communicate personality. Here, we explore different color palettes and their significance in branding.



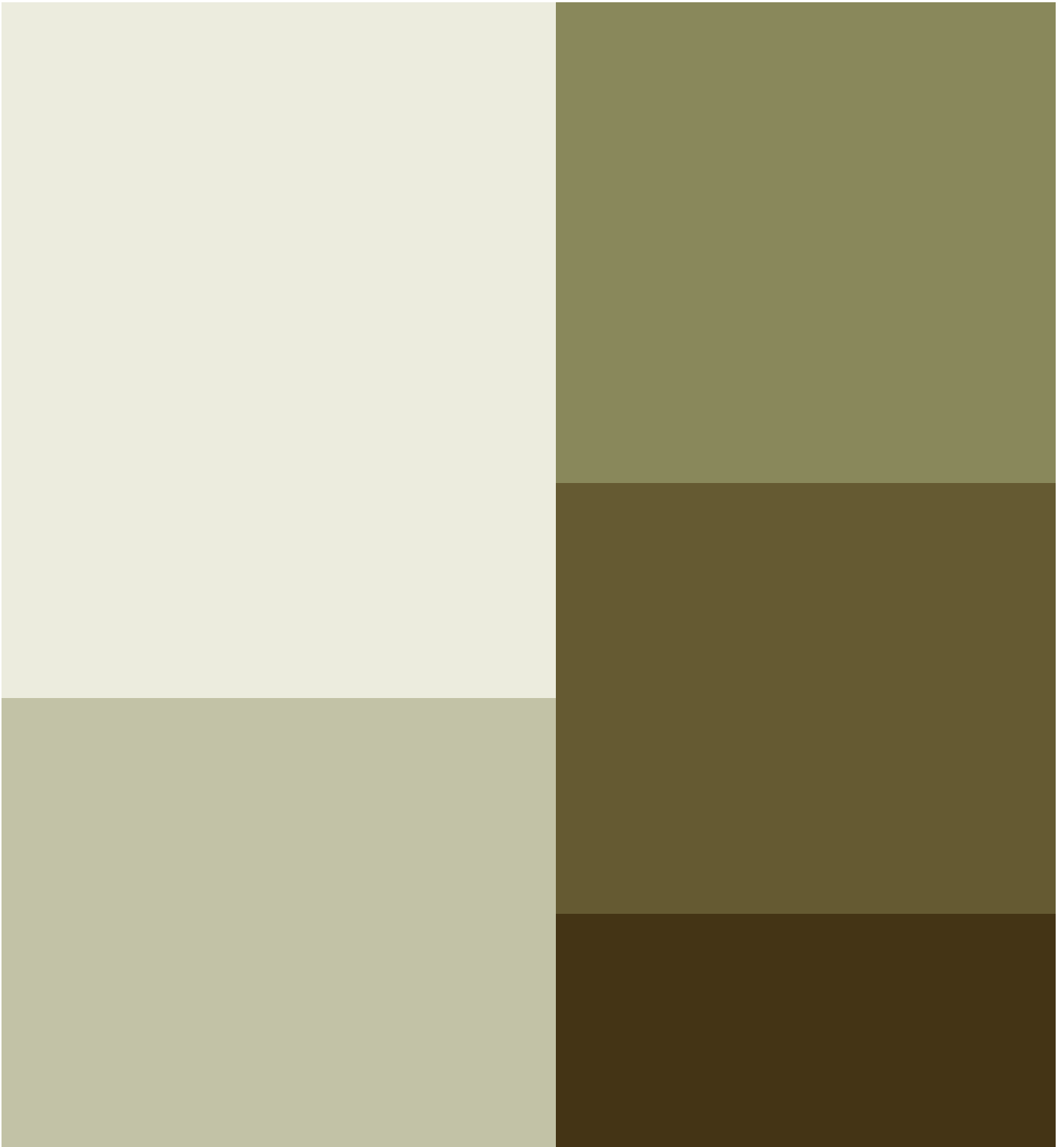
Calm Neutral

This color palette consists of soft, neutral tones such as beige, sand, taupe, and warm grays. It creates a sense of calm, harmony, and timeless elegance. Calm Neutral is often used in minimalist and luxury brands, where the aesthetics are discreet, natural, and refined. This palette appeals to brands wishing to signal authenticity, well-being, and a balanced lifestyle.



