

Midterm Study Guide: Communication Design II

Greenberg

Briefly: Kitsch and Art

“... the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it.”

“Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself” ...in other words it is its own point of reference without representing anything outside of itself.

“Realistic, naturalistic art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art; Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting -- the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment -- were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Under Modernism these same limitations came to be regarded as positive factors, and were acknowledged openly. Manet's became the first Modernist pictures by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the flat surfaces on which they were painted. The Impressionists, in Manet's wake, abjured underpainting and glazes, to leave the eye under no doubt as to the fact that the colors they used were made of paint that came from tubes or pots. Cézanne sacrificed verisimilitude, or correctness, in order to fit his drawing and design more explicitly to the rectangular shape of the canvas.”

kitsch is formulaic

Plato

Plato distrusted Art in all its forms: visual, musical and literary. He especially distrusted the artist who created them due to what he felt were their natural intellectual limitations. He felt artists were no more than hired hands and lacked the cognitive ability for deep intellectual pursuits which was required to define truth and beauty. That pursuit was best left up to Kings and Philosophers to define God's intent and for the rest of the masses to follow obediently.

According to Plato, artists would always be three steps removed from perfection no matter how hard or how exact their representations might be. The first being the “form” which originated from God and was placed within the mind of the enlightened philosopher. The second step away from the original form was an imitation created by the craftsman: the architect, the carpenter, the engineer.

These were craftsman who created out of a need or utility. They would make a practical object, working from the conceptual “form” of the object that only existed in any true sense in the mind. An “artist's” representation of the chair created by the craftsman based on observing the visual construction of the original form. The artist's work thereby exists three steps removed from the original concept and therefore is the least likely to be representative of the Form. It is a copy of a copy.

He outlined his concept in his Allegory of the Cave. (see the movie “The Matrix.” It's a good example of this.....)

Imagine yourself chained to a spot inside a cave with your face pointed toward a blank wall in front of you. You are unable to look at anything behind you, but your back is facing a huge doorway where light spills in from the alternate universe outside which you are unable to turn around to see. What you can see are shadows which are cast on the wall in front of you from objects moving past the door in that “outdoor” universe. Being a thinking human you want to know what these shadows represent so you begin a process of defining them by imitating what you believe they represent.

You have never directly seen any of the objects outside, but you try to deduce from your direct observance and discussions with others locked in beside you what the shadows might be. This thought problem is how Plato

represents human expression. You can never know the truth. You only know the shadow even in the best case scenario.

David Hume

To Hume art was an object of taste. But it was not a broad approach which put everyone's opinion on an equal footing. He had particularly rigorous and uncompromising standards about whose opinion should be considered and whose shouldn't.

The way in which this expert analysis could be acceptable was based on judgement and not sentiment. In cases of sentiment, all opinions were equal because sentiment has nothing to reference to but itself..... but true judgment on the other hand was based on understanding founded on experience and absent of bias. Bias being a lack of objective detachment...

"...strong sense united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison and cleared of all prejudice" were the qualities necessary to ascertain what could be considered art."

Hume went on to say that as humans we are more disposed to like the things found in our own age and our own country that can be bounded within our own set of customs, but the delicate sensitivity of the learned critic would be able to make allowances for these "peculiarities" and would still be able to appreciate those objects found outside their own experience.

Immanuel Kant

Kant maintained that our experience of beauty is an experience of freedom much like Hegel. He argued, however, that beauty is not itself an objective property of things. When we judge that a natural object or a work of art is beautiful, on Kant's view, we are indeed making a judgment about an object, but we are asserting that the object has a certain effect on us (and that it should have the same effect on all who view it). The effect produced by the "beautiful" object is to set our understanding and imagination in "free play" with one another, and it is the pleasure generated by this free play that leads us to judge the object to be beautiful (Kant, 98, 102-3).

Emotional attachment and response without any reason appeared to be one of Kant's criteria. The pleasurable feeling one receives without regard to the rigors of Hume's learned practice would place it outside the realm of rational and comparative study in Kant's view.

Art objects both reveal and conceal their nature as artifacts and produce in us an "aesthetic response." What the heck does that mean, you might ask???

Concealing and revealing simultaneously bears further investigation. Art must be free of arbitrary rules, but "must be clothed with the aspect of nature" without looking belabored in its appearance. Revealed and concealed essentially means it must look as if it were created effortlessly, as if the creation itself were spontaneous as in nature, but revealed in beauty as we marvel in its form.

He goes on to say "Fine Art must necessarily be regarded as arts of genius."

