

Aesthetics & Analytics

Agenda:

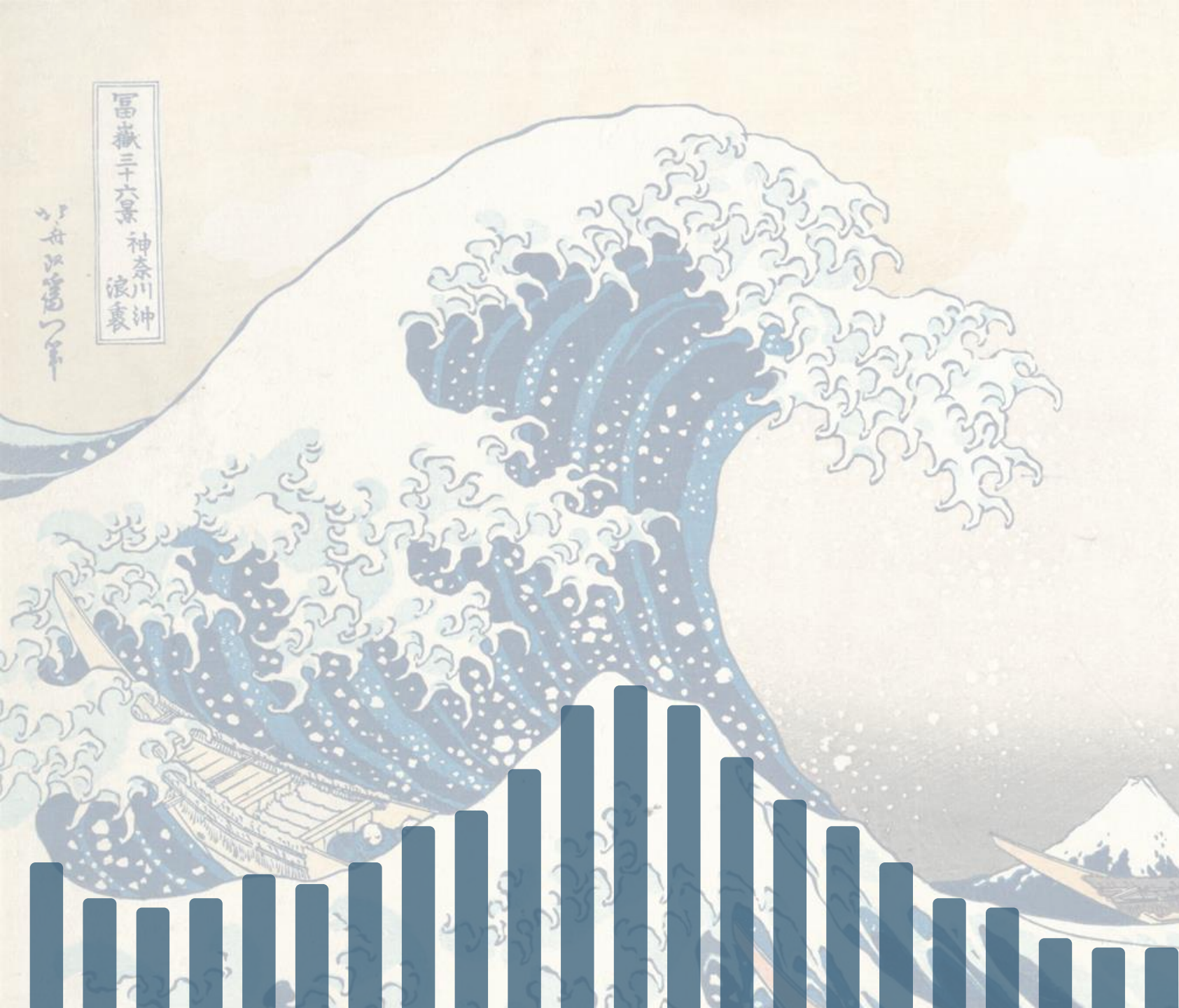
Introduction

Do we need nice charts?

Applying colors

Composition in dashboard design

Q&A



Introduction



Alex Lajtos

BI Consultant and Data Analyst
Born in Budapest, 1994

Education

2012-2016 Corvinus University of Budapest, BA Business Administration
2016-2017 University of Manchester, MSc International Management

Professional Experience

2018-2022 IFUA Horváth (HU), Management & BI Consultant
2022- Hatch Blue (NO), Market and Data Analyst

Hobbies and Interests

Data Visualization, Art History, Wall Climbing (+ getting new scars all the time as I'm not too good at climbing)

Do we need nice charts?

What is aesthetic(s)?

