

MAKING POSTERS

from concept to design

Scott Laserow

Natalia Delgado

MAKING POSTERS

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Scott Laserow and Natalia Delgado

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

- 6 *Foreword*
- 8 *Introduction*



1 THE BEGINNING

- 13 The Beginning
- 15 Historic Timeline



2 CONCEPTUALIZING

- 23 Conceptualizing
- 24 Know Your Project
- 26 Train Your Eye
- 27 Know Your Facts
- 27 Know Your Message
- 29 Know Your Audience
- 30 Define Your Resources
- 31 Ideation Techniques for Conceptualizing
- 35 Case Study: Splendent Sun by Dermot Mac Cormack
- 38 Exercises
- 39 Gallery



3 EXECUTION

- 51 Execution
- 52 Image Making
- 54 Line
- 57 Type as Image
- 58 Figure/Ground
- 59 Color
- 60 Composition and Hierarchy
- 61 Using a Grid
- 62 Symmetry and Asymmetry
- 64 Rule of Odds
- 64 Focal Point
- 66 White Space
- 67 Creating a Poster Series
- 68 Context
- 68 Aesthetics
- 70 Methods and Materials
- 74 Making Mistakes
- 76 Evaluate Your Design
- 77 Case Study: Dead Leaf by Christopher Scott
- 80 Exercises
- 81 Gallery



4

GRABBING ATTENTION

- 101 Grabbing Attention
- 103 The Power of Contrast
- 103 Using Color to Demand Attention
- 105 Adjust the Thermostat: Contrasting Temperature
- 105 Opposites Attract: Using Complementary Colors
- 107 The Power of Three: Triadic Color Palettes
- 108 Burst of Color: Using Four Colors or More
- 111 Scale
- 112 Rhythm and Pattern
- 113 Movement
- 114 Eye Gaze and Pointing
- 114 Disruption
- 117 Case Study: Converse/Marimekko by Andrew Lewis
- 120 Gallery



5

ART OF PERSUASION

- 137 Art of Persuasion
- 139 Rhetorical Figure
- 139 Metaphor
- 140 Metonymy
- 140 Synecdoche
- 142 Other Figures
- 148 Building an Emotional Connection
- 149 Fear and Shock
- 151 Humor
- 152 Arousal
- 154 Case Study: Somos de Maíz by Natalia Delgado
- 156 Gallery



6

STORYTELLING

- 167 Storytelling
- 168 Creating Your Visuals
- 171 Structuring Your Story
- 171 Nostalgia and Reminiscence
- 173 Telling Your Story with Type
- 175 Multiple Narratives
- 175 Narratives across a Poster Series
- 177 Case Study: Storytelling by Joe Scorsone and Alice Drueding
- 179 Gallery



7

BEYOND THE PRINTED SURFACE

- 193 Beyond the Printed Surface
- 194 Interactive Posters
- 194 Smell
- 195 Touch
- 196 Taste
- 199 Sound
- 200 Moving Posters
- 200 Animated Posters
- 202 Music and Sound
- 206 Augmented Reality Posters
- 209 The Future of the Poster
- 211 Exercises
- 213 Case Study: Blood Oil by Scott Laserow
- 215 Gallery

- 228 Glossary
- 232 Bibliography
- 233 Index
- 239 Acknowledgments

F O R E W O R D

The Public Life of Posters By Elizabeth Resnick

"Posters endure as one of the most permanent and solid forms of visual communication, and they exert a palpable physical presence, shaping spaces while reflecting and altering human behavior."¹

This book is about making posters. The goal is to provide the reader with a structured experience to create, analyze, and evaluate posters through a multitude of exploratory research and brainstorming methodology, keeping the focus firmly on conceptualization (the forming of ideas).

Why a book on making posters in this digital age? Simply put, posters are message systems—informing, educating, or inspiring—whether they are viewed in public spaces, in galleries or museums, or while browsing the internet. "From the confrontational and political, to the promotional, persuasive and educational, the poster in all its forms has persisted as a vehicle for the public dissemination of ideas, information and opinion."² They are windows onto our world in the service of our collective community conscience.

Posters also function as effective memory triggers. You see an image and are instantly transported back to a specific time and place in your past. Sights, sounds, smells, places, people, and objects can all act as strong memory triggers. I'd like to offer two personal experiences in this vein, both of which have shaped my work as a designer, educator, curator, collector, and author.

In the early 1960s, when I was a pre-teen living in Queens (a borough of New York City), my family took the subway into Manhattan for outings, entertainment, or dining out. Most New York City subway stations are subterranean environments. You descend several flights of stairs into a darkened underground cavern-like space, glaringly lit with fluorescent lights. This environment would feel gray and lifeless if not for the large, colorful posters that line the tiled walls in every station. A cacophony of bold images and words shouting out cultural events and advertising commercial products and services, all crying out "look at me" as each poster competes for attention.

During this time, most of the posters displayed in the subway espoused lifestyle choices, showing sophisticated pretty women and attractive young men enjoying cigarettes or alcoholic beverages with the aim of influencing ordinary people to buy their product. Other posters touted the latest time saving conveniences or remedies for the morning after like Alka Seltzer's "plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is!"

