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Investigate the digital graphic design revolution of the mid 1980's.

**Discuss the work of 3 designers who embraced this new
technology to challenge the past and define the future.**

Until the later twentieth century, graphic design was solely based on manual processes such as sketched layouts, hand-drawn designs, hand printed letters and block shapes. Each part of a design had to be individually produced, without the help of a click of a button which we're so reliant on at present. Often referred to as the International Typographic Style, Swiss Design originated in Switzerland in the 1940s. This style of design was the footing of much of the development of digital design during the twentieth century. Throughout the 1980's, there was a dramatic move from physical to digital design. The rapid advances significantly altered graphic design and introduced the world to a new digital era. In this essay I will discuss this digital graphic design revolution, focussing mostly on the influential designers who embraced the change, challenged the past and defined the future.

One of the very first designers to embrace the Swiss Design movement was Paul Rand. Born in 1914 and deceased in 1996, Paul Rand is a graphic design legend. Rand began out in the thirties with a bold design style. He was certain that graphic design was and would continue to have a huge role in communication world-wide, he was sure it would be utilized as a universal language. He once suggested: "one quickly realizes that simplicity and geometry are the language of timelessness and universality" (Rand, P. 1996).

Later on, in the fifties, Rand started developing his own style and distinguished himself with unique design principles, attracting brands and companies who desired his expertise. He proposed his universal language of graphic design to many companies,

aiming to support their growth and restoring their image. He ventured into logo designing for huge companies such as IBM, ABC, UPS and Next which got him a lot of recognition in the design world. He became more known for his bright colours and bold shapes, designs that still seemed so unusual and bizarre to others at the time. Even at this point of his career, he had completely transformed corporate communication in America.



Rand, P. (1981)

He had fully developed his own modernistic, unique design style during the dynamism movement that surfaced in New York, which was mostly inspired by European abstract art. Many different styles are held by the term Modernism, however there are several rules that are designated to the art form, such as abstraction, asymmetry, streamlined forms and strong geometric shapes. The movement was a rejection of history and the conservative values of design at that time, a global shift in cultural society which mixed visual arts and commercial design. It focussed on experimentation with things such as colours, shapes, layouts and lines, it required designers to be innovative and pushed out of their comfort zone. Rand embraced these new trends enthusiastically as he already had some experience with German and British modernism during his time as a teen.

According to Rand (Rand, P. 1996), "It is integrity, honesty, absence of sentimentality and absence of nostalgia, it is simplicity, clarity. That's what modernism means to me...".

Throughout his long career of 60 years, Rand changed America's opinion on visual communication. His tenacity gave the design world more credibility and his style consequently still has an impact on graphic design today. By the sixties, Modernism had become the norm, it was a dominant style of design used plentifully by designers everywhere. Building on these precedents, designers began pushing the boundaries once again, using new materials, imagery and techniques which they felt were more of an appropriate way to reflect their new realities. As Rand explained (Rand, P. 1991), "Without play, there would be no Picasso. Without play, there is no experimentation. Experimentation is the quest for answers."

Post-modernism was a reaction against the principles and values of modernism. It represented the departure of the idealistic view of society that designers previously had and allowed them to reflect on the modern world. Post-modernism challenged the stereotypical and cultural norm of design and embraced its complex and often contradictory layers of meaning. While modernist designers focused on experimenting with form, processes and simple technique in clarity, post-modernism pushed the boundaries and broke the established rules about design.

As traditional work started to become outdated, the post-modernism punk aesthetic was formed. The birth of Punk created both an evolution and a revolution in the world of modern design, which saw a rise of underground subculture. The seventies were a time of

cultural, societal and political turbulence, one of the first people to take action on the revolution were the world's first punk band, the Sex Pistols. It was their disgraceful behaviour and shameless words that put the movement of punk aesthetics in motion. Without them, our world would have never experienced punk, however, without their grunge look and punk design work to match the movement at the time, they wouldn't have reached the level of fame they did. The man behind their look was Jamie Reid, a designer who played a key part in challenging the past and introducing this new era of freedom.