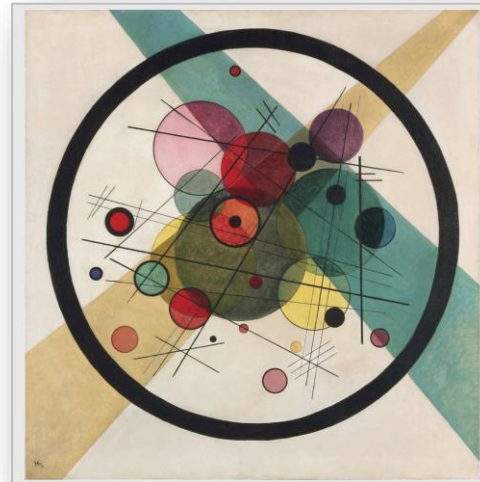
Philosophy concerned with the evaluation of beauty and art, both natural and artificial.

A set of **principles and opinions** underlying a certain art movement or style.

A simple **adjective**, which is often used to describe nice, stylish objects or phenomena.

Either way, it's something inherently subjective

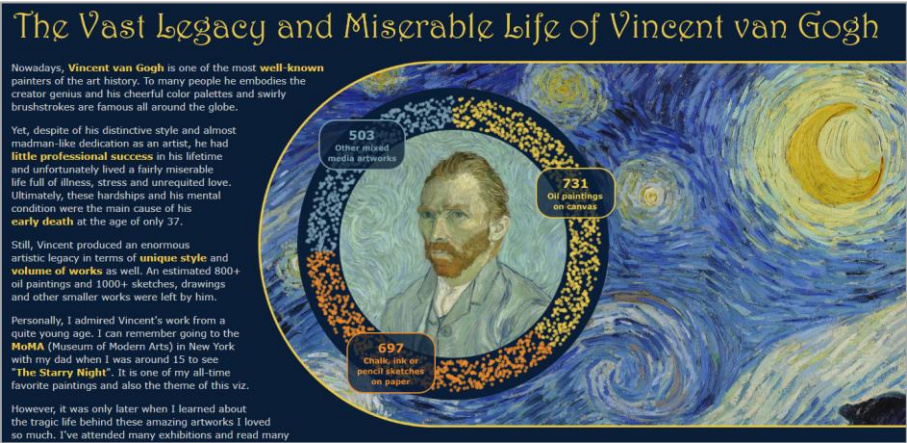
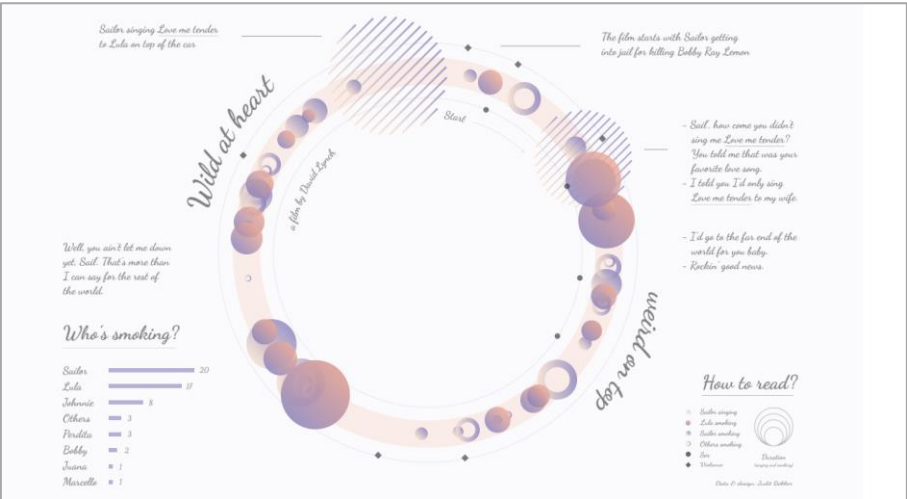
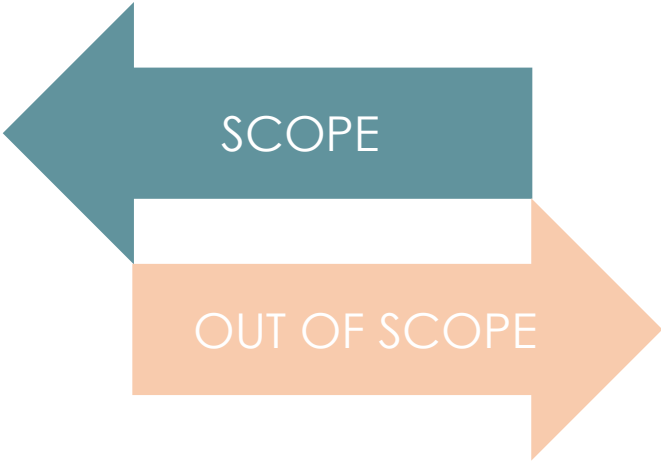
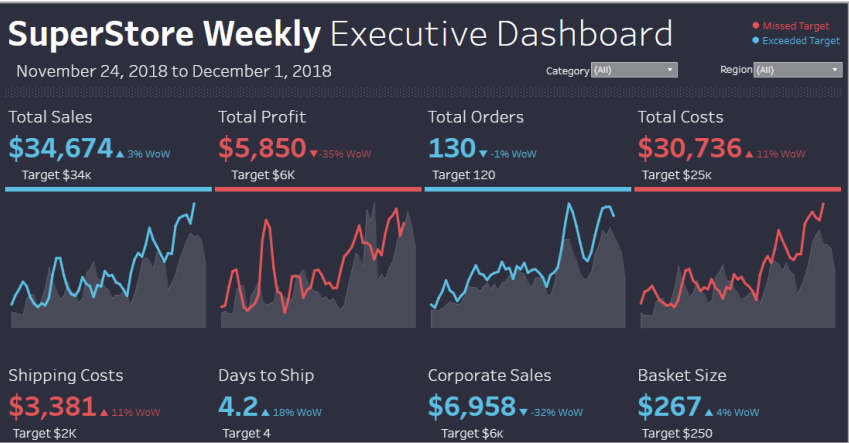
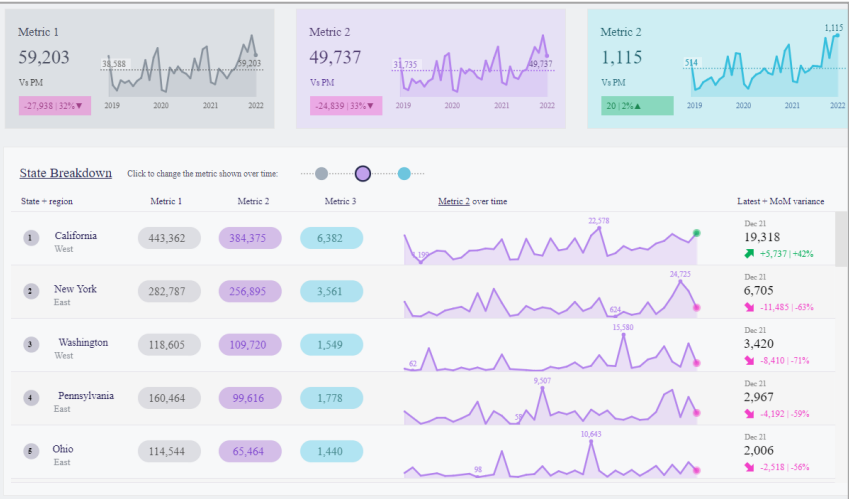
What a weird bowl of soup?!



