



A.M. Cassandre

Designer's full name: Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron

Designer's pseudonym/nickname: A.M. Cassandre

Gender: Male

Year Born: 1901

Country Born: Ukraine

Year Died: 1968

Country Died: France

Religion | Political Alignment: Information unavailable.

How did any of the above affect either his/her life experience or work because it/they provided a challenge at the time?

None of the above qualities of the designer provided a challenge for the time.

Did this designer do notable work in fields other than what would TODAY be considered graphic design?

Cassandre actually began his academic career in painting, but quickly switched to poster design. After working several years prominently in the graphic design field, Cassandre began focusing his efforts onto painting and theatre work, such as costume design and set design. After going off to war and receiving an injury that caused loss of mobility, easel painting was much easier for Cassandre to work with, leading to

easel painting exhibitions. As for his theatre work, it was a field that Cassandre enjoyed because it integrated several of his artistic passions into one. He worked and created designs for large theatres, such as the Paris Opera and the Monte Carlo Opera.

For what is this designer most noted in relation to design? EXPLAIN.

Cassandre is known for posters, but he is also known for his creation of several typefaces. He designed Peignot, an alphabet that contained capitals and small capitals- no lowercase letters, for Charles Peignot in 1937. This typeface became fairly popular when it was first created, and later on in the 1970s.

Is there anything controversial about this designer? Explain.

There is nothing notably controversial about this designer.

Explain this designer's education/training, including academic, apprenticeships, and /or mentorships.

Cassandre began his academic career studying at Ecole des Beaux-Arts and then moved to start studying painting under Lucien Simon at Academy Julian. From here, he moved into his first studio and began designing posters and working for several clients, including Charles Peignot, Hachard and Cie, L. Danel in Lille, McCorquodale & Co., Bemrose & Sons, and Nijgh en Van Ditmar, as well as many others.

Did this designer promote a specific ideology in his/her work? Explain.

Cassandre was known for using subtle humor in his poster design. This humor was a way for Cassandre to exhibit a play on words ("wordplay") by using specific visuals that he created. The key to this ideology was that the message has to be clear, despite the lack of words within the work. Cassandre had to successfully tell the joke, without actually telling it; only showing it. An example of this ideology is shown in his poster "Dubonnet Man".

Why is this designer viewed as iconic in the history of graphic design?

Cassandre is viewed as iconic in the history of graphic design because of his innate ability to use simple, bold designs to convey a precise, specific message. He had a unique way of design that centered around wit and deeper thinking. That, combined with his exploration of typeface style, ensured that Cassandre would make a large impact on the graphic design industry.

Is there any other important information to know about this designer?

Cassandre was the first freelance graphic designer to have his own exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936.

Student: Beth Ann Shadwick

State and explain the one most important effect that your assigned artist and the quality/importance of his/her work had on the history of graphic design.

A.M. Cassandre is a graphic designer from the Art Deco period who thoroughly explored the idea of using simple, bold, geometric design to convey a deeper meaning through unobstructed wit. This wit was a way for Cassandre to exhibit a play on words by using specific visuals. The key was to successfully tell the joke without actually telling it; only showing it. Cassandre's poster design had an immense impact to the history of graphic design because his exploration of simplified planes of color, contour line, and geometric shapes and letterforms led to the spread of this look through designers all around the world. This emphasis on two-dimensionality became a reoccurring element in the Art Deco period.

A recurring element in all of Cassandre's posters is strong geometric shapes with drastic horizontal, vertical, and diagonal compositions. Cassandre not only used geometric shapes to simplify objects in his composition, but also in his letterforms. An example of this is in his poster for North Star Paris-to-Amsterdam night train. The typography here consists of perfect circles for the O's, as well as hard lines

and sharp angles created by the down strokes. To add to his razor-sharp compositions, Cassandre also created movement using contour lines either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. In his poster for the ship of Normandie, Cassandre has used one strong vertical line down the center of the poster. This line creates a dynamic, balanced composition that is aesthetically pleasing and pairs well with the severe geometric forms of the ship. Cassandre's expert use of shape paralleled with his desire to integrate his word with his overall image.

When creating his work, Cassandre never wanted his typography to be an afterthought, second to his image. The desire to integrate his type into the overall design was often accomplished by encompassing the poster with words along the outer edges - much like a frame. This technique is used in his poster for the Nord Express. Just as one would take great care choosing a beautiful frame to complement a photograph, Cassandre uses alluring typography to border his prominent illustration. Cassandre also uses his letterforms to help convey the wit he is aiming to portray in his designs. An example of this is in his poster for Dubonnet. Cassandre is progressively filling his image to show how Dubonnet will "fill you up." Yet, he doesn't do this with his illustration alone; he includes the Dubonnet letterforms as well, gradually filling in each letter from a contour outline. This clever expression of humor is a common theme in Cassandre's work.

Although Cassandre's work featured straightforward elements, he contradicted the design with a deeper meaning, often using humor to deliver his message. A majority of Cassandre's humor was subtle, but done in a way that successfully carried the ideology. In his poster for the ship L'Atlantique, Cassandre shows a very small ship next to a larger L'Atlantique. This play on dramatic size differences almost personifies each ship, making L'Atlantique seem large and in charge against the smaller ship. Cassandre also used humor to advertise products in a superior light. As mentioned before, this is seen in his poster design for Dubonnet. The idea of this wine "filling you up inside" is humorous because of the impact it is hinting towards. However, it also shows Dubonnet as a finer wine because of its "ability" to do this. A glass of wine cannot truly solve everything and make one "whole" again, but according to Cassandre, Dubonnet can. This consideration of humor intertwined with the overall idea is one reason Cassandre was so successful, leading others to follow this track.

Cassandre's iconic designs continue to be a lasting influence today. His success and new representation of design guided the years to come in the timeline of graphic design.

Bibliography

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