



Pierre Didot

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: Pierre Didot

DESIGNER'S PSEUDONYM/NICKNAME: None

GENDER: Male

YEAR BORN: 1761

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: France

YEAR DIED: 1853

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: France

RACE | ETHNICITY | RELIGION | POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE AFFECTED EITHER THE ARTIST'S LIFE EXPERIENCE OR WORK BECAUSE IT/THEY PROVIDED A CHALLENGE AT THE TIME, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

Didot was born into a family of printers, typographers, and publishers. Because of this, he took over the family printing press when he got old enough. He had an automatic entry into the world of print and typography. This led to him working for Napoleon Bonaparte for a time as the director of the imperial Printing Office until he died.

DID THIS DESIGNER DO NOTABLE WORK IN FIELDS OTHER THAN WHAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED GRAPHIC DESIGN TODAY? EXPLAIN.

Didot was a tried and true printer and publisher. He didn't delve into many other fields and produce notable work.

LIST AT LEAST ONE OTHER WORK THAT IS NOT NAMED IN THIS TIMELINE FOR WHICH THIS DESIGNER IS WELL KNOWN. IF WORK CO-CREATED, LIST THE OTHERS INVOLVED.

Didot is well known for his book designs for Jean de la Fontaine. Notably *Contes et nouvelles en vers par*.

EXPLAIN IF THIS FAME IS ONLY WITHIN DESIGN CIRCLES OR ANY OTHER SUBSET OF THE POPULATION.

These books were well known in affluent circles, but wouldn't have trickled down to the common people.

DOES THIS WORK EXEMPLIFY ASPECTS EXPLAINED IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

This work shows his mastery of publishing, which is something he was able to achieve because of this affluent family business.

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

Didot is most noted for his book designs and his printing press, and perfecting Fournier's Point System of Type.

IS THERE ANYTHING CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT THIS DESIGNER? EXPLAIN.

Didot was a normal book designer and member of society. He didn't cause trouble or cause controversy.

WHAT MATERIALS WERE MOST OFTEN USED BY THIS DESIGNER IN THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION OF WORK?

Cloth, leather, paper, ink, metal, wood

EXPLAIN THIS DESIGNER'S EDUCATION/TRAINING, INCLUDING ACADEMIC, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND /OR MENTORSHIPS.

Didot trained under his father, Francois-Ambroise, and others in the Didot family. The entire family was involved in printing and publishing, so he had many mentors and tutors.

DID THIS DESIGNER PROMOTE A SPECIFIC IDEOLOGY IN HIS/HER WORK? EXPLAIN.

Didot wanted to reform his family's press and make books objects of luxury and art again. He didn't want them to be simply read, but experienced and enjoyed. You can tell this with the elegant and extravagant illustrations and type designs in his books.

WHY IS THIS DESIGNER VIEWED AS ICONIC IN THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN?

In a time where book printing was becoming more and more inexpensive and easy to make, he wanted to hold onto the beautiful and elegant book styles of previous eras. He sought to bring glory to his family by way of elegant book design.

IS THERE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW ABOUT THIS DESIGNER?

When he passed away, he left the company to his son, Jules Didot to keep the company in the family.

YOUR NAME: Alexa Herring

GIVE YOUR EDUCATED OPINION OF THIS DESIGNER AND HIS/HER WORK. ALSO EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE, IF ANY, THIS WORK HAS HAD ON YOUR OWN. A LACK OF INFLUENCE MUST BE EXPLAINED.

Pierre Didot was a French press owner and printer. He spent much of his life trying to hold on to the classical style of book design and binding from previous periods in time. I think that his classical book design and illustrations have had an impact on me in how I view everyday things. As you get older, books begin to get much less visual. It becomes just text on a page that's meant to be read only, but Didot wanted to bring beauty back to books. He wanted them to be experienced, to be viewed as a piece of art, not just read and put back on a shelf. I appreciate that he wanted to keep books and manuscripts in the realm of art. His ideals aligned a bit with the soon to come Arts and Crafts Movement. Didot believed that books should stay at the level of art and wanted to make sure that his family's name and press was associated with beautiful and classy design. Because he inherited his own printing press, he was able to print the books that he wanted without worrying about getting a press to do it for him. This meant that he had much more freedom in the subject matter and style of his books. He included illustrations, he had an awareness of space, leading, and margins, and he sought to create beautiful works of art with his books.

I appreciated so much Didot's refusal to strip the art of bookmaking of its traditional techniques and ornamentation. He stuck to his guns and made sure that he preserved the history of the craft, while adding new techniques and traditions to the art. Because of Didot and people like Didot, book design today still has ornamentation, even if it's not as prominent as it was then. It is still considered an art, and leading, margins, and typeface are things that need to be closely considered. If Didot, and people like him, had given up during the rise of literacy and demand for books, and let go of the ornamentation and design that had dominated the craft in previous years, I don't believe that books today would have the same care and consideration as they do. I believe that it's a holdover from the days of highly ornamented and designed books. I am very thankful for Didot's fight for his beliefs.

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