

modern vs. postmodern

overview **“You have to know the rules before you can properly break them.”**

Knowledge of art history is essential to a designer’s development. Artwork - especially graphic design - does not develop in a vacuum. Everything happens within its context of time, place, and culture. Only in hindsight can something be labeled a style or identified as formulaic. When one attempts to copy today’s Post-postmodernist style, it will simply be a shallow copy or transparent formula unless one understands what Postmodern was/is. Postmodern’s name is obviously in reaction to Modernism, so what and WHY were both of these styles? Etc., etc. and the mystery unravels.

lecture notes **See outline to help with the abbreviated overview of modernist to postmodernist graphic design. Read footnotes. Add notes! ABSORB! Include notes from *Helvetica*.**

objective The lecture is an abbreviated overview. The “test” will be your execution of the end project, as your designs will use the Modernist and Postmodernist “formulas” while your *explanations* must defend your choices per history.

problem **MODERN:** Within a 16”w x 5”h square, write/type **Modern** (or MODERN or modern, etc.) and illustrate* this in Modernist style.

EXPLANATION of MODERN: Explain your design choices, citing certain historic styles/inspiration/reasons. You must defend what you have done to make this Modernist style. Entitle this MODERNISM and only explain this execution on this paper. You must set this in Times New Roman, 11 pts. on letter-sized paper. No specific leading, as I know many will be using Word. 300-500 words. Hand this sheet in with your board. Include your name on the top.

POSTMODERN: Within a 16”w x 5”h square, write/type **Postmodern** (or POSTMODERN or postmodern, etc.) and illustrate* this in Postmodernist style.

EXPLANATION of POSTMODERN: Explain your design choices, citing certain historic styles/inspiration/reasons. You must defend what you have done to make this Postmodernist style. Entitle this POSTMODERNISM and only explain this execution on this paper. You must set this in Times New Roman, 11 pts. on letter-sized paper. No specific leading, as I know many will be using Word. 300-500 words. Hand this sheet in with your board. Include your name on the top.

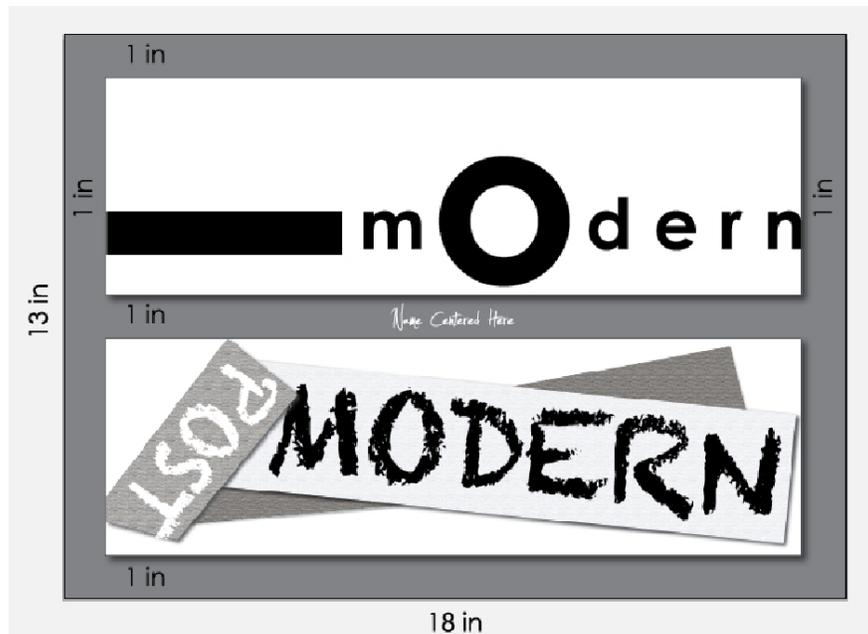
*By illustration, I mean a visual representation. You must have type, but remember that all type has a voice. Listen to it in order to create the correct visual representation. **Sans serif** is often quiet or monotonously loud. Ripped apart magazine type would be a very rhythmic, fragmented voice. You may add drawn illustrations only if this adds to the typographic output. Or it could simply be perfectly spaced type on amazing paper.

