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DesignVerso

Una collana dedicata ai designer
della comunicazione immaginata
come allegato alla rivista Multiverso,
Università degli Studi di Udine.

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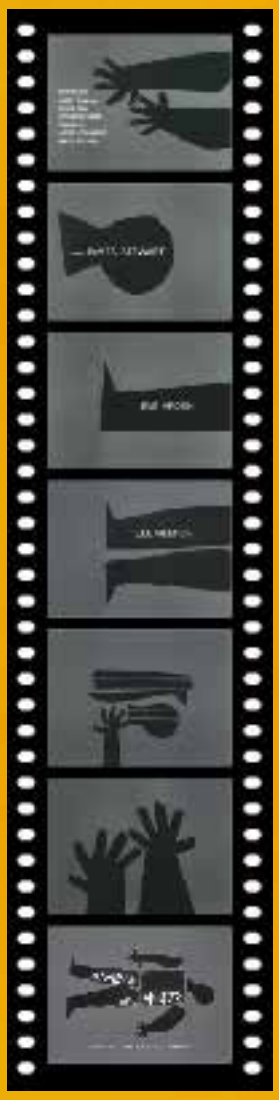
Welcome

These are the first pages of *Saul Bass: thinking made visual*, a monograph with magazine traits that explores the mind of one of the most prolific artists of the past century. You'll witness the revolution he brought to the world of graphic design, filmmaking, animation and artistic taste in general: all straight from his own words.

Focusing on Archie Boston's interview in 1986, we created five segments to express Bass' poetics, filling them with carefully-selected articles and book excerpts. You'll find out his tips and ways of thinking, starting with the importance of learning to draw and ending with an inside-look into work relationships in design and filmmaking. Saul Bass has always brought something new to the table, giving a fresh start to modern cinema with his opening sequences, elaborating corporate identity theories and showing us how playful life can get: our monograph explicits his personality creating a space to let his own work speak and collecting pieces of information from different époques to show his everlasting legacy.

Keeping in mind his love for revolutionary ideas, we teamed up with Catchoom to deliver a new multimedia experience. Download the Craftar app from your mobile marketplace, enter username: *saulbass.polimi@gmail.com* and password: *polimi2018*. Each time you'll see the eye icon, just open the app and point it at the image: after clicking "scan" the on-paper-image will become a link to a video from our vimeo channel. You'll see opening titles as they were shown in theatres and you'll have access to our video-vault without having to subscribe or point at QR codes.

Before we begin...



A last piece of thought about our cover: we decided to recall Bass' works, uniting the arm from his designs in *Anatomy of a Murder* to the message behind *Bunny Lake is missing*, adding (together with torn paper and thick illustration) a touch of his well-known modernism, as you'll have noticed from the choice of colors. The arm is both a physical section of his work and a metaphor of his love for manuality, while the rendered levels symbolize the depth of our content: as you'll see, we won't limit ourselves to plain white paper, we'll connect images to videos (with our own codes). By looking at the overall view, you'll hopefully feel his playful vision: fasten your seatblets and have a nice trip!

Index

Learn to draw

6 Personal Handwriting

10 How did Saul Bass Influence contemporary motion design?

12 Love in the afternoon

14 Breaking away

16 Thick Black lines and bold swatches of color

26 Distortion and jaggedness

28 Look what Saul Bass made Taylor Swift do

Making the ordinary extraordinary

32 Saul Bass' most iconic film posters

42 Animating modernist design

56 This is what you need: a magic dot.

Trademarks = Metaphors

60 Large or small scale: same basic approach

64 The "Saul Bass" process

68 The formula for timeless logos

72 The night Saul Bass had a revelation

80 Credibility-based logo design

Film. A whole new world

86 Titles as a metaphor

90 The Basses' work

94 The film: Saul Bass and Alfred Hitchcock

98 Its sequences symbolise emotion

100 The pursuit of new ideas makes us human

My work: thorough discussions

108 Look at the sequence, look at the film and think

114 It looks like a science fiction film

118 The are stil around. This is fantastic!

124 I'm Spartacus!

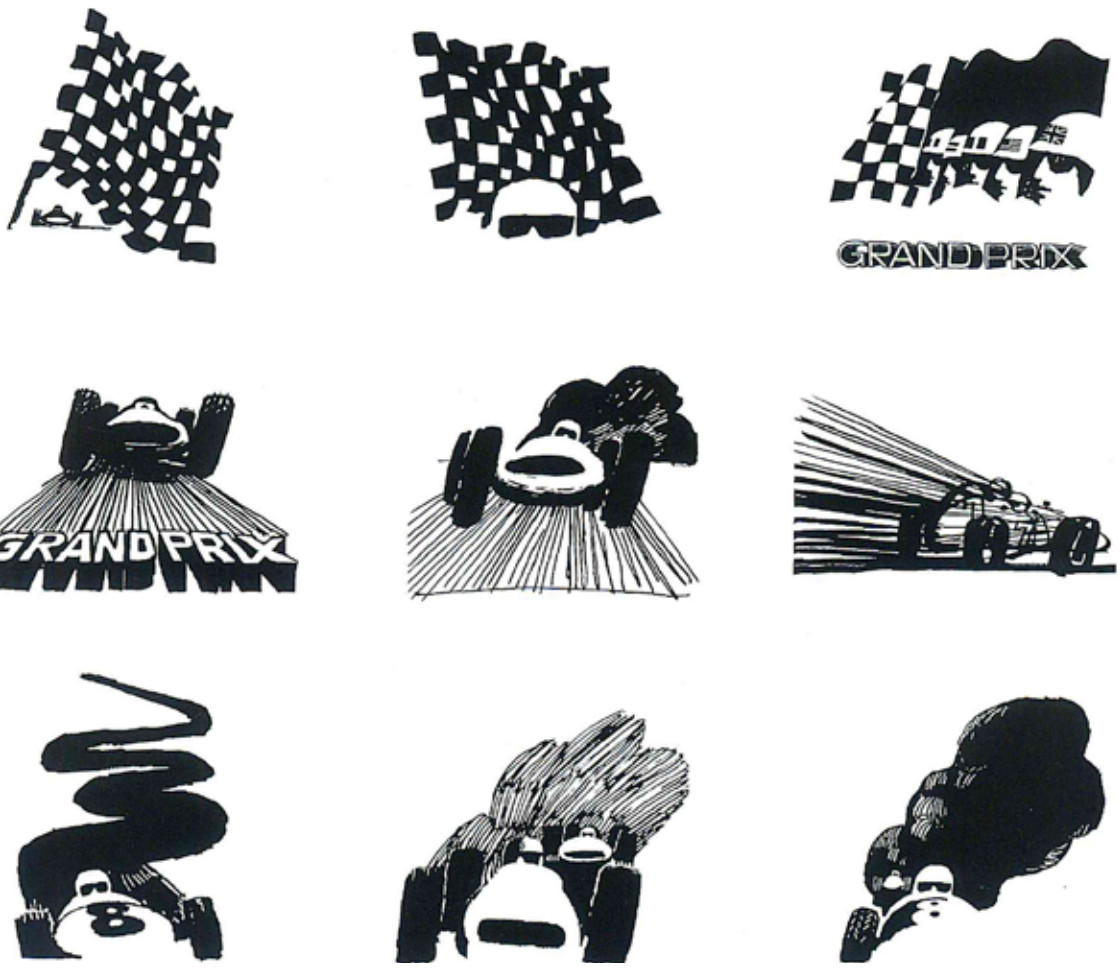
130 Think of Dante's Inferno

curated by Nicola Magri

Personal Handwriting

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

Sketches for
Grand Prix, 1966.



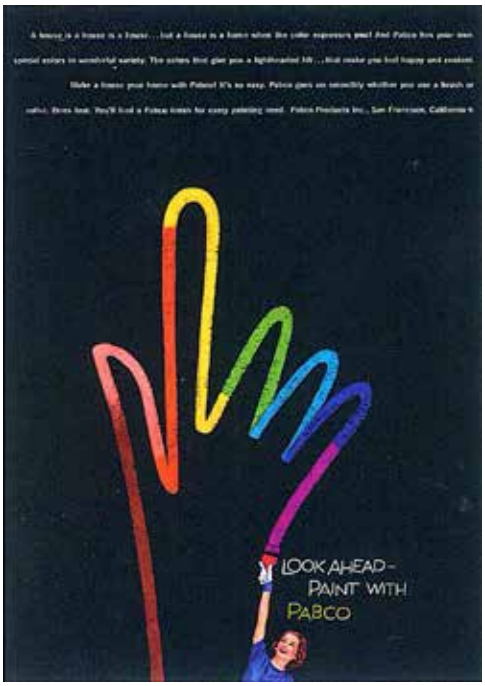
Saul used the term "personal handwriting" to refer to a certain category of work, mostly posters, where he was free to create and explore images and ideas on his own terms. This work was often for clients, such as film festivals or cultural institutions, who did not interfere, largely because the commissions were pro bono (carried out voluntarily and without payment), but also because they were grateful to have a poster by Saul. Such was also the case with work for causes and organizations with whose aims Saul sympathized — for example Human Rights Watch or the Special Olympics. Looking at these posters, we see Saul playing around with a theme, an idea, a form or a palette; sometimes over a very short period, and sometimes over a period of years. Saul's "personal handwriting" extended to many other areas, ranging from photography and doodles to the collecting of artifacts and his involvement in the annual Aspen Design Conference.

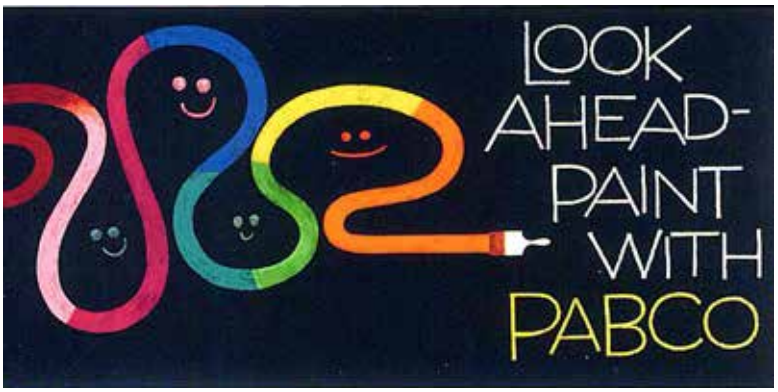
Saul spoke of "an emotional need for direct contact with a surface," adding "I like to feel the pencil's abrasion, or the brush's slither. It's where I started, and what I need to come back to periodically: a free and open area of expression." Well-sharpened pencils and his favorite pens were among the few tools on his desk, always carefully placed near a clean pad of paper. Saul also took hundreds of photographs, usually when traveling, as a sort of sketchbook or diary of images. For him, these "frozen moments" were both document and source of inspiration.

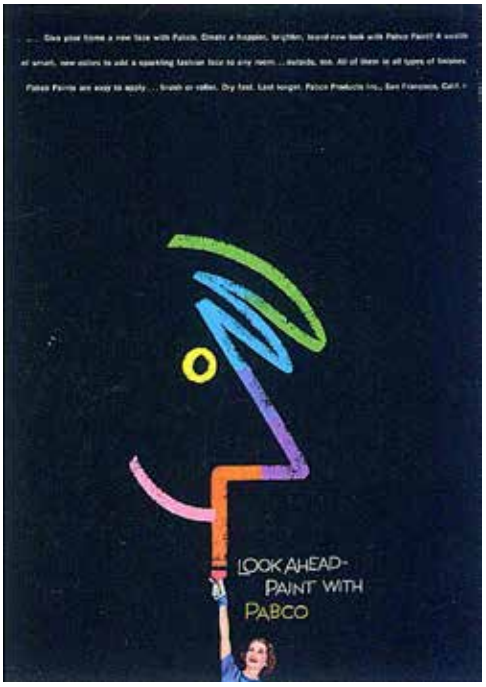
"These frozen moments were both document and source of inspiration"

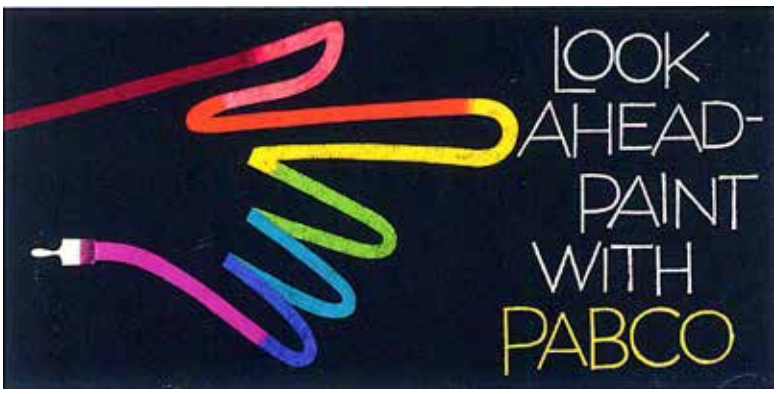
Some were taken to capture an idea or an insight, others to record an image, a new way of seeing an everyday object or as a study in light, texture and pattern. An habitual doodler, Saul's were mostly done while on the telephone, on vacation or during conferences. His doodles included lettering and abstract forms, as well as sketches of people, places and imaginary landscapes.

Many doodles were done at the Aspen Design Conferences — of fellow board members and speakers, from Lou Dorfsman to Peter Reyner Banham. Doodles aside, Aspen, the debates and the people were all important sources of creative energy for Saul. So too were the artifacts that Saul and Elaine collected.



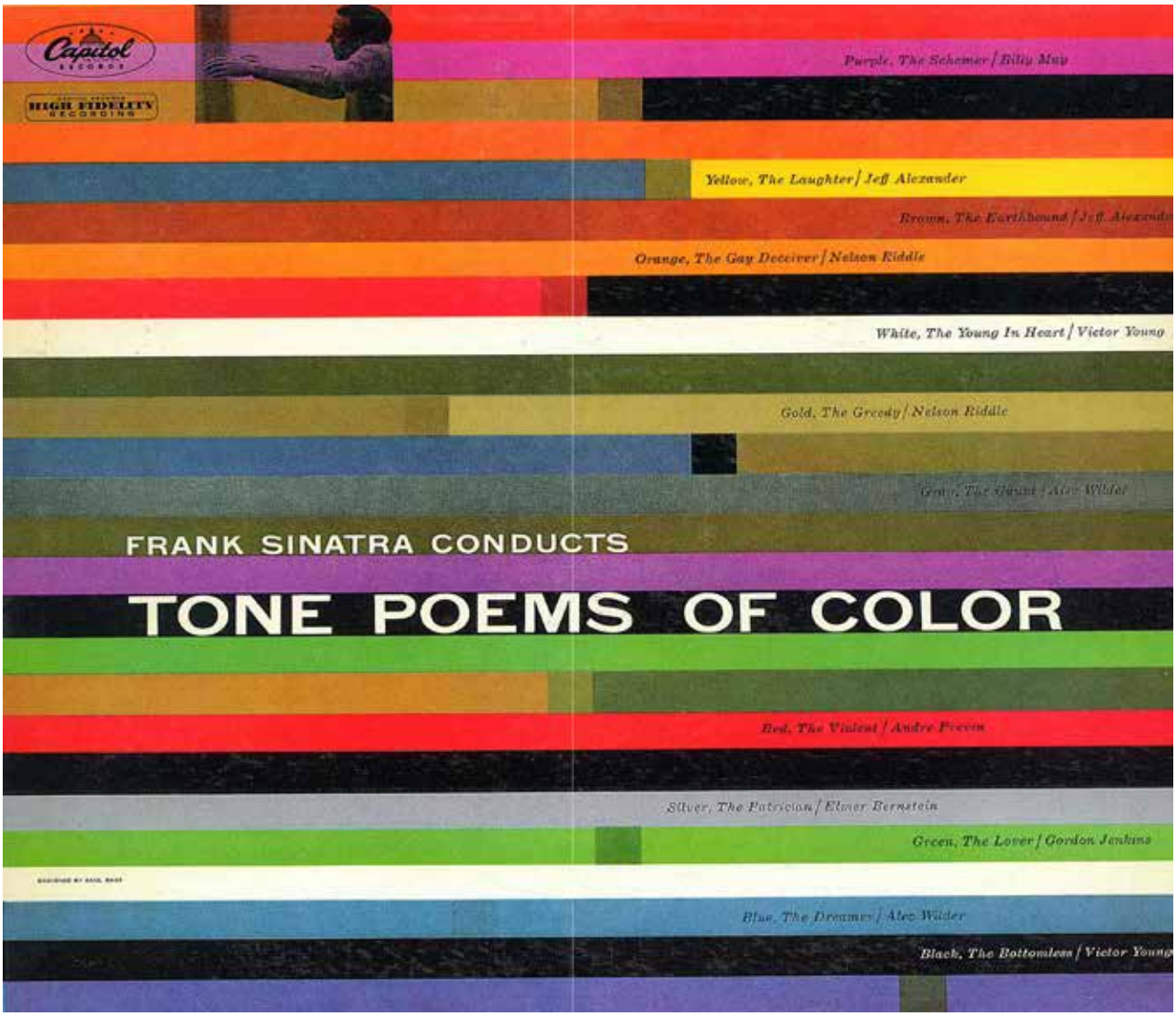






Originating from ancient societies, they were mostly Native American but also Pre-Columbian, African, Middle Eastern, Greek and Roman. To them, such objects were carriers of myths and meanings: at once knowable and unknowable, material yet mysterious. Saul surrounded himself with them in his office and at home because he thought that, in addition to their intrinsic beauty, they brought "a special kind of mystery — a quality of the unknown that reaches the very deep and hidden place," and showed how, despite working within particular traditions, conventions and forms, each was unique. For him and Elaine, the creators of these objects were kindred spirits.

Billboard for Pabco Paints, early 1950s.



Cover for Frank Sinatra's album, 1956.

How did Saul Bass influence contemporary motion design?

by Eilish McFadden

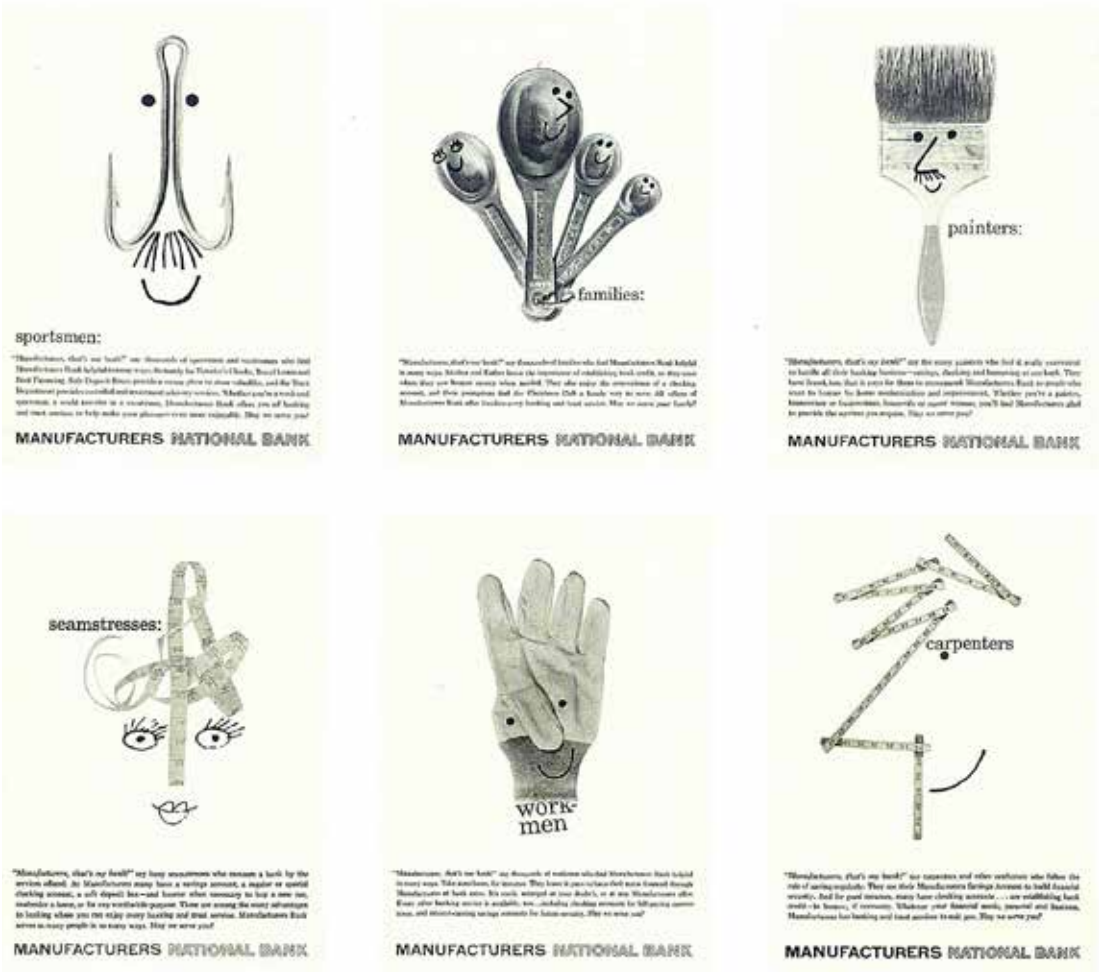
As a graphic designer Saul Bass created some of the most iconic logos in American corporate history but it is his work in films, where he almost single-handedly re-defined what titles and credits could achieve in cinema, for which he is probably best remembered. Saul Bass' style had always been minimalist; using simple geometric shapes and symbols to carry mood and message. His art and typography was often intentionally identifiable as hand-drawn to further carry over the meaning he wanted to convey to an audience.

Saul Bass' work in film and beyond spanned more than forty years and brought any number of admirers and imitators. The influence of his minimalist style is still seen in many movie posters to this day, and the title sequences of many films and television series, such as the modern hit "Mad Men", are often quoted as homage's to the ground breaking work of Saul Bass.

Catch Me If You Can is one of the most well known Saul Bass inspired title sequences. The film was set during the 1960's which was when Saul Bass was extremely popular, there for taking influence from him seemed the logical thing to do. This sequence does not only capture the look of some of his work but it also sets out to achieve one of the things that Saul Bass found the most important when creating a title sequence.

"My initial thought about what a title can do was to set mood, and the prime underlying core of the film's story, to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it". What Saul Bass is saying is that each title sequence isn't just something to showcase names; it is an opportunity to deliver a story in a unique way to the audience.

Selection of ads for Manufacturers National Bank, 1960-61.



Titles sequences can act as a prologue to the films narrative, a device to set the mood of a film or to hint at the plot, sub plot or twists that are only noticeable when you re-watch the film. Keeping this in mind it is easy to understand how important a title sequence is for a film especially a well designed one. Dexter is a widely acclaimed TV series which has a newly designed title sequence, created by Ty Mattson.

The sequence he created was based on his earlier prints for season six promotional material and is clearly recognizable as Saul Bass inspired. The title sequence he created takes on a slightly different approach; more of a summary than a storyline, although it does borrow some visual devices from the original and it provides more of a clue as to what happens in the show. Kiss Kiss Bang Bang, is another old sequence that was created by Danny Yount at Prologue.

"His art was identifiable as "hand-drawn"

This is very similar to Catch Me If You Can. The Visual Identity again has a very similar look to it and the approach is to outline the films storyline in the sequence.

In summary, it is clearly evident that the work of Saul Bass has influenced many designers. However, the question which still remains is can designers whose work is unmistakably influenced by Saul Bass be considered as plagiarists? It is a delicately balanced debate which on one side argues for the advancement of a style and on the other is considered as intellectual theft. When applying this argument to Saul Bass himself, he too could also be accused of plagiarising the constructivist-era posters.

Selection of ads
for Manufacturers
National Bank,
1960-61.