Reid, J. (1977)

Reid is one of the most influential designers of his time and has taken the world by storm. His unique ideas and creative thoughts had a great effect on the design world and opened the eyes of many designers globally, encouraging them to see design in a different light. He represented the band's genre of music well with his unique collaged

'ransom note' style of typography, juxtaposed images, cluttered pages, subversive slogans and unpredictable form. The piece he is most recognised for is the cover he designed for 'Never mind the bollocks', one of the Sex Pistols' albums. The design is purely typography based and very minimal, as if design was pulled back to its first principles. "The only real thing about Never Mind the Bollocks was that it had to look ugly," recalled their late manager Malcolm McLaren (McClaren, M. 2016). "We came up with the ugliest cover we could think of; that in a sense would attack the idea of super-graphics. I wanted to make ugliness beautiful". The typography used seems trashy, which perfectly fits the style of music that was being represented. The use of bold, vibrant colours certainly grabbed the attention of people around the world, it was something that had never been even considered to be accepted before, it took pushing the boundaries of design to a whole new level.

Reid mainly worked in collages, he cut letters and sentences out of newspapers or magazines and positioned them creatively across his canvas with other elements of designs such as drawings and images. Juxtaposition was a main characteristic of many of Reid's designs, it's what made him stand out from the crowd. I personally use this style of design a lot in my work, I like how it incorporates some physical elements into a piece. Little did I know this was introduced by Reid, he really was a huge influence and still is influential to designers to this day. Collage design set by Reid was the new design form of rebellion and revolution, it represented anarchy and the people's fight towards cultural society, which worked very well with the message the Sex Pistols were trying to portray with their music. At the time, Reid's work was considered appalling and

disorderly, however, now overlooked due to its incredible and undoubtedly influence it has had on design worldwide.

Another of Reid's most iconic designs is 'God Save the Queen' which he produced in 1977, the year of the Queen's silver Jubilee. The design exhibits a monochromatic image of the queen, with both her mouth and eyes removed, revealing juxtaposed text made up of cuts of newspapers and magazines underneath, true to Reid's known style. The idea of the Queen's mouth and eyes being removed caused a lot of controversy due to the message it portrayed, some were appalled at the artwork, however, Reid was often involved in politically charged design work and others viewed it as a staple of the times they were living in.



Reid, J. (1977)

Reid's design work undoubtedly challenged the design of his past, he experimented, pushed boundaries, tried the unordinary, destroyed what was familiar and completely reinvented graphic design. He is the signifier of punk design. His style of

work; ransom-note typography, juxtaposition, collage and bold colours, took on a completely new approach for artwork. He made his mark in design history and we still are influenced by him almost half a century later.

Following on from this was the introduction of digital design, a new revolutionary form of graphic design. In 1984, Apple introduced the Macintosh computer, the invention shook the entire world. Being the first mass-produced personal computer that featured a mouse and a graphical interface, it completely flipped the design community. It provided a new platform for people to communicate, design and advertise. As Bill Gates stated, "To create a new standard, it takes something that's not just a little bit different; it takes something that's really new and really captures people's imagination, and the Macintosh, of all the machines I've ever seen, is the only one that meets that standard". (*The Dating Game* (1983) [Event Show]).