As a young person traveling into the city, I loved being cocooned in this sea of visual distraction, yet only one poster campaign still resonates: "*You Don't Have to Be Jewish to Love Levy's Real Jewish Rye.*" Each large poster depicted a photographic portrait of a distinctly non-Jewish person eating a sandwich made of rye bread. It is very doubtful that the Black, Asian, Italian, and Native American models pictured in these ads were Jewish. It was also very rare to see any person of color or non-white ethnicity featured in advertising of any kind.

The campaign, which began in 1961, was developed by American ad agency Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) for a small family-owned bakery in Brooklyn. Although the campaign transformed Levy's into New York's top seller of rye bread, it actually did more than simply promote rye bread. This campaign was widely acknowledged as one of the first sensitive and successful uses of cultural and racial identity in public advertising.

The 1960s was also when paper posters transitioned from public spaces to private spaces in the service of lifestyle decoration. The first poster I ever thumbtacked to my dorm room wall was Milton Glaser's *Dylan* poster. As the story goes, John Berg, then art director at Columbia Records, asked Glaser to create a poster that could be folded and packaged into Dylan's "Greatest Hits" LP in 1967. Glaser depicted Dylan with kaleidoscopic hair, a visual nod to the rock posters being produced in San Francisco at the same time. Glaser has always maintained he took his inspiration for the Dylan profile from a 1957 self-portrait by Marcel Duchamp. Glaser used a similar composition but maintained that Dylan's curly mane, with its swirling streams of color, was his own invention. Personally, I've always thought that Glaser was channeling Peter Max—an enormously popular American artist known for using bright colors associated with psychedelic art, pop art, and counterculture. Or, perhaps, it was simply the cultural and visual climate of this era. Nevertheless, this powerful and colorful visual statement came to define a generation.

Making Posters from Concept to Design is a book—for learners with a basic understanding of art and design principles—that will exemplify effective methods for creating posters that can engage, inform, reflect, and shape our material world. It will undoubtedly resonate for years.



I N T R O D U C T I O N

How This Book Works

Making Posters—From Concept to Design has a companion website (www.making-posters.com) that works alongside the book. The website offers additional content, including resource website links, videos, animated and digital interactive posters, a list of participating artists, and an interactive poster history timeline.

Book Key

^{MPR} Denotes additional content found at www.making-posters.com/resources.

A Denotes Augmented Reality posters. To view these posters, download the free Artivive® application to your handheld device.

QR Codes will link to animations and videos.

Always check www.making-posters.com for the latest app updates.

With a focus on conceptualization, this book provides a structure to create, analyze, and evaluate posters and leads readers through various methods of research and brainstorming techniques. It analyzes the art of image making and takes a critical look at the persuasive power of the poster, its use as a storytelling device, and how a narrative can dictate the way a message is received.

Going beyond the printed surface, *Making Posters* reviews how emerging technologies continue to offer designers new tools, allowing the process of making a poster to expand and evolve while still maintaining its core purpose—to communicate quickly and convey its message.

About the Authors

Scott Laserow

Scott Laserow is a full professor of Graphic and Interactive Design at Temple University, Tyler School of Art, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, where he has taught for over twenty-eight years. His curriculum includes traditional graphic design; branding,



identities, page layout, packaging, posters, and emerging technologies; animation; augmented reality; digital publication; tablet applications; and website design and development.

For over thirty years, Scott has brought his unique approach to graphic design in the form of print, web, interactive design, and animation. Between Scott's client work and poster design, he has won over seventy-five prestigious national and international awards, been featured in over sixty publications, and been included in over sixty exhibitions in sixteen countries, all peer-reviewed. Since 2004, Scott has focused increasingly on posters as a design challenge and an instrument of social change. Since he started creating posters, he has been involved in many social, environmental, and political causes. Scott's posters have appeared in numerous international publications and exhibitions; many have received international awards and are in permanent collections worldwide. Scott has also refereed and judged various international poster competitions.

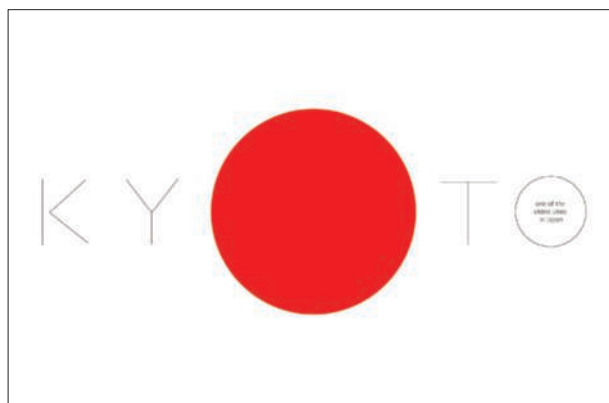
Making Posters—From Concept to Design is written as an educational tool for undergraduate graphic design and advertising students. While this book offers useful and interesting content for all levels, those in second, third, and fourth year will benefit the most. The book can be a teacher's companion for those who are teaching a poster course or any graphic design course as well as a supporting bibliography for those teaching introductory or advanced graphic design courses. The book is also helpful for professional designers who want to learn more about this specific area and for non-designers who want to explore this topic. Although *Making Posters* is an educational resource, the posters represented are so diverse that anyone with an interest in posters will relish this book.

