

LOUISE FILI

Food, type and all things italian

DESIGN|VERSO

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DesignVerso è il prototipo editoriale di una “collana di design” concepita come elaborato didattico nel Laboratorio di Fondamenti del Progetto. Ogni numero della collana è immaginato dagli studenti come monografia dedicata a personaggi illustri del design.

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DESIGN VERSO

EDITORIAL

Louise Fili immediately piqued our curiosity because of her strength, passion and charm - and of course because she says she's in love with Italy and food!

We decided to first talk about her and her job, to then move to her works and restylings. However, her character will show up in every single column, since her unique style seems to reflect her personality throughout every single project: each one of them is graceful and elegant and filled with timeless quality.

She is considered a leader in the postmodern return to historical styles in graphic design, and still isn't as valued and appreciated as she should. This is why we wanted to focus on the lack of mentors and role models aside from the loss of memory. With our last column we'd like to start a reflection on the topic in order to make things right for her and other forgotten designers, but also to help who's approaching this world and not just “sit around and wait for the phone to ring.”

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1 THE ANATOMY OF A STRONG CHARACTER

Find something you're
passionate about

Curated by Giada Germanò



PIONEER OF RETRO DESIGN

Written by Richard P. Meggs

During the 1980s, graphic designers gained a growing understanding and appreciation of their history. A movement based on historical revival first emerged in New York and spread rapidly throughout the world. Called “retro” by some designers, it was based on an uninhibited eclectic interest in modernist European design from the first half of the century, a flagrant disregard for the rules of proper typography, and a fascination with eccentric and mannered typefaces designed and widely used during the 1920s and 1930s that were more or less forgotten after World War II. The prefix retro suggests the term retrograde, implying “backward-looking” and “contrary to the usual.” Retro may be considered an aspect of postmodernism because of its interest in historical revivals, yet it paraphrases modern design from the decades between the wars rather than

the Greco-Roman and Renaissance motifs employed by many architects. The New York approach to retro began with a small number of designers, including Paula Scher (b. 1948), Louise Fili (b. 1951), and Carin Goldberg (b. 1953). They rediscovered earlier twentieth-century graphics, ranging from the turn-of-the-century Vienna Secession to modernist but decorative European typefaces popular during the two decades between the world wars. Their approach to space, color, and texture is often personal and original. Unorthodox attitudes about the accepted rules and regulations of design and typography permit them to take risks and experiment by exuberantly mixing fonts, using extreme letterspacing, and printing type in subtle color-on-color combinations. They are, however, typographic precisionists seeking a

sublime level of visual organization. In many of their designs, typography does not play a role secondary to illustration and photography but moves to center stage to become figurative, animated, and expressive. The self-consciously eclectic aspects of retro continue a trait of New York design: Scher credits Seymour Chwast of Push Pin Studios and his use of Victorian, art nouveau, and art deco forms as an important inspiration; Fili worked with the late Herb Lubalin, who often called upon the extravagance of Victorian and art nouveau typographic themes. Scher and Fili moved New York’s tradition of historicism forward into the 1920s and 1930s. Retro thrived in book-jacket design. The work of Louise Fili, who developed a deep love of typography while working in her college’s type shop, is highly personal and intuitive.

After working for Herb Lubalin and art directing Pantheon Books from 1978 to 1989, she launched her own studio. Her early work evidenced Lubalin’s influence and then grew in power and originality from this starting point. Fili routinely vacationed in Europe each summer after the annual crunch of producing cover designs for Pantheon’s huge fall list, and her travels inspired the development of an original approach to American book-jacket design. Eccentric letterforms on signs at little Italian seashore resorts built between the world wars fascinated her, as did graphics from the same era found in French and Italian flea markets and used book stalls. These vernacular graphics incorporated textured backgrounds, silhouetted photographs, and modernistic sans-serif typefaces with decorative



New York City during the 80s

elements or exaggerated proportions. After World War II, design sensibilities shifted, and these typestyles and techniques fell into disuse. When typography converted from metal to photographic methods in the 1960s and 1970s, the outmoded faces were not converted to the new processes. Fili responded to them with fresh eyes and began to introduce them into her work. Fili's work is elegant and refined, possessing great subtlety and even softness. Seeking the right graphic resonance for each book, she searches for the appropriate typeface, color scheme, and imagery by producing volumes of tissue layouts.

Although the death of hand-set metal typography made many old faces unavailable, Fili works around this problem and uses now-forgotten faces – such as Iris, a condensed sans serif with thin horizontal strokes, and Electra Seminegra, a bold geometric sans-serif face with inverted triangles for the crossbar of the capital A – by restoring letterforms from old printed specimens and commissioning handlettering of the missing letters or even an entire title. In Fili's book covers, color and imagery resonate with the essence and spirit of the literature, almost as though she has developed a sixth sense for interpreting the author's work.

“

It's a fusion of almost everything, in the way that I think society today tends to take cultural memory. Because there's an internet, it's on there forever. I think that's the way kids see the world today. They actually speak to each other using retro concepts now because the internet culture has kept that memory alive, constantly.

- Joseph M. Khan

”

Old design material rediscovered by Louise





Scan here to watch the video

A JOB OF GENUINE INTERESTS

Presentation by Louise Fili

When I was in high school I sent away for an Osmiroid pen that I had seen advertised in the back of *The New Yorker*, and I taught myself calligraphy and started making illuminated manuscripts of Bob Dylan lyrics and selling them to my classmates. I went to Skidmore College, a school where, if you couldn't paint, they would tell you you were graphically oriented. Once I understood what graphic design was, I was hooked. I realized why I loved making alphabet books and calligraphy, photographing signage, collecting wrappers and labels. I got my job with Herb Lubalin on my 25th birthday by simply walking through the door. I had the great luxury of having my office in very close proximity to Herb's. His sketches were phenomenal. To communicate something that other people would need photography or illustration for, he could say it all with type. I became

art director of Pantheon Books. Pantheon's list was so obscure that no one really ever paid attention to it, so, with no one really watching, I very slowly made changes, and then suddenly everybody started to notice. I was looking for ways to make my covers be unique, whether it was hand lettering or scanning in old alphabets in old foundries and then making up the missing letters. I designed close to 2000 book covers. I received a fan letter one day from Steve Heller. I still know it by heart. It was: "Dear Louise, I just want to tell you that your book and your book jacket designs for Pantheon are excellent. Consistently so. Every time I am struck by something in the bookroom or in the incoming pile, it is something that you've been responsible for. Best regards, Steve Heller." That was in 1982, and in 1983 we were married.

My son Nick was born, and Pantheon gave me a three-week leave and a fax machine, and I saw no reason to go back. It never occurred to me to be scared to strike out on my own. I always just sort of looked for signs. People have to find you in the phonebook, and so I had to call it

[her studio] after myself, and I knew so that was somewhat of a liability. But I took this opportunity to send a very clear message: if you have a problem with my being female, I don't want you as a client. I wanted to focus on the three things that I'm passionate about: food, type, and all things Italian.



Watching her design is like watching her cook: the intense attention to details is identical.

- Steven Heller



Louise And her husband, Steven Heller





Louise showing an object from her collection

I started out with my book jacket clients and started making inroads into restaurants. Then from there, I went into food packing. Having come from an Italian household where the main subject of conversation every morning was what to make for dinner, it really should have come as no surprise to me that I would end up working for the food industry. I love being able to see my work in a supermarket; likewise, just walking around certain neighbourhoods of New York and seeing restaurants that I've done that are still open.

I had all these collections, and then, of course when I met Steve, we started collecting together, and it was the impetus to start doing books together. Having my own projects is really what helps define me as a designer.

I collect these things, particularly from Italy but also from France, because it's a past that I didn't have that I kind of wished I had.

In the last several years I've been doing books that I write as well as design which gives me a great opportunity to travel more to Italy and France, which has worked out very well.

“NEVER SIT
AROUND AND
JUST WAIT FOR
THE PHONE TO
RING”

-Louise Fili

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY

Louise Fili interviewed by Tina Essmaker

Do you feel a responsibility to contribute to something bigger than yourself?

One thing that was very unfortunate for me when I was in school and just starting out as a designer in New York was that I had no role models. I couldn't find any women working in the field of graphic design – and I tried very hard to find them. Today, it's really, really important to me to be a role model in any way I can. I've been teaching at the School of Visual Arts for over 30 years, where most of my students are female. Many of the employees I hire are women as well.

Are you satisfied creatively?

On a good day, I'm 90% satisfied, which is fine; I don't think one should ever be 100% satisfied because then there is nothing left to aspire to. I always like to have that 10% that keeps me moving and thinking about the next project that I want to do. I believe that every designer has to have personal projects – it's the only way to grow and find a unique voice. At any given point in time, I'm working on an independent project in the studio and that's very important to me – it's what defines me as a designer. Right now, I'm working on a book of my photographs of Italian signs, which I have been taking for over thirty years and

am very passionate about. I have the photos on a dedicated shelf in my office, arranged in binders by city, and they're an incredible source of inspiration for me. I started taking them as 35mm slides, switched to a point-and-shoot camera, and eventually went digital. I never meant for them to be anything but reference, but now that the technology is more advanced, I can make them look better. That's also ironic because, thanks to technology, a lot of these signs are disappearing and are now dumbed down to mediocre type and cheap plastic. I actually took time off between December and January to go to the American Academy in Rome so I could have an entire month to photograph all the signs in Rome. It was heaven.

How often do you go back to Italy?

As often as I can. I use any excuse to go. This year, I'll be traveling there three times, which is just right.

Do you still have family over there?

I lost track of them, unfortunately. My father was from Sicily and my mother was from Calabria, which is the toe of the boot that's kicking Sicily.



Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people.

- Leo Burnett



Is there anything you hope to do or explore in five to ten years?

I think I just want to keep pursuing personal projects and fueling my interest in going to Italy as often as possible. Within the last ten years, I've done a number of my own books. I started doing books with Steve and then, when I started designing covers for The Little Book Room, publisher of specialized travel guides, mostly for Italy and France, they asked me to write and design a little guidebook to artisan shops in Florence. I said: "I am neither a shopper nor a writer", but apparently it didn't matter. It doesn't take much for me to get on a plane to Italy to go interview shopkeepers and taste test gelato. I was really glad that happened because it was something I had never done before and it forced me to use another side of my brain. After I did that, I was asked to do a book on "what makes Italy Italy", so I did *Italianissimo* – the only way I can describe this book is that it's all the things we love and sometimes love to hate about Italy. One book led to another and now I'm doing the sign book.

If you could go back and do one thing differently what would it be?

Maybe I should have learned how to design on a computer. (laughing)

Do you use a computer at all?

No, and I prefer it that way. Most designers of my generation are equally technology-challenged. For me, the excitement is doing sketches. My sketches start out being very rough and then get very, very precise. Then I'll go gather reference, sit with one of my designers and go over it carefully, and supervise the execution of it. We try very hard to make sure things don't look like they were made on a computer.

