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## Introduction

### **Keywords: Space, Print, Sound**

These selected keywords are based on my personal preference and have significance to me. The mysteries of space is something that has always fascinated me. As a designer, I enjoy exploring how space themes and fascination with space can be integrated into graphic design. As printmaking is something I enjoy within the graphic design context, I wanted to include 'print' as part of my research. To include a word that links to my deafness, I chose the word 'sound' to explore how graphic design can convey both sounds and silence, which hold diverse meanings across various individuals.

The main themes throughout this essay are how the keywords can be explored through artistic practices and graphic design. The main theorists will be Brian Cox for 'space', John Bigunet for 'sound', and Beatrice Ward for 'print'. The main artists looked at will be Lucien Rudaux and Chesley Bonestell for 'space', Erik Spiekermann, and Alan Kitching for 'print', Kazimir Malevich for Sound.

## Space

'Space' can mean many different things. It can refer to a natural or build physical environment, as well as the area inhabited by groups of people. Space can include personal space or planetary space (Buchanan, 2018). For many, it is "the physical universe beyond the earth's atmosphere", sometimes known as outer space (Waite, 2012). Theorist Henri Lefebvre distinguishes three types of space; perceived space, conceived space and lived space (Cited in Buchanan, 2018). These refer to the space around us but could be applied to outer space. The universe is so great and complex that even the greatest scientific minds can only perceive a relatively small part of it. We conceive ways to explore outer space and other planets by building rockets, satellites and space stations. Lived space can relate to our planet and its place in the wider universe. Fredric Jameson argued that since the end of World War II, there was a mass movement away from the countryside into the cities, making

cities more populated than the countryside (cited in Buchanan, 2018). This suggests that when there is space to do so, humans will move and expand. This could provide an additional reason for the interest in exploring Mars (NASA, 2024). Graphic designers for NASA have designed posters for an imagined future of Mars colonisation (fig 1). Within the scope of this essay, the focus will be on the environment known as 'outer space', which encompasses the planets within our solar system, the sun, moon and stars.



*Figure 1: Historic Sites of Mars by NASA (2016)*

Space exploration is a widely discussed topic in various artistic mediums such as television and print, While the opportunity to physically travel to space is limited in reality, the portrayal of space in film, media and art allows us to feel a sense of connection to the unknown. Tim Peake (2023) suggests that one of the reasons we are fascinated with space is the potential discovery of other life forms existing in the Universe. However, Brian Cox's

“Horizons” talk in 2024 he expanded on ‘Life in the Universe’ as one of his main themes. He stated that “we understand that human beings, as thinking, feeling collections of atoms, are remarkably fortunate to exist. We may be alone in our galaxy.” This contradicts Peake’s assumptions that the potential for the existence of other life forms is the reason for interest in space. NASA (2023) offer a different suggestion: “Through space exploration, we gain a new perspective to study Earth and the solar system. We advance new technologies that improve our daily lives, and we inspire a new generation of artists, thinkers, tinkerers, engineers, and scientists”.

On a personal level, it is the visual effects seen in space that inspire me to create artwork. I am currently developing a range of print experiments to depict galaxies (Fig 2). I intend to explore further techniques and processes that will allow me to effectively depict my visualisations of space within graphic design.



Figure 2: Space Poster, Own work (2024)

Artists have been fascinated by space for centuries. After viewing the moon in its earthshine state, Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) made several sketches of the moon between 1505 and 1508, showing its various shadows and shades (Fig 3). These are the earliest known drawings to show the surface features of the moon (Reaves & Pedretti, 1987).



*Figure 3: Leonardo Da Vinci's Drawing of the surface of the moon (1505-1508)*

Despite this early interest in space, astronomical art did not emerge as a movement until the nineteenth-century, with romantic and naturalistic traditions being amongst the first to create 'space art'. Lucien Rudaux (1874–1947) and Chesley Bonestell (1888–1986) used imagined visualisations of space (figs 4-5) and were the first artists to specialise exclusively in space art and astronomical themes (Princeton University Art Museum, 2024). This connects to my own interest in the mystery of space and aspects of the unknown. Art gives the freedom to create from imagination without needing to be accurate. It could be argued that

art can help people visualise space, which could encourage using their imagination to design their own galaxy.

