DESIGNVERSO

Editorial

Paul Rand was one of the most influential graphic designers of the 20th century who was recognized for his advertising work and illustrations as well as for his famous company logos.
He is considered to have set the standards for company brands and corporate identity. Modernity, simplicity and easy recognizability are some of the features of these graphic projects. Paul Rand was also a prolific writer and design theorist and was among the first people to define the role of the graphic designer in the workplace.
Our project aims to examine his mindset and personality which meld wonderfully in his work.
The goal was to design a monograph using his stylistic choices of simplification, bidimensionality, bold colors and solid hues. A common denominator runs across the pages: the red, blue, green, yellow and black that he used very often have been reproduced on inside covers and for the quotes.
Our intent was also to offer a more modern and interesting take of the work of a designer who lived more than 30 years ago, and who may sometimes appear outdated or overtaken by other trends.
It is designed for readers with a knowledge of design since his articles, which have been reproduced here, are very specific and use technical language.

Scuola del Design
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Laboratorio di Fondamenti del Progetto
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DESIGNVERSO

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Paul Rand's RULES

The Politics of Design

It is no secret that the real world in which the designer functions is not the world of art, but the world of buying and selling. For sales, and not design are the raison d'etre of any business organization. Unlike the salesman, however, the designer's overriding motivation is art: art in the service of business, art that enhances the quality of life and deepens appreciation of the familiar world.

Design is a problem-solving activity. It provides a means of clarifying, synthesizing, and dramatizing a word, a picture, a product, or an event. A serious barrier to the realization of good design, however, are the layers of management inherent in any bureaucratic structure. For aside from the sheer prejudice or simple unawareness, one is apt to encounter such absurdities as second guessing, kow-towing, posturing, nit-picking, and jockeying for position, let alone such buck-passing institutions as the committee meeting and the task force. At issue, it seems, is neither malevolence nor stupidity, but human frailty.

The smooth functioning of the design process may be thwarted in other ways, by the imperceptive executive, who in matters of design understands neither his proper role nor that of the designer; by the eager but cautious advertising

man whose principal concern is pleasing his client; and by the insecure client who depends on informal office surveys and pseudo-scientific research to deal with questions that are unanswerable and answers that are questionable.

Unless the design function in business bureaucracy is so structured that direct access to the ultimate decision-maker is possible, trying to produce good work is very often an exercise in futility. Ignorance of the history and methodology of design — how work is conceived, produced, and reproduced — adds to the difficulties and misunderstandings. Design is a way of life, a point of view. It involves the whole complex of visual communication: talent, creative ability, manual skill, and technical knowledge. Aesthetics and economics, technology and psychology are intrinsically relate to the process.

One of the more common problems which tends to create doubt and confusion is caused by the inexperienced and anxious executive who innocently expects, or even demands, to see not one but many solutions to a problem. These may include a number of visual and/or verbal concepts, an assortment of layouts, a variety of pictures and color schemes, as well as a choice of type styles. He needs the reassurance of numbers and the opportunity to exercise his personal preferences. He is also most likely to be the one to insist on endless revisions with unrealistic deadlines, adding to an already wasteful and time-consuming ritual. Theoretically, a great number of ideas assures a great number of choices, but such choices are essentially quantitative. This practice is as bewildering as it is wasteful. It discourages spontaneity, encourages indifference, and more often than not produces results which are neither distinguished, interesting, nor effective. In short, good ideas rarely come in bunches.

The designer who voluntarily presents his client with a batch of layouts does so not out prolificacy, but out of uncertainty or fear. He thus encourages the client to assume the role of referee. In the event of genuine need, however, the skillful designer is able to produce a reasonable number of good ideas. But quantity by demand is quite different than quantity by choice. Design is a time-consuming occupation. Whatever his working habits, the designer fills many a wastebasket in order to produce one good idea. Advertising agencies can be especially guilty in this numbers game. Bent on impressing the client with their ardor, they present a welter of layouts, many of which are superficial interpretations of potentially good ideas, or slick renderings of trite ones.

Frequent job reassignments within an active business are additional impediments about which management is often unaware. Persons unqualified to make design judgments are frequently shifted into design-sensitive positions. The position of authority is then used as

Paul Rand by Peter Arnell

evidence of expertise. While most people will graciously accept and appreciate criticism when it comes from a knowledgeable source, they will resent it (openly or otherwise) when it derives solely from a power position, even though the manager may be highly intelligent or have self-professed "good taste." At issue is not the right, or even the duty, to question, but the right to make design judgment. Such misuse of privilege is a disservice to management and counterproductive to good design. Expertise in business administration, journalism, accounting, or selling, though necessary in its place, is not expertise in problems dealing with visual appearance. The salesman who can sell you the most sophisticated computer typesetting equipment is rarely one who appreciates fine typography or elegant proportions. Actually, the plethora of bad design that we see all around us can probably be attributed as much to good salesmanship as to bad taste.

Deeply concerned with every aspect of the production process, the designer must often contend with inexperienced production personnel and time-consuming purchasing procedures, which stifle enthusiasm, instinct, and creativity. Though peripherally involved in making

aesthetic judgments (choosing printers, papermakers, typesetters and other suppliers), purchasing agents are for the most part ignorant of design practices, insensitive to subtleties that mean quality, and unaware of marketing needs. Primarily and rightly concerned with cost- cutting, they mistakenly equate elegance with extravagance and parsimony with wise business judgement.

These problems are by no means confined to the bureaucratic corporation. Artists, writers, and others in the fields of communication and visual arts, in government or private industry, in schools or churches, must constantly cope with those who do not understand and are therefore unsympathetic to their ideas. The designer is especially vulnerable because design is grist for anybody's mill. "I know what I like" is all the authority one needs to support one's critical aspirations.

Like the businessman, the designer is amply supplied with his own frailties. But unlike him, he is often inarticulate, a serious problem in an arena in which semantic difficulties so often arise. This is more pertinent in graphic design than in the industrial or architectural fields, because graphic design is more open to aesthetic than to functional preferences.

Stubborness may be one of the designer's admirable or notorious qualities (depending on one's point of view) — a principled refusal to compromise, or a means to camouflage inadequacy. Design cliches, meaningless patterns, stylish illustrations, and predetermined solutions are signs of such weakness. An understanding of the significance of modernism and familiarity with the history of design, painting, architecture, and other disciplines, which distinguish the educated designer and make his role more meaningful, are not every designer's strong points.

The designer, however, needs all the support he can muster, for his is a unique but unenviable position. His work is subject to every imaginable interpretation and to every piddling piece of fact- finding. Ironically, he seeks not only the applause of the connoisseur, but the approbation of the crowd.

A salutary working relationship is not only possible but essential. Designers are not always intransigent, nor are all purchasing agents blind to quality. Many responsible advertising agencies are not unaware of the role that design plays as a communication force. As for the person who pays the piper, the businessman who is sympathetic and understanding is not altogether illusory. He is professional, objective, and alert to new ideas. He places responsibility where it belongs and does not feel insecure enough to see himself as an expert in a field other than his own. He is, moreover, able to provide a harmonious environment in which goodwill, understanding, spontaneity, and mutual trust — qualities so essential to the accomplishment of creative work — may flourish.

Similarly, the skilled graphic designer is a professional whose world is divided between lyricism and pragmatism. He is able to distinguish between trendiness and innovation, between obscurity and originality. He uses freedom of expression not as a license for abstruse ideas, and tenacity not as bullheadedness but as evidence of his own convictions. His is an independent spirit guided more by an "inner artistic standard of excellence"(1) than by some external influence. At the same time as he realizes that good design must withstand the rigors of the marketplace, he believes that without good design the marketplace is a showcase of visual vulgarity.

The creative arts have always labored under adverse conditions. Subjectivity emotion, and opinion seem to be concomitants of artistic questions. The layman feels insecure and awkward about making design judgments, even though he pretends to make them with a certain measure of know-how. But, like it or not, business conditions compel many to get inextricably involved with problems in which design plays some role.

For the most part, the creation or effects of design, unlike science, are neither measurable nor predictable, nor are the results necessarily repeatable. If there is any assurance, besides faith, a businessman can have, it is in choosing talented, competent, and experienced designers.

Meaningful design, design of quality and wit, is no small achievement, even in an environment in which good design is understood, appreciated, and ardently accepted, and in which profit is not the only motive. At best, work that has any claim to distinction is the exception, even under the most ideal circumstances. After all, our epoch can boast of only one A.M. Cassandre.

By Paul Rand from "A Designer's Art"



Integrity and invention

Courage and Creativity

Like that of the spawning salmon, the artist's life is a never-ending upstream battle. To function creatively the artist must have the courage to fight for what he believes. Courage in the face of a danger that has no element of high adventure in it-just the cold, hard possibility of losing his job. Yet the courage of his convictions is, along with his talent, his only source of strength. Frank Lloyd Wright put it this way:

I'll work as I'll think as I am
No thought of fashion or sham
Nor for fortune the jade
Serve vile Gods of trade
My thought as beseemeth a man'

The businessman will never respect the professional who does not believe in what he does. The businessman under these circumstances can only 'use' the artist for his own ends. And why not, if the artist himself has no ends?

In asking the artist to have courage, we must ask the same of industry. The impetus to conform, so widespread today, will, if not checked, kill all forms of creativity, scientific and technological included.

Business has a strong tendency to wait for a few brave pioneers to produce or underwrite original work, then rush to climb on the bandwagon. The bandwagon, of course, may not even be going in the right direction. The attention and admiration evoked by the high calibre of XYZ's advertising have induced many an advertiser to say 'Let's do something like XYZ' without considering that it might not be at all suited to his needs. Specific problems require specific visual solutions. But both XYZ's and ABC's advertising and products can be made to fulfil their functions and also be aesthetically gratifying. Both can express respect for and concern with the broadest interests of the consumer. Against the outstanding achievements in design by some companies, there stands the great Artistic Integrity.

Artistic Integrity

There are those who believe that the role the designer must play is fixed and determined by the socio-economic climate; that he must discover his functional niche and fit himself into it. It seems to me that this ready-made image ignores the part the artist can play in creating this climate. Whether as advertising tycoons, missile builders, public or private citizens, we are all human beings, and to endure we must, first of all, be for ourselves. It is only when man is not accepted as the centre of human concern that it becomes feasible to create a system of production which values profit out of proportion to responsible public service, or to design ads in which the only aesthetic criteria are the use of fashionable illustrations and 'in' type faces. The commercial artist (designer) who wants to be more than a mere stylist and who wishes to avoid being overwhelmed by the demands of clients, the idiosyncrasies of public taste, and the ambiguities of consumer research surveys must become clear as to what his cultural contribution should be. In all these areas he must try to distinguish the real from the imaginary, the sincere from the pretentious, and the objective from the biased. If the commercial artist has both talent and a commitment to aesthetic values, he will automatically try to make the product of graphic design both pleasing and visually stimulating to the user or the viewer. By stimulating I mean that this work will add something to the spectator's experience.

