

Research in Context, Essay Question (3)

Student Number: 1901499

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Tutor's name: Timi O'Neill

Essay Question (3): Referring to the idea of storytelling within a discipline, refer to at least THREE practitioners within any field of academic study and critically explore the way their work has aided the creation of a dominant view of how we see society today.

Objectives:

1: Compare the following designers' first initial introduction to their genius and untouched techniques that no fellow designer/makers had ever thoroughly approached before, against more modernised and adapted versions from the designer's original concept.

2: To consider how these ideas and concepts affected audiences at the time when they were constructed and how the following techniques influenced ongoing practitioners at our current time.

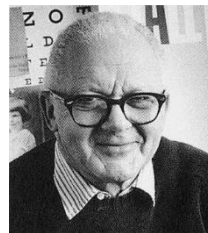
3: To explore the worth and importance of the creative design industry to the world's economy; the possibility of where the creative industry would stand today if these ideas and concepts never became mainstream or was never created and the impact this would have.

Introduction:

Within this investigation, I intend to establish an appropriate answer to the selected question of how the referred practitioners aided creation by critically applying my research and findings to my written assigned objectives; in which will help me succeed and maintain structure throughout this inquiry. The following practitioners that will contribute to my findings are Saul Bass, Paul Rand and J. Stuart Blackton. Each creator stated brought something new to the industry and revolutionised the creative world with their unorthodox methods and unfamiliar styles. They aided the development of design and changed how we view creative products today by influencing others to challenge themselves and break the standard design norms. This will be evident in my chosen sources that reinforces this notion and signifies how adaptive the activity of design can become.



Saul Bass



Paul Rand



Stuart Blackton

It is evident that industries are changing constantly, particularly within design, where we are seeing the rise of new knowledgeable practitioners that bring forth new and innovative ideas with an entirely new viewpoint and perception towards their work ethic. As John Kotter claims, "The rate of change is not going to slow down anytime soon. If anything, competition in most industries will probably speed up even more in the next few decades." (Kotter. J, 1996, Leading Change p.n.d). However, it is those who paved the way for the current and future ambitious designers that have tremendously encouraged others to test themselves and try new processes. "Never be afraid to tread the path alone. Know which is your path and follow it wherever it may lead you; do not feel you have to follow in someone else's footsteps." (Caddy. E, n.d)

Saul Bass: The first extensive use of kinetic typography in film.

Film Sequences Pre- Saul Bass Era (1920s-1940s):

During the early days of film screenings, one feature that was overly disregarded by film makers were film titles. A lot of title sequences appeared to be very dull and boring with no creativity in mind. Rather than expanding on the previewed film's narrative and genre, the film title segments were simply a tiresome stage of the film presented through single frame held title cards that outlined key individuals who had an involvement in the film. (Boxer. S, 2000, New York Times). Eventually, sound was introduced which James Counts highlights, "after the implementation of sound, titles began to function as a transition" (Counts. J, 2005) further enhancing the tedious sequences for resented audiences.

Although most films tried to make their titles appear more interesting for audiences, there were also films that ignored the opening credit sequence altogether to avoid conflict with disinterested viewers, demolishing an entire potential space for creativity. The addition of high illiteracy rates during these times, especially in the United States, made it more difficult for people to read the film titles. (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2018) This typically resulted in the new norm for screenings to 'pull the curtains before titles', leaving the curtains closed until the feature film actually started.

As Emily King explains, "While those engaged in film studies have for the most part ignored title sequences, historians of graphic design tend to treat them purely as graphics which through cinema technology have taken on a temporal dimension" which is evident when we see Saul Bass, a man with prior knowledge and understanding of graphic design in his palette, sharing new ideas and principals with film through the potential of storytelling aided by his expertise in design. (King. E, 2004, Taking Credit)

Film Sequences Post-Saul Bass Era (1960s-2000s):