Love in the afternoon: poster by Saul Bass

by Tyler Foley

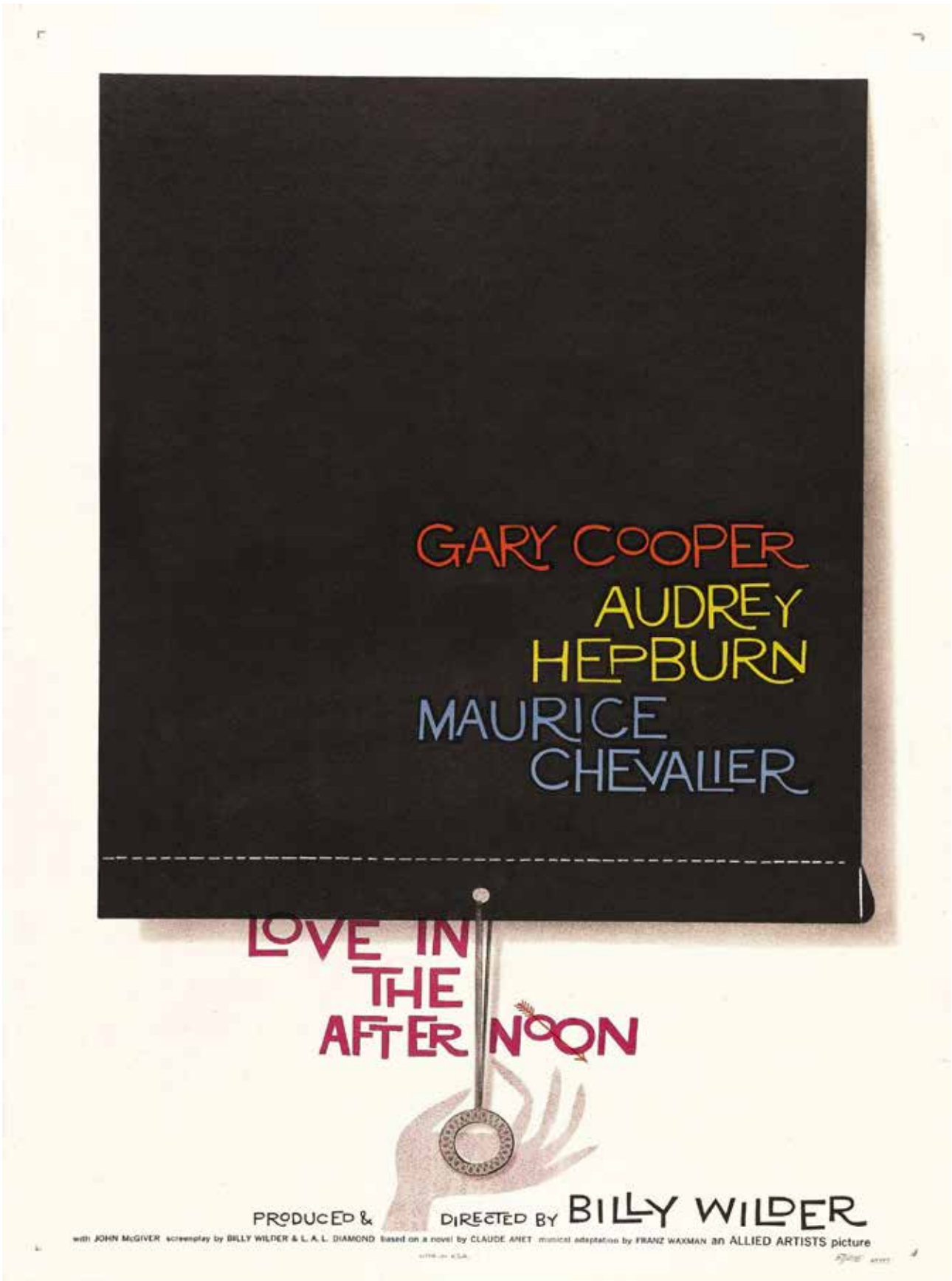
Released in 1957 and based on the novel "Ariane, jeune fille russe" , "Love in the Afternoon" is a romantic comedy directed by Billy Wilder. The film follows Ariane, a young French student who falls in love with American business magnate Frank Flannagan after warning him about an attempted threat on his life. During the film, Ariane creates this extensive list of imaginary past lovers that provides her with the opportunity to form fake comparisons. This torments Flannagan, these mysterious entities that he never sees constantly haunt his subconscious, affecting his view on the relationship. Saul Bass' promotional poster for the film, pictured above, efficiently and clearly conveys these themes of romance and intrigue. The poster, set in portrait orientation, contains the film's title coloured in a bright purple.

It is hidden by a black shade cloth, being pulled down by a feminine hand that shares a less-saturated shade of the same purple. The use of this colour, the only tertiary colour in the graphic, makes the title stand out above the rest, further adding rest, further adding to some sort of purpose or reason for it "being hidden". The names of the three main actors are included on the bottom-right corner of the shade cloth, each name coloured in a different primary colour to aid in distinguishing each one.

"A unique relationship obscured by some ominous, mysterious force"

The positioning of the lines and the cartoon-style font grants the poster this element of character over what would be some static black rectangle that dominates the image.

The combination of this big, black nothing that dominates most of the poster and this small, attractively coloured title, echoes the major overlying theme of the film: A unique relationship obscured by some ominous, mysterious force. On the most ostensible level, the image is of a woman's hand shutting the shade, further alluding to a sense of sexuality that plays a crucial role in the evolution of Love in the Afternoon's narrative.


GARY COOPER
AUDREY HEPBURN
MAURICE CHEVALIER
LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON
PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY BILLY WILDER
with JOHN McGIVER screenplay by BILLY WILDER & I. A. L. DIAMOND based on a novel by CLAUDE ANET musical adaptation by FRANZ WAXMAN an ALLIED ARTISTS picture

Breaking away

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

In the 1950s, Saul generated a virtual explosion of work in nearly every area of design from advertisinge, including billboards and illustration, to identity design, environments and architecture. He created trademarks for numerous companies and reshaped the images of others through distinctive advertising, packaging and television commercials. To clients willing to embark on the adventure with him, Saul brought his appetite for ideas, his playfulness and his delight in engaging viewers in spirited games of visual thinking. In the late 1950s, Saul was represented in Britain by the Artist Partners Ltd. Agency and worked for a variety of British companies, including British European Airways (BEA.), Enfield Cables and Transparent Paper Limited. One of the advertisements for BEA featured stylized contrails dotted with flags to indicate the geographical spread that made the airline "Europe's Foremost," while another featured luggage adorned with national flags. Saul's 1957 designs for Shell Oil placed him among the ranks of the great and good of British advertising. The company had a long-established policy of engaging leading designers and artists to create its posters, the most famous being Edward McKnight Kauffer, whom Saul had admired since the 1930s. Saul's advertisements followed the company's signature theme of "motoring": performance was implied through lines suggestive of speed, while type was used to fashion an undulating road. Saul was one of the first freelance graphic designers to move into album cover design. The first long-playing album was issued in 1948. Within a year, Saul had designed two covers, including Columbia Records' Barber Shop Harmony by The Sportsmen Quartet, for which he created playful renditions

Designs for
Shell Oil, 1957.

of barbershop singers, complete with mustaches and flattened-down hair. For the 1950 Cyrano de Bergerac soundtrack, Saul used whimsical, light-hearted graphics to suggest similar qualities in the film. From 1954, Saul designed album cover sas part of coordinated publicity campaigns for many films, and, in addition, for Elmer Bernstein and Frank Sinatra, the composer and star of The Man with the Golden Arm. Sinatra felt that "An album's cover art is as important in setting the mood of a music recording as are lyrics and music," and admired Saul's ability to capture "entire films and albums in a few brush strokes." Fro Tone Poems of Color (1956), which featured Sinatra as a conductor, Saul offered his own poem of color, line and pattern. The lyricism of the design for Bernstein's Blues & Brass (1956) lies in the harmonious yet dynamic relationship of free-floating forms. Saul offered his desing services to the various causes with which he was involved. His contributions ranged from invitations for the Southern California Peace Crusade and Plaintiffs Against the Blacklist, to stationery for the Great Issues Foundation and TRansport-a-Child, and posters for Human Rights Week.

In 1957 he designed a poster for a public meeting about nuclear policy at which the main speakers were Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. Linus Pauling, and California Congressman Chet Holifield, who sat on the government's Joint Committee for Atomic Energy. Saul's 1959 symbol for the Hollywood branch of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), which sought to keep nuclear power within safe and human bounds, indicated that the future lies in the hands of each and every one of us.

Anatomy of a Murder's poster, 1959.

Thick black lines and bold swatches of color

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

Anatomy of a Murder

Of this now iconic symbol, Martin Scorsese commented: "Here's another emblematic image, instantly recognizable and intimately tied to the film. There's something lurid and garish about the black on red, which is perfectly keyed to the subject matter, then risqué, of Anatomy of a Murder, one Preminger's best. And since the film is all about moral ambiguity and different points of view that never converge, it was brilliant to separate the corpse into seven pieces." Saul's pun on anatomy aligns the dissection of a human body with the dissection of a body of evidence in a court of law. The abstraction distances the viewer while the figuration pulls in the opposite direction. Here, as elsewhere in his work, we see Saul's fascination with the "primitive"; each piece looks as if it has been cut out by an untutored hand. The hand lettering in various sizes and forms signals inconsistency, every version of every letter is different, just as every version of events is different in this film about a lawyer who comes to doubt his client's story. The symbol appeared on a wide range of items, from invitations and lobby cards to a record album and posters. Once again, to see the range in its entirety is to realise how Saul excelled at subtle variation.

Last year's No. 1 best-seller... This year's No. 1 motion picture.
OTTO PREMINGER'S
ANATOMY
OF A MURDER
JAMES STEWART
LEE REMICK
BEN GAZZARA
ARTHUR O'CONNELL
EVE ARDEN
KATHRYN GRANT
and JOSEPH N. WELCH as Judge Weaver
GEORGE C. SCOTT/ORSON BEAN/RUSS BROWN/MURRAY HAMILTON/BROOKS WEST screenplay by WENDELL MAYES from the best-seller by ROBERT TRAVER photography by SAM LEAVITT produced & directed by OTTO PREMINGER/a Columbia release
music by Duke Ellington

Oscar campaign for Some Like It Hot, 1960.

Some Like It Hot

Many regard the series of ads for the 1960 Oscar campaign for Some Like It Hot as among Saul's most brilliant. He took the theme of gangsters dressed up as musicians from the film, in which the characters played by Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis witness a murder and are chased by the mob. Saul riffed for ten advertisements, creating a readily recognizable series even though there is no one symbol. Each design tells a story without words, while text used as part of the design tells another. Words form gunfire, liquid poured into Molotov cocktails, the body of a vehicle, musical notes, the flattened body of a gangster, a coffin, a sailing boat in a bath and part of a birthday cake. Wilder later joked with Saul, "Brilliant, brilliant. I laughed and laughed. So did everyone, but I still didn't win the Oscar." He paused, briefly but dramatically, turned to Saul and said, "Maybe your designs made people think the movie was going to be as funny at the advertisements!"

MARILYN MONROE · TONY CURTIS · JACK LEMMON in BILLY WILDER'S "SOME LIKE IT HOT"
CO-STARRING GEORGE RAFT · PAT O'BRIEN · JOE E. BROWN · SCREEN PLAY BY BILLY WILDER AND I.A.L. DIAMOND
DIRECTED BY BILLY WILDER · AN ASHTON PICTURE · A MIRISCH COMPANY PRESENTATION · RELEASED THRU UNITED ARTISTS
"SOME LIKE IT HOT', A HOT BET TO BE LIKED BY ALL. ALSO LOOMS TO BREAK THE DROUGHT OF COMEDY CONTENDERS FOR AN OSCAR."
XXX

Exodus' poster,
1960.

Exodus

Dubbed a "Jewish Western," Exodus deals with the period just before, and shortly after, the partition of Palestine in 1947 and the creation of the state of Israel. This strongly pro-Jewish film came under attack from Israeli politicians for giving too much emphasis to extremist groups, from members of those groups for compressing incidents and focusing on one individual, and from Palestinians for its bias against and portrayal of Arabs. For Saul, a key issue was to devise a contemporary symbol to alert potential audiences that this was not a biblical epic, despite the name Exodus referring to a book of the Old Testament. In this case, Exodus was a ship carrying Jewish immigrants to Palestine. "I used guns because that definitely made it of today. More important was expressing the basic idea of conflict, the idea of a fight. It was an attempt to symbolize the struggle of the Jewish people to establish their own land. To me it had certain parallels to the American foothold in the West. But it also had something the West didn't have, a spiritual overtone. The reaching hands are an attempt to imply spirituality."

EXODUS
OTTO PREMINGER PRESENTE
PAUL NEWMAN · EVA MARIE SAINT
RALPH RICHARDSON · PETER LAWFORD
LEE J. COBB · SAL MINEO · JOHN DEREK
HUGH GRIFFITH · GREGORY RATOFF
FELIX AYLMER · DAVID OPATOSHU
JILL HAWORTH DANS "EXODUS"
MARIUS GORING • ALEXANDRA STEWART • MICHAEL WAGER • MARTIN BENSON • PAUL STEVENS • BETTY WALKER • MARTIN MILLER
VICTOR MADDERN • GEORGE MAHARIS • JOHN CRAWFORD • SAMUEL SEGAL • SCENARIO DE DALTON TRUMBO D'APRÈS LE
ROMAN DE LÉON URIS • MUSIQUE DE ERNEST GOLD • PHOTOGRAPHIE EN SUPER PANAVISION 70, TECHNICOLOR® PAR
SAM LEAVITT • DECORS RICHARD DAY • DISTRIBUE PAR LES ARTISTES ASSOCIÉS • PRODUIT ET DIRIGÉ PAR OTTO PREMINGER

One, Two, Three

The publicity campaign for this comedy about American cultural and economic imperialism in West Germany proved controversial. Saul's symbol featuring a U.S.-style flag sticking out d a Coca-Cola-style bottle had to be scotched when Coca-Cola threatened legal action. The replacement campaign used three balloons to capture the film's ligh-heartedness - balloons that in the movie carried slogans such as "Yankees Go Home" and "Russki Go Home".

One, Two, Three's poster, 1961.

Grand Prix's
poster, 1966.

Grand Prix

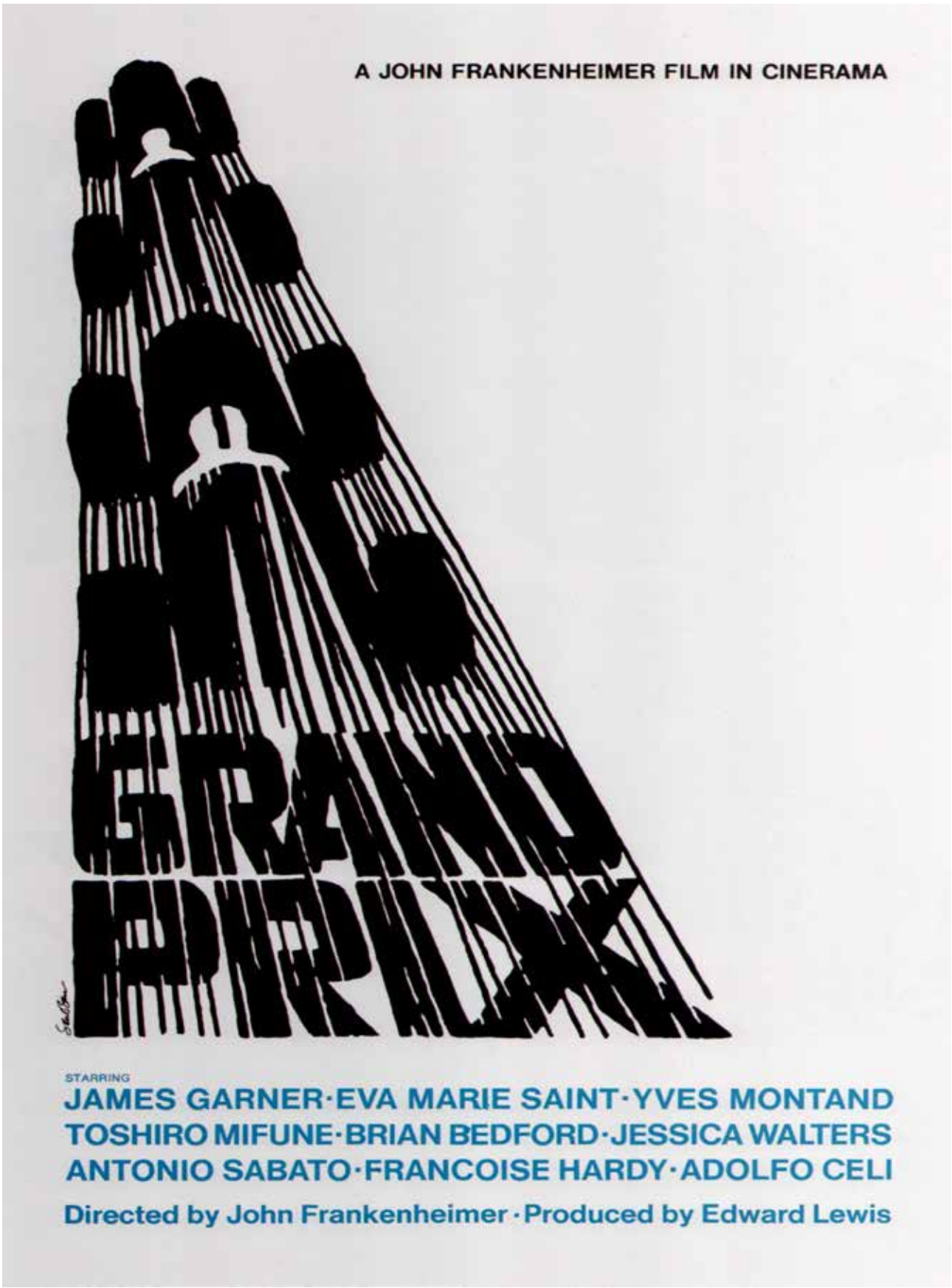
Saul was just recovering from hip surgery when Frankenheimer asked him to create a title sequence for a film about Formula One auto racing and the lives of the drivers, on and off the track. It was to star James Garner, Eva Marie Saint and Yves Montaned.

Under the circumstances, Saul reluctantly declined, but offered to shoot sufficient footage to provide a "vocabulary of images" that would indicate the type of approach Frankenheimer might take. The results were so good that Frankenheimer convinced Saul not only to do a title sequence but also to play a wider role as visual consultant, including designing and directing all but one of the races, editing two races in order to establish a house style for the rest and supervising the final editing. The title prologue deals with the minutes immediately before the start of the Monte Carlo rally. Focused on feverish preparations for the race, the sequence is a montage of fast-cut close-ups printed singly or as multiples: tire treads turning, wrenches tightening down spark plugs, needles swinging across tachometer dials, helmets pulled onto heads, gloves onto hands, expectant faces in the crowd and the heartbeat of a driver as we experience with him the last seconds before the flag comes down for the start of the race.

One of the most dramatic moments comes at the very start. The name of the film emerges from a single black circular object that fills the screen.

Then, the camera pulls back, the soundtrack explodes – "vrroooom" - and we realize we have been looking into the exhaust pipe of a racing car.

The sequence ends with a countdown from "Five" to "Go!" and, as the race begins, so too does the film proper - in this case, a race directed by Saul.


A JOHN FRANKENHEIMER FILM IN CINERAMA
GRAND PRIX
STARRING
JAMES GARNER·EVA MARIE SAINT·YVES MONTAND
TOSHIRO MIFUNE·BRIAN BEDFORD·JESSICA WALTERS
ANTONIO SABATO·FRANCOISE HARDY·ADOLFO CELI
Directed by John Frankenheimer·Produced by Edward Lewis

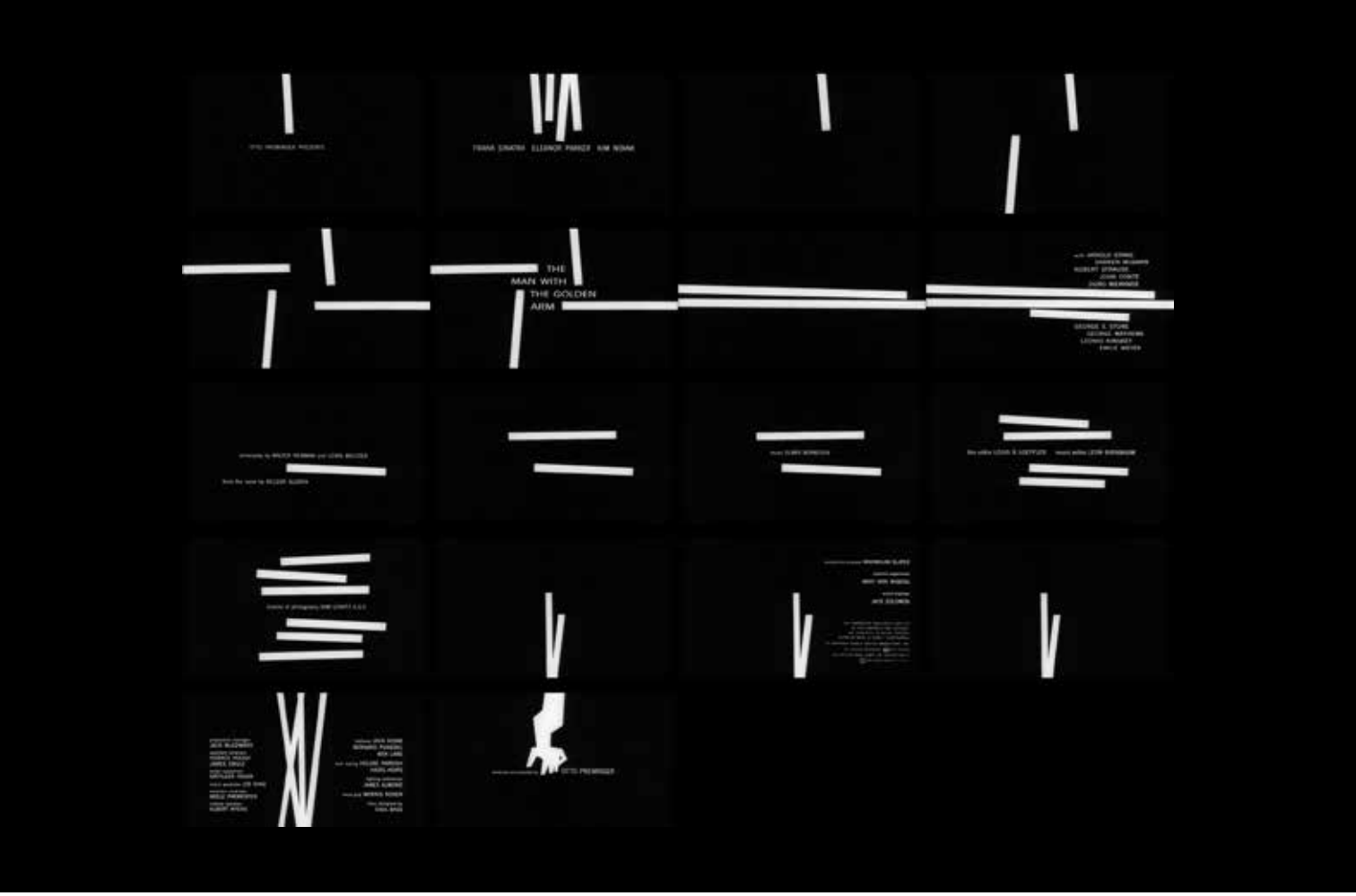
Distortion and jaggedness

by Pat Kirkham

In 1954, Preminger again defied Production Code guidelines when adapting Nelson Algren's powerful novel about drug addiction, a taboo topic in mid-century America. The challenge facing Saul was how to create a symbol that captured the drama and intensity of the film without resorting to sensationalism. He created an arresting image of a distorted, disjointed arm.

The semi-abstract form helped distance the image from the harsh realities of shooting up, although they are implicit in the (dis)figuration. As well as being disconnected from a body, the black arm has the appearance of being petrified and transformed into something else, just as the Sinatra character in the film is transformed by his addiction. The title sequence was modern art on the movie screen. Saul stated that, "The intent of this opening was to create a mood spare, gaunt, with a driving intensity… [that conveyed] the distortion and jaggedness, the disconnectedness and disjointedness of the addict's life the subject of the film."

Accompanied by Elmer Bernstein's driving jazz-like score, and set against a black background, white bars appear, disappear and form abstract patterns before finally coalescing into the film's symbol. Contrasts between the black and white heighten



The Man with the Golden Arm's opening titles, 1955.

the strident intensity, and the disjunctures encapsulate the mood of the main character, a downbeat drummer with a penchant for gambling and drugs. Because of the extremely tight schedule, Bernstein had to compose the music at the same time as Saul was creating the title. Saul explained, "He gave me a beat, 'the counts' as we say, and I designed to that beat. It was a helluva moment when we first screened it." When prints went out to theaters all over the country, Preminger made sure they were accompanied by a note instructing the projectionist to run the first reel only after the curtains were drawn back.