The only requirement per material or output is that you must have **two 16”w x 5”h squares with the words (Modern and Postmodern) explained above mounted to spec on an 18”w x 13” black board** (Crescent, no foam core). You may use the computer or render by hand. You may use ink or paint or clay. You may cut up photography or some other “found object” from the media landscape. You may use cardboard for the base 16” x 5” square or fabric or craft paper or pieces from a book you’ve torn out to create a visual texture with the words. Perhaps you use a printing press for one and a computer for the other, and therefore, the process itself becomes an example of Modernist vs. Postmodernist. You have freedom to render how you choose as long as you properly express Modernist and Postmodernist style respectively. *Then you must explain and defend your choices.*

presentation

Please mount to the following specifications:

18" x 13" black Crescent board. 1" border around all, 1" space between the squares (each 16" x 5"). Use spray mount and your roller/burnisher. Use fresh blades. Write your name only (no project explanation) in white pen, centered in this space between the 2 rectangles. **Have perfect craft.**



evaluation

You will be graded on the following:

- Directions were followed accurately with absolutely no errors.
- Awareness of form's relation to content.
- Ideas successfully conveyed per objective.
- Design choices **defended correctly** per historic style.
- Ambition - How much did you challenge yourself? Did you plan your time well?
- Cleanliness and Presentation.
- *Participation in critique TBD*

schedule

Fri Oct 24, 1pm: Watch *Helvetica* in FA127 (*meet outside the locked classroom at 1pm*)

Mon Oct 27, 1-2:50pm: Modern/Postmodern lectures, **check FB for location!**

Wed Oct 29, 1pm: At least **30** thumbnail sketches: **15** Modernist, **15** Postmodernist.

Wed, Nov 5, 1pm: Proj 6 DUE final work mounted with name written correctly in white ink/pencil. Typed sheets separate with name on each sheet of paper. **Critique.**

Note: AIGA Guest Speaker for November is now Wed, Nov 5th at 6pm, location TBD in Union Friday, Nov 7th is AIGA Student Day in Memphis. Attend if you can. No class.

We will begin the last project, Project 7 (calendar says 6A and B), on Mon Nov 10.

LECTURE NOTES: Overview of Modernist and Postmodernist Graphic Design
Prof. Nikki Arnell, ART2413 Fall 2013, Arkansas State University

Graphic Design- “While Graphic Design as a discipline has a relatively recent history, with **the name 'graphic design' first coined by William Addison Dwiggins in 1920's**, graphic design-like activities span the history of humankind: from the caves of Lascaux, to Rome's Trajan's Column to the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, to the dazzling neons of Ginza. In both this lengthy history and in the relatively recent explosion of visual communication in the 20th and 21st centuries, there is sometimes a blurring distinction and over-lapping of advertising art, graphic design and fine art. After all, they share many of the same elements, theories, principles, practices and languages, and sometimes the same benefactor or client. In advertising art the ultimate objective is the sale of goods and services. In graphic design, ‘the essence is to give order to information, form to ideas, expression and feeling to artifacts that document human experience.’”¹

Modernism² [as opposed to “contemporary”]- In the history of art, ...the term ‘modern’ is used to refer to a period dating from roughly the 1860s through the 1970s and describes the style and ideology of art produced during that era. It is this more specific use of modern that is intended when people speak of modern art.³ The style that is known as Modern in graphic design occurred from the end of the Industrial era, epitomized by the Bauhaus (1919-33, Germany) and later co-labeled “Swiss” or “International” style. This style is still alive today.

Postmodernism- A late 20th century style and conceptual theory in the arts and architecture, characterized by a general distrust of ideologies as well as a rather 'difficult' relationship with what constitutes art. Postmodernism can be discussed from multiple viewpoints. Our discussion will specifically discuss postmodern graphic design, which will be presented today as beginning with the punk movement of the late 1970s.

Post-postmodernism- ???