The artist must believe his work is an aesthetic statement, but he must also understand his general role in society. It is this role that justifies his spending the client's money and his risking other people's jobs. And it entitles him to make mistakes. He adds something to the world. He gives it new ways of feeling and of thinking. He opens doors to new experience. He provides new alternatives as solutions to old problems.

There is nothing wrong with selling, even with 'hard' selling, but selling which misrepresents, condescends, relies on sheer gullibility or stupidity is wrong. Morally, it is very difficult for an artist to do a direct and creative job if dishonest claims are being made for the product he is asked to advertise, or if, as an industrial designer, he is supposed to exercise mere stylistic ingenuity to give an old product a new appearance. The artist's sense of worth depends on his feeling of integrity. If this is destroyed, he will no longer be able to function creatively.

Art and Communication

The lament of the graphic designer that he is not permitted to do good work because good work is neither wanted nor understood by his employers is universal. It is indeed very often true. But if the artist honestly evaluates his work he will frequently find that the 'good work' the businessman has rejected is really not so 'good'. Many times when the 'square' client says 'it's too far out', he may be unconsciously reacting to inappropriate symbolism, obscure interpretation of an idea, poor typography, an inadequate display of his product, or simply bad communication. In a new edition of my book Thoughts on Design, this problem was alluded to as follows:

Graphic design-

which fulfils aesthetic needs,
complies with the laws of form
and the exigencies of two-dimensional space;
which speaks in semiotics, sans-serifs,
and geometries;
which abstracts, transforms, translates,
rotates, dilates, repeats, mirrors,
groups, and regroups-
is not good design
if it is irrelevant.

Graphic design-

which evokes the symmetria of Vitruvius,
the dynamic symmetry of Hambidge,
the asymmetry of Mondrian;
which is a good gestalt;
which is generated by intuition or by computer,
by invention or by a system or coordinates-
is not good design
if it does not co-operate
as an instrument
in the service of communication.

Originality and Subject-Matter

Ideas do not need to be esoteric to be original or exciting. As H. L. Mencken says of Shaw's plays, "The roots of each one of them are in platitude; the roots of every effective stage play are in platitude." And when he asks why Shaw is able to 'kick up such a pother', he answers, "For the simplest of reasons. Because he practises with great zest and skill the fine art of exhibiting the obvious in unexpected and terrifying lights." From Impressionism to Pop, the commonplace and the comic strip have become the ingredients for the artist's cauldron. What Cezanne did with apples, Picasso with guitars, Leger with machines, Schwitters with rubbish, and Duchamp with urinals makes it clear that revelation does not depend upon grandiose concepts. In 1947 I wrote what I still hold to be true, 'The problem of the artist is to make the commonplace uncommonplace.

If artistic quality depended on exalted subject-matter, the commercial artist, as well as the advertising agency and advertiser, would be in a bad way. For years I have worked with light bulb manufacturers, cigar makers, distillers, etc., whose products visually are not in themselves unusual. A light bulb is almost as commonplace as an apple, but if I fail to make a package or an advertisement for light bulbs that is lively and original, it will not be the light bulb that is at fault.

The 'Corporate Image'

In this, the speed generation, practically any corporation, large or small, can have its 'image' made to order. A vast army of image makers have made a business out of art large enough almost to rival the businesses they help to portray.

Much has been touted about the virtues of corporate identification programmes. Because the corporate image so often conveys the impression that it is all-encompassing, it leaves little doubt in the mind of the onlooker that the image he sees represents a company which is really in the swim, that it's the best, the first, and the most. However, being with it is not always being for it.

It seems to me that a company can more easily be recognized for what it really believes not by its 'made to order image' (its trade mark, logotype, letterhead), nor by the number of avant-garde prints or Mies van der Rohe chairs which embellish its offices, but by its more mundane, day-to-day activities: its house organs, counter displays, trade advertisements, packaging and products. Unless it consistently represents the aims and beliefs as well as the total production and activities of a company, a corporate image is at best mere window dressing, and at worst deception.

Things can be made and marketed without our considering their moral or aesthetic aspects; ads can convince without pleasing or heightening the spectator's visual awareness, products can work regardless of their appearance. But should they? The world of business could function without benefit of art-but should it? I think not, if only for the simple reason that the world would be a poorer place if it did.

By Paul Rand, published in the Graphis Annual in 1971

"Mies van der Rohe once said that being good is more important than being original. Originality is a product, not an intention."

Graphic Wit "Paul Rand: The Play Instinct"

Failure by design

Because design is so often equated with mere decoration, it is safe to assume that few people understand what design means or the role it plays in the corporate world. Graphic design pertains to the look of things — of everything that rolls off a printing press, from a daily newspaper to a box for corn flakes. It also pertains to the nature of things: not only how something should look but why, and often, what it should look like.

Why then do design programs in large corporations seem to be going out of style? Why is the average graphic design effort today merely average at best? Is the paucity of good designers and good CEOs possibly the reason for the paucity of good design? The Arco Oil Company began to lose interest in its design program when it chairman Robert Anderson departed. The highly acclaimed CBS design program began to erode when William Paley and Frank Stanton were no longer active.

One rarely hears of the program that put Westinghouse on the design map. And when Walter Paepcke, the CEO of the Container Corporation of America died, why did the flow of distinguished advertising by world-famous painters and designers cease? Is it mere coincidence that when Rawleigh Warner departed, Eliot Noyes's elegant designs for Mobil stations were aesthetically downgraded?

When my friend Giovanni Pintor left his company, the character and special quality of Olivetti design no longer reflected the same passion and brilliance of an almost never-ending stream of graphic design works. Without the enthusiasm of Adriano Olivetti, its founder, there might never have been a design program.

Tom Watson, who almost singlehandedly created the IBM design program, was not only it guiding spirit but was deeply concerned with its product; he always believed that good design is good business. In fact, years after he had left the company and the IBM design program had taken a different turn, he nevertheless was instrumental in rescuing the now-famous rebus poster (the IBM picture logo) from oblivion, when it was questioned by other executives.

That so many programs for large corporations have had a short life span is no evidence that design is impotent. What is evident is that management does not really appreciated the contribution that design (art) can make socially, aesthetically, and economically.

Art", said John Ruskin, "represents a social necessity that no nation can neglect without endangering its intellectual existence.
Yet in the world of commerce, with the exception of the lucky, talented, passionate, or aggressive few, designers are neither appreciated nor understood. For the most part, they are consigned to a low run on the corporate ladder. Similarly, it is the tendency of most businesses to appeal to the consumers' lower instincts rather than to their higher ideals.

But is poor design exclusively the domain of the CEO? There is also the problem of visual literacy, a common language between designer and client. Unfortunately, just as there are managements unwilling or enlightened enough to commission good designs, there are designers who are eager to accommodate their every whim. Moreover, good design cannot be dictated or willed; alas, it is not the product of market research but of natural talent, relevant ideas, and mutual respect, without which design programs eventually will unravel and good design wither away.

Design can help inform, delight, and even persuade — assuming that the designer is an artist and not just someone focused on the nonsense of "self-expression" or on the fads of the moment.

Most people", said the painter Robert Motherwell, "ignorantly suppose that artists [designers] are the decorators of our human existence, the esthetes to who the cultivated may turn when the real business of the day is done. ... Far from being merely decorative, the artist's awareness is one of the few guardians of the inherent sanity and equilibrium of the human spirit that we have.

By Paul Rand Originally published in the New York Times, 1993

"Good design adds value of some kind, gives meaning, and, not incidentally, can be sheer pleasure to behold; it respects the viewer's sensibilities and rewards the entrepreneur."

Design Form and Chaos

The boy art director

One to watch

How Paul Rand became Paul Rand

In 1934 Rand took his first professional part-time job as an illustrator for Metro Associated Services, a syndicate that supplied maps and stock advertising cuts to newspapers and magazines. Along with the art director and four much older men sitting elbow to elbow at a row of drawing boards, Rand made all kinds of graphic cliches — from cuts of Fourth of July festivities, butter-and-eggs, farm animals, snow scenes, children at play and men at work, to novelty headlines for going-out-of-business or fire-sale ads. Though he was not particularly prud of the "junk"'that they produced, he learned more about graphic techniques — the invaluable tricks of the trade — than he had in school. He was also earning money — less than $10 a week, but enough to make his own way in New York. Although he had no visual persona of his own, his professional self-confidence was growing. Rand's professed goal was to earn $50 a week — a king's ransom during the Depression — and this prompted him in early 1935 to rent a "closet-sized" studio at 331 East 38th Street with designer C. W. D. Stillwell (who later became the assistant to the industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes). In this space, on the periphery of Manhattan's advertising district, he launched his first

freelance practice and landed a few minor accounts. After some months on retainer doing layouts and spot advertisements for his biggest client, Glass Packer magazine, he had a viable portfolio that he said “was terrible stuff, but I managed”.
Rand was never satisfied doing such menial work, so he sought advice, and perhaps even presumed he would get offers of better jobs, from designers he had read about in the trade magazines. First on his list was F. G. Cooper, a comic illustrator and letterer well known at that time for his witty “Father Knickerbocker” trade character promoting the Consolidated Edison Company. Cooper, however, was abruptly dismissive of Rand’s efforts, which mimicked the advertising posters of German émigré Lucian Bernhard.

Undeterred, Rand’s next stop was the upper East Side studio of Bernhard himself, one of Germany’s maestros — inventor in 1906 of the Sachplakat (an object poster with a minimalist, though often colorful, design, and a graphic representation of the product) and proponent of graphic design thai rejected superfluous decoration in favour of a stark prop or object. After emigrating from Berlin in 1922, Bernhard established a successful business in New York designing typefaces, logos and poster/billboard campaigns for major corpor-ations. Rand greatly admired the austerity of Bernhard’s 1906 poster for the Priester Match company. A masterpiece of graphic erudition, this poster (which showed two colorful match-sticks against a dark maroon background, topped with the word Priester in block letters) set the standard for twentieth-century simplicity and at the same time was an unmistakable signature for its maker. Rand aspired to work in this manner and with the master. Nevertheless, Bernhard was not the least bit interested in conversing with his uninvited acolyte. “He was not welcoming at all,” Rand recalled, “rather he played the big-shot.”

Disappointment never held Rand back. He regrouped quickly; he also began to emulate the Secessionist style of Gustav Jensen, “designer for industry”. This former aspiring opera singer’s elegant, classically inspired, moderne drawing style (inspired by the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, 1925) stood out among the faux roman-tic/heroic (Art Deco) mannerisms of the day.
While more decorative than Bernhard, Jensen nevertheless used ornament purely as functional architecture — a foundation on which his selling messages were built. Known for his streamlined packages (notably the Golden Blossom Honey jar and label), advertising campaigns for Charles of the Ritz perfumes, and sleek designs for cutlery and hand-basins, Rand saw in Jensen the quintessence of the integrated artist/designer and a model on which to base his own practice. “I desperately wanted to work for him,” he recalled; “I would have done it for free.” Jensen, however, declined Rand’s offer but in an agreeable way, explaining that he always worked alone.
Rand’s tenacity kept him knocking on more and more doors in search of work until he met Ervin Metzl, a successful typographer, poster and book cover designer known for his famous calli-graphic lettering and modernistic illustrations for Fortune and other magazines. Metzl immediately acknowledged Rand’s innate talent and helped him land freelance rendering jobs from Young and Rubicam, the agency handling the Nabisco and Camel accounts, and R. H. Macy’s art department doing ads for Saybrook fabrics. But Metzl’s most enduring contribution to Rand’s career was an introduction to George Switzer, which resulted in an apprenticeship with the successful package and industrial designer, whom Rand noted was influenced by progressive French and German designers.