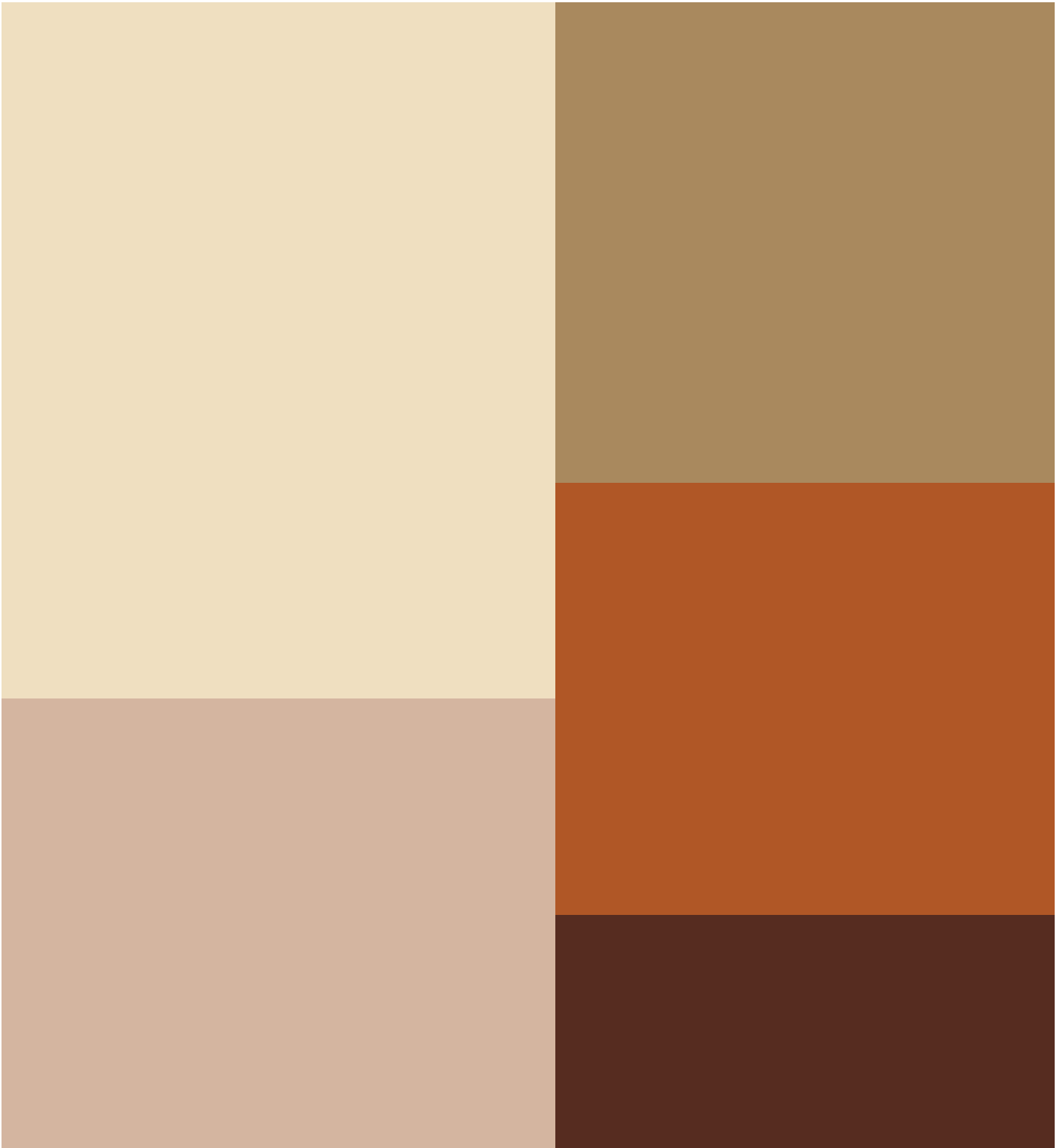
Cool Wellness

Characterized by cool and soothing shades such as deep blue, soft lavender, mint green, and ice gray. These colors are often associated with health, freshness, and balance. Typically used by wellness, beauty, and sustainable lifestyle brands, where a clean, relaxing, and professional appearance is essential.



