

Approach and Language

n
a way of dealing with a
situation or problem

n
a system of communication
used by a particular
community



Ethical:
aware-
ness/
reflect-
ion/
debate

ava
academia

BASICS

GRAPHIC DESIGN

**Gavin Ambrose
Nigel Aono-Billson**

01

Approach and Language

Ethical:
aware-
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ava
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AVA Publishing (UK) Ltd.
Tel: +44 1903 204 455
Email: enquiries@avabooks.com

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Tel: +65 6334 8173
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Email: production@avabooks.com.sg

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BAFTA **Small**

Programme cover for the 2010 BAFTA (British Academy Film Awards) ceremony. Tavis Coburn produced this illustration, with art direction by StudioSmall. The cover depicts a scene from the movie, *The Hurt Locker*. This was just one design from a series of different programme covers produced for the event.

Orange British Academy Film Awards in 2010



 Orange
BRITISH ACADEMY
FILM AWARDS

 orange

Contents

- 6 Introduction**
- 8 How to get the most out of this book**
- 10 Essential kit**

12 Chapter 1 / Context

- 14** Contemporary practice
- 16** History
- 26** Communication
- 28** Social attitudes
- 32** Studio interview: Lawrence Zeegen
- 34** Student exercise: Context

36 Chapter 2 / Ideas

- 38** Research
- 40** Idea generation
- 46** Idea mapping
- 54** Exploring and investigating
- 58** Communicating ideas
- 62** Mark making
- 66** Ideas on paper
- 70** Studio interview: Fred Deakin
- 72** Student exercise: Mapping

74 Chapter 3 / Workshops

- 76** The workshop
- 88** Craft
- 90** Technology
- 92** Capturing images
- 94** Studio interview: Dennis Y Ichiyama
- 96** Student exercise: Rich media

98 Chapter 4 / Vocabulary

- 100** Design language
- 102** Messages and meaning
- 110** Exploring visual imagery
- 116** Typography, alphabet and images
- 120** Exploring typography
- 124** Space, balance and hierarchy
- 132** The grid
- 138** Studio interview: Wout de Vringer
- 140** Student exercise: Typography

142 Chapter 5 / Responses

- 144** The design process
- 148** Creative responses
- 158** Testing
- 164** Presenting ideas
- 166** Studio interview: Morag Myerscough
- 168** Student exercise: Hybrid

170 Chapter 6 / Conventions

- 172** Formats and sizes
- 178** File formats
- 182** Colour systems

- 185** **Appendix**
- 186** **Conclusion**
- 188** **Bibliography**
- 190** **Index**
- 192** **Acknowledgements**
- 193** **Working with ethics**

Graphic design is a complex and dynamic subject. Far-reaching in its influence and broad-ranging in the creative skills it encompasses, it is an exciting and challenging area in which to study. However, without a basic understanding of some of the ideas and processes that underpin graphic design, embarking on an education or career in this area can be a daunting prospect.

The intention of this book is to introduce some common approaches to graphic design as well as the language and vocabulary inherent to its practice and study. A sound knowledge of these areas will provide the student with the tools and techniques required in order to create, develop and analyse new ideas in response to a design brief.

Chapter 1 – Context

This chapter will look at some of the debates that have faced graphic designers throughout history and how they have influenced designers today.

Chapter 2 – Ideas

Here, we look at some of the techniques used to research, generate and validate ideas in response to a design problem or brief.

Chapter 3 – Workshops

The creative processes available to the designer are numerous. Here, we look at some of them and how they might influence the eventual design solution.

Chapter 4 – Vocabulary

Conveying messages and meaning are central to visual communication. Here, we look at some of the ways in which meaning can be conveyed through design.

Chapter 5 – Responses

Experimenting with type and images will lead to creative solutions, but these must be tested, presented and prototyped. Here, we look at some of the ways in which we might do this, and the effect they may have on the outcome.

Chapter 6 – Conventions

A final look at some of the conventions within which the designer must work to give structure and order to design solutions.

Is there anywhere better than here? ➔

Adam Hayes

Pencil drawing for the allotment show, a group art show at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, UK. This design demonstrates both an understanding and control of the written word and also a sense of craft. We need to consider both 'what' we say, and 'how' we say it.



