THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

Arts & Crafts

The Arts and Crafts movement came as a reaction to the lack of aesthetics that emerged from the industrial age. Machinery reduced attractive product design to the verge of non-existence. Artists and craftsmen that were once viewed as one and the same had become distinguished from one another in the age of industry. This led to the attempt of agents of change such as artists, architects, and writers to develop a cohesive, national style. A very intricate, ornate aesthetic emerged from the void and overflowed with vines, leaves, and floral patterns. The poor type practices of the Victorians was revamped and integrated into each composition with a greater degree of care. Some influential designers of the period include William Morris, Arthur H. Mackmurdo, Walter Crane, and Aubrey Beardsley.

Victorian

The Victorian period was born out of the consumerism created by the infamous Industrial Revolution. A demand for design was created from the surplus of goods to distinguish competing products from one another The stylistic approach came from artists and designers using medieval art and architecture as inspiration when the aesthetic quality of the time was suffering. The Victorian philosophy was that excessive ornamentation dazzled the customer's eye and would encourage a purchase. Engravings were the popular style for illustrations during this time. Many intricate display typefaces were designed in this period, modifying the Didone typefaces into bold "Fat Faces." Notable designers include Jules Chéret, Grant Hamilton, and Richard Doyle.

Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau was the first international design style in history. The decorative style emerged from the Arts and Crafts period as a continued rebellion towards the Victorian style and industrialization. Art Nouveau began in England in the late 1800's and lasted until the final days of World War I. Organic, floral motifs were the defining characteristic of the style. Art Nouveau functioned as a bridge into the 20th century, and ended the dominance of antiquity as the main influence for contemporary art. Designers across Europe embraced the excessive stylistic freedom that Art Nouveau encouraged, and each country developed their own unique brand of the style. Notable designers of the period were Toulouse Lautrec, Alphonse Mucha, and Eugene Grasset.

Glasgow

Jugendstil

Vienna Secession

Wiener Werkstatte

The movement known as the Vienna Secession occured as a reaction to strict classicists who were not open to displaying new mediums and practices, such as applied arts and graphic design. A group of artists, architects, and designers including Josef Hoffmann, Gustav Klimt, and Koloman Moser banded together to found a design society where they were free to create and display the designs that inspired them. The main influence came from the classical art of antiquity. Many of the artists and designers of the Secession began to stray from naturalistic and organic styles and began using simplified, geometric forms.

Vorticism

Futurism

The Futurism Movement was started by the Italian poet F.T. Marinetti, who wrote the Futurist Manifesto in 1909. It was perhaps the largest and most influential of the Modern styles. The Futurists set out to revolutionize design and philosophy with a forward thinking, "don't look back" attitude. Futurism embraced industry, metal, clamor, and speed. The Cubism style practiced by fine artists of the period became a large influence on the angular typography of the Futurist period. Notable designers of the period include Fortunato Depero, Enrico Prampolini, Ivo Pannaggi, and V. Paladini.

Constructivism

Constructivism was a Russian design style that developed from prerevolutionary artistic experiments such as Cubo-Futurism, Rayonism, and Suprematism. The Russian philosophy surrounding art is that it should possess a social purpose and deliver a message. Soon enough, the Constructivist style was being used to promote the ideals of the revolution in Russia. Constructivist worked together to form a collective whole with their work, to which the individual was secondary. Their typography was based on the geometry of squares and rectangles, which were believed to be the source of all creative expression. Graphic design was viewed as an unornamental, objectified code. The designers of the period used illustration sparingly, and created visual pictures out of typographic arrangements. The prominent designers of Constructivism were El Lissitzky, Gustav Klutsis, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Alexander Rodchenko.

