



(1)

“In most people’s vocabularies, design means veneer. It’s interior decorating. It’s the fabric of the curtains and sofa. But to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design. Design is the fundamental soul of a man-made creation that ends up expressing itself in successive outer layers of the product or service.”

Steve Jobs, Apple Computer

INTRODUCTION

“What is design?” is a frequent question—both asked and wondered. Throughout its history, design has suffered problems of identity: is it art, craft, science; is it culture, communication, utility? This class is designed to lead students in open-ended explorations of design. The questions we ask address issues that span time periods and stylistic groupings. Our goal is to discover the breadth of varying viewpoints rather than pinpoint a single conclusion about what makes something a work of design.

While humans have created design throughout the ages, various cultures at various times have defined it differently. Today, most experts agree that there is no single definition, but rather, that design refers to a variety of ideas, approaches, and qualities. Well-known American graphic designer Paul Rand (1), once said:

“Everything is design. Everything!”

Rand’s “everything” may encompass the tangible such as bridges, automobiles, electronics, furniture and the less tangible such as illustration, advertisement, motion graphics and games. What all these have in common is, at least potentially, an interrelationship of form, function, and communication. Our primary material will be graphic design and product design, with some diversions into architecture, film and interior design.

Suppose you want to announce or sell something, amuse or persuade someone, explain a complicated system or demonstrate a process. In other words, you have a message you want to communicate. How do you “send” it? You could tell people one by one or broadcast by radio or loudspeaker. That’s verbal communication. But if you use any visual medium at all—if you make a poster; type a letter; create a business logo, a magazine ad, or an album cover; even make a computer printout—you are practicing graphic design.

THE LANGUAGE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

“We are supposed to be the people who make culture, not decorate culture.”

James Victore (2)



(2)

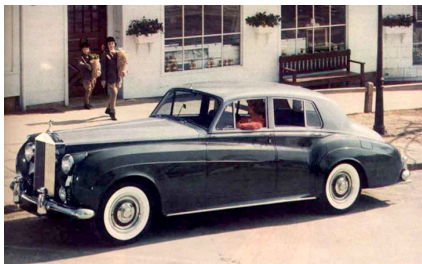
“Designers tell a story of a graphic designer trying to explain his job to his grandmother. He shows Grandmother a recent project and says:

- You were asking me about what I do Grandma. I am a graphic designer, and I designed this.

Pointing to the photograph in the design, the grandmother asks:



(3)



"At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock"

What makes Rolls-Royce the best car in the world? "There is really no magic about it—it is merely patient attention to detail," says an eminent Rolls-Royce engineer.

1. "At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise comes from the electric clock," repeats the Technical Editor of one journal. There and there are no sound inspectors—occasionally.
2. Every Rolls-Royce engine is run for seven hours of full throttle before installation, and each car is run driven for hundreds of miles over varying road surfaces.
3. The Rolls-Royce is designed as an emergency car. It is eighteen inches shorter than the larger domestic cars.
4. The car has power steering, power brakes and automatic gearshift. It is very easy to drive and to park. No chauffeur required.
5. The finished car spends a week in the final workshop, being fire-proofed. Here it is subjected to 99 separate checks. For example, the engineers use a microscope to look for scale white.
6. The Rolls-Royce is guaranteed for three years. With a wide network of dealers and parts-depots from Coast to Coast, service is no problem.
7. The Rolls-Royce radiator has never changed, except that when Sir Henry Royce died in 1933 the monogram RR was changed from red to black.
8. The monogram is given five coats of primer paint, and hand rubbed between each coat, before nine coats of finishing paint go on.
9. By moving a switch on the steering column, you can adjust the shock absorbers to suit road conditions.
10. A picnic table, veneered in French walnut, slides out from under the dash. Two more swing out behind the front seats.
11. You can get such special extras as an Espressos coffee-making machine, a heating machine, a bed, hot and cold water for washing, an electric stove or a telephone.
12. There are three systems of power brakes, two hydraulic and one mechanical. Change to one system will not affect the other. The Rolls-Royce is a very safe car—and also a very lively car. It comes exactly at right first. Top speeds to 100 m.p.h.
13. The Bentley is made by Rolls-Royce. Except for the radiators, they are identical motor cars, manufactured by the same engineers in the same works. People who feel difficult about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley.