These abstract city lights are beautiful!

Do we need nice charts?

Our question is to what extent should **more traditional charts and dashboards** focus on being „nice“? Today's topic is **not the data art** type of visualizations, since we can mostly agree those are heavily design focused and target a high aesthetic value.



Do we need nice charts?

The human element

People generally like „nice stuff“, especially if we have to look at it multiple times a day for minutes, or even hours.

Structurally organized and harmonically colored content is in general easier for our brain to process, not to mention our eyes.

! Example of „how not to“



YES
...in my opinion

The professional element

They say we shouldn't judge a book by its cover... but we still do it quite often. Our first impression of a content (often a visual impression) can stick with us and distort our perception.

Even if subsequent impressions are more positive, if our first one was a strong negative visual impression that can impact our overall opinion on the piece.

What if I start with a slide like this? !



Applying colors

Colors play a vital role in our perception of „nice“. Our taste in colors is of course different, but some simple strategies can help us to color our charts in a way that majority of people won't find it horrific!

- Use of **pastel / less saturated colors** instead of **highly saturated / vibrant colors**

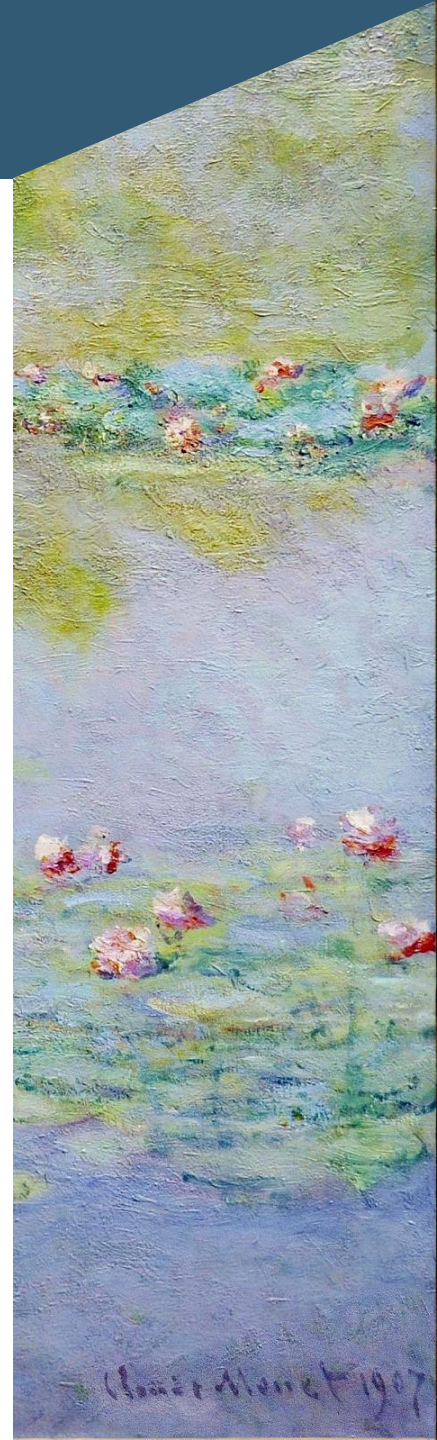


- Use of **limited** number of colors in charts and design elements

- Use of **analogous** colors or **monochromatic** sequential colors to express differences in values



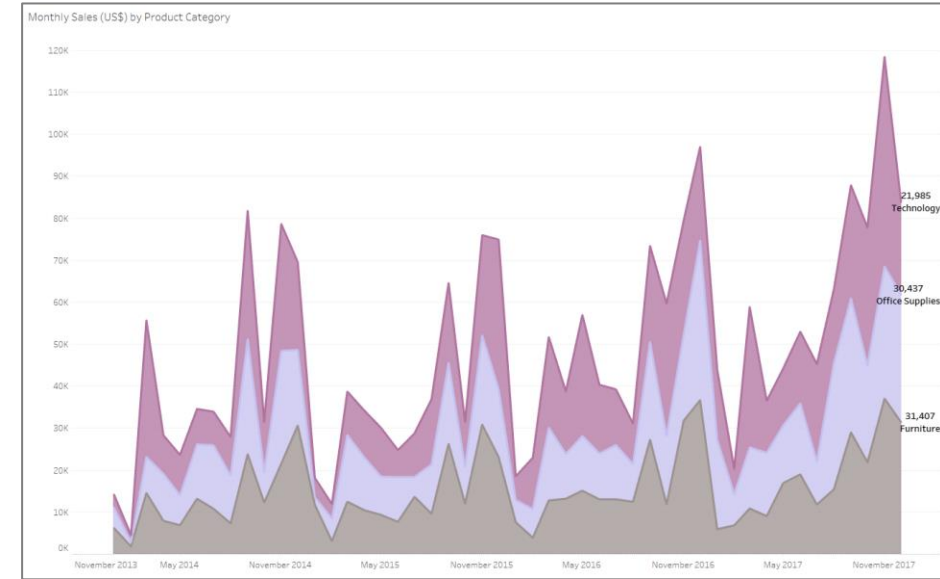
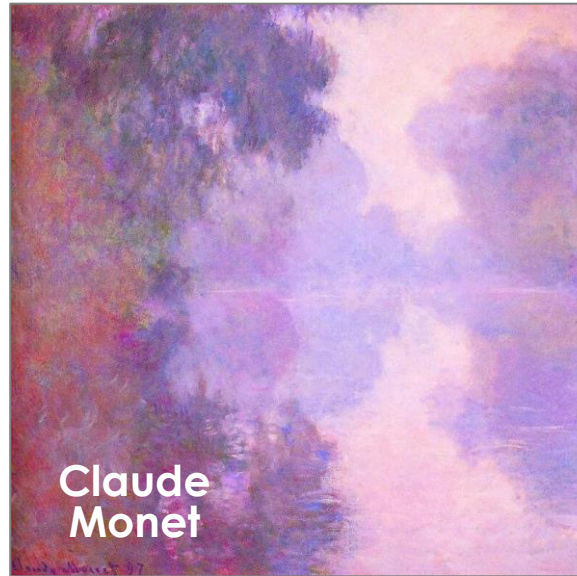
- Use of **complementary contrast** instead of **primary contrasts**