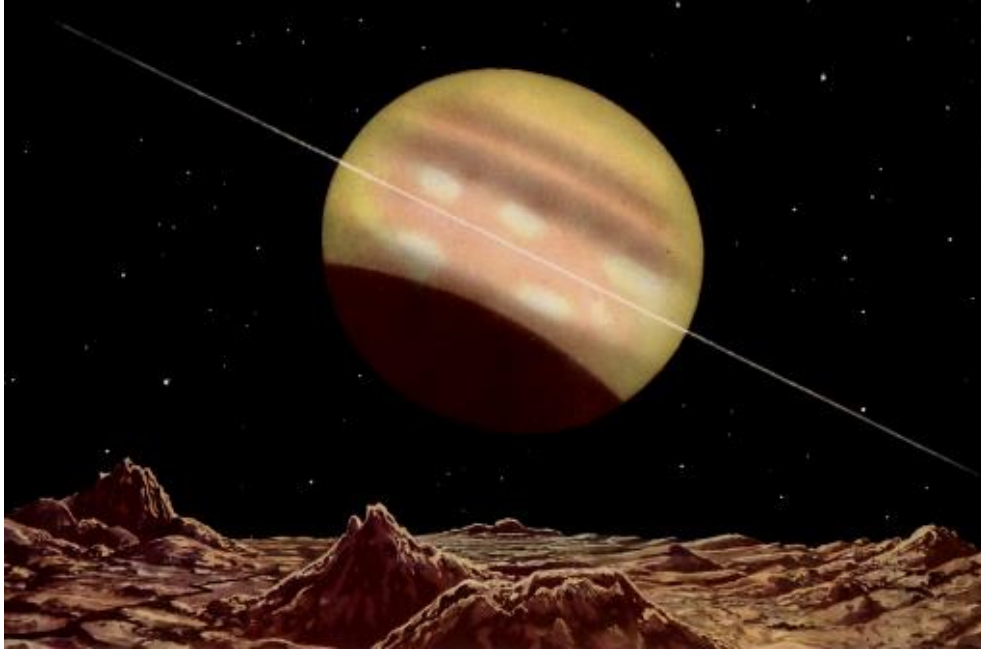


*Figure 4: Saturn from one of its moons by Lucien Rudaux*



*Figure 5: Saturn as seen from Titan, painting by Chesley Bonestell (1944)*

Interest in space art is still of interest to many artists today. Music is an art form that can depict space. Jeff Wayne's musical 'War of the Worlds' created an imagined version of our world overrun by creatures from Mars, using unusual sounds to depict an interplanetary battle as well as industrial style props. More recently, Coldplay depicted their visions of space into their music and lyrics to create their own galaxy. In *the Music of the Spheres* tour, they created their own planets, eco system and language (fig 6).

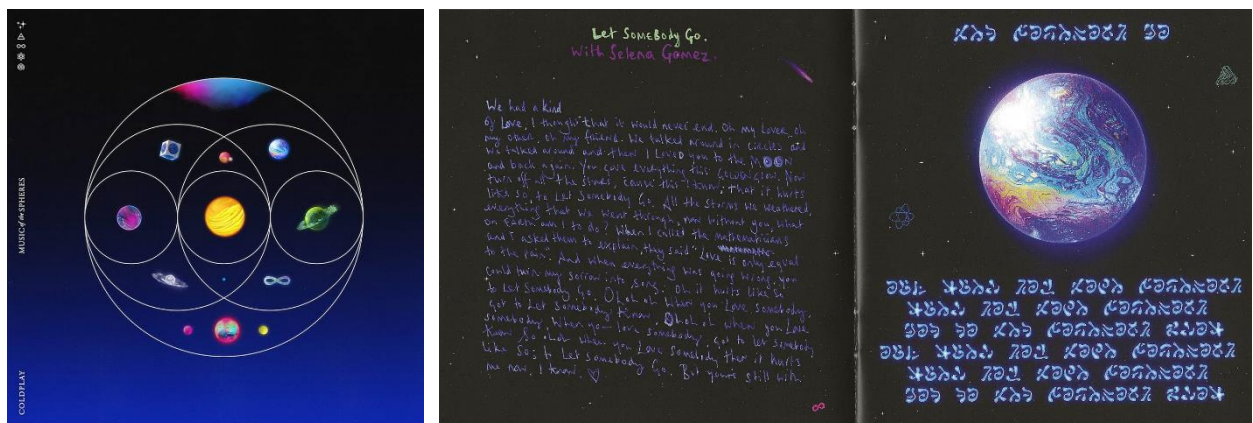


Figure 6: Album cover and booklet from Coldplay 'Music of the Spheres' album (2021)

This shows how music as an art form can depict space. The next keyword will focus on sound which will include music.