This book introduces many different aspects of the design process and the vocabulary used on an undergraduate design study programme, with distinct chapters for each topic.

Headings

Each chapter is broken down into discrete sub-sections, which can be found in the top left corner of each spread.

Clear navigation

A simple navigation bar allows readers to see where they have come from, where they are and where they are going to next.

Idea generation

The best results are achieved by using the right amount of effort in the right place at the right time. And this right amount is usually less than we think we need. In other words, the less unnecessary effort you put into learning, the more successful you'll be... the key to faster learning is to use appropriate effort. Greater effort can exacerbate faulty patterns of action. Doing the wrong thing with more intensity rarely improves the situation. Learning something new often requires us to unlearn something old.

Tony Buzan

Lateral thinking

Lateral thinking, also referred to as parallel thinking, is a method of idea processing that encourages a person to discover or learn something for themselves. A 'heuristic' approach (experimentation, evaluation or trial and error) can be used to reach an outcome which has rules that are only loosely definable.

Lateral thinking was devised as a method of creative thinking by Edward De Bono and first appeared in the title of his book, *New Think: The Use of Lateral Thinking*, published in 1967. De Bono's approach is based around the idea that vertical or logical, linear and critical thinking has limitations. In order to facilitate creativity, De Bono proposed that conventional patterns of brain behaviour would need to be disrupted – formulating new ideas should not be left to chance.

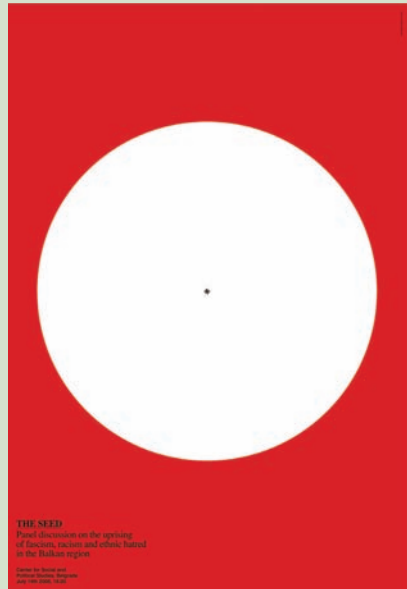
Lateral thinking is centred on the process of reasoning and solving problems through an indirect and creative approach.

42-43

The Seed

Futro (Slavimir Stojanovic)
By adopting a lateral approach to the problem, and with the desire to express a strong commentary, Slavimir Stojanovic at Serbian design studio, Futro, created this powerful piece of political symbolism. The design piece – a poster to promote a conference on the uprising of fascism in the Balkan region – features the Nazi swastika reduced to represent a seed, which, if left, could grow into something more potent.

← Research **Idea generation** Idea mapping →



Quotations

Quotations support and expand on the subject matter, from both a historical and practical point of view.

Each chapter features work from both practitioners and students, ranging from explanatory diagrams to creative work. These provide a viewpoint on graphic design in context to its study and exploration.

The workshop

The workshop environment affords the opportunity to experiment and play. It is also the place where traditional approaches can be explored and tested for their suitability for future usage and as a means to respond to an assignment brief and project. Workshops generally centre around the introduction of new skills, such as print- and mark-making processes and book binding. These workshops, or introductory classes, usually provide an individual with a unique learning experience and inspiration. Not all workshops necessarily focus around purely traditional skills. Digital workshop sessions, for example, introduce software applications and advanced image manipulation techniques.

Print making

Earlier, we looked at how mark-making and sketching might be used to create and develop design ideas, resulting in a single print or a single piece of work.


Print making is a collection of techniques (linocut, woodcut, drypoint, engraving, etching, screen printing, woodblock and letterpress) that enables the creation of copies of a piece of work. These processes also help to further develop mark making, which when exercised and analysed, provide opportunities for the manipulation of ideas.

Woodblock

Wood has been used for printing repeat text, illustrations and patterns on to textiles and paper for almost 2000 years.

Unlike other modern printing technologies, woodblock printing, and its derivative, letterpress, produce results that have a unique beauty and quality.