Look what Saul Bass made Taylor Swift do

by Claire Blaustein

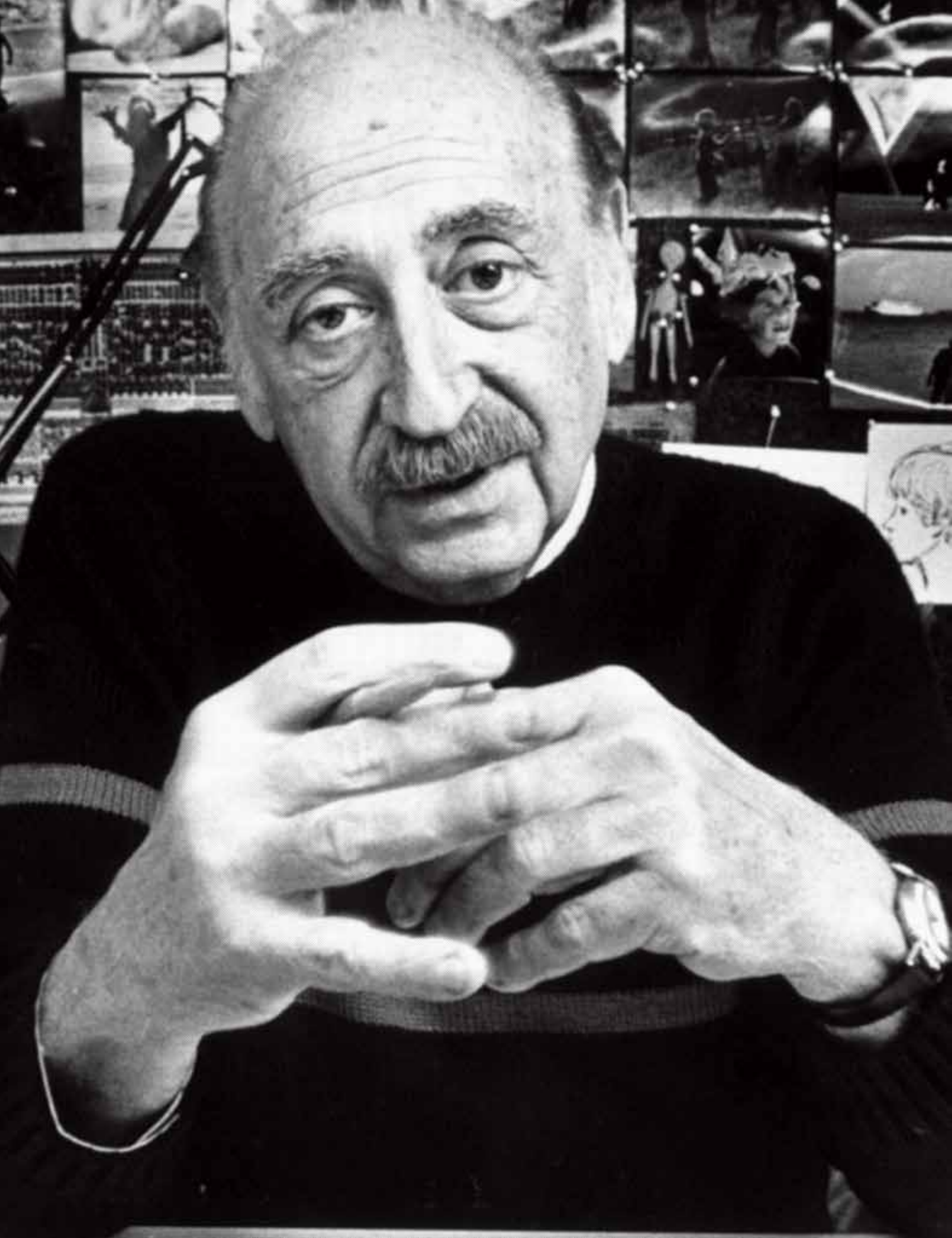
The buzz around Taylor Swift's new "Look What You Made Me Do" can go in plenty of directions. Is it about Kim and Kanye? What does Katy Perry think? Has Swift shed her "good girl" reputation? And who is she talking to on the phone?

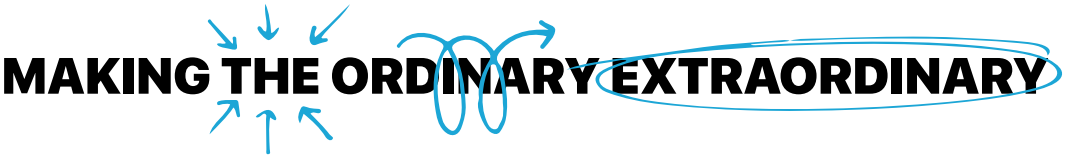
But let's take a minute to focus on what's really important (at least to designers) — that clearly, the inspiration for Swift's lyric video is the legendary Saul Bass. Although Bass is known for iconic logos — think Kleenex, AT&T, United Way — what you probably recognize more is his work with movies. Bass broke into the film industry in 1954 when he designed the poster for Carmen Jones, and was then asked to design the title sequence. Up until that time, title credits were generally tacked on to movies, sometimes even shown on closed curtains. But Bass made them a critical part of the experience. As he continued to create these sequences, his work became even more arresting - animating cut paper, choosing bold colors and making the type a part of the story. Now, decades later, Swift calls on Bass to illustrate what she did (or didn't) do. Produced by ODD and an impressive team, the video uses strong colors and silhouette animation that pull deeply from Bass' style. The deep red and black is familiar from many of his posters —

Frames from the lyric video of Look What You Made Me Do, 2017.

"Vertigo," "Anatomy of a Murder" and "Spartacus." It's the type that stands out the most. The blocky handwriting, much of it done by letterer Art Goodman, showed up in many of his posters and in many variations, and the type cut out from objects and figures also made regular appearances.

It's even possible that lyric music videos only exist because of Bass, who pioneered the kind of dynamic use of type that propels you through the story. Bass started using "kinetic type" in his work with Alfred Hitchcock, like the classic "North by Northwest." Lyric videos would be pretty boring if the text just flashed in and out like karaoke slides.





curated by Alessandro Jack Scavino

Saul Bass' most iconic film posters

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

The ambidextrous Bass had a piercingly keen eye (Martin Scorsese once called it a jeweller's eye), and an ability to freely sketch the myriad ideas that poured from his fertile mind. When art and design students asked him how they should prepare for future careers, he always told them to learn to draw.

A voracious reader with a probing intellect, his endless curiosity, ingenuity, boundless enthusiasm for the task at hand, discipline, warmth, sense of humour, and sensitivity toward human emotions, all lay at the heart of his success.

Admired for his ability to balance content and form, Bass believed that in any successful design, content was paramount. In the 1990s he stated, "I've always looked for the simple idea," and went on to say that as he and his wife, Elaine (who worked with him on film titles and short films from 1960), continued to do so. "We have a very reductive point of view when it comes to visual matters," he commented."We see the challenge in getting things down to something totally simple, and yet doing something with it, which provokes… If it's simple simple, it's boring. We try for the idea that is so simple that it will make you think – and rethink." Today he is best known for his iconic

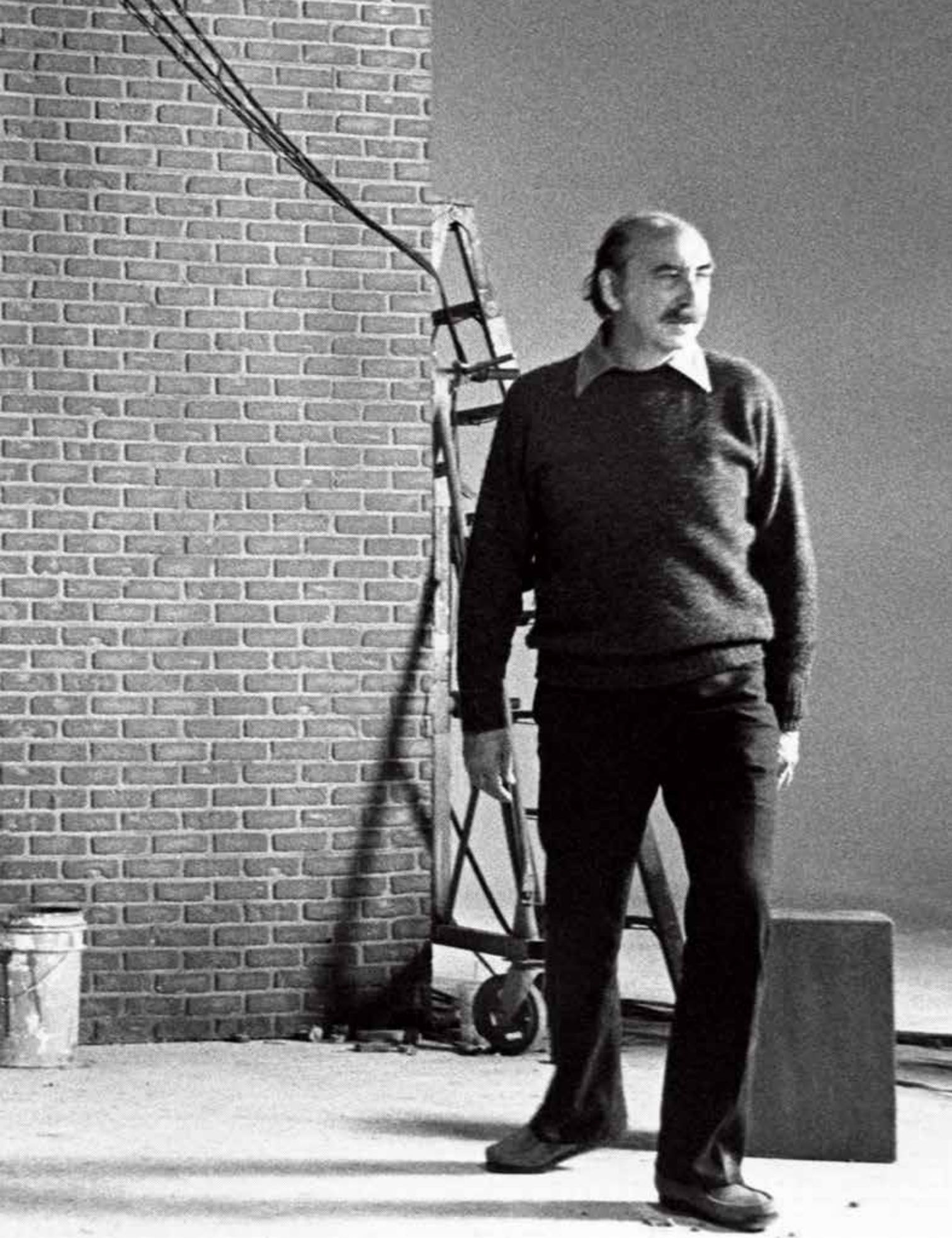
"We try for the idea that is so simple that it will make you think – and rethink"

film posters, and more than 50 title sequences for Hollywood films, each featuring an image or symbol that served as a metaphor for the film itself.

Because he always sought to create a design relevant to the commission at hand, there is no definitive "Bass" aesthetic; though his work shows a strong drive towards reductionism, distillation, and economy, features central to modernism, it also reveals a concern with fragmentation, layering, ambiguity, and metaphor, qualities evident in the 1950s but more associated with postmodernism. His bold designs are matched by bold and expressive colour palettes, and the posters incorporate finely honed lettering and typography.

His reputation in film sometimes overshadows his enormous and equally prolific work across a wide range of disciplines, from all manner of advertising and packaging, to logos and graphic identity programs for some of the leading corporations and institutions of the day, such as United Airlines, the Girl Scouts, Warner Brothers, and Minolta.

The ideal corporate symbol, he believed, "is the one that is pushed to its utmost limits in terms of abstraction and ambiguity, yet is still readable," pointing out that they are usually "metaphors of one kind or another... [and] in a certain sense, thinking made visible." This applies to the film posters featured here as well. His big break in terms of film advertising and title sequence work came in 1954 when the independent film director and producer Otto Preminger offered him the chance to achieve a long-standing ambition, namely to design a unified identity campaign for a Hollywood film that banished "realistic" and sensationalist illustration and removed or minimised images of the film stars. Bass created strongly graphic posters and title sequences for several Preminger films, including The Man with the Golden Arm, 1955; Saint Joan, 1957; Bonjour Tristesse, 1958; and Anatomy of a Murder, 1959; while for director /producer Alfred Hitchcock he produced three title sequences and an advertising campaign (for Vertigo, 1958).



The Man with the Golden Arm's poster, 1955.

The Man with the Golden Arm

This is a film about an aspiring jazz drummer who has cleaned up from addiction while in prison and returns to his old neighbourhood on Chicago's North Side. Then, through a series of misfortunes, we watch as he slides back into his drug habit. Bass' challenge was to find a symbol that would capture the horrors of addiction without sensationalism. The black, distorted, jagged arm suggests dysfunction and petrification, while the uneven yet elegant gold lettering suggests the talent and potential of the main character, playing on the word "gold," as slang for heroin. The blocks of solid colour and their abstract formation evoke the language of modern art and jazz, echoing the contemporary theme of the film. Bass named the film's three stars in uneven lettering at the top of the poster. By including their names but not their images, Bass' design flew in the face of film industry conventions.

FRANK SINATRA · ELEANOR PARKER · KIM NOVAK
THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM
A FILM BY OTTO PREMINGER · FROM THE NOVEL BY NELSON ALGREN · MUSIC BY ELMER BERNSTEIN · PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY OTTO PREMINGER

Advise & Consent's
poster, 1962.

Advise & Consent

Bass' bold symbol for the film Advise & Consent is a clever visual pun that literally "takes the lid off" contemporary Cold War politics in the United States. Based on Allen Drury's 1959 novel of the same name, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the film exposes scheming and blackmail in the US Senate, aimed at defeating the nomination of a liberal, who was open to rapprochement with the Soviet Union, to the office of Secretary of State. After creating several symbols representing politicians as puppets on a string or mechanical toys to be wound up at will, Bass came up with a solution which raises the question of what goes on beneath the surface of political life.

Witty and pregnant with potential, Bass' trademark found resonance at home and abroad and was used as a visual gag in various political cartoons in Europe and the United States.

HENRY FONDA, CHARLES LAUGHTON, DON MURRAY, WALTER PIDGEON, PETER LAWFORD, GENE TIERNEY, LEW AYRES, FRANCHOT TONE, BURGESS MEREDITH, EDDIE HODGES, PAUL FORD, GEORGE GRIZZARD, INGA SWENSON

SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY WENDELL MAYES. MUSIC BY JERRY FIELDING. PHOTOGRAPHED IN PANAVISION BY SAM LEAVITT. PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY OTTO PREMINGER. A COLUMBIA PICTURES RELEASE

The Cardinal's
poster, 1963.

The Cardinal

Through the story of a priest who rises to the rank of Cardinal within the Roman Catholic Church, this film questions the Church's position on several key issues, from war and politics to inter-faith marriages, sex outside wedlock, abortion, and racism. Bass' challenge was to devise a symbol free of ecclesiastical associations, lest potential viewers understood the film to be narrowly religious. In the end he decided to make the name of the film the symbol.

In a boldly modern composition, divided in two by a strip announcing "An Otto Preminger Film," the gigantic black capital letters of "The," representing the towering authority of the Roman Catholic Church, dwarf the power of the word "Cardinal."

The backward-leaning tilt of the monumental "The," together with the large block of solid black below, hint at a dark side to this movie.

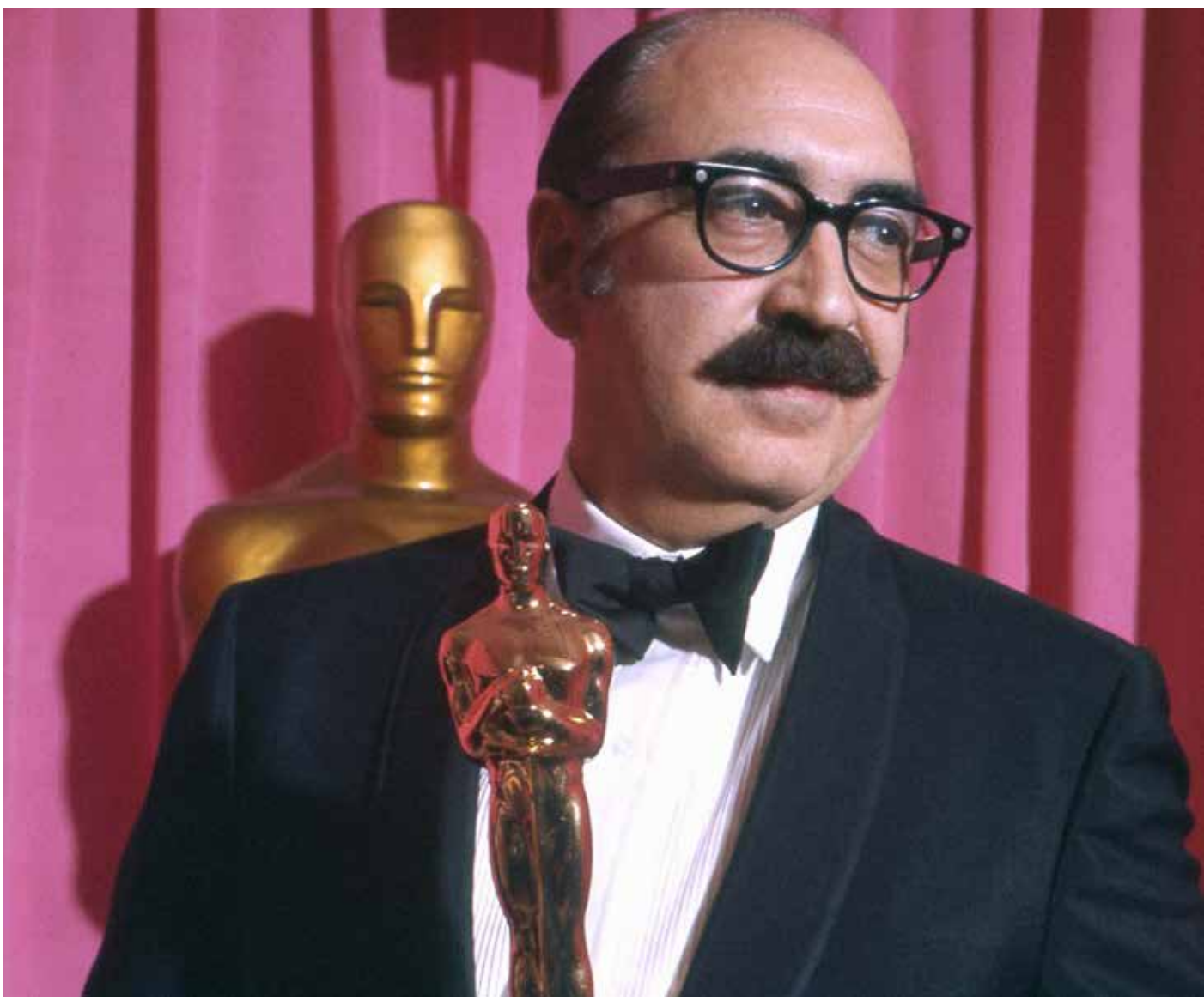
THE CARDINAL

AN OTTO PREMINGER FILM

THE CARDINAL STARRING TOM TRYON, ROMY SCHNEIDER, CAROL LYNLEY, JILL HAWORTH, RAF VALLONE, JOHN SAXON, JOSEF MEINRAD, BURGESS MEREDITH, OSSIE DAVIS, DOROTHY GISH, TULLIO CARMINATI, MAGGIE McNAMARA, BILL HAYES, CECIL KELLAWAY AND JOHN HUSTON AS GLENNON. ALSO BOBBY (MORSE) & HIS ADORA-BELLES ✦ SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT DOZIER. BASED ON THE INTERNATIONAL BEST SELLER BY HENRY MORTON ROBINSON. MUSIC BY JEROME MOROSS. PRODUCTION DESIGNED BY LYLE WHEELER. PHOTOGRAPHED BY LEON SHAMROY IN TECHNICOLOR® AND PANAVISION 70™. PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY OTTO PREMINGER. A COLUMBIA RELEASE

Animating modernist design

by Michael Betancourt



Saul Bass (1920 – 1996) was the first of the new "title designers" to emerge in the 1950s, setting the precedent for those who followed. He moved to Hollywood in 1946 after spending time in New York as a student working and learning graphic design. Once in Hollywood, he worked as a graphic designer, title designer, visual consultant, and director of both short films and one feature, reflecting the basic paradigm shifts underway in the 1950s and continuing through the 1970s as Hollywood production abandoned the industrial model of the studio system. He would ultimately produce fifty-nine title sequences between 1954 and 1996, revealing the influence of Modernist graphic design in his engagement with both static and motion elements on screen. These transfers between screen and print are apparent in the form and style of the work he is best known for producing: highly graphic, animated feature film titles that translated the types of Modernist forms used in print by designers, such as Paul Rand and Alvin Lustig, into motion. Bass was principally responsible for the "title designer" as a major role in media production, and the field of motion graphics was partly defined by his work.

Before working in film as a title designer, he trained in graphic design as a part-time student at the Art Student's League in New York with Howard Trafton, then at the Brooklyn College under György Kepes from 1944 to 1945. Kepes' influence on Bass is apparent in his embrace of the highly minimal, geometric Modernism characteristic of the Bauhaus. Through this relationship with the aesthetics of print, his work brought a new design aesthetic to the production of animated film titles.

"He brought a new design aesthetic to the production of animated film titles"

His first film project with Otto Preminger was as a graphic designer. He produced an advertizing poster for the film Carmen Jones (1954).

When he was hired to adapt this design for the credits of the film itself was the beginning of his work as a title designer; Bass was hired again on Preminger's next film to create another poster, this time for The Man With The Golden Arm (1955): he would end up collaborating with Preminger on a total of thirteen films. The animation itself was executed by the UPA company, and it was through that connection that Bass would meet the abstract film maker John Whitney. While The Man With The Golden Arm made Bass into the first of the title designers to become a "star," even before the success of this title sequence he was working on other title sequences that collectively established his reputation: Robert Aldrich's The Big Knife (1955) and Attack! (1956), Jose Ferrer's The Shrike (1955) and Billy Wilder's The Seven Year Itch (1955). Bass would produce the majority of his film titles during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Stuart Davis,
Hot Still-Scape
for Six Colors,
1940.

It is this period when he established himself as the premiere title designer, and had designed sixteen title sequences, often with associated print campaigns, between 1954 and the end of 1957, and a total of thirty-eight by 1970, more than half his career total.

In the accompanying print campaign for The Man With The Golden Arm, (1955) the images of the stars were either eliminated or minimized, allowing Bass' iconic form to dominate; as with Preminger's titles for Fallen Angel, the design and visual content of the titles reflects elements of the dramatic narrative, as Bass explained about his design concept: It was a movie about drug addiction, and the jigged form of the arm expressed the jarring disjointing that exist in a drug addict which expressed the climax of the film. The Man With The Golden Arm was an adaptation of Nelson Algren's novel that focused on the taboo of drug addiction. It is a design that obliquely referenced its content - abstracting the references to heroin into a more conceptual engagement with the subject while still confronting its content through the contorted shape of the arm itself; this story of a Jazz musician struggling with his drug addiction is reflected by the implied violence of the graphics.

Unlike Preminger's earlier design for Fallen Angel (1948) where road signs combined with a long take watching the bus navigate the road is obvious, perhaps even cliché, the titles design by Bass are more conceptual in their sourcing and Modernist in design. The limited formal vocabulary of lines, sans serif type and graphic composition mark these titles as belonging to the International Style that emerged as the dominant post-war graphic design school.