PRICE: The Rolls-Royce illustrated in this advertisement—each principal piece of equipment \$12,000.

If you would like the recording experience of driving a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, write or telephone to one of the dealers listed on the opposite page.

Rolls-Royce Inc., 10 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Circle 5-1114.

March 1939

(4)



(5)

- Did you draw that picture?

- No, Grandma, it's a photograph. I didn't draw it, but I planned it, chose the photographer, helped select the models, art directed the shooting session, choose which shot to use and cropped the picture.

- Did you write what it says then?

- Well, no. But I did brainstorm with the copywriter to develop the concept.

- Oh. Well did you draw this little picture down in the corner, what do you call it the trademark?

- Uh, no. A design firm that specializes in visual identity programs designed it for the client.

The grandmother is somewhat confused about just what it is that her grandchild does and why credit is claimed for all those other people's work."

Philip Meggs, "Type and Image: The Language of Graphic Design"

The designer combines words and images to create a design composition that the audience can understand. He/she is simultaneously a message maker and a form builder, communicating the message through the form of the design. In order to analyze a work of graphic design, we need to break it down into its component parts, words and images, and then analyze how they were assembled together and according to which criteria.

WORDS

Designers often use words to convey a message. Like writers, they rely on what the language of words communicates. However, designers also make use of what individual typographic units (letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, columns..) look like and how they are arranged. The designer assigns these typographic units roles which the reader should understand intuitively.

For example, this 1930 German broadside (3), created about 100 years after the invention of the printing press, showcases a common typographic arrangement structure still largely used today. The individual typographic components are labeled as follows:

HEADLINE - primary information, dominant size and position

SUBTITLE - secondary information, smaller type size or weight

PICTURE CAPTIONS - titles, explanations or descriptions of images

TEXT - the longest unit of typographic material

HEADING - divides text into sections by content

SIGNATURE - at the terminal point, the lower left hand corner

This structure was for a long time viewed as the most powerful way of organizing information according to degrees of importance. It is still present in newspapers; article titles, often sensational, appear in the headline, to attract attention to the rest of the article.

In the 1950s, graphic designers used this same form for the benefit of creating powerful advertising, evidenced by this Rolls Royce advertisement. (4)

During the late 1980s, David Carson, the editorial designer for "Beach Culture" and "Ray Gun" magazines (5), applied computer experimentation to find a new form. He avoided using information hierarchy and consistent layout of typographic patterns. Instead, he chose to explore the expressive possibilities of each page, rejecting conventional notions of typographic syntax. His radical layouts included SIGNATURES set in large type, which had previously been reserved for HEADLINES, and usually diminutive PICTURE CAPTIONS enlarged into prominent design elements. He also sliced

away parts of letters and challenged the fundamental criteria for legibility. Carson inspired young designers while angering others who believed he was crossing the line between order and chaos. He believes one should not mistake legibility for communication because more expressionist designs can attract and engage the audience. We will take a closer look at Carson's legacy during Week Eight's lecture and discussion.

IMAGES

Images can be incredibly powerful and compelling tools for communication, conveying not only information but also moods and emotions. People respond to images intuitively based on their personalities, associations, and previous experiences.

In image-based design, images must carry the entire message; there are few if any words to help. Image-based design is employed when the designer determines that, in a particular case, a picture is indeed worth a thousand words.