Making Posters—From Concept to Design demonstrates effective methods of creating posters that engage and inform by reviewing the fundamental design principles that designers continue to apply to deliver compelling work. It presents the origins of the poster through a timeline that traces its role and remarkable transformation throughout history, helping readers to understand its relationship with art and advertising and its use as a social communication device.

A Pivotal Moment

In the summer of 1974, at the age of eleven, I discovered the poster! This was about the same time the Watergate scandal was winding up and Richard Nixon was stepping down as president. A neighbor sold posters, bubble gum machines, and other strange and wonderful things out of her home. You might have thought an eleven-year-old would have been interested in the novelties, but I was more excited by and drawn to the vibrant and surreal posters. One of those posters still hangs on a wall in my studio today. It is a 1973 Third Eye Inc. dayglow, blacklight poster titled *Watergate* by the incomparable Ralph Reese and Larry Hama. I still set it aglow every now and again. Of course, I had no idea what Watergate was, I just thought it was a cool poster that would look wicked on my bedroom wall. Mind you, this poster was tame in comparison to my 1970s bedroom. Imagine walls painted the color of bananas just before they ripen and turn bright yellow, and a matching yellow and gold shag carpet. My comforter was a velour leopard print complete with a giant oversized coordinating footprint pillow. There were blacklight posters covering practically every inch of wall space, a strobe light, and two or three blacklights illuminating all the intense colors. Although some of the poster themes may have been a bit over my head at the time, it was the electric comics that captivated me with colors and images floating in an endless space. I remember often getting lost in their visuals for hours.

As I grew older, my tastes changed, and the groovy banana yellow room was repainted. Yet I found that the colors and images of posters still ignited my curiosity. First it was band



Kyoto Travel Poster | 43.2 x 27.9 cm. © the author

posters, then album covers. My love for music and visual narrative led me to discover many musical artists by purchasing their albums simply because I liked the cover. Like my Watergate poster, many of my favorite album covers adorn my walls today. I am still enamored with their images that bring back memories of great music and questionable fashion.

In 1985, I began to study graphic design at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. My first poster was created in a typography class and was a sort of travel poster for Kyoto, Japan. While it may not have been the strongest poster, it taught me about concept, typography, composition, and white space. Little did I know at the time that I would end up here, not only designing posters but writing a book about posters and poster design.



Natalia Delgado Avila, Ph.D.

A design strategist and educator with more than fifteen years of experience in her field, Natalia has a bachelor's degree in Graphic Communication Design, a master's degree in Science and Arts for Design from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, and a Ph.D. in Art

Education from the University of Victoria.

Natalia has shared her original design process and vision in conferences and workshops around the world. She's been the recipient of numerous awards and has juried some of the top international poster competitions. Her work has been exhibited in more than 100 locations and published in multiple magazines, websites, and books.

She worked as a consultant and facilitator for the international non-profit organization *Poster for Tomorrow* and helped to develop the curriculum and program design for the United Nations Funded *Draw Me Democracy!* Project. She is a co-founder of Poster Poster, a virtual community that celebrates the power and influence of posters in our culture. Natalia's interest in contemporary social issues has been a critical element in her work, which emphasizes the importance of considering design in its historical, social, and cultural contexts. She currently resides and teaches in Montreal, Canada.

Poster Passion

Even before I knew what graphic design was, I had a fascination with posters. It was a time before Facebook and social networks, when the internet was taking its first baby steps, and we had to switch between being online and using a landline phone to make a call. Access to large printed images was limited and expensive, but my friend and I managed to sweet-talk the manager of the local movie theater into letting us have the posters that were taken down from the displays after the movie stopped showing. I still remember taping *The Last of the Mohicans* to my bedroom

wall. Of course, at the time, I was more interested in Daniel Day-Lewis's handsome face than the color or layout of the design!

There were many memorable moments during my studies that confirmed my career choice. I remember attending the Mexican Poster Biennial exhibition in Mexico City and falling in love with the images covering the walls. I even bought the catalog, which was a significant expense for my modest student budget. In 1999, I went to Cuba, where I came upon a poster exhibition about El Che Guevara. This was my first encounter with a thematic exhibition, and I was mesmerized by the variety of conceptual and technical alternatives that could be used to address the same topic.

