

Her

BEGINNINGS

Curated by Dorotea Anfossi

THE BEGINNINGS OF A GREAT DESIGN

Interview by Ryan & Tina Essmaker, Tuesday, November 19, 2013

I drew a lot when I was growing up. I had a pretty unhappy childhood, and I used drawing as a reason to go off to my room and be alone. I find that I still retreat to that today: that's part of why I paint now. It allows me to escape, and I feel better afterwards, but I find that when I'm really enjoying myself, I don't draw. *(laughing)* When I was in high school, I took weekend art classes at Corcoran College of Art + Design, but I kept that to myself because it wasn't a cool thing to do. It was okay later when I became the school publicity chairman and made all the posters for school dances and events. In 1966, during the height of the 60s and the Vietnam War, I went to college at Tyler School of Art, and that's where I came into my own. I went to college thinking I was going to be a painter, but I couldn't really draw, so I tried other things. I couldn't throw pots; I knocked my finger out of joint once when I took a metals class; and I rolled my finger through a printing press. *(laughing)* It seemed like I wasn't good at anything, but then, in my junior year, I discovered graphic design. After graduating from Tyler in 1970, I moved to New York City. My first job was designing the inside of children's books, but after that, I got a job in the promotion department of CBS Records. At the time, the promotion department was the "cootie department," and the designers who worked in it weren't considered as good as those who worked in the record cover department.



“It seemed like I wasn't good at anything, but then, in my junior year, I discovered graphic design.”

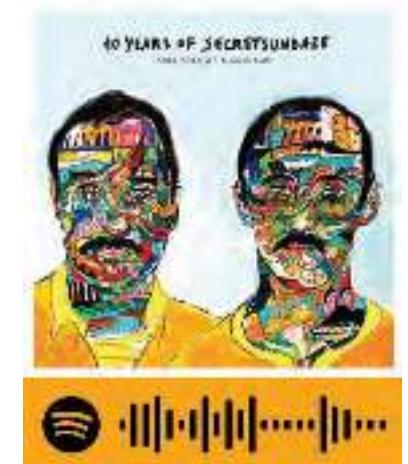
“As a child, I failed at everything but art. First, I was too scrawny; then I was too fat; my hair was never right; and I was never popular. But as the school artist, I was okay: that was the first place where I felt like I actually belonged.”

In order to get a job designing covers, which is what I really wanted to do, I left CBS Records and worked at Atlantic Records because they housed promotions and covers in the same department. I worked at Atlantic for one year, and then got hired as the East Coast art director at CBS Records. I returned there in that new position when I was 25 years old. For the next 10 years, I worked at CBS and was responsible for nearly 150 record covers each year. I approached work from what I would describe as a populist viewpoint: I designed things that mixed in popular culture with the goal of engaging people in the cover itself to make them interested in buying the record. That approach has continued to infuse everything I've done since. My current identity and environmental graphics work has the same approach to the work I was creating in the music industry. That early foundation was very important in solidifying how I think about things, even though styles and technologies have changed throughout the years. People often say that graphic design

is ephemeral, but it's not. Older designs are still seen in the mainstream; we interact with things that were designed a long time ago. I am amazed at how many people continue to remember the cover I did for Boston's debut album 38 years ago. Something else I learned from working in the music industry was how to present my work. Recording artists had contractual cover approval, which meant that I had to present the work to them, and they had to agree to it. I learned very early on how to explain my work to others, and how to get them to appreciate it. If I couldn't sell my work, then I couldn't get it made. That lesson has continued to be very important to everything I do.

Scan the disco's sleeve

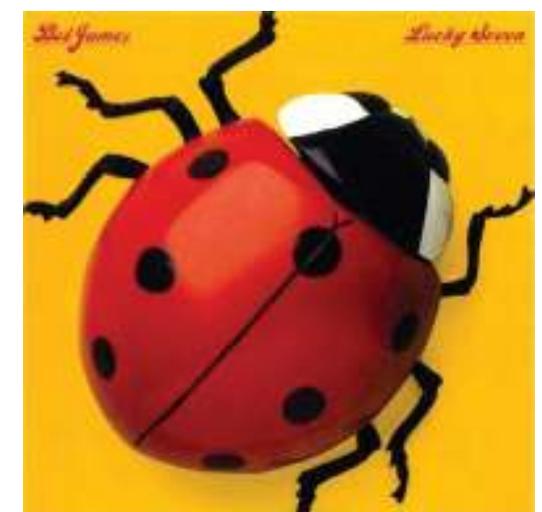
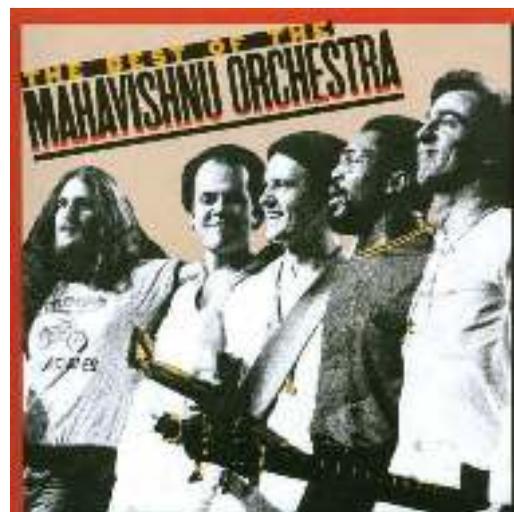
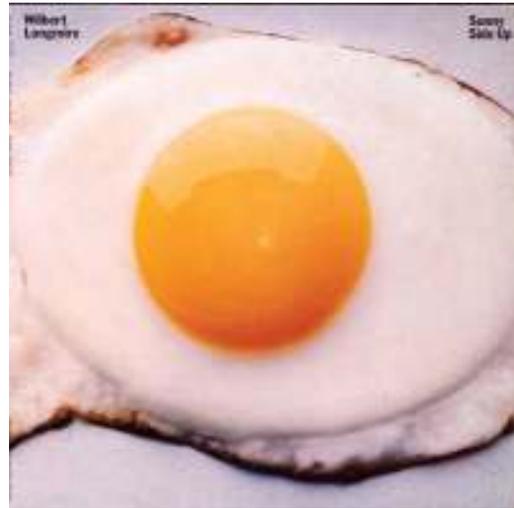
To discover more about it, included what kind of music inspired the designer's work. To open it install the Spotify® app and go for "search with image".



HOW DID YOU BREAK DESIGNING RECORD SLEEVES?

Interview by INFRAME TV, 2015

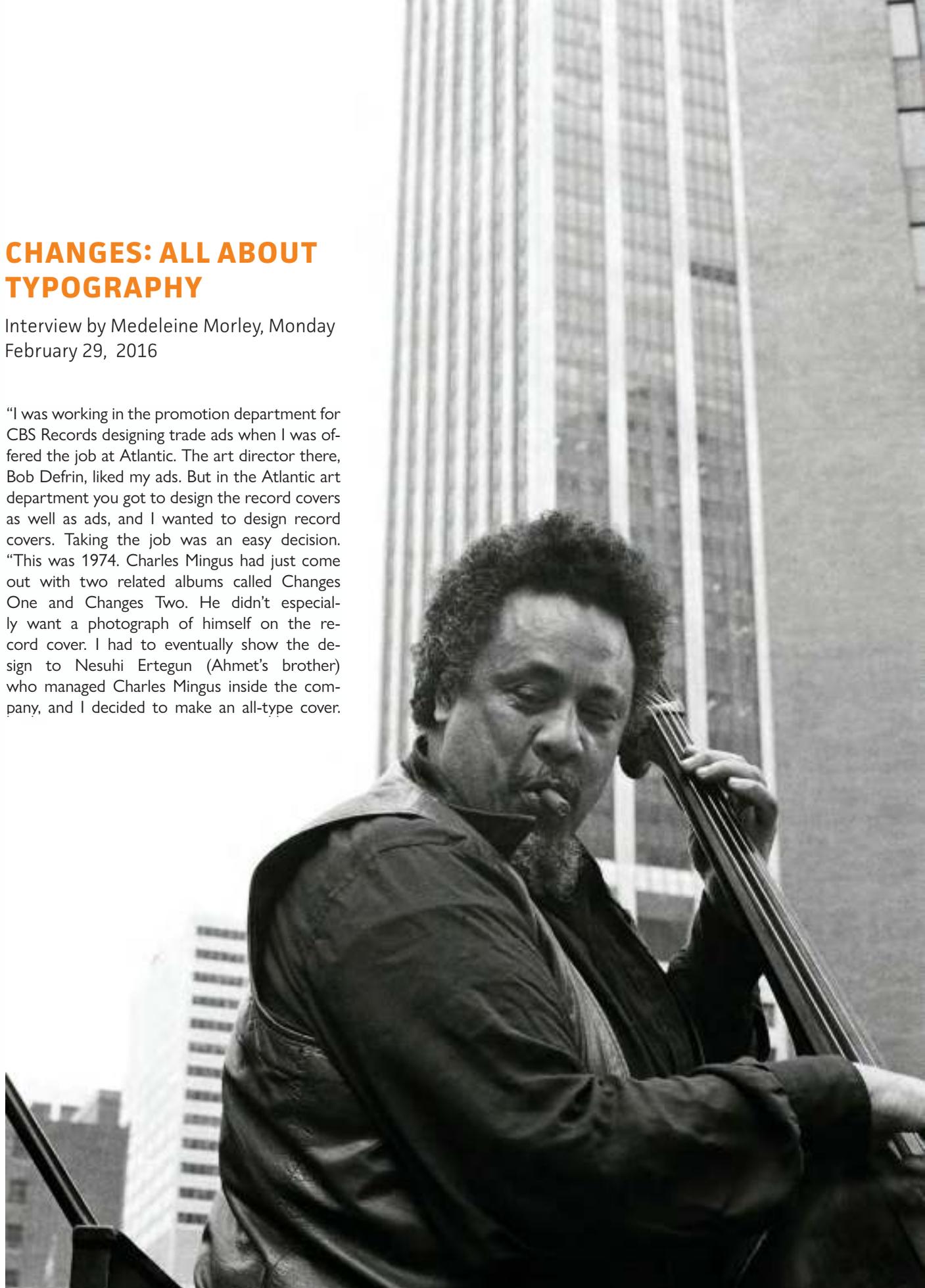
“Totally accidentally. I wanted to be in the record industry, but I was working at Random House and my boss decided to take a job at an advertisement agency and he didn’t have a spot for me. So he talked to a friend of his named Ted Burnstain who worked in the advertising department in CBS Records, and they did have a spot for me. So I went there to work and I was doing record advertising but I wanted to do record covers, but I couldn’t get hired from the cover department in CBS to do record covers coming from the advertising department ‘cause the cover department had no respect for the advertising department. So I got a freelance job doing advertising for Atlantic records, and the art director of Atlantic record hired me because he liked my advertising, but they did covers in the Atlantic records department, in the same department, so I became a record cover art director. I did record covers for one year, and then I was hired back to CBS, where I stayed for another 10 years designing record sleeves.”



