

Jan 30, 2023

Armstrong, Helen. ["Introduction: Revisiting the Avant-Garde"](#) *Graphic Design Theory:*

[Readings From the Field](#), Princeton Architectural Press, 2009. Pages 9-15.

- do you notice similarities between avant-garde movements of the past and the design field (or the world) of today?
- In your reading response, define these terms and consider in what ways do today's designers participate in, facilitate, or reject:
 - Authorship
 - Universality
 - Social Responsibility

This article touches on the emerging technologies and practices and how they affect the design world today. Looking back at history, we find that there was a similar rebellion to the rules of design in the past, particularly in the form of the avant-garde movement. This movement was characterized by artists that used their works to further their own agendas and beliefs as they pertained to their current times. Avant-garde also refers to rule breaking and creating unusual and innovative pieces. Contrasting this idea was the next art movement, The International Style, which took away the agenda of each respective designer and instead preached an organized approach, in which the main goal was to present the design and only that. Avant-garde designers believed that their authorship, or ownership, was being removed if they adhered to the new rules.

(Thinking Grid Systems in Graphic Design by Josef Muller Brockmann | THINKINGFORM)

In the 90's there was a rebellion against the new rules as defined by the principles of The International Style. Designers wanted to engage with society and comment on or reflect on social issues and world events once again. Corporate design contributed to this by removing any personality that the designer might want to inject into their piece, but also introduced the concept of branding.

Today it seems that the scale is falling back into the realm of expressive and meaningful art. More artists and designers are coming forward to engage in social change. Many artists echo on the horrors of the world and reflect the issue back at the audience with their designs. "Social responsibility is an ethical theory in which individuals are accountable for fulfilling their civic duty, and the actions of an individual must benefit the whole of society." (*Social Responsibility and Ethics*). Today, there is a huge focus on sustainability and harmony with both people and the environment which is reflected in modern design. This belief is like the universality that was present in avant-garde, that all things are related, and design should not feel unfamiliar.

Annotation Links:

1) *Social Responsibility and Ethics*.

pachamama.org/social-justice/social-responsibility-and-ethics.

2) *10 Facts You Don't Know About Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*.

www.pablopicasso.org/avignon.jsp.

3) *Thinking Grid Systems in Graphic Design by Josef Muller Brockmann* |

THINKINGFORM. 18 Mar. 2011,

thinkingform.nyc/2011/03/18/grid-systems-in-graphic-design.

Feb 6, 2023

F.T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism"; Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Who We Are: Manifesto of the Constructivist Group"; and El Lissitzky, "Our Book", [Graphic Design Theory: Readings From the Field](#) by Helen Armstrong, pages 19-31

- What political events were happening during the time and place that these manifestos were written? How did those events influence the authors' beliefs?
- Consider if and how these manifestos addressed the concepts of **authorship/ownership**, **universal systems of communication**, and **social/political engagement**.
- Which elements of these texts remain relevant for the present, and which elements are problematic?
- How has the communication process changed since the early 20th Century, specifically regarding technology?

The Manifesto of Futurism was written right before the first World War. Tensions were already high in Europe and the Manifesto is more of a call to arms than anything to me. They reference being aggressive, outlaws, and basically disagree with any progressive ideas of the time and apparently, women too. Authorship was forgotten in favor of a "voice for the people" idea. They mention being at the precipice of a new era and use it to emphasize the urgency of acting in the moment and with force, without necessarily minding the rules.

The Constructivist Manifesto was written after WWI. In contrast to the Futurists, they are more concerned with the art itself and not necessarily the social engagement. The manifesto insists that artists/constructors need to go back to the "laboratory" and inspect and maybe come up with new elements of design to develop and experiment with them.

El Lissitski's "Our Book" is like The Terminator in that it essentially predicts the future. It basically compares books at the time with what the internet is today; it also goes a step further to predict new ways of communications that will eventually arise. One of the main points it makes is that designers need to be readily able to translate their concepts into these new spaces or "languages" that become the universal systems of communications.

Feb 14, 2023

Reading Response 3 - New Typography

Madeleine Morley; [*Master László Moholy-Nagy Saw Photoshop Coming. 90 Years Ahead of Time*](#) (2019), AIGA Eye on Design, László Moholy-Nagy; *Typophoto* (1925): [*Graphic Design Theory: Readings From the Field*](#) by Helen Armstrong on pages 32-34, Jan Tschichold, "The Principles of the New Typography" 1928: [*Graphic Design Theory: Readings From the Field*](#) by Helen Armstrong on pages 35-38.