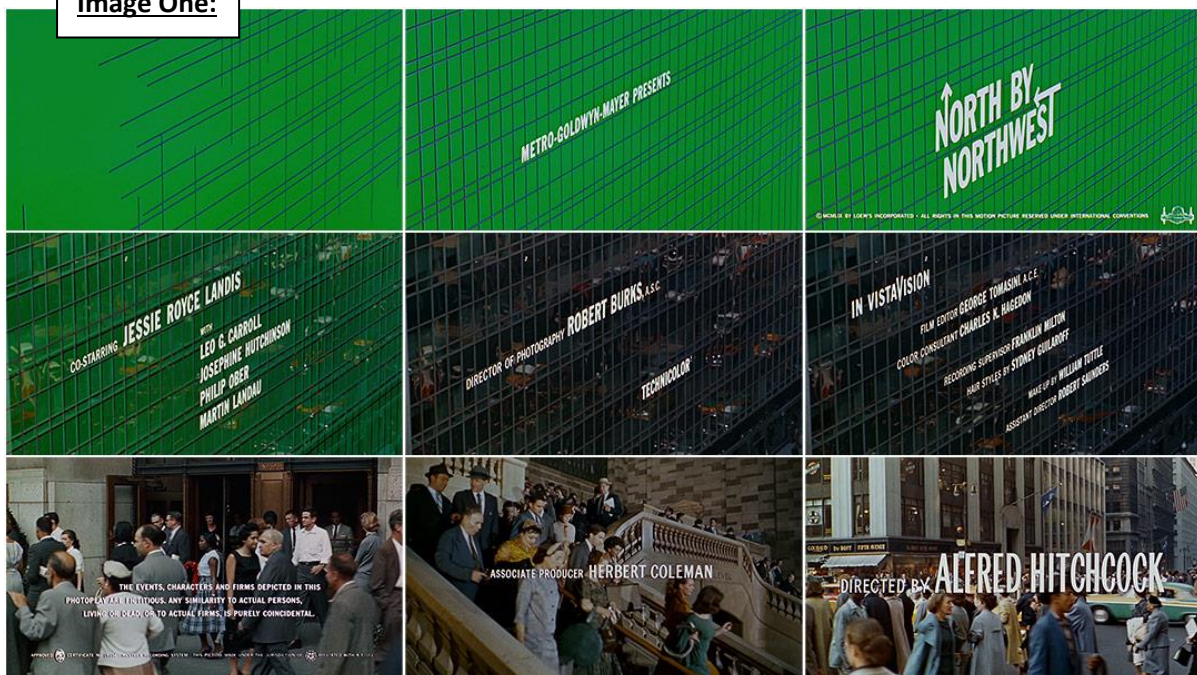
Saul Bass' work heavily altered how we view design within the filming industry. He notably introduced the uncommon practice where he manipulated text and gave them transformative motion effects that made the displayed type feel more engaging and lively compared to the typical static credits most audiences were used to seeing. "I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it." (Bass. S, n.d)

This strategy known as 'kinetic typography', a technical term for the moving of text and type to help incorporate a sense of tone and induce emotion; a technique to help audiences feel more absorbed with the previewed film by setting the intended impression (Kinetic Typography, Vyond | Vyond, 2020). John Medina states that 65% of people are visual learners, and 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual (J. Medina, Brain rules, 2014) hence why the involvement of kinetic typography made viewing films a more enjoyable experience, and with the advancement of computer technology, kinetic typography is becoming widely used in modern human communication from music videos, commercials, video games, and even mobile apps.

The example shown in image one, *North by Northwest* (1959) was far from the only film in which he used the technique in the three-year period between 1958 and 1960, but the acclaimed Saul helped produce other early rough sequences like *Vertigo* (1958) and *Psycho* (1960). In the opening sequence of *North by Northwest*, we see a visible strong green tint with the addition of music that builds as parallel lines enter the screen from the right flowing at an erratic rate. Another set of lines then move vertically across the screen; from both above and below when eventually the lines meet and intersect to assemble a grid, revealing the titles positioned along the diagonal perspective lines. After the common credits are shown, the surface then begins to dissolve and transforms into a glass facade of a New York office building seen at a slight angle.

(Image displays the beginning sequence for the north by northwest film.)