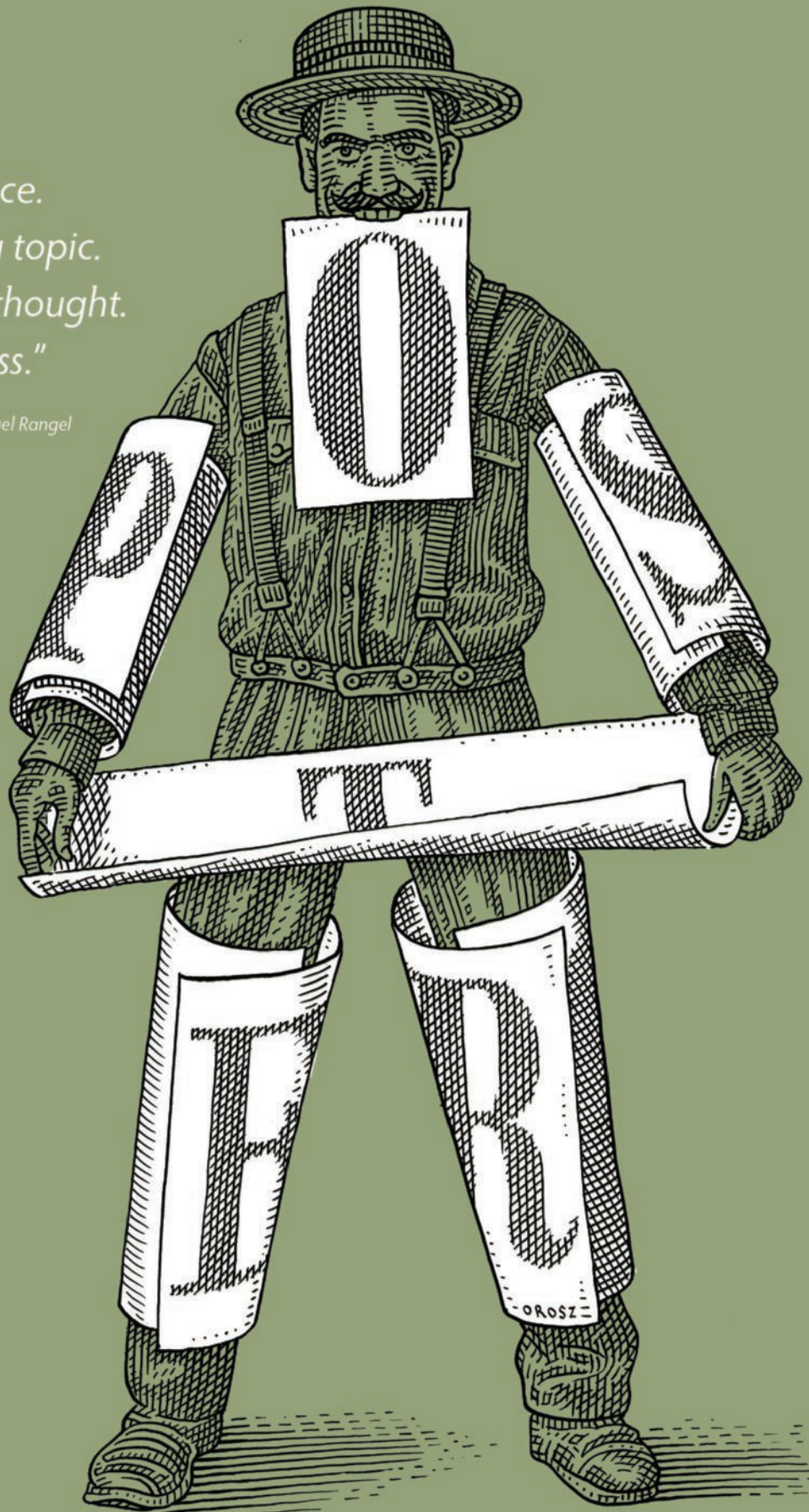
After I graduated, I designed posters for some events but found it challenging to find exciting work because the poster culture was poor in Baja California, and most of the posters were printed in tabloid size. I was hungry to create, and I couldn't find anything that I felt challenged me and helped me grow as a designer. So I took the matter into my own hands and decided to enter Good 50x70, an international poster competition focused on social communication that was launched that year. Of the briefs proposed that year, my attention was especially drawn to the issue of prostitution. This subject is delicate and difficult to handle, and to this day, this image is one of the most potent and controversial ones in my portfolio. I focused my concept on pimps, the hidden characters in the world of sex trafficking, and used the metaphor of the woman as property that gets commercialized. I poured my heart and soul into making it, and I was ecstatic when it got selected. It was a career-defining moment, and my life changed completely after that.

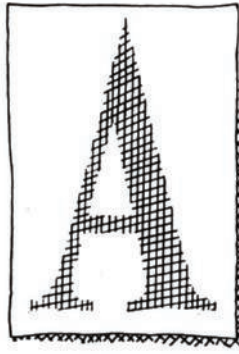
Posters have, in different ways, taken me all over the world and led to some of the most exceptional experiences and friendships in my life. Sometimes your passion screams at you, sometimes it whispers.



1
"Poster is essence.
The extraction of a topic.
The distillation of a thought.
No more, no less."

Miguel Angel Rangel





poster or bill is a pictorial form of communication that often appears in public places to post notice. They are generally found on vertical surfaces and may include both graphic and typographic elements or may be solely graphic or typographic.

Posters are a visually striking and informative tool used in advertising and promotion to grab an audience's attention and generate interest in a particular topic. They are also frequently used by social, political, and environmental groups to communicate a message or point of view.

Posters are a flexible medium and can range in size from A4 to the size of a billboard or can appear on digital screens as electronic images. Posters reflect pop culture, a literal sign of the times. They are a portal to the past and a record of how typography, image, and color were used to publicly disseminate information. The poster has always embraced change and will continue to do so. The electronic tools that poster artists are experimenting with today will become a virtual record of how twenty-first-century posters are designed and executed. As technology continues to impact how we receive information, the poster's form will undoubtedly change, but its vibrant role of informing society will remain.



