

Personal Study

“Just because something's legible doesn't means it communicates. More importantly, it doesn't mean it communicates the right thing” Carson

Typography is one of the most important parts of graphic design, it is a way that designers communicate with their audience. Over a past 100 hundred years there has been significant changes in how designers approach type within their work. In this Essay I will explore the work of David Carson, Jan Tschichold and Neville Brody, focusing on two significant art movements, the modernist period and the post-modernist movement. I will discuss the important role that typography places in our society, and whether the modernist or post-modernist approach is more successful in communicating with the audience.

Exploring the David Carson Piece **Don't Mistake legibility for communication**, He arranged this by splitting one word into two segments '**legibility**'. The piece is a square format and was a poster that was designed to promote a lecture that Carson was delivering. The quote was taken from Carson's first book "Print is not Dead" where he explores themes within post-modern editorial/typography. He placed the words into the background, by overlaying the word legibility over and over. By doing this, Carson creates a black box within the design, this adds a framing effect to the piece whilst also adding the element of texture. He placed the word **legibility** in the middle of the piece, as it is the main word. He split the word **legibility** into 5 sections, you could suggest that Carson deconstructed the word phonetically. He reflected the word **legibility**, as you could say the design is Illegible. Other words he put the line on it on each work to make a pattern and make the work look nice. He used 4 different typefaces and all of them are different, this is a clear sign of the work can be deemed post-modern. During the early stages of modernism, Jan Tschichold wrote the design manifesto "Die Neue Typographie". In this he set out a set off rules that designers should use when using typography, this includes editorial design, posters and even product design. In the manifesto, Tschichold suggests that no more than three typefaces can be used in anyone design, as this may cause chaos within the structure. Carson obviously did not apply this rule to this piece, in a recent documentary titled open "Helvetica documentary, he says he did not realise that there were rules in graphic design

“White space is to be regarded as an active element, not a passive background”
Jan Tschichold

The colour of the piece is predominantly black and white, however his name which is located at the top left-hand corner of the piece is in red. This may suggest his name is of a higher status than the quote itself, this design feature is regarded as hierarchy of typography (surprisingly a modernist design rule).

How was the work made and was the process integral to the piece? He made this piece on Photoshop, and he made this on computers, obviously this is very different to the equipment that Tschichold had access too. The advancements in technology has allowed more experimentation with

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Graphic Design. However, with the introduction of Adobe, designers like Carson were able to experiment more as it was quicker to produce to him designs. Tschichold and other modernist designers made their work by hand. This may have led to mistakes then he will have to start it again because he done it by hand.

This work made me feel good because I like messy and more experimental work because it looks interesting and very unique. Some designers may find their work disorientating and completely illegible. Carson is trying to achieve something on his work and when people read his magazine it's whether people like or not.

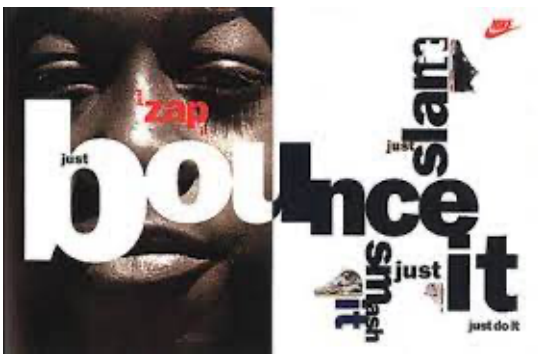
Post-Modernist is a newer style of artwork. It is an eclectic, colourful style of architecture and the decorative arts that appeared from the late 1970s and continues in some form today. It emerged as a reaction to Modernism and the Modern Movement, and the dogmas associated with it. Post-Modernist you can make your work however you want to be and there is no rule whereas Modernist is older, and you must listen to a rule. Post-Modernist you can mix your work up and make whatever style you want.

I will now explore the work of Jan Tschichold, his design work is synonymous with the early stages of the modernist movement. In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a time where artists, designers, writers and musicians were experimenting within their own practices. During this exciting time, we saw the greatest shift within the design industry as artists like Tschichold wanted to move away from tradition and embrace the future. Modernism was created in response to the end of World War 1, after the atrocities experienced within Europe at that time, it seemed natural for creatives to inspire radical changes. Modernists such as Tschichold, wanted to add more order to graphic design. He believed that design should communicate clearly, and the ornate style seen previously should be banished. Tschichold wrote a manifesto titled, "Die Neue Typographie." In this book he set out a number of design rules, these included the creation of grid system, the use of sans-serif's and the limited use of colour. He believed the idea "less is more" and some of these principles are still being applied in design today.