Dada

De Stijl

Streamline

Art Deco

Art Deco was a decorative design style of the early 1900's that became very popular and commercially successful. The style swept across the world and began to appear in art, architecture, clothing, design, and furniture. Art Deco was the last of the "total design styles." It made use of historical motifs, reductive forms, geometric typography, and Modernist sensibilities. The style began to grow into a symbol for modern living and elegance. Notable Art Deco Designers include Jean Carlu, A. M. Cassandre, Charles Chappell, Noel Fontanet, and Paul Pfund.

Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was a school that sought to reform art education by combining fine arts and design principles into one program. The school distanced itself far from traditional academic practices by no longer imposing strict theories and philosophies on their students. Rather, the Bauhaus encouraged a personal and unique understanding of design and creativity. During the early years of the school, there was no consistent style identified with the Bauhaus. The addition of the designer László Moholy-Nagy to the faculty caused the coursework to be nudged towards a more Constructivist style. More emphasis was placed on typography. The school developed a universal alphabet that contained only lowercase letters. Towards the end of the 1920's, the Bauhaus became a hub for avant-garde functional graphic design.

New Typography

British Modern

Late Modern

Swiss International Style

Corporate Style

Highly influential to this day, the Swiss International Style set out to change design from environmental clutter to an efficient tool for communication. The style emerged from two seperate Swiss schools in Basel and Zurich. The graphic designers of the era considered every element of a design as it pertained to the work's message. The visual style is characterized by grid–based designs and clean sans-serif typefaces. The ubiquitous typeface Helvetica was designed during this period in history. Notable designers of the time include Armin Hofmann, Josef Müller–Brockman, Karl Gerstner, and Max Bill.

Eclectic

Revival

Psychedelic

The short lived Psychedelic era of the 1960's reflected the culture and attitude of America's youth. Psychedelic design was primarily seen in connection with concert posters and album covers. The art style drew influence from the Art Nouveau and Vienna Secession styles. Vibrant colors were employed to entertain the casual psychedelics user. The spread and popularity of the style quickly caused it to be exploited and applied to clothing, jewelry, newspapers, and furniture. Well known Psychedelic artists include Wes Wilson, Rick Griffin, Stanley Mouse, David King, and Victor Moscoso.

Post-Modern

The Post–Modern period was an international graphic style that formed out of various discordant theories and practices of individual designers and schools, not a blanketing philosophy that influenced the vast majority. The constricting principles of Modernism were abandoned, and design saw a return to un–apolgetic ornamentation, full of harmonious colors, random patterns, and floating forms. Post-Modern design tended to blend current technologies and techniques with art history themes. The Memphis, Basel, and Zurich styles broke free of the stringent Swiss typography practices, and intentionally broke conventional rules to create more visual interest. In the late 1970's and on into the 1980's, Punk style and its playful commercial counterpart New Wave carried on the departure from rational design and produced chaotic compositions and edgy collage based illustrations that broke down borders and boundaries. Notable Post-Modern designers include Wolfgang Weingart, Ettore Sottsass, John Jay, and Tibor Kalman.

Deconstruction

The introduction of the Macintosh computer in the 1980's revolutionized graphic design like nothing else in history. Not only was it beneficial for speed as a production tool, but it spawned an age of creative experimentation. Designers of the digital age pushed the limits of what a computer could do, often resulting in incredibly unique and original design. Type also moved forward in leaps and bounds, with new fonts being created in rapid succession since punchcutting had become obsolete. Magazines such as *Emigré* and *Fuse* pushed the practice into new territory and showcased the newest designs on the market. David Carson laid waste to all convention in his infamous music magazine *Ray Gun*. His "deconstruction" style made use of the Macintosh's ability to create wild compositions with scrambled, layered, and backwards text settings. The design of the following years in the 1990's changed to reflect the current technology and software available, such as the high-tech electronic "Rave" style, Maximalism, New Simplicity, and the advent of motion graphics formerly known as "Kinetics". The digital design age is now a permanent fixture in history, and nearly all designers implement some form of technology in their work. Prominent Digital designers include Rudy VanderLans, Zuzanna Licko, Kyle Cooper, and Carlos Segura.

Digital

Japanese Modern