CHANGES: ALL ABOUT TYPOGRAPHY

Interview by Medeleine Morley, Monday
February 29, 2016

“I was working in the promotion department for CBS Records designing trade ads when I was offered the job at Atlantic. The art director there, Bob Defrin, liked my ads. But in the Atlantic art department you got to design the record covers as well as ads, and I wanted to design record covers. Taking the job was an easy decision. “This was 1974. Charles Mingus had just come out with two related albums called Changes One and Changes Two. He didn’t especially want a photograph of himself on the record cover. I had to eventually show the design to Nesuhi Ertegün (Ahmet’s brother) who managed Charles Mingus inside the company, and I decided to make an all-type cover.



“I listened to the album once. At the time I hated that kind of jazz and no idea I was designing a cover for something that was going to become a classic. Typography worked well with jazz albums because it was more abstract. I selected a wood typeface that I drew and added drop shadows to it. It was a good solution because it didn’t cost much to execute and Atlantic always had a more limited budget than CBS. “The whole thing took a week to design and it probably took another week to make the mechanical. I made a comp by drawing the type with a rapidograph pen and rubbing down Cello-tack to create the color systems for the two albums. They were essentially the same design, but with the color changed. Nesuhi was happy with them. I hired a mechanical artist to draw the type from my hand lettering. Then I set the type for the back cover, added an existing picture of Charles Mingus, and marked up the mechanical for the printer. “The most complicated part of the project was the color breaks. I matched my Cello-tack colors by picking percentages of magenta, cyan, black, and processed yellow out of a color chart that was produced by a color separation company called Color Service. They had the best color break book in the business, and I memorized the percentages. The best grey, for example, was 5% blue, 5% yellow, and 5% red. If you selected a straight black percentage for the grey it looked

cheap and wimpy, especially on the cardboard that record covers were printed on. There was an area of design production called pre-press that has totally disappeared now because color separations are accomplished on the computer. I’m glad I learned to design before the computer; I learned a lot about color that way. “Designing record covers in the ’70s was fantastic. They were big (12 3/8” x 12 3/8”). They were visible in records stores everywhere. They were culturally relevant. And they were global without testing, and with very few approvals. They were global with maybe a couple of people making a decision about it and a proofreader making copy corrections once. The technology was antiquated, but a global album could be accomplished in two weeks with another four weeks for color separations and printing. “Changes One and Two was released in 1975. It’s now 41-years-old and still in print. It lived as a CD for a period of time and the original cover was reprinted at the original record cover size, folded up in quarters so the type was partially visible, but still recognizable through the plastic. If you want to download it on your iPhone, my graphic will still appear. If you Google it now, both the album and CD graphic appear. “People will always tell you that graphic design is ephemeral. Maybe it isn’t.”

“I listened to the album once.
At the time I hated that kind of jazz and no
idea I was designing a cover for something
that was going to become a classic.”



**“The Boston cover is dumb...
If nobody cared about
the album I did typography,
and that’s what
I liked doing most.
I was the artist,
I was the one in control of
what these things
looked like.”**



A BOSTON ERA

Interview by Medeleine Morley, Monday, February 29, 2016

Paula Scher really doesn't like it, doesn't want to acknowledge it and doesn't want to hear it but she created one of the most iconic album covers of all time. Art intersects music with a dash of technology. So where did that whole Boston space look come from? Paula Scher. Yes, the same person who's won hundreds of design awards, is a partner at Pentagram, and educator at the School of Visual Arts. [...] As the Art Director at CBS Records in 1976 the assignment to create a cover for a new band called Boston eventually fell to her. Lots of versions had been rejected by the band based on puns using lettuce or cream pie with the word Boston attached to the image. Can you imagine Boston

being represented by cream pie? Yeah, me neither. Band founder, guitarist Tom Scholz wanted the cover to be tech-like, as he was a MIT grad and product engineer at Polaroid. It was Scholz who recorded most of the tracks in his basement creating the eclectic-full Boston sound—a sound I've really never heard another band duplicate. He'd suggested a cover with a guitar shaped spaceship. Not exactly something you can get your mind around. And Paula Scher in her own words "thought the idea was idiotic." Since it didn't make sense they tried to tie it to a story...the earth had blown up and space ships were escaping into orbit. There were supposed to be many guitar-city spaceships leaving the planet labeled, London,

Paris, Rome, and Boston was supposed to be the largest escaping front and center. OK the idea is far-fetched, but it's rock n' roll. Eventually they took out the other city names to avoid confusion and just kept one city, Boston. The label, Epic had high hopes for the band, and the album exceeded expectations. It's the second best-selling debut album of all time. 20 million copies sold. And the album cover, simply iconic. Paula Scher doesn't care for their music and doesn't want to be known as the woman that created the album cover. But Paula, c'mon, it's a great little ditty on a resume. That album cover went on to influence future techies and software for decades. Lots of 3-D color blends and stylistic elements in design came

from that album cover. As Paula Scher mentioned in her book *Make it Bigger* "I've often thought that the entire point of computer programs like (Adobe) Illustrator and Photoshop, based on the way they are advertised, is to enable anyone to create their own Boston cover." She has a point. Photoshop likes to show lots of smooth 3-D gradient blends that you can do yourself. Paula Scher acknowledges that being known for this assignment has opened doors "...so I mentioned I was art director of the first Boston album cover. I felt a hush of reverence permeate the room. I was given the assignment."

SCAN ME
TO KNOW
MORE ABOUT
HER EARLY
YEARS





CHALLENGING RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Interview by INFRAME TV, 2015

“Different types of product exist in the market place and, in use, the record industry is where I learned it. If I bought an illustration for a Rock’n’Roll cover, that was supposed to be bad, but illustrations were okay for jazz covers. Who wrote that? What toward is that written in? That somebody made in that rule? But it was the expectation of what we’re supposed to sell: that if you put a picture of a Rock ’n’ Roll band on a cover it would be so better than another illustration. Except when it didn’t. Except for there is Boston who sold seven million records out the thorn. How did that happened? Even if it’s not a very interesting illustration... I mean, these things exist for art reasons, and then they become laws. When I was working in book jackets, when I was doing a lot of book jackets, there were books that looked like big big books, and they had a big type on, and now there are books that look like big big books ‘cause they have small type on. Who said those expectations? It happens by accident, and as designers what we can do is show that there can be surprises, that it doesn’t have to be as you expected to be. And that’s how you actually lift the visual, liberate it to see the landscape. Barack Obama did it by having a design logo that looked like he was not cooperation. When he had his first election in 2008 and this was an enormous amount to reach:



Q

What tip would you give to a person that just started working in this crazy world?

it looked like it was made for the youngest generations because he actually had something that looked like graphic design, it was supposed to be something that looked like advertising. There were sort of advertising messages in logos. Hillary had a bad one, and that's how she lost. I say her loss is based on her tywpeface, it is something that subliminally was supposed to look like the American flag, but who cared? You know, I mean these sort of things, they're cliché, and there's a point in time where you show them out. That work, that I think was my most important work, was not done by being obedient, it was not done by following rules, and it was not done by

fulfilling expectations. It was done because of some intense desire of me to either rebel or to want to do something so much that I could defy everything and everybody. But it was never done by getting a brief, doing my researches, and trying to do the job in a responsible way... And that's a terrible thing to admit, that the best design is also often this act of arrogance or irresponsibility, but in many instances it is."



SCAN ME
TO KNOW
MORE ABOUT
HER RECORD
INDUSTRY DAYS

A

Pay attention to
everything around you
and learn as much as you
can from it.

IMAGES CREDITS

- P. 1-2 Paula Scher by Christian Witkin
- P. 4 Spotify's QR codes. Discos' sleeves: Paula Scher. Album cover for Gary Graffman performing Bartók, Prokofiev, and Lees. 1978
- P. 4 James Priestley, Giles Smith – 10 Years Of Secretsundaze; Design - Paula Scher; 2011
- P. 5 Wilbert Longmire - Sunny Side Up; Design - John Berg, Paula Scher; 1978
- P. 5 Mahavishnu Orchestra – The Best Of The Mahavishnu Orchestra; Design - Paula Scher; 1975
- P. 5 Blue Öyster Cult – Fire Of Unknown Origin; Design: Paula Scher; Artwork: Greg Scott; 1981
- P. 6 Bob James - Lucky Seven; Design: Paula Scher; Photography: Buddy Endress; 1981
- P. 6 Mi-Sex – Computer Games; Design - Paula Scher; 1979
- P. 6 Kiss - Rock and Roll over; Design - Paula Scher; 1976
- P. 6 Eddie Harris - Bad Luck Is All I Have; Design- Paula Scher; Illustration - David Wilcox; 1975
- P. 6 Wilbert Longmire - Champagne; Design - Paula Scher; 1979
- P. 6 Johnny Winter – White, Hot & Blue; Design - Paula Scher; 1978
- P. 7-8 Charles Mingus by Tom Marcello; 1976
- P. 9 Charles Mingus - Changes One; Design - Paula Scher; 1975
- P. 9 Boston - Boston; Design - Paula Scher; 1976
- P. 11-12 CBS' Record NYC building by Variety
- P. 13-14 Johnny and Edgar Winter - Together; Design- Paula Scher; 1976
- P. 15-16 Frame of the movie: "Paula Scher: designer as educator; Productor - TDC Salon; 2017

Her
CITY

Curated by Chiara Cucurachi



NEW YORK CITY THROUGH PAULA SCHER'S EYES

Interview by Susan Szenasy, September 24, 2012

Susan S. Szenasy: If there is one thing you could tell a friend from abroad about New York City, as it relates to the design you encounter here every day, what would that be? Please explain.

Paula Scher: For me, the most exciting thing about New York City is the distinct personality of its ever-changing neighborhoods, especially the ones I know best in Manhattan and Brooklyn. This is a result of ethnic groups banding together, artists and other trail blazers continually hunting for cheap space, real estate developers taking some risks, all under the seemingly invisible hand of City Planning, the Economic Development Corporation, the Parks Department, the Department of Transportation, and the Business Improvement Districts.

SSS: What is unique about the planning and design of the city that makes it work for you?

PS: New York has such a big vocabulary in such a small space. I never cease to be surprised by a changing block, a crazy store or restaurant popping up in an unexpected place. I also love the expansion of parks that has occurred under mayor Bloomberg and parks commissioner Bennepe, they have changed and revitalized neighborhoods all over the city.

SSS: This year, as every year for the past decade, OHNY will bring visitors into some very special spaces. What are your favorite interior spaces and why?

PS: I love the auditorium of Renzo Piano's New York Times Building (perfect proportions). I love looking out the window from an office at Norman Foster's Hearst Building—great trusses! I love the space, experience, and view from Dizzy's Club at Jazz at Lincoln Center. I love the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera—totally romantic and

glittery with the staircase and chandelier; the Garden at the MoMA which is a most delightfully proportioned outdoor space, and the bar at the Four Seasons (best chandelier in NYC).

SSS: What can visitors learn about New Yorkers inside our public interiors, such as offices?

PS: Visitors can learn how New Yorkers function in a designed landscape that lacks space and makes up for it in clever efficiency, and when the efficiency doesn't exist, they can witness how oppressive it becomes.

SSS: What about outdoor NYC, here I'd like for you to give us your expert opinion, Paula. What is your favorite signage and why does it work? And where can we use some graphic design help? You can be as specific or general as you like.

PS: First of all, I would like to talk about our spectacular new parks. Pentagonum is across from

Madison Square Park, one of the most beautiful perfectly programmed parks in NYC. It is a delight. I do my food shopping at the Union Square Market and it is always a wonderful experience.