"The linkage requires a recognition of Davis' painting in Bass' design"

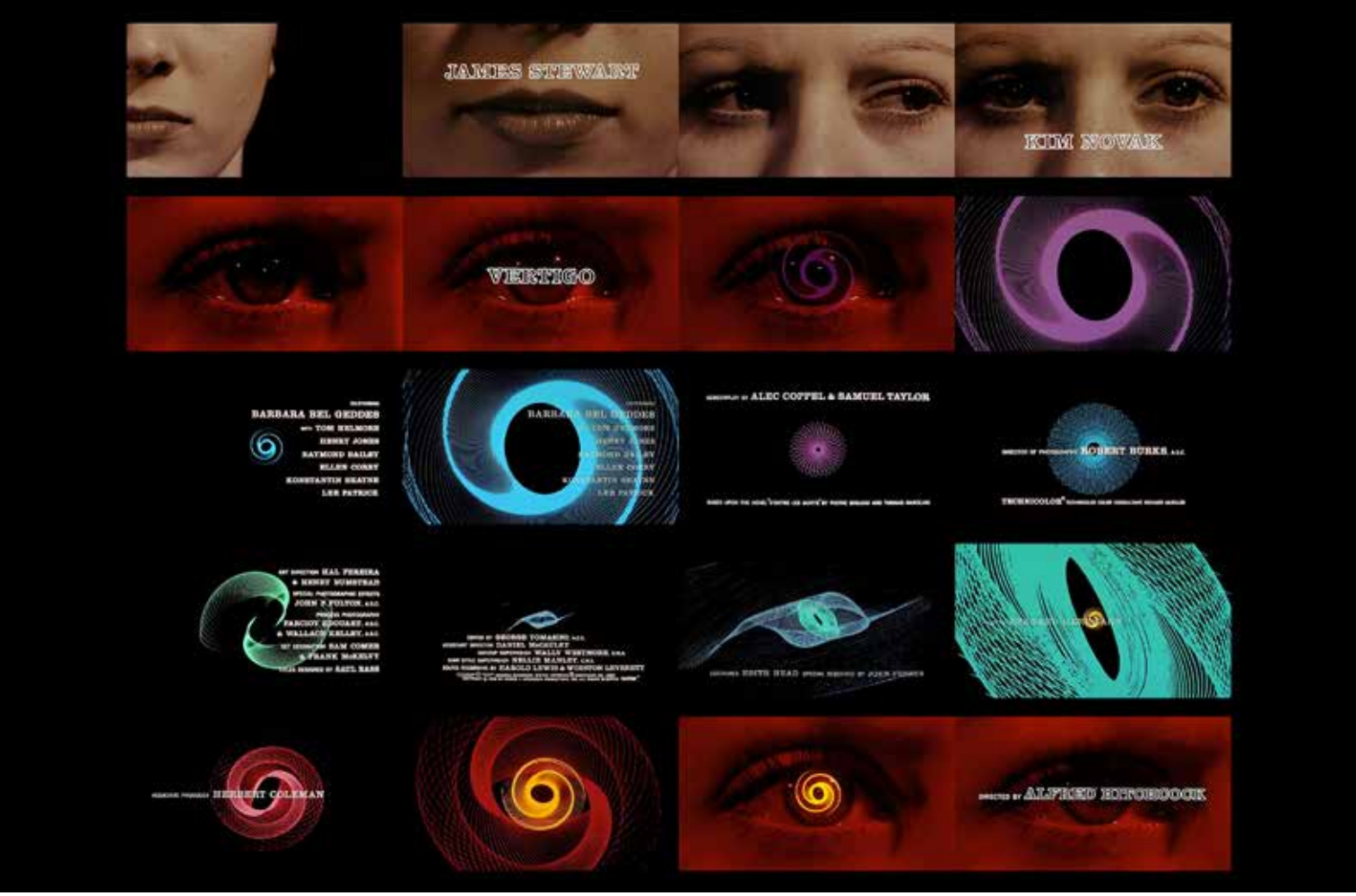
At the same time, these titles draw on a specifically American Modernist source: the painting of Stuart Davis, whose combinations of flat graphic planes and sharply cut angles evoke Jazz both indirectly through their visual form, and directly via their titles, (combined with the American version of International Style common to graphic design in the 1940s and 1950s). Thus while the design is specifically Modernist, its references make the meaning apparent to knowledgeable audience members: the connection of painting concerned with Jazz to a film narrative concerned with a Jazz musician is no less obvious than in Fallen Angel, but results in a title sequence where the conceptual linkage requires a recognition of Davis' painting in Bass' design.

Vertigo (1958), brought Bass into collaboration with John Whitney who produced the spirals that dominate this opening. It reflected the convergence of avant-garde film and commercial media production that had been developing throughout the 1950s, most especially around television.

The relationship established between Bass and the Whitneys continued throughout his career—the 1984 animated logo for AT&T (formed after the anti-trust suit's end) was done by John Whitney, Jr. This collaboration reflects Bass' comment about the American avant-garde: They created a great yearning in me to emulate this, to do something that would embrace this kind of daring.

His focus on the American avant-garde films of Maya Deren and Kenneth Anger, both central figures in the New American Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. The influence of avant-garde film on the development of film titles and television design (especially advertising design) was part of the shift towards the Modernist aesthetic that came to dominate design during the 1950s.

As in Bass' earlier sequences, the visual design of the titles in Vertigo proceed through an ambiguous visualization of the film's central themes—in the case of Hitchcock's film, both dizziness (one meaning of "vertigo") and the internal psychological state itself (another meaning).



Vertigo's opening titles, 1958.

Unlike the narrative, however, which follows Scottie, played by James Stewart, Bass' sequence focused on Kim Novak, his co-star, who played Julie. He explains this focus on Novak by choosing to focus on her character, rather than Stewart's detective: Here is a woman made into what a man wants her to be. She is put together piece by piece. I tried to suggest something of this, and also the fragmented mind of Julie, by my shifting images. Bass' description of the film is simultaneously accurate and misleading; it is Scottie whose mind fragments in the film, (and he who experiences vertigo), yet from the title sequence and his commentary on it, the film might tell a different story. Yet the focus of these titles on themes

"Here is a woman made into what a man wants her to be"

of sight and the spiraling dizziness that is vertigo proves effective. Each potential meaning of film's title appears in the organization of this sequence: the a design that recalls William Golden's animations of the CBS logo, the slowly rotating spirals rise out of a close-up of Kim Novak's eye, their graphic form reiterating this movement throughout the entire sequence: ovals lying at the center of Whitney's spirals become eye-shapes, each succeeding spiral playing the role of "pupil" to the earlier one's "eye."

"The result was an undefined sense of weirdness"

Psycho (1960) was the last title sequence Bass produced for a Hitchcock film. However, the main credit Bass received on the film was as 'pictorial consultant,' an ambiguous credit that requires some explanation. Bass' explained this role as to "strangify" the Bates house, and work on the now famous shower murder sequence where Marion Crane, played by Janet Leigh, dies. For "strangifying" the house, Bass' solution relied on optical printing: Finally I hit on it. I matted a time-lapse moonlit, cloudy night sky—but no scudding clouds—just moving somewhat faster than normal. In the two to three-second cuts to the house (which was not long enough to reveal the abnormal rate of movement), it resulted in an undefined sense of weirdness.

This solution directly shows the close technological relationship between special effects and motion graphics—both use basically the same technologies; in effect, the "solution" Bass devised was a motion graphics solution to a narrative concern.

The combination of masking and compositing in optical printing are common features of Bass' title design work, highly visible in the titles done for his previous designs for Hitchcock.

Psycho's opening titles, 1960.

The peculiar alienation of Magritte's painting *L'Empire des lumières* remains in Bass' shots for Psycho: the reversal of night and day elements produced a similar sense of unease, but without an immediate understanding of why. For the shower sequence, Bass was given the task of designing the storyboards, which Hitchcock then followed precisely in shooting. Hitchcock had collaborated with artists in earlier films—Spellbound (1946) had a dream sequence designed by Surrealist painter Salvador Dali, and the dream sequence in Vertigo was created by Abstract Expressionist John Ferren. The handling of this sequence was crucial to the success of the film. The titles design itself is a dramatization of the psychoanalytic term 'schizophrenic' that literally means a 'splitting of the mind'—shown on screen by the splitting and disjuncture of the typography itself. The motions are irregular, and the moving bars that cross the screen are of different lengths and move at different speeds. The typography becomes legible only when the different parts of the type briefly align: fragmentation and momentary unities of schizophrenia are dramatized through the misalignment and break-up of the design into elements whose formal basis recalls the opening to The Man With The Golden Arm.

"It's a dramatic shift from the highly graphic titles he was known for"

It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World (1964) is a dramatic shift from the highly graphic titles Bass is best known for doing, to a more conventional animated cartoon sequence of exceptional length for a feature film title. These titles were done for an almost encyclopedic compendium of Hollywood film comedy that included actors from the silent era as well as contemporary figures from both film and TV. These titles, done in the style of the UPA studio, reflect the Modernist, limited cel animation style. They were part of a trend towards larger, more expensive and complex films in the early 1960s. The adoption of cartoon titles, however followed earlier work done for The Pink Panther (1963) by animators Friz Freleng (1906 – 1995) and David H. DePatie (1935 –). Their title design incorporated Modernist graphic elements, but followed the more traditional and familiar character animation style developed at Warner Brothers in the 1940s by Tex Avery. The cat character designed by Hawley Pratt for the opening would reappear in later sequels such as The Return of The Pink Panther (1975), The Pink Panther Strikes Again (1976) and Revenge of The Pink Panther (1978). While highly memorable, the complex character animation of these title sequences was also both rare and unusual in Hollywood film.

It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World's opening titles, 1963.

Bass would produce other title designs as well as logos, advertizing campaigns, and continue working until his death in the 1990s; however, his later work did not achieve the iconic status of his earlier design work.

The importance and role of the title designer in the creation of a feature film that he established in the 1950s enabled other artists to make titles, in the process opening up the field for experimentation and elaboration. During the 1960s these other artists became more prominent, bringing other approaches and aesthetics to the design problems posed by the title sequence.

"State-of-the-art technical effects? No, the process could have hardly been simpler"

[Director John] Frankenheimer, who was already working with Saul on Grand Prix, was of the opinion that Saul was the only person capable of designing an appropriate title sequence for Seconds, a Faustian sci-fi drama about a secret organization that offers the wealthy the chance to assume new identities and bodies.

Rock Hudson stars as a respectable sixty-year-old banker who, through advanced surgical procedures, takes up a "second" life as a bohemian painter. Frankenheimer recounted how he actively pursued Saul until he agreed.

For the title sequence, Saul and Elaine manipulated intense close-up photography of a human face to create strange, undulating patterns that are both lyrical and horrifying.

Saul explained, "Tampering with humanity in that way is pretty scary, so in the title we broke apart, distorted and reconstituted the human face to symbolically set the stage for what was to come."

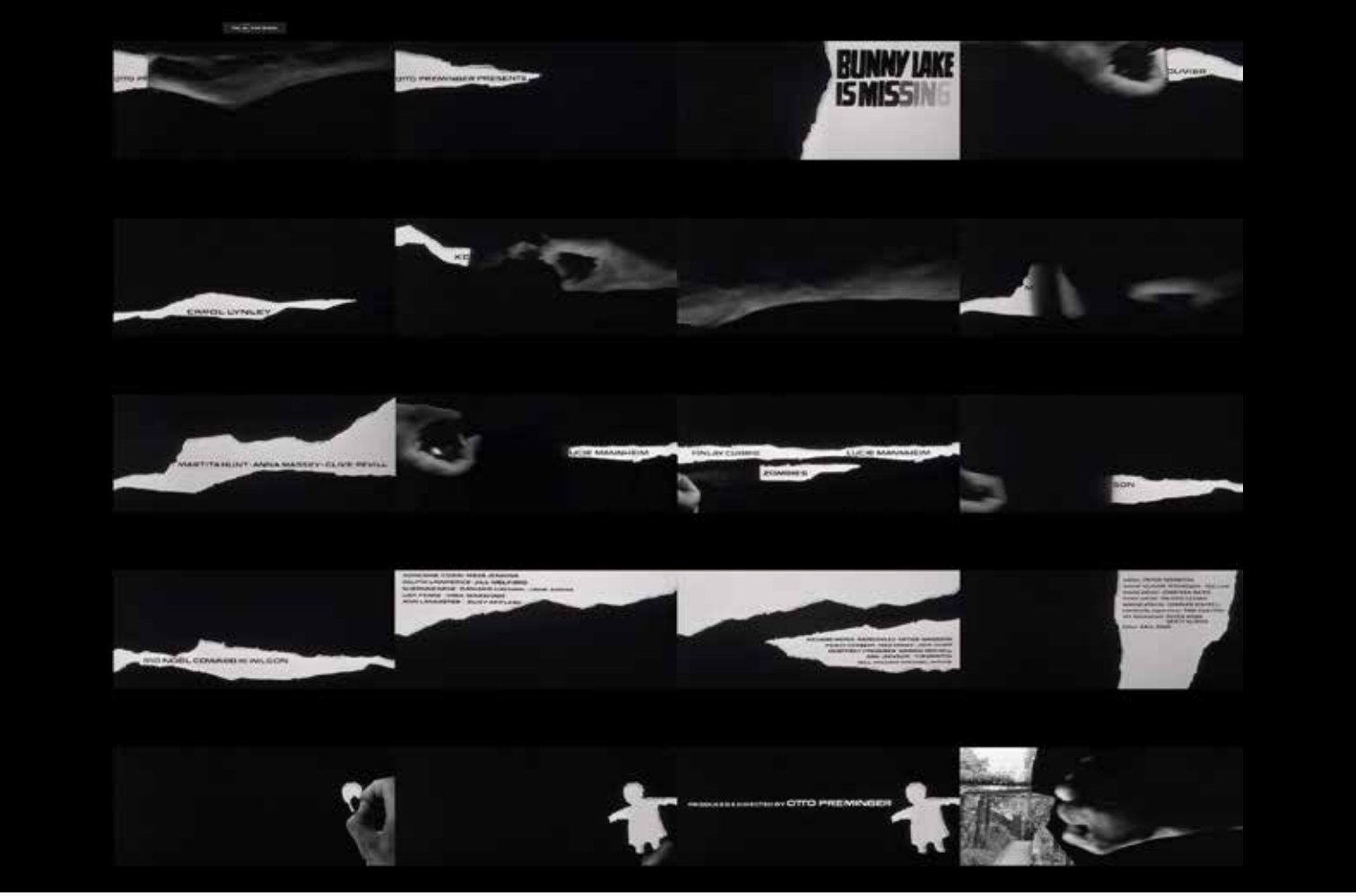
As Andreas Timmer notes, "As in all of Bass's work, the physical elements of the sequence are referential to plot, while their juxtapositions and reconfigurations become psychological and visceral communicators for mood and theme.

Seconds' opening titles, 1967.

He prepares the spectator for the nightmarish cinematography of Wong Howe, whose fluid camera movement is combined with extreme wide-angle lenses and off-centered perspectives." Described by Frankenheimer as "breathtaking," the sequence seems to be the result of state-of-the-art technical effects, but in fact the process could hardly have been simpler — photographing the reflection of a perfectly normal physiognomy onto aluminum sheets that were manipulated to create distortions. In the strange, contorted images on screen, it is difficult to imagine that we are actually looking at the friendly face of Art Goodman, who volunteered to model.

"No color, no tricks. Just the raw, naked concept standing on its own"

Saul Bass's work always looks effortless and timeless. That's what makes his work so appealing — it can be enjoyed on a basic level. Like a child seeing simple shapes and colors for the first time — a white line on black paper. Maybe there's something soothing about that simplicity next to the visual chaos of the world. One of the best examples of a simple yet smart Saul Bass idea is the main title sequence for Bunny Lake is Missing. The film is about an emotionally disturbed person involved in the disappearance of a child. To hint at the character's state of mind, a hand tears shapes out of a black screen, each hole revealing another credit. The torn edges are jagged and help to set the mood of the film. It ends with the shape of a girl being torn out of the paper, as if she's missing from the sheet of paper (which is then used again in the poster). It seems like such a simple idea but getting there is difficult. It takes years of experience to have the ability to boil ideas down to this kind of purity and Bass didn't muck it up with anything he didn't need: no color, no jumpy edits, no tricks. Just the raw, naked concept standing on its own. You can see this same approach time and time again in his work: great ideas condensed down to their purest form, then simply executed.



Bunny Lake Is Missing's opening titles, 1965.

It proves that basic shapes, colors, and compositions in the hands of an experienced artist can become something magical. You could compare him to Matisse, who spent his entire career as an artist refining his style over 50 working years and ended up cutting simple shapes out of painted paper in his later years. He made some of his best work at the very end of his life. But all those years of experience were necessary for him to cut those shapes just right. Saul Bass was at that same level in the design world. Look at the title sequence to Psycho. Matisse would have loved it — Bass did it all with just rectangles.

This is what you need: a magic dot.

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

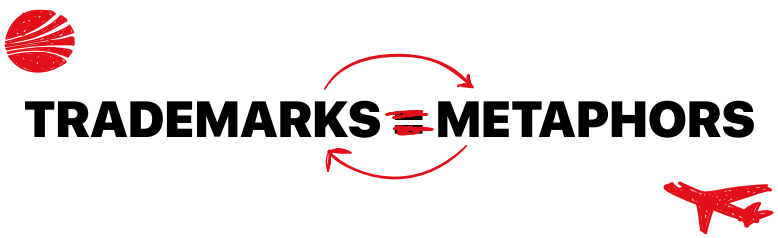
Saul Bass described a particularly sticky moment when he presented his Minolta design at the company's Osaka headquarters in 1980.

"Although his son, the President of the company, had initiated the corporate identity program, the Chairman and retired founder, Kazuo Tashima, remained skeptical of such fancy new ways. During the initial consultation process, he listened to my proposals in stony silence. At one point when I was speaking, Mr. Tashima plucked a miniaturized Minolta camera from its display stand, and said 'Gentlemen, we have a very small product. There is hardly enough room on it for a name, let alone a symbol!' I paused a moment. 'Mr. Tashima,' I said, 'your company has a perfectly symmetrical name — three letters on each side of a circle — and the circle is the perfect place for a symbol.' I then reached over and took Herb Yager's pipe out of his hand; it was a Dunhill pipe. I pointed to the traditional white Dunhill dot and said, 'This is what you need — a magic dot.' That did it. From then on the old lion was intrigued."

A magazine ad for Konica Minolta.

The essentials of imaging

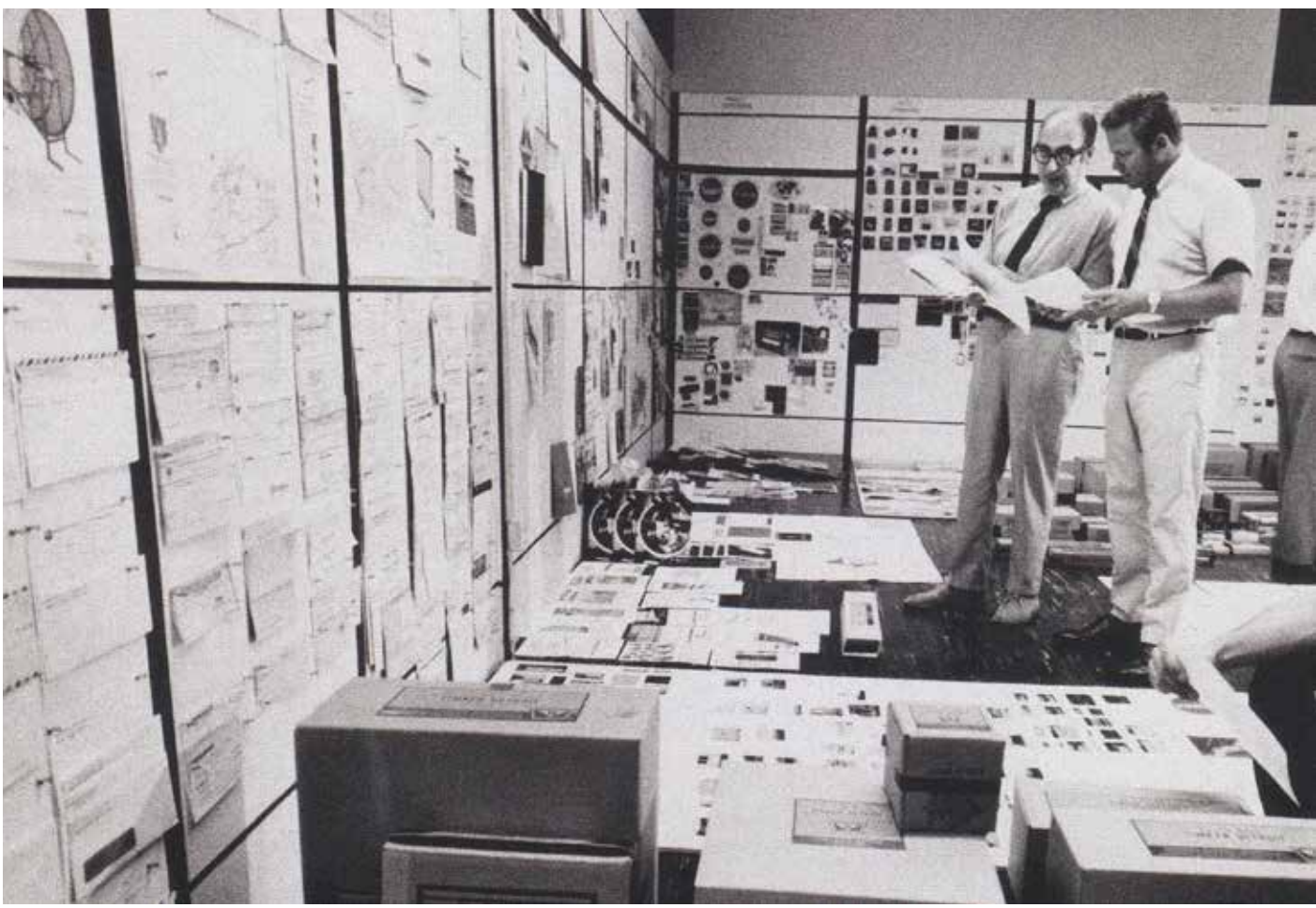
Production Printing Solutions that Work for Your Business



curated by Matteo Delia

Large or small scale: same basic approach

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham



Corporate identity design is the creation of a distinct and unified visual identity for a company or institution, usually centering on a trademark. According to Saul, “c and reflect the role it plays in the environment. On the surface that sounds simple. But, before you start changing anything, you have to clearly understand what you are changing, and why you are changing it.”

The large, comprehensive corporate identity programs of the postwar era are usually seen as beginning with Lester Beall's logo and related designs for Connecticut General Life Insurance Company (from 1956) and International Paper (1960).' Also, at this time, Paul Rand began to update the image of IBM (from 1956), becoming more heavily involved in corporate identity design in the 1960s. Saul entered the field in the early to mid-1950s, before he began his film identity work, but always felt that his involvement with large comprehensive programs started with the 1959 Lawry's commission, closely followed by Alcoa (1963), Fuller Paints (1963), Hunt-Wesson (1964), Celanese (1966) and Continental (1967).

Because Saul's film work generated so much popular attention, it is easy for those not familiar with his early graphic work to overlook the fact that he

"You have to clearly understand what you are changing, and why"

was part of a small group of American designers who were instrumental in developing a strongly rationalist approach to corporate identity design. In sheer volume as well as the quality of work, Saul was possibly the most prolific designer in this field over the period 1960-96, and one of the most influential.

He went on to work for some of the largest and most high-profile companies in the world, including the Bell Telephone System, United Airlines, AT&T and Minolta.

Saul was also one of the first U.S. designers to create house style manuals, those for Alcoa and Celanese dating to 1963 and 1966 respectively.

Given the huge amounts of time and effort put into large identity programs, design manuals were a way of ensuring the work would remain visually intact over the years and across many applications. Saul thought of manuals as part of an educational control system, always with some flexibility built in.

"He also had a rare capacity to successfully convey the rationale behind the designs to his clients"

He devised each manual "with an awareness that arbitrary rules were less likely to be embraced, than those for which reasons are clearly enunciated and rationally presented. "

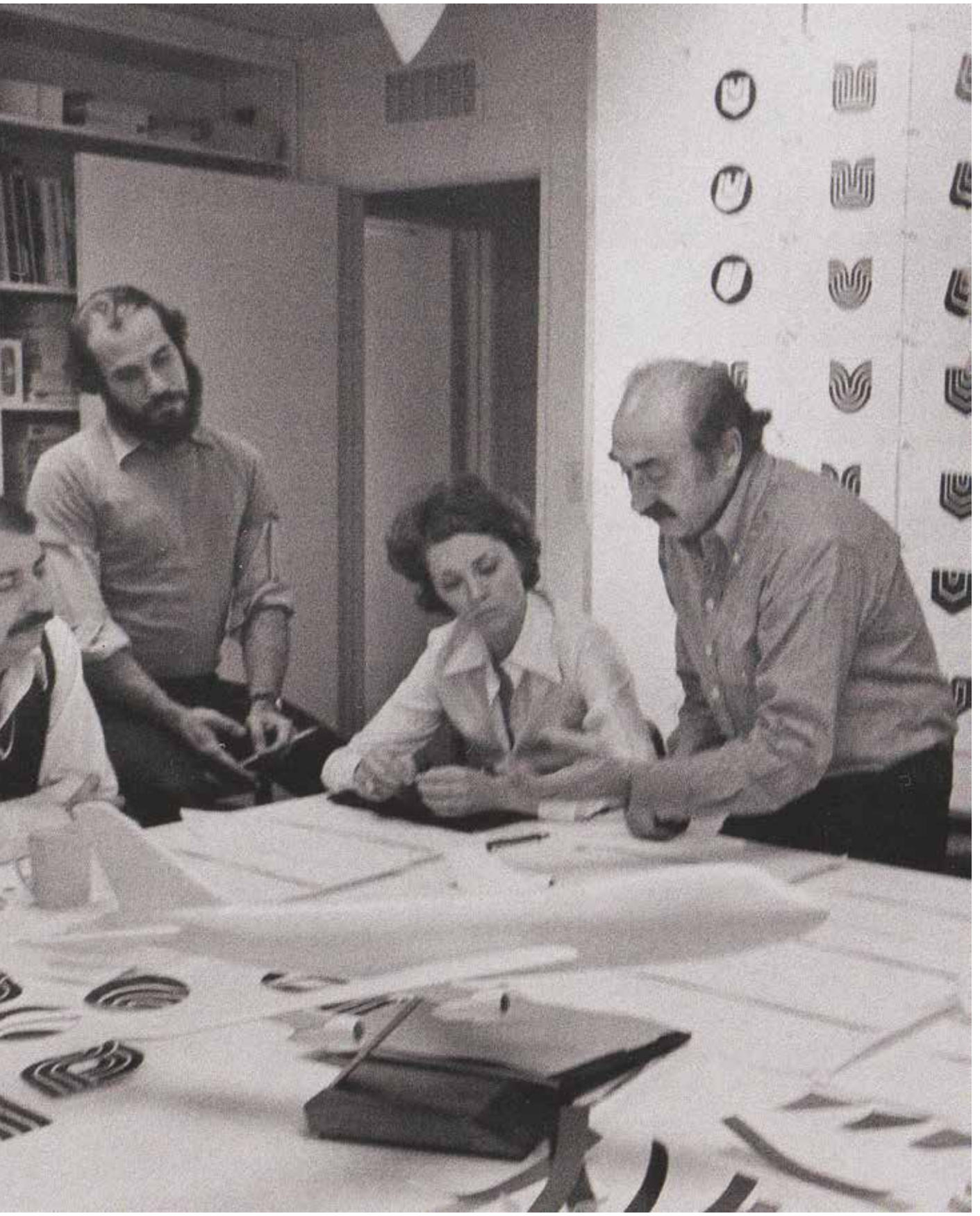
We made each manual a persuasive document as well as an instructional one." As corporations grew in both size and complexity, so too did manuals: those the Bass office created for the Bell System in 1968 and Exxon in 1981 were both among the most comprehensive of their day. The Bell commission itself was one of the largest ever undertaken by any designer and there-fore, by the late 1960s, the Bass office was regarded as one of the offices most capable of dealing with the very largest and most complex corporate identity programs. Be it large or small-scale, Saul's basic approach remained the same. He tried to grasp the essence of what a company was about in order to represent it to itself and to the public.