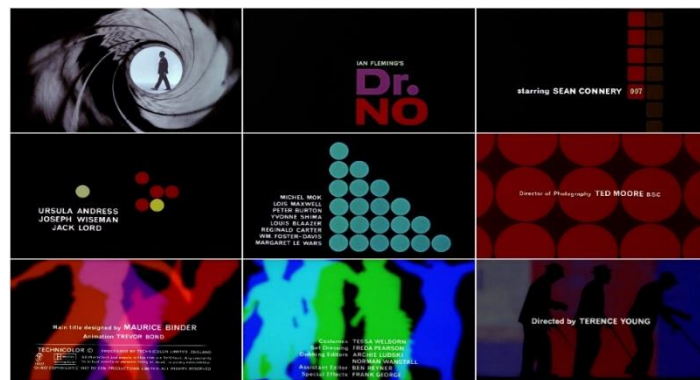
Image One:



By breaking traditional styles and structure, Saul's innovative way of thinking and fearlessness in changing the way we see films, enabled more people to break the boundaries and create superior and captivating film titles that audiences adore. As more people incorporated this element into various outlets, the original concept expanded, and kinetic typography became a new way of initializing audiences to immerse themselves fully to the film's narrative. As Saul Bass suggests "Design is thinking made visual", and it is evident that modern companies acknowledged this and were capable of producing high quality moving type that perfectly reflects on the film's character and themes through quirky and emotive openings.

Examples of modern-day title sequences:

(Image displays the beginning sequence of Monsters INC Footage / “Dr. No” Footage / “The Adventures Of Tintin” Footage)



As our technology has advanced throughout the years, so have the modern-day title sequences. With leading tools that produce smooth animated motion effects and polished expressive imagery visible in image two, it is obvious that contemporary sequences surpass Bass' inferior performance. While he refashioned how we observe sequences today, his limited yet raw productions in a visual sense cannot compare to what adapted technology can accomplish now.

Paul Rand: The man that revamped and strengthened branding for businesses using graphic design in the early 1960s (Breaking the Rules).

Image Three:



Image Four:



Rand was one of the first major graphic designers that pioneered the way the branding/marketing industry has become today by providing the fundamentals and rules of design. As Rand suggests, having a clear understanding of the importance of visual communication is the key for success. (Rand. P, 1947, Thought on Design) Knowing that any form of information should be seen as “the embodiment of form and function: the integration of the beautiful and the useful.” His values of appreciating creation and how any element of design can become a lively

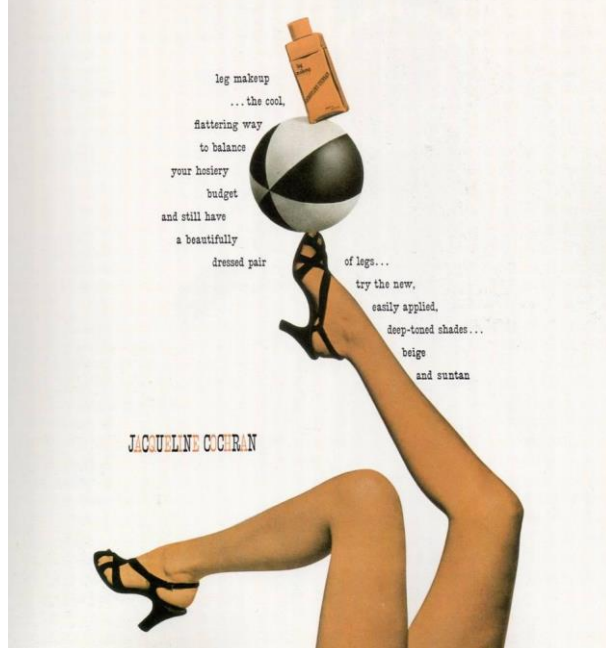
entity is what enabled his work to shine and make others realise how transformative graphic design can be. Despite his values, this knowledge might prove worthless to a novice designer with no experienced visual thought and practice hence why most early designers failed to understand during Rand’s major appearance was graphic design is more than simply making a good layout; many other factors need to be considered before reaching a deserving result. The initial belief that to make a good layout, all that is needed is satisfying arrangements or elements for a worthy business, unintentionally led to the downfall of people’s brands and corporations which we still see today with companies like Mastercard and Kraft who failed to rebrand their logos in favour of audiences (image five). However, Rand already recognised this and demonstrates how “procedure involves the time-consuming uncertainties of trial and error, and at worst, an indifference to plan” in which was the underdoing of most designers.