And I worked for 12 years, first developing the identity and fundraising materials for the Highline and then their signage system. The Highline has revolutionized a neighborhood and is the most visited attraction in NYC.

My favorite signs in New York are the Pepsi sign that sits on the East River in Queens and is a populist as well as heroic icon that is best viewed from the FDR Drive. I have the same fondness for the bold lettering on the entrance the Holland Tunnel. You know you are about to enter a powerful and dynamic city. I think the subway system has a perfect system, even though a lot of the signage is beat up. I think our street signs are characterless and are totally inconsistent.



“My favorite signs in New York are the Pepsi sign that sits on the East River in Queens and is a populist as well as heroic icon that is best viewed from the FDR Drive.”

SCAN ME
TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT NEW YORK
CITY'S INFLUENCE ON
PAULA SCHER



“I began to notice, for some peculiar reason, in a lot of my work, I began using very tall, big, long, skinny typography always in all caps and I was doing it year after year after year, I always seemed to be drawn to it in things I designed and then I suddenly realised they were buildings.”

THE CITY'S INFLUENCE ON HER DESIGN

Interview by Emily Nonko, Tuesday, April 11, 2017

New York is a city that's always changing, evolving, branding itself in new ways. How does that affect your practice?

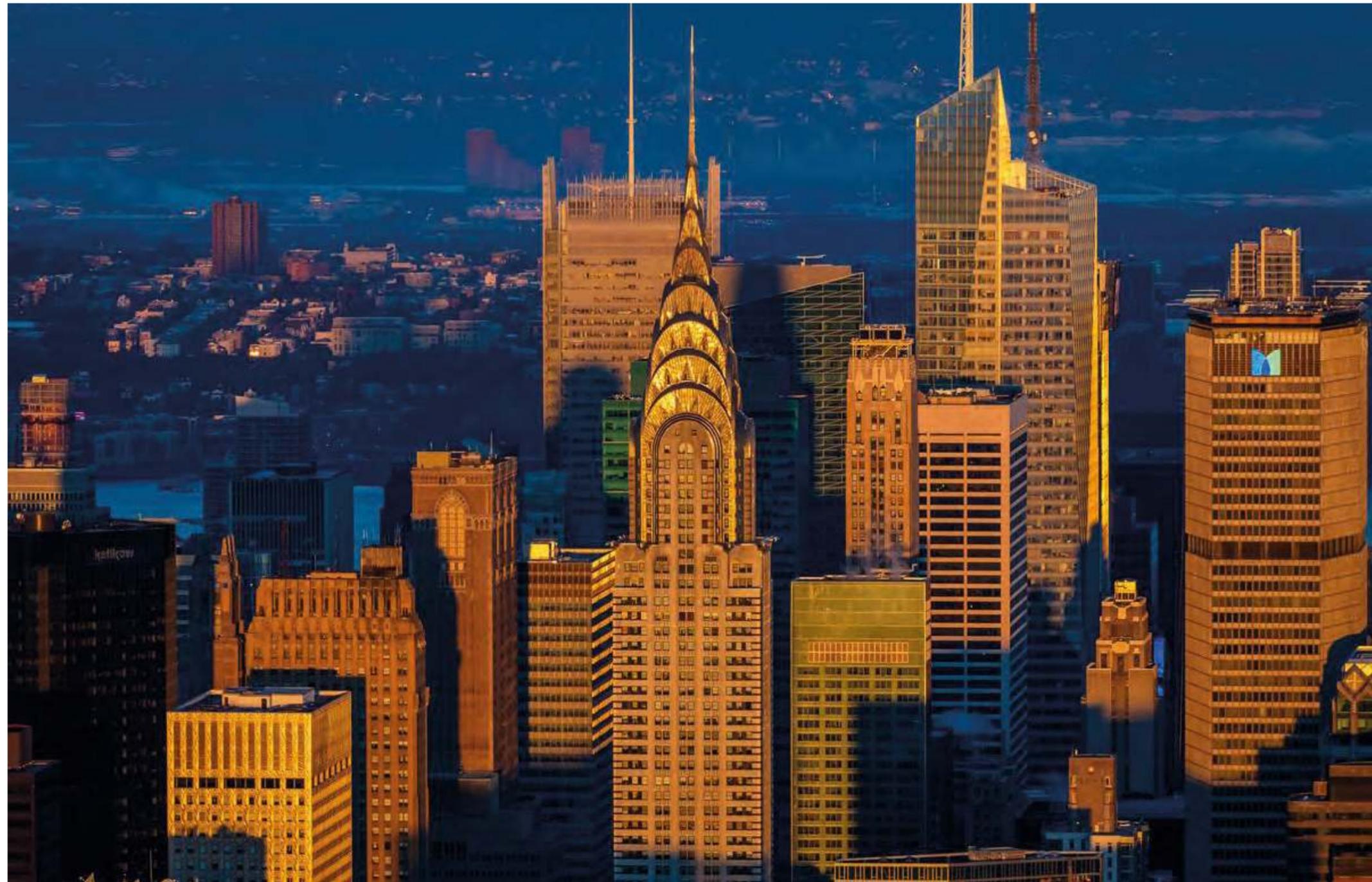
Paula: My goal is to make things last. My identity for the Public Theater was designed in 1994. I still work for them and we've evolved it and made changes to the posters and advertisements, but it's essentially the same identity. Jazz at Lincoln Center I first designed in 2000 and re-tweaked two years ago.

So what makes a design last?

Paula: I think it's the ability to be recognized. Citi Bank was designed in 1998 with that arc you recognize. Logo designs have to be eccentric enough that you can recognize them, and simple enough that everyone can use them consistently.

What New York brands have inspired and influenced your work?

Paula: To be honest, the things that inspire me in New York City are the signs that were always here or the buildings that are always iconic. I'm in love with the Pepsi Cola sign you see on the East River. It's totally heroic—I'm thrilled they finally landmarked it. I love the sign to the Holland Tunnel—those big words running across the cement of the entryway. And the Chrysler Building, it's completely identifiable from wherever you see it. It's amazing. The newer buildings seem less so. They've lost their ability to be recognized. The notable exceptions, I'd say, are the Renzo Piano's New York Times building, Foster's Hearst Building, Gehry's twisted apartment tower or the Calatrava train station. But so much of ar-



“My work for the Public Theater is very New York influenced. But I’m a broad enough designer to move from the Public Theater to the Metropolitan Opera because they’re sort of design opposites.”



chitecture and design is designed to look like other things like it.

Why do you think we’ve come to that place right now in New York?

Paula: We’ve come to that place with everything. Go to a party and every woman’s wearing black. It’s hard to stand out. It’s not my goal to make somebody comfortable in black wear a red dress. I couldn’t, but maybe I could wear a red belt.

Do New York architectural figures or images play into your work, or inspire you?

Paula: My work is very influenced by New York City. I gravitate towards caps, as opposed to upper and lower case. I wouldn’t describe my work as classical—I use geometric, gothic print usually from newspaper headline type. My work for the Public Theater is very New York influenced. But I’m a broad enough designer to move from the Public Theater to the Metropolitan Opera because they’re sort of design opposites.

**“Be culturally literate,
because if you don’t have any
understanding of the world
you live in and the culture
you live in, you’re not going
to express anything to
anybody else.”**





“The city has impacted everything I do. It impacts me physically, I mean, I feel the city, emotionally and also romantically.”

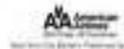
NEW
YORK
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NEW YORK
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CLASSICS. REVISITED.
WINTER 2010
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WINTER 2010
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JANUARY 5–FEBRUARY 28

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“The starkness of the identity is softened by its transparency and a subtle gradation of color that will include shades of blue blacks, green blacks and red blacks.”

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

Article by Pentagram

Pentagram has designed a new identity and promotional campaign for the New York City Ballet, one of the largest and most prominent dance companies in the world. The campaign, developed with Luis Bravo of the NYCB, launched in 2008 with the opening of the fall season.

Founded in 1933 by Lincoln Kirstein and choreographer George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet's approximately 100 dancers perform a repertoire of over 150 works choreographed by Balanchine, Jerome Robbins and current Ballet Master Peter Martins. The performances, which take place at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center, are neo-classical, but less traditional than other companies, as the company fulfills its original mission to re-imagine the principals of classical dance. The company is credited with bringing modern dance to the American public and as a result, has played a significant role in the

history of twentieth century performing arts, a precedent that informs the company's mission today as it continues to be an influential cultural force. Working with Peter Martins, marketing director Tom Michel and general manager Ken Tabachnick, Pentagram has created an identity that links the company's legacy and location to a contemporary and dramatic new aesthetic. Set in the font DIN, the logotype appears stacked and layered, like buildings staggered in the skyline, with a degree of transparency that echoes the visual texture of the cityscape. The palette is composed of black, white and silvery grays, in the way that the buildings of New York can sometimes appear. The starkness of the identity is softened by its transparency and a subtle gradation of color that will include shades of blue blacks, green blacks and red blacks.

The graphics program is balanced by Nick He-



avican's arresting black and white photography. Promotionally, most dance companies typically present their performers centered in the frame, with the entire figure pictured. For the New York City Ballet, the designers cropped the images of City Ballet dancers to create more tension and drama. Cutting in and out of the frame, the dancers capture the shifting focus one experiences while watching a performance. At the same time, the dramatic layering of figures reflects the logotype and the city itself as viewers are immersed in the intense energy of the dancers, as well as the style of the city.

The new identity and graphics appear on bus shelter and subway posters all over the city, in magazines and newspapers ads, in the company's programs and website, and in environmental graphics at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center where the company performs.

Q

And what should a designer do, in your opinion, when lacking of inspiration and motivation to go through stressful projects?

A

Take a walk, go to a
movie or museum.
Do something else to
free your mind, then
come back to your work.

