Typography and typeface design

Design

At first, it was Just mindlessly doodling, but then I realized what I was actually doing. I wasn't just drawing the letter, I was designing it. It may sound Like a trivial discovery, but for me It was a revelation that Immediately triggered my curiosity. The truth Is: typeface design Is everywhere, and because of this it easy to forget that typefaces are products of design too. Somebody designed the logo of your favorite soft drink brand, somebody designed the font that is displayed on the " emergency exit" sign, and somebody designed the very letters you are looking at right now.

Even in product design typefaces and typography can play a major role. Once I started to take notice of the amount f typography around me, It became almost overwhelming, and I couldn't help but starting to wonder. Who designed these typefaces and with what purpose? Where do they come from and how did they become such a big part of our everyday life? But above all, what can I as an industrial designer learn from studying this huge but for me uncharted design discipline?

Typography in the middle of the desert HISTORY If we trace typography back to its roots, It Is fair to say that It typography and typeface design emerged somewhere mold- 1 5th century with the introduction of movable type printing in always handwritten, but movable type printing allowed for new possibilities and systematic typography. Johannes Gutenberg designed the first typeface: Texture. The design was heavily influenced by the gothic style of the German area scribes. This style is called Gothic or Blacklisted.

This new form of printing spread fast across Europe, and played a major role during the Renaissance. In Italy the German gothic style was replaced by the

Venetian style, which was based on the instructional capitals on Roman buildings and monuments. These new typefaces were designed in a very structural way, and were very detailed and balanced. They soon became he main typeface for western civilization. The Italians also reintroduced the Roman concept of " minuscule", or lowercase letters. The " minuscule" where kept in a case at low level easy access, while the capitals where kept in a case above that one.

This is where the terms lowercase and uppercase come from, which are still used today. Eventually all these different elements melted together and these typefaces are referred to as Roman types. Late 15th century Italian printers realized that they could print text in a slanted way, so that the vertical space a word occupied could be minimized. This way they could print more ext on a page. This style is called Italics, and is named after its place of origin: Italy. So in the early 16th century there where three main type classifications of Western typography: Roman, Blacklisted and Italic.

However, people started combining Roman and Italic type, and nowadays Italics are often only used for emphasis, quotes and names or titles. During the 17th and 18th century typefaces evolved further, and typeface designers were experimenting with different stroke-weights and serif styles. Serifs are the little strokes at the end of characters In the 19th century the industrial revolution kook place. The rise of advertisement demanded for large-scale typefaces that Egyptian, or Slab-serifs, and were recognizable by their thick block like serifs.

Early in the 20th century a new movement within typography emerged: modern typography. Modern typography was part of the modernist movement, which was a movement that strove for a new, modern interpretation of art, architecture, literature, etc. Modern typography strove for an universal form of communication, and by this is meant that they did not want the typeface to interfere with the message in any way: typefaces should be neutral, and their arm should be dictated by its function. They wanted information to be displayed in a visually linear and ordered way.

One of the most characteristic developments of modern typography is the popularization of the sans-serif typefaces. Sans- serifs (literally " without serifs") appeared as early as 500 B. C. , but modernists looked at them with new interest. They were clean, simple typefaces, and they lent themselves perfectly for the " function over form"- ideology of modern typographers. Gothic Roman Slab-serif Sans-serif Some modernist movements started to experiment with the form and placements of rods as well. Especially Dadaism experimented a lot with typography and pushed it in another direction.

The Dada movement was a movement that rebelled against the established art forms. They deliberately avoided all logic and order in their works, and it is fair to say that the Dada typography was the counterpart of modern typography. Dadaist typography is characterized by the many use of different typefaces and letter sizes. Words were printed in both horizontal and vertical directions, random letters were placed throughout the poster and punctuation was often illogical. For Dadaists the form of the ext was more important than the message itself.

A great example of this is the poem " Poem Passages" of the Belgium poet Paul van Stained. Movement during the early 20th century. They started experimenting with shape of letters, trying to abstract them and build them up from basic shapes like circles and squares. These types are called geometrical typefaces. They were heavily influenced by the Dutch art movement " De Still". During WI, art forms where hindered in developing. Instead typography turned to propaganda posters for artistic outlet. Post WI typography developed at a rapid rate.

After the war designers begin looking for a form of unification within design. This became the International, or Swiss style. It was characterized by the heavy use of sans-serifs, with a neutral and geometrical appearance. In the ass's the psychedelic movement emerged, which preferred on flowery ornamented typefaces, and distorted texts to mimic the effect of drugs, and even later styles such as " Grunge-typography' emerged. At the end of the 20th century computers started to appear in every household. With these computers came word processing software, and many default typefaces.