What advice would you give to a young designer starting out?

Follow your heart. You have to combine design with passion, otherwise, there's no reason to be a designer. It's not a way to get rich – at least I've not found it to be. But doing it is what makes me happy. At this point, my work and my life are totally, inextricably combined – you can't separate one from the other and that's just the way I like it.



Design process of "The Mermaid Inn" restaurant

How does where you live impact your creativity?

Well, in an ideal world, I would be living in Europe, but that wasn't meant to happen. And I have to say, if I had moved to Italy, I don't think I ever would have been able to do the work I've done. I love living in New York and it's the only city in America that I would want to live in as long as I can travel to Italy on a regular basis as a visitor. I think that is a much more practical way of enjoying Italy because living there can be incredibly frustrating, especially when trying to get anything done, which is why many good Italian designers have moved here.

Louise working in her studio



Is it important to you to be part of a creative community of people?

Of course. Absolutely. Going back to my art directing days, being able to work with great illustrators, photographers, and retouchers was so important and that's the wonderful thing about being in New York.

Are your friends mostly involved in the creative industry?

Yes, because that's the only language that I speak. I have friends who are outside of design, but it's much easier to associate with people who understand and appreciate what designers do.

What does a typical day look like for you?

First, I wake up around 6am and try to find a reason not to go to the gym. Sometimes I can't find one, so I'll go. Then I walk to work and stop by the farmer's market on the way, which is an important part of my day. I get to work around 9am and will typically have a few meetings with clients here at the studio. I only take on clients who have products that I really believe in. As I mentioned, I have a small staff, so I work very closely with both of my designers. Actually, I described my perfect day in my book, *Elegantissima*. I'll read it to you: "Here is my perfect brand-name day: dressed in Ilux, I have breakfast courtesy of Irving Farm Coffee Company and American Spoon, I walk to the studio carrying a Blue Q tote, work until it is time for a pick-me-up of Q.bel chocolate or a passion-fruit sorbetto from L'Arte del Gelato, have a glass of Calea Nero d'Avola at aperitivo hour, and stop in at the Mermaid Inn for a lobster roll on the way home. Small businesses make good business." That's my perfect day!

What are your typical hours?

9am–6pm. I never want my staff to stay longer than that. If we can't get it done in that amount of time, we should just pick up again the next morning. I don't believe in taking advantage of others' schedules. I try to manage the jobs so that we never have unreasonable deadlines. I don't think that's fair to anybody.

How do you spend your evenings?

On personal projects and cooking. I like knowing who



Louise in her studio

I'm buying my ingredients from, so I stop at the farmer's market on the way to work, take everything with me to the studio, and bring it home at night. Cooking is the other way I love to express myself.

What music are you listening to right now?

In the studio, I really like to listen to soundtracks from Italian and French movies from the 40s, 50s, and 60s – I'm sure you've never had that response before.

Your favorite film?

I think it would be *La Strada* by Fellini. It's a great one.

Do you have a favorite book?

It's hard to only choose one because I have many favorites, but I do love a book called *The Wine-Dark Sea* by Leonardo Sciascia. It's full of short stories that so concisely capture the essence of Sicily in a very beautiful book.

Favorite food?

I could never choose one. I will eat anything in Italy, unless it has dairy in it because I'm lactose intolerant.

What kind of legacy do you hope to leave?

I think it goes back to what I was saying before about role models. If I've been able to inspire one young female designer, I will be satisfied.



Scan this on your Spotify app to listen to the playlist
"Original Music for the Movies of Federico Fellini"

SIGNS AROUND THE WORLD

A trip around the world in search of the most interesting signs

Curated by Giulia Schena





Scan here to watch the video

GRAFICA DELLA STRADA: ITALY

Presentation by Louise Fili extracted from AIGA design Youtube channel

03:49 For decades I had been obsessively documenting signs all over Italy while I watched heartbroken as they continued to disappear year after year after year. I had started shooting these signs as 35 millimetres slides, then point-and-shoot snapshots and finally digital. Although they were never really meant for anything more than my own reference and enjoyment. But as digital technology got better and better, I was finally able to consider putting these into a book. Ironically, it was that same technology that was making the signs disappear to be replaced with clumsily crafted plastic signs made from free fonts.

04:44 I felt a sense of urgency to go back and rephotograph these signs before they were all gone.



GRAFICA DELLA STRADA
2014 | Princeton
Architectural Press



GRAFICA DELLA STRADA
2014 | Princeton Architectural Press

So I went to the American Academy in Rome, known to some as Mount Olympus, armed with a modest Google map and my secret weapon. The telescoping pole gave me what I had always wanted in life: an extra three feet of height.

05:34 Futurists and fascist typography shows up all over Rome from the zoo to a commuter train station (Roma Flaminio). This is the only station in Rome with typography like this, which is sort of odd, which later inspired me to design a typeface. This is the inside of that train station where I was prepared for the first time ever in Italy to bribe a government official.

06:03 This is Garbatella, a housing complex with a sign like this on every building. Do you see that there's something missing on the left side to the left of the P? After the war all the fascist symbols were removed with great patriotic zeal.

06:21 I tried whenever possible to speak to the shop owners like at this clothing store that I found on Google Street View and the owner gave me this photo of what the shop looked like when his grandfather opened for business in 1939 and when I asked him about the style of the typography he sheepishly said: "We stole the M and the N from Mussolini."

American Academy, Rome





GRAFICA DELLA STRADA
2014 | Princeton Architectural Press

06:53 This, in my opinion, is the sexiest script in Rome, and it's a corner sign so you get to see it twice. Again, it was a third generation octogenarian owner who I spoke to. I was really curious to find out when this sign was created and he told me that the vertical sign was made in 1948 but the script had to wait because the tenants on the second floor were not very happy about it. They didn't want a sign, no matter how beautiful, blocking their view, so I asked him "So what did you do about it?" he shrugged as only a roman could do and he said: "So I bought the apartment."

FLORENCE

07:34 Over the course of that year I took three more trips to Italy so I could return to different cities to reshoot as much as I could. Each location was unique. Florence for example has butcher shop signs like this which I've never found in any other city and I love how they worked the building number into the design, that was pretty ingenious. I didn't find every sign like this one which is why we have Photoshop.

08:03 This is the iconic Florence train station built in 1930 with beautiful modernist signage that is still intact throughout the station.

BOLOGNA

08:25 Whenever I go to Bologna I always stay at this hotel, it's the green clock sign that you see in the middle of the photo, the hotel Orologio, so that I'm perfectly situated to see all three of these signs at once although one of them is now gone. You can see that I took this photo of the cappelleria on the left when it was still indeed a hats store. Now they sell shoes but at least they kept the sign.

VENICE

08:55 How many of you have ever been to Venice and never gotten lost? That's why they have these mosaic signs on the pavement with arrows pointing to hotels and restaurants that no longer exist. As soon as I returned to Venice I started shooting these mosaic signs using a truncated version of my telescoping pole and I couldn't help but notice the strange reaction that I was getting from the locals. Everyone put up their hands and knock hard until I finally realized that it looked to them like I was holding a rifle. By the way the sign was so filthy that I had to go back the next day with a box of baby wipes. And wasn't I happy when I found this mosaic which I hadn't seen before and it fit the double page proportion of the book perfectly, that's what we all will wait for.

09:51 The street signs in Venice are done in an interpretation of Didot thanks to a brief Napoleonic occupation in the early 19th century and their stencilled onto whitewashed rectangles called "Nizioleti", which is Venetian dialect for little sheets. Nearby on the island of Burano they have a more rustic interpretation of the "Nizioleti" letter form and a baffling numeral system that I finally managed to decode.



GRAFICA DELLA STRADA
2014 | Princeton Architectural Press

LUCCA

10:34 Lucca has one of my favourite signs and as you can see this is no longer anything close to a pasticceria. The Lucchesi are very good about keeping their signs just for the sake of beauty.

SICILY

11:20 Sicily has a particular affection for wrought iron scripts as well as typographic beaded curtains which I've never seen anywhere else in Italy.

TORINO

11:35 Then finally going all the way back up North to Torino where you can always find elegant signage in gold and brass, and this billboard size sign for a movie theatre which is still in operation. The first time I saw this sign I gasped and by the way the theatre was originally named Dux and it was changed to Lux's after the war.

Signs around Italy



“TODAY’S INSPIRATIONS FOR YOUNG DESIGNERS ARE ON INSTAGRAM AND PINTEREST, BUT NOTHING MATCHES THE THRILL OF DISCOVERY IN PERSON-TO TOUCH SOMETHING, TO BE YOUR OWN CURATOR, NOT JUST OBSERVE THE WAY SOMEONE ELSE CURATED IT”

-Louise Fili

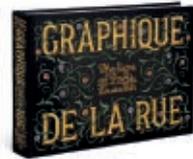


Scan here to watch the video

GRAPHIQUE DE LA RUE: PARIS

Presentation by Louise Fili extracted from AIGA design Youtube channel

12:04 So when this book came out to my great surprise have got a lot of really good press in Italy. All the reviews had basically the same thing: “We passed by these signs every day and never noticed before and it took an American to come here to make us appreciate them.” So even before I finished this book I felt the same sense of urgency to plan a trip for the next sign hunt. Certainly Paris, with its refined sensibilities, would show no tolerance for the removal of its beloved signs.



GRAPHIQUE DE LA RUE
2015 | Princeton Architectural Press

12:38 This is from the before and after section of the book which shows why it was so important for me to document these signs. This Tabac sign in the Marais which I thought would stay there forever had turned into the lacklustre “Le Renard” as you can see below.

12:59 The once beautiful Deco facade of Atlas became yet another victim of default type like so many others.

13:10 Then there was the world’s greatest script for “Le Montana” and the new sign is not even worth discussing.

14:43 I think my favourite thing about doing these books is taking a wrong turn which is how I found this deco sign

for a butter and eggs shop. Although a lot of the neon is rapidly disappearing I tried to find every example I could. Once I was back in New York I spent even more time trying to locate the cameo appearance for this sign for “Le Select” in the film *Breathless* which was extremely brief but very memorable.



GRAPHIQUE DE LA RUE
2015 | Princeton Architectural Press

15:17 Here’s my big question, is there a law in Paris that says that all hairdressers have to have a sign in a funky script?

15:27 I decided it would be best to focus on mosaics since those are more difficult to remove. This entryway to the “Printemps” department store unfortunately had a lot of foot traffic and a guard who takes his job far too seriously but every time he turned away I would kick the black floor mats further out of the frame so I could get on with my work.



GRAPHIQUE DE LA RUE
2015 | Princeton Architectural Press

15:53 Only in Paris could a public toilet be considered a historic monument. This is an art nouveau restroom that had closed in the early 1980s so I had to photograph the signs through a padlocked gate but the mosaic artist apparently planned accordingly leaving his credit front-and-centre.