MODERNIST GRAPHIC DESIGN

1. The beginning of Modernism
 - Designers across disciplines search for new forms of expression*
 - Art addressed (and reflected) changing social, economic and cultural conditions*
 - a. Technological and **industrial** advances
 - b. Utopian ideals slowly forming
 - i. As population shift from rural agricultural to urban centers
 - c. Europe
 - i. The catalysts of this movement were mainly in Scotland, Austria and Germany
 - ii. Not accepted into American mainstream until closer to mid-century
 - d. **Invent new forms** rather than copy from nature or historical example
 - i. Artists looked to future instead of past
 - e. Faith in invention and future
 - f. Faith that there is an answer, universal truth
2. Main style points
 - a. **Clean** layout!
 - b. **Sans serif typeface**
 - c. Geometric
 - d. Extremely organized
 - e. Kerning and alignment
 - f. Capitals and lowercase
3. End of 19th century
 - a. The Arts and Crafts Movement
 - b. Ukiyo-e
 - c. Art Nouveau
 - i. Also known as *Jugendstil*, *Sezessionstil*, *Stile Floreale*, *Modernismo*

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_design , paraphrasing/**quoting** Philip B. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983).

² Modernism/modernism, Postmodernism/postmodernism, Modern/modern, Postmodern/postmodern > There are subtle differences between the labels of –isms and capital vs. lowercase. These subtleties will not be explored in the *abbreviated* overview.

³ <http://arthistoryresources.net/modernism/roots.html>, accessed 20 Sept 11

⁴ Apple Dictionary

⁵ As defended by Rick Poyner in *No More Rules : Graphic Design and Postmodernism*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

4. **“Form follow function”**
 - a. “something in which the part is to the whole as the whole is to the part, and which is all devoted to a purpose... It seeks that completeness in idea in execution which is absolutely *true* to method, *true* to purpose, *true* to character...” – Frank Lloyd Wright
5. The Glasgow School or *The Four*
 - a. Developed unique style of lyrical originality and symbolic complexity – figures both religious and romantic interpretations
 - b. Countermovement to popular floral art nouveau
 - i. Via spatial organization, bold, simple lines that define **flat** planes of color
 - c. From Scotland; celebrated on continent, particularly in Vienna:
6. The Vienna Secession
 - a. April 3, 1897: younger members of the Kunstlerhaus (Viennese Creative Artists’ Association) resigned in stormy protest to refusal to allow foreign students to participate in exhibitions
 - b. Opposition to floral art nouveau as it finally died, development of illustrative allegorical style of symbolist painting
 - c. *Ver Sacrum*
 - d. Style points:
 - i. Flat shapes
 - ii. Greater simplicity
 - iii. Design and craft
 - iv. Emphasis on geometric patterning
 - v. Modular design construction
7. Peter Behrens, German artist and architect
 - a. Played major role in charting course for design in first decade of 20th century
 - b. Sought typographic reform, early advocate of sans serif type, grid system to structure space
8. **Overview of other movements affecting graphic design**
 - a. Futurism
 - b. Dada
 - c. Plakastil
 - d. Art Deco
 - e. Constructivism
 - f. DeStijl
 - g. **BAUHAUS**
 - i. School, 1919-33, Germany (with a few gasps in America after forced out of Germany by Nazis)
 - ii. Ideas from all advanced art and design movements explored, combined applied to problems of functional design and machine production
 - iii. **No distinction between fine and applied arts**
 - iv. This need to be outside the box reformed the box to which postmodern reacts. But at this time, this was very progressive. Nazis thought they were “Cultural Bolsheviks”...as it closed, many moved to America, establishing the Institute of Design in Chicago for one. Clean design remains today...this legacy is very powerful.
 - v. “nThe Bauhaus accomplishments and influences transcend its 14-year life, 33 faculty members, and about 1,250 students. It created a viable, modern design movement spanning architecture, product design, and visual communication. A modernist approach to visual education was developed, and the faculty’s class-preparation and teaching methods made a major contribution to visual theory. In dissolving fine and applied art boundaries, the Bauhaus tried to bring art into a close relationship with life by way of design, which was seen as a vehicle for social change and cultural revitalization.” Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*
 - h. Jan Tschichold, Die Neue Typographie (The New Typography), 24 page insert into issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen*