Woodblock posters 
Anthony Burrill

These self-initiated woodblock posters were printed using traditional techniques. The eclectic mix of typeforms makes for a series of deceptively simple posters. Printed on to coloured stock, these statements are given gravitas by their sheer scale and attention to detail.

76-77



Text

Each section is introduced by a brief paragraph in bold and the section is then further broken down into sub-sections.

Captions

Image captions explain and provide information about the images shown.

Examples of work

Actual examples from designers, creatives and students demonstrate a design response in context.

Shown here is a selection of studio/design equipment you'll need to have with you during your studies to enable you to complete your assignments. These tools will become essential aids to you when you make the transition from the educational to the working design environment.

Having a selection of quality tools to hand will make the creative and production processes easier, and the results you achieve will be both more accurate and more purposeful. Familiarity with a good range of design tools will enrich your creative work, and will allow you to articulate your ideas quickly and efficiently.

1 Loupe (linen tester)

For close examination of printed material and proofs.

2 Erasers

A selection of erasers will be needed, including a cleaning eraser, a vinyl eraser for fibre-tipped pens, a non-etching eraser for drawing ink on tracing paper and a putty rubber.

3 Pantone book

A pantone book will be needed for colour matching between screen and substrate.

4 Pencils

A selection of quality pencils from 6H (hard) to 3HB (soft). Also, a propelling pencil for fine-line work and sketching.

5 Tape

Different tapes will be needed for making mock-ups and dummies of work. Magic tape will come in useful as it doesn't show up on photocopies.

6 Roller

For pressing flat paper mock-ups and dummies.

7 Knives/blades

There is no substitute for a quality scalpel (sizes 3 & 4), with replaceable scalpel blades (size 10).

8 Drawing pens

A selection of different weight pens, for example .35pt, .5pt and 1pt.

9 Cloth marking and paper marking

A selection of chalk and markers for measuring out on to paper, card and fabrics.

10 Type scale and clear caps measure

For developing grids and layouts – without relying on a computer.

11 Drawing and paint mediums

Charcoal pencil, charcoal, conté crayons, pastels, graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic can all be used.

12 Crops

For experimenting with the cropping and editing of images.

13 Glue

Different glues for various media, including a spray glue for paper.

← How to get the most out of this book **Essential kit**



Chapter 1 – Context

As both student and practising designer, it is important to develop and maintain an awareness of history and context in graphic design. Looking back across historical design eras, one can develop a reference bank of approaches and theoretical ‘tools’ for tackling design problems.

This section will look at some of the debates that have faced designers throughout history, as well as those that we face today. How do graphic designers see themselves within wider society? Is it a designer’s responsibility to be socially aware? This chapter does not propose answers to such questions. What is important, though, is that as a student or a practitioner of design, you are aware of these issues.



It is often said that nothing in design is new anymore. Designers continue to plunder the design vaults of the past, searching for inspiration and validation of their design approaches. However, what they often end up with is a rehash or pastiche of something that was really only fit for its original time and purpose.

The Bauhaus movement and the modernist style that followed it spawned a design revolution considered by many to be at the very heart of contemporary graphic design.

What Walter Gropius and his colleagues started at the Bauhaus was not about style; it was about functionality and form and was really an ideology. Admittedly, some aspects of Bauhaus design are based on aesthetics, but they also contain a rationale and reasoning. As the philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote, 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'.

Design for the sake of design is empty; it needs the backing of an idea with focus, and a sense of purpose for it to be truly successful. In our world of open-source technology – wikis, blogs and social networks – opportunities to create work with shallowness, based on laziness, assumption and presumption are numerous. The need for validation and reason is more important than ever before.

Styles, trends and fads will always come and go; they are driven by technology and the zeitgeist. But many do turn into established forms and approaches within the world of design, and therefore become marked periods within graphic design history.

As new technology and equipment has made designers more self-sufficient, the ability to transcend cultural and global boundaries has also increased. Designers can now draw influence from a limitless number of sources in order to respond to assignments and to produce creative work that will fulfil a client's needs and requirements.

Much work currently seen as 'contemporary practice' can be described as digital design. Over the years, this will become an observation of this time and of the era in which it sits.

Zeitgeist

the spirit of the time; general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time.