16:16 There were many other noteworthy mosaic artisans working in Paris.

16:27 Through a bit of detective work, I found this catalogue with the address of his workshop and I remembered that I had just photographed a mosaic facade on that very street.

16:41 It was the French society of mineral waters, a fantasy waterscape with cascading bubbles and insert crowns.

16:55 What is Paris without the metro signs by the brilliant Hector Guimard. The typography of the metro stations has continued to evolve over time and never disappoints, even with the occasional one-offs like this one at the route to service station.

17:44 Optique are on every block identified only by these signs. Never any type although I have to say I really loved that one in the upper right hand corner that looks like they were drawn with a sharpie.

17:59 The anthropomorphic signs “Au pied du cochon”, the pig’s foot, and “Ocean key foam”, the smoking dog, are a natural fit for this genre. The smoking dog was the inspiration for a logo I did recently for a new restaurant in New York. “Poulet sans tête” which is being made into a neon sign as we speak.



POULET SANS TÊTE
New York



Scan here to watch the video

GRÁFICA DE LES RAMBLES: BARCELONA

18:27 Barcelona, modernista and deco paradise, was my next stop where I did this book which was published just two weeks ago.

18:41 Here it wasn't just about the type but in many cases it was the entire facade that needed to be documented like this mosaic and stained glass tour-de-force. I had to work very very quickly this time.



GRAFICA DE LES RAMBLES
2017 | Princeton
Architectural Press



GRAFICA DE LES RAMBLES
2017 | Princeton Architectural Press

18:58 The historic fabric store “El Indio”, which had opened in 1870, had closed just before I got there and this sign for a chocolate shop was removed a week after I photographed it.



El Indio, Barcelona

19:17 This sign for a photo studio was one that I couldn't wait to see in person. I've been checking regularly on Google Street View to make sure that it was still there and as soon as I arrived in Barcelona I literally ran to the storefront where I found this. I felt like I had missed the removal by a matter of minutes and I probably did. I was devastated, this had happened with a number of other signs in Barcelona but this one was really tragic.



GRAFICA DE LES RAMBLES
2017 | Princeton Architectural Press

19:50 But the next day I was interviewed by a reporter from the Spanish newspaper *El País* and I couldn't help but mention my tale of woe to the reporter. This was in turn noted in the article that appeared a day later in the paper. A week later when I returned to New York I received an email from Ángel Lopez, grandson of the original owner, who said "My family and I were very moved by the article and, if you're ever back in Barcelona, we will remount the sign so that you can take a picture." How long could an offer like that last? I went back immediately and the whole Lopez family came out for the event. Even Ángel's sister Rosa on the right came from Germany with her husband and three children and I dedicated the book to them.

20:51 While I was there the second time I found other Deco signs to fill out the book, including this curious one from an indoor market which roughly translates as oxen remains. You have to wonder what they were thinking when they put those little flowers inside the type.

21:14 Barcelona has enough monograms above the doorways for a book in itself, which is something I continue to obsess about, and this was a monogram for the San Moritz brewery.



GRAFICA DE LES RAMBLES
2017 | Princeton Architectural Press

21:34 Even some of the construction dates were treated like monograms like here where you see the numbers threading through one another. Every building with a monogram had to have the year crafted in wrought iron which was always done beautifully. Many of them were made at this historic workshop which has a pretty memorable sign of its own.



Scan here to watch the video

Insight

“MY POLE, MY GOOGLE DOC AND MY HANDMADE MAPS”

Presentation by Louise Fili extracted from AIGAdesign Youtube channel

13:23 So I went back with my pole, my Google Doc and my handmade maps of each air indecent long with all the routes planned out. There was no time to lose in this race to preserve a type legacy. Before I would leave for each trip to Paris I would spend hours at my desk in New York on Google Street View locating signs I had photographed earlier by referencing negatives from my point-and-shoot photos. Street view help me find new locations by taking me virtually up and down every street. This saved me hours if not months of pounding the Parisian pavement.

14:10 I was determined to photograph every boulangerie and patisserie sign and document the signs for the great last Samaritaine department store before it was turned into condos.

14:28 Fortunately I found the “Folies Bergere” in better shape than the first time I had photographed it.



Louise Fili's Instagram photos

3 THE ART OF BOOK COVER DESIGN

“You don’t need to shout to capture someone’s attention”

Curated by Sarah Cosentino



THROUGHOUT THE XX CENTURY IN THE US

Written by Ned Drew

The book jacket evolved from a simple utilitarian object into a highly visual and conceptualized means of communication. While the first book jackets date to the 1820s, until late in the century they had only been used as protective packaging and tended to be nonpictorial, labeled wrappers with little focus on design. Book jackets began to gain importance in the 1890s with the recognition that they could be a way to attract the attention of potential buyers. Thus the book jacket became a focus of design in and of itself, separate from the front board of the book. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the book jacket began to take root as a promotional tool, and its design received more attention.

By the 1930s, many of America's leading graphic designers looked for ways to reconcile the utilitarian and economic demands of their field with a self-image based on individualistic creative expression.

Perhaps this tension between the demands of commerce and the possibility for conceptual depth made modernism attractive to so many American designers: it offered an interweaving of rigorous formal aesthetics and potential for creative expression with an ultimate goal of social and economic utility.

Many of the experimental approaches to book cover design in America had their stylistic and theoretical roots in Europe. European movements in the fine arts inspired new ways of thinking about graphic design. Cubism presented a means of disintegrating and distilling form, challenging traditional notions of representation, embracing the abstracted flatness of the painted surface and integrating text as a legitimate formal element of composition. The Futurists and then the Dadaists took some of the formal innovations of Cubism and applied them to more specifically design-related projects. Artists including Filippo Martinetti experimented with typography as an active expressive element, no longer subservient to the content of the text. Artists associated with the De Stijl and Constructivist movements made tremendous contributions to the idiom of modernism that would impact the design world. Not only did they attempt to contract a highly refined distillation of form into purified geometries, but they also fostered an ideological stance that this new vocabulary of forms could serve modern society—from the most basic practical needs to the most ethereal.



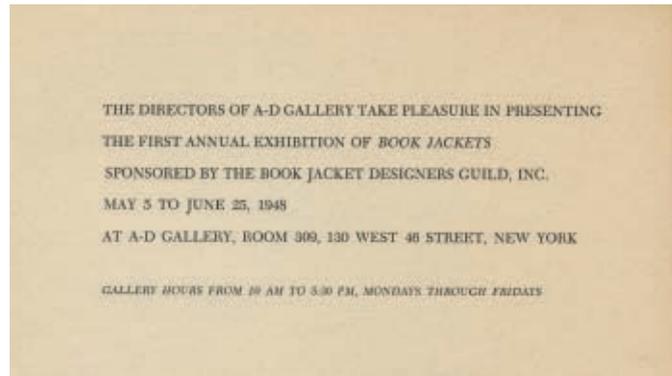
TOMMASO MARINETTI
ZANG TUMB TUMB
1914 | Edizioni Futuriste
di "Poesia"



ALVIN LUSTIG
THE ASPERN PAPERS
AND THE EUROPEANS
1950 | New Directions

This notion of formal innovation as both personal and social expression would greatly inform the practice of America's first generation of true modernist book cover designers, most notably Alvin Lustig and Paul Rand. The challenge to the commercial designer was to put these lessons gleaned from the modernist worlds of fine art and theoretical experimentation to practical use.

As American designers started to focus their efforts on cover design, they felt compelled to justify putting so much effort into an object so often discounted as crassly commercial. One way designers seemed to come to terms with this problem as to consider the cover as a part of the larger project of designing an entire book.



AMERICANIZING UTOPIA

The movement toward progressive design in American book covers was a product of greater self-awareness on the part of both designers and publishers. In February of 1947 a group of American designers formed the Book Jacket Designers Guild “for the purpose of promoting and stimulating interest in the art of book jacket design.” With the intention of elevating the artistic level of jacket design, the group aimed to foster a collegial atmosphere and organized annual exhibitions.

The American publishing world began to recognize the possibility of bold and effective visual communication as a means to orchestrate its identity and inform its audience. Thus the designer became an essential link between the corporate entity and its market, creating the visual vocabulary of American consumer culture. Good design meant good business. Modernism served that commercial language well, providing the means for articulate design that was functional yet neither simplistic nor obvious. Progressive publishing companies appreciated modernist graphic design’s marriage of type and image and were among the most important sponsors of ground-breaking American graphic work. They employed designers who could exploit the clarity and logic of modernism to develop visual systems that shaped the identities of the presses and created thematic threads from one publication to the next.

MODERNISM AND BEYOND

If references to the philosophical grounding and potential social impact of modernism became less frequent by the 1960s, designers including George Giusti, Fred Troller,

Rudolf de Harak and the team of Chermayeff and Geismar continued to push modernism’s austere formality to new frontiers. At the same time, others were beginning to look for thoughtful alternatives to modernism’s severity, embracing techniques that had been set aside by earlier progressive designers. Seymour Chwast, Vincent Ceci, and Milton Glaser, all working at Push Pin Studio, advocated a more pluralistic and eclectic approach to design. The Push Pin group embraced traditional illustration and historical typefaces, and they were willing to create *mélanges* of styles that would have been virtually unthinkable to their modernist colleagues.

These two distinct directions in design—the further distillation of the modernist idiom and the embrace of historicist eclecticism—both reflect larger social and cultural upheaval in 1960s America. As post–World War II optimism and economic boom gave way to the political and racial tensions of the 1960s, the previous generation’s styles seemed to offer great promise to some and seemed hopelessly out of date to others. On one hand, a modernist visual language offered order and rationality at a time when nuclear weapons proliferated, race riots raged, and war in Asia dragged on. On the other hand, a broader conception of style in which type, image, and illustration merged into what might be considered a more accessible, humanist acknowledgment of history.

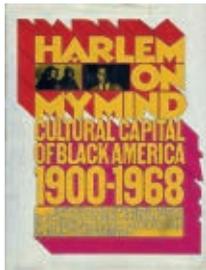
While Push Pin was tremendously influential in the legitimization of illustration as a tool in progressive American book cover design, they had an even more momentous effect due to their willingness to quote and commingle historical styles of both illustration and type.



Push Pin Studios press photo, featuring current and former members, circa 1970.

THE BLAND BREEDING THE BLAND

The early to mid 1970s was a time of restraint in book cover design, perhaps reflecting the broader social and cultural upheaval brought on by a decade of war, racial tension, and political scandal. The volume of truly innovative work in book cover design dropped, the result of a number of factors within the world of publishing, most notably an increasing corporatization of commercial publishers. Small presses like *New Directions* and *Grove*, presses that had played such a pivotal role in encouraging progressive design in their covers, were eclipsed by big publishing houses. Editorial committees and executive boards replaced dedicated individual entrepreneurs like Laughlin and Rossett. At the smaller presses that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, the publishers perceived their task as a privilege to present the work of their authors and a duty to present their audience with important literature. On the other hand, the larger presses that dominated the 1970s seem more authoritative, almost dictatorial in their pursuit of commercial success.