IMAGES CREDITS

- P. 1-2 Dominic Kamp, October 23, 2013
- P. 3 Yves Luthin,
- P. 5-6 Max Touhey, January 14, 2019
- P. 7-8 Rob Natelson, May 7, 2017
- P. 10 Stefano Viola, February 24, 2012
- P. 11 Pentagram, New York City Ballet
- P. 11 Pentagram, The Metropolitan Opera
- P. 11 Mcohenandsons.com
- P. 11 New York City Ballet logo, Paula Scher for Pentagram
- P. 11 The Metropolitan Opera logo, Paula Scher for Pentagram
- P. 11 The Public Theater logo, Paula Scher for Pentagram
- P. 13 New York City Ballet logo, Paula Scher for Pentagram
- P. 13 New York City Ballet poster, Paula Scher for DMA united, Fabric campaign, 2010
- P. 13 New York City Ballet poster, Paula Scher for DMA united, Fabric campaign, 2010
- P. 15 KBENY.com

Her

CLIENTS

THE EXACT MOMENT TO END A CLIENT MEETING

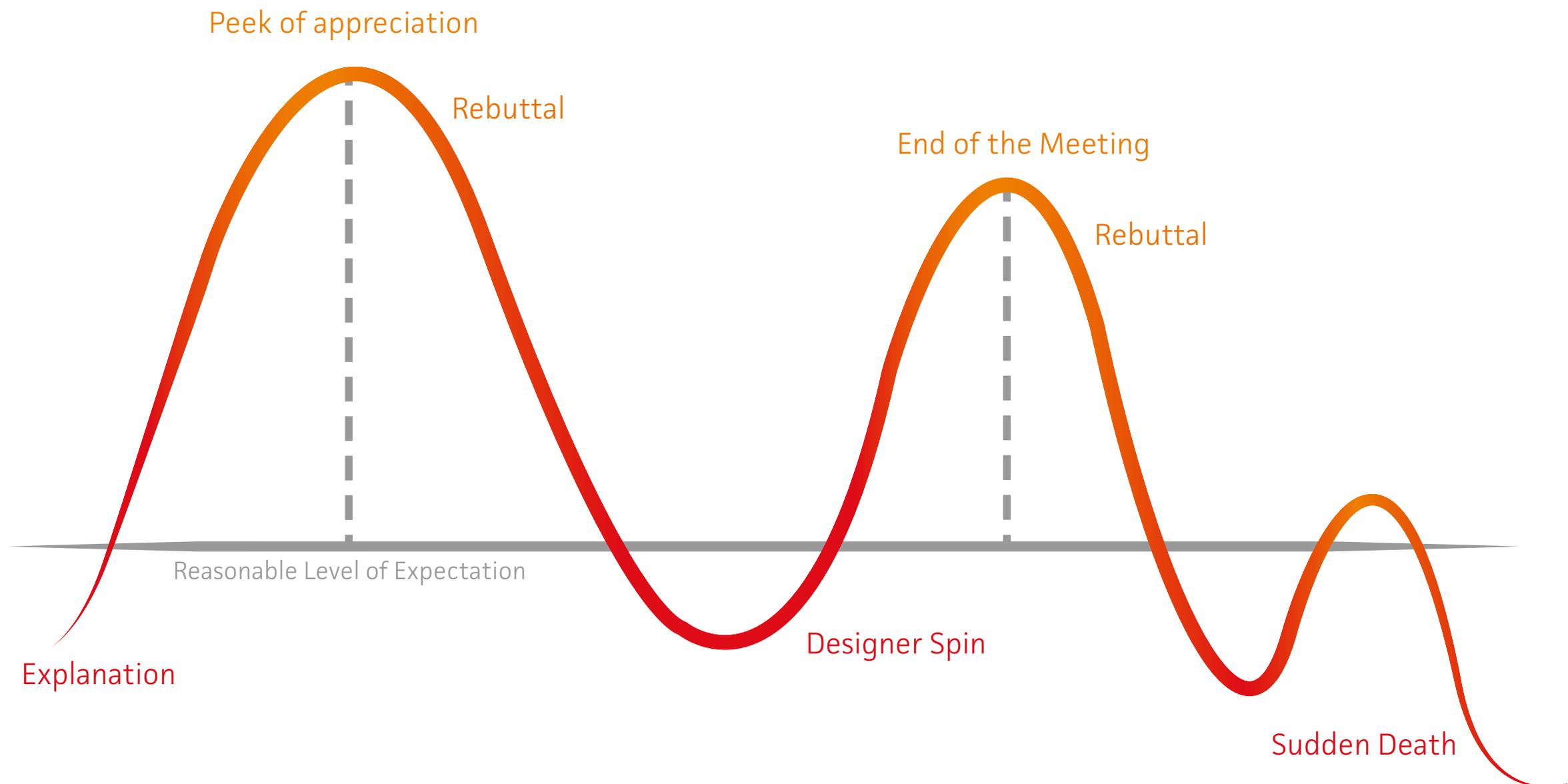
Article by Anne Quito, Tuesday, June 27, 2017

In her 41 years as a professional designer, Paula Scher has dealt with a lot of egos. That's why she has become a mastermind of "client diplomacy"—drawing on experiences from her days designing record covers for moody musicians to her current job creating high-profile brand identities for complex bureaucracies including Microsoft, Citibank and MoMA.

Through books, magazines, frequent speaking engagements and even a recent Netflix documentary about her work, Scher is a superstar in design circles. A longtime partner at the design consultancy Pentagram, Scher, 68, has learned how to read a room and figured out how to tip client meetings in her favor. Her new 520-page monograph, *Paula Scher: Works* (Unit Editions) is as much a showcase of her award-winning creative output as her acuity with the psychology of boardroom dynamics.

One point she makes that applies far beyond the world of design: Knowing exactly when to end a meeting is a learned skill. From her four decades presenting her work, Scher has learned that a meeting's final words matter enormously—they can even determine the fate of her work.

In a fascinating sequence from the Netflix series *Abstract*, Scher diagrams the emotional arc of a meeting, juxtaposed with an actual presentation of a design for New York City's Public Theater.





“End it when they’re all smiles”



SCAN ME

TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE
DIAGRAM OF A MEETING
BY PAULA SCHER

After the initial gush of approval—with the response to the work going above expectations—a wave of doubt inevitably enters the discussion, she explains, and the perception of the work falls below expectations. An agile designer responds quickly by proposing a compromise, bringing the perception back up again.

Scher advises adjourning at this high point, instead of tapering off into awkward silences to squeeze out every bit of feedback. “What will happen [if it goes on] is the counter rebuttal to your offer will go below the reasonable level of expectation,” observes Scher. “[It] will continue on until you reach sudden death.”

A business meeting has archetypal characters, she says: “You can tell where the power is, because that’s where everyone’s eyes are,” explains Scher. “There are people who you might think are powerful, but they’re just saying a lot to impress the person in power. Then there are grenade-throwers...they lob a grenade just to shake things up.”

Presenters should learn to read a room’s power dynamic to know how to steer the conversation, she says, and that learning comes with experience. “I learned everything from working in the record industry,” says Scher in the book, recalling the decade she designed hundreds of covers, collaborating with the likes of Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and the Rolling Stones. “I learned how people make decisions in power structures...I’ve been able to use the experiences my entire working life, because they are always the same, regardless of technological and even cultural shifts.”



"Your name is Windows. Why are you a flag?"

Paula Scher



"Design is the art of planning, and it is the art of making things possible."

Paula Scher



"The work needs to get out of your head and on to the table, and it needs to be done from the heart."

Paula Scher



"Identities are the beginning of everything. They are how something is recognized and understood. What could be better than that?"

Paula Scher

PAULA SCHER'S VIEW ON WORK AND CLIENTS

Article by Lucy Bourton, Wednesday, November 15, 2017

When discussing graphic design with Paula Scher she lets me in on a secret for spotting trends and tastes: "If you look through design history and you see something that looks really radical, that's what you're going to be doing now. If you think that's nice, that's what you've already been doing. If you think it's tired, that's what you were doing five years ago. But if you think it's ugly, that's what you're going to be doing in five years." I ask Paula when she worked out this key piece of design knowledge, she laughs... "about 30 years ago." Knowing this rotation could be the reason why Paula's work has often been one step

ahead of her contemporaries. However, looking at her work, and particularly when you hear the designer speak, it is a palpable passion that has elevated her work, rather than a calculated formula. She defiantly says no to projects that don't fit with her ethos, "you know when you can't do something," she donates her skills to institutions that need it, and she even relays a story about blowing a pitch "because I said some unpolitical thing to them". Paula is an erudite designer, but the industry's love and long-term relationship with her is also because of a zealous and thoughtful personality. Paula Scher is the guest at a





“In your twenties you don’t know anything, what’s interesting is how much growth you have”

dinner party who says what she thinks, the thing you think too, but couldn’t find the words. She paints and designs those words.

Each of these attributes make Paula the ideal choice as the ‘graphic designer’ in the eight-part Netflix documentary *Abstract: The Art of Design*, which aired earlier this year. Paula watched the documentary the same way many of us interact with Netflix, tucked up in bed. “Seymour [Paula’s husband illustrator Seymour Chwast, who she met when she was 21] wasn’t there at first, but I put it on because I am very self-conscious of what I look like, so I had this moment of ‘my god, can I do this?’”

Her concern was quickly diminished however, due to the documentary’s blockbuster opening that sets you up for watching someone so powerfully cool. “It was the very beginning when I was walking through traffic and I heard my voiceover and thought I’m not going to be able to deal with this. All of a sudden these graphics come on and, holy shit, they looked so powerful to me.” When speaking about the film with Paula she characteristically downplays the attention. “Most of the time I spent with him [director Richard Press] was riding around in taxi cabs, walking in traffic, going up and down the steps of Pentagram a million times, and I really wanted to kill him!” she says. “There was this thing, it was a summers day and I had to walk down sixth avenue on this really crowded street, and people kept walking in front of me, or he didn’t catch it right, and I had to go back and do it 100 times. We had to spend one whole day in traffic and he is making me sketch, all that shit. It looks totally natural in the movie, but you don’t realise how much of movie making is that.” But Richard’s dedication worked, “people who know me feel it’s very much me, and it was, I feel that too”.



“If I am sitting with a new client, I can see in the first glance that he’s wondering why he’s got this old lady.”

They’re not figuring out that you can go outside that box by finding a cause, or volunteering services, or making a relationship... It’s becoming more and more rare and I find it really troubling. It means that it takes the profession and sort of turns it into a pure business, instead of a craft or a calling that you’re working to improve.”

Due to this ethos, Paula is respected as one of America’s greatest liberal designers. It is inevitable therefore that our conversation at some point turns to Trump. Within her team at Pentagram, Paula explains that a shift has already begun since the start of his presidency. A proudly global group of associates, “there are things that have changed that I have felt already,” particularly in terms of employment and visas. “If Trump is talking about a good deal for American business, this isn’t.” But most of all it is the discussions the designer heard 40 years ago resurfacing that she finds worrying. “The cause of feminism has not really — yes there are better numbers — but it’s really not where I thought it would be. I just can’t believe I am having the same conversations all these years later, I’m just totally horrified by it.”

The lack of female graphic designers is a constant discussion within the industry and during *Abstract* Paula recalls back to the 70s when all women were in organisational roles, agents or reps. “I would sit there and think ‘oh my god what are they gonna do with me, what am I gonna do with them.’” Surprisingly, the designer still experiences sexism, saying during the film: “If I am sitting with a new client, I can see in the first glance that he’s wondering why he’s got this old lady.”

During our interview I explain my dismay that this still happens to a designer of such stature, the first female partner at Pentagram with the

world’s biggest and exciting creative clients under her belt. “It doesn’t really happen if they know who I am, but a lot of times they don’t,” she explains. “They call up Pentagram because they’ve seen a piece of work or they want to know who did something or other, and something about the appearance seems shocking to them.” Talking with clients is where this occurs most, “I’ve gone to meetings with my partner Michael Beirut and if he’s in the meeting, the eyes go to him. I see it and I feel it in the room. He’s also a mansplainer sometimes and I have to smack him, but really it’s horrible, I mean he knows it too, I have to yell at him about it — not in the meeting — we’re friends. But in most instances he will be awarded confidence, and I will have to earn mine. It’s the only way to describe it, it’s a free pass. Women do it too by the way, it’s not just men who are guilty, I have women clients who do the same thing.”

Still in the midst of a career including countless successes, and during a year where her work has been celebrated in book and film form, Paula says she remains excited about what she does. One particular project she is still proud of is her identity for New York’s beaches from Coney Island to Rockaway. “I was really proud of the beach project because they were disseminated and I wasn’t capable of doing a case study on it at that time. But it was a serious project that they had to accomplish really quickly, and it was successful. Also in the Rockaway’s, everyone knows who I am.” Proving again Paula’s ability to be more than the designer behind the desk, but the character conveyed in her work.