Applying colors

Pastel / less saturated

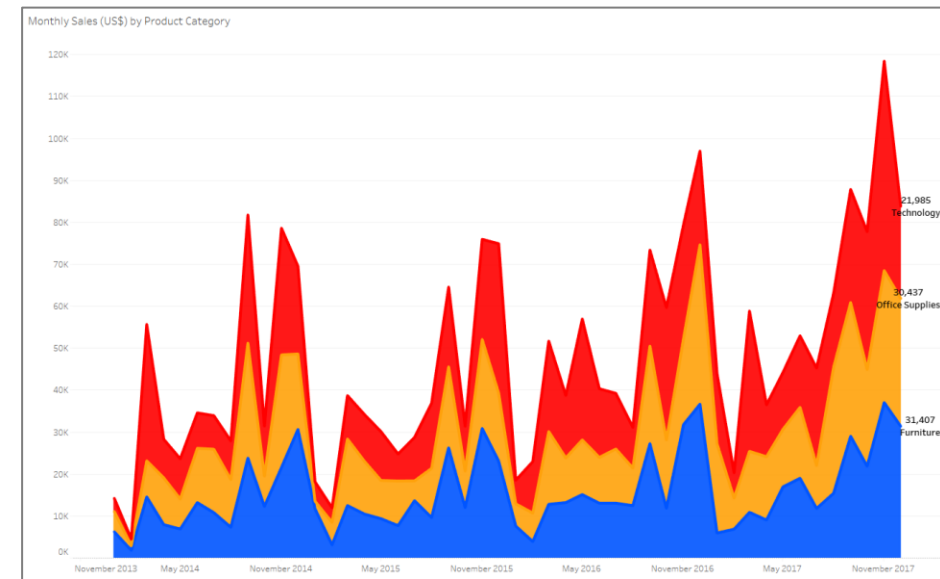
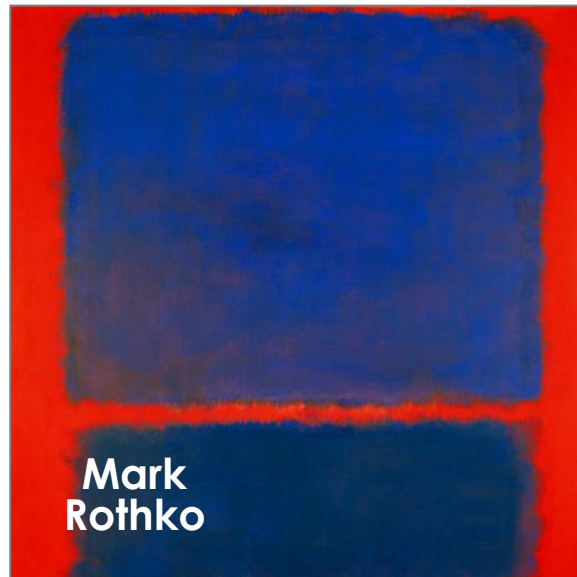
Categories still distinguishable but not too vibrant