HERB LUBALIN
HARLEM ON MY MIND
1968 | Random House

By the late 1960s the commercial realm quickly adopted graphic innovations like those being made at Push Pin Studio and by inventive typographer Herb Lubalin. Lubalin, a master of what design historian Philip Meggs calls “figurative typography”, experimented with phototypographic techniques that enabled him to create and manipulate type in unprecedented ways. Covers like Lubalin’s 1968 *Harlem on my mind* broke down barriers between type, image, and illustration. Lubalin’s groundbreaking magazine and advertising work of the 1960s and early 1970s set the stage for type-dominated book cover design throughout the 1970s. Designers realized they could acquire or create just about any typeface they could imagine, and they felt that the type itself offered enough plasticity to be a solitary design element.

Covers like *The gods themselves* and *Briefing for a descent into hell* reveal such purely typographic solutions. Many of these covers seem to aim at concrete directness rather than deep conceptual connections between cover, text, and viewer.

THE PILLAGED, PARODIED, AND PROFOUND

Design’s postmodern theorists pointed out a slippage and contingency of meaning that exists in a society barraged by images that seem farther and farther from the real. They sensed that the universal truth and personal expression that modernism seemed to promise were romantic delusions that had been co-opted and defiled by corporate power. Those who attempted to apply these theories tried to tear apart grand historical narratives through the juxtaposition of purposefully discordant historical styles in non-hierarchical, interwoven compositions. They broke modernism’s rules of logic and legibility with dizzying layered images, fragments of type, and indecipherable signs. In graphic design, postmodern analysis engendered a variety of formal characteristics: pastiches of traditional and vernacular styles; unapologetic appropriation of historical sources; mixed typefaces; collages of seemingly disparate images; openly computer-generated images; and purposefully vague and complex compositions that defied direct reading and fixed meaning.

As the 1980s wore on, mainstream design would incorporate postmodernism’s opacity of meaning and depersonalized expression; the mixing of disparate images and styles would become an indispensable tool for mainstream postmodernist designers.



La copertina è l'avamposto visivo dove le storie figurate addensano i propri colori prima di sciogliersi nel racconto.

-Giovanni Baule



A RETRO APPROACH

Written by Ned Drew

Starting in the late 1970s, in an approach sometimes labeled “retro”, book cover designers built compositions around Deco-inspired typefaces, as in *The stars at noon* and *Where the jackals howl and other stories*. Other designers crafted whimsical but sophisticated mélanges of styles and liberally spaced typefaces mined from any source they found useful. Louise Fili freely made references to past design sources; Paula Scher was especially interested in historical typefaces and formal arrangements, building and varying themes from De Stijl and Constructivism; and Carin Golberg used a spectrum of historical references and typographical experimentation. Reflecting the critical theory of the day, these designers quoted the past unapologetically, creating a conscious and deliberate questioning of originality and boldly obscuring the creative presence of the

designer. And, as design historian Philip Meggs noted in 1989, the practitioners breathing new life into commercial design were women, a sign that the previously male-dominated field of design was beginning to overcome generations of gender bias. Louise Fili had worked with the master of innovative typographic design, Herb Lubalin, in the 1970s. Later, she adapted the light pluralism of corporate publishing of that decade into a style of more forceful, yet subtle historical reference. As art director at Pantheon from the mid 1970s to the 1980s, she appropriated and pastiched traditional styles, yet tempered the audacity of her adaptations with artful combinations of understated color and matte finishes. Fili’s 1985 design for Marguerite Duras’s *The lover* was a subtle adaptation of 1930s style, marrying a historicist typeface with an evocative photograph of the author from the era addressed in

her memoir. The refined type, combined with the relentless, knowing stare of the young woman in the photograph, reveal Fili’s ability to use spare historical sources to create striking covers in a style that has been described as “hyper-elegant.” The strength of Fili’s designs, and her true contribution to book cover design at the end of the twentieth century, have come from her love of the physicality of her sources and her rigorous attention to history. Fili combed French and Italian flea markets for ephemera with inspirational typefaces, and when she adapted her inspirations to book cover designs, the products tended to be imbued

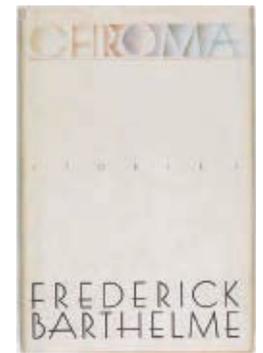
with the tactility of her beloved flea-market finds. Fili has also proven to be one of the most historically savvy designers of her era. Along with her husband, design historian Steven Heller, Fili has authored several books exploring the styles that she finds so inspirational. Historical quotation for Fili most often began with a resurrected typeface that would elicit the connotations and associations she wished to conjure up. In covers like *Perfect gallows* and *Chroma*, Fili showed how elegant, historically inspired typefaces can create a stage for the literary exploration through visual associations, with or without illustrative elements.



ROBERT SCUDELLARI
THE STARS AT NOON
1986 | Alfred A. Knopf



LOUISE FILI
PERFECT GALLOWES
1988 | Pantheon Books



LOUISE FILI
CHROMA
1987 | Simon & Schuster

“I DON’T WORK ON A COMPUTER WHAT EXCITES ME MOST IS THE SKETCH STAGE. WHEN I DESIGNED BOOK COVERS, I WOULD SIT DOWN WITH A TRACING PAD AND DRAW A 5.5-BY-8.5-INCH RECTANGLE, WHICH I CAN DO WITH MY EYES CLOSED, I WOULD TAKE THE TITLE OF A BOOK AND WRITE IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN, LET IT SPEAK TO ME, AND IT WOULD GO FROM A ROUGH SCRIBBLE TO SOMETHING MUCH MORE PRECISE. I WAS ALWAYS TRAVELLING TO EUROPE AND GOING TO FLEA MARKETS, AND AT THAT TIME, THERE WERE NO REFERENCE BOOKS ON DESIGN HISTORY, SO I HAD TO MAKE MY OWN ARCHIVE TO DRAW FROM. IT SET ME ON MY PATH FOR DOING LOGO DESIGNS LATER BECAUSE, WITHOUT EVEN REALISING IT, I WAS TREATING THE TITLE OF THE BOOK LIKE A LOGO DESIGN”

-Louise Fili

FROM HERB LUBALIN TO PANTHEON BOOKS

Written by Louise Fili

Bob Scudellari, my former boss at Knopf/Random House, mentioned that there was a staff position opening up. I half-jokingly asked if my office would have a southern exposure. He said yes. I took the job. Pantheon, an imprint of Random House, was distinguished by its extremely mediocre jackets. It was hard to take the books seriously, although closer inspection revealed a roster of very respected European authors. The art director whom I was about to replace took me aside, inmate-style, and somberly offered one piece of advice: “Every editor has a favorite color.” After I had settled into the job, one of the editors asked me: “Why did your predecessor have to use the same vomit brown for all of my covers?”

As a colleague explained to me: “My editors have bad taste. Yours have no taste.” I had a more-or-less blank slate,

so why not make the most of it? I immersed myself in book covers. I visited bookstores obsessively, constantly asking myself how I could improve on what was current in the industry. Did a cover really need to scream to be noticed? I didn’t think so. Little by little, I introduced change to every aspect of jacket design. I rejected traditional Pantone colors, opting to use paint chips from hardware stores - to the consternation of my printers. I also cut deals with the production department, like trading an extra color for an unusual paper stock. Book buyers began to take notice. Given my Lubalin training, I automatically thought of the book jacket first in terms of typography. Without even realizing it, I was designing the title like a logo. Hand-lettering that made reference to vintage type specimens, alphabet books, and other sources



LOUISE FILI
THE LOVER
1985 | Pantheon Books

allowed me to create unique type treatments. Of course, my appreciation of design history had a perfect outlet in Pantheon's Euro-centric list. I travelled to Italy and France at least twice a year to seek new inspiration, combing flea markets and bookstores, photographing restaurant and shop signage, and collecting food packaging. My office became a graphics test kitchen where I could experiment with a different period of type history every day. I began to find my own design voice. In addition, I had the opportunity to work with a talented group of illustrators, photographers, designers, letterers, and retouchers who helped bring my designs to life. In my eleven years at Pantheon, I brought in just one book for publication. I am happy to say that it was this one: *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman.

When the editors wrung their hands and worried, "How can we sell a comic book on the Holocaust?" I said, "It's not a comic book. It's a graphic novel." (This was a design genre that had just started to emerge.) Two thousand book jackets later, in 1989, I opened my own studio, Louise Fili Ltd, making a conscious decision to focus on my passions for food, typography, and all things Italian. As I already had a client base from my very active freelance work for publishers, I didn't really need to look for work, but my goal was to diversify. I knew that if I tried to survive on book jackets alone, my future would be limited, so I took a chance and entered the curious world of restaurants. My first projects soon taught me that this realm was the polar opposite of publishing.



The whole point of what we're calling "graphic novels" is the melding of visual and verbal information – to sound professorial for a second – and part of that information starts with the first thing you see. ... It's why when, when Pantheon didn't want to give me the right to do the cover – back in 1986 when the first volume was published by them, and there was no such thing as a graphic novel that anybody'd heard of – I was sputtering. Like, how could they do that, if the cover's part of the book, of course? And then my friend up at Pantheon, Louise Fili – the superstar art director of Pantheon at the time – said "shut-up and don't worry about it, you'll do the cover, it goes through me."