He found, however, that while film clients shared a common vocabulary and were familiar with thinking visually, for the most part, this was not the case with corporate clients. For the majority, this was their first experience of working in the visual realm. Saul's ability to listen to what company executives wanted, or thought they wanted, and to their hopes and fears about their businesses, proved an important asset.

He also had a rare capacity not only to come to a powerful and appropriate image, but also to successfully convey the rationale behind the designs to his clients.

He took great care to guide executives through each stage of the process, creating a rational structure within which visual forms could be evaluated in order to bridge any potential divide. Saul was also able to make sense of huge amounts of information generated by in-depth studies of major corporations.

Lou Dorfsman was but one of many contemporaries who marveled at Saul's ability to digest and synthesize it all. Dorfsman also regarded Saul's final presentations as "second to none — the finest I ever witnessed in half a century in the design profession."



The “Saul Bass” process

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

"Products or services: we learn their history, their unique characteristics, their weaknesses"

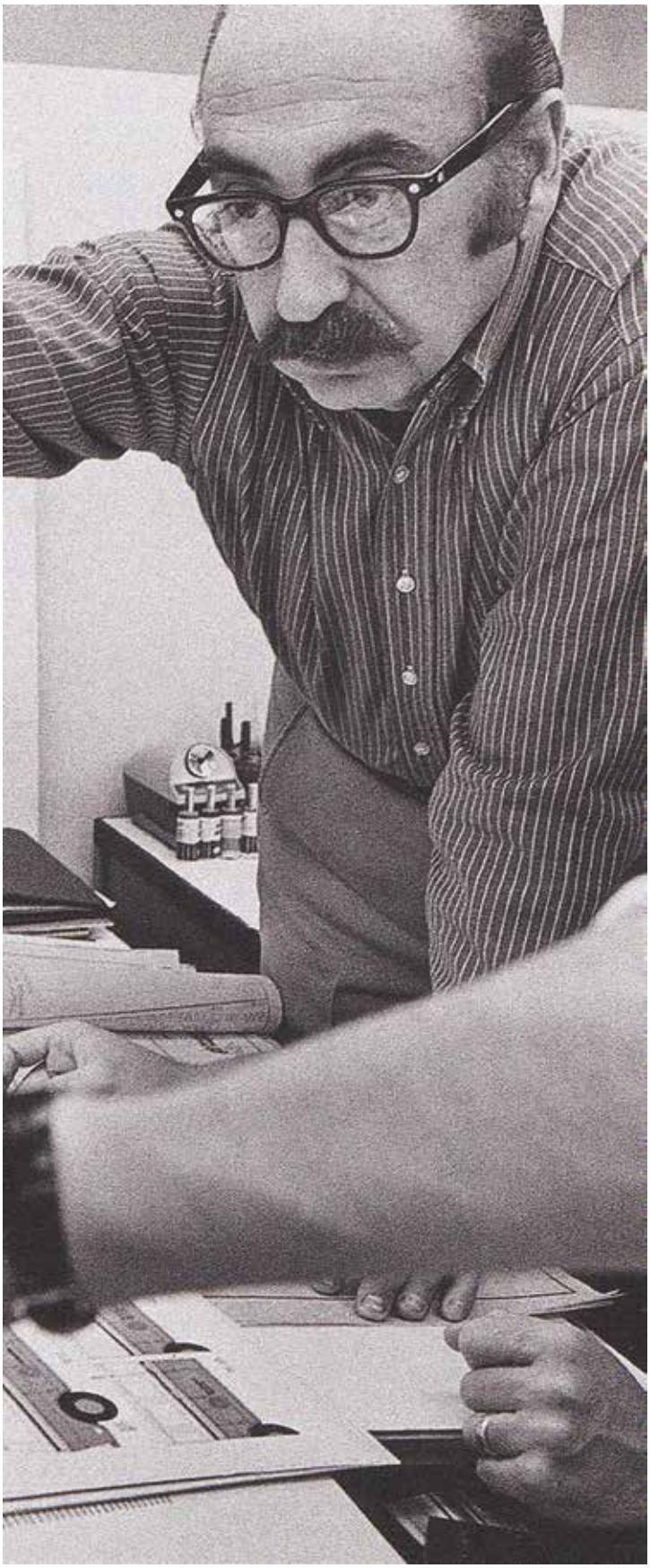
Usually we become involved because a company has a practical problem. They've changed their name. They've merged. They've had a trademark for a long time and their business has changed so the trademark no longer reflects what they do. Or, there may be a basic need for updating.

We've developed a way of approaching the task that makes what we do more comprehensible to non-designers. It's a straightforward problem-solving technique that has come to be used by many design consultants these days.

It starts with a study and analysis phase, during which we arrive at the critical strategic decisions that will guide our efforts. There's nothing mysterious about what we do. We start by learning the client's business as thoroughly as we can. Products or services: we learn their history, their unique characteristics, their strengths, their weaknesses. We analyze competitors. Who is doing well or poorly and why. We collect and analyze all the client's communication materials, everything that carries the corporation's identity. If market research exists, we enlist it. If it doesn't, we might recommend that it be undertaken, and though we don't do the research ourselves, we participate in creating the design of the research to make sure that our questions are answered.

By far the most important clement of our study is the interviews with key company officers and personnel. I some companies we talk to the chief officers, the head of marketing and a few division heads. But in others it might be more important to talk to an outside member of the board, an assistant to the president or a key scientist. The point is that every company is different and must be approached as such. The interviews themselves are the key to our study. Typically they occur after we have done our other homework. We meet with only one executive at a time. We promise confidentiality.

We work from a questionnaire but not rigidly. The interview is planned to last forty-five minutes but usually spills over because there is always more to say than time will allow. It's among the most interesting aspect of my work.



"It's essential that we move away from the dreaded I like that, or I don't like that, syndrome"

I get to ask powerful and often interesting people about their work and their lives.

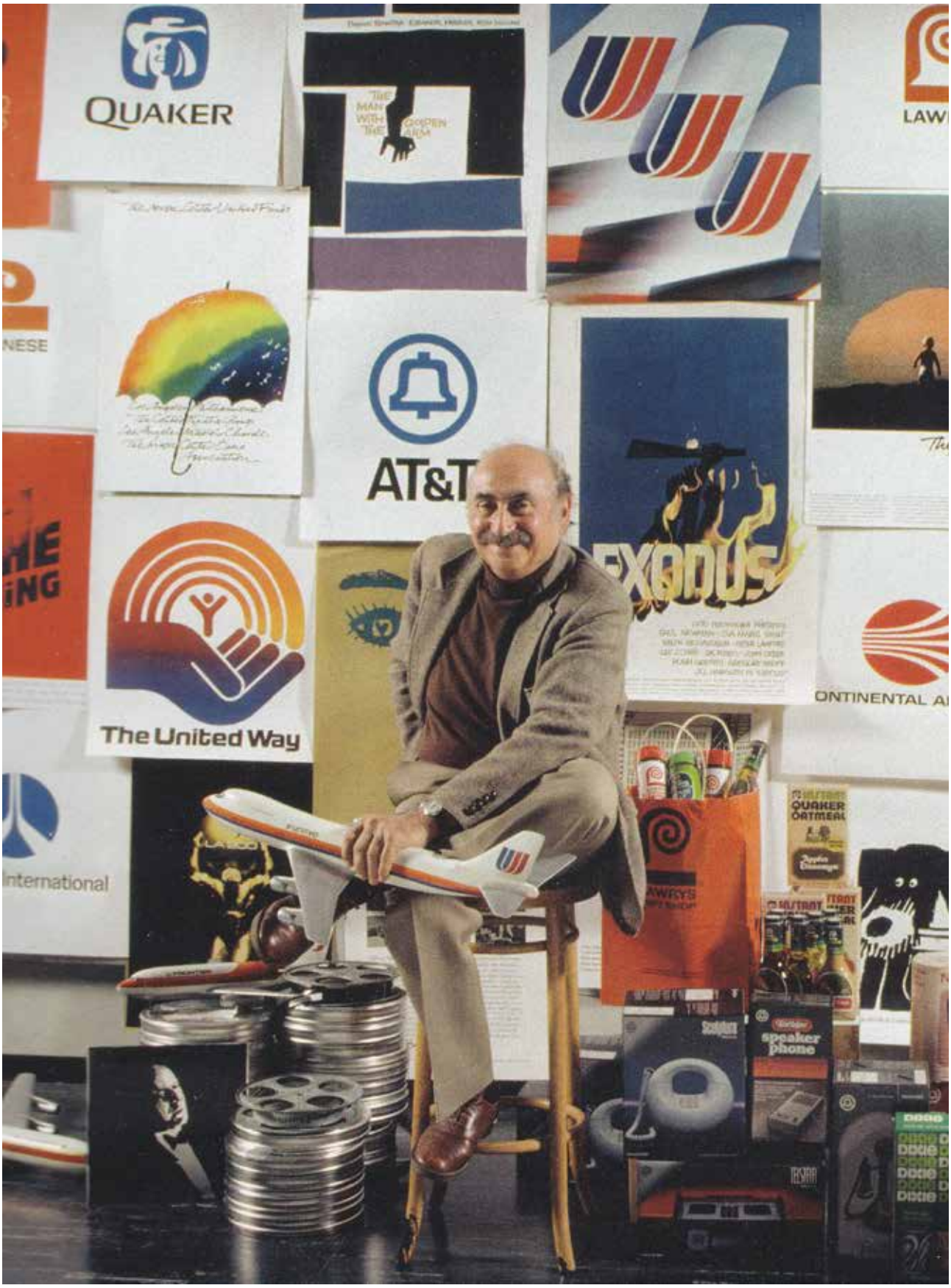
It is in their heads that the real blueprint for the future exists or is being formed. Okay, by now we have the whole picture. Well maybe not everything, but a great deal. Only at this point are we prepared to devise a set of objectives for our design project.

These objectives are the true road map of the work that will proceed from this point on. They tell us what is most important to communicate, and what's next most important, and so on. These objectives are vital to us for two reasons: first because our `canvas' is very small, and we will likely have to make hard choices about what to go for. Equally important is that we must have some rational basis for evaluating the work that will emerge. It's essential that we move away from the dreaded I like that, or I don't like that, syndrome. At that point, having been intellectually rigorous, you can begin the process of design that cannot be rigorous in the same way.

You go to work and the process becomes an odd amalgam of objective awareness and intuitive expression. But its a process that we share with the client. We expose everything we've done — good, bad, or indifferent. We usually drop true dopiness. But it does occur. It's in the nature of the beast. In presenting the work I might say we tried this, but it was too frivolous (or too didactic). And we tried that, which was rather promising. So we developed that further, but then it went over the edge and the notion became incomprehensible. Finally, there will be two or three designs that I think are really viable and worth considering seriously. We then review the original objectives to see how what we've done measures up. But then I may point out that there's a place I go where they, the executives, can't follow. It has to do with my intuitive feeling about whether it's really going to fly.

And that's a judgment that comes from inside me and results from my many years of thinking and worrying about these things. I might then make an assertion that I'm convinced that this will work. Or do a good job. Or become an outstanding trademark, if I really believe that. In corporate identification, you're looking for the essence — the metaphor for the company's activity. But there are certain general things that any identity must achieve. It has to have an impact, a presence, yet also be timeless rather than particular to a moment in time.

Because of the long-range nature of corporate identity, a company doesn't go through an identification program more than once or maybe twice in its lifetime. You must be very careful not to do something that will prompt people five years later to say, 'Oh, yes. That's what they used to do five years ago.'


QUAKER
AT&T
EXODUS
The United Way
International
speaker phone

The formula for a timeless logo

by Gareth David

"The symbol serves as a focal point, directing attention to the name"

Saul Bass is regarded as one of the best graphic designers of the 20th century, best known for his design of motion picture title sequences, film posters and corporate logos.

Saul Bass was also an academy award-winning filmmaker. Examples of Saul Bass' famous title sequences include: "The man with the Golden Arm" (1955), "North by Northwest" (1959) and "Psycho" (1960). Examples of his film-posters work include: "The man with the Golden Arm" (1955), "Saint Joan" (1957), "Vertigo" (1958), "Anatomy of a murder" (1959) and "The Shining" (1980). Now these are just a few of many posters he designed. As well of his motion picture and poster designs, over his forty year career, he designed many iconic logo designs, many of which have gone unchanged. It's been said that the average lifespan of a Saul Bass logo is thirty-four years; examples include: the United Way logo, designed in 1972 only to be refined slightly in 2004; the Girl Scouts logo, designed in 1978 and refined slightly in 2010; the Kleenex logo, modified slightly from Bass' original design in 2007, and the Dixie logo, designed in 1969 to be tweaked and modified in 2016. Out of all of his logos designs, one of his most famous is the AT&T logo. It was redesigned from the previous Bell logo, which was also designed by Saul Bass. The Bell logo served from 1969 to become a globe in 1983. This logo will become known as the death star logo. The horizontal lines would come to represent lines that covered the globe, suggesting worldwide communication. The AT&T logo is essentially a combination mark, including two visual elements: the prominent logo mark and a logotype, in this case more specifically a letter mark because it's an acronym. To quote Saul Bass: "The symbol creates the uniqueness in the mark. So the lettering in the logotype can remain clear and easy to read.

The symbol becomes a flag, by itself the logotype is just another word in a sea of words, but combined, the symbol serves as a focal point, directing attention to the name."

The letter mark element was a bold monolithic Sans Serif typeface, developed in the previous logo version; this along with a blue colour was kept in the 1983 version.

AT&T logo,
1983.

Over forty years the logo will be modified and refined slightly with added dimensions. Today the AT&T logo is still reminiscent of Saul Bass' design back in 1983; in 2015, the logo would come refined with a change of typeface and more curvature in the lines.

Today it is common for the logotype element to appear standalone or as a lockup with the letter mark; so what do I think about this logo?

Well, ideally a logo should maintain a long lifespan and remain consistent throughout the course of time. It's obvious that Saul Bass understood this concept, because lots of his logos have gone largely unchanged. I like how simple the original incarnation was, and how it lent itself to a modern treatment. It may have changed slightly, but it's still got Saul Bass' version behind it; I like the new version but I still prefer Saul Bass' 1983 logo, I find it more bold, striking and memorable.So what can we learn from this story? Well, what's interesting about Saul Bass is that he created many logos between the 1960s and 1980s, since then there have been big changes in how society behaves and reacts to different forms of design. Many of his logos still remain very similar to their original incarnations, so how have they proved to be so affective and timeless? What is most striking about Saul Bass' work is its simplicity: his designs are bold logo marks and typically use just one or two colours.

Saul Bass saw his logos as flags serving as focal points. There is strong visual narrative, movement and direction in his designs, executed elegantly and simply. Each design is very distinct and memorable.

Saul Bass' work has proven that simplicity, along with strong visual narrative and originality, is the formula for timeless logos.

AT&T logo,
2015.

The night Saul Bass had a revelation

by Bill Haig

In late 1967, Saul asked me to see him after work for some quiet time with no distractions for a very important meeting.

He wanted to discuss logo design strategy for a new client, Continental Airlines. Eastern Airlines and Braniff had just launched the airline logo and plane markings boom. Now, this was a new logo and plane markings design image program for Continental and we had to give them a dynamic solution.

Previous to this planning meeting, an associate and I observed and to photographed how Continental looked in reality. The objective was to show Continental management what the public saw at ticket counters, city ticket offices, inside their aircraft, outside their aircraft, baggage handling operations, ticket jackets, uniforms, signage, stationery, business cards, advertising and so on.

Today what we would call this recording all "all visual touch points" for a client. This would be an eye opener for the client from the customer perspective. This would also help our planning and design phase as well as for ultimate changeovers. We came back with a photographic inventory of 1500 slides showing a dated and con

"Suggesting it to the great Saul Bass, however, was like speaking before the great Oz"

fused Continental visual appearance. What we found was a definite conflict with Continental's reputation for friendly and efficient service. The Continental visual look said the opposite. Plus Continental had no overall distinct character and looked rather like most other airlines at the time.

After discussing several themes, such as the aforementioned "western" look, nothing seemed to work and frustration set in! I had an idea and I wanted to please my boss. My psychology/communication education at UCLA kicked in and I had an inspiration which might work. Suggesting it to the great Saul Bass, however, was like speaking before the "great Oz."

I mustered my courage and suggested to Saul that since Continental is already known for their high service image, why not extend this image and communicate Continental in all areas just like Continental conducts itself in real life?

Let's make the logo communicate Continental as a high-quality service airline. Let's begin with the logo communicating Continental as an "airline", its basic business. Then add to the "airline" logo symbology design motifs expressing "friendly", and "efficient" in terms of "high tech" and "state-of-the-art" which are the elements of Continental's high service image.

In summary, company logos which are credibility based will be successful when implemented up to four times greater than logos which are not credibility based.

This is because we want to know that the company we are dealing with is competent and can be trusted to work with.Surface credibility allows a company to build its credibility on a consistent basis from managed visual cues expressed through its logo and various marketing communications. This is management controlled branding to achieve Brand Credibility.

The new logo would symbolize "flying", Continental's basic or core business. Then, the "flying" symbol would be designed in a contemporary motif symbolizing "high tech", "state-of-the-art", and "friendly." This supports Continental's high service image.

"Why not communicate Continental in all areas just like Continental conducts itself in real life?"

Like a product package, we were communicating the essence of the Continental product inside, high service which would give customers confidence that what they already knew about Continental would be visually seen as well. Now we were on track.

Then, we would reframe the dated logo design and environmental graphics so vivid in our photographic inventory with the new logo together with simple, contemporary environmental design themes.

The plane markings would be horizontal stripping on a long white fuselage of gold, orange and red beginning with the famous gold tail with a red logo. The ticket counters would look super efficient, a place for great service. The city ticket offices and boarding areas would have interesting photos and artifacts from around Continental's route structure while also looking super efficient.

Continental Airlines
logo, 1968.

The new design image taken in all areas of customer contact would be a natural extension of Continental's reputation for high service. What Saul and I were doing was describing Continental's credibility traits in communication persuasion although we didn't call it that.

Several years later in graduate school I discovered the connection between source credibility in communication persuasion and its application to logo design. I termed this process, credibility-based logo design. My 1979 Master of Arts thesis on this process was awarded scholastic honors.

As mentioned, university supervised research demonstrated that successful logos --- logos that work to help achieve company goals --- are indeed credibility-based.

My research supported the revelation that night in Saul's office.

Credibility based logo design projects the company as being an expert in their business symbolizing the company core competence and communicates the company as being trustworthy and believable.

I sometimes add that a company must be believable at being able to do the work for which it claims to be an expert. Expertise and trust worthy define the two import credibility traits for a given company. "Flying" is Continental's basic business or expertise.

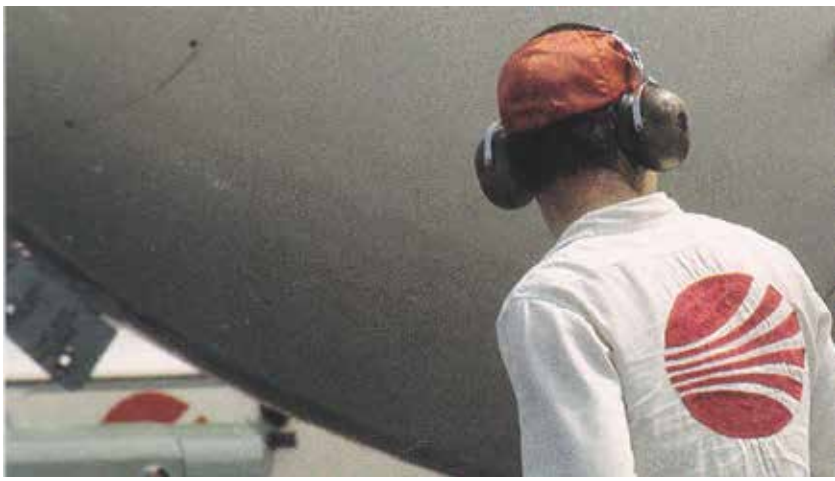
"I discovered the connection between source credibility and its application to logo design"

Credibility-based logo design also communicates the company as trustworthy with recognized non-verbal design motifs. Continental's reputation for high service was communicated by making the "flying" symbology "high tech", "state-or-the-art" and "friendly".

These trustworthy traits were communicated in a contemporary design motif quite suitable for 1968 and maybe even today. What Saul and I were doing that night in 1967 was, as it turned out, specific credibility trait planning which became Continental's credibility based "logo design brief."

The "design brief" objectives were set for the logo design phase which produced the Continental logo above.

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
CHICAGO
MIDLAND
ODESSA
CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
DENVER



CONTINENTAL

Credibility-based logo design

by Bill Haig

"You wouldn't go to the computer wiz for food-related purchase advice"

First of all, consider looking at a company logo as communication persuasion, rather than artwork per se. Then follow me here. It all goes back to Communication 101. There are four elements in any communication process and are arranged in the following model:

1. The source or sender of the message. In our case the company.
2. The message. In our case unique selling points for the purpose of inducing a purchase.
3. The channel. In Continental's case plane markings as an example, but normally TV, newspaper, phone, website ---- any medium which carries the message.
4. The receiver. These are important stakeholders such as customers, employees, banks, suppliers etc.

If the company is the source, how does the company influence the receiver as a customer?

Many studies in interpersonal communication over the past forty years conclude that a source which is expert and trustworthy will be more influential than a non-credible source.

In other words, a credible source being at the beginning of the model is critical to the message placed in targeted channels being accepted or not the receiver. This is called source credibility in communication persuasion. For example, a computer wiz would be more influential in recommending what computer software program to buy than, say, a chef.

But, on the other hand, a chef would be more influential when it comes to recommending the best curry or the latest Pacific fusion cookbook to buy. You wouldn't necessarily go to the computer wiz for food-related purchase advice, and you wouldn't go to the chef for computer-related purchase advice.

In short, a person high in the dimensions of expertise and trust will be more credible, and, therefore, more influential. The research I conducted as my MA thesis and just recently my PhD thesis has supported the application to logo design that a company perceived in its logo to be expert in its field and is trusted will be more credible and, therefore, more influential.

"Credibility-based logo design philosophy first requires to symbolize the company business"

In fact, two to four times more influential than a non-credible logo. Read: more sales.

This is because people relate to companies the same way they relate to people. Like human communicators, logo design benefits or suffers based on its credibility appearance.

Although with companies, logo design is a form of the company's "brand-customer" relationship. Applied to logo design, I termed the process credibility-based logo design.

