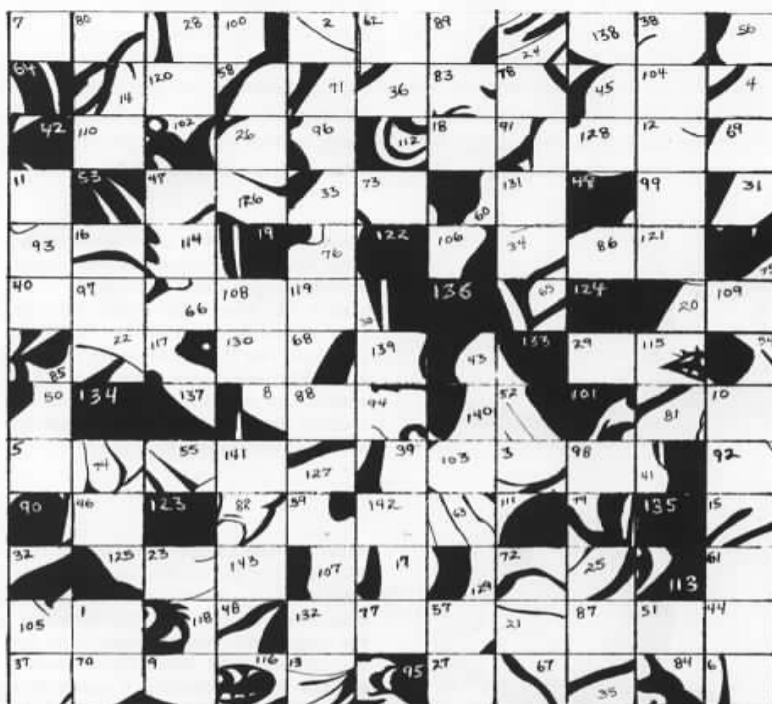# The Puzzle Piece Theory: A Guide to Seeing Shapes

Before you begin any type of blending on your artwork, it is very important to give yourself a firm foundation to build from. This is achieved by giving yourself an outline and *accurate line drawing* first.

The easiest and most educational way to draw a portrait from a photo is by using a graph. A graph is simply a tool that divides your photo into smaller, workable boxes to draw in. To help you understand how a graph works, I have developed a graph exercise that's fun to do, like a puzzle.

At right is a series of numbered boxes that contain black and white nonsense shapes. By drawing these shapes in the corresponding numbered boxes on the empty graph at right, you will prove to yourself that you *can* draw. This exercise teaches you to see just shapes, and shapes alone. *Do not* try to figure out what you are drawing. As soon as we become aware of what the subject matter is, we start to draw from our memories, instead of from what is right in front of us.

No matter what we are drawing, we should learn to see the object as many individual shapes, all interlocking like a puzzle. This can be referred to as "mapping." If one of the shapes we are drawing does not lead us to the next one, fitting together, we know that our drawing is inaccurate.

Once these nonsense shapes are drawn in their correct positions on the graph at right, the subject will be revealed.