-Art Spiegelman



Louise Fili's bookshelf



4 LOUISE FILI'S PRODUCTS

An analysis of what lies behind the work of Louise Fili

Curated by Alessia Kerri



TIMELESS LOGOS

Written by Diana Budds

On Sundays, designer Louise Fili likes to venture into her Manhattan office, pull out her visual diaries—albums of perfume labels, orange wrappers, photographs of street signs, she’s been making for decades – and immerse herself in the world of vintage European graphics. “It’s important for me to flip through them every now and then so I can get a jolt of Italy” she says. Fili, who opened her studio in 1989 after working as the art director of Pantheon Books for more than 10 years, has an unmistakable style informed by classic Italian 20th-century graphic design. Her evocative logos, branding, book jackets, and packaging project sophistication and timelessness thanks to ornamental typography. In the era of Helvetica, Fili shows that there’s plenty of room for serifs—and companies like *Good Housekeeping*, *Paperless Post*, and

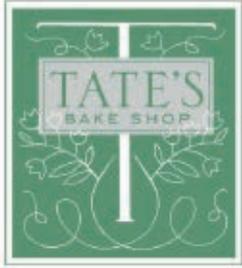
Tiffany & Co. have come to call on her expertise for logos. “I know it would be a lot easier to set (logos) in Helvetica, but for me it’s really important that they are really personal and my style is very personal, and I couldn’t imagine doing it in any other way” she says. “You can’t just set a word in a font and call it a logo. I think of a logo as a typographic portrait.” Fili works intuitively. After speaking with clients about what they want to get out of a new logo or visual identity and setting the conceptual strategy, she often pulls out a sheet of paper and a calligraphy pen and starts writing the company name over and over again. “This goes to my book jacket days when I used to sit down with a tracing pad and take the title of the book and just let it speak to me” she says. “It would go from this very morphous type treatment to something

much more precise. Then I’d realize that it’s a typeface that doesn’t exist so I’d have to make it. That’s what really prepared me for designing logos. I write it over and over to see where the letterforms take me.” One of her most prominent recent projects was a redesign of *Good Housekeeping*’s seal of approval. “One thing I realized doing makeovers is that you can change a lot as long as you maintain one or two main elements” she says. “In this case it was a no-brainer: you keep the oval and star and everything else can change.” The company changed its logo every decade or so, and Fili felt like it had gone downhill from its original 1909 incarnation. The version she updated was stuck in

the 1990s with type bursting out of the side of the oval, a gradient outline, and bold-italic letters. Fili brought the type back into the oval, simplified the font, and set it as white against a dark seal. “I wanted it to look timeless” she says. When the magazine debuted the new design on the *Today show*, the hosts actually confused the Fili’s design with the older one. “I took it as a compliment because I wanted it to look like it had always been there” she says. *Paperless Post* was another recent high-profile commission. When the company’s owners came to Fili for a makeover, the problem was that the logo was undecipherable and didn’t work in small formats, like online.

Some of Louise’s packagings





TATE'S LOGO



TIFFANY & CO. LOGO



GOOD HOUSEKEEPING LOGO



PAPERLESS POST LOGO

“Their original logo was interesting because no matter how you looked at the image you couldn’t tell what it is” Fili says. After poring over scrapbooks of script fonts with the company’s owners, Fili created a custom typeface and blended it with an illustration of a bird and an envelope from *Paperless Post*’s in-house team. Though her logos speak to the identity of her clients, as a whole they also paint a picture

of Fili’s creative perspective. “I want the logos to look like they’re designed by the same designer without being too boring” she says. Recently, Fili has parlayed her love of typography, monograms, and logos into a series of books on European street signs, notecards, and pencils for Princeton Architectural Press (the publisher was eager for its own line of pencils to go with its popular coloring books for adults).



Scan here to watch the video

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD PACKAGING

Presentation by Louise Fili

My presentation this morning was a superficial survey of my career starting in book jackets going into restaurants and food packaging since my main passion is food and anything to do with Italy. “My story always starts here in Italy, which is my greatest source of inspiration, both typographic and gastronomic, so having grown up in an Italian-American household where the main topic of conversation every morning was what to make for dinner it should have come as no surprise to me that I would end up working in the food industry.” Food packaging is so important because it’s the only way you’re ever going to get it get a new customer, the packaging has to inform and seduce and of course if you get them that first time that’s what counts. “This is a very interesting lesson in package design, these were the number one and two best-selling products in all the William Sonoma

stores in the US and Canada for nine years straight the whole time that it was in the store and what’s what I find really interesting is that this box of salt in the center is seven cents worth of salt that’s sold for \$12, what does that tell you about package design.” When I was very young I was always interested in typography, at a very young age I was always drawing letter forms on the wall and getting in trouble with my parents for that and when I was in high school I taught myself calligraphy. I still didn’t know what graphic design was, I had no idea that this was related to that and then when I got to college I found out about graphic design. I was always interested in books and felt very comfortable with them like I sort of fell into that, but was very happy doing that. And what really enabled me to find my design voice was working at Pantheon Books for eleven

“I’M LUCKY THAT I HAVE A SMALL STUDIO SO I CAN FOCUS ON THE STUFF I’M PASSIONATE ABOUT, WHICH IS ANYTHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH FOOD, TYPE, OR ITALY... I DO IT FOR LOVE, I DON’T DO IT FOR MONEY”

-Louise Fili



GELATO FIASCO PACKAGING

years, where I could experiment with a different period of design and type history on a daily basis mostly focusing on the typography. But then when I started in my studio I really wanted to focus more on the food, so that was kind of a big jump from publishing to food but I’m glad I did it and now the only books I do are my own books which is that’s right. “Over the years I’ve been doing a series of limited-edition promo books and letterpress called logos A to Z because I realized one day that I had a

little logo for almost every letter of the alphabet from A to Z. So these are done in letterpress. The first book was 26 logos but I didn’t have every letter of the alphabet so some of them were duplicates. Then I went to a second volume and then a third. By the third I was unabashedly offering a discount to anyone who had a business that started with a Q, X or Y.” There are similarities between books and food, it’s the same thing you’re dressing something to appeal to people and yet you have to be authentic to what

the product is, you can't lie. The most gratifying thing is to work with small upstart companies since most of the work I do is for smaller companies. But to start with someone who's just coming out with something and to see that the design can really make a huge difference in their success, that's

quite gratifying. Graphic design is a wonderful field but you really have to integrate it with something you're passionate about, so that's what I did, I integrated it with food and all things Italian so that's certainly what I recommend. Find a passion and integrate that into your interior career.

Fili's packagings stored in her studio



DELICIOUS TYPOGRAPHY

Written by Terri Stone

It wouldn't be a shock if Louise Fili were a little arrogant. She runs a successful New York City design studio, she's the author of many books, and she's been showered with medals by the Art Directors Club and AIGA. But far from cocky, Fili is almost humble, and she's eager to share what she's learned. Recently, she talked to Create about her inspiration, her process, her clients, and what she's learned during her career. "My favorite period is the 1920s or 1930s" Fili says, "It just speaks to me. The typography especially is so stylish and sexy. The combination of bold sans serif letterforms with beautiful upright scripts – I never get tired of it. It was all hand-lettered; they just made it up as they went along. Every time I go to a flea market I find examples, and they still surprise me." These vintage finds are the touch point for Louise's own hand-drawn

letters, which she has created for everything from book jackets to food packaging and restaurant identities. "Usually, the way I design is to sit down with a tracing pad" she explains. "When I was art director for Pantheon, I would write the title over and over again. I let the words speak to me. It would start out rough and loose and then turn into something more specific." (Fili's approach worked: her book covers won awards and drove sales. She would be responsible for more than 2,000 covers before she left to start her own studio.) Her process is similar when designing logos. "I write out the name and see what kind of type treatment it wants to be. I like that exercise because it's more personal." The personal connection is important to Fili, who prefers to work with smaller companies. "If I can't communicate directly with the decision makers,

“LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL REFERENCE, LOOK AT OLD TYPE BOOKS, THERE ARE NO LONGER AVAILIABLE. RESURRECT OLD FONTS THAT YOU WOULDN'T USE ORDINARY”

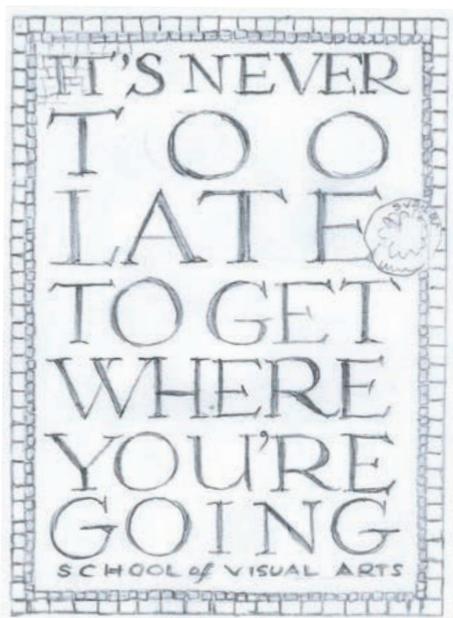
-Louise Fili

don't take the job. When it's design by committee, what are the chances they'll agree with what you say? I can make eye contact with clients. It's a much more effective way to design.” If you eat out in New York, you can see Fili's work at *Artisanal*, the *Mermaid Inn*, and *Pearl Oyster Bar*, among others. But some of her designs may be in your own home: *Bartlett wines*, *Bonnie's Jams*, *Dufour pastry dough*, *Late July crackers*, *Sarabeth's spreadable fruit*. Fili even redesigned the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval. Like the seal, most of her food packaging jobs are makeovers. “When they start

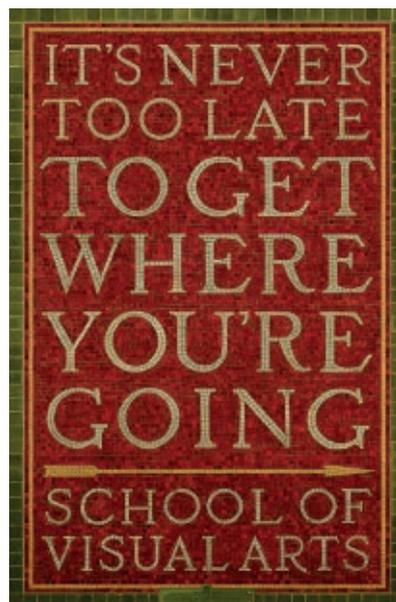
out, they don't have the budget or know-how to hire a real designer. A family friend might do the packaging” she says. “That works for the first couple of years, but then they realize that the quality of the packaging design doesn't measure up to quality of their product, and they come to me.” Fili says that these clients tend to be nervous when they come in for makeovers. Paying a designer and reprinting labels, maybe even changing the shape of the packaging, are big investments. “They don't know if it's going to pay off. That's why I show them before and after



RIZZOLI'S COVERS
2011 | Rizzoli International



MOSAIC SUBWAY SKETCH POSTER



MOSAIC SUBWAY POSTER

“

Words have meaning, type has spirit.