At the time of this introduction, a new breed of self-proclaimed “industrial designer” had already succeeded in convincing major American businesses that they were the white knights of commerce. “Styling the goods”, which is how they described the transformation of old products into new ones by changing their outer skin and packages, was how these designers injected themselves as experts. Switzer ranked just below the acknowledged leaders, Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss and Walter Dorwin Teague, in terms of national notoriety, but in his own right was a respected, award-winning exponent of modern practice with highly visible clients.

Al Switzer’s, Rand was finally on the right trajectory. No longer doing tawdry, piecework, but rather designing handsome packages for Hormell meats and daily newspaper advertisement for Squibb, the pharmaceutical company, he was able to put the dictum “less is more” into practice in layouts there were functionally elegant and conceptually astute. He accumulated a very impressive portfolio for someone of his age. The work was not radical - he had not yet created a design idiom out of whole cloth - but it was skillful, imaginative and clean enough (a real virtue amid the clutter of the times) to prove that he had special abilities. Rand was, nevertheless, convinced that the quality of his work was not enough to guarantee and his success.

During the 1930s the sons of immigrants filled many of the bullpens and art departments in advertising agencies and industrial design firms, while the majority of the account executives, vice presidents and presidents were drawn from America’s dominant Protestant class. Executives belonged to an exclusive club that hobnobbed with clients who belonged to the same club; there was a gentleman’s agreement that Jews need not apply. Ms was not, of course, unique to the advertising or design industries, and it was common for many different professionals to change or shorten ethnic surnames in order to fit in - or at least not

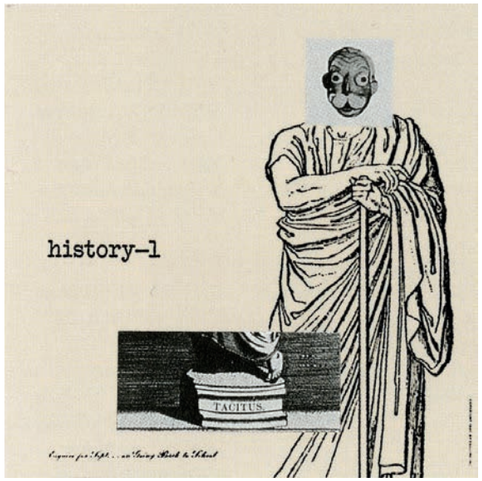
stand out. Convinced by friends that an overtly Jewish to of name might he an impediment to getting meaningful work, Rand reluctantly changed his name. Morris Wyszogrod explained it thus:
«...he start looking for jobs, going for studio to studio, and they said, "What's your name?" And he would say, "Rosenbaum." And they would ask, "What's your first name?" And he was afraid to say Peretz, so he said, "Paul." He remember that an uncle in the family was named Rand. So he figured that "Paul Rand", four letters here, four letters there, would create a nice symbol. So he became Paul Rand.»

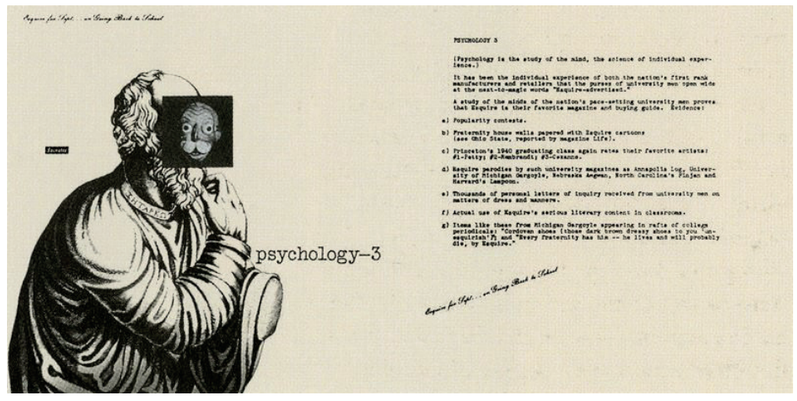
Steven Heller, "Paul Rand", London, Phaidon Press, 1999

«A salesman from a graphic arts house was in the other day with nothing apparently on his mind. Queried, he said, "My boss says the great Paul Rand works here, and I thought I might get a look at him." Just then Rand swept through the room. Asked if he was impressed, the salesman said, "But he's so young."»

"Paul Rand", The Insider, September 1939

Paul Rand, 1937
This portait was taken when Rand was working for Esquire as an art director





Top:
Esquire, brochure, 1940
Rand combined his editorial and advertising skills to produce special isuueand promotional pieces for the Chicago based Esquire/Coronet publishing company. In this 'going back to school' promotion he used the Eskie trademark in photomontages and typewriter type for the text copy

Esquire, Apparel Arts and Direction

Rand's mature visual persona

On the strength of his Switzer work, in 1936 Rand was hired as a freelancer to help produce additional layouts for an anniversary issue of Apparel Arts, a popular men's fashion magazine owned by the Chicago based Esquire/Coronet company, with offices in New York. Here Rand proved he had an extraordinary talent for transforming otherwise mundane still-life photographs into dynamic compositions, which did not merely decorate but gave editorial weight to the page. This feat earned him a full-time position in the Esquire bullpen, and, although he wasn't particularly interested its fashion, he was stimulated by the formal challenges of organizing and juxtaposing suds diverse material into a unified whole. He designed many of the special fashion and gift feature with a flair that was exceptional for this magazine, where undistinguished layouts were the norm. On his merits, after less than a year, he was plucked right out of the bullpen and offered the job of art director of special features. To the management's dismay, Rand refused the job, saying, "I'm not ready to be an art director".

Rand was not so much intimidated cautious. He was about five foot, seven inches tall, he had an impish baby face with a pug nose, and was at least a generation younger than everyone else in the art department. Although he was a more talented designer, he still had a lot to learn about both design and Esquire before he could command the others' respect. "I just preferred to do the work," he explained about this decision to continue his education.

What really made Esquire's managers intent on promoting Rand was the meticulous attention to detail that gave him design fluency and total command over the material. His will to succeed forced Rand to master as much technical skill as possible. "I went to the photographer and I'd lay out all the merchandise," he said, describing a routine day. "Sometimes there were as many as 150 items on one page. Instead of taking individual shots of 150 items, I laid them all out on the camera so that only four shots were necessary." He would then put a tissue on the ground plane of the camera, and divide the layout into four units. All the big things, such as baggage and suits, were in the back, and in the front was all the jewellery. Each piece was carefully laid out to accommodate the camera's depth of field. Often he worked well into the morning, adding: "I left work at five o'clock, went to the photographer, worked all night long, and then went home in the morning, or went back to the office. I remember going back once, and sat down outside the boss' office, waiting for him to come in at 7 o'clock. Boy, was he was amazed to see me." He was proud of his stamina, and his devotion

to work remained with him throughout his life.
Rand's hybrid of editorial and advertising — or what one admiring critic referred to as a display window layout — was what distinguished his work from other fashion magazine layouts, which usually showed either drawn or photographed models. Even Esquire's editorial features, which were designed by other designers at the main office located in the Palmolive Building in Chicago, were much more ordinary, without the hint of creative forethought. "Paul's editorial spreads were glorified ads," explains Frank Zachary, the former editor of Portfolio in the late 194os and art director of Holiday magazine during the 1950s and 1960s. "Rather than present the material without any spin on it, Paul would always give it an inflection." He often designed double-page spreads as if they were surrealistic paintings. After a year of producing impressive fashion pages, Rand finally accepted the job as art director of Esquire's New York office, where he also designed Esquire's seasonal promotional features and Ken, a short-lived political magazine. There was not yet a distinctive Paul Rand look, but a particular formal vocabulary was evidenced in the Esquire layouts as well as the covers designed for Apparel Arts.

Rand's Apparel Arts covers bore no resemblance to other mass-market magazines, including Esquire itself, which was illustrated with clay models of Eskie (the magazine's haughty mascot) engaged in mildly lascivious act. With Apparel Arts what began for Rand as "chalk salads", loose (but realistic) drawings of men in Homburgs and raincoats, evolved into witty collages, montages, and dramatically cropped photographs, unburdened by cover lines. During this period nearly all mass-market magazine covers relied on comic or romantic representational paintings laden with hard-sell cover lines. Photography was rarely used, with the notable exception of Life with its strong single, tightly cropped photograph. Rand's designs, however, relied more on the surprising juxtaposition of cut-and-paste images than overt narratives. Each cover conveyed a rebus-like message, either about the particular season of the year or the special theme of the issue. It was up to the viewer to decipher the visual elements. Although this method was unconventional, for it relied on intelligence of the viewer, it was never so extreme that Rand's editors were afraid of being too different. He earned their trust and they gave him a long leash.

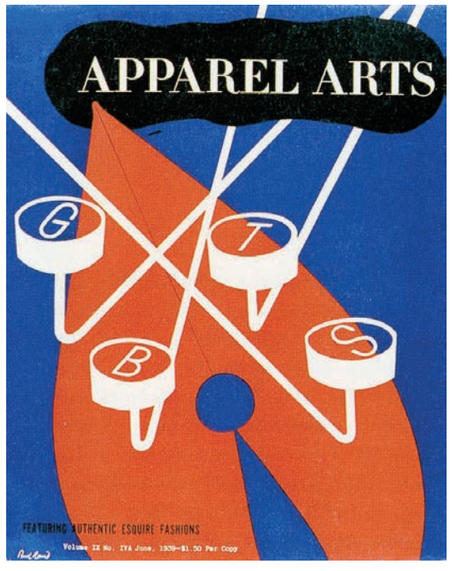
Left:
Summer, interior page for Apparel Arts, 1936
Influenced by the European Moderns, Rand made collages which, to him, were "not imitations of reality but rather juxtaposed pieces of different reality" that engaged the viewer in the creative process

For Rand's part, he was not irresponsible but rather stubbornly opposed to following ephemeral trends. A few year earlier he had read an article in the July 1930 Commercial Art, a translation of Jan Tschichold's introduction to The New Typography, retitled "New Life in Print", which introduced him to modern designers whose work would continue to celebrate throughout his life: Piet Zwart, Kurt Schwitters, El Lissitky, Max Burchartz, Ladislav Sutnar, Walter Dexel, Wilhelm Defke and Moholy-Nagy. Afterwards, he fell totally under the spell of The New Typography, which continued to inspire him to venture into more sophisticated realms of modern graphic design. Rand embraced Tschichold's dogma concerning modern typography — including the preference for machine-made over hand-made processes, functionality over ornament, asymmetry our symmetry, and so on.