Conceding that the arts are filled with process and rules, he claims that when it reaches the point of Fine Art process becomes secondary and hidden to the viewer, and only the result of their efforts are perceived. This task requires genius.

Genius being:

- 1) a talent that hides the rule and process (genius can only be an artistic venture and not scientific because science has known rules.)
- 2) must serve as a model for others to imitate without being derivative itself
- 3) Be original in method and form where it represents a concept in its portrayal
- 4) Pleasurable to view without regard to content (conceding that objects which are ugly, mass murder, disease, disaster, war, rape, etc. can be portrayed beautifully)

Requisites for fine art are: imagination, understanding, soul and taste.

High standards indeed..... but Kant goes on to quantify how one can assess or critique those qualities in art by saying that ***refined judgment*** is essential in its assessment. This requires orderliness, and clarity. The power of judgement is the quality that is consonant with understanding.

In Kant's "Categorical Imperative," he claims, among other things, that the worth, morality and beauty of an object is determined not by its outward appearance but by intent and practice...which follows:

1. Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it would become a universal law. (Does an artwork have a universal theme?)
2. Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end. (the intent and the result must have a positive outcome.)

Principles of Neue Typographie

e) The principles of the new typography:

"Both nature and technology tells us that 'form' is not independent, but grows out of function (purpose), out of the materials used (organic or technical), and out of how they are used. This is how the marvellous forms of nature and the equally marvellous forms of technology originated." (65)

"It cannot and must not be our wish today to ape the typography of previous centuries, itself conditioned by its own time. Our age, with its very different aims, its often different ways and means and highly developed techniques, must dictate new and different visual forms." (ibid.)

"If we want to 'prove ourselves worthy' of the clearly significant achievements of the past, we must set our own achievements beside them born out of our own time. They can only become 'classic' if they are unhistoric." (ibid.)

"The essence of the New Typography is clarity." (66)

"The New Typography is distinguished from the old by the fact that its first objective is to develop its visible form out of the functions of the text." (66/67)

"Every part of a text relates to every other part by a definite, logical relationship of emphasis and value, pre-determined by content. It is up to the typographer to express this relationship clearly and visibly, through type sizes and weight, arrangement of lines, use of colour, photography, etc." (67)

"Asymmetry is the rhythmic expression of functional design." (68)

"Above all, a fresh and original intellectual approach is needed, avoiding standard solutions. If we think clearly and approach each task with a fresh and determined mind, a good solution will usually result." (69)

"The New Typograhny so designs text matter that the eye is led from one word and one group of words to the next. So a logical organization of the text is needed, through the use of different type-sizes, weights, placing in relation to space, colour, etc." (70)

"The New Typography uses the effectiveness of the former 'background' quite deliberately, and considers the blank white spaces on the paper as formal elements just as much as the areas of the black type." (72)

"Among all the types that are available, the so-called 'Grotesque' (sanserif) or 'block letter' ('skeleton letters' would be a better name) is the only one in spiritual accordance with our time." (73)

“The emphatically national, exclusivist character of fraktur –but also of the equivalent national scripts of other peoples, for example of the Russians or the Chinese– contradicts present-day transnational bonds between people and forces their inevitable elimination. To keep these types is retrograde. Roman type is the international typeface of the future.” (74/75)

“All printed matter of whatever kind that is created today must bear the hallmark of our age, and should not imitate printed matter of the past.” (77)

“Like everyone else, we too must look for a typeface expressive our own age. Our age is characterized by an all-out search for clarity and truth, for purity of appearance.” (78)

The New Typography demands economy in type design.” (80)

“A completely one-type system, using lower case only, would be of great advantage to the national economy: it would entail savings and simplifications in many areas; and would also result in great savings of spiritual and intellectual energy at present wasted [...]” (ibid.)

f) Photography and typography:

“There are two forms in which photography can become are: photomontage and photogram.” (88)

“By typo-photo we mean any synthesis between typography and photography.” (92)

g) New typography and standardization:

“The New Typography, in its concern to satisfy the needs of our own period and to make sure that every single piece of printing is in harmony with the present, has always taken the greatest interest in every move towards standardization. The need for standardization, in whatever area, derives from the problems of today, which it aims to solve.” (96)

Know and be able to identify:

The International School of Design
Neue Typographie
Constructivism
Sachplakat
German Expressionism
Art Nouveau
Art Deco
Futurism
De Stijl
Vernacular design
horror vacui
WPA Posters
Dada

What were they famous for (logos, typefaces, school) and what period did they work in?

Peter Behrens
Alexander Rodchenko
Guillaume Apollinaire
F. T. Marinetti