- Paula Scher

”

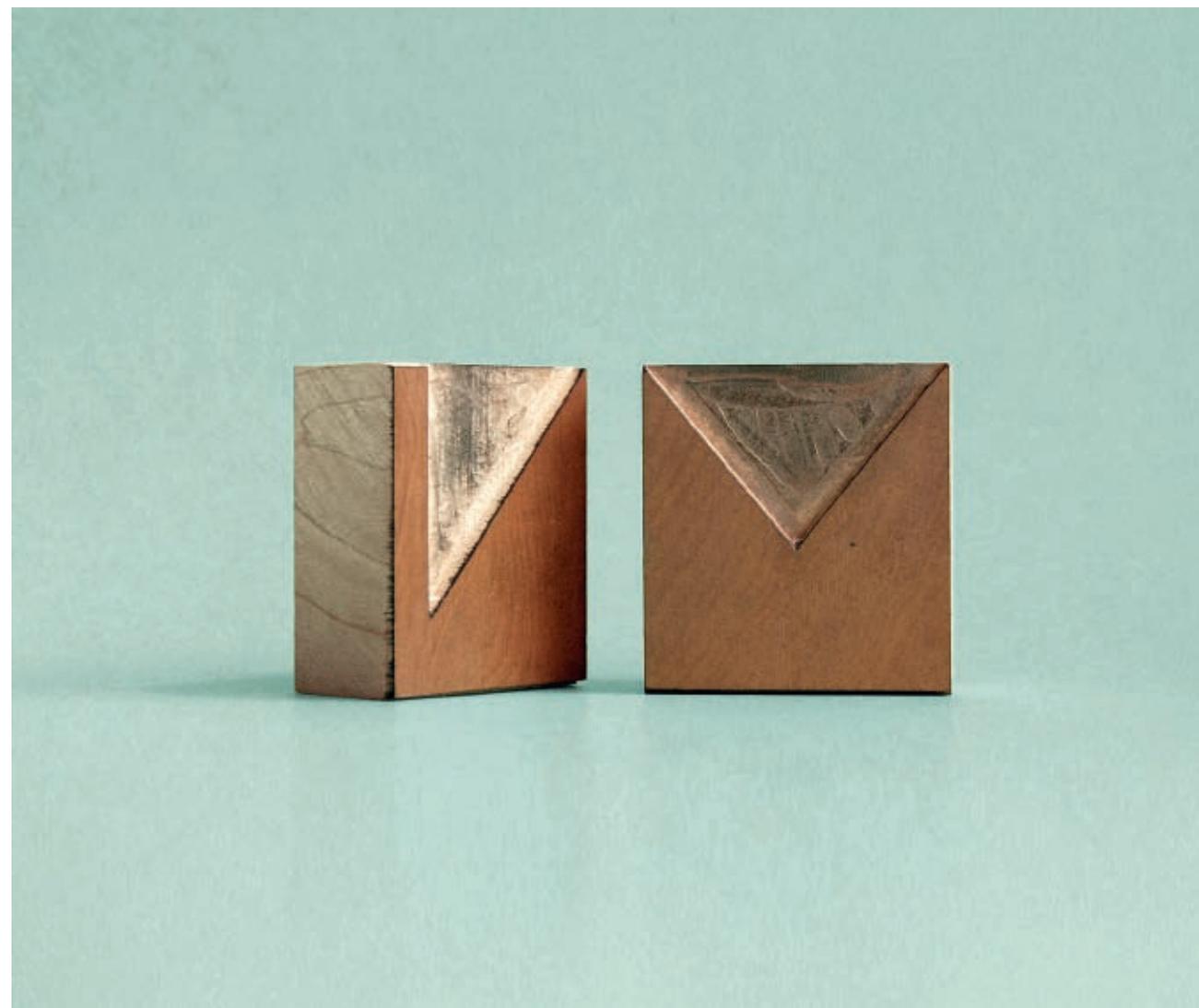
examples. Then clients get it.” If she should reach an impasse with clients during the process, Fili uses another tactic. “Usually, the client can’t articulate their problem. I’ll ask them, ‘What are you afraid of?’ They’re always afraid of something And then they’ll tell me and we’ll work it out.” While it’s clear that Fili is good with clients, her favorite projects are the ones she does for herself. For

decades, she has been photographing old signs in Italy and France. They were meant only for her own enjoyment and reference, but the photos transformed into *Grafica della Strada: The Signs of Italy* and *Graphique de la Rue: The Signs of Paris*. Good news for those of us who can’t get away to see these gems for ourselves. Although I spoke to Louise for only an hour, I came away with a lot of

advice any creative can use. For instance, who hasn’t had a client ask for a random design change (make it bigger, smaller, move it to the left, etc.)? When Fili gets those kinds of requests, she responds strategically: “I say: «Don’t tell me what to change. Tell me what you don’t like about the way it is now, and I’ll fix it.»” Brilliant!

She learned a lot while at Pantheon. “I set ground rules. One art director would go into the editor with a stack of comps. She would realize the editor was in a bad mood, but she would still show him the whole stack. Of course, he would reject them. If someone’s in a bad mood, leave and review the work later.”

Mardell wood type letters





BOOKS AND LETTERING

Presentation by Louise Fili

My story starts here in Italy which is my greatest source of inspiration both typographic and gastronomic, I never ever forgave my parents for having the bad judgment to leave and come to America, and the final indignity was that I was born in New Jersey, which I had to compensate for by traveling to Italy as often as possible, obsessively photographing signage like you see here in the town of the Viareggio, combing flea markets and bookstores and of course eating. But, because I couldn't live there, I had to learn to make my own typographic oasis in New York, so as art director of Pantheon books I had the wonderful opportunity to be able to experiment with a different period of design or type history on a daily basis. When I started in publishing it was kind of a grim time for book jacket design everybody seemed to think that they had to follow the same formulas,

there was very little innovation going on and everyone seemed to think that type had to be big and vulgar. I, on the other hand, was on a mission to prove that you didn't have to shout to capture someone's attention and I think that the cover for *The lover* is the best example of that. Marguerite Duras, although she was a celebrity and in France, was relatively unknown in the United States when her book came out, and in spite of that and in spite of the fact that I designed this very understated jacket, the book became a runaway bestseller, Pantheon's first since *Doctor Zhivago* in 1958 so I think I proved my point. The other thing to understand that was going on is that there were really no reference books available on design or type history because Steve Heller hadn't written them yet, so I had to create my own archive to draw upon and I rejected just traditional



ELEGANTISSIMA
2012 | Adams Media



GERMAN MODERN
1998 | Chronicle Books



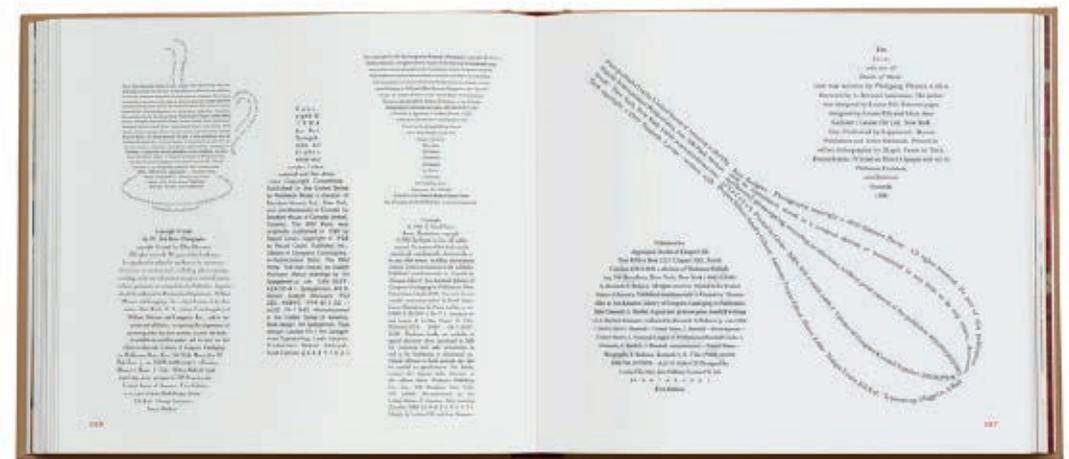
EURO DECO
2004 | Chronicle Books

typefaces for these covers, I wanted them all to be unique so I would go about making the type in whatever way I could, either doing it from scratch or piecing together letters from alphabets and from little type books or altering existing fonts. Although I was never a fan of reading mysteries, I always had a great deal of fun art directed them at Pantheon, and this gave me an opportunity to use this futurist letter form from Italy that I had always loved to work with. Actually this history takes place in South Africa and I remember I had to send my illustrator Robert Gould to the South African embassy in New York to find out what the the postal uniform looked like and postage stamp as well. So 11 years and 2000 book jackets later seemed as good a time as any to start my own design studio, so I started with what was closest to my heart, which was of

course Italian Art deco and this turned into a series of books on Art deco graphic design that Steve and I did together. Steve and I would collect and select the work together, he would do the writing, the book would be designed at my studio where I had two simple rules: we would always design a font based on something that was in the book and we would always put a woman on the cover, which was pretty easy until we got to Germany where they preferred to glorify the Aryan male and not the female. But I did finally manage to exhume this redheaded Fraulein, so as they drifted into remainder purgatory we issued *Euro deco* which happily is in hardcover and still in print, and then came many others typology and design connoisseur and and others. In the meantime I was discovering that I enjoy designing interiors of books after having focused for so long

“DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT DESIGNING A BOOK JACKET UNTIL YOU READ THE BOOK FIRST”

-Louise Fili



Elegantissima Copyright Pages, Louise Fili Ltd

just on covers, but the one page that always irked me the most was the copyright page: this is usually one of the first typographic treatments that you see in a book, it's usually on page four and it's all of this very dreary, dull legal information that has to be set a certain way and in line for line the way it's given to you from the publisher. So I was determined to find a way around that, so I was working on a gardening book one day, we set it in centered lines and I looked at it and I thought: "Well, with just a few little changes this could look like a tree!" So I tried it down to my son who was two years old at the time and he got it, so I figured I was home free, but then I had to lock horns with the copy editor who of course wanted to go by the rules and she just

couldn't understand how I could do something so blasphemous. After much back and forth and after supplying historical reference, because I certainly wasn't the first designer to ever contour type, I finally won my case and once I had one under my belt it was much easier to go on to convince the next publisher. *Italianissimo*, which is the only way I can describe this book, is everything we love and sometimes love to hate about Italy, mostly love, from hand gestures to the *Fiat Cinquecento* which is almost as cute as your *Mini Cooper*. Everything you've seen here [in the presentation] and more is in my latest monograph *Elegantissima* and I think the main reason that I did this book was so that I could design this copyright page, thank you.

5

BEFORE & AFTER

Starting over from
final touches

Curated by Claudia Dal Santo





SARABETH'S JAM
2005

SARABETH'S BRAND NEW BRAND

Written by Louise Fili Ltd

Sometimes a logo can be viable for the entire life of a company and never appear dated or stale. Frequently, however, even the most established logos can benefit from an update. Although some businesses may resist making adjustments to tried and true marks – lest brand recognition be compromised – refreshing old logos can definitely enhance the brand. For a redesign to work, it is best to retain some basic element as an aid in recognition. When rebranding *Sarabeth's*, for example, the “aide de memoire” is the oval shape, which is the essence of the original logo. In this way the old is made new, but recognition is maintained. Each logo demands a custom treatment, but in all cases it is important to respect the past while embracing the present.

SARABETH'S

After a quarter of a century, the legendary *Sarabeth's* was long overdue for a makeover. Although *Sarabeth's* signature jar of orange apricot marmalade evoked immediate consumer recognition, a typographic overhaul of the packages was needed to allow the look of the product to measure up its reputation. Keeping

the jar intact, Louise Fili Ltd recommended changing the generic printed gold cap to plain silver. While it was important to keep the oval shape for the label, the typography was refined and edited for clarity, a simple, more elegant border was used, and more precise engravings of fruit replaced the previous illustrations. The new type treatment was carried

“I DON'T THINK
ONE SHOULD
EVER BE 100%
SATISFIED
BECAUSE THEN
THERE IS
NOTHING LEFT
TO ASPIRE TO”

-Louise Fili

over to *Sarabeth's* restaurants, bakery and kitchen, as well as gift boxes, hot chocolate tins and cookie jars. The fresh look is a subtle yet striking difference that underscores *Sarabeth's* classic identity.