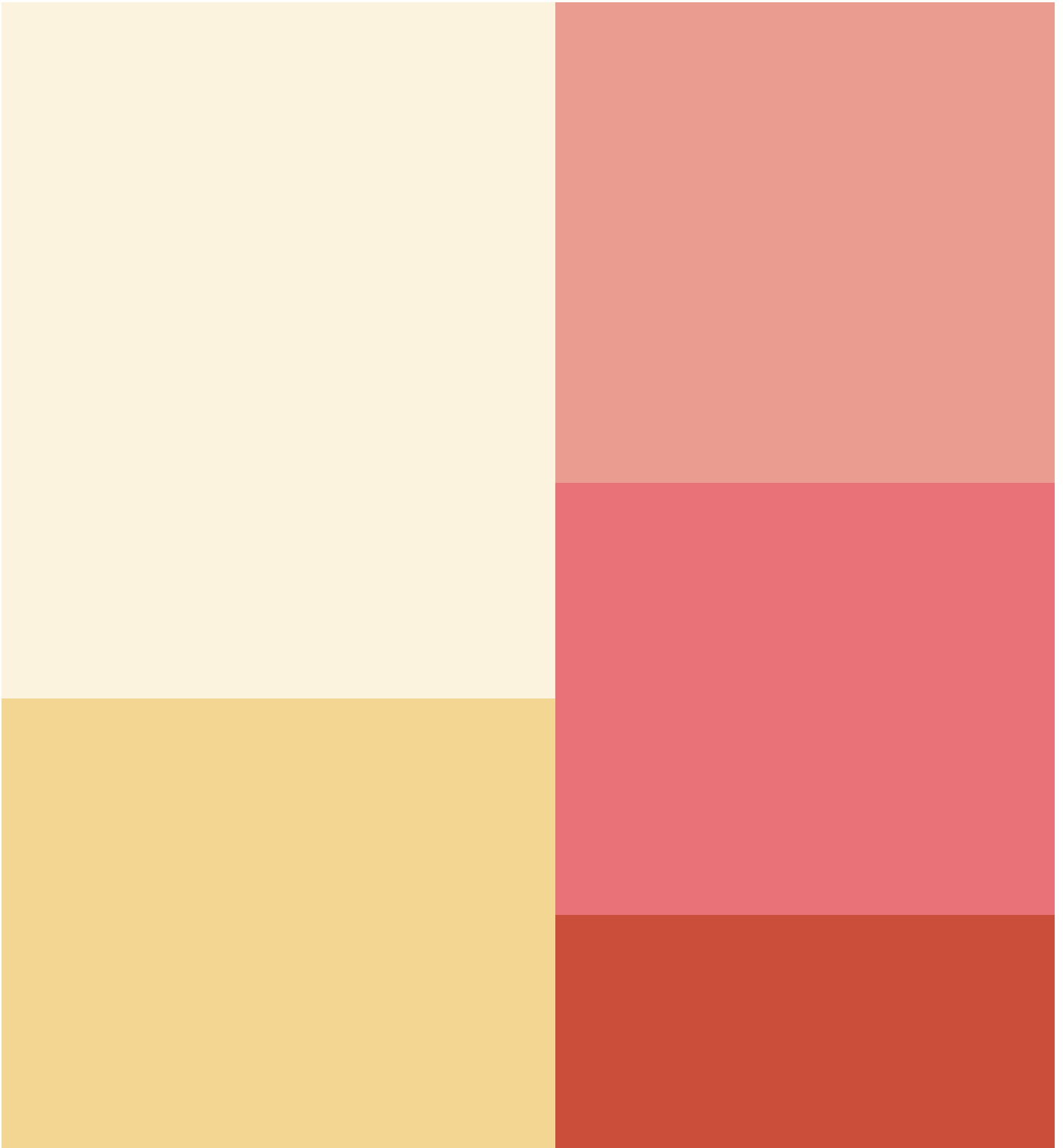
Forest

Inspired by the depth and strength of nature, this palette contains shades of dark green, moss green, earth brown, and deep ochre. It signals growth, stability, and connection to the earth. The Forest palette is ideal for brands looking to convey sustainability, nature inspiration, and authenticity, particularly in organic, outdoor, and craftsmanship sectors.



Warm

The warm palette includes shades of terracotta, caramel, deep orange, and sunset red. These colors create a feeling of warmth, coziness, and groundedness. They are often used by brands that wish to signal passion, creativity, and a welcoming atmosphere. The Warm palette is perfect for lifestyle and interior brands, as well as businesses with a handmade or personal approach.



Energizing

Dynamic and lively with colors like sunshine yellow, coral, and vibrant pink. It creates a sense of movement, positivity, and innovation. Brands that wish to grab attention, appear modern, and communicate energy and transformation often choose this palette—particularly in sports, technology, and the creative industry.

03 TYPOGRAPHY

Typography is a subtle yet powerful element in brand design. Fonts convey tone, style, and professionalism and contribute to a cohesive visual expression. A strategically chosen font can strengthen the brand's credibility and make communication more recognizable.

Why is Typography Important in Branding?

Communicates the Brand's Tone and Style

Typography signals the brand's personality. Serif fonts give a classic and timeless feel, while sans-serif fonts appear modern and minimalist. The choice of font thus supports the mood the brand wishes to communicate.

Creates Recognition

Consistent use of typography makes the brand easily recognizable. When the same font is used across all communication, from logos to printed materials and digital platforms, the visual identity becomes more distinct and memorable.

Supports Readability and User Experience

The choice of font affects how easily the message is read. Well-designed typography ensures clear headings, pleasant body text, and a logical hierarchy, which collectively improve the user experience and make communication more effective.

Enhances Credibility

Consistent typography builds visual structure and professionalism, making the brand more credible. Consistency in typography signals care and builds trust with customers and partners.

Typography Structure in a Brand Guide

Primary Fonts

The primary font is used in the logo and the brand's most important communication. It should reflect the brand's values and identity. It can be used for headings, large design elements, or key messages.

Secondary Fonts

Used for body text and supplementary elements. It should be legible and visually compatible with the primary font. Can be used for longer texts, descriptions, and informative elements.

Alternative Fonts (Web & Print)

Some fonts are suitable for print, while others work better digitally. Alternatives should be provided for web and print use if the brand's primary font is not supported on digital platforms.

Typography and the Brand's Voice

Typography is a visual extension of the brand's personality and should reflect its tone and identity. From modern and minimalist to classic and handwritten.

Note: It is recommended to use a maximum of 2-3 fonts. Too many fonts can make the design feel cluttered.

Here are examples of different font styles:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆØÅ

Modern and Minimalist

Sans-serif Light/regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆØÅ

Modern and Strong

Sans-serif Semibold/bold

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆØÅ

Classic and Elegant

Serif

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆØÅ

Technical and Innovative

Monospace

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzæøå

Playful and Creative

Handwritten or decorative fonts

Examples of Typography Combinations:

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

Sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit sed do
tempor incididunt

Sans-serif + Serif

A combination of modern and classic. Sans-serif is clean and minimalist, while serif adds elegance and tradition. This creates a balanced identity that communicates both innovation and credibility. Often used by brands wishing to present a sophisticated yet modern appearance, such as high-end lifestyle, fashion, or finance brands.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

Sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit sed do
tempor incididunt

Serif + Serif

Two serif fonts create a classic, timeless, and often luxurious expression. It signals tradition, craftsmanship, and authenticity. Suitable for luxury brands, book design, and businesses aiming to convey heritage and prestige. To maintain readability, the contrast between the fonts should be clear in style or weight.

Examples of Typography Combinations:

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

**Sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit sed do
tempor incididunt**

Sans-serif light + Sans-serif bold

A minimalist and modern combination that creates contrast between the light and the bold. The thin sans-serif provides an airy and sophisticated look, while the bold adds weight and authority. Perfect for tech brands, modern lifestyle brands, and businesses that want a clean and digitally friendly appearance.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

*Sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit sed do
tempor incididunt*

Sans Serif + Handwritten

A modern and inviting combination. The sans-serif font gives a clean, minimalist expression, while the handwritten font adds an organic and personal touch. This combination creates a balance between simplicity and warmth, making it ideal for brands wishing to convey both professionalism and approachability, such as lifestyle, fashion, or creative industries.

Examples of Typography Combinations:

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR
SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR
ADIPISCING ELIT SED DO
TEMPOR INCIDIDUNT

Serif Light + Sans-serif Bold

A blend of elegance and strength. The light serif adds a sophisticated, classic touch, while the bold sans-serif creates contrast and visual weight. This combination is often used by luxury and lifestyle brands that want to signal exclusivity with a modern edge. It's also popular in the fashion and beauty industry, where the balance between tradition and innovation is important.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

**Sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit sed do
tempor incididunt**

Monospace + Sans-serif Bold

A combination of technical precision and modern minimalism. Monospace fonts are often associated with technology, coding, and structure, while a bold sans-serif adds dynamism and clarity. This combination is commonly used in tech brands, startups, and industrial design, where functionality, innovation, and a modern look are key. It can also give a cool, edgy appearance to creative brands with a futuristic or experimental style.