Even on the surface, Paula’s contribution to graphic design is nothing short of astonishing. Her work has informed pop culture through record



sleeves, but it also visualises technology when Windows computers are turned on all over the world. Her identity designs sit on the mastheads when prospective students receive letters from The New School or University of the Arts London. Her signs direct people when they're trying to meet friends at the beach or the park, or when your hungry for instance Pentagram's identity for Shake Shack, where this feature is shot. Her ideas give a voice to non-profit arts institutions that keep this industry thriving. Galleries such as MoMa, The Guggenheim, the Victoria and Albert museum, who represent the best of the art wor-

ld, choose her to represent themselves. Her work for Planned Parenthood is immeasurable in what it has done for the organisation.

Of course there are other designers whose work may be more instantly recognisable, but Paula's work is embedded in our everyday lives. Her work is ubiquitous and embodies the notion that design in its purest sense should be communicative. Paula will also continue to do this, showing no signs of slowing down even though she is in her 60s. "Let's take tools and see how far we can expand them," she says when I ask what she would like to do next. "Let's see if it still works."

“Let’s take tools and see how far we can expand them. Let’s see if it still works.”

“I have said this when a client has asked me to do something visually putrid: I can’t do that, and it will be nearly impossible for me to explain why I can’t do it, and if I show it to you, you may even like it. But pretend that I am a lawyer and you asked me to do something patently illegal that would cause my disbarment and professional shame forever. That is what you are asking me to do.”

THREE KEY CONCEPTS ABOUT WORKING WITH CLIENTS

Interview by Carey Dunne, Thursday, July 13, 2017

[...]

Colleague envy

My partners are pretty good designers, in case you don’t know. I envy parts of everybody’s work. Michael Bierut seems to have the best dialogues with his clients. It seems so effortless for him to explain something to the client and get them to feel like he’s masterful and in control, which is harder for me to do. Michael Gericke is organized in a way I can’t be. Abbott Miller comes to the most elegant of solutions, which I find hard to attain.

First is best

I do things in spurts. My first ideas are always my best, which can be a problem, because the client always feels most comfortable if you’ve shown them three to five options. I have a hard time after the first idea coming up with something as good.

[...]

Finding the possibility

I have an endless appetite for seeing the possibility in something. When I don’t see the possibility, I get depressed. There’s always a moment in any project when sometimes the project just feels so boring you might want to shoot yourself in the head, or you’ll think, “God, I hate this client,” or whatever it is that you feel—but then there will be a moment when I see a way through, that makes it possible, that this thing is really a terrific possibility.

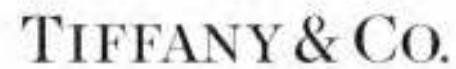


IMPORTANT BRANDS PAULA SCHER DESIGNED FOR

during her years as a Pentagram partner



NYC Parks



“It took me a few seconds to draw it, but it took me 34 years to learn how to draw it in a few seconds.”

IDENTITY FOR MICROSOFT WINDOWS 8

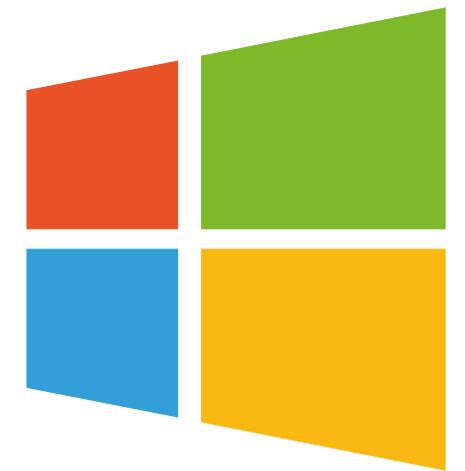
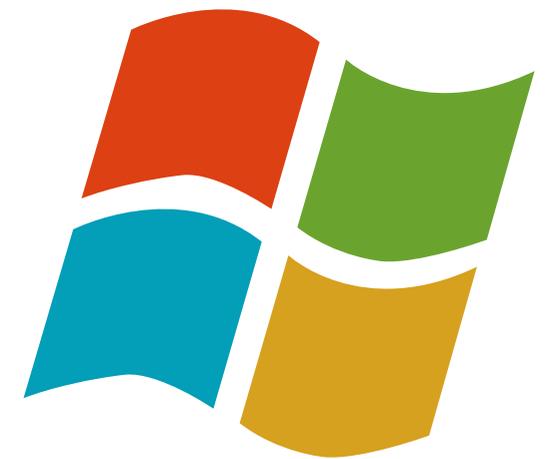
Article by Pentagram

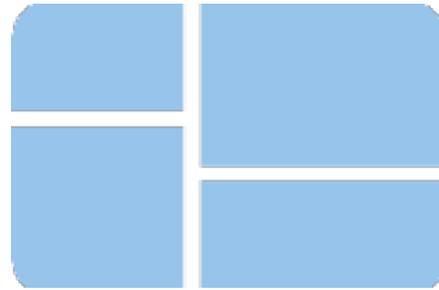
Designed in coordination with the launch of Windows 8, Pentagram’s new identity for the operating system takes the iconic Windows logo back to its roots—as a window. The logo re-imagines the familiar four-color symbol as a modern geometric shape that introduces a new perspective on the Microsoft brand.

Meeting with Microsoft early in the development process, Pentagram asked: “Your name is Windows. Why are you a flag?” The answer is that the brand started as a window, but over the years, as computing systems grew more powerful and graphics more complex, evolved into a flag. The designers made the assumption that the waving flag was probably a result of typical industry comments that a plain window looked too static, and that straight lines were too severe.

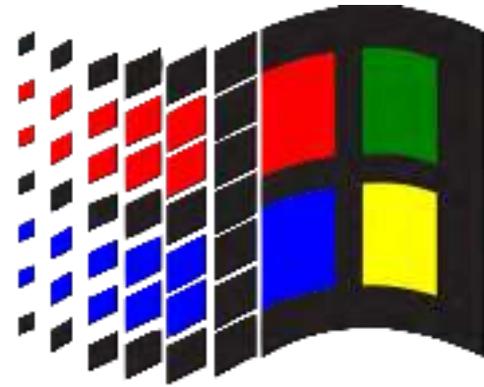
The new identity returns the logo to its roots. The name Windows was originally introduced as a metaphor for seeing into screens and systems and a new view on technology. The new identity reintroduces this idea with the actual visual principles of perspective. It also reflects the Metro design language developed by Microsoft for its products, graphics and user interfaces.

In a post on his blog, Sam Moreau, Microsoft’s Principal Director of User Experience for Windows, says: “‘Windows’ really is a beautiful metaphor for computing and with the new logo we wanted to celebrate the idea of a window, in perspective.”





Windows 1.0 (1985)



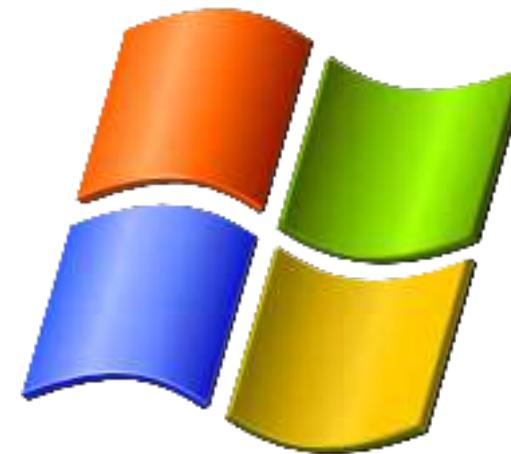
Windows 3.1 (1992)



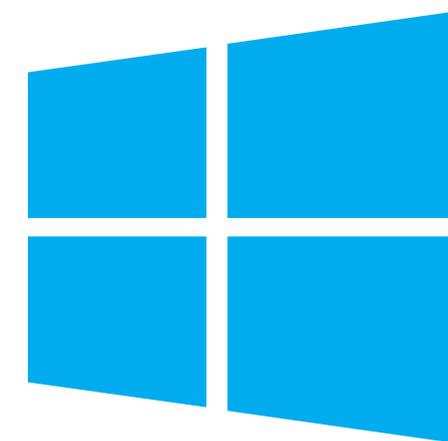
Windows Vista (2006)



Windows 7 (2009)



Windows XP (2001)



Windows 8 (2012)



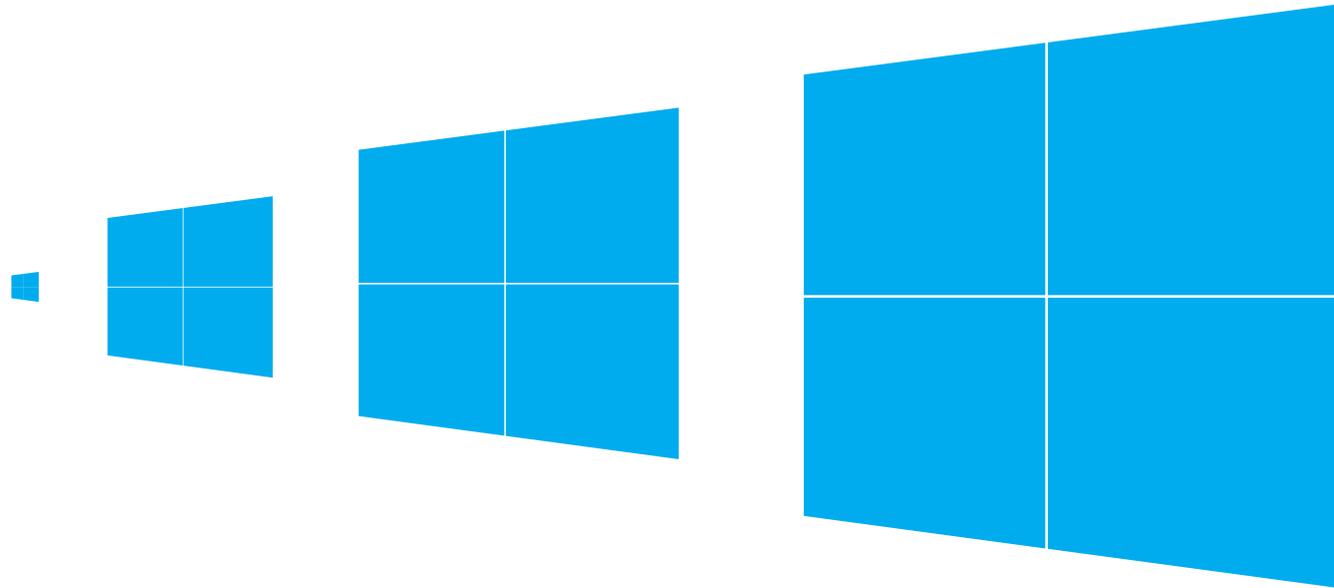
SCAN ME
TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT THE IDENTITY
FOR THE MICROSOFT
OPERATING SYSTEM

The designers created a complete system based on the idea of perspective. They completed motion studies to demonstrate the transformation of the flag shape into a window shape, to show that they weren't that far apart and would be an easy and elegant transition for the brand.

In its research, the team considered the Windows brand history. The original Windows logo looked like a window. As computing became more powerful, the logos for Windows began to get more complex, to show off the capabilities of Microsoft systems. The logo for Windows 1.0 resembled panes of glass. By Windows 3.1, this had been replaced with a waving effect for a sense of motion and the four colors that became a signature of the Windows brand.