HEAR WHAT SARABETH HAS TO SAY

“When we first hired Louise, we were really relocked into make changes because for 25 years we had the graphics.”

It was really one of the best things I did for my business. It needed tweaking and she did it, she just made it more elegant and made the products look rich of a really good look of quality, and that’s what Louise brought to the table. You know, I don’t even think about expense because it’s something that you really have to do if you want your product to stand out in the market place.”



SARABETH'S COOKIES
2005

Sarabeth's products



There are very few people who can do what Louise does. I’ve just been so pleased and so satisfied with the work that she’s done for us. She is like part of our family, she is our business family and I just can’t imagine life without Louise.

- Sarabeth



Scan here to watch the video



“WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?”

Louise Fili interviewed by Lee Magill

The before-and-after page on your website is fascinating.

Yeah, it's really good for potential clients, because when they come to me for a rebrand, they're the first to say “My logo is terrible”, but then they are always very nervous about making a change. They're afraid of losing their customer base or that it's going to represent them incorrectly. So when I show them the before and after, they're like “Oh.” It's like taking a magic wand and just making everything look better. Depending on how articulate they are, I usually ask them about 15 or 20 questions about their business.

I start with “Have you trademarked this name?” It's a very important question, especially in restaurants. You'd be amazed. The only time I didn't ask that question was when I was working with a very highly regarded restaurateur. I thought it would be insulting for me to ask, but sure enough, we did the logo and then they found out that they couldn't get the name.

Some of the makeovers are really subtle.

Some of them need it more than others. But they're all nervous about it, and that's why I like working with smaller businesses; I like having a more personal

relationship with my clients. Like with Sarabeth.

I sat down with her and her husband. They had been making their jam for 25 years, and I can understand why she was nervous about it. What I always tell someone is, “You can change a lot, as long as you maintain one or two key elements.” In her case, we kept the same jar, because everybody knows her by her jar. But she was using a generic mason jar, so we changed the embossing on the top so instead of saying “Mason” it said “Sarabeth.”

And we kept the type, did the label in the same oval, and kept her name in upper and lowercase, which I felt was important. Then we just refined everything else, and it made a huge difference. Even the paper stock. The first time I looked at it I thought, This paper stock looks so dingy. So I found the brightest, most opaque white paper stock I could, there was a change in the design. But they suddenly had a higher regard for the product, and they didn't mind paying \$9.99 for it.

Louise Fili with a client



What happens if you get negative feedback from a client?

Well, the first question I ask, even before we discuss the trademark thing or even have a meeting is “Who are the decision makers?” They have to be at the meeting. If the big decision maker is too busy to have a meeting with me, then I’m too busy too, and I won’t do it. It cannot end well otherwise. There’s nothing worse than someone trying to second-guess their boss. I don’t want there to be any big surprises when I see them next time and present the logo. And there aren’t any as long as we’re all there at the first meeting. We all talk about everything that is important to us.

Are there interim stages where they say, “I like this, but is there any chance you could make this blue instead?” Sometimes, and if they’re reasonable questions, that’s fine. Very often, they’re just nervous about something. And that’s when I ask the really important question. I would



Failure is built into creativity... The creative act involves this element of ‘newness’ and ‘experimentalism,’ then one must expect and accept the possibility of failure.

- Saul Bass



Louise Fili's L'arte del Gelato's sketch

never ask it at the first meeting, but when things look like they’re starting to fall apart, I ask them, “What are you afraid of?” And you would be surprised. With a question like that you would expect people to say, “What are you talking about? How dare you?” Yet they never ask that. They always answer the question, which is so interesting. That’s why I always recommend, whenever any students ask me what I recommend that they do to become a designer: Take a Psych 101 class. Because of course they’re nervous. I talk them off the ledge, and then it’s usually fine. It’s a designer’s chance to earn their trust, which is a big step. The other trick I’ve used only once is, “We’re not going to leave this room until we all make a decision.” But the thing I do on the other end of the spectrum is whenever I schedule a meeting to show a logo design, I always try to schedule it in the afternoon. I serve gelato first, and then I show the logo. It usually works very well.

Do you find it relaxes them?

It’s better than getting them a drink. It makes them happy.

NICELY PACKAGED FOOD TASTES BETTER

Written by Anne Quito

Over the course of her 40-year career, award-winning designer Louise Fili has applied her elegant touch to book covers, store signage, subway posters, and even a series of bestselling postage stamps. But her favorite kind of assignment is design makeovers – especially for food packaging. “It gives me great satisfaction to clean up after someone else’s mess” jokes Fili, who gave Quartz a tour of an exhibition of her work at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan (closing Dec. 10). The 65-year-old designer, who has worked on packaging for biscuits, jams, teas, wine, chocolate, and ice cream, says that improving the label, container, or logo for food has an impact that goes beyond aesthetics. “Quite simply – and this might sound strange – a good package design can make food taste better” she says. To demonstrate her point, Fili points to the package for *Gelato Fiasco* that

she redesigned in 2013. The Maine-based company, which makes its products using traditional Italian techniques, sold their small-batch ice cream in cheap plastic takeout containers before hiring Fili. “It’s the package that says it all – if it’s a beautiful package that looks trustworthy and authentic, you believe it” she says. “*Gelato Fiasco* had that takeout salad container. Why would you trust that?” After the gelato-package makeover – to an elegant transparent jar, sealed with a ribbon and a label harkening the shape of heraldry – *Gelato Fiasco* got into *Whole Foods*, and saw an increase in sales. Though Fili has never put her practical observation to a scientific study, research actually backs her theory. Oxford University psychologist Charles Spence has published several experiments



Louise Fili's exhibition at the School of Visual Arts, 2016

proving the correlation between taste and food presentation. He found that *Coca-Cola* tastes sweeter in a red can and cookies seem crunchier when presented on a rough, textured surface. “In most cases at least half of our experience of food and drink is determined by the forgotten flavour senses of vision, sound, and touch” food blogger Nicola Twilley wrote in

her 2015 profile of Spence in the *New Yorker*. As Quartz’s reporting on Mast Brothers shows, good packaging is seductive – a kind of delicious foreplay to the act of eating. But it can also mislead consumers. How does Fili guard against promoting substandard food? “The first thing I do is taste” she says. “I only take the job if the product is good.”



WHO DO I LOOK UP TO?

Different perspectives
on the importance of
role models



A VOID

During her career Louise suffered the lack of female role models in the graphic design environment. For this reason we decided to dedicate some space to this topic, our goal is to let Louise's experience emerge and analyze how the situation is changing nowadays through some interviews and surveys all curated by us.



“MY MISSION IS TO BE A
ROLE MODEL; IT GOES
BACK TO WHEN I
COULDN'T FIND ANY
ROLE MODELS MYSELF.
EVEN IF IT IS JUST
ABOUT ENLIGHTENING
ONE YOUNG WOMAN,
IT IS WORTH IT”

-Louise Fili

“FINDING YOUR TRUE VOICE”

Interview to Louise Fili

We were impressed by your philosophy “if you have a problem with my being female, I don’t want you as a client.” Does this come from any particular experience, and how has it affected your work?

This was something that happened continually when I started my studio. It was then that I realized that I shouldn’t expect to wait for the right client to walk through the door with the perfect job. The perfect job is the one that you create for yourself. I started pursuing my own personal

projects, which, although not always profitable, helped me define my style. I wouldn’t be the designer I am today if I had only relied on commissioned work.

You’ve mentioned in different interviews that you didn’t have any female role model in graphic design, especially at the beginning of your career. Who did you look up to, then, in the design scene?

From my days as a design student, I looked up to Herb Lubalin for his brilliant use of typography as an expressive tool. I was fortunate to be hired as a senior designer at his studio, where I worked for 2 years.

Louise, Herb Lubalin and other workers



Herb was multi-talented, but what I admired most about him was that he hired women and African_americans at a time when no other studio or agency would consider doing that.

Is there any female graphic designer that you admire or look up to now?

I can remember when there were no graphic design studios in Rome, while today there are many. But what is the most impressive is that I can name three studios doing excellent work that are all run by women: Paola Manfroni at Marino; Silvana Amato; and Cristina Chiappini.

Since gender inequalities have been reduced throughout the past decades, how would your career have been affected if you'd been born in our generation? Do you think you would have made any different choice?

If I had been born in your generation, as strange as it might sound to you, I would have moved to Italy to work.

When I was in my twenties, it was impossible to do that. There were very few design studios in Italy, and most jobs were in Milan only. And it didn't help that I was female. But the computer changed all of that, making it possible to run a design studio just about anywhere in the country.

In a male-dominated world, we believe you found a way to let your personality and femininity emerge through your design. What's your tip for us young designers to find a way to do the same?

Find something that you are passionate about and combine that with graphic design. It is the only way to find your true voice. I found a way to express my passion through vintage type.

UNA NUOVA GENERAZIONE

Sondaggio fra gli studenti di design della comunicazione

Credi di avere dei modelli a cui fai riferimento nell'ambito del graphic design?



Se sì, quali sono?

Le mie prime fonti d'ispirazione sono stati i miei docenti di design. A suscitare il mio interesse sono stati, soprattutto coloro che si sono dimostrati particolarmente appassionati al loro lavoro e che sono riusciti a far trasparire il loro interesse anche in delle lezioni molto semplici o teoriche, riuscendo così a catturare la mia attenzione e curiosità.

- **Giorgia, studentessa al 1 anno**

Non mi ispiro a singoli Graphic Designer, generalmente preferisco ispirarmi o prendere spunto da singole opere o progetti.

- **Marco, studente al 1 anno**

Guardo con molta ammirazione ai maggiori rappresentanti del design milanese del dopoguerra tra cui Bob Noorda, Max Huber e Massimo Vignelli, nonché alcuni studi grafici internazionali come Pentagram e Landor Associates.

- **Andrea, studente al 1 anno**

Paula Scher, Herb Lubalin, Andy Warhol, e tutto i designer del costruttivismo russo e del surrealismo.
- Marta, studentessa al 1 anno

Per te quanto è importante avere dei modelli? Cosa cerchi in essi?