VS

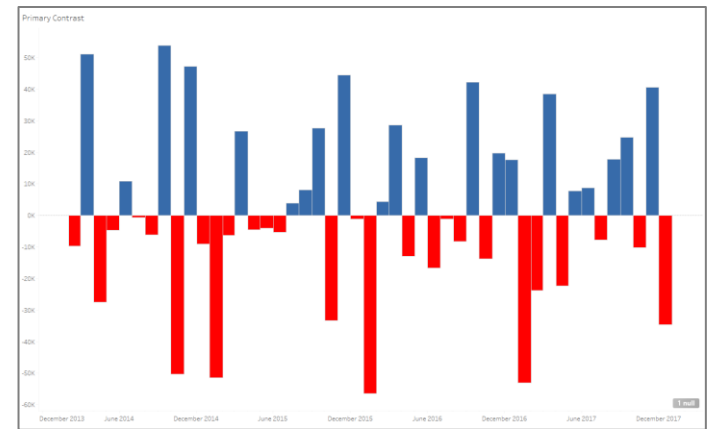
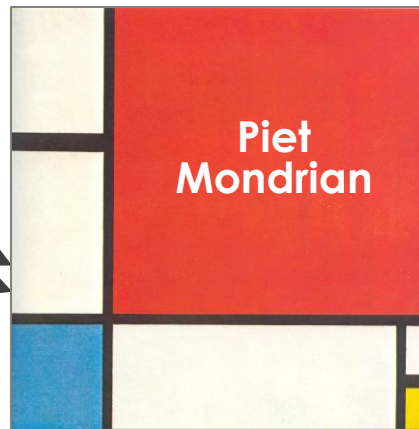
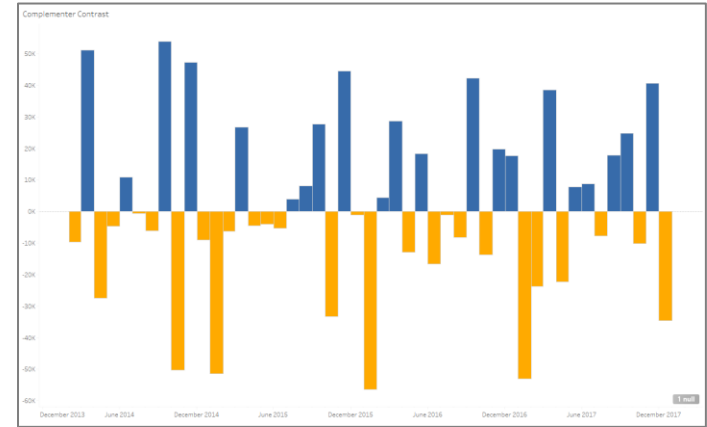
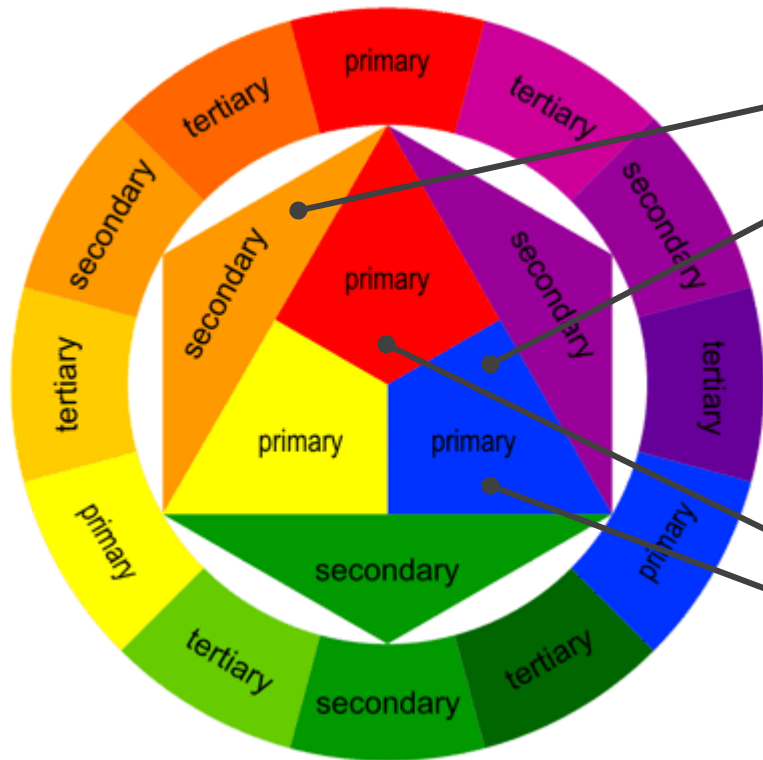
Highly saturated / vibrant

Striking impression, unnecessarily big contrast between categories



Applying colors

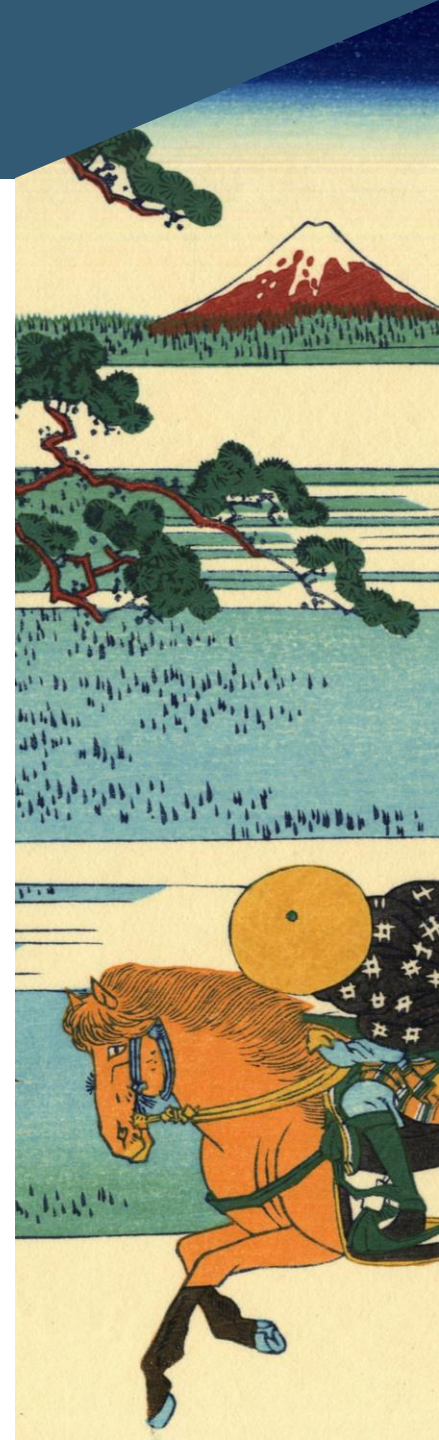
Complementary contrast (upper example) VS primary contrast (lower example)



