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Graphic Design and Motion Graphics

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Introduction

These are the first reflections on a recent experiment in teaching Editorial Graphic Design and Motion Design in an interdisciplinary work focusing on the same target: typography. It begins with training graphic design skills, with an emphasis on the expressive potential of textual elements. Then, the same subject is re-compiled for display on video. When one takes into account the specifics of each media, the expectations converge in terms of provoking a broader view of typography as a design element. This is a work in progress that, although at the beginning stage, opens up new ground in Communication Design Education.

Graphics Trial: Design principles and processes.

An exercise is proposed in which the students produce a Graphic trial, planned as an Editorial Graphic Product – a book, which starts with interpreting a given theme that all the students are familiar with. The textual content, which can be freely chosen, is interpreted with typography only and designed to convey spatial and graphic perceptions like *scale, tone, texture, transparency, line-surface, form-counter form, static-dynamics*. This series of typographic compositions is made with the maximum degree of contrast: black printing on white surface. Then, another significance generator is introduced: chromatics, which is perceived and experimented with on a finished composition. Two studies are thus made in color. The series of studies is completed by designing a typographic illustration, based on a given image that has already been printed and is linked to the proposed theme.

The editorial organization and the sequential rhythm follow the conceptual definitions of each project, as well as the cover design, front page and colophon. The whole design process considers the book as being an integral object, encouraging readers to approach it and to handle it like an important sensorial, or even sensual, feature of printed medium, as experienced by Munari in his “Unreadable Book” (Munari, 1981, p. 220-227), where the emphasis is on the visual and tactile possibilities of the means of production: *supports*, surface qualities, cuts, etc.



The main aim is to sharpen the perception of the potential of typography in Visual Communication, beyond the verbal and pictorial contents it conveys. When seen as a graphic registry, the written language takes form both visually and spatially. As Wolfgang Weingart says, it is important to stress that typography, here, has a broader meaning which is beyond what “*can be set and printed*” (Weingart, 1999, p.222). It is not restrained to principles of universality, rationality, elegance, economy, precision and order. Handwriting is also treated as typography in which there is the presence of strokes when forming the seemingly illegible characters or solutions, as long as they are consciously planned.

At the beginning of the design process a space is opened up to discuss visual manifestations that emphasize, as they proceed, the typographical experimentation and expression, which are considered as ideas, attitudes, contexts and particularities. For instance, the recognized vigor of the modernist vanguards (Spencer, 1969), the “verbivocovisual” of the concrete poets (Bandeira & Barros, 2002), the “graphic improvisations” of Aloisio Magalhães at the ‘Grafico Amador’ workshops (Leite, 2003), the graphic field used as a stage for performing the typographic theatrical pieces of Robert Massin (“Robert Massin, action on the page”, 2003), all contribute. All of them are historic references that stimulate research on contemporary production, as well as help to put it in its proper context. One can see that, under strict principles and greatly diminished emphasis, experimentation and expression are not missing, even among authors who aim towards clarity and objectivity, and they are always linked to the balance between form and function.ⁱⁱ

Thus, the students have the autonomy to decide on their own routes and to define the choice criteria in order to take their experiments in a certain direction. Having selected and comprehended the text, defined the conception and made a first general plan, it is expected that they be involved in a permanent quest, constantly entwining the relationships between form and character that characterize the interactions between typographical elements with the page, the construction of meanings and the production techniques.

São Paulo was one of the general themes covered. The individual choices should be texts that reflect aspects of the students’ personal life, so that the city may be typographically depicted from different viewpoints. Three different solutions are presented in figures 1, 2 and 3.



Fig. 1. In the work *Novelinha de Metro* – Camila Christini Tomás – the graphic trial is made upon variations on the Helvetica typeface, which is a strong visual reference that interferes in the dialogue between two passengers.

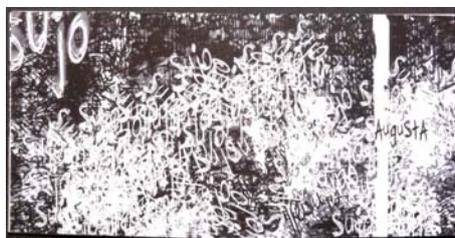


Fig. 2. *Augusta* – Artur Tillieri – expresses urban decay, the excess of information and the profusion and contrast of forms found on a typical metropolitan street. The video graphic work *Sujo* was made after the first of those compositions.