Rand realised this and knew in order to create a prosperous piece, the designer should closely study and observe the idea, a mental process that requires the designer to

Image Five:



Image Six:



formulate, interpretate and analyse first to realise one's strengths and weaknesses in their field of work. (Rand. P, 1947, Thought on Design) The ability of being able to simplify, symbolise and eliminate excess will lead you to further success. As one of his contemporaries later put it, Rand "brought ideas and intelligence to advertising where before him there was no semblance of thought." strikingly noticeable in images six and seven. (Wired Article) Nevertheless, it is a designer's job, he wrote in Thoughts on Design, to shape ingredients in a given space to manipulate symbols through juxtaposition, analogy and association. (Rand. P, 1947, Thought on Design)

Furthermore, Rand thought about the relationship with a brand as a consumer from their perspective and how they would

interpret the design. Most designers misjudged the amount of time and attention a logo needs to determine how long it will relate to the consumer. In his work, Rand created a link between European modern art and American commercial art; a pioneer in using a new formal language, creating professional designs that companies like IBM wanted.

The logo he redesigned for IBM shown in image four is a simple yet striking logo and is commonly distinguishable today. However, the logo fails to show a clear communication of what the brand is and does. Despite this flaw of not being able to immediately identify what type of company IBM is, the design Rand produced helped set the tone and creates the impression of a vigorously skilled company, where the previous logo did not supply any information about the brand's identity for audiences to grasp (image three).

In the modified logo, Rand added horizontal stripes through a blue typeface that created the connotations of speed and proficiency, which is what IBM stood for at the time of the redesign in the 1960s. Having redesigned other visual aspect such as annual reports and letterheads helped keep a consistent theme of power and capability for IBM. It is evident in both Rand's branding work and advertisement that he was not afraid to walk his own path, and broke traditions of design that were set before him by creating new principles for himself and other ambitious designers, "Don't try to be original; just try to be good." (Rand. P, 1960).

Image Seven:



Rand bridged an era of elation for branding; providing us with a necessary basis for which to do so in design to succeed from a business standpoint. However, appreciating Rand's values and methods instinctively is not enough alone to compete with alternative designers, but the key to understand the complexity of what it is to be good and having your own personal style is what separates you from others is crucial as a designer.

J. Stuart Blackton: The Man who created the first ever film animation.

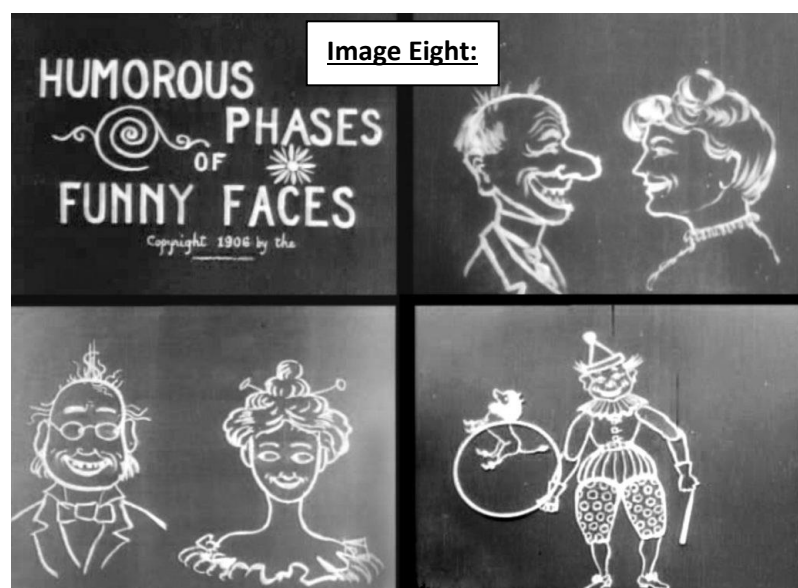
Random House describes animation as giving life or liveliness to something "motion picture consisting of a sequence of drawings, each so slightly different that when filmed and run through a projector the figures seem to move". (Random House, Inc, 2001, p. 82).