## Sound

Sound is defined as “vibrations which travel through air or water and are sensed by the ear” (Waite, 2012, p.696). This can include speech, music, and the impact of objects. Silence is the lack of sound. Graphic design is usually associated with visuals. However, I would like to explore sound within graphic design.

My interest in sound stems from my personal experience. When I was profoundly deaf, I used to dance to music via the vibrations from the speakers and feeling the beat and rhythm. I enjoyed music ever since and I love how the music depicts different meanings and emotion.

Sound and silence can be represented visually in various ways. An example of visual communication of silence is the finger to the lips. Graphic design uses universally recognised icons to indicate silence, such a red circle and a line going through a loudspeaker or a person talking (Fig 7).



Figure 7: Graphic icons to represent silence

Biguenet explains how it is difficult to signify silence in the visual arts; “attempting to distinguish the representation of silence in painting or sculpture or other visual forms from efforts by artists to address silence itself as the subject of their work” (2016 p.52). This is a complex area as silence means different things to different people. Biguenet lists several examples of silence, including silence as “a servant of power, as a lie, as a punishment, as the voice of God, as a terrorist’s final weapon, as a luxury good, as the reason for torture” (2016 inside cover). He goes on to say that in a world full of noise, silence is something we do and do not recognise, and it is something we both desire and fear.

Artists and designers have visually presented the idea of being silenced by using the image of fingers to lips or the mouth covered. Other artists have used more subtle visual representations. Biguenet (2016) suggests that Kazimir Malevich’s ‘Black Square’ (fig 8) may represent silence. Tate (2024) states that when ‘Black Square’ was exhibited for the first time “people found it a strange thing... There’s no wrong or right way to look at it”. The reason for seeing it a representative of silence could be because black is often seen as nothingness, empty or void, which is linked to the absence of sound.