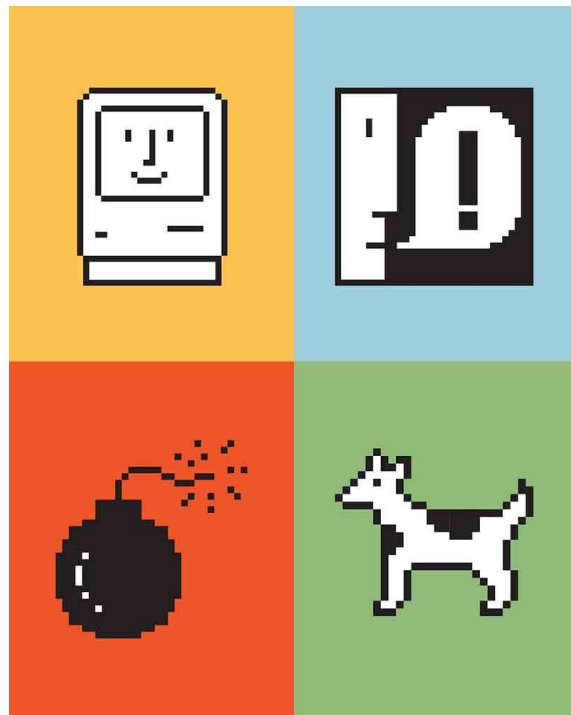


Apple Computer, Inc. (1984)

One of the key designers during this time that was most influential is Susan Kare, the “woman who gave the Macintosh a smile” (Lange, A. 2018). Born in America in 1954, graphic designer Susan Kare grew up and became the creative genius that we all know her as today. Kare studied in various art schools where she gained her creative intelligence throughout the years. It wasn't until the early nineteen eighties that Kare joined Apple Computer and became a member of the original Apple Macintosh design team. Originally, Apple hired her to solely design interface graphics and fonts. She designed the Geneva, New York, and Monaco typefaces, her most notable work being the Chicago typeface, which was the primary typeface used for their next model, the iPod. Kare thrived in this role and soon after, was promoted to the post of Creative Director. She was responsible for the typefaces, distinctive icons and all graphical elements that gave the Macintosh its revolutionary look and feel. Kare recalled “I didn't have any computer experience, but I had experience in graphic design” (Kare, S. 2000). With over thirty years of simple, whimsical designs, Kare has made graphic design more accessible, reachable and more appealing for millions of people.

The Macintosh did amazing things for designers, it opened the door to a lot of new techniques, mediums, opportunities and ideas. The design world became more efficient which was great for advertising and production purposes, people were able to communicate and share designs around the world, which was impossible beforehand. However, some disagree with its excellence. Photoshop was launched in 1990 as a graphics editing software, meaning anyone and everyone had access to the art of

manipulating images and digital design. As it became more popular and more usual to design on a Macintosh, the market became very saturated, especially with people who had no design experience at all, the development allowed anybody to begin exploring graphic design which a lot of people had negative views on.



Kare, S. (1984)

Kare was largely responsible for the visual identity of the shift designers saw during the nineteen eighties. Without Kare, Macintosh would not have had the success that it did and may have meant we would all not be using Apple products daily at this time. Susan Kare is the designer responsible for bringing that into existence. She had a huge role in forming the world of graphic design and her influence can still be felt every day with our access to technology.

The rapid advances and changes of the graphic design revolution significantly altered graphic design and introduced the world to a new digital era. The progression of visual communication from Swiss International Style to the modern technology we have today wouldn't have been possible without our most influential designers, three of which I have talked about above. After speaking about some of the many art movements that flourished throughout time, I have come to the conclusion that it was Susan Kare and the development of the Macintosh computer that served us the most as the most inspirational. Although I believe Kare is the most influential of the few, I realise that without the influences of the previous designers I have spoken about, Rand and Reid, it's most likely that Kare would not have been inspired to push the boundaries of design even more. I believe each of the design movements to be a reflection on their previous due to designers challenging the past and defining their future. Without them being pushed out of their comfort zones and starting a revolution, no new boundaries would have been challenged and design would most likely be similar to how it was over a century ago. In our current time, graphic design is ubiquitous, many people around the globe use it daily for many different things such as communication, entertainment, advertisement, and product design, our generations would not be able to live without it. After researching the graphic design revolution, I have concluded that we have a handful of people to thank for the privilege we have today, specifically, Paul Rand, Jamie Reid, and most importantly, in my opinion, Susan Kare.

The advances I have talked about in this essay have dramatically changed the art of graphic design and the development of technology has certainly helped us adapt how

we distribute our work across the world. The fundamental role of a graphic designer, visual communication, still remains the same. What does the future hold and how will graphic design evolve next?

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