Composition in dashboard design

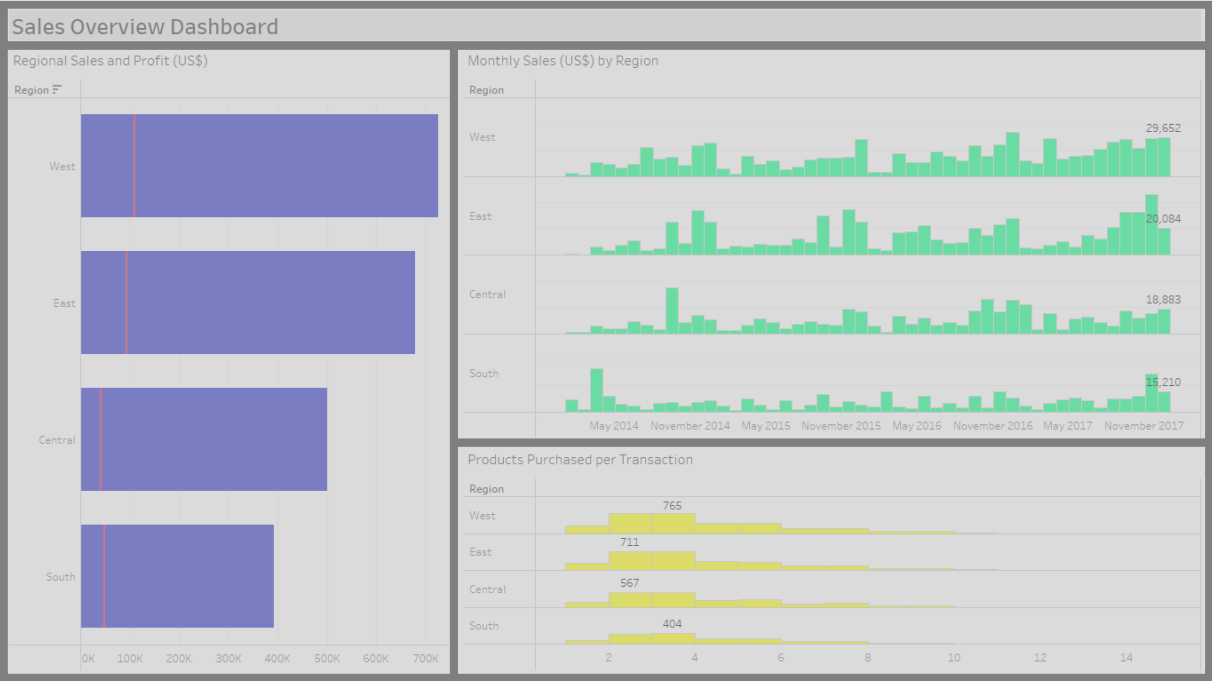
A structured composition of objects on a dashboard is not only considered more appealing, but also aids the dashboard user to quickly oversee blocks of content.

Similarly to the below featured Japanese print by Hokusai, a good dashboard organizes content in blocks (in this case horizontally) and helps to associate the contents of a block to each other by using composition, colors, and separators.

