

Design History and Practice

PACD 1010

Section B, CRN 14302

Fall 2022

Thursdays

4:00 – 6:40pm ET

6 East 16th Street

Room No. 909

Dhp22.labud.nyc

Nika Simovich Fisher

simovich@newschool.edu

Office Hours by appointment

Course Description

This class exposes students to significant and great design from the history of visual communications, focusing on the 20th Century. It is not meant to be exhaustive, but provides a foundation of understanding communication design as it exists today. Students will look closely at formal relationships within historical designs and respond in original designs of their own. The class combines lectures, which require additional visual research and reading outside of class, with active making as students will have to design responses to prominent figures and historic moments of the disciplines. Students will also experience basic introductions to color theory and elements & principles of design.

History is messy and nonlinear. There is no official start and end date. As such, a series of investigative questions will guide our class and serve as our units. Topics from one question to the next will organically re-emerge, and while we'll jump around in timelines, we'll see that many facets of design overlap and can help you build a personal relationship to it.

Investigative Questions

1. What does the current state of graphic design look like?
2. How does graphic design distribute power? What is the relationship between graphic design and access?
3. How does distribution affect meaning in graphic design? How does it affect visual form?
4. What is the relationship between design and authorship?
5. How does one's identity shape their relationship with graphic design? How does graphic design hinder or highlight identity? Can we separate the designer from the form?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Understand the evolution of communication design, both as a progression of styles and as developments in technology.
2. Understand the concepts and techniques behind the major periods in communication design.

3. Identify and articulate the influences and relationships that exist within a work of design.
4. Research a subject of interest, both visually and through text.
5. Recontextualize visual methods from the past (such as color theory, elements and principles of design and Gestalt theory of visual perception) to create a contemporary visual form that is their own.

Required Reading

We will use Graphic Design History – A Critical Guide (Second Edition) written by Johanna Drucker & Emily McVarish as a text book. It is impossible to create a fully comprehensive history of graphic design, and as such, the idea of a textbook is not ideal. However, this book will help expose us to a historically canonized narrative and help build a library of references. It is not assumed you will memorize these histories or timelines, but it is important to be aware of them. Each week, we'll also have readings from contemporary authors in dialogue with the textbook offering additional perspectives to themes in the class.

You can rent a digital version of the book on Pearson.com. Sign up for a \$9.99 eText membership and cancel at the end of the class (should cost ~\$40). You can also rent it on textbooks.com. There are two copies of it available at The New School University Center Library.

We'll also read portions from some of the following suggested books. Clips will be provided to you digitally for free (no need to purchase).

- *Baseline Shift / Untold Stories of Women in Graphic Design History*
Edited by Briar Levit
- *Proof of Art / A Short History of NFTs from the Beginning of Digital Art to the Metaverse*
Edited by Alfred Weidinger
- *Graphic Design Reproduction & Representation*
Paul Jobling & David Crowley
- *You Are Here / Art After the Internet*
Edited by Omar Kholeif
- *Women Design*
Libby Sellers
- *Thinking About History*
Sarah Maza

- *Glitch Feminism*
Legacy Russell
- *Broad Band / The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet*
Claire L. Evans
- *No More Rules / Graphic Design and Postmodernism*
Rick Poynor

Schedule

Detailed schedule will be on the class website and updated weekly. Make sure to check the homework there, as additional readings will be posted.

Date	Unit Question and In-Class Topics	Readings
09/01	1. What does the current state of graphic design look like? History of history, Multiple perspectives on graphic design history, What we consider to be graphic design Introduce Something New, Something Old Class in teams, one reading each.	What Does It Mean to Decolonize Design? – Anoushka Khandwala IN CLASS: GOOD HISTORY/BAD HISTORY – Tibor Kalman, J. Abbott Miller, and Karrie Jacobs Can We Teach Graphic Design History Without Chronology? – Aggie Toppins Nontsikelelo Mutiti on Interrogating the Euro-centric Design Canon – Ksenya Samarskaya Messy History vs. Neat History: Toward an Expanded View of Women in Graphic Design – Martha Scotford
09/08	Globalization in design, Digital revolution, Gaps in global language support, Parallels to Industrial Revolution How do we critique and evaluate design? Learning to describe what we see, Basic form vocabulary	The Hottest Design Trend of the Year is... Nostalgia? – Liz Stinson Troll Palayan: Clara Balaguer on Design, Decolonization, and Trolling Duterte – Amber Newman GDH, Ch.16 Graphic Design and Globalization
09/15	Postmodernism, relationships with form, interface designs, evolution of web design Present Something New, Something Old Introduce: Personal Homepage Sketches	Typography and the Screen – Loretta Staples GDH, Ch. 14 Postmodernism in Design (1970s -1980s and Beyond)