POSTMODERNIST GRAPHIC DESIGN

- 1) What is Modern? (*Review, relevance to Postmodern comparison*)
 - a. Not contemporary
 - b. Began to break rules and push boundaries, but did so with FAITH IN THE FUTURE
 - c. Belief in the uniqueness of the individual, creativity, originality, and artistic genius
 - d. Abstract mode of expression over narrative, historical, political content
 - e. Disdain for cultural kitsch and middle-class sensibilities
 - f. **Had an overall belief in a universal truth and rational order.**

- 2) What is Postmodern?
 - a. **There is no absolute truth, but merely constructs of individuals and groups.**
 - b. All knowledge is mediated by culture and language
 - c. With skepticism to the point of complacency
 - d. Fragmentation and indeterminacy
 - e. Recycling of earlier forms
 - f. "New" no longer a goal
 - g. High culture and trashy on same level
 - h. Multiple points of access
 - i. As open as possible to interpretations
- 3) Audience?
 - a. MODERNISM
 - i. Values artist first
 - ii. Artist defines meaning
 - b. POSTMODERNISM
 - i. Values audience first; therefore, variety of valid readings
 - ii. Cannot fully know what the artist intended
- 4) "...the Modernist image of the artist as a productive inventor has been replaced by that of the bricoleur, or collagist, who finds and rearranges fragments of meaning. The Postmodern artist is the 'postman delivering multiple images and signs which he has not created and over which he has no control.'"⁶
- 5) **Deconstruction • Appropriation⁷ • Technology**
 - a. Prophets:
 - i. The End of Art, Danto [following Hegel]
 1. "The "end of art" refers to the beginning of our modern era of art in which art no longer adheres to the constraints of imitation theory but serves a new purpose:
 2. 'Art began with an 'era of imitation, followed by an era of ideology, followed by our post-historical era in which, with qualification, anything goes... In our narrative, at first only mimesis [imitation] was art, then several things were art but each tried to extinguish its competitors, and then, finally, it became apparent that there were no stylistic or philosophical constraints. There is no special way works of art have to be. And that is the present and, I should say, the final moment in the master narrative. It is the end of the story.'"⁸
 - ii. Conceptual Art, Pop Art, Photography
 - b. Style points:
 - i. **Decontextualizing⁹** the powers of the media (as Pop Art had done)
 - ii. Ripped apart newspapers, etc. to "turn it back on itself"
 - iii. Antithesis of harmonious, tasteful professional design
 - iv. Question the status quo (like punk audience)
 - v. Urban folk art, anyone can do
 - vi. Legibility not a concern (underground gets it)
 - c. Deconstruction
 - i. Pushed legibility and image for a purpose:
 1. New ways of encouraging the audience's participation and to 'open up' meanings so that audiences could be involved in its construction and interpretation.
 - ii. Opposition
 1. Steven Heller, *Cult of the Ugly*
 2. Paul Rand, *Confusion and Chaos: The Seduction of Contemporary Graphic Design*
 - iii. Grunge (Seattle, WA and Portland, OR specifically), early 1990s
 1. Energetic, disrespectful, angry, Subcultural in origin, Very influenced by punk
 2. **"Deconstruction had gone pop."**

⁶ Harold Pierce, "Beyond Paradigms: Art Education Theory and Practice in a Postparadigmatic World," in *Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research* (Reston, VA: NAEA, 1992).

⁷ Appropriation - the action of taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission, *Apple Dictionary*

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Danto quoting Arthur Danto from his *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998) pp. 47.

⁹ Decontextualized - considered in isolation from the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed, *Apple Dictionary*

- d. Appropriation
 - i. “In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the other styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment of the past.”¹⁰
 - ii. Of visuals, styles, advertising technique, brand power
- 6) Technology
 - a. Apple computers, 1984
 - b. Internet commerce is no longer the new frontier; Witness to dotcom bubble burst
 - c. “The temperature of digital rhetoric may have cooled, but design is still produced, for the most part, on computers and that has irrevocably changed the way that many [not all] designers and design theorists think about design.”¹¹

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985).

¹¹ Poyner.