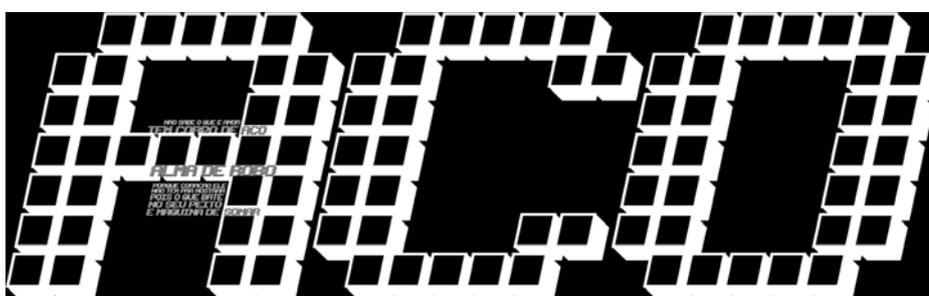


Fig. 3. *Alma de Robô* – César de Souza – was made after a broader graphic composition shown through a series of pans and zooms.

The interchange between graphic trials and video graphics

Producing a still, immobile image that is generated from the expressive possibilities of typography presents the challenge of condensing the meanings of what it intends to communicate but, on the other hand, helps to bring about the composition. Researchers on the art creation process (Wollheim, 2002, Salles 1998) understand that the artist is an agent, spectator and witness to the work of art being formed through the interchange between feeling, thought and action. Similarly, the designer is also an agent and a spectator of his own creative process. Thus, he has in his favor whatever time it takes to bring the image to fruition; he is able to investigate each detail, deviate from the path, weave in other considerations, experiment with new configurations, make simultaneous comparisons between the images and wait for the meanings to emerge out of the interchange between the spectator and the image being configured.

When producing a moving image, the challenge is shifted. It is no longer necessary to condense the meanings into a single image.

The fixed image, in itself, brings with it elements that gain mobility in audiovisual language, which helps in the task of building meanings but makes it more complicated to maintain, throughout the moving process, all the composing relationships, including the audio one which is also part of this language. Arnheim (1994) defines movement as an organized sequence in which events follow one another in such a way as to create a meaningful order, in which each detail that is added not only fulfills the whole but also modifies all that has been previously shown.



In audiovisual language, a series of elements compete with each other and join together to create meanings and, for each choice, an expressive result is shown. The “framing” made possible by a fixed image, which is the starting point for developing the work, can gain mobility by being moved from a “close-up” to a “wide frame” which spreads out the spectator’s view, and vice versa. It can also acquire other configurations by adding or subtracting elements, by shifting objects around. “Camera movement” is another important element in audiovisual language. When we simulate panoramics, travelings, dollyings or zoomings, we are creating emphasis by directing the eye of the spectator, altering the scale of the elements, imprinting spatial movement and attributing points of view to the spectators’ perceptions.

It is important for us to make a distinction between cinematographic images and video graphics. The former two depend on a certain contiguity with the object it represents. A photograph, or a video take of an empty chair, depends on the object being there as it maintains a link with its referent object (Barthes, 1984; Benjamin, 1985; Dubois, 1999). In video graphic pieces, the objects being depicted are lines, textures and colors. In fact, there are no objects represented; there is the object itself, the types that take on shapes, densities, colors and movement, which are their own, even though they may simulate shapes of objects. In this way, we find ourselves immersed in an important universe of design – the typography and video graphics.

In order to carry out the work proposed, one out of the 11 typographical compositions done for the graphic trial needs to be chosen.

First, we consider the graphic and expressive qualities of the image, the eloquence and coherence of the text and image composition, its originality and identity. The second criteria is the result of a limit set by current technology. The definitions of video graphic images are still made up of lines and dots or, in the case of digital imaging, in pixels, which generate a more textured image, rendering subtleties of color, tone and scale of the printed image impossible. Therefore, it becomes necessary to ensure that the image is suited to the video graphic support, which requires that the elements of the composition show enough graphic to guarantee a clear image, since one runs the risk of it becoming illegible or ‘pixelized’ when using tiny elements or very fine lines

After having made these initial considerations, the potential for transforming the image through movement and the potential for building meanings are analyzed. These transformations can present emphasis both in space and time (Arnheim, 1994). The work entitled ‘*Sujo*’ (fig.8), for example, shows transformations that are developed mainly in terms of time and are presented in space in a subtle and relatively stable manner. In contrast with this example, we have the work ‘*Alma de Robo*’ (fig.6) in which the elements slide at speed from left to right, showing a flagrant shifting in space. This is also seen in the work, ‘*Estacas*’ (fig 4), in which the text is moved from the foreground to the background, which generates huge alterations in the sequence of images and in a series of superimpositions that gyrate creating ‘*moirés*’. The meaning can then be contained in the fixed image or can present any new contents through the movement.