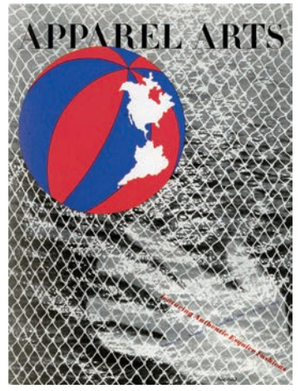
Designer T. M. Cleland declared in a talk before the American Institute of Graphic Arts, which was later published as a pamphlet entitled Harsh Words that the embarrassing ineptitude of current efforts toward a "new typography" is even more distressing than similar contortions in other fields. He referred to modernistic fashion, yet by the late 1930s emigrants fleeing the Nazis were bringing with them real examples of Dada, Constructivism and the Bauhaus to the United States, and a few Americans were also beginning to engage seriously with European influences. Most notably, Lester Beall proffered the Modern approach that fused both Cubist and Dada aesthetic by combining photographic fragments and discordant typefaces on posters and advertisements. By the early 1940s Alvin Lustig further imbued such notion of form and space found in Surrealism and Dada in his book jacket design.
The aim of knocking the eye off centre was found in progressive culture and arts magazine, such as Broom, The Little Review and View, where Modern aesthetic were show-case. But between 1937 and 1938 Rand was putting into practice, and therefore setting a standard for, a variant of Modernism that was not merely a sampling of foreign influences, but rather a synthesis of European formalism and design philosophy fused with American vernacular — function and wit — which ultimately became Rand's signature. In addition to his long hours spent on the Esquire job, Rand also freelanced for a variety of clients, usually accepting meagre fees in order to get his thoughts on design seen and accepted. Rand believed that his design ideas were meaningless if they went unfulfilled. "In a country that was used to decorative work, I realized that as a matter of common sense one way to have my approach accepted was to do it for free." In 1938 he accepted what was to be his most important commission to date from Marguerite Tjader Harris, the daughter of a wealthy munitions manufacturer and publisher of Direction, a cultural magazine with a left-wing slant and anti-fascist bias. After seeing the article in PM she asked Rand to design some covers. The fee was negligible, but the offer of creative freedom (and eventual-

Below:
Apparel Arts, cover,
July/August 1938
Rand was hired in 1936 as a freelancer to help produce layours for an anniversary issue of Apparel Arts. In this issue he revealed his talent for transforming ordinary photographs into dynamic compositions

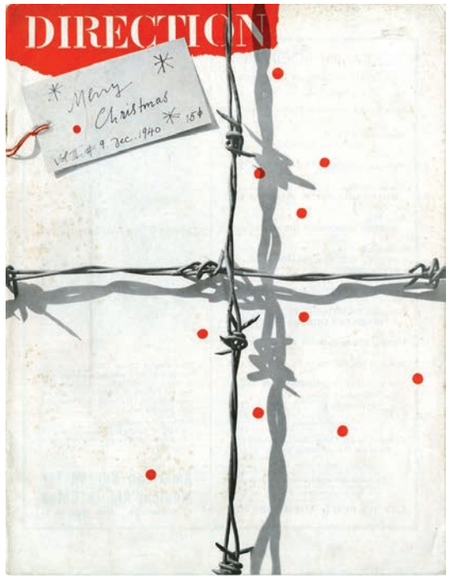
Below left:
Apparel Arts, cover,
June 1939
Although he did not think of himself as a "fashion magazine" designer, Rand's earliest cover designs challenged the cliches of fashion art



Below right:
Apparel Arts, cover,
April/May 1941
Rand juxtaposed a ball/globe, net and hand and trasformend ordinary images into unique whole in this summer issue



Below left:
Direction, cover
March 1939
Direction covers were designed by Rand between 1938 and 1945, resulting in a good showing of diverse methods and concerns



Below middle:
Direction, cover
December 1940
The covers created for this small anti-fascist, left-learning magazine of art and culture represent Rand's most experimental period. In the spirit of the European avant-garde, Rand played with drawing, collage and lettering, trascending the conventions of mass magazine cover design. In this issue, what appears to be a Christmas package is tied with a barbed-wire ribbon

Below right:
Direction, cover
Winter 1942
Rand made a trenchant anti-Nazi statement in this freehand drawing of a rat with Hitler's iconic moustache

ly a few original Le Corbusier drawings) was too enticing to refuse. The Direction covers that Rand produced from 1938 to 1945 expanded upon the vocabulary that he began with the Apparel Arts covers, only now he was dealing with more substantive content.

His first Direction cover, symbolizing Nazi Gerinanv's vivisection of Czechoslovakia, was a cut-out of a map of the imperilled nation photographed on a copy camera against a white background. It is lit so that a slight shadow gives the illusion of three dimensions, while two intersecting bars carve the map apart, suggesting the lines of German annexation. Rand once explained that this cover "pinpoints the distinction between abstract design without content and abstract design with content. You can be a great manipulator of form, but if the solution is not apt, it's for the birds." Likewise, the 1940 Christmas cover shows pieces of barbed wire criss-crossing the image area like gift ribbon, with little red circles symbolizing drops of blood randomly placed. This cover was an acerbic commentary on the conflagration that was just about to engulf the world. Another politically charged cover, dated Winter 1942, showed that Rand had not given up drawing altogether. A simple pen-and-ink sketch of a rat with Hitler's iconic moustache proved that minimal lines could evoke maximum emotion. "The Direction cover, the one with the rat-face of Hitler, was a pretty nice drawing," he admitted; "I hated to do it because I hate rats and I hated Hitler. But this was a rat with a Hitler moustache."

Economy was the mother of Rand's inventions in more ways than one. Since his fees for Direction covers were low and his allow expenses nil, he did his own photography on a copy camera at the engraver's plant and used a handwritten scrawl to eliminate the need for costly typesetting. This seemingly ad hoc execution of Rand's ideas is why his Direction covers are as fresh today as when they were published over sixty years ago. There was no comparison at the time even between other artists' Direction covers in term of formal or conceptual invention. Yet Rand played down their originality, saying that they were influenced by Picasso and Surrealism, and were homages to the avant-garde arts magazines Verve and Minotaure. "When I was doing the cover of Direction I was trying to compete with the Bauhaus, not with Norman Rockwell," he added; "I was trying to do it in the spirit." Homage or not, the Direction covers marked the beginning of Rand's mature visual persona.

Steven Heller, "Paul Rand", London, Phaidon Press, 1999

The Visionary Advertiser

Advertising

How Paul Rand was introduced to advertising

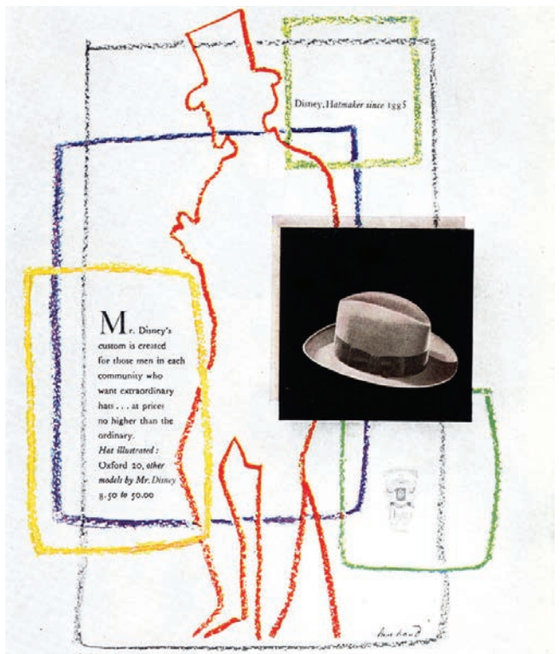
The advertising work that would skyrocket Rand to the top of his profession began to take shape while he was in the Esquire bullpen. As a loss leader used to snare advertisers, Esquire's management offered the services of its designers to prospective clients who were not tied to any agencies — and Rand often drew the short straw. One of these jobs was for Abe Spinnell, the eccentric owner of Playtex and inventor of its latex products. Rand designed ads using Futura type instead of the so-called "perfume scripts" that were common to lingerie advertising at the time. This minor deviation from the norm thrilled Spinnell because it immediately set his message apart from the others by symbolizing the product's newness. He gave Rand additional freelance work and routinely summoned him to his thirty-fifth floor office in the Empire State Building for meetings.
"He gave me a chair in front of his desk and had me sketch ideas right on the spot" Rand recalled about the advertisements that earned him $8 to $10 a piece and a sandwich from Longchamps restaurant. But he was also given a freedom that most advertising designers never knew. "For those prices," he added flip-

pantly, “Spinnell had no choice.”
Although Rand’s design solutions departed from time-worn verities, he was careful not to compromise the image of the product. He stayed within the bounds of what Raymond Loewy once described, referring to his own work, as MAYA: “Most Advanced Yet Acceptable”. The ads sold Playtex effectively and efficiently – but they were also simpler looking, and it turn more eye-catching, than typical advertisements, “I knew that other guys (in the agencies) weren’t doing this,” Rand admitted with ingenuous modesty, “but I never thought it was any great achievement, because I was just doing what they were doing in Europe.”
By the end of the 1930s, when Rand started to produce advertising in earnest, the ad industry was building a renewed head of steam after the sluggish days of Depression. Shortly before the United States entry into the Second World War American companies were spending larger sums to advertise their products. And by the opening day of the 1939 New York World’s Fair, dubbed the “World of Tomorrow”, which symbolically marked the end of the Great Depression, American industry was celebrating itself as a force for progress. [...]
[...] Three years at Esquire was just about enough for the restless twenty-seven-year-old Rand, so when Weintraub offered him the job of chief art director of the fledgling agency, he accepted without a moment’s deliberation. The only prerequisite was that he be given the mandate to run the art department and direct the design of the campaigns without interference. Weintraub appreciated Hand’s artistic temperament and sought the unique virtues he demonstrated at Esquire/Coronet, so he agreed to these terms.Within a year Rand had made a mark.

“Paul was the creative revolution” explains Onofrio Paccione, who in the early 1950s was an art director at Weintraub working on the Revlon account and afterwards founded his own agencies. “He was the guy who started this whole thing, and people forget that! It was like Cézanne; and after Cézanne came Braque and Picasso and they went on to [invent] Cubism. But it all originated with Cézanne. We [art directors in the 1950s] took a lot of the things that Rand did, because brought ideas and intelligence to advertising where before him there was no semblance of thought.”

