

Random House Dictionary of the English Language (the Unabridged Edition)
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Assert: 1. to state with assurance, confidence, or force; state strongly or positively.
(More than “to accept.”)

Deny: 5. to refuse to recognize or acknowledge; disown; disavow; repudiate. 7. to refuse to...accept.

The Picture Plane, more specifically the limits, or boundary, of the paper upon which is drawn our images, can be treated in one of two ways. We can **assert** the picture plane, forcing the viewer to believe that all we are “saying” is contained within the boundaries (edges) of our paper. Or we can **deny** the picture plane, a visual refusal of the limits of the edges of our drawing support (usually, but not always, a sheet of rectangular-shaped paper.) The Picture Plane equates to our drawing surface, the paper, but is technically the “plane of a painting, drawing, or the like, that is coextensive* with but not the same as the material surface of the work...” Please note that there are 5 sides to, or edges of, a picture plane: Left, Right, Top, Bottom, and Front (there is no Back.) There is no depth, the word “plane” indicates that the surface is flat and has no depth.

One can think of the concept of assertion as if one were looking straight down at a box filled to the brim (but not beyond) with objects. For example: If the picture plane is the same shape and proportionally sized to the box, and everything that can be seen is drawn all the way to, but not beyond, the edges of the paper, this drawing, corresponding to what is seen in the box, asserts the picture plane. In this instance everything that we wish the viewer to see, everything that is important to our “message,” is within the confines of the picture plane. This makes the viewer aware of the shape and size of our paper.

On the other hand, if we wished to deny the picture plane (the boundaries and limits of our drawing surface) and we want the viewer to, while focusing in on a specific area of the objects we are drawing, know there is much more to be seen even if it is only in their mind’s eye, we would need to draw the objects in such a way that the viewer would know there is more to see, if only the drawing were like a window and could be seen beyond. Using the box filled with objects as an example, but denying instead of asserting the picture plane, the box would have to be drawn smaller than the picture plane (drawing paper) and there would need to be more objects drawn outside the box. To link them to the objects inside the box it would be visually helpful, but not an absolute requirement in all cases, to have some objects extending beyond the edge of the box, by breaking the plane of the sides of the box, as well as extending beyond the edges of the paper.

ASSIGNMENT 11: Two drawings on 18”X24” paper, your choice of media, one drawing will assert the picture plane; one drawing will deny the picture plane.

* *Coextensive:* Equal in space.