There are works that already present, in themselves, suggestions of movement, and this suggestion may or may not be appropriate. Not making use of this suggestion of movement provided by the image may be either a



productive challenge or result in nonsense. However, most of the time we repeatedly see the movement suggested by the image itself being made use of, as can be seen in the works: *Ventinbo da Paulista* (fig.7), *Saudosa Maloca* (fig.5), among others.



Fig. 4. *Estaca* – Hugo Takahashi

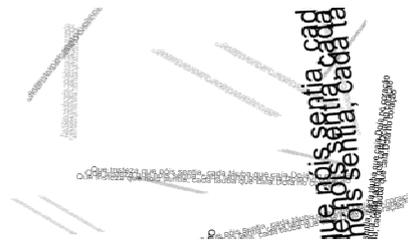


Fig. 5. *Saudosa Maloca* – Alfio Presutti.



Fig.6. *Alma de Robô* – César de Souza.

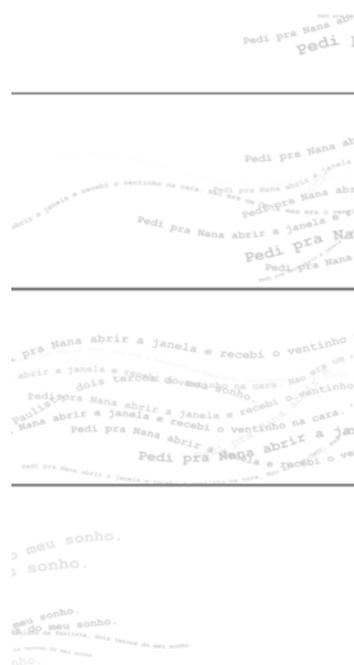


Fig. 7. *Ventinho na Paulista* – Osmair Krespi



Fig. 8. *Sujo* – Artur Tillieri.

Conclusion

Even when movement is suggested by the original image, there is a process of subjacent creation that is carried out at each action. We know that the creative process is based on perception (Ostrower, 1990; Gombrich, 1986) and is carried out by means of a complexity of actions involving ideas, experimentation, research, rejecting, rescuing, reflection, revision, decisions, choices and certainties (Salles, 1998). Therefore, as in all creative processes, the role of experimentation is shown to be an important research instrument when making video graphic pieces, since it is experimentation that gives form to the images that establish a dialogue with the designer who will evaluate their visual quality, their expressiveness and meaning.

We also know that the creative process is a continuous flow. In this respect, the student brings together all the experience he has accumulated in manipulating the typography he has previously carried out and uses the knowledge he has acquired during the course, choosing reference visuals, building his own



identity in the way in which he expresses himself, creating meanings and communicating his built up knowledge, through the production of typographic and video graphic images, and also making use of the resources of audiovisual language. Thus, we can observe that, in fact, there is development in the understanding of typography as an element of design and in the sensitivity with which it is used. Even though this interdisciplinary experiment is just the first move towards approximation, still with a lot of possibilities for evolving more, we can see that this knowledge is built up through the creative process and can contribute to the perception of typographic design and the awareness of the specific means of communication in each media.

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¹ Verbal, Vocal and Visual, in the original expression coined by Augusto de Campos.

² Emil Ruder, in the introduction to his *Manual de Diseño Tipográfico*, confirms the necessity to be “trained in experimental typography”. In this same book a section opens, with reservations and excesses, with the poetics of “Spontaneity and chance”. Also, under strict parameters, Will Kunz has an experimental proposal looking into effective communication of both the “intellectual meaning” and the “emotional content” of the message. See:

Ruder, Emil. *Manual de diseño tipográfico*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1982.

Kunz, Willi. *Tipografía: macro y microestética*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2003. p.8