PHOTOGRAPHY IS THE **POWER**
TO **CAPTURE** THE **ESSENCE**
OF A **FEELING** AND A **STORY.**



04 IMAGE STYLE

Images tell stories and evoke emotions, making them essential for an authentic brand. A well-defined image style ensures that the brand appears consistent and creates a strong connection with the target audience through aesthetics, mood, and narrative.

Why is image style important in branding?

Creates authenticity

A well-defined image style helps build an authentic brand that customers can trust. When the images reflect the brand's core values and personality, it creates a genuine connection with the target audience.

Reinforces brand messages

The right images can emphasize the brand's core values and differentiate it from competitors. Colors, composition, and subject choices all signal specific emotions and values that strengthen the brand's identity.

Provides visual recognition

A consistent image style makes the brand easily identifiable, even without a logo or text. When consumers see an image with the brand's unique aesthetic, they should immediately associate it with the brand.

Evokes emotions in the audience

Images have a powerful ability to evoke emotions and moods. They can evoke joy, nostalgia, calm, or excitement, depending on how they are composed. When a brand understands its target audience and uses an image style that speaks to their needs and desires, it can create a deeper connection and loyalty among customers.

Image Style Guidelines in a Brand Guide

Overall Aesthetics

Should the images be bright and minimalist or dark and atmospheric?

Color Tones and Mood

Should the images reflect the brand's color palette?
Should they be natural, warm, cool, or monochrome?

Subject and Content

Should the images be lifestyle shots, product shots, or conceptual images?

Image Sources

Use of own photos vs. stock images (and guidelines on what types of stock images may be used).

Editing and Post-Processing

Should the images have specific filters or editing styles?

Examples of illustration and graphic styles in branding

Illustrations and graphic styles play a central role in branding, shaping visual identities that stand out and promote recognition.



Minimalist & Elegant

This image style focuses on simple objects and elements, where aesthetics and artistic expression are central. The images often feature clean lines and subtle color choices, creating a sense of calm and sophistication. There is a sharp focus on details, often with an underlying mystery or story that makes the viewer reflect on the meaning behind the image. This style is well-suited for brands that wish to exude elegance and timelessness.



Environmental Images – Nature

Environmental images focusing on nature bring an authentic and grounded element to branding, where the natural landscape and elements such as plants, water, and soil create a sense of connection to the environment. This image style emphasizes the beauty of nature and can be used to express values such as sustainability, ecology, and responsibility. The images create a sense of calm and harmony, appealing to brands that want to communicate a deeper respect for nature and highlight their commitment to environmentally friendly solutions. The images are often light, fresh, and inspiring, giving the viewer a sense of closeness to the natural world.