It didn't take long or people to start experimenting with text and typefaces, and soon everybody started making their own typography. Especially with the arrival of internet DID typography became increasingly popular, sometimes to the dissatisfaction of professional typographers. Think for instance of the controversy that surrounds Comic Sans. Nowadays, typography has become something that everybody does Looking at the background and history of typography we see that, although typeface design is a form of design, it is significantly influenced and used by different art movements throughout the years, which is a remarkable contrast.

Design is a rational and orderly activity; designers structurally approach a design and follow certain rules when designing objects. In design it is often functionality that influences form. But in art, the form of an object is the aesthetic choice of the artist, and is not subordinate to functionality. Art does not follow a predetermined set of rules and the artist is free to experiment with form to his liking. In typography these two elements clash. On the typeface has a clear function: convey messages to the reader. But on the other hand the typographer is free to shape the letters in any way he desires.

By doing so, the typeface itself can attain a certain " identity', and convey a message that goes beyond Just the displayed text. The Dadaist where the first to really experiment with this, and this may be further explained by looking at some famous typefaces. ANATOMY OF A TYPEFACE Before we dive deeper into typefaces and start to analyze them, it is important to understand some of the terminology of typeface design. Characters consist out of many parts, more than I am going to describe here, but the following are the most important and defining for a typeface. Arts of the specific letter, but each letter has a tern, which is the main body of the letter. What the elements attached to stern are called differs per letter. Typefaces are generally divided in serifs and sans serifs. Serifs are recognizable by the little extra stroke at the ends of characters, called a Serif. The lines that make up a character are called strokes. Strokes can be modulated, which means they vary in thickness, or strokes can be modulated, which means they have the same thickness throughout the character. Well-designed typefaces are always designed within a structured grid.

This grid consists out of multiple lines, in which the character is placed. The baseline is the line on which the characters " rest". Parts of a character that extend below this line are called descendent, like for instance the bottom part of a " J". So, as we can see, there are many different parts the typeface designer can use to give a typeface its identity. The height between the baseline and mainline is called the X-height. The Cap Height indicates the height from to baseline to the top of uppercase letters like H. Of most lowercase letters. Parts that extend above the mainline are called ascenders. He height from to baseline to the top of uppercase letters like H. A lot of letters have their own names for various IMPORTANT TYPEFACES THROUGHOUT HISTORY Now that we have acquired enough knowledge about typefaces and their history, let's take a better look at some (in)famous typefaces throughout history. Guttenberg Bible Texture (1452) Texture was, as mentioned, the first ever typeface. Texture was designed after the gothic style of the German scribes of that time. The strokes are modulated, and the serifs are very sharp and calligraphic. This is a great example off time related design.

Anything you will type in this text will look medieval. Aloud Manumits' Roman (1495) A few decades later this typeface was designed in Italy. It defined the essential form of Roman types for the following three centuries. The characters have thick sterns and thinner " arms", and very classical serifs. Because of their long existence, Roman typefaces tend to come across as a bit boring, and are often associated with formal and uninspired prints, like the " out of order"-sign you would hang on a bathroom door. Robert

Grandson's Civility© (1557) This is one of the first typefaces that were designed from the ground up.

It was made to look like calligraphy and show the qualities of quill rating, which was mimicked by using heavily modulated strokes and short ascenders and descendent. Note that the typeface is a sans-serif. The typeface expresses a sort of luxurious quality, while also displaying some old gothic features. This was the first slab serif font. It is characterized by its bold strokes and block-like serifs. It was popularized by the advertising industry, and it is not hard to see why. It is a typeface with a powerful look, and it's great for " yelling" at your audience.

Kidney Grottoes (Hans Hoffmann, 1898) An early sans-serif that became the benchmark for future sans-serifs. It lived on to become evilly used in publications of Bauhaus and Swiss-style. Its modulated strokes and rational design gave it a neutral appearance, which made it one of the fundamental types of modern typeface design. Future (Paul Renee, 1927) This was the first truly geometrical sans serif. Renee put a lot of effort in modeling the lowercase letters into a very exact looking, mono-line appearance. As a result the typeface looks tight, simple and modern.