At the outset, Rand hired a comparatively small staff of art assistants, some direct from the Esquire bullpen. Later on he named a few of these as associate art directors on particular accounts. But he rarely delegated any of the conceptual work, preferring to conceive virtually everything himself (unless it was an account that he had absolutely no interest in handling). This was uncommon in ad agencies, where assembly-line delegation was the rule and quality was the first casualty. Yet Rand claimed that his orientation had nothing to do with advertising, “except an awareness that you’re not doing museum stuff, and whatever

Paul Rand at work



Top left:
The Architectural Forum,
advertisement, 1945

Top right:
Bab-O Cleanser,
billboard in New York of 24-sheet

Below right:
Disney Hats,
advertisements, 1947-9
Paul Rand developed a mascot from a nineteenth-century painting of a sartorially splendid, top-hatted gentleman who was ever-present, but shared the stage with the product. Over the course of this campaign Rand essentially manipulated three elements: the mascot, hats and squares and rectangles that framed the other elements and evoked a sense of modernity

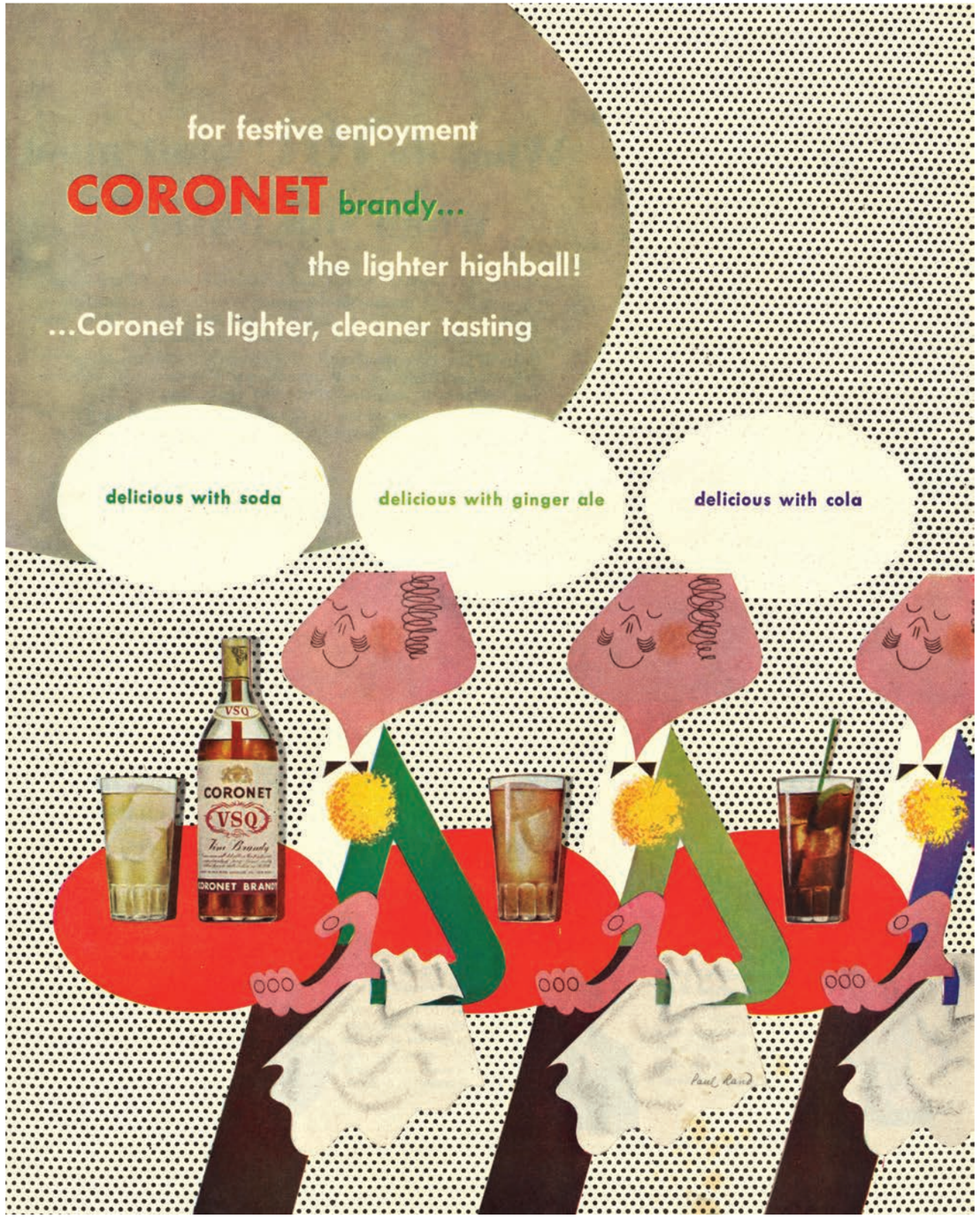
you're doing should communicate, so the guy in the street should know what the heck you're trying to sell."
He, therefore, ran Weintraub's art department according to his own vision - which was an anomaly in the industry.
Prior to the early 1940s very few American advertisements were specifically designed per se, but were composed by a boardman, who followed templates, formats and styles that made one ad look more or less like the next. Copywriters reigned supreme, and layouts were dictated by the length of the copy. In many cases the copywriters imposed rough sketches on the layout artists, who simply finessed them. This convention was total anathema to Rand. He asserted that advertising composition was a design problem; the message was best conveyed through a marriage of text and image articulated through the layout, and only the designer was responsible for that function.
Helen Federico, who worked in the Weintraub art department from 1943 to 1951, recalls: "Paul's inner need for quality was always present. And the copywriters and the account executives were the arch-enemy, because the account executives wanted to please the client at all costs, and the copywriters were committed to wordy headlines, sub-headlines, sub-sub-headlines, and then a whole bunch of garbage down at the bottom. Paul was always having arguments with them, and rightly so. There was a lot of shouting. But he pretty much won, because Weintraub realized what a treasure he had."
To the consternation of many of the advertising veterans who were also hired by Weintraub, Rand took pleasure in tearing up their layouts and otherwise flexing his muscle. He exhibited little patience and was often dismissive, even rude, to those who attempted to impose their own will. He explained his philosophy simply: "I was not going to let myself be treated like a job printer on Pitkin Avenue."
Had Rand complied, mediocrity would certainly have prevailed. The Weintraub Agency specialized in mass-market product advertising, not the corporate genre that N. W. Ayer was known for (i.e. the Container Corporation), which conveyed a more institutional message about a corporate philosophy and was, therefore, easier to design in an abstract or sophisticated manner. On the contrary, these were hard-selling pitches that appeared in weekly magazines and daily newspapers aimed at moving products off the shelves. Rand noted that most good designers did trademarks or posters, "and not posters for cornflakes, either," but he believed that design was design, regardless of purpose, and he possessed a keen ability to create smart-looking advertising for the most run-of-the-mill commodities. "I'm not saying that it was great," he would argue, "but I did a lot of mass-market stuff, which very few good designers did. They just never got a chance. What agency guy, in fact what client, would let you do it well?"
What Rand accomplished in pages for Disney Hats or Schenley Liquors or Air-Wick air freshener, compared to other agencies more mundane

product advertisements for clothing, beverages or household products, exhibited the same contrast between his Direction and other mainstream magazine covers.
He redefined the problem and customized solution that forced alternative perceptions not only on the client but on the audience. He realized, for example, that a newspaper ad had to compete with a large number of other graphic elements — headlines, pictures, rules, borders, and so on — on the same and/or opposite pages, and that consequently there were two ways of addressing the problem. Either design an ad that screamed much louder, or situate an ad within a frame of empty space and considerably turn down the typographic volume. He reasoned that the latter — a more elegant approach — would compete more effectively in the presence of the conformity that prevailed. The audience may indeed feel more comfortable with the tried and true, but it is more likely to be aroused by the new and different. Moreover, as an artist he preferred the creative options of working with modern sans serif typefaces (even typewriter type) and abstract forms in asymmetrical configurations, rather than central axis layouts with strained novelty faces. In addition, by using montage rather than detailed renderings he found ways to create (and control) serendipitous imagery. Even Rand's own childlike drawings were more unexpected than the typical advertising fare.

Steven Heller, "Paul Rand", Phaidon Press, 1999

"From a long-range standpoint, the interests of business and art are not opposed. The former could perhaps survive without the latter, for a time; but art is a vital form of that creative activity which makes any kind of growth possible. We are deluged with speeches, articles, books, and slogans warning us that our very survival as free nations depends on growth and progress–economic, scientific, technological. The kind of climate that fosters original work represents an over-all attitude, a general commitment to values that uphold and encourage the artist as well as the scientist and the businessman."

By Paul and Ann Rand, originally published in 1960 in a special issue if Daedalus: The Visual Arts Today, edited by Gyorgy Kepes (Winter 1960)



California grape brandy, 84 proof. Schenley Distillers Corp., New York

Posters

Paul Rand's idea of poster

The essence of the "art of the poster" is not a matter of literal content nor technique but one of creating visual ideas appropriate to the medium. Countless so-called posters are not in fact posters at all- they are merely enlarged illustrations which ignore the fundamental functional considerations of size, distant viewing, and speed of the viewer which should be the determinant of poster design. By demanding that the poster be simple, bold, and striking these factors distinguish the poster unequivocally from the illustration which, like a miniature or easel painting, is intended for close and leisurely inspection and can therefore be complex and subtle. Unfortunately where it has been recognized that a poster must be immediately and potently attractive this has been widely interpreted to mean a blow up of a "pretty girl" or the rendering of a fantastically elongated motor car. It has been forgotten that color and design are the basic elements of attraction in the same sense that flags, pennants, flowers, bright fabrics, and heraldic devices are the age old means of dramatization and advertisement. Clearly the appeal of these purely plastic elements cannot be calculated by surveys, polls, and pulse takers; therefore in this age of reverence for statistics it is apt to be ignored or lightly dismissed. Hence, the poster becomes formulized into the above mentioned pretty girl plus product or oversized product plus label. Consequently to see one poster is to see all, and the prime and crucial factor in poster design is flouted - i.e. sensory appeal.

A poster must attract as quickly and boldly as a banner and excite sensations of pleasure and interest in the observer. This the standardized poster cannot do but it can and does succeed in boring the observer with its triteness and vacuous design. A good poster is, however, only half the battle for the best post er if badly displayed cannot only be revitalized but can actually become a visual irritation if it interrupts architectural forms or obtrudes rudely into the landscape. It is unnecessary to remind the reader of the r avages done to city and countryside by the wanton plastering of post ers on every available space. But apparently it is necessary to remind the advertiser who defeats his own purpose by rendering his advertising obnoxious rather than pleasurable.

The placing of the poster and its design should be interdependent. The American poster producer's obsession with size, i.e. 24 sheet, not only leads to monotony but makes the post er difficult to place

The virtues of the small post er are overlooked and 24 sheet billboards are post ed in alleyways or along sidewalks where the small size poster is obviously more practicable. Likewise the flexibility of the small poster is not appreciated, for instance it can be shown not only single but r epeated within larger frames - a device widely and effectively used in Europe and one which by creating a repetitive pattern, can render even a mediocre poster exciting. Furthermore the small poster being ideally suited for peripatetic inspection, can be displayed with great impact if instead of being haphazardly pasted on walls it is exhibited within an appropriate architectural framework - for example the cylindrical kiosk. This kiosk which is found all over Europe is worth special mention because it can combine competing posters. Its circular form permits each poster to be viewed in comparative isolation and, because it is not merely an effective sidewalk display device, it makes a positive contribution to the gayety and architectural beauty of the urban scene.