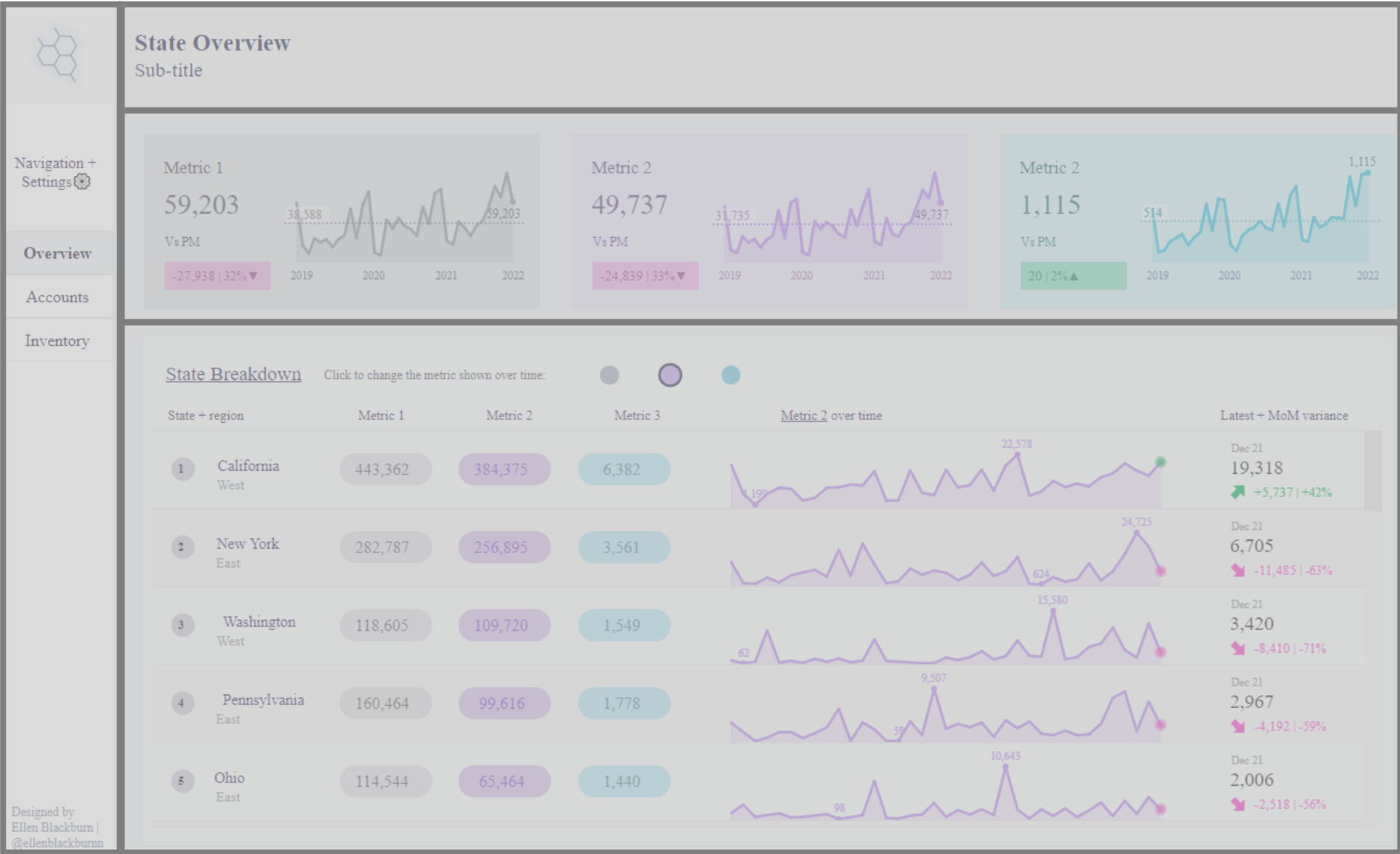


Composition in dashboard design

In dashboard design, the less visual content types such as main title, filter menu and navigation buttons are usually placed in a top lane or in a block at the side of the dashboard. Also, a fairly useful practice is to put the main KPIs in a horizontal block under the title bar.



Composition in dashboard design



Designed by
Ellen Blackburn |
@ellenblackburn

In Conclusion...

- Visual preference and opinions on aesthetics are still very much subjective
- BUT... with some good practices we can increase our chances that majority of the people will find our charts and dashboards appealing (or at least not ugly!)
- And since we still (at least occasionally) judge the book by its cover, it matters if potential analytics consumers find our work visually acceptable, maybe even pleasurable
- With colors it worth to soften the saturation and simplify our palette, use pastel colors and complementary contrasts
- Regarding composition, we should group and arrange similar content in blocks, preferably horizontal ones
- Find visual inspiration in things you like! (for example art, but it could be various other sources)

Sources

- **Images of paintings:** <https://www.wikiart.org/>
- **Slide 4 example visuals:**
 - Ellen Blackburn (also on slide 11): <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ellen4268/viz/snowflakeremake/Dashboarddemo>
 - Syedjawadhassan: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/syedjawadhassan/viz/SupplychainDashboard/1KPIDashboard>
 - Judit Bekker: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/judit.bekker/viz/WildatHeart/WildatHeart>
 - Own work: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/alex.l6463/viz/TheVastLegacyandMiserableLifeofVincentvanGogh/DearVincent>