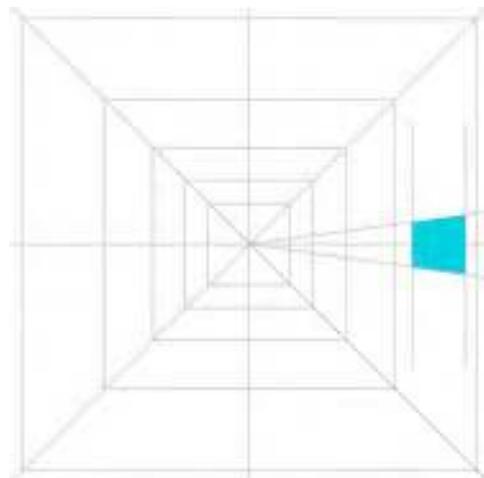
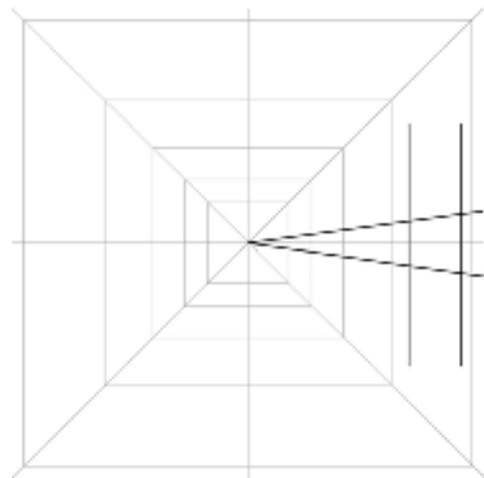
For Microsoft, the logo became a natural place to demonstrate the graphic capabilities of each new version of Windows. The Windows logo underwent another transformation for Windows XP, when the "flag" began looking more material and gained a 3D effect with a gradient. For Windows Vista, the flag evolved into a kind of dimensional button or "pearl," as it became known in Microsoft's branding language.

The new logo reflects the sleek, modern "Metro" design language first introduced by Microsoft in its Windows 7 phones. Metro is based on the design principles of the Swiss International Style, with clean lines, shapes and typography and bold, flat colors. One guideline of Metro is that the graphic or interface must appear "authentically digital" – that is, it should not appear to be material or three-dimensional using gradients or effects. The new identity suggests dimensionality using the classic principle of perspective: lines receding into space.



The perspective drawing is based on classical perspective drawing, not computerized perspective. The cross bar stays the same size no matter the height of the logo, which means it has to be redrawn for each time it increases in size, like classic typography.

The perspective analogy is apt because the whole point of Microsoft products is that they are tools for someone to achieve their goals from their own perspective. The window here is a neutral tool for a user to achieve whatever they can, based on their own initiative. The logo design is deliberately neutral so that it can function effectively in a myriad of uses, especially motion. The old logo was flat and drawn in motion; the new logo is a neutral container that can convey actual motion, becoming a more active and effective brand.



Q

Which is, according to you, the most important aspect in a project that determines a successful work?

A

I measure success by
looking at the impact
(and length of impact)
that the work has
with its audience.

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Her

MIND

Curated by Marta Dami

GREAT DESIGN IS SERIOUS, NOT SOLEMN

Transcription of a speech for TED, Serious Play 2008

My work is play. And I play when I design. I even looked it up in the dictionary, to make sure that I actually do that, and the definition of play, number one, was engaging in a childlike activity or endeavor, and number two was gambling. And I realize I do both when I'm designing. I'm both a kid and I'm gambling all the time. And I think that if you're not, there's probably something inherently wrong with the structure or the situation you're in, if you're a designer. But the serious part is what threw me, and I couldn't quite get a handle on it until I remembered an essay. And it's an essay I read 30 years ago. It was written by Russell Baker, who used to write an "Observer" column in the New York Times. He's a wonderful humorist. And I'm going to read you this essay, or an excerpt from it because it really hit home for me. Here is a letter of friendly advice. [Paula Scher reads the letter by Russel Baker] Be serious, it says. What it means, of course, is, be solemn. Being solemn is easy. Being serious is hard. Children almost always begin by being serious, which is what makes them so entertaining when compared with adults as a class. Adults, on the whole, are solemn.

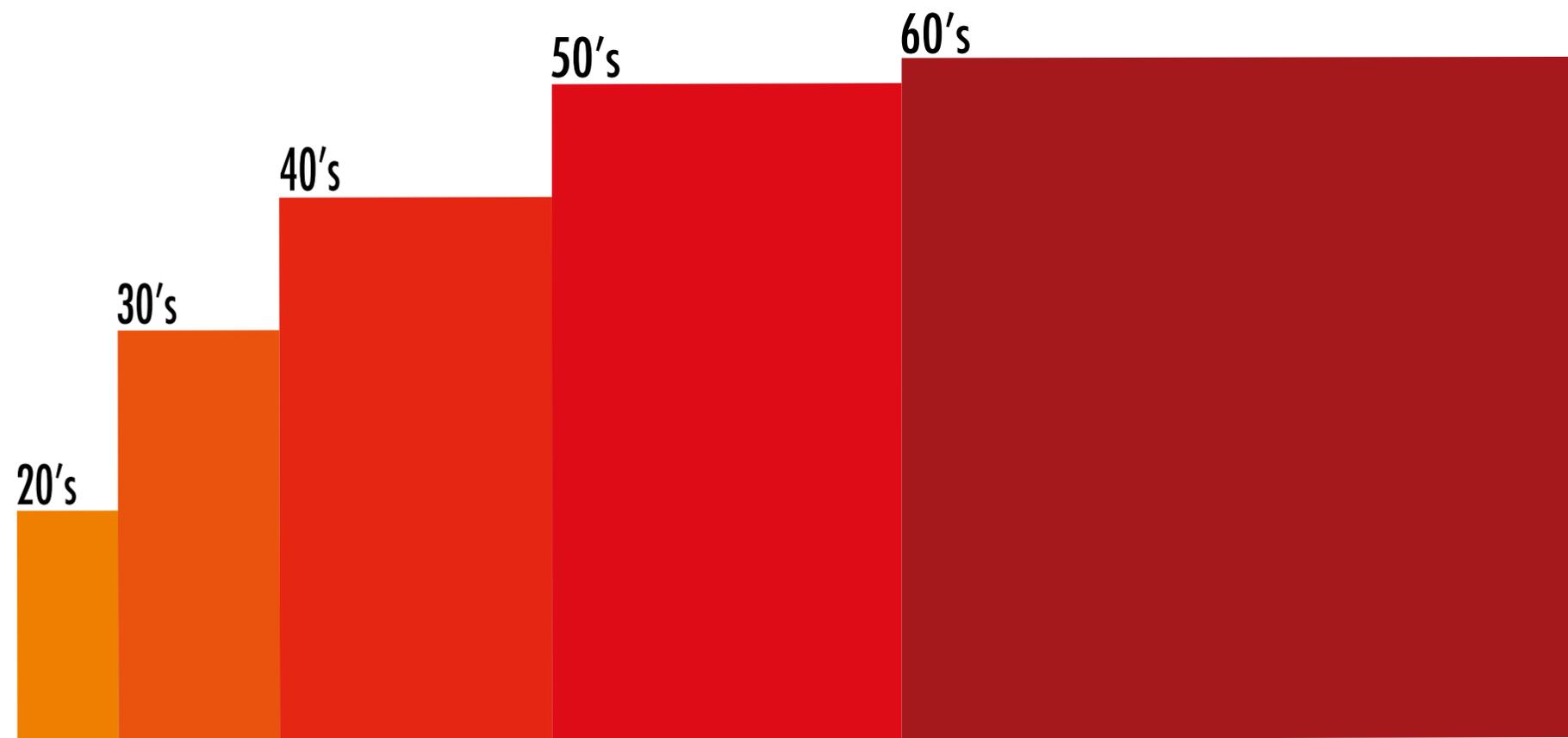
Now, when I apply Russell Baker's definition of solemnity or seriousness to design, it doesn't necessarily make any particular point about quality. Solemn design is often important and very effective design. Solemn design is also socially correct, and is accepted by appropriate audiences. It's what right-thinking designers and all the clients are striving for. Serious design, serious play, is something else. For one thing, it often happens spontaneously, intuitively, accidentally or incidentally. It can be achieved out of innocence, or arrogance, or out of selfishness, sometimes out of carelessness. But mostly, it's achieved through all those kind of crazy parts of human behavior that don't really make any sense. Serious design is imperfect. It's filled with the kind of craft laws that come from something being the first of its kind. Serious design is also--often--quite unsuccessful from the solemn point of view. That's because the art of serious play is about invention, change, rebellion--not perfection. Perfection happens during solemn play.

Now, I always saw design careers like surreal staircases. If you look at the staircase, you'll see that in your 20s the risers are very high and the steps are very short, and you make huge discoveries. You sort of leap up very quickly in your youth. That's because you don't know anything and you have a lot to learn, and so that anything you do is a learning experience and you're just jumping right up there. As you get older, the ri-