In America isolated efforts have been made to correlate the poster with its setting as for instance in subway advertising where size and spacing of posters is controlled. If these efforts multiply, and the quality of poster design improves, outdoor advertising could easily become a pleasure to the community as well as an effective advertising medium.

By Paul Rand, originally published in "Posters: Fifty artists and designers analyze their approach, their methods, and their solutions to poster design and poster advertising", 1952

Call for Entries!

The Art Directors Club, Inc.
3rd International Exhibition
New York, N.Y. U.S.A.
Deadline: 16 December 1988

MINUTE MAN

Minute Man National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

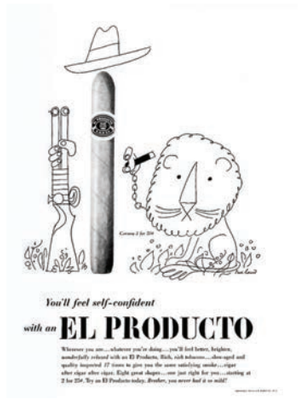
El Producto

One of his most famous works

Perhaps Rand's most emblematic advertising campaign was for El Producto cigars. It was the perfect synthesis of all the modernisms. To animate El Producto, he used many of his own comic line drawings to anthropomorphize the otherwise lifeless cigar. And then on one of El Producto's gift boxed "albums" he took a radical departure from the traditional chromolitho-graphic cigar box label showing beautiful women or historical vignettes, by designing the box top with a photogram. "There was nothing esoteric about it; they were shapes of cigars" he said, illustrating that even his most audacious solution was totally pragmatic. In fact, the trade publication Packaging Parade (February 1952) reported that "Sales, after adoption of new package, were reported higher than ever before and the company reported an unusually high percentage of women customers. Jump in sales was attributed by Mr Rand to "shock value" of a non-plain cigar box. Mr Rand compared livening up of cigar boxes to status of self selling packages with the use of colour, art and display on phonograph albums." As for Rand, this solution was just one of many salvos in his barrage against mediocrity. "A cigar is almost as commonplace as an apple," he wrote in Daedalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Winter 1960), "but if I fail to make ads for cigars that are lively and original, it will not be the cigar that is at fault."

The El product campaign was typical of Rand's modus operandi and consistent with the agency's strategy. Rand developed a logo (or trademark) for virtually every new account prior to designing the advertisement themselves.

El Producto, sketches for advertisement, 1953-7
Rand created well over a hundred of these serial advertisements and in the process gave El Producto a distinctive brand that appealed to the casual as well as the regular cigar smoker. He also attracted the non-mosker who simply wanted to see the vignettes develop from week to week



The iconic device became the touchstone for everything that followed. It further triggered what Rand would later call the "Play Principle", a stream of consciousness used to devise solutions that played off the mark. He quickly became very philosophical about these devices. "A trademark is not merely a device to adorn a letterhead, to stamp on a product, or to inert at the base of an advertisement; nor one whose sole prerogative is to imprint itself by dint of costant repetition on the mind of the consumer public," Rand wrote in The Trademark as an Illustrative Device (1952). The El Producto logo was a stencilled typeface, which echoed the stencils found on bales of tobacco, and the letters were placed in alternating coloured squares for mnemonic effect. Once the logo was in place, the content of the advertisements was developed. With El Producto, line drawings were collaged to photographs of cigars, giving them human-style personalities. Every week a different cigar was featured as a player in a serial comic drama. While the practice of using contiguous narratives in advertising was not new, Rand's method — the serendipitous, sketchy quality — was at the time both unique and alluring. Rand once boasted that it took him less than a day to draw thirty gestural images for as many ads. After the campaign got going, it took viewers an instant to recognize the brand.

Steven Heller, "Paul Rand", Londra, Phaidon Press, 1999

Identity

Logos, Flags, and Escutcheons

Here's what a logo is and does:

A logo is a flag, a signature, an escutcheon.
A logo doesn't sell (directly), it identifies.
A logo is rarely a description of a business.
A logo derives its meaning from the quality of the thing it symbolizes, not the other way around.
A logo is less important than the product it signifies; what it means is more important than what it looks like.
A logo appears in many guises: a signature is a kind of logo, so is a flag. The French flag, for example, or the flag of Saudi Arabia, are aesthetically pleasing symbols. One happens to be pure geometry, the other a combination of Arabic script, together with an elegant saber-two diametrically opposed visual concepts; yet both function effectively. Their appeal, however, is more than a matter of aesthetics. In battle, a flag can be a friend or foe. The ugliest flag is beautiful if it happens to be on your side. "Beauty," they say, "is in the eye of the beholder," in peace or in war, in flags or in logos. We all believe our flag the most beautiful; this tells us something about logos.
Should a logo be self-explanatory? It is only by association with a product, a

service, a business, or a corporation that a logo takes on any real meaning.
It derives its meaning and usefulness from the quality of that which it symbolizes. If a company is second rate, the logo will eventually be perceived as second rate. It is foolhardy to believe that a logo will do its job right off, before an audience has been properly conditioned. Only after it becomes familiar does a logo function as intended; and only when the product or service has been judged effective or ineffective, suitable or unsuitable, does it become truly representative.
Logos may also be designed to deceive; and deception assumes many forms, from imitating some peculiarity to outright copying. Design is a two-faced monster. One of the most benign symbols, the swastika, lost its place in the pantheon of the civilized when it was linked to evil, but its intrinsic quality remains indisputable. This explains the tenacity of good design.
The role of the logo is to point, to designate-in as simple a manner as possible. A design that is complex, like a fussy illustration or an arcane abstraction, harbors a self-destruct mechanism. Simple ideas, as well as simple designs are, ironically, the products of mental purposes. Simplicity is difficult to achieve, yet worth the effort.

The effectiveness of a good logo depends on:
a. distinctiveness
b. visibility
c. useability
d. memorability
e. universality
f. durability
g. timelessness

Most of us believe that the subject matter of a logo depends on the kind of business or service involved. Who is the audience? How is it marketed? What is the media? These are some of the considerations. An animal might suit one category, at the same time that it would be an anathema in another. Numerals are possible candidates: 747, 7-Up, 7-11, and so are letters, which are not only possible but most common. However, the subject matter of a logo is of relatively little importance; nor, it seems, does appropriateness always play a significant role. This does not imply that appropriateness is undesirable. It merely indicates that a one-to-one relationship, between

Esquire Magazine, 1938

Dunhill Clothiers, 1947

United Parcel Service (UPS), 1961

Tipton Lakes, 1980

Yale University Press, 1985

Hub TV, 1995

a symbol and what is symbolized, is very often impossible to achieve and, under certain conditions, may even be objectionable. Ultimately, the only thing mandatory, it seems, is that a logo be attractive, reproducible in one color and in exceedingly small sizes.
The Mercedes symbol, for example, has nothing to do with automobiles; yet it is a great symbol, not because its design is great, but because it stands for a great product. The same can be said about apples and computers. Few people realize that a bat is the symbol of authenticity for Bacardi Rum; yet Bacardi is still being imbibed. Lacoste sportswear, for example, has nothing to do with alligators (or crocodiles), and yet the little green reptile is a memorable and profitable symbol. What makes the Rolls Royce emblem so distinguished is not its design (which is commonplace), but the quality of the automobile for which it stands. Similarly, the signature of George Washington is distinguished not only for its calligraphy, but because George Washington was Washington. Who cares how badly the signature is scribbled on a check, if the check doesn't bounce? Likes or dislikes should play no part in the problem of identification; nor should they have anything to do with approval or disapproval.
Utopia! All this seems to imply that good design is superfluous. Design, good or bad, is a vehicle of memory. Good design adds value of some kind and, incidentally, could be sheer pleasure; it respects the viewer-his sensibilities-and rewards the entrepreneur. It is easier to remember a well designed image than one that is muddled. A well design logo, in the end, is a reflection of the business it symbolizes. It connotes a thoughtful and purposeful enterprise, and mirrors the quality of its products and services. It is good public relations-a harbinger of good will.

It says "We care."

By Paul Rand, published in 1991 by AIGA, the professional association for design.

NeXT

What should a logo for NeXT look like?

Choosing a typeface as the basis for the design of a logo is a convenient starting point. Here are two examples: Caslon and Bifur. Caslon is an alphabet designed as far back as 1725 by William Caslon. It appears to be a good choice because it is both elegant and bookish, qualities well suited for educational purposes.
Bifur, a novelty face by A.M. Cassandre, was designed in 1929. An unconventional but ingenious design, it has the advantage, to some, of visually implying advanced technology. (Attributing certain magical qualities to particular typefaces is, however, largely a subjective matter.)
One reason for looking at a number of possible typefaces is to satisfy one's curiosity. Another, and perhaps more meaningful one, is to study the relationship of different letter combinations, to look for visual analogies, and to try to elicit ideas that the design of a letter or group of letters might inspire.
Here are some further choices, but no matter how one may look at these different examples - sans serifs, hairline and slab serifs, condensed, expanded, bold, light, outline - they still say next... like next time, what's next? next in line, or even next of kin.
The world is in such common usage that it is simply taken for granted.
Personal preferences, prejudices, and stereotypes often dictate what a logo looks like, but it is needs not wants, ideas not type styles that determine what its form should be.
To defamiliarize it, to make it look different, to let it evoke more than the mere adjective or adverb it happens to be is, it seems, the nub of the problem.
Set in all capitals, the word NEXT is sometimes confused with EXIT, possibly because the EXT group is so dominant. A combination of capitals and lowercase letters helps to circumvent this problem.
Here are some possibilities that explore the use of lowercase letters. The e is differentiated so as to provide a focal point and visual contrast amidst the straight and stalwart capital letters.
Happily, the e also could stand for: education, excellence, expertise, exceptional, excitement, e=mc^2, etc.
Note the difference that the lowercase e makes when