Contemporary image making includes all the techniques of drawing, painting and illustration, photography, and computer generated imagery. The rooster images were created by Intro to Design Communication Fall 2007 student Jeannine Blakefield as a part of her DESIGN 100 PROJECT. In this project students were exploring the imaging possibilities, from the simple notation to full color representation. (6) (7)



(6)



(7)

1. NOTATION - is the simplest way of image making. The essence of the subject is captured by minimal graphic means. (8)

2. PICTOGRAPH - is a symbol representing a concept, object, activity, place or event by illustration. The primary forms of the subject are reduced to elemental geometry. (9)



(8)



(9)

3. **SILHOUETTE** - is a view of an object consisting of the outline and a featureless interior. It is different from the pictograph because it presents the specific shape of an object. **(10)**

4. **CONTOUR DRAWING** - is a linear and conceptual image that traces the edges of forms in space. **(11)**



(10)



(11)

5. **LINE AS TONE** - black and white linear pattern is interpreted as a tone of the image **(12).**

6. **REPRESENTATION** - attempts to show the natural appearance of the subject. **(13)**



(12)



(13)

Graphic designers enrich their images with expressive and communicative power by altering, exaggerating and combining them. Image making is going to be addressed in depth in most of our lectures and discussions. **(14) (15)**



THE UNION OF WORDS AND IMAGES

Designers often combine images and typography to communicate a client's message to an audience. They explore the creative possibilities presented by words (typography) and images (photography, illustration, and fine art). It is up to the designer not only to find or create appropriate letterforms and images but also to establish the best balance between them. In the message making process, designers create a composition where words and pictures come together to reinforce and extend each another, becoming more than the sum of their parts.

Designers are the link between the client and the audience. On one hand, a client is often too close to the message to understand the various ways in which it can be presented. The audience, on the other hand, is often too diverse to have any direct impact on how a message could be received by a broad audience. However, designers stand between clients and the audience, facilitating a disinterested, though not uninterested, perspective to satisfy both the client's intention and the audience's reception. They work with the client to understand the content and the purpose of the message, often collaborate with market researchers and other specialists to understand the nature of the audience, and once a design concept is chosen, the designers work with illustrators and photographers as well as with typesetters and printers or other production specialists to create the final design product.



(16)

Stefan Sagmeister, poster for the AIGA National Conference in New Orleans **(16)**

“Why a headless chicken? Is it a metaphor for the profession? Should we stop running around like one and sign up for this very interesting conference? Is it a Voodoo symbol? Anti-technology?”

We will take a closer look at the message-making process during the Week Three lecture and discussion.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION: Throughout its history, design has suffered problems of identity: is it art, craft, science; is it culture, communication, utility? This class is designed to lead students in open-ended explorations of design.

THE LANGUAGE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN: The designer combines words and pictures to create a visual-verbal composition that the audience can understand. Another aspect of a designer's task is to infuse content with resonance. The graphic designer is simultaneously a message maker and a form builder. In order to analyze works of graphic design, we need to break it down into its component parts, words and images, and then analyze how these parts were assembled together and according to which criteria.

WORDS: To designers, what the words look like is as important as their meaning. The designer gives the typographic units assigned roles, and the reader should have an intuitive understanding of these roles. Or, then designer avoids using information hierarchy and consistent layout of typographic patterns, instead he explores expressive possibilities of typography.

IMAGES: Images can be incredibly powerful and compelling tools of communication, conveying not only information but also moods and emotions. Contemporary image making includes all the techniques of drawing, painting, illustration, photography, and computer generated imagery.

THE UNION OF WORDS AND IMAGES: Designers often combine images and typography to communicate a client's message to an audience. They explore the creative possibilities presented by words (typography) and images (photography, illustration, and fine art). In the message making process, designers create a design composition where words and pictures come together and reinforce and extend one another.

*“All of us who professionally
use the mass media
are the shapers of society.
We can vulgarize that society.
We can brutalize it.
Or we can help lift it
onto a higher level.”*

William Bernbach
Doyle Dane Bernbach

EXERCISE: What is Graphic Design?

In this exercise, you will explore your own ideas about what makes something a work of graphic design.

1. Select one of the images from the:

http://redsparrow.org/gr10/week1/in_mainframeT1.php

gallery. When you click on the image thumbnail, enlarged image will open up in a new window where you can get more information about it.

2. Do you think this image is a work of graphic design? Why?

3. Write a brief answer to the question “What is Graphic Design?” Respond according to your own beliefs, not what you think is a correct answer.