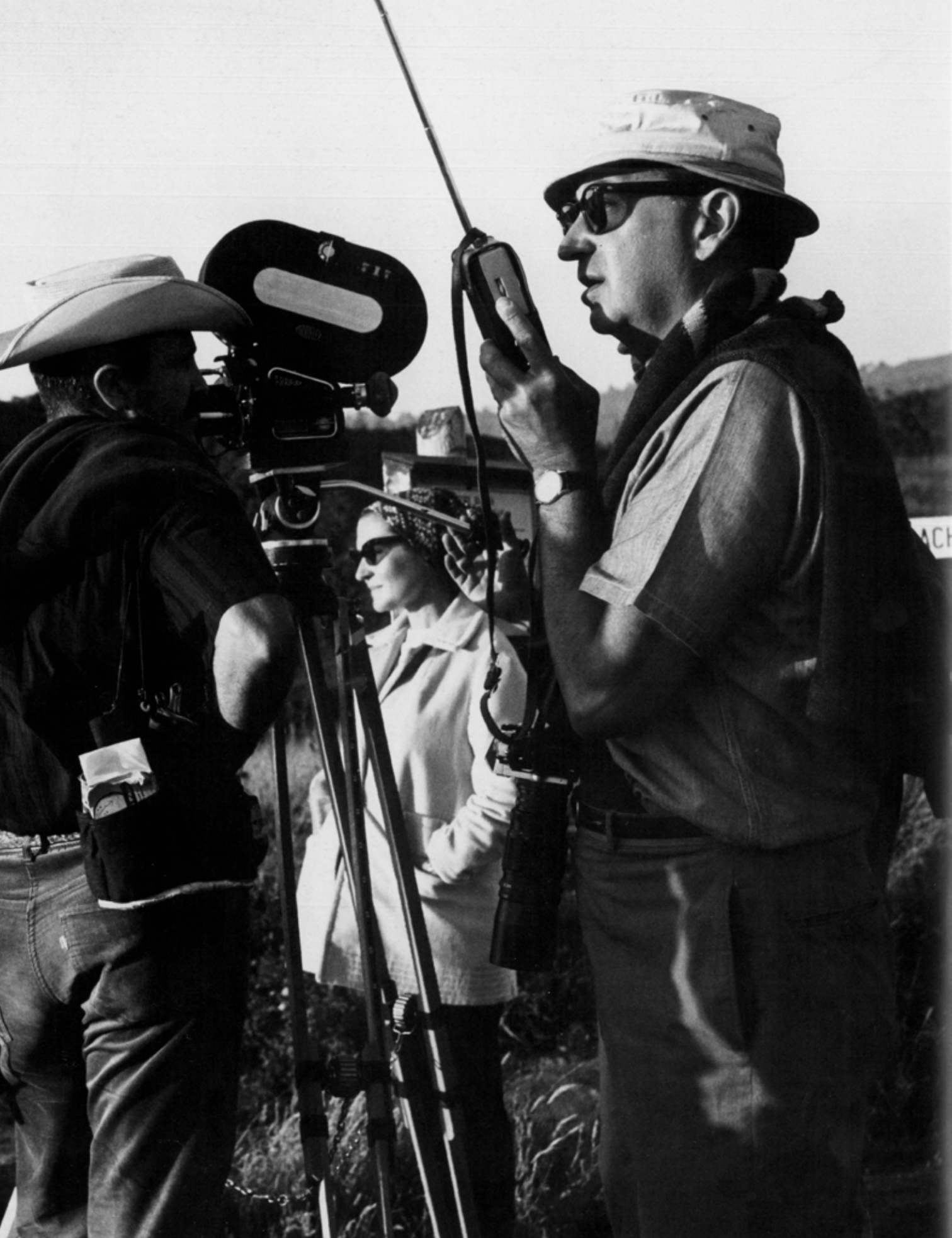
Credibility-based logo design philosophy first requires a designer to symbolize the company business. This says the company is an expert in that business. Let's use for example Joe's Shoe Repair. This would be a shoe repair shop with a sign hanging on the store front with a "shoe" symbol. The next step is to give the "shoe" symbol a design character in a way that characterizes Joe's Shoe Repair and how he operates. This non-verbally communicates the business character in a trustworthy design motif. There are an infinite variety ways Joe's trust can be communicated, but the trust chosen must represent how Joe operates in reality. Joe could show that he has modern shoe repair equipment and a Gucci environment, which would require a contemporary and classy "shoe" design treatment. But this is not Joe. In reality Joe does shoe repair the old style hand crafted way, which would be a dated or retro period design with friendly overtones.

The objective is to make Joe look trustworthy with traits that define the most descriptive nature of Joe's shoe repair shop which in this example is "experienced," "professional" and "friendly." As credibility based logo for Joe's Shoe Repair, the "design brief" would require the logo to communicate: expertise = "shoe repair" + trustworthy = "experience", "professional" and "friendly". This credibility trait logo description would produce a logo design of a shoe with dated and retro friendly overtones.

It must be simple and have high impact as a sign on Joe's shop. This is a credibility-based logo design. This approach also demonstrates that if a logo design can be described verbally after it is designed as so many graphic designers and company businesses do, it can also be described before it is designed. The Continental Airlines logo with its famous gold tail turned out to be the first of many successful credibility based logo designs that I helped plan and develop thanks to Saul Bass' revelation. Company managers and logo designers now have a frame of reference for planning, designing and creating company logos. Successful logos are no longer concepts which come out of nowhere. They are credibility based.

This process redefines the objectives for a "design brief" which only describes the logo design objectives in terms of the client company's unique credibility traits. Credibility-based logo designs are proven to be successful.

The process works today for company managers and logo designers just like the late Saul Bass and I did it with Continental Airlines almost 40 years ago.



curated by Nuria Lòpez

Titles as a metaphor

by Simon Arms

"What, he thought, could a two minute title sequence have to do with all that?"

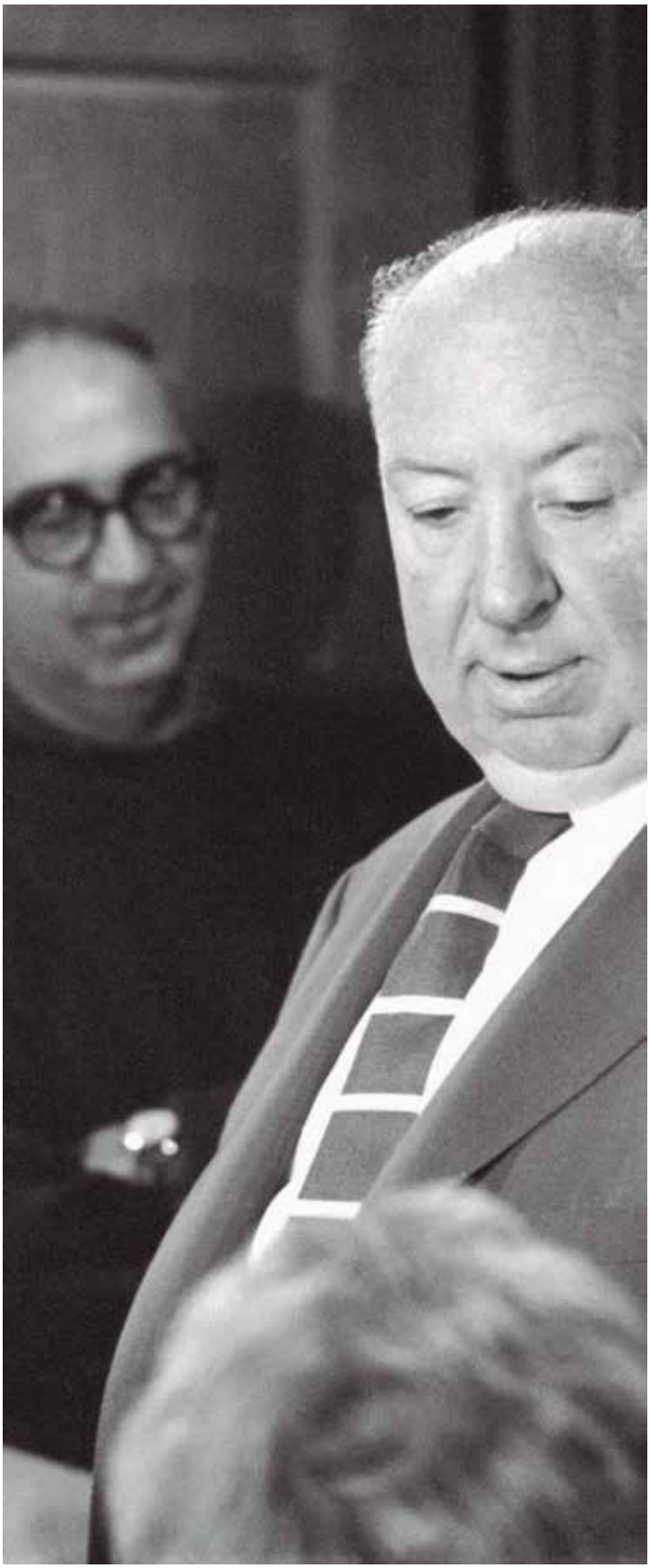
With a smile the projectionist slowly read the handwritten note sellotaped to the canister: "PROJECTIONIST: PULL CURTAIN BEFORE TITLES". What a strange request! It was the opening night of the latest Frank Sinatra vehicle- the Man with the Golden Arm.

The opening night of a film so graphic in its depiction of heroin addiction the MPAA had refused it a certificate. What, he thought, could a two minute title sequence have to do with all that? Shrugging his shoulders the projectionist discarded the note, wound the film, turned down the lights and pulled the curtains.

The audience's stunned silence on that opening night may have shocked the projectionist, but for Saul Bass their reaction was very close to what he was aiming for. Very close.

What he didn't quite reach was that level of perfection, that extra yard, only an artist of his caliber could comprehend. From his foundation in the European school of graphic design to his collaboration with some of Hollywood's most legendary directors, that would take him a whole life time. Despite that Hollywood was struggling, Saul Bass's migration to Los Angeles in 1947 was a clever career move. It was true that television was stealing a huge portion of Hollywood's audience. It was true that the government was suing the Hollywood majors for violation of the anti-trust laws – their victory in the 1948 Paramount Case would all but end the studio system that had dominated since the 1920s. Yet it was equally true that these same factors were forcing the majors to turn to people who could create something different.

For the first time since the introduction of the Hays Code in 1930, the creatives and not the executives were calling the shots.When the filmmaker Otto Preminger first hired him to design the film titles for the 1954 film Carmen Jones, Bass not only knew that he hired him out of respect for his talent, but that he would give him the freedom to express it. While in retrospect his flaming rose didn't quite do justice to the film's core themes of racism and miscegenation, the idea of expressing a film's concept through one simple image, was for those times, highly innovative.



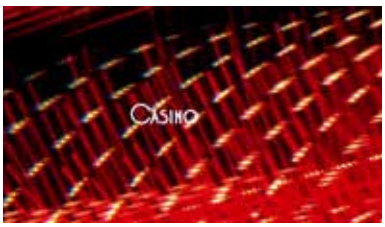
"By introducing ideas from the New Swiss Style, Bass made the film title an integral part of the cinema experience"

Up to that point Hollywood had mostly listed the main players over a pretty but basic background. And even then audiences rarely saw them – most projectionists didn't open the curtains until after they had finished. By introducing ideas from the New Swiss Style, Bass made the film title an integral part of the cinema experience. As he stated in the documentary Bass on Titles (2006) he approached each film title with the same three point approach he would use with any other design project.

1. He saturated himself with knowledge of the company.
2. He made sure he understood the vision of the company.
3. He didn't try to symbolize a point of view.

His approach was far more successful in his next film for Otto Preminger, the Man With the Golden Arm. Preminger's vision was to represent the reality of drug addiction without judging the morals of the main character. Used to Hollywood representing addicts as drug fiends, it was a vision that Bass knew would challenge the sensibilities of the audience so he sandwiched the credits between a series of straight and off-kilter lines. By the time they came together to form the foreboding jagged arm, the audience knew they were about to witness a film that would step over the lines of traditional values. With Hollywood facing strong competition from the independents, they again turned to artists such as Saul Bass for inspiration.

From 1990 to his death in 1996, Martin Scorcese – a great admirer of Saul Bass's work – hired him



"The designers most influenced by him are those who have found their own style and perspective"

to design the film titles for Goodfellas, Cape Fear, Age of Innocence – and for what proved to be his epitaph – Robert de Niro's descent into the neon lit hell of Casino. As one can see this is no tap dance. Instead of harking back to what many would perhaps, unfairly, regard as his signature – his cutouts and hand drawn animations – he used modern technology to create a sequence that fit perfectly with the film's themes of greed and corruption. As this essay shows Bass experimented with a range of different styles; unless it suited the material, he would never have thought about about repeating himself. In this respect the designers most profoundly influenced by him are those who have looked to find their own style and perspective.The contemporary graphic designer Kyle Cooper is more influenced by Bass' literate approach to film title design than by his designs. As he states "story based film titles are something that have always been more comfortable to me. And by story I mean specific backstory, but also a metaphor – a poster like pun that has to do specifically with what the film is about."

His film titles for Seven are, even for Saul Bass, a perfect example of how to prepare an audience for what is at times a horrific film.

There are many other examples of modern film and even TV titles influenced by the Saul Bass' work made in the years.

Some are listed above, but can you think of any others that share aspects of and even pay homage to his vision? Of course, as shown, Bass was continuously looking to push the boundaries of his art, using a variety of techniques.

The Basses' work

by Lola Landekic and Will Perkins

"Bass designed effective and memorable title sequences, inventing a new type of kinetic typography"

Saul worked side-by-side with his wife Elaine Bass for much of his career. During his 40-year career Bass worked for some of Hollywood's greatest filmmakers, including Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder, and Martin Scorsese. He became well- known in the film industry after creating the title sequence for Otto Preminger's The Man with the Golden Arm in 1955. For Alfred Hitchcock, Bass designed effective and memorable title sequences, inventing a new type of kinetic typography, for North by Northwest, Vertigo (working with John Whitney), and Psycho.

Elaine Bass born to Hungarian immigrants in New York in 1927, Elaine's early years were full of drawing and singing. From age twelve to eighteen, she and her sisters sang professionally as the Belmont Sisters. Thereafter, Elaine worked in the ready-to-wear fashion industry in New York until leaving for Los Angeles in 1947, where she got a job in the design department at Capitol Records.

In 1955, Elaine Makatura came to work with Saul Bass and after the opening title sequence to Spartacus in 1960, which Elaine co-directed and produced, the two were married. Much of Saul Bass's title design and film work thereafter was made in close collaboration with Elaine. After the birth of their children, Jennifer in 1964 and Jeffrey in 1967, the Basses concentrated on their family, short films, and title sequences.

Their first joint venture into short filmmaking was with promotional films for pavilions at the 1964 World's Fair, From Here to There for United Airlines and The Searching Eye for Eastman Kodak. In 1968, they made the short film Why Man Creates, which won an Oscar.

From the mid-60s to the late 1980s, Saul and Elaine moved away from main titles to focus on filmmaking and their children. Of this time, Saul has said: "Elaine and I feel we are there to serve the film and to approach the task with a sense of responsibility. We saw a lot of pyrotechnics and fun and games and I suppose we lost interest. At the same time, an increasing number of directors now sought to open their own films in ambitious ways rather than hire someone else to do it.

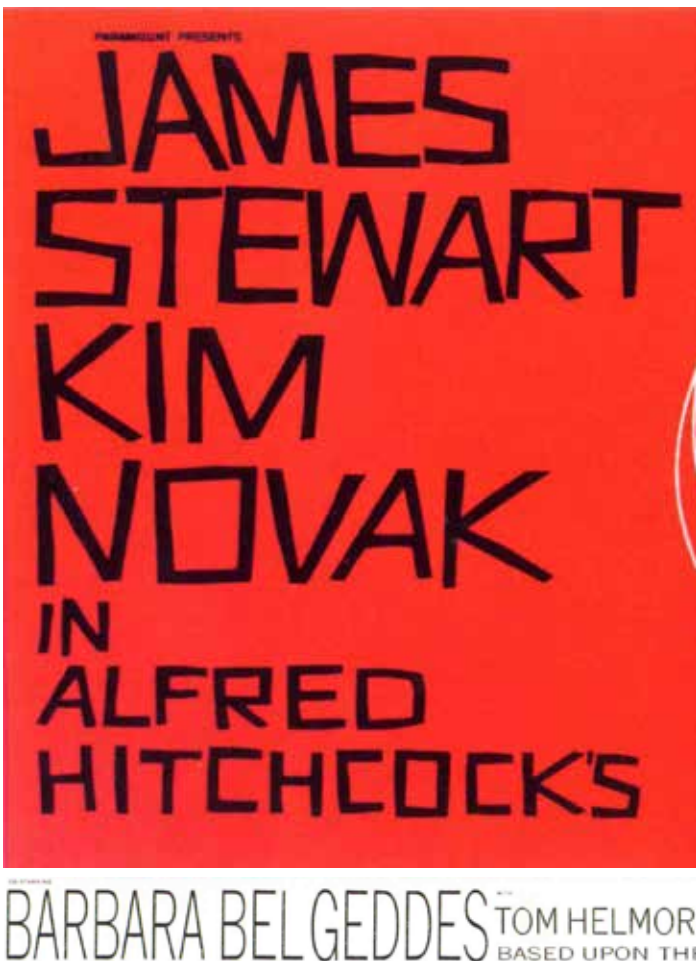
"We did not worry about it: we had too many other interesting projects to get on with"

Whatever the reasons, the result was 'Fade Out.' We did not worry about it: we had too many other interesting projects to get on with.

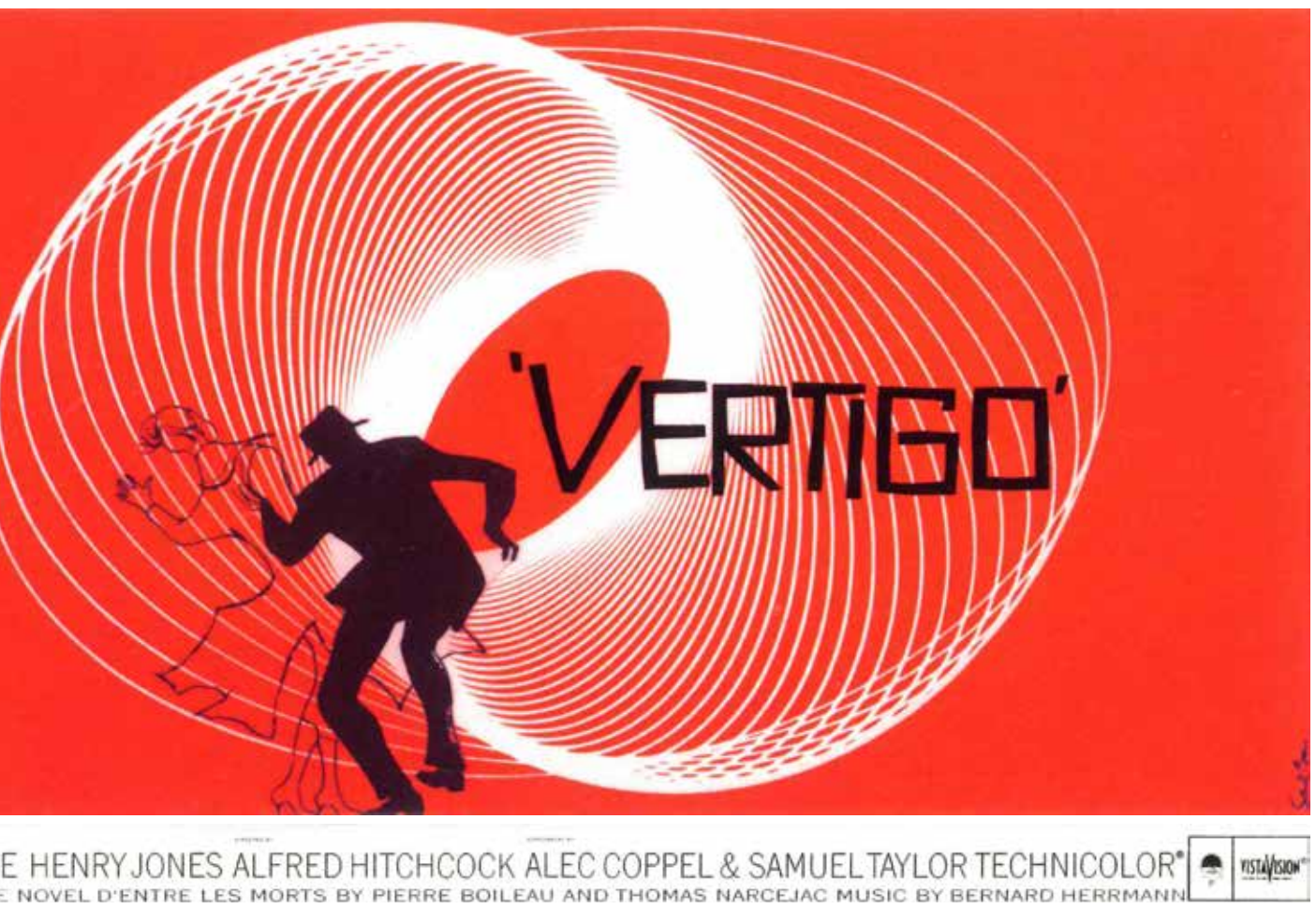
Equally, because we still loved the process of making titles, we were happy to take it up again when asked..." Toward the end of his career, Saul Bass was "rediscovered" by James L. Brooks and Martin Scorsese, who urged the Basses to return to main title design. For Scorsese, Elaine and Saul Bass created title sequences for Goodfellas, Cape Fear, The Age of Innocence, and Casino, their last title sequence.

In a sense, all modern opening title sequences that introduce the mood or theme of a film are a legacy of the Basses' work. After the death of Saul Bass in 1996, Elaine collaborated with title designer Pablo Ferro to update the opening for the remake of Psycho (1998).

In a sense, all modern opening title sequences that introduce the mood or theme of a film are a legacy of the Basses' work.



Vertigo's poster, 1958.



The film: Saul Bass and Alfred Hitchcock

by Liz Ohanesian

"The focus of the sequence is the eyes, with the film's title emerging from one live-action eye"

In "Vertigo," it's all about the eye. In "North by Northwest," it's a big city building. For "Psycho," it's a series of vertical and horizontal lines that appear to dance to the movie's now notoriously ominous theme.

Graphic designer Saul Bass knew how to hook audiences into a film. He did this for decades, working with directors ranging from Otto Preminger to Martin Scorsese.

At the end of the 1950s and into a new decade, the graphic designer worked on three films for Alfred Hitchcock. "Vertigo," "North by Northwest" and "Psycho" went on to become some of the director's best- known, and most-loved projects. For Bass, those movies helped cement his reputation as a cutting-edge designer whose work would ultimately come to define mid-20th century aesthetics.

Bass' first Hitchcock project was "Vertigo," for which he produced the iconic movie poster as well as the opening title sequence. In "Saul Bass anathomy of film design" the writer Jan-Christopher Horak notes that Bass' work was seen as "avant-garde" which helped him succeed in the film world, as director-producers pushed their Hollywood pictures to artsy extremes.

Horak writes that the title sequence of "Vertigo" exemplifies an influence of experimental cinema. Meanwhile, Jennifer Bass and Kirkham, in their biography of the graphic designer, note that Bass was influenced by the mathematician Jules Antoine Lissajous.

The Jennifer Bass and Kirkham biography points to a quote from the designer that indicates his goal for the title sequence — to represent the feelings of dizziness associated with vertigo.

Accordingly, the focus of the sequence is the eyes, with the film's title emerging from one live-action eye and the animated swirls that follow taking on ocular shapes.

With the Lissajous curve as a point of reference, the opening sequence is both captivating and unnerving. The curves morph into different forms as they close in on the viewer.

Colors shift. Blue, purple, green and other hues pop and fade on the screen.

On the set of "Psycho", at the Bates Motel.

"The sequence does its job beautifully; as a viewer,the film's title makes sense before the story begins"

The sequence does its job beautifully; as a viewer, the film's title makes sense before the story begins.
Bass came back on board to work with Hitchcock for "North by Northwest." The sequence here is much simpler than that of "Vertigo."
Horak surmises that this was probably due to budgetary constraints, but its minimalism made an impact.
That green, graphic representation of the side of a skyscraper and arrows pointing from the title are an unforgettable introduction to the bustling city scene that follows.
It's Bass' third and final project for Hitchcock, "Psycho," that earned a place in film lore, but that's not simply because of the title credits. In addition to designing another opening sequence, Bass was hired as a consultant for the film.
In that capacity, Bass storyboarded what is perhaps the most infamous fictional murder scene to hit movie theaters.
Indeed the look of the notorious "shower scene" is derived from Bass' storyboards. It's not only a memorable movie moment but an influential one that has been referenced and frequently parodied over the decades.
For Bass and Hitchcock, that scene is a source of controversy that extends beyond its content. In film circles, a question arose: Who gets credit for it? For the casual film-goer, the answer is usually Hitchcock. For others, though, the answer may be a little more complicated.
Following "Psycho," Bass continued to enjoy a long and productive career. He frequently worked in collaboration with his wife and fellow designer, Elaine Makatura Bass. Bass eventually worked as a director and earned an Academy Award for the short documentary "Why Man Creates." He also continued working on movie titles for much of the rest of his life.
Bass' final credit in this regard was the 1995 Martin Scorsese film "Casino." Bass died in 1996.
In film circles, a question arose: Who gets credit for it? For the casual film-goer, the answer is usually Hitchcock.
For others, Saul Bass, the answer may be a little more complicated.