Helvetica (Max Midrange/Eduardo Hoffmann, 1957) Comic Sans (Vincent Concern, 1994) Maybe the most beloved typeface of all time. It is a modulated sans serif, designed to be impolitely neutral. During the ass's, Helvetica became the face of corporate branding. Because of its neutrality, it is widely used in many different contexts: street name signs, subway signage, but also in graphic design. If you are walking in a city, you won't

have to look far before you spot a text printed in Helvetica. It is so popular that even a feature length documentary was made about it.

Comic Sans might Just be the most hated typeface ever created. Especially designers have a beef against this playful typeface. It was originally designed to be implemented in Windows 95 as part of Microsoft Bob, an animated dog hat provided help to Windows 95 users. It was based on the way classical comic book lettering. However, the typeface was not finished in time introduction of home printers, people at home started to experiment more with typography, and when they first laid eyes upon the funny looking Comic sans, they Just couldn't resist using it for their homemade wishing cards and flyers.

As a result the typeface became insanely popular, and has stayed popular ever since. However, the truth is, it is not designed very well according the principles of typography, and especially since it is used so often in wrong contexts, typographers ant help but complain whenever they can. Entire essays have been written about the flaws of Comic Sans. New Alphabet (Whim Cromwell, 1967) New alphabet is a geometric San serif, designed by Dutch graphic designer Whim Cromwell as an experiment in 1967. It designed to deal with the limitations of early digital data displays.

He wanted to adept his design to the technology, instead of adapting technologies to meet the design. Because the typeface consists of only vertical and horizontal strokes, some characters look a bit unconventional. With his experiment Cromwell sought the limitations of what we can perceive as readable. Comic Sans TYPEFACES IN CORPORATE BRANDING Heinlein

(Heinlein) So we can conclude that different typefaces have different " identities. For many companies logos are very important. Often, an entire brand is created around a logo.

Often these companies use certain typefaces as an additional tool of branding. By doing so, companies use the identities of a certain typeface to create or reinforce the identity of their brand. Here are some examples: Google (Actual BC) Backbone (Slovakia (Modified)) goes by the name Actual SQ. The Heinlein logo is developed especially for Heinlein. Note the " laughing" see's as one of the rand's hallmarks. TIME Magazine (TIME) Ferreira (Freer Ross) Who doesn't recognize the clean white sans-serif on that blue background? Because of its thick Moline appearance, the Backbone logo looks fresh and modern.

A very classy slab-serif that embodies Ferrier's characteristics: power and style. TIME magazine's logo consists out of four capitals. It looks like a classic Roman type but in a modern Jacket. The logo has something powerful, and makes you feel like that what you are about to read is very important. TYPOGRAPHY AND ME I have always been interested in graphic design and typography, which is one of the reasons I hose this sublet. It may be interesting to take a closer look at the my favorite typefaces and what they say about me. Next Light Gotcha Black Rockwell I Just love the no-nonsense factor of Gotcha.

It is pretty powerful looking typeface, but also really simple and clean. This is the typeface I always use for titles and headers, but also for text that needs to pack some extra " punch". My favorite slab-serif. It looks very solid, but

the strokes are not too heavy. I especially like the way the serifs seem to be part of the stroke, and not Just added for esthetics purposes. Another simple typeface that I really love to use or smaller texts. It looks sleek and stylish, and really has a nice flow to it. This is a more elegant typeface. It the roundness of the characters give it a very friendly look.

Code Light It may not look that impressive, but that is because it needs to be used with a pointiest (so letters need to be BIG). This typeface Just looks so incredibly light and has a high design-factor. There's Just something about this type that says: " good taste". When I look at the selection I made it tells me something I already knew: I love minimalism. I don't want things to be as simple as possible; In design, but also in typography. However, thanks to all the knowledge I gained by writing this essay, I can ago bit deeper than that.

For instance, I notice that I really prefer sans-serifs over serifs. These types are associated with modernism, and it might be worthwhile to investigate modernism some more. I have encountered this movement before, while searching for my vision and identity, and it is interesting to encounter it once again, although this time via my preferred typefaces. CONCLUSION Now that we have seen the visual impact a typeface can have, it seems a logical conclusion that a typeface can be a powerful tool for a signer, if he wants it to be.

Of course, typefaces can be chosen by Just picking one that looks about right, but they have much more potential than that. Not only can it be used to convey a certain message to the user, but designers can use typefaces as an expression of the identity of a product. It is interesting to see how

typefaces have evolved over the past 500 years. From a medium to simply display information, to an art form which can hold the identity of an artist, or even an entire company, to a tool used by the masses to express their individualism. It begs the question if industrial design might follow a