When referring to animation, it is challenging to label one individual as the creator. Since animation toys like the zoetrope and flipbooks had already existed, it is hard to determine who officially created the animated genre. However, one particular figure that truly revealed the potential and capabilities animation could bring was none other than an American film maker named James Stuart Blackton.

Blackton was one of the first people to use the techniques of stop-motion and referred animation not just an optical trick, but a new 'medium of artistic expression'. Discovered by Méliès, and hand-drawn animation; originally, he was a newspaper cartoonist who produced the first animated film ever made, Humorous Phases of Funny Faces in 1906. A simple 3-minute silent film that was also the first cartoon to use the single frame method and was projected at 20 frames per second (Animation, n.d.). Within this jittery black and white film (image eight), we can see a bald man drawn on a chalkboard appearing with a woman. They then begin to interact with each other in a fully animated style of stop motion. Shortly after, another character is introduced, playing with his hat and umbrella, followed by the departing figures of the man and woman staring at each other. Finally, the film ends with a uniquely made but flawed cut-out animation sequences of a joyful clown and a performative dog jumping through hoops.

The narrative presented was so simple and uncomplicated which some might have found as meaningless or amateur, but it was the ability to see a moving image through life like drawings that sparked the creation of the animation genre today. This peaked new opportunities and granted people the ability to bring their imagination to live through cartoons and animated sequences

"Everything you can imagine is real." (Picasso. P, n.d)



This later inspired the arrival of famous characters we know of today, such as Mickey Mouse, Betty Boop, Snow White, Dumbo, and some many more cherished personalities that have greatly impacted audiences. The genre from this point onwards quickly developed and was explored in many different ways. For instance, people began mixing animations with motion pictures, which was extremely successful in 'Who framed Roger Rabbit?' (1988). As the rise of technology was also promptly escalating too, this helped the demand and experimentations of animation to constantly surge. First the multiplane camera, a tool that was used within animation to add more detail and depth to scenes within 2D films (Traditional animation, n.d.; Multiplane camera, n.d.) and then the involvement of Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) which took animation to a whole new level with even more visual possibilities. Therefore, the continuing evolution of animation today would not have been possible without advancing technology.

A great example of this is Pixar Studios. Its first global success was Toy Story and was considered revolutionary at its release. Throughout each film in the Toy Story franchise, the quality of lighting, definition and detail tremendously improves, feeling almost life-like in some instances which, when comparing Blackton's first film

Image Nine:



to these sharpened visuals, makes his animation feel unrefined and sloppy. Other companies like Laika that specialise in stop motion have taken what Blackton originally created and have shifted that concept to a whole new perspective through animations like 'Coraline' (2009). Once again in comparison to Blackton's work it is much more well-made and imaginative against a dull rugged piece. However, without Blackton's innovation, it is uncertain where animation would stand today as he crafted the recipe while other designers slowly began adding the ingredients.

"This is the time of large effort in the motion picture

world. Time was, and not so long ago, when through lack of courage or comprehension, the run was in the direction of small things. Now there is no reasonable limit to the possibilities of our undertakings." (Blackton. J, n.d).

Conclusion:

The influences that these practitioners had on the industry was extensive and significant, each granting their own heretical ideas that would later embolden many people by providing them with the fundamentals and primary principals of new and innovative techniques, mediums, and the ability to recognise a brand.

The thought of these practitioners' offerings never being noticed might have brought serious consequences for the industry. A world with the possibility of no signs of motion for text, the acknowledgement of a true brand and conceivably an entire pure imaginative genre deceased and never to inspire. However, dismissing the fact that perhaps someone else would have brought forth these methods, it is known for absolute certainty that wondering audiences and thriving practitioners would not view and envision the creative industry the same way without the involvement of these pioneers. As Neil Gaiman said, "The world always seems brighter when you've just made something that wasn't there before." (Gaiman.N, n.d). Their ingenious ideas helped fuel others and greatly impacted the demand on creativity, enabling even more promising potential to come "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." (Angelou. M, n.d)

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