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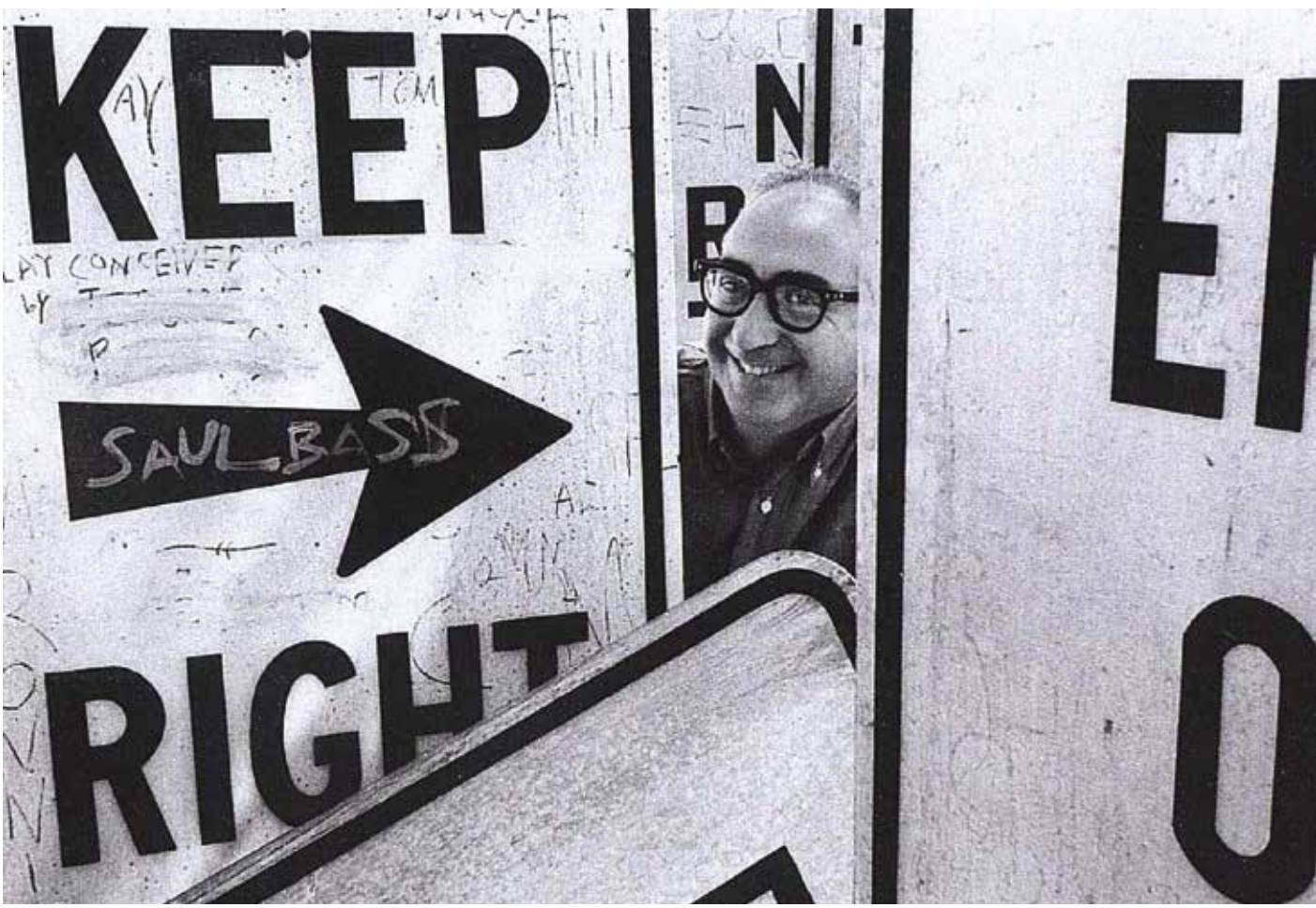
Its sequences symbolize emotions

by Elizabeth Stinson



"Title sequences set the mental and emotional tone for the story"

Bass once said that the audience's involvement in the film should begin at the very first frame. He believed title sequences were responsible for setting the mental and emotional tone for the story that was about to be told. As Saladino rightly points out, Bass knew how to leverage simplicity—primary colors, basic shapes, playful animations—to create what was ultimately perceived as complex emotions. Less wasn't more, necessarily. But in Bass's hands, it was always just right.

The next time you watch Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho, pay close attention to the film's iconic shower scene. Note the quick cut-aways, extreme close-ups, and sharp shooting angles.

These stylistic decisions amount to a decidedly un-Hitchcockian aesthetic. That might be because Hitchcock didn't direct it. Rumor in Hollywood is that the murder scene was actually the work of Saul Bass. The famed graphic designer, who is revered for his corporate identity work for the likes of AT&T and United Airlines, is held in equally high esteem by cinephiles for his seminal contributions as a director, storyboard artist, and designer of title sequences—and, just maybe, one of the best-known scenes in movie history. "Regardless of whoever did the deed, Bass's fingerprints are all over the sequence," says Andrew Saladino in a recent video essay from a series he calls The Royal Ocean Film Society. In his short, Saladino breaks down Bass's enduring impact on the film industry, charting the artist's work from the famed title sequence in Otto Preminger's 1955 film The Man With the Golden Arm to the opening credits of Casino, in 1995.

What Bass's credits share in common is their ability to convey theme, setting, and mood. Today, you, like most people, probably expect an opening sequence to tell you something about the film or television show you are about to watch. You can thank Bass for that. Referring to his work on the Man With the Golden Arm, Bass recalled, "the arm in its jagged form expressed the jarring disjointed existence of the drug addict." His illustration of a black, zig-zagging forearm became a seminal example of how to express an idea, or emotion, in visual form, and much of his later work followed this same principle.

The pursuit of new ideas makes us human

by Sean Savage

"It's far more loose and playful than the rigid thesis its title might imply"

How unlikely that one of the least definable films from the last half-century would also be one of the most beloved. A favorite of classroom AV diversions, and an abridged presentation on the very first episode of "60 Minutes" helped make it the most viewed educational film of all time. "I don't know what it all means," Saul Bass himself admitted, and his "Why Man Creates" (1968) is far more loose and playful than the rigid thesis its title might imply. In fact, it is the searching and open-ended nature of the various vignettes that perhaps makes the film resonate so strongly with viewers. Though an Oscar-winner for Documentary Short Subject, the film is almost entirely invented, apart from recollections of old masters like Edison, Hemingway and Einstein, and brief encounters with scientists striving to innovate for the betterment of mankind. Creators invariably encounter problems, and have no choice but to persevere in the face of discouragement. If the film argues anything, it is that the unbridled pursuit of new ideas makes us uniquely human. Bass actually resisted the title of the film, one that was imposed on him by the film's sponsor, Kaiser Aluminum, which evidently wanted the prestige project it had backed more authoritatively defined. Perhaps an extension of his previous short film, "The Searching Eye"—one of two he produced for the 1964 World's Fair—the journey can often be more gratifying than the arrival, and this is especially true of the mind of the artist. The phrase "Why Man Creates" never appears, rather the film begins with the more generous promise in Bass's own handwriting of the "explorations, episodes & comments" to follow, and for the rest of his life he referred to the best known of his own films simply as "the creativity film." Perhaps he simply had an aversion to onscreen titles. His later "Notes on the Popular Arts" (1977) opens with similarly casual musings, and there's nothing didactic about the vague "Notes" of the distributed title, which again, never appears onscreen.

And "A Short Film on Solar Energy" reads the main title card of that film (1979), but it is popularly known, on the posters and other publicity, and recognized in its Academy Award® nomination even, simply as "The Solar Film."

Frames from Why Man Creates, 1968.

"I was trying to demonstrate in both the content and form of the film the nature of the creative process"

Throughout the 1950s and 60s Bass had served as a "visual consultant" on the films of others, designing a slaves vs. Romans battle for Stanley Kubrick's "Spartacus" (1960) and an auto racing montage for John Frankenheimer's "Grand Prix" (1966).

Perhaps the most hotly contested of these contributions was the shower sequence of Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho" (1960).

But there's no disputing the authorship of the main title sequences Bass created for Otto Preminger ("Carmen Jones" 1954; "The Man with the Golden Arm" 1955) and Hitchcock ("Vertigo" 1958; "North By Northwest" 1959) and other directors (in many cases Bass also designed the theatrical posters and ad campaigns for these and more films).

These standalone works are intriguing in their own right, so it's no surprise that this master of the short form would smartly conceive of his "creativity film" as a series of short sketches.

Bass said, I was trying to demonstrate in both the content and form of the film the nature of the creative process.

And, in passing, to celebrate the variety, the richness and importance of the creative vision.

The intent of the film is to give those who look at it, and who are probably not working (as a life-commitment) in creative areas, a sense of what it "feels" like to work creatively... the agony, the frustration, the discipline, the pleasure, the messiness, the orderliness, the failure (and in the case of the scientists), the aberrant nature of time when you are engaged in the process.

Scriptwriter Mayo Simon, who would later collaborate on Bass's sole feature film "Phase IV" (1974), said that they were inspired by the energy of the television hit "Laugh-In" (1967).

"We were very impressed with that show," Simon said, and they aimed to emulate the same jerky, comic rhythms.

The original bookends of the film—known as the "Countdown Version" which survive at the Academy Film Archive—were apparently "too eye-popping" for the film's sponsors, who encouraged a more sober approach.

Sent back to the drawing board, the creators elected to go quiet instead, which Simon described as more "like opening a door" and taking a look around.

Though often fruitful, the creative process can't be all "fooling around" (as one segment is gleefully titled) and these reconceived and more introspective sequences also served Bass's themes, particularly "The Mark" section that concludes the film.

Bass again: We say that the creative act has to be understood as having its sources in two urges which exist simultaneously or individually.

Man creates to leave his mark on his time, as a denial of mortality, to say "Look at me... I was here... ".

He also creates out of a need to identify himself, to himself... to say, as we say at the end of the film, "I am unique... I am here... I am."

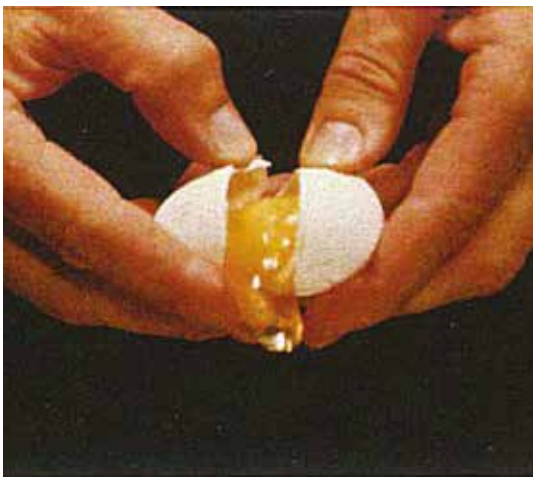
With "The Creativity Film" (I'm honoring the favored directness and preferred title of the director here), the most enduring of his own short films, Bass made his mark.

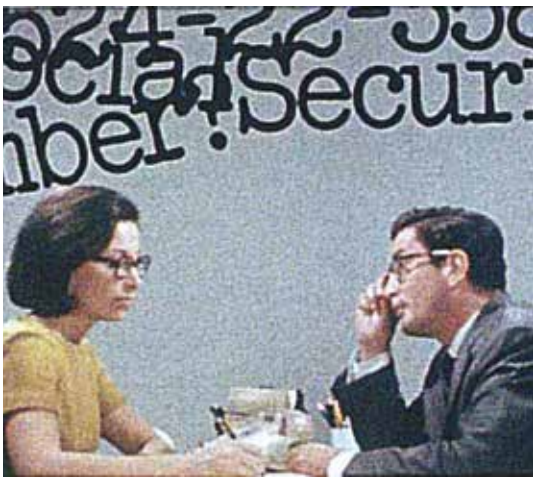
While it remains his grandest if loosely defined statement, he was careful not to take himself too seriously (an early version title card promised at best "free-wheeling guesses on the nature of ideas") and the most memorable moments include a cartoon elevator ride through civilization, an angry mob rejecting an unseen (by us) work of art, and a renegade bouncing ball making its own way in the world—the last accompanied by goofy sound effects voiced by Bass himself. For Bass, the work of directing a sponsored film (as all of his shorts were) was not going to get in the way of play.

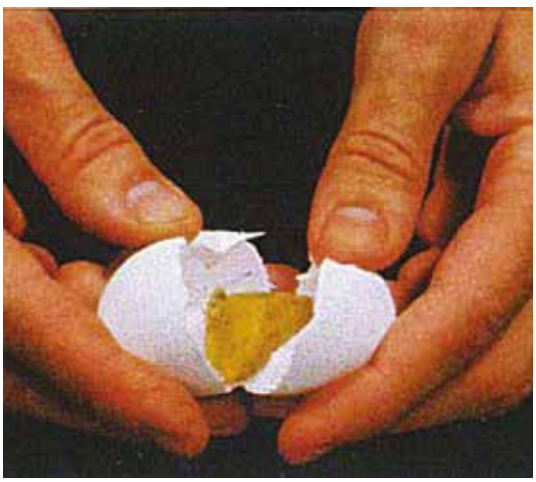
"Man creates to leave his mark on his time, as a denial of mortality, also out of a need to identify himself to himself"

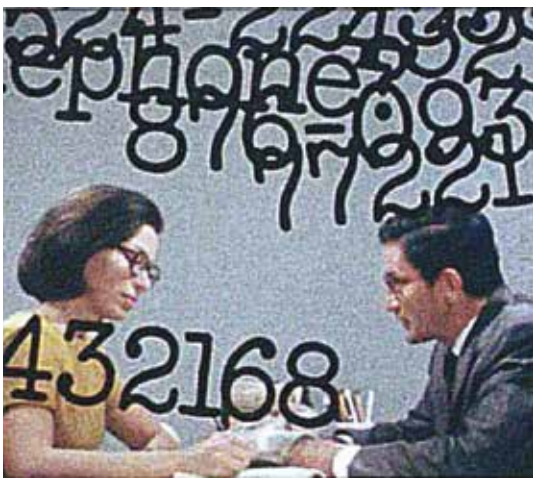
The opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Library of Congress.

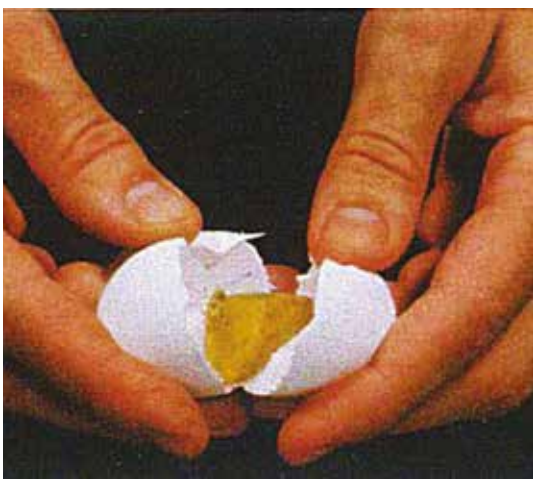
Sean Savage is an archivist at the Academy Film Archive, and wrote extensively about Bass and Simon's next collaboration, "Phase IV" (1974) for the 14.2 issue of The Moving Image.

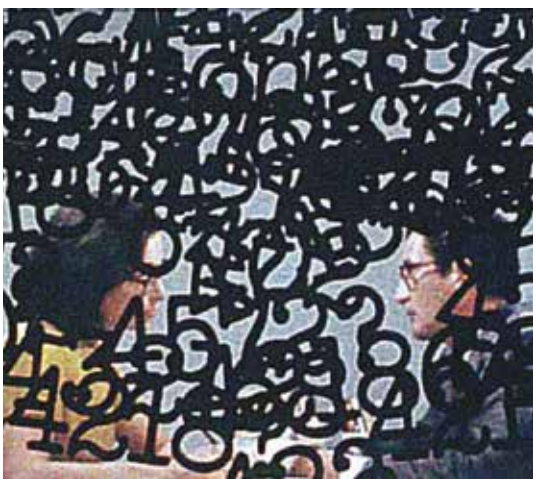












ONE!
TWO!

MY WORK: THOROUGH DISCUSSIONS

curated by Gabriele Broggini

Look at the sequence, look at the film and think

by Pat Kirkham

The entire Bass/Hitchcock collaboration deserves to be better known, partly because of the sheer quality of the work, partly because it offers an interesting case study of the complex interchange between film and design, and partly because of the controversy surrounding Bass's contribution to what is arguably the most famous scene in U.S. cinema—the shower scene in Psycho. Serious discussion of Bass's contribution to the shower scene—a fascinating collaboration, from novel and script to musical score—remains problematic, not least because issues of authorship are far from dead in many academic disciplines, design history and film studies included.

Although, as will be shown, Bass's contribution to the scene was substantial, it was ignored for many years by auteurist commentators who took their cue from Hitchcock's evasive reply to a question posed by François Truffaut regarding Bass's contribution to Psycho above and beyond the title sequence for which Bass had a separate credit (his main credit was for "pictorial consultant," a new specialism within filmmaking).

Hitchcock stated, "He did only one scene, but I didn't use his montage. He was supposed to do the titles, but since he was interested in the picture, I just let him lay out the sequence of the detective going up the stairs, just before he is stabbed."

"Hitchcock thereafter never publicly acknowledged Bass's contribution to the shower scene"

Although Hitchcock thereafter never publicly acknowledged Bass's contribution to the shower scene, others involved in the movie did, some on more than one occasion.

As Stephen Rebello and others point out, Hitchcock was widely known to give credit parsimoniously, a trait that went back to his work in silent movies but became more exaggerated dating from the early-to-mid-1960s.

After Psycho, Hitchcock "seemed to harden his heart increasingly toward others associated with his continuing popularity," and did so increasingly as his own popularity and film box office appeal waned.

For example, Joseph Stefano, who wrote the Psycho screenplay, recalled, "Hitchcock never mentioned writers in any of his interviews. It was always his picture."

Hitchcok's long shot

"Everybody talked about that scene. Right from the beginning I understood that Saul did it"

This attitude is one of the contexts within which Hitchcock's collaboration with Bass should be considered. It helps one better comprehend why Hitchcock hired one of the leading graphic designers in the world, a man he admired for making strong visual images, and paid him a large sum of money out of his own pocket for the work (Hitchcock had to put up the money for the production because studio funding was not available), only to find it difficult to give due credit a mere six years later. Film director Billy Wilder, who knew both Bass's and Hitchcock's work inside out, had little patience with those who could not see the difference between the overall style of the film and that of the shower scene.

He told me, "Like most people in Hollywood you knew who did what if you were in the industry, especially if great stuff was involved. Everybody talked about that scene. Right from the beginning I understood that Saul did it. Everybody knew. Everybody knew Saul was brilliant. Who questioned it until those remarks of Hitchcock?…You only have to look at the sequence and look at the film and think. Think for one minute. You see the shower scene and you see it is not at all like Mr. Hitchcock—King of the Long Shot." Bass's creative watchword in terms of film was "It's the film that counts," and he saw his role as working for the director, stating: "The script is only the bones. I must know how he [the director] is going to flesh it out, what his point-of-view is and how he is going to articulate that script.

My work is always preceded by very, very, thorough discussions with the director…about what he's going to do so that I can understand it, be responsive to it, to support it." In the case of Psycho Hitchcock involved Bass from the earliest stage.

They had several meetings before writing began, presumably so that Bass could be fully briefed on Hitchcock's vision of the film. This was not the first time Hitchcock had brought in an artist to create a special sequence within a film.

The Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali had created a dream sequence for Spellbound (1945), and American abstract expressionist John Ferren did the same for Vertigo.

Shower scene

The latter work appears amateurish when compared with Bass's title sequence for the same film, a comparison apparently not lost on Hitchcock.
According to Stephano, Hitchcock told him, "I'm going to get Saul Bass to do a storyboard for the shower scene so we know exactly what we're going to do," and Stephano sent Bass each section of the script as it was finished.
Janet Leigh told Donald Spoto that "the planning of the shower scene was left up to Saul Bass, and Hitchcock followed his storyboard precisely.
Because of this…[the shooting] went very professionally," and she told Rebello that "Mr. Hitchcock showed Saul Bass's storyboards to me quite proudly, telling me in exact detail how he was going to shoot the scene from Saul's plans".
Hitchcock felt uncertain about Bass's bold conception, fearing audiences might not accept such a stylized and staccato-like, symbolic, and abstracted sequence. Bass recalled, "Having designed and storyboarded the shower sequence, I showed it to Hitch. He was uneasy about it. It was very un-Hitchcockian in character.
He never used that kind of quick cutting; he loved the long shot. Take the opening shot in Psycho, where the camera moves over Phoenix, over the buildings, closes in on a building, into a window and into a room where Janet Leigh and John Gavin are making love.
That sort of camera move was his signature. My proposal was from a very different point of view."
That Hitchcock was not completely convinced about the concept worried Bass. "His misgivings made me a bit nervous too," he recalled, "so I borrowed a camera (a little Eymo wind-up with a twenty-five foot magazine) and kept Janet Leigh's stand-in on the set after the day's shooting. I put a key light on her and knocked off about fifty to a hundred feet of film. Then I then sat down with George Tomasini and we put it together following my storyboards, not worrying too much about finesse—just wanting to see what the effects of these short cuts would be. We showed it to Hitch. He liked it."
In the end, Hitchcock gave it his approval but wanted two additions: a spray of blood on the chest of Marion Crane/Janet Leigh as she slides down the tiles, and a close-up of her belly getting stabbed. When Philip Skerry interviewed Hilton Green, Hitchcock's assistant director, he pressed him hard about the latter shot, insisting that the knife penetrated the skin.

Frames from the shower sequence storyboard

"Sometimes there's a little voice inside me that says it was better without them"

Green was adamant that no such thing was shot, stating, "We never did a thing like that. And that was before the computer things where you could do things like that"; when pressed further he said, "We never shot it." According to Bass, the effect of a knife stabbing the belly was achieved by pulling the knife away from her skin, reversing the shot, and cutting away just as it touched the skin. Such knowledge suggests that Bass was closely involved with the filming of the shots. When I asked Bass how he felt about the additions, he stated that, despite his huge respect for Hitchcock, "deep down I was not really happy": "It impinged on the purity of the concept, a 'bloodless' murder with no knife contact. My idea was to hold back the horror of showing blood until the very end when it would be seen swirling down the drain. I was surprised at my response. I was in awe of Hitch. How could he be wrong? I told myself it did indeed make the sequence more effective." He paused for a long time, deep in thought, before adding, "Sometimes there's a little voice inside me that says it was better without them." In terms of design, that was probably the case; within the film, however, Hitchcock's decision to add more blood and overt violence undoubtedly raised the sensational tone of the sequence and helped ensure its infamy. As filmed, the scene closely follows the storyboard, and all of Bass's images were probably shot. In the final edit, Hitchcock left out some images and moved others around, but the resemblance between the original design and the finished sequence is quite remarkable, especially for Hitchcock, who greatly relied on creative editing. Visual clues are the overall modernist design sensibility of the piece as well as more specific imagery, such as the transition from the drain in the bathtub to Leigh's eye, which recalls the unsettling eye in Bass's Vertigo title sequence and the huge eye in Bonjour Tristesse, while Leigh's desperate outstretched hands recall those of concentration camp inmates in the opening of The Victors. The circular form of the showerhead and drain are seen in several Bass titles, including Attack!, Walk on the Wild Side, The Victors, and Grand Prix, while the Walk on the Wild Side sequence is a good example of the power of the close-up in a short, tight sequence.

It looks like a science fiction film

by Steven Brower

"It's surprising that they didn't get along better, since they had much in common"

It's hard to imagine two more influential figures than film director Stanley Kubrick and designer Saul Bass. Kubrick, who would have turned 87 next Sunday, set the standard for several genres: biting political satire (Dr. Strangelove), science fiction (2001: A Space Odyssey), sweeping epics (Barry Lyndon), unsentimental war films (Full Metal Jacket), and horror (The Shining), among others. His auteur approach to filmmaking—the triple threat of directing, writing, and cinematography—has left its mark on generations to come.