NeXT, logos, 1986

compared with the capital E. By means of contrast, both interest and readability are achieved. This is particularly noticeable in the illustration at the bottom.
These simple, geometric letters make it easier to exploit and manipulate possible visual ideas than do more complex, serifed letters.
Ideally, a logo should explain or suggest the business it symbolizes, but this is rarely possible or even necessary. There is nothing about the IBM symbol, for example, that suggests computers, except what the viewer reads into it. Stripes are now associated with computers because the initials of a great computer company happen to be striped. This is equally true of the ABC symbol, which does not suggest TV. The mnemonic factors in both logos are graphic devices.
In this example the e is the mnemonic element.
A logo takes on meaning only if over a period of time it is linked to some product or service of a given organization. What is needed is a meaningful divide, some idea that reinforces the memorability of the company name. A black cube, in which the product happens to be housed, can be such a device because it has certain visual presence and is easy to remember. Unlike the word next, it is deportable and possesses the "promise of meaning and the pleasure of recognition".
This device in no way restricts its application to any one product or concept.
The three-dimensional effect functions as an underscore and helps to attract the viewer's attention.
It is desirable to keep the letter style simple, unmannered, and untrendy so as not to distract from the cube concept. Furthermore, the use of a single identification device and simple sans serifs letter, designed to harmonize with almost any accompanying typeface, is essential for practical application. Whenever possible, double identification (name plus symbol) is the best avoided. The brevity of the world NeXT and its containment within the framework of the cube obviates he need for such awkward devices.
Splitting the logo into two lines accomplishes several things: it startles the viewer and gives the world a new look, making it easier to separate from common usage. Even more important, it increases the letter size, and hence the readability, twofold within the framework of the cube.
For small reproductions, a one-line logo would have been

much less legible within this same framework.
Readability is hardly affected because the word is too simple to be misread.
Moreover, people have become accustomed to this stacking format with such familiar four letter combination.
In this design, color arrangement, and orientation the logo is a study in contrasts.
Tipped at a jaunty angle, it brims with the informality, friendliness, and spontaneity of a Christmas seal and the authority of a rubber stamp. Together with its lively black silhouette it becomes a focal point difficult for the eyes to avoid.
The unconventional yet dignified array of colors - vermillion against cerise and green, and yellow against black (the most intense color contrast possible) - is designed to appeal to a youthful audience and to add a sparkling, jewel-like touch to paper, package, or machine. It is the sparing use of brilliant colors on a predominantly black ground that produces this effect, like stairs in the sky.
In itself a decorative and self-contained device, the logo does not depend on extraneous embellishment or fancy backgrounds for its many varies applications.
Poised at an angle of twenty-eight degrees, the black cube - even without color - is equally effective for black and white reproduction.

By Paul Rand, from the NeXT logo presentation booklet, 1986.

"A logo takes on meaning only if over a period of time it is linked to some product or service of a given organization. What is needed is a meaningful divide, some idea that reinforces the memorability of the company name."

NeXT, page from presentation booklet, 1986

IBM

What is the IBM look?

The question, "What is the IBM look?" is often asked. "Is it possible in today's crowded marketplace to distinguish the graphic design of one company from that of another?" is a further question. The response to such a questions is never simple, and becomes more difficult if the subject involved is a large corporation which, in itself, is a bundle of complexities. A company which produces a multitude of highly sophisticated products, maintains widespread facilities, in countries of different cultures, languages, traditions, and temperaments, demands a means of communication which is universally understood.

However, there's more to the "look" of a company than meets the eye. The look is a synthesis of many responses, perceptual, emotional, and mental difficult to describe.

There are two aspects to every viewing problem:

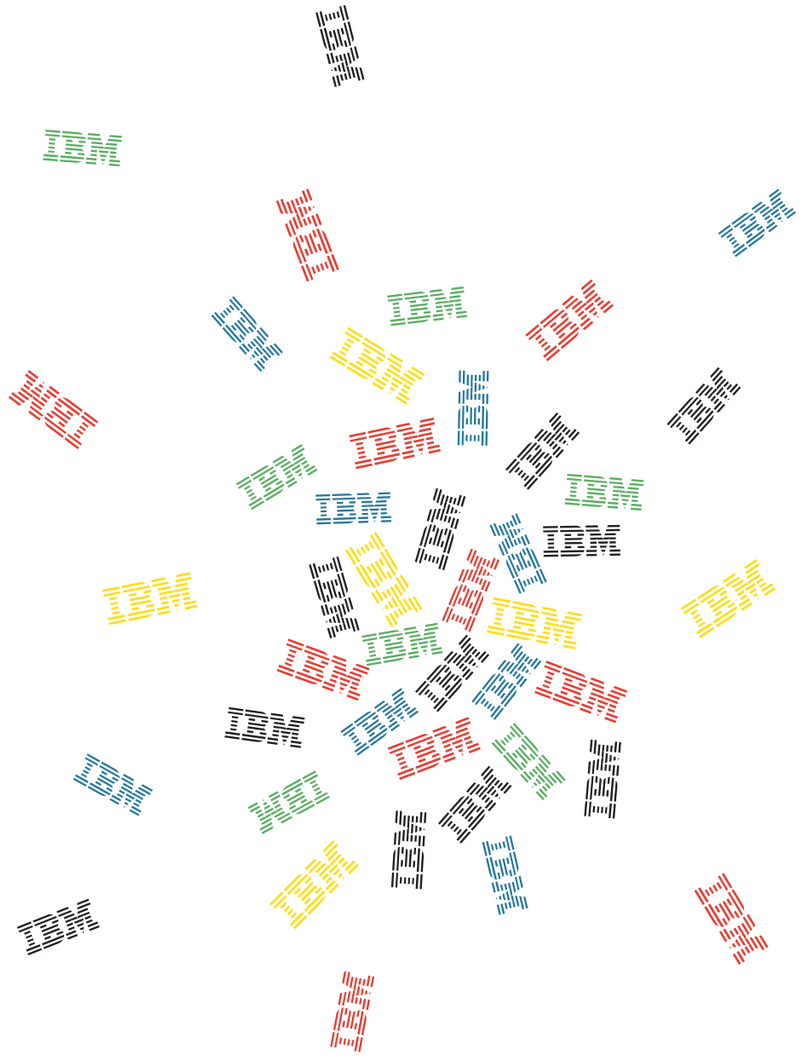
On the one hand, there is the viewer, and on the other, that which is being viewed. Tradition, experience, education, habits, and prejudices are some of the subjective factors which color the opinions of a viewer.

The quality of a product, company efficiency, employer relations, advertising practices are, on the other hand, some of the external factors affecting what is being looked at. Creating an effective corporate image is a complex procedure. It involves the explanation of number of possibilities, among them:

1. A unique style of design

A company as complex as IBM depends on the work of a great number of designers in different countries to solve a wide variety of problems.

As individuals as corporations, we are reflect in our behavior and in our appearance the age in which we live. In the age of machine aesthetics and mass culture, of mobility, and accelerated change, the visual arts seem more and more to lean toward the average, the commonplace, rather than the individual, the unique. The emphasis on simple, geometric forms, the absence of ornamentation, and the universal acceptance of certain art forms, tend to aggravate this quality of anonymity. The solution to such problems is to focus on those aspects of a problem which are timeless, which do not change. To find new and unusual visual relationships, unexpected combination and equivalents: to be aware of the difference between process and product, between ends and means; and to avoid the misuse of tools like the computer for pretentious rather than practical purposes, are goals which should be uppermost in the mind of the designer.



The IBM Logo: Its Use in Company Identification, cover from the brochure, 1996

2. The use of a special typeface

Today, good design is universally oriented. In typography, for example, most designers prefer to use the simplified sans serif typefaces and to apply them to an endless variety of products ranging from toothpaste to automobiles. In the beginning of the IBM design program a square serif typeface, called City Medium, was chosen for general use for all graphic problems to provide a basic unifying, typographic link for all IBM visual material, from calling cards to building identification. Designed around 1930, City Medium had received very little exposure up to this time. For this reason, IBM was able almost to "make it its own".

However, because of widespread distribution and exposure, the typeface was quickly taken up by others. Since it no longer served its original function, the use of City Medium as a corporate typeface was discontinued.

In summary, it should be recognized that a distinctive, all purpose typeface is impractical, because it can be easily copied, its life as an effective design tool is rather short. Experience has shown that a special purpose typeface, limited to use only in association with IBM trademark, has proved useful.

3. The recurrent use of distinctive color

There are few instances in which the repetitive use of an overall distinctive color scheme has helped to create a company's visual identity. The Kodak Company is a notable and rare example. Here, however, the product line consists of closely-teated items, all meant to be used somehow in conjunction with each other.

The products are, of course, much more interrelated than those of IBM, whose products range from enormous computers to tiny ribbon packs. Diversified products are difficult to integrate simply by the use of a single color scheme. Much greater latitude in the choice of color schemes is obviously desirable.

4. A distinctive company trademark or logotype

The IBM logotype should not be viewed as a design en-

cumbrance. Nor should it create the impression of having been dictated because of some company regulation. Its use should never appear arbitrary or forced or as more decoration in the absence of genuine ideas. A trademark is most effective when it serves the function assigned to it: to help identify a company or a product.
Flexibility, versatility and adaptability are the principal considerations which determine the form of the IBM logotype. Its gestalt is relatively simple, and its is designed to minimize problems of compatibility with other typefaces. To meet aesthetic and practical requirements and to facilitate fabrication, several styles and weights were developed: solid, outline, and striped.
There are occasions when the IBM logotype is not used. Ordinarily this may be just an oversight, at other times, deliberate avoidance. In keeping with Mies van de Rohe's dictum that less is more, there are instances when the omission of the IBM trademark may be appropriate or even necessary.

5. Continuity
Useless a concept, an idea, a color, a shape, or a symbol is repeated with some regularity, it is less apt to be remembered or associated with any particular entity. It should, however, be noted that even though repetition is the concomitant of recognition. It may, under certain conditions, contribute to a sense of boredom. The ability to cope with this difficulty, to discover new combinations and new variations, and to sustain spectator interest distinguishes the professional from the novice.
The understanding and the ability to do good design is a prerequisite in resolving this problem of company identification. The awareness of good design and its encouragement is encumbent on management. Except for the rare occasions when corrections are made for mechanical or optical reasons, it is essential that the letter-spacing and basic silhouette of the logotype not be altered in any way. Care should also be exercised when the logotype is used to contain an illustrative device of some kind. Here are some examples of what not to do with the IBM logotype.

6. Quality
The meaning of quality is different to define, for it is somehow intuited in the presence of the work in which it is embodied.
This has little to do with popular conceptions of the

Right:
Eye, Bee, M, poster, 1981.
Rand designed this rebus as an announcement for the in-house IBM event, The Golden Circle Award

beauty or style, and has nothing to do with status, respectability, or extravagance. It is revealed, rather, in an atmosphere of propriety and restrain. Quality deals with the judicious weighing of relationships, with balance, contrast, harmony, juxtaposition between formal and functional elements — their transformation and enrichment. Further, it is concerned with ideas not techniques, with the enduring not the ephemeral, with precision not fussiness, with simplicity not vacuity, with subtle not blatancy, with sensibility not sentimentality.
Whenever the emphasis be on graphics, industrial design or architecture, what we are chiefly concerned with is the quality of company identification, for this is essentially what the IBM look is about.

By Paul Rand, from "IBM Design Guide, House Style", May 1972.

Color

A Designer's art

Black in the Visual Arts

Taboos and prejudices have long created limiting barriers to experimentation and to meaningful work in the graphic arts. In this paper I should like to attack one particular prejudice—that against the color black.

"Vowels: black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O, Someday I shall name the birth from which you rise: A, a black furry corset of loud flies Boiling where the cruel stenches flow..."