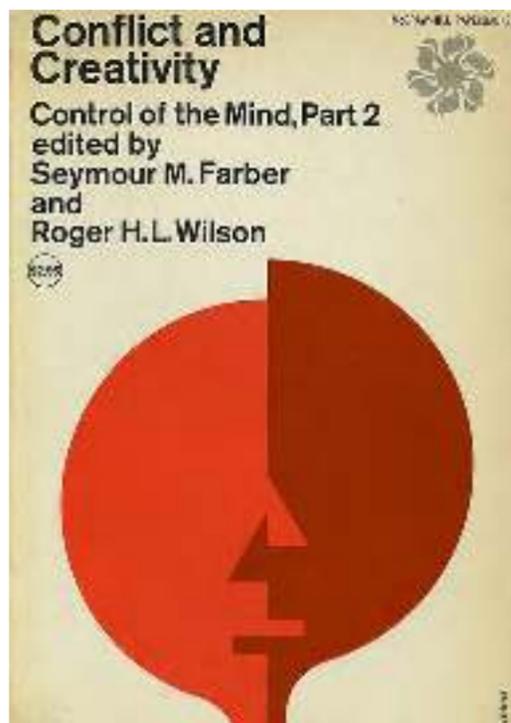
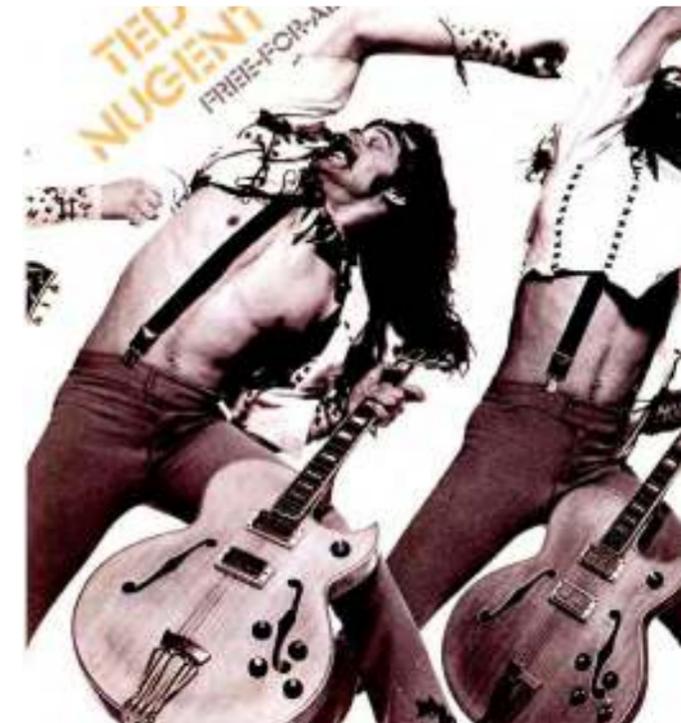
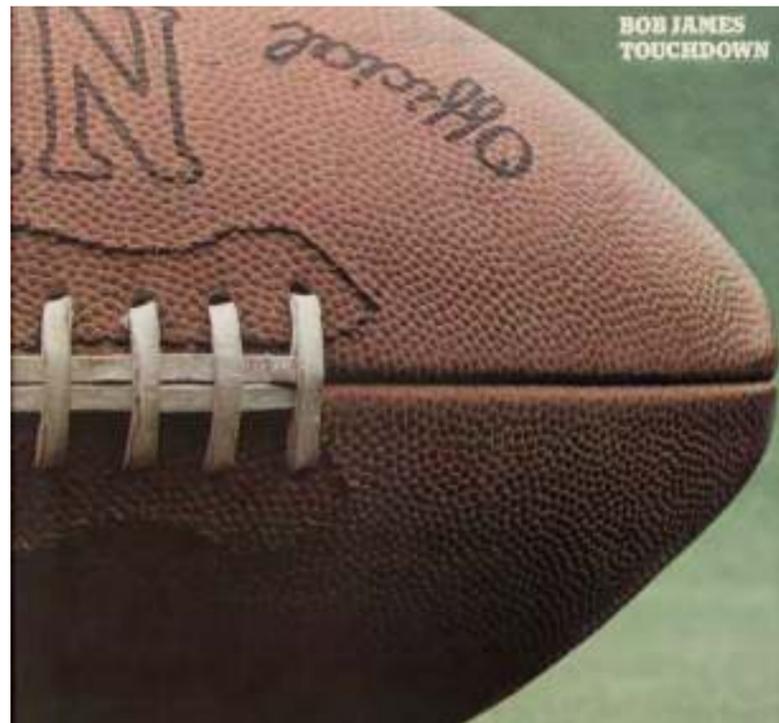
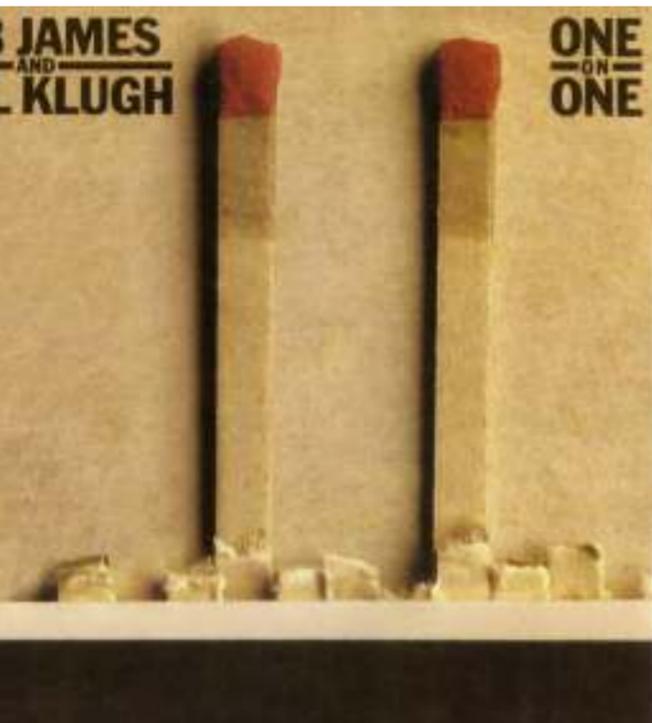
“Be serious, it says. What it means, of course, is, be solemn. Being solemn is easy. Being serious is hard.”

sers get shallower and the steps get wider, and you start moving along at a slower pace because you're making fewer discoveries. And as you get older and more decrepit, you sort of inch along on this sort of depressing, long staircase, leading you into oblivion. I find it's actually getting really

hard to be serious. I'm hired to be solemn, but I find more and more that I'm solemn when I don't have to be. And in my 35 years of working experience, I think I was really serious four times. In my early 20s, I really, really, really hated the typeface Helvetica. I thought the typeface Helve-



SCAN ME
TO READ
RUSSEL BAKER'S
ESSAY



tica was the cleanest, most boring, most fascistic, really repressive typeface, and I hated everything that was designed in Helvetica. And when I was in my college days, this was the sort of design that was fashionable and popular. This is actually quite a lovely bookjacket by Rudy de Harak, but I just hated it, because it was designed with Helvetica, and I made parodies about it. I just thought it was, you know, completely boring. My goal in life was to do stuff that wasn't made out of Helvetica. And to do stuff that wasn't made out of Helvetica was actually kind of hard because you had to find it. And there weren't a lot of books about the history of design in the early 70s. There weren't -- there wasn't a plethora of design publishing. You actually had to go to antique stores. You had to go to Europe. You had to go places and find the stuff. And what I responded to was, you know, Art Nouveau,

or deco, or Victorian typography, or things that were just completely not Helvetica. And I taught myself design this way, and this was sort of my early years, and I used these things in really goofy ways on record covers and in my design. I wasn't educated. I just sort of put these things together. I mixed up Victorian designs with pop, and I mixed up Art Nouveau with something else. And I made these very lush, very elaborate record covers, not because I was being a post-modernist or a historicist--because I didn't know what those things were. I just hated Helvetica. And that kind of passion drove me into very serious play, a kind of play I could never do now because I'm too well-educated. And there's something wonderful about that form of youth, where you can let yourself grow and play, and be really a brat, and then accomplish things. By the end of the '70s, actually, the stuff be-

“I used these things in really goofy ways... I wasn't educated.”

came known. I mean, these covers appeared all over the world, and they started winning awards, and people knew them. And I was suddenly a post-modernist, and I began a career in my own business. And first I was praised for it, then criticized for it, but the fact of the matter was, I had become solemn. I didn't do what I think was a piece of serious work again for about 14 years. I spent most of the '80s being quite solemn and I was living in this cycle of going from serious to solemn to hackneyed to dead, and getting rediscovered all over again.



The institutions are solemn, and so is the design. The best way to accomplish serious design--which I think we all have the opportunity to do--is to be totally and completely unqualified for the job. That doesn't happen very often, but it happened to me in the year 2000, when for some reason or another, a whole pile of different architects started to ask me to design the insides of theaters with them, where I would take environmental graphics and work them into buildings. I'd never done this kind of work before. I didn't know how to read an architectural plan, I didn't know what they were talking about, and I really couldn't handle the fact that a job--a single job--could go on for four years because I was used to immediacy in graphic design, and that kind of attention to detail was really bad for somebody like me, with ADD. It was a rough go, but I fell in love with this pro-

cess of actually integrating graphics into architecture because I didn't know what I was doing. I said, "Why can't the signage be on the floor?" New Yorkers look at their feet. And then I found that actors and actresses actually take their cues from the floor, so it turned out that these sorts of sign systems began to make sense. They integrated with the building in really peculiar ways. They ran around corners, they went up sides of buildings, and they melded into the architecture.

By the time I did Bloomberg's headquarters my work had begun to become accepted. People wanted it in big, expensive places. And that began to make it solemn. Bloomberg was all about numbers, and we did big numbers through the space and the numbers were projected on a spectacular LED that my partner, Lisa Strausfeld, programmed. But it be-

came the end of the seriousness of the play, and it started to, once again, become solemn.

John Hockenberry told you a bit about my travail with Citibank, that is now a 10-year relationship, and I still work with them. And I actually am amused by them and like them, and think that as a very, very, very, very, very big corporation they actually keep their graphics very nice. I drew the logo for Citibank on a napkin in the first meeting. That was the play part of the job. And then I spent a year going to long, tedious, boring meetings, trying to sell this logo through to a huge corporation to the point of tears. I thought I was going to go crazy at the end of this year. So during this time I needed some kind of counterbalance for this crazy, crazy existence of going to these long, idiotic meetings. And I was up in my country house, and for some

reason, I began painting these very big, very involved, laborious, complicated maps of the entire world, and listing every place on the planet, and putting them in, and misspelling them, and putting things in the wrong spot, and completely controlling the information, and going totally and completely nuts with it. They would take me about six months initially, but then I started getting faster at it. Here's the United States. Every single city of the United States is on here. And it hung for about eight months at the Cooper-Hewitt, and people walked up to it, and they would point to a part of the map and they'd say, "Oh, I've been here." And, of course, they couldn't have been because it's in the wrong spot. But what I liked about it was, I was controlling my own idiotic information, and I was creating my own palette of information, and I was totally and completely at play.



“To go back and to find out what the next thing is that you can push, that you can invent, that you can be ignorant about, that you can be arrogant about, that you can fail with, and that you can be a fool with.”

Somebody was up at my house and saw the paintings and recommended them to a gallery, and I had a first show about two and-a-half years ago, and I showed these paintings. And then a funny thing happened--they sold. We began doing these big silkscreen prints, and they started selling, too. So, the gallery wanted me to have another show in two years, which meant that I really had to paint these paintings much faster than I had ever done them. And I--they started to become more political, and I picked areas that sort of were in the news or that I had some feeling about, and I began doing these things. And then this funny thing happened. I found that I was no longer at play. I was actually in this solemn landscape of fulfilling an expectation for a show, which is not where I started with these things. So, while they became successful, I know how to make them, so I'm not a neophyte, and

they're no longer serious--they have become solemn. And that's a terrifying factor--when you start something and it turns that way--because it means that all that's left for you is to go back and to find out what the next thing is that you can push, that you can invent, that you can be ignorant about, that you can be arrogant about, that you can fail with, and that you can be a fool with. Because in the end, that's how you grow, and that's all that matters. So, I'm plugging along here--and I'm just going to have to blow up the staircase. Thank you very much.





“I was controlling my own idiotic information, and I was creating my own palette of information.”

“Be serious, it says. What it means, of course, is, be solemn. Being solemn is easy. Being serious is hard. Children almost always begin by being serious, which is what makes them so entertaining when compared with adults as a class. Adults, on the whole, are solemn.”