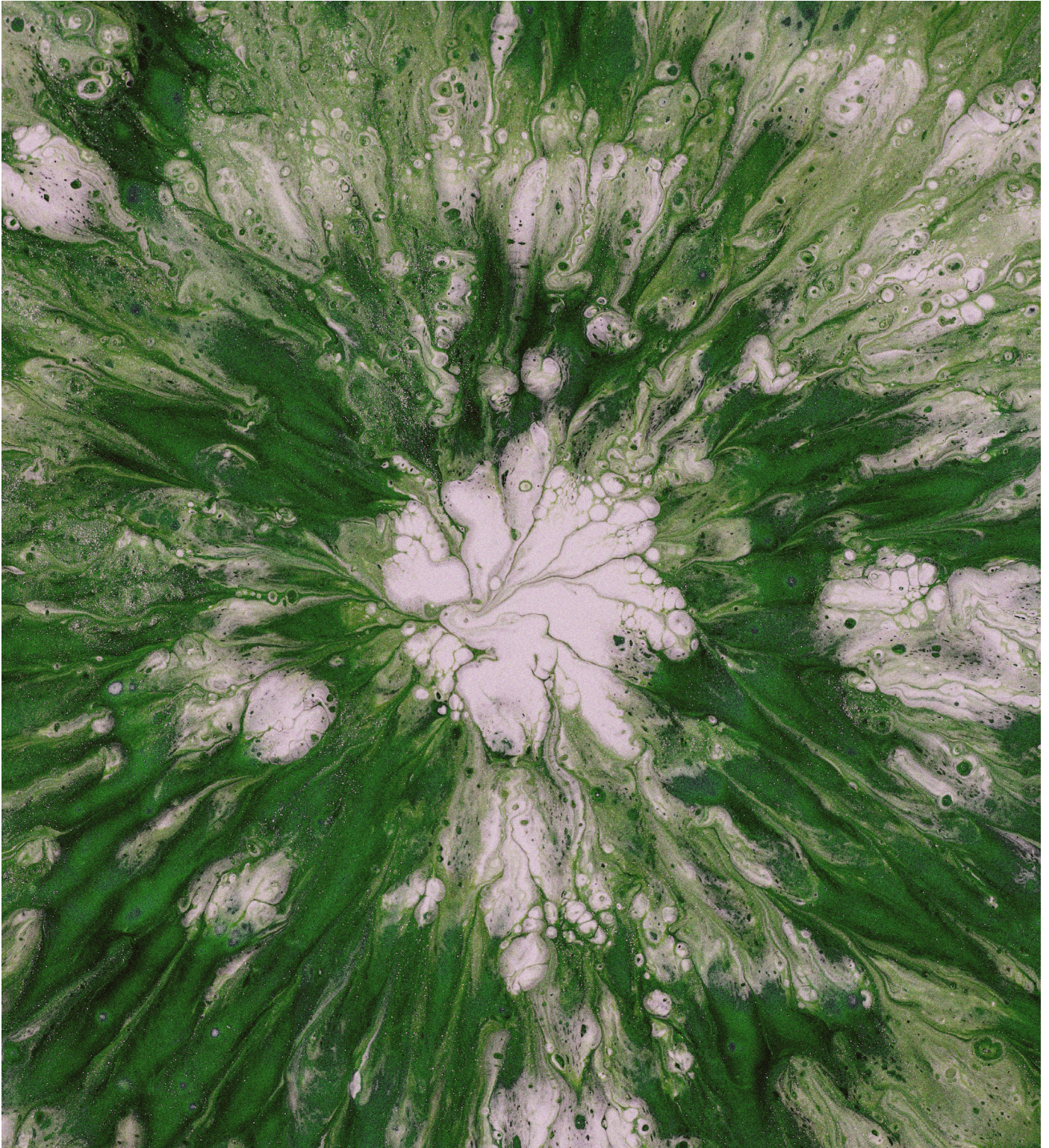
Styled – Staged Environments

In this image style, every detail is carefully selected and arranged to create an artistic expression. The images have high contrast, sharp lines, and refined surroundings that exude elegance and style. The staged nature of the images makes them perfect for brands that wish to highlight a luxurious or sophisticated image, where every component of the image is designed to support the brand's visual identity.



Lifestyle Images – Authentic Moments

Lifestyle images that capture natural, unfiltered moments are perfect for showing real scenes and human connections. This style exudes sincerity and relatability, often depicting everyday situations that create an emotional connection with the audience. The images are spontaneous and authentic, making them ideal for brands that wish to appear present and genuine in their communication.



Dynamic & Energetic

This image style is characterized by movement, sharp colors, and high contrast, creating a sense of energy and intensity. The images reflect activity and life, often used to capture attention and create a sense of speed or excitement. This style is ideal for brands that want to exude energy, youthfulness, and dynamism and engage their audience with strong visual elements.

05 ILLUSTRATIONS/GRAPHICS

Unique illustrations and graphic elements add personality and character to a brand. They can be used to reinforce messages, create visual variety, and make the brand more memorable in a world of standardized solutions.

Why are illustrations and graphics important in branding?

Reinforces brand identity

Illustrations and graphic elements can make a brand more recognizable and unique. A well-defined graphic style creates consistency in the brand's visual expression and makes it easier for the target audience to remember and recognize the brand across platforms.

Supports messages visually

Graphic elements can help explain complex concepts or simplify information. Infographics, icons, and visual symbols can make messages easier to understand and quickly capture the recipient's attention.

Adds creativity and personality

A distinctive illustration style can create a strong visual DNA that stands out from competitors. Illustrations can give the brand a more human and creative expression, creating a closer connection to the target audience.

Increases usability

Icons, infographics, and graphic details can make a website or presentation easier to navigate. Well-placed visual elements can guide the user, improve clarity, and create a more intuitive experience.

Illustration and graphic guidelines in a Brand Guide

Illustration Type

Should the illustrations be hand-drawn, digital, or vector-based?
Should they be detailed or more minimalist?

Style and Expression

Should the illustrations be realistic, abstract, or figurative?
Should they have an organic, soft style or a more graphic, sharp look?

Icons and Infographics

Should icons be simple line drawings or filled shapes?
How should infographics be designed to match the brand's visual identity?

Graphic Elements and Patterns

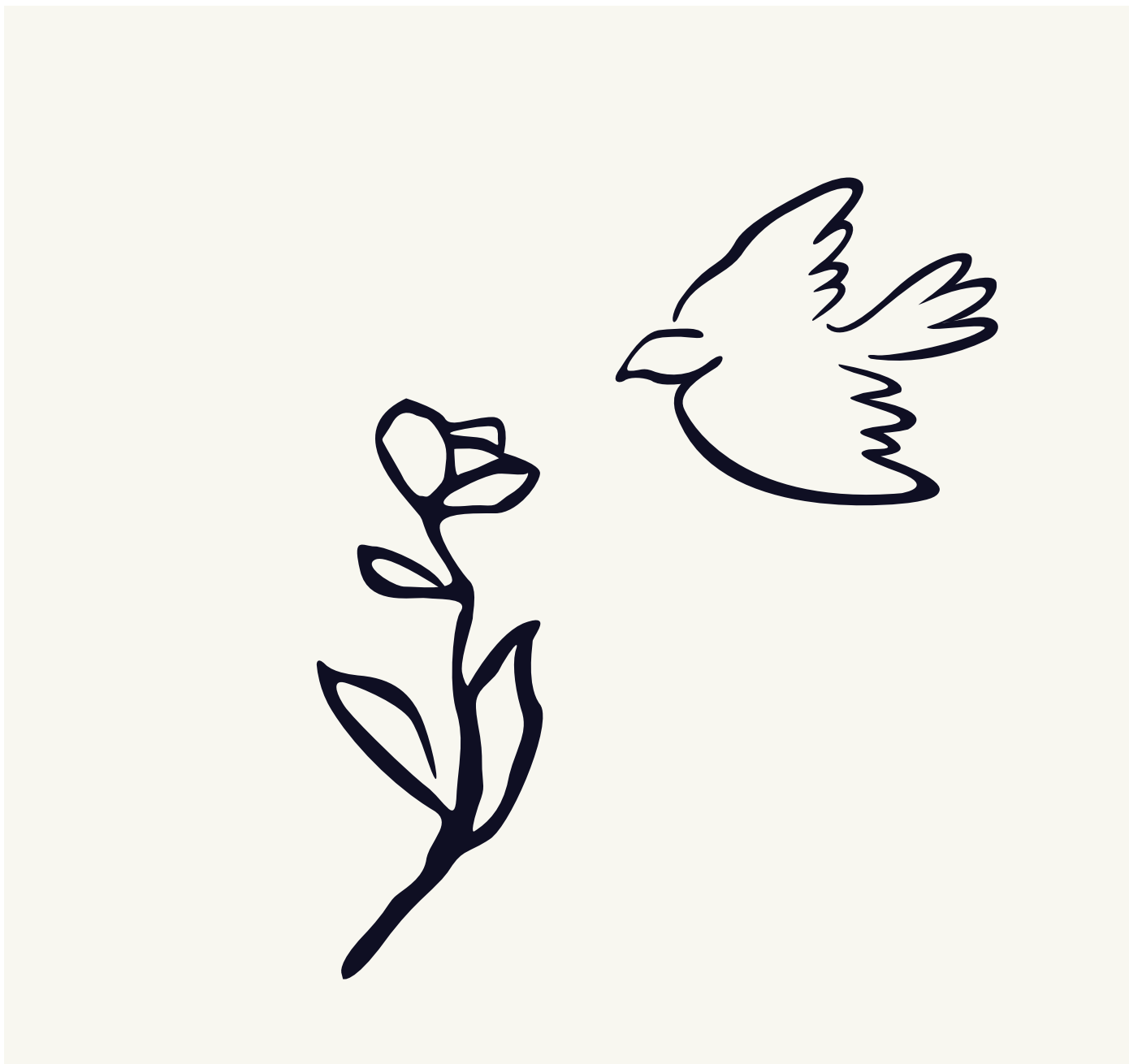
Should the brand use repetitive patterns or special background elements?
What shapes and textures suit the brand's style?