Here are the questions to which you should respond in your reading response:

- According to these authors, what is their aesthetic approach, and why is it better than the traditional design/typography of the past?
- What role should typography, photography, and other media play in shaping a new kind of design?
- How did technological advances influence aesthetic forms and theories in early 20th Century design?

According to both authors, the old typography is too decorative. Being centered on a main axis that was kept centered made messages confusing and unnecessarily busy. The use of highly

decorative fonts combined with a complete disregard for uniformity or legibility betrayed the purpose of the typography's communication. Both authors agreed that a new more uniform and economical approach would carry out the message in a much more successful way.

Sans serif type was at the helm of this movement. The uniformity and legibility of sans serif type made it a perfect vehicle for the new typography to flow and become a part of what we call good design today. It was through the successful use of this type and through using a new axis to anchor the text that the standard flush left is preferred today. Designers also tasked themselves with introducing these new concepts to the world of advertising, in an expo, to create a new standard but also to convince the clients and the public that this new method was successful and indeed correct.

I believe that type will have yet another revolution when the new preferred method of communication is invented. Given the history of how type has changed to meet the needs of the times it is only logical that type will exist in a much different form in the future as well.

Feb 20, 2023

Reading Response 4 - International Style

Here are the questions to which you should respond in your reading response:

- How do each of these designers/authors think you should approach design?
- Include an example of **contemporary** typography/layout that embodies the two design systems or philosophies described by Karl Gerstner and Joseph Muller-Brockman. And explain why!

How do the contemporary Swiss designers described in the Margaret Rhodes' essay "*flirt with breaking the rules of the International Typographic Style*" ?

The International Style brought order to the concept of design by means of templates or guidelines that would guarantee successful results. One Swiss designer that pioneered this movement was Karl Gerstner. Gerstner approached design as a mathematician. He believed that like equations, design elements could be composed into formulas that would yield an effective outcome. He created a table to assist in the design process by allowing the user to successfully combine elements together that had proven to be successful design methods in the past.

Another Swiss designer that had a huge influence on The International Style was Josef Müller-Brockmann. His belief was more concerned with the grid and the composition within as a vehicle of facilitating, organizing, and enhancing the content to be displayed. He also believed that design was as valid as the work of a mathematician in that a good designer must consider all aspects of design and then combine them in perfect harmony to achieve success.

A perfect example of both Gerstner and Müller-Brockmann's design philosophies is Jacqueline Casey's work. She was highly influenced by the International Style when she was working as a designer, alongside Muriel Cooper, at MIT from 1960's thru 1980's. Casey's love for Helvetica as a sans-serif font of choice, combined with her expert use of the grid, and restrained use of color hark back to the principles of both Gerstner and Müller-Brockmann. Her use of basic shapes as abstract type is also notable as is her use of negative space in her compositions.

Ref:

· “Cooper and Casey at MIT.” MIT Spectrum, 14 Mar. 2017, spectrum.
mit.edu/winter-2017/cooper-casey-at-mit.

· Jacqueline Casey | Cary Graphic Arts Collection | RIT.
www.rit.edu/carycollection/jacqueline-casey.

March 16, 2023

Reading Response 6:

- In your opinion, is there a difference between “underground” and “mainstream” today? Why?
- Heller identifies a few underground movements, like 1960s psychedelia, that turned mainstream; which ones does he identify? And can you think of any others?
- Provide a visual example (with citation) of culture jamming today. Describe why it would be considered culture jamming.

In my opinion there is no difference between the underground and mainstream today. Everything is so readily available online that the second it gets posted anywhere it can gain traction because it becomes part of the world wide web. We as citizens are not guaranteed any privacy in our everyday lives so it is a little silly to think that anything could be done in secret anymore unless you possess some sort of higher power and money or have connections to make

evidence go away. Heller identifies the 60's, "underground bands", Dada, 1930's Ballyhoo, and MAD magazine.

I believe the writer, Heller, should perhaps use his time more wisely and maybe fight for the rights of artists in the workplace or perhaps he may write about anyone who doesn't look like him, a white man, could never be taken seriously in the perverse and money hungry environment that is the high-priced art world. Another suggestion is to create more design ideas and concepts that may be new or that may contribute something to the planet, but things like type, magazines, or "underground bands" have never changed the world for the better. In addition, anyone who uses phrases like "self-flagellating" should be encased inside stone like Han Solo so that new artists, who are diverse, have a chance to show the world their ideas without having to be judged or compared to something else.

This is an example of culture jamming because they manipulated the logo for IKEA and created a new tagline and in doing so are ridiculing the furniture store.