Likewise designer Saul Bass, whose film posters and movie titles set a new standard, most notably those he made for directors Alfred Hitchcock (Vertigo, Psycho) and Otto Preminger (Anatomy of a Murder). One might expect a Bass x Kubrick collaboration to be equally epic, but in this case it was the behind-the-scenes drama that took center stage. It's surprising that they didn't get along better, since they had much in common. Both were Jewish boys born in the Bronx around the same time, Bass in 1920 and Kubrick in 1928. Both were masters of their disciplines and recognized as such. The two first collaborated in 1960 on the film Spartacus. Working with his soon-to-be-wife Elaine, Bass created both the film's titles and storyboarded key scenes. But it would be almost another 20 before they worked together again, when Kubrick hired Bass to create the poster for his adaptation of Stephen King's novel The Shining. As evidenced in his letter from September, 1978, Bass cheerily submitted five designs, all done in an uncharacteristic stipple technique.

"I am excited about all of them, and I give you many reasons why I think they would be strong identifiers for the film." Signing it with a humorous self-portrait as a bass fish, one can only guess Bass assumed this was a done deal. Kubrick, however, wasn't amused.

On the sketches themselves (which were later discovered in his personal affects) he wrote "Looks like science fiction," and "Hand and bike are too irrelevant. Title looks small, looks like the ink didn't take on the part that goes light," and "Maze too abstract and too much emphasis on maze," and, the most scathing of all, "Don't like artwork."

The Shining's poster, 1980.

"They are beautifully done but I don't think any of them are right"

Ouch. Let's see that last one again for full effect: "Don't like artwork."

In his response letter Kubrick wrote, "Dear Saul… my reactions to the ones you sent is that they are beautifully done but I don't think any of them are right."

More discussion followed, and when Bass sent his correspondence the next month they had agreed upon an illustrative approach of a large head peering through the title, perhaps a nod to the iconic "Here's Johnny" scene. Bass' stipple technique remained in place. As Kubrick instructed, the final two-color poster evokes both "terror" and the "supernatural."

Kubrick seemingly had an easier time with illustrator Philip Castle who created posters for Clockwork Orange and Full Metal Jacket. Ironically, when Kubrick contacted Castle for the poster of Clockwork Orange Full Metal Jacket he asked if he "knew anyone who could do a painting like Saul Bass."

They are still around. This is fantastic!

by Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham

"His designs, for film titles and company logos and record albums and posters, defined an era"

"Saul Bass. Before I ever met him, before we worked together, he was a legend in my eyes. His designs, for film titles and company logos and record albums and posters, defined an era. In essence, they found and distilled the poetry of the modern, industrialised world.

They gave us a series of crystallised images, expressions of who and where we were and the future ahead of us. They were images you could dream on. They still are...

Saul and I worked together on four occasions. The first time we met was on Goodfellas. I had an idea of what I wanted for the titles, but couldn't quite get it. Someone suggested Saul, and my reaction was: 'Do we dare?' After all, this was the man who designed the title sequences for Vertigo, Psycho, Anatomy of a Murder, Advise and Consent, Spartacus, Ocean's 11, and so many other pictures that defined movies and movie-going for me. When we were growing up and seeing movies, we came to recognise Saul's designs, and I remember the excitement they generated within us: like Bernard Herrmann's scores, they added a whole extra dimension to whatever picture they were part of.

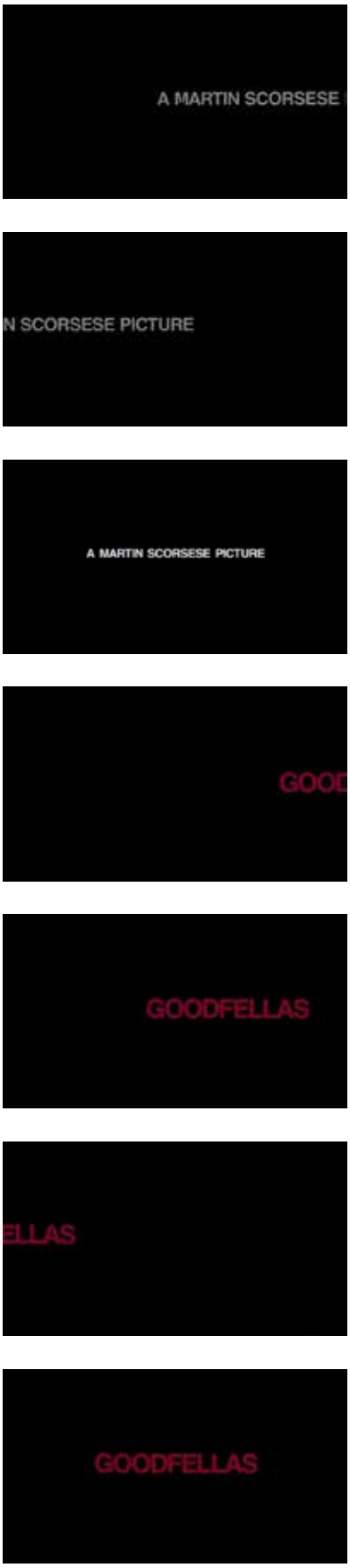
They made the picture instantly special. And they didn't stand apart from the movie, they drew you into it, instantly. Because, putting it very simply, Saul was a great filmmaker. He would look at the film in question, and he would understand the rhythm, the structure, the mood – he would penetrate the heart of the movie and find its secret.

That's what he did with Vertigo and those spirals that just keep endlessly forming. That's the madness at the heart of the picture, the beautiful nightmare vortex of James Stewart's affliction. And so, when I showed him and Elaine [Bass' wife and design partner] Goodfellas, they understood what we were driving at right away: the speed, the flash, the sense of life soaring along and then jumping the tracks."

Goodbyes

"The lean, hard-edged credits rush across the screen, blurring like a car passing at high speed"

The title sequence was resolved fairly quickly, partly because Scorsese already had an approach in mind, partly because there were no "backgrounds" to be considered, only lettering, and partly because Saul and Elaine came up with what was used after only one or two attempts.
Scorsese wanted the sequence to reflect the frenetic pace of the film based on Wiseguys, Pileggi's composite biography about Italian–American mobsters, but since the credits would bookend the extremely powerful opening scene involving cold-blooded murder, Saul and Elaine were anxious not to overwhelm the action with elaborate visuals. The lean, hard-edged credits rush across the screen, blurring like a car passing at high speed just like that in which the "Goodfellas" are traveling — to a background of doppler-effect traffic sounds. Before the murder the typography is white on black; afterwards it changes to red.



Goodfellas' opening titles, 1990.

I'm Spartacus!

by Pat Kirkham

The story of a gladiator who leads a slave revolt against the might of the Roman Empire, Spartacus was a high-profile project for Kirk Douglas, who both produced and starred in the movie. A long standing admirer of Saul's work, Douglas hired him not only to create the title sequence and advertising campaign, but also as a visual consultant. His responsibilities included the design and storyboarding of the battle sequences, conceptualizing and designing the gladiatorial school and scouting the Nubian mine locations.

Douglas stated, "Saul is a tremendous talent. A real artist who captures real feelings.

He went much further than anyone could have imagined in visualizing key scenes. And on top of that, he came up with a most powerful graphic image for the ads. The studio [Universal] fought me on that one. They wanted prancing horses that looked effeminate, and banners that didn't capture the spirit at all. What Saul brought to uswas this image of a slave with a sword and a broken chain: when you saw that you knew the issue was freedom."

The symbol of heroic slave broken free from his chains with short sword in hand was, for the most part, restricted to trade advertising and

"Saul is a tremendous talent, a real artist who captures real feelings"

Douglas' personal greeting card. With a few exceptions, such as the billboard, the main publicity campaign used only elements of Saul's designs. It would appear that the politically charged symbol and lack of focus on stars proved too much for those promoting the film.

Saul and Elaine (this was the first sequence on which Elaine was a full collaborator) wanted the titles to establish the powerful presence of the Roman Empire. Saul explained: "What we were going for in the Spartacus titles was the multiple layers of elegant and disdainful faces, which express the duality of Roman rule — the oppressiveness and brutality, as well as the sophistication that made possible so many contributions to Western civilization.

It seems very rich to see the growth of those profiles forming a full face, and full faces dissolving into profiles before the final face starts to crack apart and the camera zooms into the empty eye, signaling that all is not well."

Spartacus' poster, 1960.

"The tendency is to thinkof them as ruffians who were just thrown into the ring"

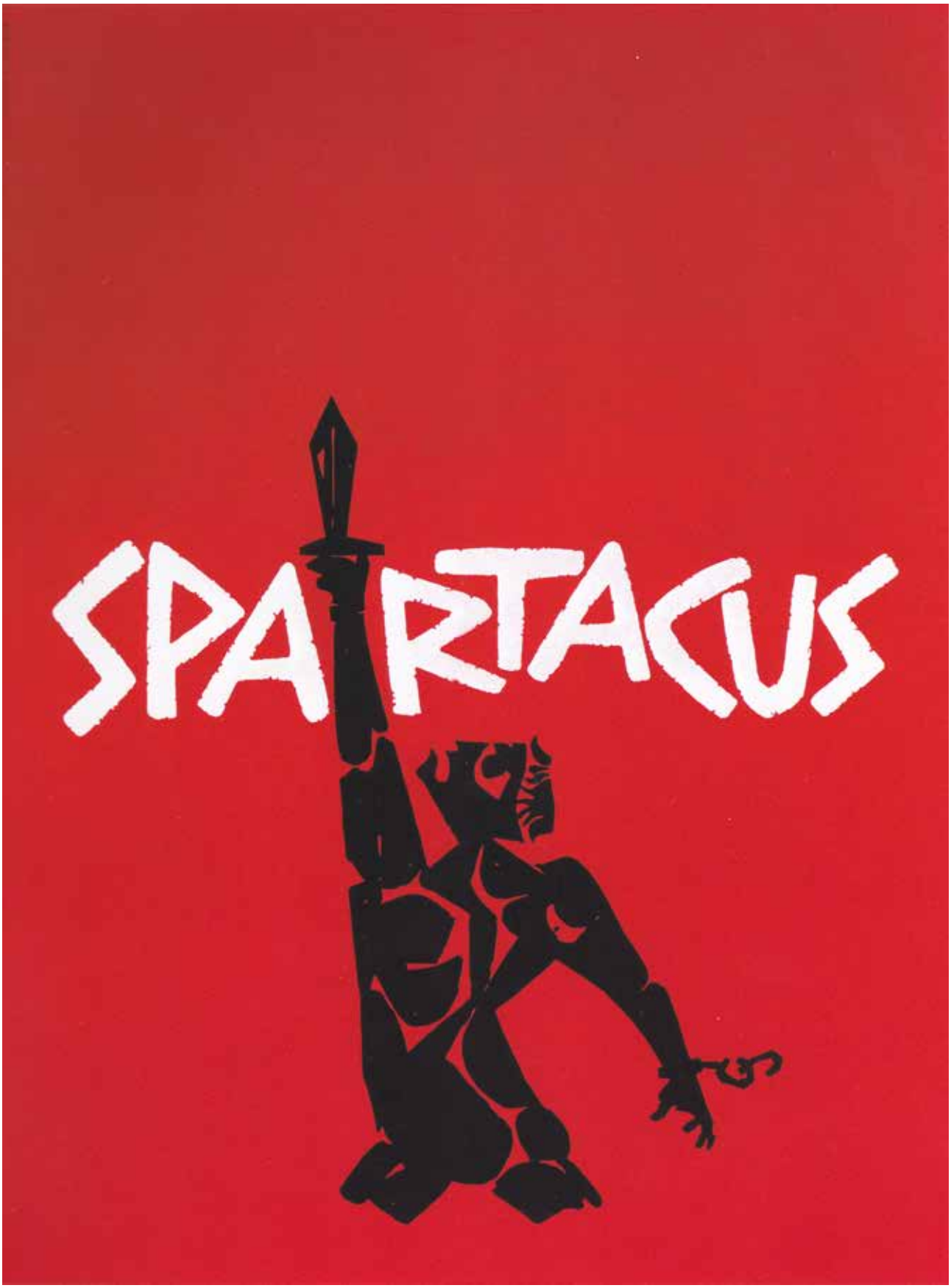
The concept was relatively simple, but the precise effects they wanted proved difficult to achieve, especially because there were no zoom lenses available for the wide-screen Super Technirama 70 process in which the film was shot.

Saul recalled: "We solved the problem by buying a few plaster heads, for thirty dollars a head, at a place across the street from the old Goldwyn studios that made plaster casts. At that price it didn't matter if we broke more than we used, and it saved renting an expensive studio and creating expensive special effects. We put the camera on a track and shot every frame as we made a series of tiny incremental move-ins. At each stop, Elaine would start and extend cracks in the head, getting nearer and nearer, until it was riddled with cracks and ready to fall apart.

So far, so good …" But how to have the head crack open and retain the mood of slow decay? We had to think of a way of it coming apart slowly. We wracked our brains and Elaine came up with a great idea. She recalled the Japanese bunraku theater where puppeteers dressed in black manipulate the puppets. Well, Elaine put on a pair of black gloves and draped herself in black cloth. She was on-camera while it was rolling and slowly pulled chunks out of the statue, just taking them away slowly until it fell apart."

Discussing the visualization of the gladiatorial school, Saul stated: "The tendency is to think of them as ruffians who were just thrown into the ring - but the gladiators were viewed as prized animals, and they were carefully treated, though not as individuals or human beings. So I thought, 'What's the allusion then?' At one point I thought of creating a pit into which they would be lowered for training and practice.

But then I began to think of the circus, and animals in cages, and I sensed that maybe the circus allusion was a good one, the idea of the big cats, of ferocious and potentially dangerous animals which are cared for, highly trained, and spectacular. That's what led to the eventual set, which was really a large-scale circus with bars and barred pathways into the practice ring."


SPARTACUS

"A people's army whose fighting skills far outstripped their organizational skills"

Saul also conceptualized and storyboarded the final battle between the slaves, led by Spartacus, and the well-trained forces of the Roman state: "I visualized two armies whose equipment and tactics would express, in compelling detail, the nature of the cultures that had produced them. The slave ranks would be relatively loose, their battle form-ations irregular. A people's army whose fighting skills far outstripped their organizational skills.

The Roman army would be highly mechanized, a rational force with the Centurion blocks execut-ing intricate geometric maneuvers with terrifying precision.

In one scene I had rows of Roman soldiers stepping forward with locked shields that suddenly opened, like venetian blinds, allowing rows of troops behind them to step through, hurl their spears, and step back before the shields snapped closed again."

Spartacus' opening titles, 1960.

Think of Dante's Inferno

by Pat Kirkham

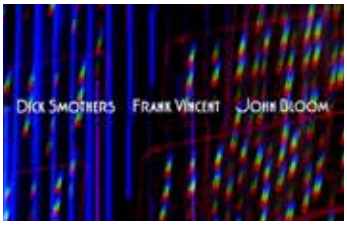
"I was so touched that they had understood the writing, they knew what the film was trying to do"

The staggeringly beautiful title sequence for Casino was the last one made by Saul and Elaine. Screenwriter Nicholas Pileggi described it as "simply brilliant".

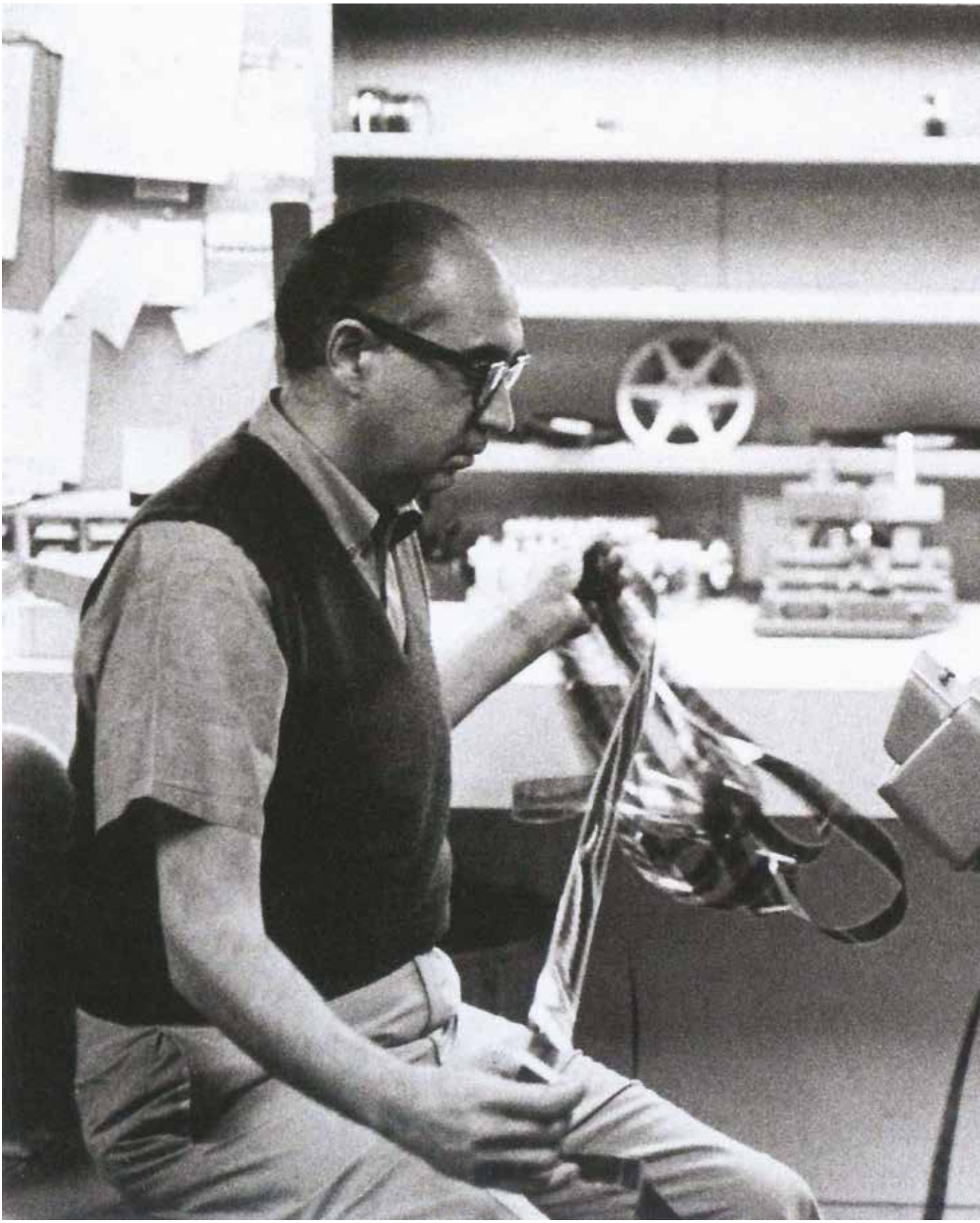
He added: "I was so touched that they had understood the writing; that they knew what the film was trying to do. There must have been a hundred Hollywood films about Las Vegas that have tried to capture the essence of that city, but none quite like this. Part of the brilliance of the Bass opening is that their project is so clear.

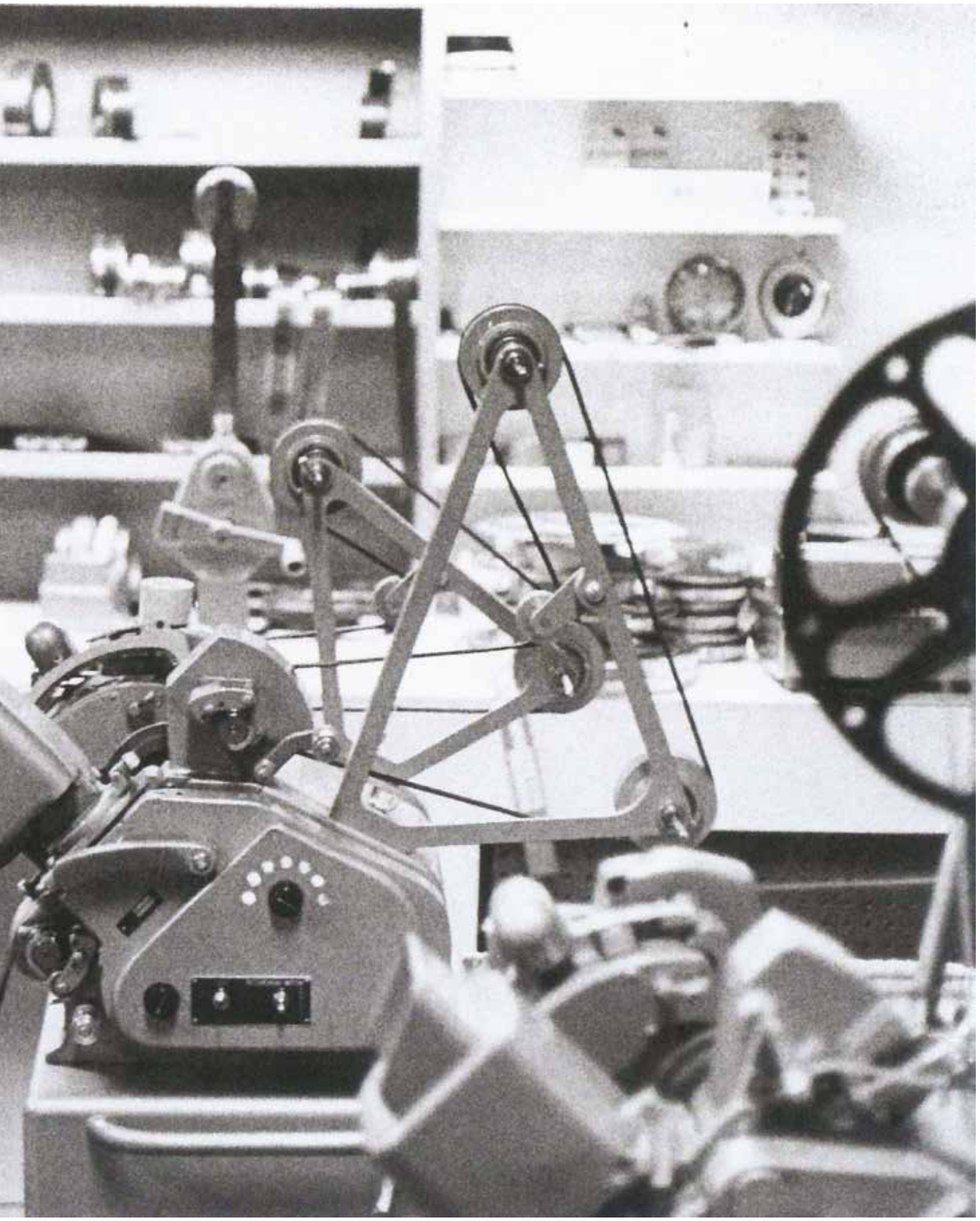
Elaine and Saul have found the perfect metaphor for the film as a whole — for Las Vegas in the 1970s, and for descent of the Mafia into Hell." The Bass titles for Ocean's Eleven (1960) also featured Las Vegas, but as soon as they read this script they knew the sequence would have to be very different. As in Goodfellas, the titles do not just open the movie. They follow the first scene in which Ace Rothstein (Robert De Niro) leaves a casino and gets into his car, turns on the ignition and the car blows up! At that moment the title sequence begins. Saul described it thus: "Think of Dante's Inferno and Hieronymus Bosch, set against Bach's St. Matthew Passion, and you begin to get an impression of what we're after."

In Saul and Elaine's vision, Ace's body, or soul, rises and falls within a fiery Las Vegas purgatory. Between his ascent and descent, the flames dissolve into a montage of surreal neon lights that capture the city's throbbing assault on all the senses. In the sequence, the main character's excess energy and flashiness are rendered simultaneously distorted and hyperreal, repulsive and desirable, not unlike the strip of casinos itself. The result is a work of startling visual poetry. There could be no more befitting finale for the greatest film title designer of the century, or more moving elegy to his long and fertile collaboration with Elaine.



Casino's opening titles, 1997.





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A note on photographers

Every effort has been made to give credit for specific photographs when known, but unfortunately complete records were not available. The following photographers are among those who worked with Saul and Elaine over the years:

Sid Avery
Ferenc Berko
Morton Dimondstein
André Gobeli
David Fredenthal
Don Handel
George M. Heneghan
Don Jim
Jay Maisel
Tom Miller
Leonard Nadel
Marvin Rand
J. Tennenbaum
Gerald Trafficanda
C. G. Walker
Todd Walker
Jerry White
Bob Willoughby
Max Yavno