I will now analyse **Die Frau ohne Namen (The Woman Without a Name)**. This piece was created in 1927 and was used to promote the film "The Woman Without a Name". The film was significant within the surrealist movement, this too came under the bracket of modernism. The design is minimal in nature, we see the title of the film in the top left-hand corner and then several images taken from the film. The text is set out to mimic the shape of the train, as this features heavily within the film. In the poster the image of the train is depicted at the bottom of the design, the images behind are scenes taken from the film. An image of a woman is a key part of the design, the viewer is left wondering whether this is the main character (The Woman Without a Name). This is an unusual film poster as it has very little information about the film, you could say that the poster raises more questions than it answers. Who stars in the film, when the film is released and also the name of the director.

The colour palette are white background and the black text on a title and there is a red line and red circle for the action. There are similarities to Tschichold's work and Carson for example the

colour palette is limited in both pieces of work and the text has been distorted in some way. There are also differences as well, for example in Tschichold words and title is more controlled than Carson, Tschichold uses pictures whereas Carson doesn't, he only uses typography words and some drawings. Finally, Tschichold's work is well more organised, well-spaced out and very neat compared to Carson. Carson's work is very messy, grungy, he also makes his own rules and makes his work whatever he wants, whereas Tschichold listens to rules and he can't do certain stuff.



During the 1990s, at the similar time to David Carson, we began to see the work of Neville Brody in fashion magazine. A typographer by nature, his work, similar to that of Carson. He looks at using typography as a way of adding energy to graphic design. The piece I would like to analyse is an advert for the sports brand Nike. This design would have featured in magazines such as Vogue and linked to their "just do it" campaign. This marketing campaign focused on the sport of basketball, during the 1990s we saw a rise in popularity of the NBA, this could be linked to sports stars Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Shaquille O'Neal.

"Typography is a hidden tool of manipulation within society"
Neville Brody

The text has been laid out across the double page spread; this is very unusual but does relate to the content. The words bounce, this looks like it is bouncing, mimicking the movement of a basketball. All the characters appear to be bouncing around the design. As words are placed as such, this movement creates an energetic feel to the piece, this energy is what Brody was looking for, as it directly relates to the activity of basketball. When we observe the players, and their movement around the court, it is clear that Brody, wanted to reflect this in his use of type. The words move up and down across the layout, almost mirroring the movement of a basketball player. The bounce represents your bouncing a basketball that's the main thing about it. The shoes, which are basketball trainers, represent the basketball range that Nike offer. The Nike logo, designed by Caroline Davidson, is not necessarily the main feature of the design. This was intentional as the "Just Do It" campaign was at its peak, the 'Just Do It' was replaced by the words 'Just Zap'. This may represent the

quick movement of the players and the throwing of the basketball. The colour palette is minimal, using only white, black and red for the text. We do have a close-up image of Michael Johnson, was one of the most iconic players of the time (of all time), this links in the brands identity of world class athletes.

When comparing this work to Carson and Tschichold, you can make comparisons with both. The energy of Carson's work can be clearly seen, with the dynamic use of typography. The structured approach is like modernism, so it is difficult to place this work in a bracket. You may say that this piece is more post-modern due to the nature and timing of the piece.

In conclusion, having studied the work of these designers, it is clear that some parts of their designs are relevant to the content. For example, David Carson "Don't Mistake Legibility" the layout reflects the quote, just because something is legible does not mean it communicates. Carson's work is very exciting, his dynamic typography brings energy to the work, however it is very difficult for the audience to read and view. This is where Tschicold work is more effective, as function overrides form (a modernist value) the viewer is able too clearly read the message he is trying to present. I find that Neville Brody work is probably the most successful of all, because he uses a mixture of both modernist and post-modernist principles within his designs. As modernism has lasted the test of time, it is clear that these values will remain in graphic design for a long time to come, though on reflection, my favourite is Post-Modernism!