Postcard for an exhibition at the Bauhaus, 1923 **Wassily Kandinsky**

The Bauhaus is best known as the most progressive art and design institution of the twentieth century. Its major aim was to encourage craftsmen and artists to collaborate, therefore evolving a new level of inter-relationships between art, design, craft and industry.

Context and history have a bearing on all design work. The origins of graphic design are deeply rooted in art, craft and architectural practice. The first recognised evidence of visual communication comes in the form of the pictographs and symbols found in the Lascaux caves in southern France (15,000–10,000 BC). From the Arts and Crafts movement, Dadaism and the Bauhaus to postmodernism, we can draw influence to inform our own design practice. Research and inquiry can, in turn, create new approaches and outcomes. The following selection provides an introduction to some of the key movements that have both shaped and affected what we understand to be graphic design today.

Expressionism

Expressionism (1905–1925) originated in Germany. Inspired by symbolism, fauvism and cubism, it moved beyond the objectivity of its subjects to focus on the emotions and feelings of the artist.

Dada

Dada (1916–1922) was started in Zurich, Switzerland. An anti-art movement, its formation came as a direct criticism of and response to the atrocities of the First World War. Dada means literally ‘hobby horse’ and ‘father’, but the term was also chosen due to its childish phonetics. Much of the work of this period was nonsensical and used found objects.

Constructivism

The Russian constructivist movement focused on geometric principles and basic shapes such as squares, circles and triangles (a theme later revisited by the Bauhaus). Some of its roots stem from cubism, futurism and Russian suprematism. One of its main aims was to depict mechanisation and the growing power of the machine over the natural world.



L.H.O.O.Q. ↑
Marcel Duchamp

Much of Marcel Duchamp's work was typical of Dadaism. L.H.O.O.Q. was a postcard-sized reproduction of the Mona Lisa, on which he drew a moustache and goatee beard. It was an attempt to mediate between high and low culture, through the defacing of a cherished national institution.



Triangle, square, circle ↑
The use of geometric principles and basic shapes in Russian constructivism was a theme later revisited by the Bauhaus.

Modernism

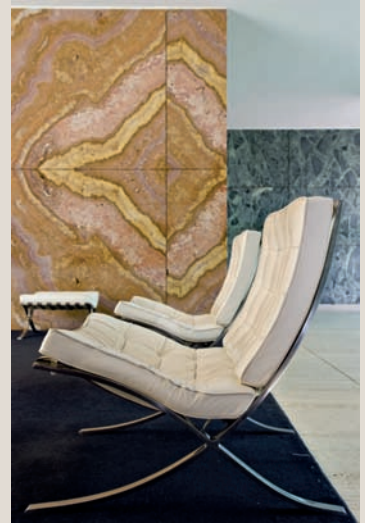
Modernism was formed around Western society's new and developing industrialisation, and focused on the experimentation of form, process and technique. The new economic, social and political conditions that emerged from modernism affected the worlds of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organisation and even daily life. It literally took people out of the fields and placed them in factories, in turn forging a new industrialised society.

Following the Second World War, modernism became associated with the émigrés who fled Germany for America and other European countries. Mies van der Rohe, for example, was a key figure at the Bauhaus until pressure from the Nazi regime forced him to leave Germany to live and work in the USA.

Modernist design principles had a major effect on typography, and on its application and usage, in terms of grids and layout, leading, alignment, spacing and proportion.

Jan Tschichold, a German typographer, book designer, teacher and writer, embodied the modernist design principles he saw during his visit to the first Weimar Bauhaus exhibition in 1923. He became a leading advocate of the modernist ethic and with his book *Die neue typographie*, created a manifesto for modern design.

Initially condemning the use of all serif fonts, he eventually rejected this doctrine as being too extreme and reverted back to the use of classical Roman typefaces. In chapter 4, we will further explore the basis and historical background of typography – along with shape, balance and hierarchy – all of which form the basics for good design.



German Pavilion at the International Exposition in Barcelona, Spain ⓘ
Mies van der Rohe

A reconstruction of the building in which Mies van der Rohe first used the grid as an ordering factor. It was designed to be a perfect example of modernism in architecture.