Illustration of the French Revolutionary emblem with text: *Unite, Indivisible de la Republic Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite ou la Morte.* (Photo by Time Life Pictures/Mansell/The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images)

The French Revolution

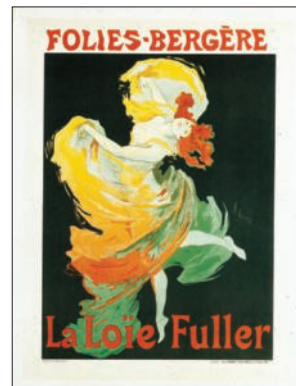
The French Revolution is known as the first milestone in the history of posters. It was a period of social and political rebellion in France and its colonies that began in 1789 and had a profound influence on political and social trends throughout Europe. From this time forward, posters were increasingly used for advertising products and services, often following the AIDA formula: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.



Die Erste Berliner Litfasssäule, 1855. Photo by Ullstein bild via Getty Images

Posters Take to the Streets

In 1855, Ernst Litfaß, a German printer and publicist, devised a free-standing cylindrical advertising pillar, named Litfaßsäule. During this time, there was also the emergence of sandwich board men, who were hired to carry wood panels with posters on their front and back to call the attention of people strolling down the street.



Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergere, La Loie Fuller Poster, 1893.* Photo by © Historical Picture Archive/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images

The Birth of the Lithographic Poster

Although lithography was invented in 1798, it was not until the 1860s that Jules Chéret created the three-stone lithographic process (usually blue, red, and yellow), which allowed artists to achieve just about any color they could imagine. This process offered an economical way to mass-produce large-scale visuals. Chéret is considered the world's first full-time poster artist. His pioneering adoption of a single central image became a model for other poster designers.



Alphonse Maria Mucha, *Petroleo Gal Para El Pelo—Perfumeria Echeandia* (Photo by Swim Ink 2, LLC/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)

The First Golden Age: The Belle Époque & Art Nouveau

The Golden Age of posters, the Belle Époque featured Parisian nightlife and romanticized the theaters and cabarets of the city. Natural forms and structures, flat colors, bold contrasts, curved lines, balanced asymmetry, and embellishment inspired by Byzantine icons, pre-Raphaelite romanticism, Japanese prints, and Celtic art are all a part of this style.

1875

1885

1895

1905

1915

The First Golden Age

Glasgow School Collective in Britain

Jugendstil

Vienna Secession

Plakatstil



Charles Rennie Mackintosh, *Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts*, 1896

Glasgow School Collective in Britain

In Britain, the Glasgow School of Arts represented the Art Nouveau movement. A group of designers known as *The Four*—Charles Rennie Mackintosh, sisters Margaret and Frances Macdonald, and Herbert MacNair—created posters inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement and Celtic illuminated manuscripts.



Henry van de Velde, *Tropon*, 1899. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

Jugendstil (Jugend-style)

In Germany, Art Nouveau took the name *Jugendstil*, stemming from *Die Jugend* (*The Youth*) magazine, which featured many Art Nouveau artists. Before 1900, the style mainly focused on floral and organic shapes and lines; its later stages became more abstract, influenced by the work of architect and designer Henry van de Velde. The style was a benchmark for German and Austrian modern design. It emphasized workshops where designers and manufacturers worked together.



Moser Koloman, *Poster for the 13th exhibition of the Viennese Secession*. Color Lithography. Printed by Albert Berger: Vienna, 1902. Photo by Imagno/Getty Images

Vienna Secession

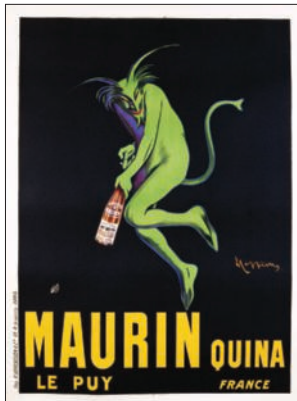
The desire to rebel against academic tradition led to the formation of secessionist associations like the Vienna and Munich. Satirical magazines became popular during this time.



Robert J. Wildhack, *Poster for Opel automobiles*, 1911. Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images

Plakatstil

Artists from Scotland's Glasgow School, Austria's Vienna Secession, and Germany's Deutscher Werkbund shunned rounded decorative forms in favor of rigid geometric arrangements based on functionalism. As a result of this, 1905 saw the birth of the German *Plakatstil* (*Poster Style*), led by Lucian Bernhard in Berlin and Ludwig Hohlwein in Munich. The style used flat colors and shapes as well as an abstract and modern visual language that allowed a more natural appreciation of the advertising message.



Leonetto Cappiello. *Maurin Quina Absinthe*, Italy, 1905. Photo by Leonetto Cappiello/Buyenlarge/Getty Images

The Cappello Style

Italian artist Leonetto Cappiello produced over 1,000 posters during his 40-year career. The father of modern advertising revolutionized poster design with a new graphical style that used a single simple image, often humorous or bizarre, placed against a dark background, making it pop and capture the viewer's attention. His eccentric poster design style would reign supreme through the Art Deco movement of the 1920s.



Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Futurism*, 1932. Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images

Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, and Surrealism

Four of the most influential art movements of the time were Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, and Surrealism. Cubism was marked by a departure from representational art through the use of various simultaneous vantage points to portray its subjects. Dadaism challenged the definition of art itself and embraced chaos, absurdity, and irrationality. Futurism praised machines, speed, and innovation while experimenting with expressive typography. The Surrealist movement introduced the notion of intuitive art and automatism, exploring the world of the unconscious, merging dreams with reality, and combining a variety of media.



Poster for *German Domestic Arts Exhibition*, 1914. Photo by Found Image Press/Corbis

Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen)

Deutscher Werkbund was founded in 1907 by Hermann Muthesius and emerged from the need to strengthen the competitiveness of German companies in global markets through a partnership between design and mass production. The style employed simple forms, bold colors, and clear typography.



Vladimir Stenberg and Georgii Stenberg, *The Burden of Marriage*, 1925. Photo by Buyenlarge/Getty Images

Constructivism

The Russian Constructivist movement began in 1913 and rose to prominence after the Revolution of 1917. Inspired by the ideal of social change and a functional approach to artmaking, the posters featured a minimal color palette, dramatic diagonals, strong typography, and photomontage. The style began with a political aim but quickly spread to the world of advertising and publishing. The leading artists of the time were Vladimir Tatlin (the father of Constructivism), Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, Gustav Klutis, and the Stenberg brothers.

Cubism, Dada, Futurism and Surrealism

Deutscher Werkbund

De Stijl

Bauhaus

Art Deco



War Poster "Britons, your King wants you. Join your country's army! God save the King," 1914. Photo by Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution

During WWI, posters became political tools to campaign and broadcast propaganda. From raising money to recruiting and provoking outrage, the war created an unprecedented advertising campaign. The United States produced over 2,500 posters and printed 20 million copies in two years. The Bolsheviks acknowledged the incredible impact these poster designs had in America and began using the same tactics for their propaganda.



Theo Van Doesburg, *Archer*, 1919. Hulton Fine Art Collection. Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images

De Stijl

The artists' association *De Stijl* was founded in the Netherlands in 1917. Led by Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg, the movement sought a return to order after the chaos brought by the war. The main characteristic of this style was simplicity, reflected in the total abstraction of form. Geometric shapes, lines, and primary colors were all artists needed to create their powerful images.



Joost Schmidt, *Bauhaus the 1923 Weimar Exhibition*, 1923. Photo by Apic/Getty Images

Bauhaus

In 1919, Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany. The school had a crucial role in the evolution of design education. It encouraged the embrace of modern technologies and promoted a pragmatic view of design through the principle of "form follows function." The school had three locations: Weimar, from 1919 to 1925; Dessau, from 1925 to 1932 under the direction of Hannes Meyer; and Berlin, directed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe from 1932 to 1933 until the Nazi regime closed it down.



A.M. Cassandre, *Normandie*, 1935 (French Line Poster). Photo by Found Image Holdings/Corbis via Getty Images

Art Deco

Art Deco, also called *Style Moderne*, originated in Paris in the 1920s. The style made distinctive use of sleek geometric forms and intense colors. Its central themes were power and speed, and the movement drew its inspiration from many sources, including jazz, modernist artistic movements, and the exotic arts of Persia, Egypt, and Africa. One of the most iconic designers of the Art Deco style was A.M. Cassandre, famous for his airbrush techniques.

1935

1945

1955

World War II

Taller de Gráfica

Mid-Century Modern

New York School

Golden Age of Polish Posters

18



British propaganda poster during the Battle of Britain. *Never Was So Much Owed by So Many to So Few*, 1940. Photo by David Pollack/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images

World War II

During the Second World War, the poster once again played a central role in rallying support for the troops, earning the nickname “weapons on the walls.” Designers used photography and offset printing to produce posters on a massive scale. Some featured patriotic messages to boost morale; others highlighted the importance of solidarity in terms of scarcity, while others used fear to emphasize the importance of secrecy.



Francisco Dosamantes, *Exposicion Litografias*, *Taller de Grafica Popular*, Galeria de Arte de la Universidad Nacional, 1942. The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

Taller de Gráfica

Founded in Mexico in 1937 by artists Leopoldo Méndez, Pablo O'Higgins, and Luis Arena, *Taller de Gráfica* is acknowledged by many as one of the most influential printmaking collectives of its time. The group was primarily interested in using art to promote revolutionary social causes.



David Klein, *Las Vegas*, 1960. Photo by Buyenlarge/Getty Images

Mid-Century Modern: '50s Style

The end of World War II brought the emergence of a new consumer society. Posters adapted to the times by changing their focus from propaganda to advertising, giving birth to the vivid, playful, and colorful boom of the early 1950s.