		GDH, Ch. 15 Digital Design (1970s–2000s)
09/22	2. How does graphic design distribute power? What is the relationship between graphic design and access? Bauhaus, Pre WWII era, New typography, Ornamentation Vs Order Systems and structures	GHD, Ch. 8, Formations of the Modern Movement GHD, Ch. 9, Innovation and Persuasion (1910 to 1930)
09/29	Early Modernism, Distribution models, Harlem Renaissance Present: Personal Homepage Sketches Introduce: Bauhaus Feed Visit: New School Archives, Look at graphic identity of Parsons School of Design	This Just In: Emory Douglas & The Black Panther – The Letterform Archive GDH, Ch. 12 Corporate Identities and International Style (1950s to 1970s)
10/06	Modern art, conceptual art, The New York School, Art -> Design Geometric forms, Symmetric, Asymmetry Present: Bauhaus Feed Introduce: Typographic Compositions	The Hitchhiker's Guide to Secondwave Feminism – Meg Miller on The New York Times GDH, Ch. 13 Pop and Protest (1960s-1970s)
10/13	3. How does distribution affect meaning in graphic design? How does it affect visual form? Design as activism, International style, Mid Century design, Typography Tension with form, tension with typography	If You're Worried About DALL·E Replacing Illustrators, You Don't Understand The Power of Illustration – Julien Posture GDH, Ch. 11 Public Interest Campaigns and Information Design (1930s to 1950s)
10/20	Midterm Meetings	Ripping Off The Resistance – The Editors on AIGA Eye on Design Ch. 10 Culture of Consumption (1920s to 1930s)
10/27	Ways of Seeing, Design networks, Mail Art Present: Typographic Compositions Introduce: Archival Story Research methods, Visual research, Archives Librarian Visit	Nili Lerner's IDisney Coin, Interview with Georg Bak – Nili Lerner's in Proof of Art Art After Social Media – Brad Troemel from You Are Here Art After the Internet
11/03	4. What is the relationship between design and authorship? Design Lab Tour Ephemera, riso printing Collaging, Photo manipulation	Typist to Typesetter: Norma Kitson and Her Red Lion Setters – Ruth Sykes, from Baseline Shift In the Late '70s in the Bronx, PHASE 2's Party Flyers Created a Visual Language for Hip-Hop – Jerome Harris on AIGA Eye on Design
11/10	Field trip: New York Historical Society	Fuck Content — Michael Rock

	New wave, Punk rock typography, Pop culture and design Present: Archival Story Introduce: Final Project	
11/17	Final project workshop	How Designing and Writing Are More Alike Than You Think — Editors on AIGA Eye on Design Publishing Will Not Be Another Victim of the Pandemic – Rachel Berger and Mary Banas
12/01	5. How does one's identity shape their relationship with graphic design? How does graphic design hinder or highlight identity? Can we separate the designer from the form? Poetry in design, Blogging, Self-publishing Rhythm in design	Reckoning with Eric Gill's Legacy – Megan Williams on Creative Review Excerpts from a Mail Artist's Diary – Anna Banana Design Researcher Zara Arshad on Documenting East Asian Visual Culture and Tracing the "In-between" – Florence Fu
12/08	Community and events in design, Happenings	Scratching the Surface Episode 213, Nicole Killian Miss Outer Boro – Claire L. Evans, Ch. 11 in Broadband
12/15	Final Design Presentations	

Assignments

In this course, you'll complete small exercises for each unit. There is a larger final project, and an ongoing design journal.

Something New, Something Old

Find an example of something you consider a contemporary piece of graphic design. Describe what it is, where you found it, who designed it, who the audience is, and to the best of your abilities, what it looks like formally.

Next, find something from the 20th century or prior that echoes some of the design sensibilities found in your contemporary example. Try to look beyond color, and instead focus on hierarchy, typography, messaging, and other visual components. In a few bullet points, describe what it is, where you found it, who designed it, what year or decade it is from, and what it looks like.

In a few additional bullet points, describe the similarities and differences between the two examples. Do you think that one style is informed by the other? If so, how?

Due: 09/15

Personal Homepage Sketches

Design a homepage for yourself. The site should be personal and low-stakes, highlighting something about either yourself or one of your interests. It should not be a professional homepage for your design work.

Design it three ways: one as though the website was programmed in 1998, one in 2006, and one designed in the present.

You might reference <https://www.webdesignmuseum.org/> to review some of the timelines and stylistic motifs. Think about why they were designed that way in the first place. As a class, we will look at ways in which technology changed during these time periods and how you might echo some of those choices in your sketches.

Due: 09/29

Bauhaus Feed

Identify a designer of the bauhaus community that created work you are interested in. Start here:

<https://www.bauhauskooperation.com/knowledge/the-bauhaus/people/masters-and-teachers/>

Imagine this designer would create 12 posts for a social media feed. Select 12 images this designer would share and place each on a page with Title, Designer Name, 1-sentence description. 5 Images should show work of the designer (could include sketches, fragments, ...) The rest of the images should show how the designer looked at the world. This can include products of other designers, friends, nature, anything that expresses the designer's perspective. Two of those images have to be yours.