Use of Graphics Across Platforms

How are illustrations integrated into social media, websites, and presentations?
Should graphics be used in packaging, printed materials, or ads?

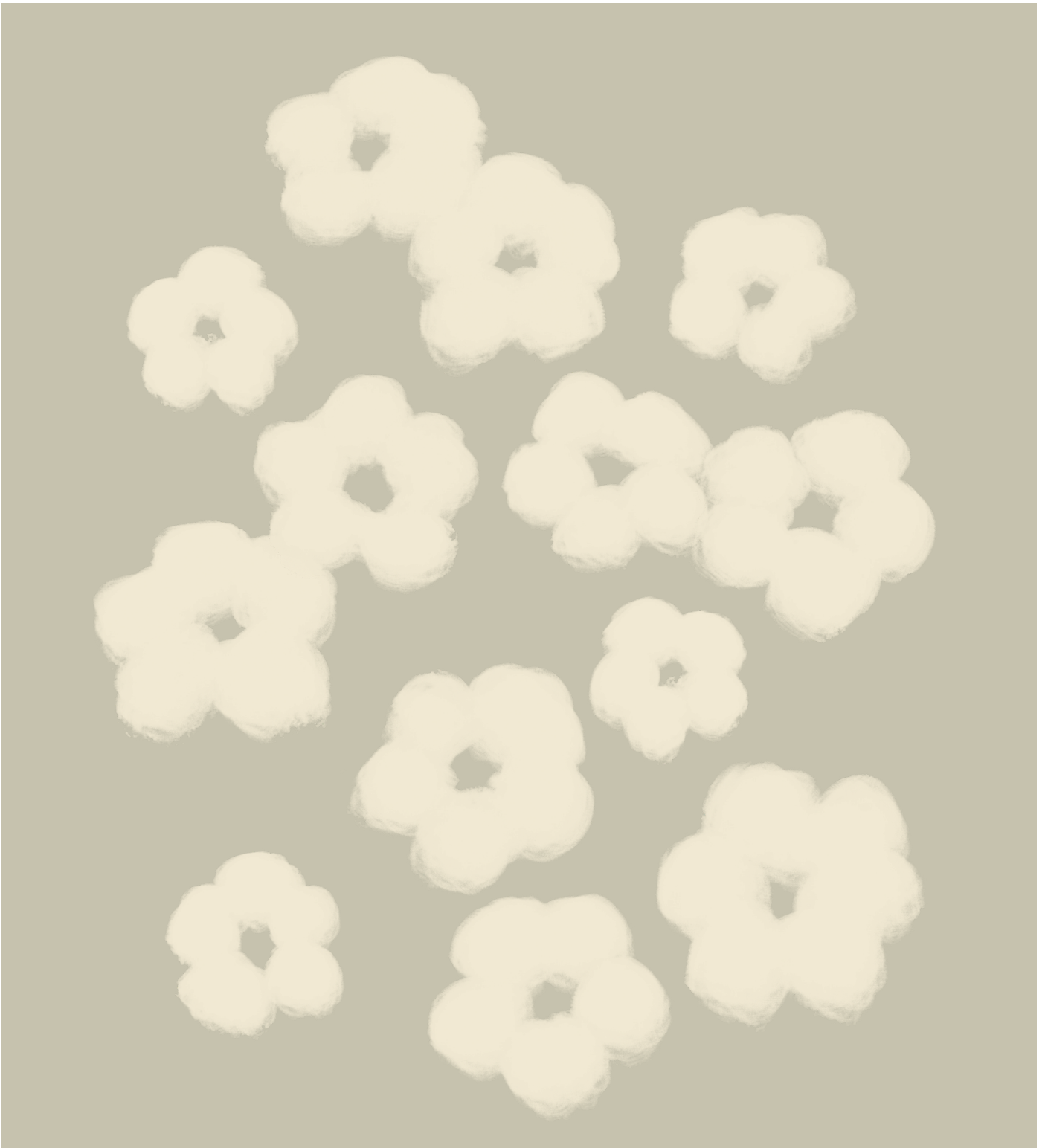
Examples of Illustration and Graphic Styles in Branding

Illustrations and graphic styles play a central role in branding, shaping visual identities that stand out and promote recognition.