Saul Bass, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, 1955. Photo by Movie Poster Image Art/Getty Images

The New York School

The New York School was a group of artists closely associated with abstract expressionism and other avant-garde art movements. The movement started in the 1940s and quickly grew, making New York the cultural center of the world during the 1950s and 1960s. The artists were interested in the open and direct presentation of ideas and played with shape, contrast, and texture to accomplish this mission. In the field of graphic design, this resulted in the symbolic use of form and an interdependent relationship between text and images. During this time, many influential boutique advertising agencies were established, leading to the creation of iconic designs that are still in use today.

Swiss Style

Pop Art

Cuban Revolution



A Polish poster for the Paramount Pictures movie 'Roman Holiday,' titled 'Rzymskie wakacje,' 1953. Photo by Movie Poster Image Art/Getty Images

The Golden Age of Polish Posters

In 1950s Poland, the film industry was state-run. Without commercial constraints, artists had the freedom to express themselves, resulting in posters featuring vibrant colors and often a single surreal, intriguing, or provocative image that, in many cases, made little to no reference to the film it represented.



Erik Nitsche, *Atoms for Peace, General Dynamics*, 1955. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

The Swiss Style

The Swiss Style, also known as the International Typographic Style or International Style, arose from modernist and constructivist ideas guided by its pursuit of simplicity. It featured highly structured and systematic designs made up of essential typographic elements and striking photography. The government actively promoted posters and the printing industry during this time, allowing the Swiss Style to become a landmark and expand outside the country to the rest of the world.



Roy Lichtenstein illustrations on the windows of a gambling and gaming casino in London, UK. Photo by In Pictures Ltd./Mike Kemp/Corbis via Getty Images

Pop Art and Expressionism

Led by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg, Pop Art was a movement that emerged in the late 1950s and became internationally prominent during the 1960s and 1970s. It is recognized by a bold chromatic aesthetic and elements from popular culture to create iconic images and striking patterns.



Antonio Pérez Níko, *Hasta la Victoria Siempre*, 1967. poster courtesy of artist © Antonio Pérez Níko.

Cuban Revolution and Movie Posters

Fueled by the success of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the poster thrived in Cuba as a tool to showcase the new political, economic, and social changes of the nation. That same year, the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) and the *Casa de las Américas* were founded, creating key cultural opportunities for poster design.

Chicano Poster Movement

Psychedelic Posters

Punk



Xavier Viramontes, *Boycott Grapes, Support the United Farm Workers Union*, 1975. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. Photo by Cathy Murphy/Getty Images

Chicano Poster Movement

The Chicano Poster movement can be traced back to 1965, when Cesar Chavez created the United Farm Workers (UFW) union. What started as a labor movement quickly became a civil rights movement. Since posters were cheap and easy to mass-produce, they became a powerful medium to disseminate the message of the cause. The movement featured unique and distinctive iconography that drew from bicultural and bilingual elements and was influenced by the Mexican muralist movement and Cuban political posters. The posters were overtly political and portrayed the life and struggles of Mexicans in the United States. Popular iconography included the use of Aztec gods, Day of the Dead images, and the Virgin of Guadalupe.



Rick Griffin, *Jimi Hendrix concert poster at the Fillmore Auditorium 1968*. Photo by GAB Archive/Redferns/Getty Images

Psychedelic Posters

Psychedelia flourished in the United States, particularly in San Francisco during the 1960s. It frequently featured intense contrasting colors from opposite ends of the color wheel that created a visible vibrational effect. The typography was fluid and at times difficult to read, making onlookers work to decipher the content. Another common psychedelic approach involved making repeated photocopies of photographs, then reducing them to simple black-and-white shapes.



Sex Pistols, *God Save the Queen*, 1977. Europunk exhibition at the Villa Medici, headquarters of the French Academy, in Rome. Photo credit ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP/Getty Images

Punk

The Punk aesthetic glorified chaos and anarchy, making use of lo-fi and DIY approaches, including collage and décollage. Designers attacked the page, mixing contrasting shapes, colors, and textures. As the popularity of punk rock grew at an unprecedented rate and experienced many reinterpretations in the late 1970s, so too did the Punk aesthetic, including the addition of hand-drawn illustrations. A principal Punk poster designer was Jamie Reid, who created the iconic artwork Sex Pistols, *God Save the Queen*.



Niklaus Troxler Design, *McCoy Tyner Sextet*, 1980. © Niklaus Troxler

Postmodernism

Postmodernism, as its name suggests, emerged as a response to what many perceived as the rigid and dogmatic rules of modernism. Postmodernism first appeared in the 1970s but did not become widespread in Europe and America until the 1980s and 1990s. It was characterized by a distrust of theories and ideologies, a revival of ornamentation, and the use of historical references, humor, and irony.

Postmodernism

Memphis Style

New Wave/Swiss Punk

Deconstructivism



Ettore Sottsass. Detail from the photograph of the exhibition Design Radical at The Met Breuer on July 20, 2017, in New York City. Photography: John Angelillo | UPI / Alamy Stock Photo

Memphis Style

The Memphis design movement began in 1981 in Milan, Italy, with the creation of the Memphis group founded by designer Ettore Sottsass. Influenced by Art Deco and Pop Art, the style valued humor, fame, and outrage, featuring geometric shapes in a colorful palette. The Memphis style experienced rejection at first but quickly gathered a cult following.