Start here:

Lucia Moholy's Photos of the bauhaus

<https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections?q=lucia+moholy>

Harvard bauhaus Collection

<https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections?q=bauhaus>

Bauhaus Archive Berlin

<http://open-archive.bauhaus.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&moduleFunction=search>

Due: 10/06

Typographic Compositions

Kim Elam defined 8 Typographic Systems. Find examples for 6 systems designed on the People's Graphic Design Archive. Place each design on one page with the name of the designer, title, and year.

Next, look at the lyrics of one of your favorite songs; select 1-2 sentences (10-20 words).

Use 6 different Typographic Systems (any, your choice) to create compositions using exactly the same lyrics excerpt.

- 2 with a sense of urgency and directness
- 2 that feel quiet but confident
- 2 that highlight the musicality and timing of the song
- 1 that is meant to be shared with a large audience
- 1 that are meant to be one-off copies that are saved and preserved in a private collection

The fliers can include color or photos. Print the compositions at 8.5 x 11 inch paper.

Due: 10/20

Archival Story

Use The New School's Databases (Proquest, for example) and find a published article for a general audience from the 20th century (News article, magazine profile). Read the article and analyze the story's main points. When was it written, who is the author, what is the publication, and what else was going on in the world at that time?

Next, think through how you might communicate the story on Instagram. Think through an image carousel (3 to 5 images) and a thoughtful caption that communicates the story to today's audience. The images should be a curated selection of images, two of which need to be your own. Think through the order in which one might see them.

Next, create one short (14 second max) video that communicates the article on an Instagram Story. Design the video in one of the style's that were going on at the time of its publication.

Due: 11/10

Final Project

For your final project, you will deepen the research on one designer (OR design group OR design movement) and create the visual language for an exhibition of their work in your hometown. The challenge will be to combine the visual language of the designer with the local culture of your hometown. The emphasis here is to create something that has a visual freshness by recontextualizing and remixing formal relationships. So use your designer's work as a jumping-off point or a point of explosion, collision, contradiction, etc. Select an existing gallery or museum in your hometown or invent a speculative one.

Deliverables:

Wordmark for exhibition

Typographic system to be applied on interior labels and marketing communications

Image/Illustration lock ups

OOH poster series

Social assets: Email, Instagram post, Instagram story

Homepage mockup

Due: 12/15

Weekly Reference Journal

To encourage this historical awareness (and to practice seeing and articulating how design functions) you will be responsible for constructing a weekly "Reference Journal."

Each week you'll analyze 4 images from the assigned readings: 2 designs shown in the readings and 2 designs not in the readings (other work by designers mentioned in the text or reference material for that week) For each design, find a good quality color image online.

Spend one uninterrupted minute looking at it: How does it work formally? What relationships are at play? What tensions are created? What is happening visually?

Write 1-2 sentences describing the formal relationship(s) you see. (Feel free to

annotate, and sketch on the image if that is useful.) And write 1-2 sentences that situate them historically and how they connect to the unit question.

Include a discussion question or comment on the readings to share in class.

Specific Language

One goal of this course is to learn how to see and how to articulate what a design is doing (how it functions visually). To see and describe relationships. To see and describe sets of relationships. To do this, we want to avoid relying on vague phrases. Here are some terms to start thinking about: (this list is not exhaustive)

abstract/representationa	front/behind layered	relation to the outer
I alignment	light/dark light/heavy	bounds repetition
big/small	line	repetition with variation
broad/narrow	linear starting and	rest/motion
color relations	stopping many/few	rotation
conflict/unity	opaque/transparent	size relations
constraining cropped	opposite	smooth/rough soft/hard
curvilinear/rectilinear cut	orientation	spatial relations
depth in color	overlap	symmetry
direction	pattern	systems of order/grid
disruption of	physics	tension
expectations flat/depth	pierce	thick/thin thrust/counter
flexible/stiff	plane	thrust tight/loose
foreground/background	point	touching
gravity	realignment of	translucent
hidden/visible	horizontal/vertical	vibration
horizon	relation to	volume
horizontal/vertical in	horizontal/vertical	

Assessment Criteria

Critique and Class Participation	20%
Reference Journal	20%
Project 1	5%

Design History and Practice

Fall 2022

Thurs. 4 – 6:40pm

6 E. 16th / No. 909

Nika Simovich Fisher

simovichn@newschool.edu

Project 2

5%

Project 3

10%

Project 4

10%

Project 5

10%

Project 6

20%

Attendance, Grading and Work Submission Standards, Program Policies, Making Resources, and University Policies

All CD classes adhere to the same program and university policies:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u358io8doX_SVVMGqIM_oH5V0OlcneYu4Ww-uE55QM/edit

Materials and Supplies

Laptop

Figma (free)

Adobe Suite