SUCCESS DOESN'T LEAD YOU ANYWHERE

Interview By Plazm, Monday, December 1, 2018

I think you can't be successful without having failures. And I don't think that success leads you anywhere. Because when you're successful, you tend to repeat those things you already know how to do, and they become terrible crutches. Nothing like a good, sloppy failure to wake you up and make you reinvent. When I began working on environmental projects, and I didn't understand materials yet and I didn't understand what was possible and impossible, I think I did things that were incredibly creative, simply because I didn't know what I was doing. Where now, I find it harder to be as innovative as I was earlier, because I know too much. So, I have to find something that I really don't know how to do. But I find that that's always the most exciting challenge, to be ignorant. I like it when I'm kind of making some big mistake, or doing something that you're not supposed to do, like painting a

whole building, that sort of thing. Where people thought 'gee, what are you doing,' and then it becomes iconic. But you don't know it at the time. You're just like, "that would be great," and just sort of make a Photoshop rendering and think "wow." I started out as an art director, art directing record jackets and I used to do about 150 covers a year and they were all squares and they were all the same and I was in my twenties and it was an absolutely great job. I never thought I would be designing the insides of buildings, or the outsides of buildings or rethinking parks or doing massive global identities or painting--I didn't think I'd be doing any of that. Designers have to grow, because otherwise, design doesn't grow. Designers as they're producing and making things cannot rely on past successes, because that is the path to mediocrity. If you make what is already perceived as good,



by definition, you're mediocre. You have to find the next way to do it that hasn't been thought of before. Very often, you make failures on your way to do that because it involves experimentation and it involves risk-taking. What I try to do to make those sorts of graphic breakthroughs, is to work on projects either where I'm totally unqualified for the job, so I don't know what I'm doing and I make a mistake by accident that turns out to be terrific. Or I take a piece of design, a project that I can take on a pro-bono basis, usually for a graphic arts organization, and experiment with it. These things are very important

to me and I do that--I would consider that R+D. Part of maintaining a viable design practice is that you are always looking to grow and to change. If you are in any form of business and you do the same thing over and over again, and you're not growing and changing with your time and not looking for the next best way to be expressive, you'll be out of business. It's not just true for designers, it's true for everybody.



SCAN ME
TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT PAULA'S
IDEA OF CREATIVITY



“To be creative is to have ideas and ideas come from all kinds of places. It’s mostly being able to have an open mind about something. My output seems to come from a physical and emotional sense of activity, and usually optimism. The key is to accept both circumstances and run with the ideas when they strike.”

HOW PENTAGRAM’S PAULA SCHER MAKES A MAP

Article By Diana Budds, Thursday, September 3, 2016

Compare New York City’s wayfinding signage to this hand-drawn map of the city’s buildings and landmarks. One is certainly a more faithful depiction of the street grid; both are steeped in editorial commentary. But which tells you more about the city? Which is more truthful?

When Pentagram partner Paula Scher—the graphic designer behind the branding of Shake Shack, the New School, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art—paints a map, she’s not interested in making a carbon copy of reality. “I’m not mapping for accuracy,” she says. “I’m mapping in a way that’s about expression and emotion.” Last month, an exhibition of Scher’s map paintings of the United States opened at the Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery. The series presents the country as she sees it: an amalgam of different connections between people and place. “It’s really anti design,” she says. For each piece, she analyzes upwards of 50 different sources: airline flight patterns, climate, the Interstate system, driving times and mileage between cities, median real estate prices, and ZIP codes versus area codes, for example. Patterns begin to emerge in her mind and she renders them onto the canvas as a frenetic col-

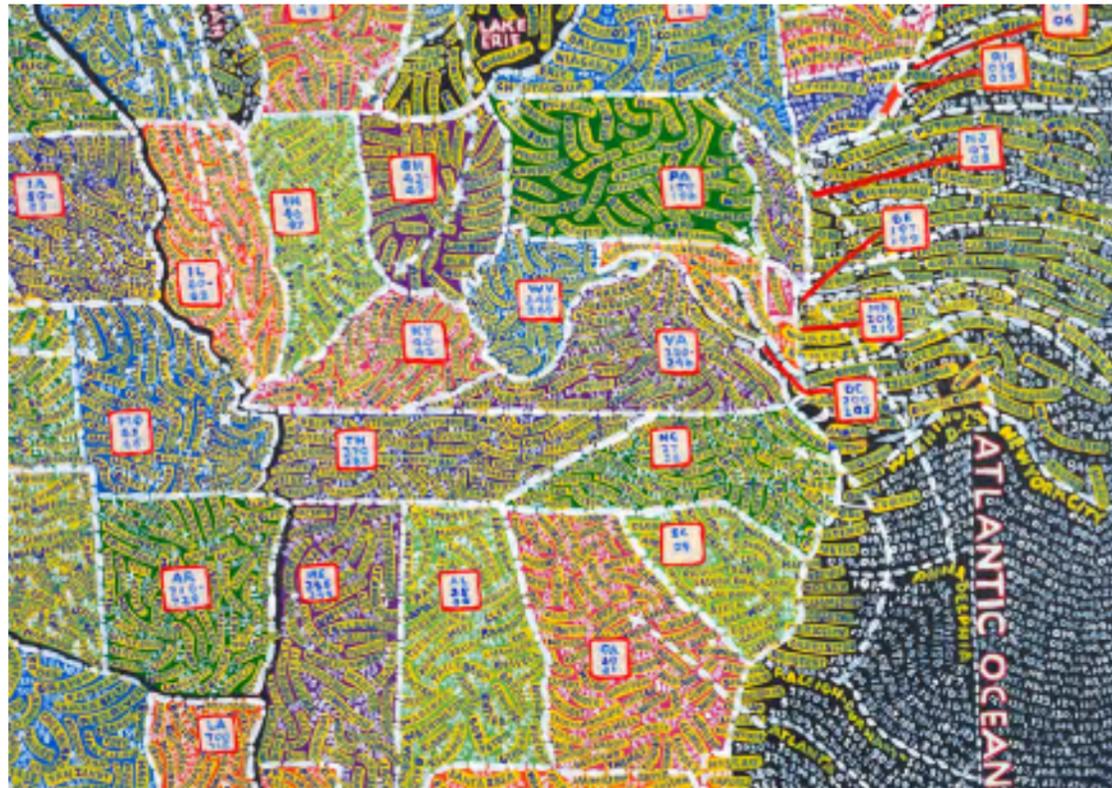


“Data doesn’t just exist; it’s selected or not selected.”



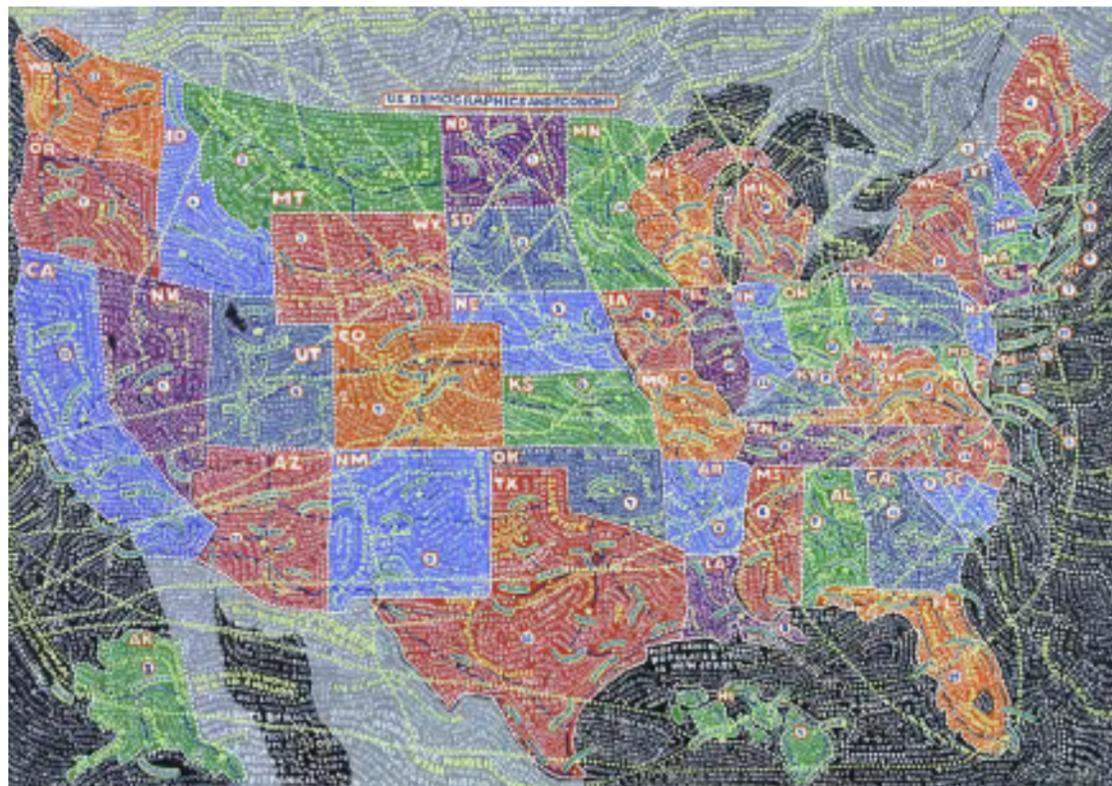
“Scher became fascinated with maps at an early age. Her father was a civil engineer with the U.S. Geological Survey.”

lage of prismatic labels and pathways. Scher became fascinated with maps at an early age. Her father was a civil engineer with the U.S. Geological Survey and invented a tool that corrected distortions in aerial photography. Learning about complex representation and how mapmakers skewed information stoked a lifelong interest in organizing information. “All Maps Lie” is the title of the intro essay to her 2011 book called Maps. “With the plethora of available information, people make assumptions about things they read as literal fact or they go to the Internet and they research something and assume they actually have correct information when they don’t,” Scher says of the contemporary infographic phenomenon. “A huge difference in the way we view charts, graphs, diagrams, and maps now as opposed to 20 years ago is that in the past they usually accompanied some editorial point of view. Now that actually isn’t the case. These things exist independently. What’s problematic about looking at and reading information is that we don’t realize that there are editorial decisions in it. Data doesn’t just exist; it’s selected or not selected.” The show only features paintings of the United States, she explains, “largely because it is an election year. We’re so focused on what people think and feel, so the maps are inadvertently—if you really studied them—quite political.” The country’s division into north and south, east and west, coast versus heartland is especially intriguing to Scher because the state divisions don’t necessarily reflect the reality of how the country



Q

Which is the biggest lesson that you have learned during your brilliant career?



A

Life and work are fluid.
They change all the
time, culture changes,
technology changes,
and you need to adapt.

IMAGES CREDITS

- P. 1-2 Infographic by Marta Dami
- P. 3 Bookcover of Conflict and Creativity
- P. 3 Album Cover (CBS) for Bob James and Earl Klugh, Photography (Cover): Arnold Rosenberg, 1979
- P. 3 Album Cover for Bob James, Touchdown, 1978
- P. 4 Album Cover (CBS) for performances of works for Leonard Bernstein - Stravinsky, 1976
- P. 4 Album Cover for Ted Nugent, 1976
- P. 5 Pentagram, Environmental Graphics for Grey Group
- P. 5 The New Jersey performing Arts Centre
- P. 6 Pentagram, Environmental Graphics for Grey Group
- P. 6 Achievement First Endeavor Middle School, Brooklyn
- P. 7 Map: "The World", 2006
- P. 8 Picture from the video: Subway Series Hall of Fame Paula Scher
- P. 9 Detail from Map: "Europe", 2009
- P. 11 Picture from the article Climbing the creativity staircase on a/d/o.com Climbing the creativity staircase
- P. 12 Environmental Graphics: Queens Mural
- P. 14 WalkNYC Building Illustrations, by Michael Bierut & team, designed at Pentagram, 2013
- P. 14 Map: "Africa", 2007
- P. 15-16 Map: "NYC Transit", 2008
- P. 17 Portrait of Paula Scher by Ian Roberts
- P. 19 Map: "U.S Counties and zip codes", 2015
- P. 19 Map: "U.S Demographics and economy, 2015