April Greiman, *The Modern Poster*, 1988. © April Greiman

New Wave or Swiss Punk Typography

New Wave or Swiss Punk Typography can be traced back to Wolfgang Weingart in the early 1970s at the Basel School of Design. Many of his students, including April Greiman, Dan Friedman, and Willi Kunz, further developed the style. New Wave used analog and digital tools to create geometric shapes and isometric patterns that challenged previous notions of how type should appear on the page. The evolution in technological developments allowed designers to break the rules and experiment with type, color, and layout, creating chaotic compositions. New Wave defied strict grid-based arrangement conventions in favor of inconsistent letter spacing, varying type weights, and unexpected alignments.



David Carson, *Byron Bay*, 2014. © David Carson

Deconstructivism: The Grunge Art Movement and the New Typography

Grunge, a type of rock music known for its rough guitar and lethargic vocals, became popular around 1985 as part of the Seattle underground subculture. In the early 1990s, this artistic movement crossed over to the visual arts and design. Known for its experimental approach to typography and jumbled composition, Grunge gave rise to a new movement that sought to break the rules of traditional graphic design. Leading the way was David Carson, who served as art director of *Ray Gun* magazine for its first three years. His unique style quickly caught on and would forever change the way we look at graphic design and typography.

2

ideas

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ORIGINAL or

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Paul Rand



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Upon embarking on any poster project, designers and artists set out on a path to generate ideas, laying the groundwork for concept development. A concept is the main ingredient of any message and will ultimately influence the decisions you make during the image making stage of the design process. Your concept will keep you on track while the path twists and turns many times until resolution. The concept becomes the underlying narrative and the mechanism that provokes your audience; it should therefore inspire, influence, and even offer additional information outside of the main message. It is the designer's responsibility to combine resourcefulness and knowledge gained through discovery to develop effective concepts. During this time, you will explore many techniques for generating solutions to assigned problems. A successful result is achieved when all the elements of your poster support one another and speak in one voice. Whether it is a call to action to promote an event, seduce, entertain, or sell, a strong concept will allow you to unlock complex, seemingly unsolvable challenges.

A vertical strip of blue grid paper with the word "CONCEPTUALIZING" written vertically in black capital letters. The letters are spaced out and aligned with the grid lines. The strip has a torn, ragged edge on the left side.

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To create your concept, you should be aware of three things:

1. The context where the communication is taking place.
2. Your persuasive intent (or that of your client).
3. The beliefs of the audience about the issue.

Know Your Project

Research is the backbone of any successful idea and requires time and dedication. This is the stage when the designer seeks to build a deeper understanding of the assignment. Therefore, the more time you spend educating yourself, the more likely you are to succeed. Strong research from reliable sources can provide the most recent and relevant information. Even if you believe that you already understand a subject or have previous experience with it, you will find that there is always more to learn and discover. Designers and artists should be open to the unexpected and have an insatiable curiosity, for what you uncover may serve as a deviation and offer a revitalizing change. Finding something new can be the most exciting part of this journey. Zora Neale Hurston, an influential author of African-American literature and anthropologist, said, “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”³

The following are important questions to ask yourself before you begin: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

- Who is the poster directed to? Who will it benefit or affect? Are there any target segments or stakeholders you need to reach?
- What is the topic? What is the purpose of the poster? Is it for a contest, exhibition, event, etc.?
- Where will the poster be displayed? Is it for a specific country or will it be shown internationally?
- When is this poster being produced? Is there an urgency about the topic?
- Why is this poster being made? Why is the topic important or relevant?
- How will it be reproduced? How will it be used?

While learning as much as you can about a subject, be sure to pay attention to specific visuals that you may use as a reference later. Regardless of how familiar or straightforward an object may appear to you, never rely solely on memory. Everyday objects have subtleties and nuances that, if overlooked, will result

in weak visuals. Even the most celebrated artists throughout history used references. As you collect imagery, you will naturally start imitating the things you like and incorporate them into your designs. Do not plagiarize, but rather be stimulated by your inspirations and make them your own. Poster designers often pay homage to artistic movements or specific artists. This expression of respect and honor should be used only as inspiration and should not in any way resemble any particular poster or image unless that is your intention. For example, when you design with a retro or vintage aesthetic, you pay homage to a period or previous artistic movement.

You may also be motivated and inspired by the many visual styles created by design’s rich history of image-makers. Although you may be familiar with and have used photographic collage, did you know that this style was pioneered in the early 1930s by Swiss photographer and poster designer Herbert Matter (Figure 2.1)? Another impactful design style makes use of figure ground. Famed Japanese poster designer Shigeo Fukuda demonstrates his mastery of this technique in his 1975 *Woman and Man’s Legs* poster (Figure 2.2). If you prefer a minimalistic approach to image-making, consider master poster designer Saul Bass’s 1959 *Anatomy of a Murder* poster (Figure 2.3). Perhaps the iconic style of Milton Glaser’s 1966 *Dylan* poster (Figure 2.4) or Seymour Chwast’s famous 1967 *Bad Breath* poster (Figure 2.5) is what excites you. Regardless of your taste, there are many artists whose work continues to influence us today.