In these lines the French poet, Rimbaud, uses the word black to describe and symbolize carnality, death, and decay. This traditional association of the color black with death and sin is long standing and has led to the widespread conviction in both art and lay circles that black is depressing and sinister and therefore, if possible, must be avoided. As a result, the power and usefulness of black has been limited or misunderstood. During this century many individual artists, architects, and designers have rebelled against the conventio-

nal use and misuse of black. However, the prejudices against this color are still sufficientlystrong to require a discussion of the properties of black and a vigorous defense of its many virtues. In nature, black and its companion color white are dramatically juxtaposed in the contrast between day and night.

The monotony of uninterrupted darkness or light would be intolerable. Black in the trunks of trees subtly sets off the brilliance of green or autumn-colored leaves. Throughout nature we find the equivalent of black and white in shadow and light—there are caves and canyons as well as fields and meadows. Man as a rule does the least violence to nature when he uses either natural materials, such as stone or wood, or black and white for the objects he places out of doors. Natural colors are integrated, white participates by reflecting its environmental color, and black modestly provides perfect background for the riotous nature colors. Certainly those people who observed with pleasure the old-fashioned black steam engine wind its way agreeably through green fields and forests, have watched with a kind of horror the orange or blue streamliner that now streaks garishly across the countryside. It should be noted that it is impossible to discuss black without mentioning or implying white, grays, and dark umbers the greater part of the time.

The decidedly ambivalent nature of black has been understood in daily use. In the east and southwest of the United States and in Europe black is by far the most popular color for pleasure vehicles, but it is also the color of the hearse. In clothes black is the color of tragedy, mourning. At the same time it is the color of elegance and of sensuous enjoyment in the conventionally “sexy” black lingerie.

If we look further into the psychological significance of black, it is linked with mystery, with death which is unknowable, with night which is full of hidden things — of fear and magic.
In some countries black or near-black has been employed extensively in architecture and interior design. The color pattern of the Japanese house is based on the contrasting use of dark and light materials. Dark wood often delineates the basic structure of the house and separates it aesthetically from the light colored partition walls (fusuma) and floor mats (tatami).

The first of my illustrations (A) shows a building designed by Mies van der Rohe in which black is a crucial aesthetic factor. The structural members of this steel building are exposed and painted black. The effect of this is manifold: the structure is clearly defined, it is placed in dramatic contrast to the pale non-bearing brick walls, the bulk of its members is reduced making them appear light and delicate, great elegance is achieved without the use of expensive materials or decoration, and the restraint and restfulness of black makes the building a welcome oasis in the chaotic heart of the city.
It is, of course, understood that like any color the value of black depends upon the manner in which it is used. Black will be lugubrious or bright and elegant depending on its context and form. Despite the successful use of black in Japan and in modern buildings and interiors there are still many people who deny black categorically.
A doctor writing on the use of color in interiors issues a grim warning against black: “This is the most dismal of all colors—it expresses all that is opposite to white.” Among these opposites he lists the grave, sin, and crime.

This type of blanket denunciation of a color completely ignores the relative nature of any color or form. Eisenstein writing about the film says: “Even within the limitations of a color-range of black and white... one of these tones not only evades being given a single ‘value’ as an absolute image, but can even assume absolutely contradictory meanings, dependent only upon the general system of imagery that has been decided upon for the particular film.” He goes on to illustrate this important point by the reversal of the role of black in relation to white in the two films Old and New and Alexander Nevsky. In the former, black signified things reactionary, outdated, and criminal, while white denoted happiness, life, and progress; whereas in Alexander Nevsky white was the color of cruelty, oppression, and death, and black, identified with the Russian warriors, represented heroism and patriotism.

Eisenstein’s response to the surprise and protest of the critics at this reversal of traditional symbolism is to cite Moby Dick’s famous white whale—the reader will recall that the leprous, livid whiteness of this whale symbolized the world’s monstrous and baffling evil.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, black (with some notable exceptions) was treated as a linear element or was associated with modeling and chiaroscuro. Kahnweiler in The Rise of Cubism says: “Since it was the mission of color to create the form as chiaroscuro, or light that had become perceivable, there was no possibility of rendering local color or color itself.” Although Kahnweiler is referring to color in general, this statement applies very forcibly to black. In the twentieth century the possibilities of rendering color as a thing in itself and not primarily as a description of three dimensionality or “objectivated light,” have been rediscovered and exploited. Coincident with this trend, black has come into its own as a positive “plastic” value.

Among the many artists who have used black as a vital element in their work are Rouault, Braque, Miro, Leger, Arp, and Picasso. Beardsley, Masereel, and Posada, for example, have used it almost exclusively.

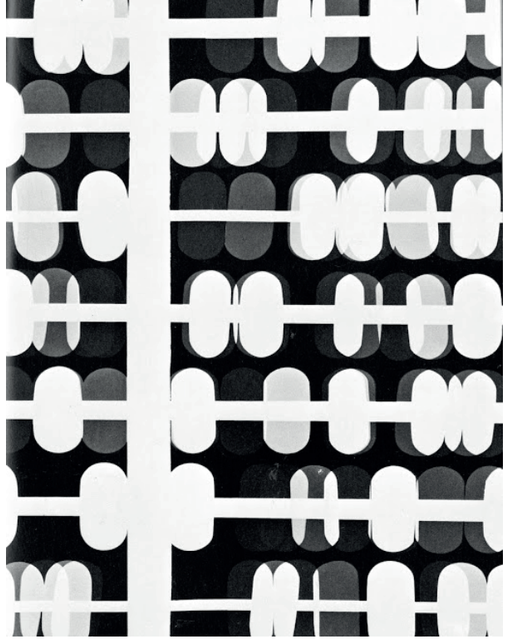
A. A building designed by Mies van der Rohe in which black is a crucial aesthetic factor

B. Arp, describing this painting said, “The black grows deeper and deeper darker and darker before me. It menaces me like a black gullet. I can bear it no longer. It is monstrous.”

Arp, describing his painting reproduced here (B), says:
"The black grows deeper and deeper darker and darker before me. It menaces me like a black gullet. I can bear it no longer. It is monstrous. It is unfathomable. As the thought comes to me to exorcise and. transform this black with a white drawing, it has aheady become a surface. Now I have lost all fear, and begin to draw on the black surface. I draw and dance at once, twisting and winding, a winding, twining soft white flowery round. A round of snakes in a wreath...white shoots this way and that..."
Arp understands that black alone and out of context is frightening, but he also knows its potency once it is formed and related.

Picasso's "Guernica" (C) is eloquent testimony of the expressive power of black and its natural companions gray and white. Although we do not know the intentions of the artist, we can venture a few statements about the more obvious effects achieved by the substitution of black, white, and gray for the usual colors. The absence of the expected pictorial colors in this mural dramatizes the impact of the work. Furthermore, the lack of color implies all colors and forces the spectator's imagination into activity by not telling him everything. The use of black, white, and gray is an understatement which makes possible and bearable the horror and violence of the imagery. At the same time, paradoxically, it emphasizes the brutally tragic imagery. It is probably beyond question that in this mural black and white play their ancient, symbolic roles. They are the raw unadulterated colors of the struggle between life and death. For many centuries Chinese and Japanese painters have revered black as a color. In Japanese painting, black (sumi) is often the only color employed. The Japanese artist feels that "colors can cheat the eye but sumi never can; it proclaims the master and exposes the tyro." One famous Japanese painter, Kubota, frequently expressed the wish that he might live long enough to be able to discard color altogether and use "sumi alone for any and all effects in paintings."

C. Picasso's "Guernica" is eloquent testimony of the expressive power of black and its natural companions gray and white



D. This photogram, for a cover design, is technically a light and shadow picture of an abacus

In 1860 Chevreul wrote: "I do not know whether the use of black for mourning prevents the use of it, in numberless cases, where it would produce most excellent effects." This quotation is as pertinent today as it was in the nineteenth century. Most graphic artists still shy away from black. When they are confronted with no alternative other than black, as in newspaper advertising or typography, they often accept it grudgingly and make little effort to discover or develop its potentialities. However, the psychological and physical qualities of black which have been discussed so far in relation to architecture and painting are equally significant for the graphic arts: advertising, cover design, and typography. I should like to illustrate this with several examples of the use of black in my own work.

The first illustration (D) is that of a photogram for a cover design. Although this photogram is technically a light and shadow picture of an abacus, it is primarily a pattern of light and dark forms that seem to move vertically across the surface. Because the photogram is an abstraction the plastic qualities of the object become more important than its literal ones. One of the prime sources of the visual power of the photogram lies in its black, white, and gray tonality. The photogram portrays a world of light, shadow, and darkness peopled by mysterious suggestive forms. The ability of these forms to stimulate varied and imaginative associations in the mind of the observer is menaced when the photogram is rendered in color. It may still be an effective work of art, but its peculiar evocative power may be destroyed.

Thomas B. Stanley in The Technique of Advertising Production says: "While color has high attention value on short exposure, psychological tests indicate that the longer the time during which advertisements are examined, the more a black and white treatment tends to regain the attention lost at first glance to a color competitor."
Many advertisers and advertising artists feel that an advertisement becomes more colorful in proportion to the amount of color used in it. This is often untrue. Limited color when combined with black and white, which provide a brilliant but neutral background, is often far more effective than the use of many colors. Furthermore, the tendency of black and white to brighten and enliven other colors often makes any color used more articulate than when it is employed alone or combined with other primary or secondary colors. This is especially important in the case of dark colors.

In the advertisement for the Kaufman store reproduced here (E), I chose black and white combined with a strong light pink (shown in this reproduction as gray) for the reasons indicated in the above paragraph as well as others which I shall discuss.

E. This adversitement for the Kaufman store combined black with a strong light pink (shown in this reproduction as gray). The symbol is far more striking in black than if it were presented in its natural hue or in any other color

Black was used for the large Easter egg primarily because of its ambivalent qualities. The combination of the egg form, which is a literal symbol of life and also suggests life by its swelling breathing shape, with black, the color of death, has shock value. A black egg is a paradox. Because of this the egg symbol is far more striking in black than if it were presented in its natural hue or in any other color.
Light pink which is a gay and playful color becomes increasingly effective when juxtaposed with black, again because of the associative paradox which their combination produces and because of the brightening action of black. Also the thin white lettering becomes livelier when set on a heavy contrasting background.

It is impossible to define cold without contrasting it with heat. It is impossible to comprehend life if death is ignored. Black is the color of death, but by virtue of this very psychological fact it is the color of life it defines, contrasts, and enhances life, light, and color. It is through the artist's awareness of black as a polar element and consequently of its paradoxical nature that black as a color can be appreciated and effectively used. Nor must he forget that the neutrality of black makes it the common denominator of a multicolored world.
The necessity for the artist to free himself of traditional and conventional thought patterns if he is to create freely is obvious. Prejudices must be broken down, ruts avoided, and new paths or old forgotten ones explored if the artist is to perform one of his most important functions, that of broadening our visual world.

Paul Rand. This article was originally published in "Graphic Forms: The Arts as Related to the Book", 1949

Design is so simple, that is why is so complicated.

Paul Rand