The Bauhaus

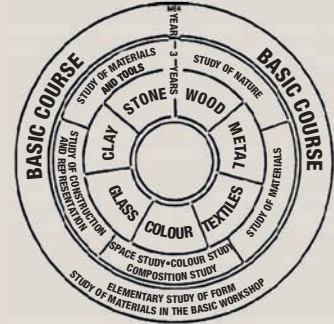
The Bauhaus school was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany, in 1919. Bauhaus translates as: 'house for building'. It was a progressive art school, combining architectural practice and design with craftsmanship. The school became one of the best-known and most progressive institutions for art and design instruction in the twentieth century.

Theories and teachings focused on the creation of new forms of design and construction that could be used for everyday living. The purity of the Bauhaus form in architecture led to flat roofs, smooth façades, cubic shapes and open-floor plans, populated with functional furniture.

The Bauhaus school's design sensibilities had a massive effect on the performing and applied arts, as well as on typography and graphic design.

After several changes of leader, it was closed by the Nazis in 1943, and many of its artists and teachers fled to the USA to continue their practice and teachings.

The Bauhaus continues to have a major influence on graphic design, with its pure geometrical forms and emphasis on aesthetic fundamentals.



The Basic Course ↑

The syllabus for the Basic Course at the Bauhaus was organised and developed by Johannes Itten. It introduced students to the basics of material characteristics, composition and colour. After successful completion of the Basic Course, students were introduced to crafts in the Bauhaus workshop.

'Universal' typeface ↓

Herbert Bayer designed this typeface in 1925. Commissioned by Walter Gropius, it consisted of lower-case characters only. Bayer saw this as a means to express his views on modern typography and to create an 'idealist typeface'.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
 1234567890

Akzidenz Grotesk Univers Helvetica

International typographic style (Swiss style)

The international typographic style, also known as the Swiss style, evolved and developed in the 1950s and introduced a form of typography that was concerned with cleanliness, aesthetics and optical relationships. Core to its approach was the use of asymmetric layouts, strong grids and sans serif typefaces such as Akzidenz Grotesk, Univers and Helvetica. The typography in many early design pieces was the primary feature, with all other text performing a supporting role. As well as this strong use of type, the movement displayed a preference for photography over illustration or drawing.

In the mid-1940s, Emil Ruder, a teacher of typography at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Basel, Switzerland, and a pioneer of the international typographic style, based his teaching around the new functionalism he had seen at the Bauhaus. Ruder focused on the point, line and plane, and the way in which typography activated space. He believed in asymmetry, with an emphasis on counter, shape and negative space. Ruder said of his programme of studies in typography: 'We want good typography, developed from the intellectual, technical and economic prerequisites.' He also believed that typography should be unobtrusive and transparent, in order to clearly communicate the content of the text – a purist use, which excluded the use of any typeface other than sans serif.

Typefaces

Akzidenz Grotesk, developed and produced by H. Berthold AG type foundry in 1898, has a strength of form and clarity. It saw a revival in the 1950s with the arrival of the international typographic style (Swiss style).

Univers was released in 1956 by the small French foundry, Deberny & Peignot. There are still many differing opinions as to which is the true modernist typeface from this period; Univers or Helvetica (formally known as Neue Haas Grotesk). Helvetica was created by Max Miedinger and Edüard Hoffmann in 1957. Both typefaces were based on the 1896 typeface Akzidenz Grotesk and are part of the Haas Type Foundry's collection.

Dogma Outline

Dead History

Typefaces ↕

Dogma, a typeface created by Zuzana Licko in 1994, was first seen in *Emigre* magazine. *Emigre* was art-directed by Dutch-born Rudy VanderLans, along with his Czechoslovakian-born wife Zuzana Licko. Their magazine was one of the first publications to be created on an Apple Mac computer and had a large influence on graphic design and typography throughout the 1980s.

Dead History was created by P. Scott Makela, a student and graduate of Katherine McCoy and the Cranbrook Academy of Art, in 1990. It is neither a serif nor sans serif typeface.

Sacred Heart sculpture ↻

Jeff Koons

Jeff Koons' Sacred Heart sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, displays many postmodern qualities. A sumptuous surface of shiny wrapping and ribbon alludes to childhood but is juxtaposed with potent imagery of the Catholic Church in the form of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

