

Light on Form

Art & Design

The six things one light does to one solid, in the order you meet them.

One light, one sphere, six distinct events.

On the form

Highlight - direct reflection of the source

Light - the plane facing the source

Halftone - the plane turning away

Core shadow - dark band at the turn

Reflected light - bounce inside the shadow

Off the form

Cast shadow - the form blocking the light

Contact shadow - darkest where they touch

Occlusion - crevices no light reaches

Ambient light - fills the unlit planes

Background - lighter or darker by contrast

Judging it

Squint until only two values remain

Shadow shapes before shadow tones

Compare, never name, a value

The terminator is where the form turns from the light. The cast shadow starts somewhere else, and the two edges differ.