Credo sia fondamentale, sia per permettere di allargare i propri orizzonti – ed incrementare la propria creatività sfruttando idee altrui – che per capire in che modo il design sia arrivato ad essere come lo vediamo. Per questo motivo, i miei punti di riferimento mi ispirano ma mi forniscono anche delle linee guida che rendono esplicito l'obiettivo di ciò che sto progettando.
- Sara, studentessa al 1 anno

Per me avere dei punti di riferimento è molto importante. Generalmente cerco ispirazione per i progetti a cui sto lavorando, ma talvolta ci sono delle figure che diventano importanti per me, non per il loro design, ma per il loro modo di lavorare, le loro

passioni o interessi. Credo di aver imparato molto ascoltando dei designer parlare dei propri lavori e la loro esperienza, piuttosto che semplicemente guardando le sue opere.
- Giovanni, studente al 1 anno

Cerco un via libera per l'espressione personale, una giustificazione a determinati gusti e pensieri che si vergognano di uscir fuori a causa del giudizio altrui.
- Matteo, studente al 1 anno

La carenza di punti di riferimento femminili è stata uno stimolo per Louise Fili, in quanto l'ha spinto ad agire e a voler diventare lei stessa un punto di riferimento per qualcuno. Tu come ti sentiresti senza qualcuno a cui ispirarti?

A volte se non si hanno punti di riferimento o persone/cose a cui ispirarsi, la soluzione è crearseli, andando a cercare altrove e allargando i propri orizzonti. Non è assolutamente detto che ogni

Designer debba avere un altro Designer come “maestro” o come ispirazione. Le nostre idee e il nostro modo di vedere la grafica possono anche derivare dalle nostre esperienze, dalle azioni che vediamo e che viviamo tutti i giorni, da un’insegna che vediamo mentre aspettiamo il treno, da un libro che abbiamo letto o da un film che abbiamo visto e si potrebbe andare avanti all’infinito; tutti piccoli tasselli che se presi singolarmente non hanno molto peso, ma al contrario, se raggruppati tutti insieme possono formare e diventare una vera e propria base da cui partire e di conseguenza un punto di riferimento.

- **Paola, studentessa al 1 anno**

Non è tanto una persona quanto un lavoro a cui mi ispiro, se non ci fosse nessuno nel mio campo penso proverei a guardare al di fuori, magari ad altre discipline dell’arte o qualsiasi altra cosa possa risultare funzionale al progetto al quale sto lavorando.

- **Nicola, studente al 5 anno**

Inizialmente perso, ma volendo fare il graphic design, troverei un mio stile, magari non ispirandomi a qualcuno ma a qualcosa.

- **Edoardo, studente al 1 anno**

Da una parte avrei paura di sbagliare, mi darebbe la sensazione di stare impaginando senza una griglia tipografica, dall’altra lo prenderei anche io come uno stimolo per colmare quel vuoto che percepisco.

- **Chiara, studentessa al 1 anno**

Credo che la carenza di punti di riferimento avrebbe spinto anche me ad impegnarmi di più per migliorare la situazione, tuttavia penso che chiunque con dei punti di riferimento sia avvantaggiato, possa produrre e lavorare meglio e senz’altro con più sicurezza.

- **Enrico, studente al 1 anno**

DESIGN OLTRE IL DESIGN

Cristina Chiappini parla dei suoi punti di riferimento

LOUISE COME PUNTO DI RIFERIMENTO

Mi fa molto piacere che Louise abbia fatto il mio nome perché sicuramente lei è un grande punto di riferimento per me, anche per il modo in cui si pone nei confronti della professione, per il suo approccio tranquillo e mai ansioso. Lei riesce a trovare tantissimo tempo per lavorare e fare ricerca. Non è semplice quello che sto dicendo, perché viviamo in un mondo dove il tempo è denaro, per cui tutto quello che uno fa spesso e volentieri è esclusivamente ciò che le

aziende impongono. E questo poi monta come dei mattoni, perché con tutta la sua ricerca ha fatto dei prodotti editoriali, è diventato qualcosa non solo per gioco, ma che si è trasformato in un fatto professionale. Anche perché appunto tutti dicono “Ma quelle bellissime insegne sono sempre state lì, perché noi italiani non le abbiamo viste? No? Stavano lì.”

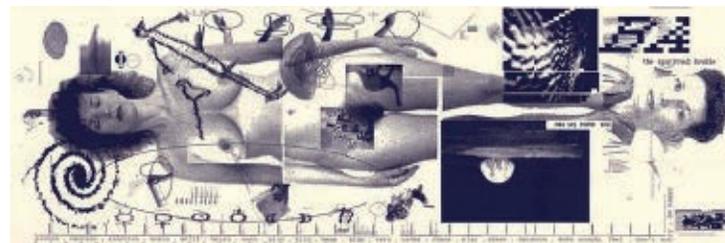
IL VUOTO

Probabilmente il mio vuoto dal punto di vista professionale è dato dal fatto che quando sono uscita da scuola – erano gli anni 80 – non sono andata a fare uno stage o un tirocinio in uno studio, ma mi sono subito lanciata nel mondo del lavoro, senza fare un traghettaggio. Forse quello può aver rappresentato un vuoto dentro di me perché il vero punto di riferimento non c'è stato. Ci sono stati altri punti di riferimento ma un po' più volanti, attraverso designer che io conoscevo e a cui mi ispiravo ma senza aver lavorato nel loro studio.

All'inizio si fanno tanti errori e se si fa un tirocinio da qualche parte è per vedere come lavora qualcun altro e per capire come raffinare le cose, cercare di non fare errori e capire modalità di progettazione. Quindi questo potrebbe essere stato il mio vuoto.

MODELLI DEL PASSATO

Quando avevo la vostra età i miei punti di riferimento sono stati un po' iconici, nel senso che non pensavo che fossero un mio punto di riferimento, ma sicuramente sono state delle grandi ispirazioni per me. Stiamo parlando di un periodo dove non c'era internet, quindi la comunicazione non era così veloce, e soprattutto non c'era la possibilità di vedere tante immagini e tanti progetti come nella contemporaneità. Da quei pochi libri che circolavano, io ero molto attratta da April Greiman, perché era una donna e mi piaceva il modo in cui si poneva. L'immagine che mi ispirò è quella con il suo corpo, è il suo approccio con il corpo che mi piaceva e mi ispirava.



APRIL GREIMAN
"DOES IT MAKE SENSE?"
1986



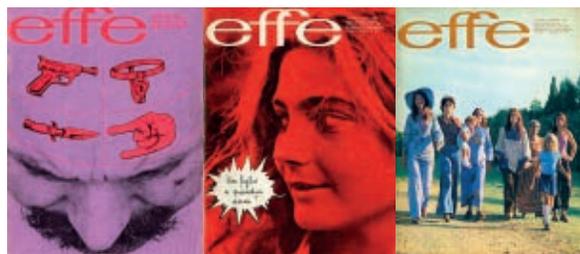
It's not graphic design anymore. We just don't have a new name for it yet.

- April Greiman



EFFE RIVISTA FEMMINISTA

Avevo conosciuto e avevo lavorato insieme a quella che era stata la ex redattrice di rivista femminista, la rivista femminista autogestita degli anni 70-80. Da parte mia c'era un attaccamento ai temi di *Effe* perché era un femminismo con un ventaglio molto vasto e la rivista ne prendeva tutta l'area. Dalla parte più radicale a quella più cristiana, più democratica, da chi voleva eliminare gli uomini nel vero senso della parola a chi cercava uno scambio e un accordo con l'altra parte. Quindi ho sempre pensato che andasse fatto un archivio di questo, per cui mi sono fatta fautrice, nel senso che l'ho finanziato insieme a Daniela Colombo (ex redattrice e giornalista di *Effe*) e Donata Francescano (giornalista di *Effe*).



Ho coinvolto nella digitalizzazione degli articoli alcuni miei ex studenti dell'Università Sapienza e dell'Accademia di belle Arti di Roma che stavano svolgendo lo stage nel mio studio in quel periodo. Quindi è stato un progetto fatto completamente a costo zero, tutti hanno lavorato gratuitamente, anche perché nessuno mai avrebbe finanziato un archivio del genere, perché non c'era interesse da parte di aziende. Le copertine di *Effe*, tra l'altro bellissime, molto differenti tra loro alcune illustrate altre fotografiche, avevano uno stile proprio della comunicazione femminista dell'epoca, però non vengono calcolate tra i classici della progettazione di graphic design femminile degli anni settanta, quando invece assolutamente lo sono.



MODELLI DEL PRESENTE E CONSIGLI

PER I GIOVANI

Nell'attualità, anche dal punto di vista didattico, come modello porto un personaggio che non è una graphic designer, ma che comunque secondo me deve essere un punto d'ispirazione ed esempio un po' per tutti i giovani: Greta Thunberg. È incredibile che una ragazza di 17 anni abbia iniziato a pensare che si possa modificare il pensiero e si possa iniziare a fare politica, politica nel senso positivo della parola, per cercare di cambiare il comportamento delle persone. È sconvolgente soprattutto perché le mie studentesse sono tutte maggiorenni, quindi pensare che una minorenni abbia comunque smosso così tanto le situazioni è incredibile. Secondo me lei è un grande punto di riferimento che dovrebbe prendere tutti gli ambiti, non solo il design: chiunque studia qualcosa, chiunque vuole fare qualcosa nel futuro, ma anche solo chi non vuole fare niente ma vuole solo continuare a vivere... Greta dovrebbe essere un punto di

riferimento per tutti.

Perciò secondo me bisogna anche spostare i punti di riferimento su delle discipline che non sono più quelle del design, perché ci sono dei fattori così importanti, come quello climatico o come la salute nel mondo, che vanno ad impattare su tutti gli ambiti. I punti di riferimento devono cambiare proprio di direzione, di tema, cioè essere completamente aperti, non essere più chiusi all'ambito del graphic design.

Questo è quello che mi sento di dire nella contemporaneità.

Io sono sempre stata guidata dalla passione, dalla grande passione per le cose e quindi non riesco a sentire la pesantezza e la lungaggine di certe cose. Secondo me la passione deve spingere, quello che bisogna dire ai giovani è che il design è passione e che adesso deve andare al di là del design, che sono altre le cose che ci devono spingere. In questo frangente, in questo momento storico, è fondamentale l'amore per il mondo e deve spingere a fare cose

innovative ma che siano in particolare sostenibili, che possano andare avanti nel tempo e possano diventare qualcosa che beneficia tutti e tutto. Quindi progetti di condivisione sono importantissimi. Quando ero studente ero sempre molto individualista, volevo sempre fare le cose da sola per avere il controllo massimo di tutto. Poi mano a mano negli anni ho imparato a condividere, che non è per niente semplice perché significa perdere il controllo delle cose ed è complicato dal punto di vista psicologico, no? Perché è facile: faccio tutto da sola, controllo da sola, però le cose che si fanno da soli arrivano fino ad un certo punto, quello che si riesce a fare invece condividendo con gli altri arriva ad un altro punto molto più aperto. Già il fatto che voi stiate facendo questa ricerca insieme vi dà la possibilità di fare in modo che diventi molto più interessante condivisa in cinque invece che fatta da un'unica persona, per esempio.

“IF YOU HAVE A
PROBLEM WITH
MY BEING FEMALE,
THEN I DON'T
WANT YOU AS A
CLIENT”

-Louise Fili



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