Minimalist & Elegant

This style focuses on simple line drawings and subtle shapes, exuding elegance and calm. The neutral colors create a clean and sophisticated expression, where every line and shape is carefully selected to maintain a sense of balance and simplicity. Minimalist illustrations in branding are often used to communicate a refined and timeless image, where complexity is removed and only the essential visual elements remain. This style appeals to brands that wish to signal luxury, modern aesthetics, and clarity.



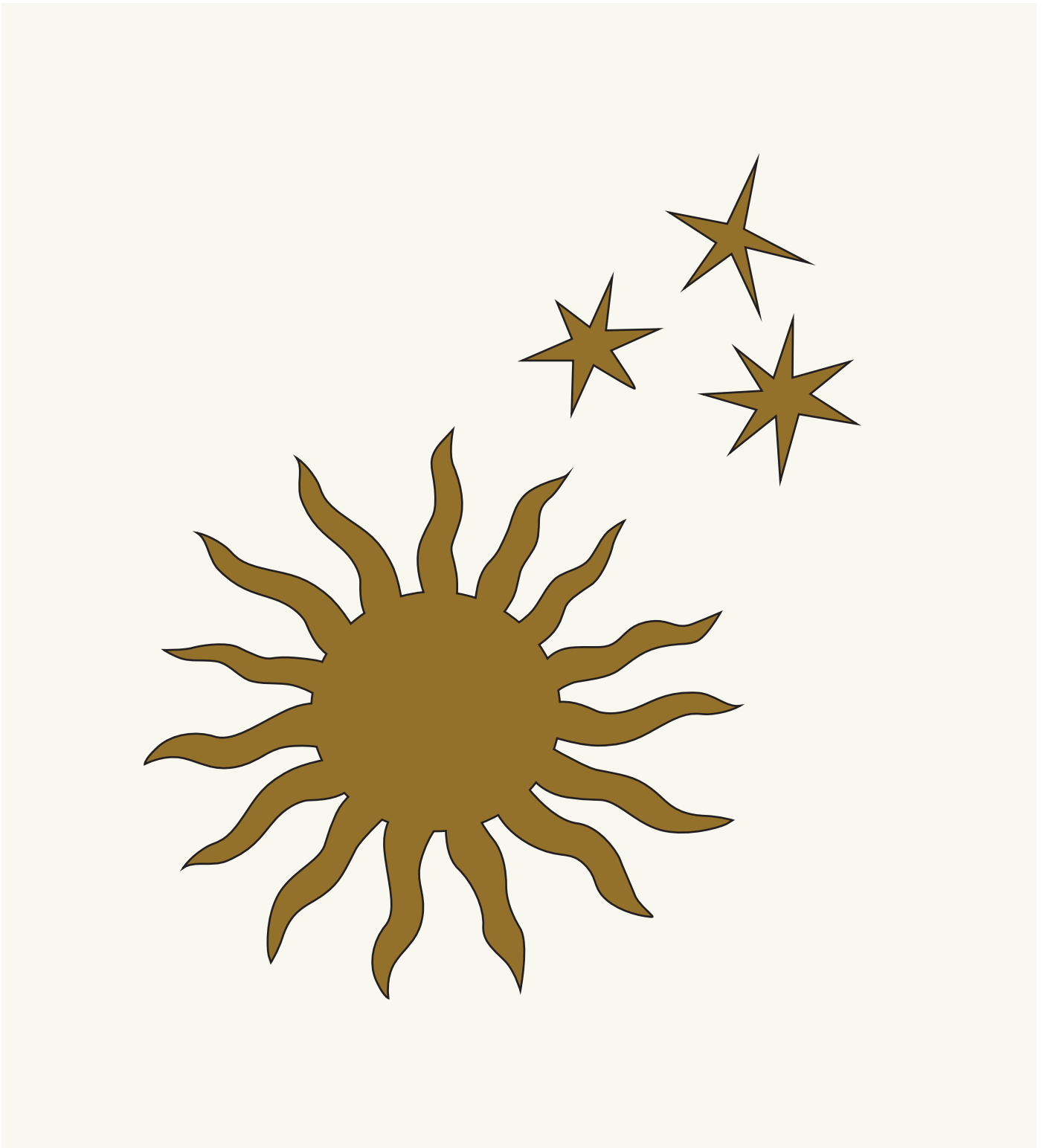
Natural & Hand-Drawn

With watercolor-like strokes, soft textures, and botanical elements, this illustration style brings a sense of organic beauty and naturalness to branding. The hand-drawn elements give a personal and authentic feel, creating a connection to nature and human craftsmanship. This style is suitable for brands that want to exude sustainability, craftsmanship, or creativity and wish to communicate a genuine and approachable image. The soft forms and natural colors appeal to an audience that values authenticity and the natural world.



