Expressive Typography: The Main Types, Figures And Categories

Human beings are in a continuous communication and interaction with other human's beings to meet their daily needs. In the actual communication process, they use speech to make their ideas reach large audiences and writing to consistently transmit them into future generations. In this context, making the text readable is the primary function of typography that is one of the most effective and indispensable components of visual communication. In typographic design, it is a priority to transmit a message into a receiver in an accurate, quick and effective way using such elements as font, format, color, and blank. 'Having more universal characteristics than a good deal of art branches, typography has a function to exchange information with a reader in line with a specific purpose' (Becer, 1999, p. 185). As a communication tool, typology should be able to make viewers feel delighted and affected along with reading, its basic function. Only then typography separating from writing would be able to conduct its duty not only in reading function but also in being a visual communication channel formally viewed. A typographic message read is either verbally stated or visually imagined.

Experimental & Expressive Typography

In scientific terms, the word of experiment defines a series of actions performed to test an idea, to reject or accept a hypothesis under controlled circumstances. As regards with graphic design and typography field, experiment is used for a phrase of every non-traditional or new trial to challenge classic classifications and surprise expectations (Bilak, 2005). According to this, the definition of experimental typography is 'the structuralized visual games catching reader's attention into visual motion of the page and whose words offering indefinite possibilities to create meaning and make rearrangement' in Alice Twemlow's (2008) book named 'What is Graphic Design for?'.

Kurt Schwitters' words 'do it in a way no one has ever done it before' was fundamental of new approach of typography in his time ninety years ago and in his works put forward his thought (Bilak, 2005). In this way, astonishing compositions in typographic arrangement and different solutions to enhance design idea have always led designers to new quests. Experimental typography is of the outcomes of searching alternative for arrangement styles learnt by use of collage and photosetting before and by facilities provided by computers. Stunning results of experimental typographic arrangements were obtained in many graphic design products ranging from institutional identities to poster designs, from press releases to magazine page designs. Contemporarily, typographic illustrations formed by use of small or capital letters, illustrative sizing compositions of letters, figurative typographic designs, kinetic typography and organic typography can be categorized under experimental typography.

New Yorker graphic designers produced the first effective examples of experimental typographic approach with their interest in figurative typography. This inclination appeared in various ways and sometimes transformed letters into objective forms or converted the objects into letter shapes.

Seymour Chwast's brochure cover design, IMPACT, is one of the typical examples of figurative typography that a word is presented with a new typographic aesthetics abiding by its meaning. In such arrangements, typography was used in the way of scratching, tearing, bending and even vibrating for an expression of concept or to attract astonishment (Bektas, 1992). Designs are made today with changes in the letter forms to intensify the meaning of the word based on this piece in a large number of typographic layouts.

Herb Lubalin, another important character in the same era, adopted an expressionist approach to typography, neglecting the standardized rules of readability and the classic proportions of letters. Lubalin examined the alphabetical characters in two respects, such as the components of visual form and message transmission. Imaging with words and letters began to replace since he fell apart the tradition of using writing and imaging separately, and then he made use of design to lay a concept or a message on the visual form. The sector has gained dynamism along with his innovative compositions in magazine page designs. He has advocated the necessity of deciding font choices by the content of word and designing by its visual form. Lubalin transformed words into ideographic typograms known as a signal respecting a word, idea or concept as in his pieces of work such as 'Families' and 'Mother & Child' using his clever and powerful skill of message transmission by working his magic in typography. Lubalin stated that it is necessary to compromise on readability sometimes so as to draw attention, and his experimental approach, extraordinary sensitivity to details and sensibility of words inspired many colleagues of his to create innovations' (Meggs,1998).

The most effective examples of experimental typography were in the limelight with the figures such as Neville Brody, David Carson, etc., in the 1980s and 1990s. Neville Brody performed impressive works in publishing design of experimental typography with the album cover designs before and the pieces that he worked for Face Magazine in which he undertook art editing and designing afterwards. Since his font characters were constantly imitated, free-hand typographic layouts have increasingly collapsed the visually of clean page texts. David Carson resisted to the grid system, the traditional and conservative order, the readability rules, and the visual hierarchy in his own page designs. Readers were forced to decode the cipher with the layouts, fractures and forms of all sizes used in the designs that he created. 'The font characters chosen by Carson for the texts are generally inconsistent with the readability criteria and pushing the writing out of its basic function using overlapping type blocks and condensed line spacing. Carson created his own readability rules by embedding the texts into ovals, trapezoids, and various shapes and gouging white big letters out of their interior parts' (Kelesoglu, 2008, s. 30).

At present, names such as Stefan Sagmeister, Carin Goldberg, Reza Abedini, Veronika Licakova, Niklaus Troxler, Peter Bilak, Christopher Lee Sauve, Acapulco Warsaw, Atelier, Martino & Jana, Sabri Akin, Max Kuwertz, Sarp Sozdinler and Erman Yilmaz (Figure 1), who have been successful in the field of expressive typography, are just a few of the many successful designers.

Organic typography, which is often preferred in today's typographic designs, is an experimental typographic approach in which a significant portion of the characters are created by hand-crafted letters, whose purpose is to inspire various emotions in the audience. One of these examples is the experimental graffiti project of Anna Garforth with the title of 'Mossenger' and she rendered a poem of the poet Elly Stevens with her layout on the wall using the letters formed by mosses. The designer explains with this project to try to highlight how city life

ruptured man from nature and people went far from biosphere in which we live by dominating the nature (Okur, 2009). Another experimental typographic example is an organic typography work with the title of ‘Melting Words’ on which the alphabet used is produced using manual techniques. In the work, the photograph artist, Kotama Bouabane, created the cliché sentences regarding separation such as ‘it’s over’, ‘just let it go’ using icy letters and completed with a photographic embedding for which he used some visual details from the life as background.