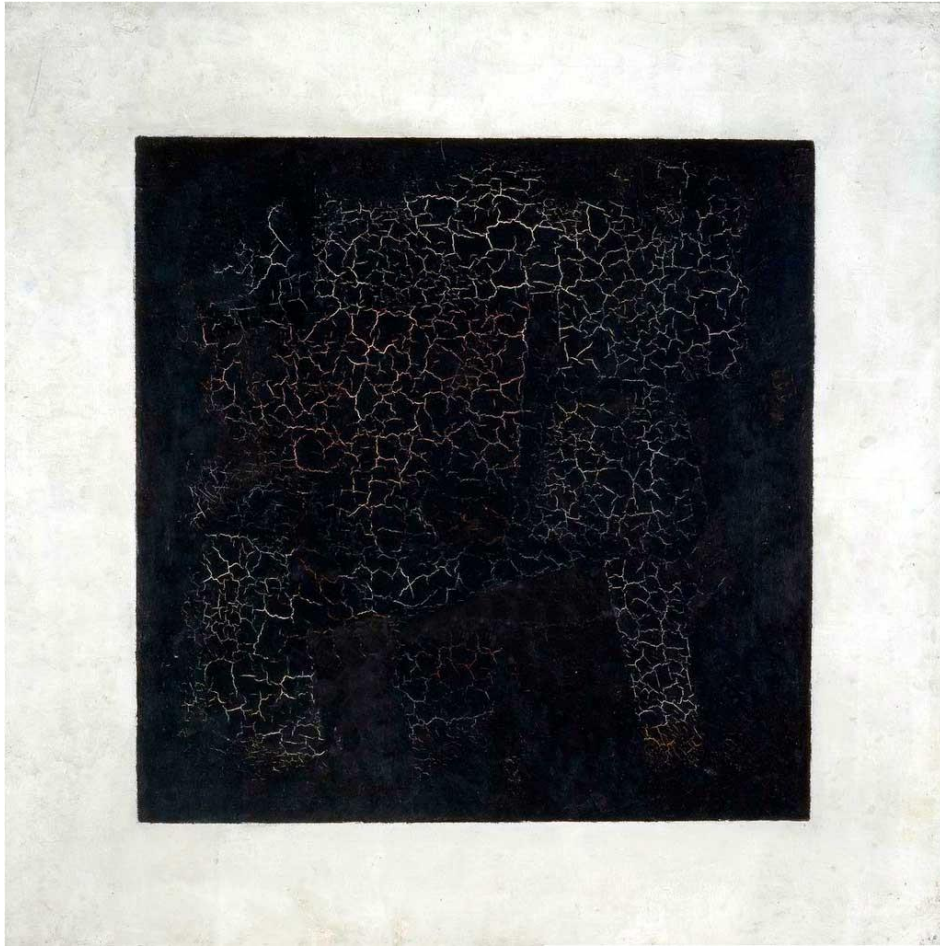


*Figure 8: Black Square Kazimir Malevich (1913)*

Jack Smith created an abstract piece called 'Sounds and Silences (to the Left of Red)' in 1975 (fig 9). The piece starts with a blank, beige space which could represent silence, and moves onto blocks of different colours in rows. These colours could represent different sources of sound or be the artist's interpretation of colours that represent certain sounds. Similarly, Roland Pichet's abstract painting 'Silence of Jonille' in 1971 uses complementary colours that give it a peaceful feel, with colours and shapes that are reminiscent of a calm and quiet beach.

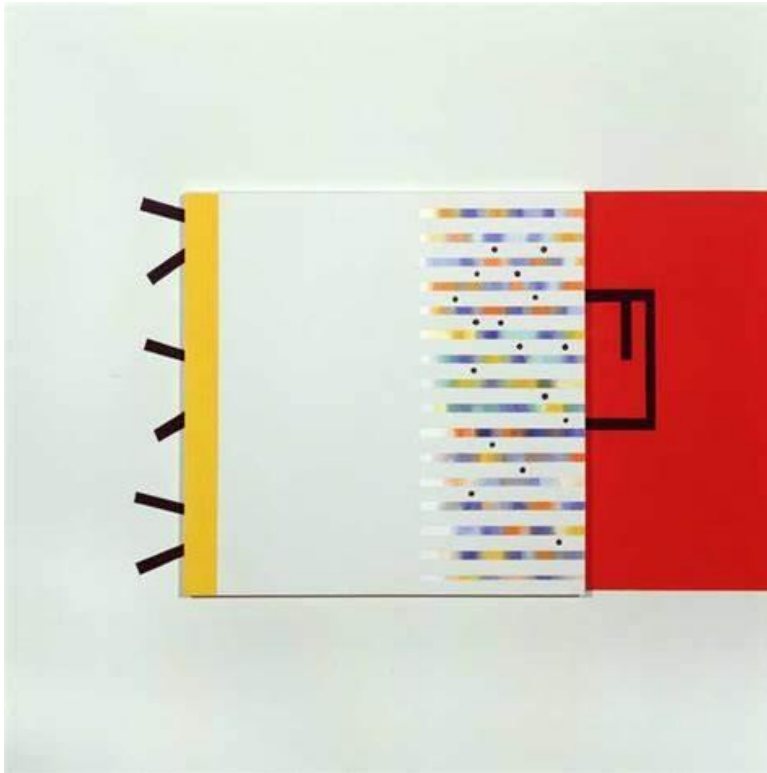


*Figure 9: Sounds and Silences (to the Left of Red) by Jack Smith (1975)*

Another aspect of visualising sound is in music album cover design. The design for albums needs to represent the sound of the musical genre it belongs to. For example, album art that uses dark moody colours, and sometimes chaotic in design is often used for emo punk music or heavy metal to signify the genre (fig 10). By examining how design can communicate musical genre in album art, we can find certain themes that connect designs to certain musical sounds.



*Figure 10: Album cover from Iron Maiden 'The Number of the Beast' (1982)*

Prior to album art in the 1930s, record album sleeves contained only an embossed title. By the 1950s, album art designers began to incorporate photography and experiment with bold typography. From the 1960s, musicians commissioned artists, designers and art students to create unique album covers that would appeal to followers of their music genre. Logos and mascots were also designed for bands from 1970s, which helped to establish a brand for bands (Chilton, 2024). An example of this is The Rolling Stones tongue and lips logo (fig 11) which can be seen on album covers and merchandise.



*Figure 11: Logo for Rolling Stones est. 1962*

Album cover design for different genres of music shows how design can communicate what music sounds like. Album art such as Coldplay's *Parachutes* is not initially obvious as to the sound of the music, but the design creates a mood associated with the music. The design speaks to a mature market, and hints of serious music (fig 12).



*Figure 12: Album cover for Coldplay's Parachutes (2000)*

Album art is a prominent area for graphic designers that connects to sound. The next keyword looks at another area heavily associated with graphic design, which is print.

## Print

Print is an interesting topic for graphic designers who enjoy traditional, hands-on processes. Compared to digital work, traditional print is a different style of art to modern typography. Being a physical artform, it is also tactile and has a unique feel.