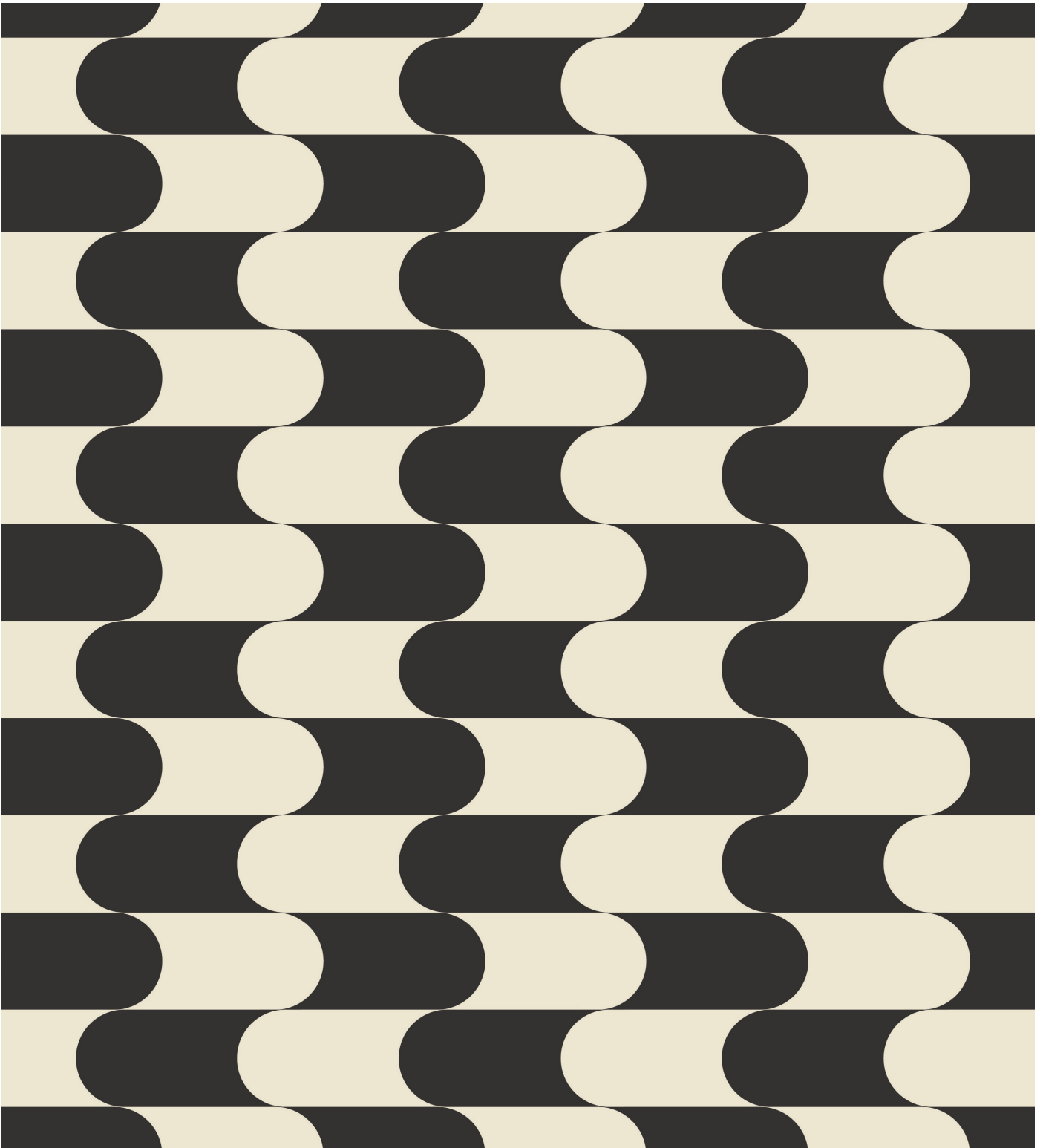
Silhouette Illustrations

Silhouette illustrations in branding are an effective way to communicate a product's or brand's essence in a simple and recognizable way. By using outlines, the object's shape is highlighted without being overwhelmed by details. This allows the viewer to quickly decode what the object is, creating a strong visual impression and recognition. In branding, silhouette illustrations are often used to simplify complex products or concepts, making them easier to understand at a glance.



Playful Abstract Illustrations

Playful abstract illustrations with a cartoonish style are an effective way to create a fresh and energetic visual identity. This type of illustration is characterized by colorful, imaginative shapes and elements that often break with traditional visual norms. Cartoonish illustrations can be both humorous and whimsical, allowing brands to communicate a playful and approachable tone.



Patterns

Patterns can add a special aesthetic and rhythm to a brand's visual expression. They can be subtle and elegant or bold and dynamic, depending on the brand's tone and message. Patterns also provide an opportunity to create a more flexible visual identity, as they can be applied in many different ways without losing their recognizability.

10 BRAND TO-DO'S: FROM PURPOSE TO ACTION

With this step-by-step guide, you will get the essential building blocks to create a solid brand from the ground up. You'll learn how to build a strong and credible identity that not only stands out but also engages and inspires your target audience with a clear and focused strategy.



01 Define Your Brand Purpose

Start by determining why your business exists and what you aim to achieve. What is your mission, and how do you make a difference for your target audience?



02 Identify Your Values

Select the core values that guide your business. These values should permeate everything from your actions to your communication.



03 Create a Unique Brand Story

Develop a story that engages and inspires. Tell why you started your business and what makes you unique.



04 Define Your Target Audience

Research who your ideal customers are. Understand their needs, desires, challenges, and lifestyle. Create a detailed customer persona to guide your branding.



05 Craft Your Brand Promise

Create a clear promise to your customers that describes what they can expect from your business and how you meet their needs.



06 Design Your Visual Identity

Create a logo, choose a color palette, typography, and imagery style that clearly reflects your brand's personality and values.



07 Develop a Tone of Voice

Define how your brand "sounds." Should it be professional, warm, playful, or authoritative? Keep the tone consistent across all communication.



08 Choose Your Platforms

Identify where you want to meet your target audience. This could be social media, a website, emails, or physical locations.



09 Create Engaging Content

Develop engaging content that speaks to your audience. Use storytelling, guides, visuals, and campaigns to strengthen your brand message and narrative.



10 Take Action and Adjust Continuously

Bring your branding to life by implementing your strategy. Regularly assess how your brand is performing and adjust to ensure you're always on track to reach your goals.

A creative design studio based in Aalborg, Denmark, founded by graphic designer Michelle Schultz. The studio offers a full spectrum of design services, including brand strategy, graphic design, visual identity, and social media design, ensuring a cohesive and impactful result for every project.

CREATIVE WORKS. STUDIO





LET'S
SOMETHING

CREATE
EXTRAORDINARY!

I am here to dive into your brand's unique identity, understand its values, target audience, and vision, so we can together create a strong and cohesive visual story and tailor a solution that perfectly fits your needs.

Visit the website or get in touch to learn more about the design services

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