

20th Century Designers

A Zine by Catarina Bakker, Charlie Little, and David Durojaiye.

The Designers featured

This zine features three designers that worked at some point throughout the 20th century. During the 20th century, art and design was inescapably influenced by politics. Modernism and Art Deco were a reaction to the horrors of the First World War. Later, artists responded to the end of World War II and the fear and suspicion brought on by the Cold War tensions between East and West." (<http://www.vam.ac.uk>) Within this publication, the designers featured had a lot of influence from the 20th century as well as similar things. One example is Bauhaus, "its aim was to bring art back into contact with everyday life, and architecture, performing arts, design and applied arts were therefore given as much weight as fine art" (<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/b/bauhaus>). Saul Bass and Robert Brownjohn were greatly influenced by Bauhaus, in different ways, for example, John Alcorn was heavily influenced on the art styles of the 60s, and the psychedelic 70s, very much like Robert Brownjohn and Saul Bass, with some of their design work and title sequences. Modernism in design and architecture emerged in the aftermath of the First World War and the Russian Revolution – a period when the artistic avant-garde dreamed of a new world free of conflict, greed and social inequality. It was not a style but a loose collection of ideas. Many different styles can be characterised as Modernist, but they shared certain underlying principles: a rejection of history and applied ornament. A great draftsman and visual storyteller, Saul Bass ran the gamut of techniques for his title sequences: montage, live action, cut-out paper animation, typography in motion, to name a few. Whatever technique he used, Bass summarized the film as a metaphor that often shone with creativity. That influences generations and contemporary designers in the 21st century, and will do in future generations.

John Alcorn was involved heavily in creating and designing book jackets. A book called "Writings!" is illustrated by John Alcorn. The book has a range of storytelling illustrated work and is aimed at children. It has a range of hand-drawn illustrations, creative typography and imaginative storytelling. This book also shows how John Alcorn's ideas are still relevant today because children's books are often filled with creative typography and imaginative storytelling so that the words and story appeal to children. The book is fun and creative. It is the exploration of language and letters and is filled with humour. John Alcorn designed the illustration for the book called "A Life After Death". This book features typography alone in the front cover of the page, which are designed in the background. The typography illustrated in this book jacket, inspired new solutions. As John Alcorn is more remembered for his contributions to the world of editorial graphics, it was the book jackets that he designed that made him stand out. "The Tight Corner" is one book jacket that John Alcorn designed, the book is "the story of a dramatic pursuit of a boxer, depicted through the reiteration of a black line reminiscent of the boxing ring". This is shown in the design of the book jacket. The title of the book "The Tight Corner" is in the top corner of the page. John Alcorn is known to use abstract shapes in the book jackets that he designs this is because they are supposed to be a symbolic representation. S. Alcorn, (2013) A Jacket for Every Occasion, (p. 81). John Alcorn's ideas are also still relevant today in many ways, but more so in the editorial work that he did. Alcorn illustrated children's books, he illustrated children's picture books. John Alcorn's ideas are still relevant today because of the way he illustrated books. The book is one of the examples of how his ideas that are still relevant.

John Alcorn



Typography was Brownjohn's strong point, he was influenced by his surroundings, as well as peers and punchy design. For example, his in London Street Photography 'Street Level' (Fig. 7) his day trip photographing typography from all around London, influenced by the architecture and typographical environment he was in the centre of. His work in street photography is still so important in today's society as his photographs capture the real London, along with its type. This series of photographs are much more than just documenting the times, but capturing them, allowing us to look back at a snapshot of the 60's London with completely different surroundings and typography to today's, a more updated London, in which technology and trends have influenced the way it now looks. It is important to still be able to return to how it used to look, and how it used to influence the work of designers like Robert Brownjohn. The images BJ took allow you to compare the way London did look to the way it looks now. "The images generate a paradox: although the nature of Brownjohn's interest in the ordinary graphic environment was very much before its time, the pictures he took are thoroughly rooted in a particular era. Looking through them now generates contradictory sensations of both nostalgia and reverberations of the shock of the new" - 'Sex and Typography', King, E. Pg.164. It looks as though the images may have also been inspired by his mentor Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and "Brownjohn's photographic eye coincided with his (Laszlo and BJ) ambitions for the medium." Sex and Typography, King, E. pg. 163. Aside from the style of work, both Laszlo and BJs passion for detail, particularly the spontaneous photographs taken over a long period of time, show true detail through unplanned images as well as the time taken to produce the set.

Saul believed that a film deserved a mood-setting opening. Bass worked for several companies like the Warner Brothers and Twentieth Century-Fox, believing he could elevate movie advertising to the standards set by Man Ray's Rayographs and Jean Cocteau's films and illustrations (how revolutionary they both were and the way they utilised a range of different media in order to create a more complex kind of art). However, working in a studio for advertisement campaigns quickly had Bass depressed. His modern and stylish ideas were constantly knocked back by the boring conventions within the industry. Saul's work was becoming more dynamic and abstract while studying Modernism. In 1954 director Otto Preminger invited Saul to design the background for the opening credits of the movie Carmen Jones (1954). He produced a live red flame placed behind a graphic symbol of a rose, thus falling into and marking the beginning of a new career later known as Title Sequences. In 1955 Bass designed the incomparable compelling symbolic poster and titles for The Man With The Golden Arm (Fig.3, 1955). These sequences were aimed to create a mood of intense anxiety, integrating the audience into the film's atmosphere. During the opening credits, the names are presented in time with the music while white bars get grouped and apparently scattered, forming various groups of abstract patterns with different plays on composition and balance, progressively changing the point of interest. The sequence ends on the most memorable symbol of the poster and titles made for the film- A crooked arm. This semi-abstract distorted figure allured to the plot of the main character, being a representation of his drug addiction. Nowadays the idea of inserting the audience in the movie's atmosphere from the very first second is still praised.

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Robert Brownjohn



SAUL BASS