Letterpress printing refers to “printing from a hard raised image under pressure, using viscous ink” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2024). The first printing press was created by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1430s (Man, 2010). This allowed images and text to be mass printed onto pages of books, news sheets and posters. This began a new way of printing, and saw the design of fonts. The standard typeface for printing in its early days mimicked the style of handwriting at the time, but this took up a lot of space on the page. To solve this, Nicolas Jenson designed simple letterforms in 1470 that would allow more text to fit on the page (Osterer & Stamm, 2021).

Certain typefaces that are still seen today can be traced back to the days of hot metal typesetting for letter pressing, such as Roman typefaces designed by Jenson. Due to the cost of type, printers only usually had access to one typeface, and this had to be used for all their printed pieces, such as adverts, invitations, and stationary. Fine print in letter pressing would fade quickly, so most printers used ‘jobbing fonts’, which were “strong enough to withstand the mechanical pressure and loud enough to be noticed” (Spikerman & Ginger, 2003 p.89). Each printer had their own version of a jobbing font, but they all had blunt corners, low contrast and soft outlines. This meant that wear and tear of the letter would not be noticed as much as letters using sharp edges, so they lasted longer.

Theorist Beatrice Warde is a scholar of typography and wrote the famous manifesto *This is a Printing office* in 1932. The words of her manifesto show the ethos of printing, as she calls the printing office a ‘refuge of all the arts’ and mentions how ‘from this place words may fly

abroad'. The manifesto ends with the words "Friend you stand on the sacred ground: This is a Printing-office" (Warde cited Born, 1984). In one of her articles, she discusses how new typefaces go in and out of fashion, but 'old typefaces' remain in the printers' workshop, giving them a choice between old and modern. New typefaces were designed in the twentieth century to fit the paper surfaces and printing processes of the time. These new designs and processes resulting in printing houses offering a variety of size of typeface, as well as many different designs, unlike the one design in the early days of printing (Warde, 1935).

With the digital revolution which was prominent in the 1980s, many graphic designers moved away from traditional hand techniques and shifted into a digital approach. However, there are still many designers that use traditional techniques and many others that blend traditional approaches with digital technology. Erik Spikermann is a contemporary example of this. His studio space has many printing press such as adana, rolling and polymer which uses many different blocks in various sizes. When talking about his methods, Spikermann explains that "we explore how letterpress can be redefined in the 21st century through research, printing, collecting, publishing and making things" (Erik Spikermann Foundation, 2024). The techniques used in his studio include working with hot metal and wood-type. They use other traditional analogue pieces such as different kinds of proof and platen presses. These are combined with digital technology for the final outcome. Some of the modern technology used in the studio included machines such as a Risograph printer Ludlow caster, and a Glowforge laser. Spikermann had his own laser built to make polymer metal-backed plates which are printed onto a 1954 Heidelberg Cylinder (Erik Spikermann Foundation, 2024).





Figure 14: Erik Spikermann's presses in studio P98A, own photo (2024)

A contemporary graphic designer who specialises in traditional form of print and graphic design is Alan Kitching. He uses a rolling machine to press paper, and uses wood and metal letterforms to create colourful typographic designs. Kitching's designs and methods are an “attempt to assess and re-state the standards postulated in the traditions of the craft and the technology of printing and thus the implications they may hold for tomorrow” (Kitching cited in North House Gallery, 2024). His return to traditional printing methods is a reaction to the growth of computerised graphic design. Kitching noted that when he first furnished his print studio, he had an impulse to ‘go and print’ and acknowledged that this was what he always wanted to do. He did not know what he wanted to print, but he enjoyed the method of traditional print (Kitching cited in Walters, p.101).



*Figure 15: Design is Hope by Alan Kitching (2023)*

There are benefits for digital and traditional as well as blending the two approaches. The method chosen is often decided by what the design is for. When going for a modern design, digital technology is often used, but when looking for something more original or artistic, many designers use traditional methods or a blend of the two.

## Conclusion

Overall, this research has deepened my understanding of the keywords. There are two main interesting pathways for future research. One is to take a deeper look at the history of typography and the importance of letters, including the development of the written language from hieroglyphs to modern letters. The other is to look at disability in art, including artists who create art differently due to their disability.

## Question

Based on the research above, I would like to focus my research more on art and disability as this can cover many aspects of design and art, whereas typography focuses on print. My proposed question is:

How do disabled artists and designers adapt different artistic methods to create their art and show their identity as a disabled artist?

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