Different Categories of Typography

Design scholars have identified a number of typographical categories, such as ‘type as image’, ‘type as form’, ‘type as experiment’ and ‘type in motion’. Fawcett-Tang (2007) categorized typography according to its various functions and forms, distinguishing between ‘type as image’, ‘type in motion’ and ‘experimental’ typography. Scholars addressing the category of ‘type as form’ have focused on the relationship between typographic form and function. Some typographic designers have emphasized the roles of typeface design and, relatedly, font in facilitating the reading process, which is the basic function of typography (Samara, 2004; Fawcett-Tang, 2007). Due to the large quantities of information conveyed nowadays, however, the functionalist typography that falls into the ‘type as form’ category is no longer an effective way of attracting viewers’ attention. Other designers have explored the role of decorative or stylish typography in commercial design, combining the graphic forms of everyday objects with basic typographic forms. This kind of typography is frequently described as ‘type as image’ (Fawcett-Tang, 2007), and is easily recognizable, often taking the form of a picture (see, for example, Figs. 1 and 2). According to Samara (2004), communication of this kind does not arise from typesetting, but is the result of transforming words into images and integrating them with the overall visual experience of a typographic work. The ongoing development of digital technology has led to the evolution of the ‘type as image’ and ‘type as experiment’ categories, as designers explore new forms and elements of typographic design.

Typography in the ‘experimental’ category diverges from the traditional patterns of typographic design, challenging the limits of recognition and legibility. For example, individual letters may appear as purely abstract forms, and textual characters may be merged with the shapes of familiar objects. However, as most experimental typographic designs use unexpected styles, materials and forms, designers must be especially careful to ensure that viewers understand the intended messages.

In recent years, the growth of electronic media has encouraged the rise of another category of typography: ‘type in motion’. Messages conveyed using dynamic typography may be two- or three-dimensional, and tend to operate as multimedia applications. Information is conveyed temporally, often using sound and animation techniques.

Emotion in type/typography’ elicits an emotional response from users. Most typographic-design experts agree that the majority of fonts have the potential to elicit emotional responses from users. However, this claim is not comprehensive enough to constitute a criterion for ‘emotion in type/typography’. As typography is a tool for communication, it is designed for mass use; that is, not only by professionals or experts in the field of typographic design. Most fonts and typefaces have a certain level of emotional potency. ‘Emotion in type/typography’ should thus be easily recognizable to laymen (those who are not practicing designers and have never received training in typographic design). Laymen should recognize the emotional concern(s) of

a typographic design as soon they see it. This category of typography should thus not include nuanced typographic changes that can only be discerned by professionals. The category ‘emotion in type/typography’ should be defined by its ability to elicit emotion from all users (including laymen), allowing them to identify the emotional concerns of the design easily and fully on both a visual and a physical level.

‘Emotion in type/typography’ is not defined by the visual attributes of the design outcome, such as ‘outcome as form’, ‘outcome as image’ or ‘outcome as color’. Rather, it is an alternative means of classifying typography, referring to typographic designs that are influenced by the emotions of their designers. Designers’ emotional responses influence their decision making during the design process, determining their selection and arrangement of forms, graphics and colors, for example. Therefore, each design outcome embodies certain facets of its designer’s emotions. As the emotional concerns of a design usually arise from its style, function, form and usability, these characteristics have the capacity to elicit an emotional response from its users/consumers. Therefore, typographic designs in the category of ‘emotion in type/typography’ can be identified by the emotional interactions among and between the (human) designers and users. This distinguishes the category from others such as ‘type as image’ and ‘type as form’, which classify typography according to the form or function of its design outcome. Therefore, static and virtual forms of typographic design, among others, can be included within the category of ‘emotion in type/typography’.

Typographic Signs and Syntax

Typographic syntax is the connecting of visual typographic signs to form words and sentences. Typography is a language of visible signs that are capable of educating, persuading, informing, and entertaining. When typographic signs are created with an informed eye and mind, they can help achieve clarity, expression, and aesthetic beauty.

All objects in the environment can potentially function as signs, representing any number of concepts for example a smog-filled city can signify pollution, and confetti can imply celebration each functioning as a sign relating a specific concept. A form is a sign, only when it carries a message. For example, a red dot can represent any number of things: balloon, ball or Japanese flag. However, when a small curved line is added close to the top of the red dot, the red dot form automatic becomes a cherry, as our mind is cued to associate to familiar forms. Particular syntactic qualities associated with typographic signs determine a specific meaning.

Typographic messages pervade our culture to the degree that they are often taken for granted or not noticed at all, but those that are etched into the mind and memory are characterized by relationship between content and form as a signal respecting a word, idea or concept.

Conclusion

Typography is the designed form where the transfer of ideas and information with the help of signs is done. Typography invites to read the text, reveals the meaning of the text, links the text to other visual elements and creates appropriate reading conditions. In addition to communicating information and messages through an understandable form language, it also carries the claim of being an element expressed as a style, personality, and visual language. In this sense, it is important to arrange the typographical characters, such as font, form, color,

space in the media, in an effective way of conveying the message.

Sources

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