



Johann Gutenberg

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: Johann Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg

DESIGNER'S PSEUDONYM/NICKNAME: Johannes Gutenberg

GENDER: Male

YEAR BORN: c. 1398

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: Germany

YEAR DIED: 1468

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: Germany

RACE N/A | **ETHNICITY** German | **RELIGION** Catholic Christian¹ | **POLITICAL ALIGNMENT** Unknown

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.

He was the son of a patrician blacksmith, and around the 1420's he was exiled from Mainz. This was because there was a conflict between the guilds of the city and the patricians. After that, he moved to France. He stayed there for about ten years but eventually moved back to Mainz.² This provided a challenge for him because he had to start over in a new city. Ultimately, however, it worked out in his favor because his success started in France.

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

When he was first settling in France, it is said that he involved himself in other crafts like gem cutting, and he taught these crafts to people.³ The only other information about this is that he worked in a jewelry shop when he first moved to France, but there is no other notable mention anywhere in history.

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

He was credited for inventing independent, movable, reusable type. Korea was the first to use something similar to this around 932 CE⁴, but Gutenberg developed a casting system and a metal alloy that worked well for printing.

IS THERE ANYTHING CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT THIS DESIGNER? EXPLAIN.

There is nothing notably controversial about this designer.

¹ Heinrich Wallua, CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Johann Gutenberg, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07090a.htm>

² Hellmut E. Lehmann-Haupt, Johannes Gutenberg | Printing Press, Facts, & Biography, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Gutenberg>

³ Lehmann-Haupt, Johannes Gutenberg | Printing Press, Facts, & Biography, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Gutenberg>

⁴ Mary Bellis, Biography of Johannes Gutenberg, Inventor of the Printing Press, <https://www.thoughtco.com/johannes-gutenberg-and-the-printing-press-1991865>

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

There is no evidence as to who exactly, but it has been said that he studied under a goldsmith.⁵ It has also been noted that he might have enrolled in the University of Erfurt.⁶

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

This designer did not promote a specific ideology in work.

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

His invention of the printing press made it possible for people to communicate and learn. This led to the rise of printing and typography, one of the most important elements in the history of graphic design.

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

No.

YOUR NAME: Ashlyn Garrett

STATE YOUR EDUCATED OPINION OF THIS PERSON AND THE QUALITY/IMPORTANCE OF HIS/HER WORK. EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE - OR LACK OF INFLUENCE - THIS WORK HAS HAD ON YOUR OWN.

Everyone, at some point in a history class, has learned at least a little bit about Johann Gutenberg. He is known worldwide as, “the guy who invented the printing press or something, right?” (A quote from my boyfriend and a biology pre-med major, Bryce Dickerson) That is what I thought all the way up until we started to learn about him in the history of graphic design. Now, I know that he is actually credited with inventing independent, moveable, reusable type which stemmed from his development of a casting system and a metal alloy that worked well for printing.

He was born and died in Germany and was the son of a patrician blacksmith. Gutenberg was kicked out of Mainz, Germany for being related to a patrician because there was a conflict between the guilds of the city and the patricians.⁷ For this reason, he fled to France where he spent approximately ten years. He borrowed a lot of money and was not very good at paying it back. Even after his creation of the Gutenberg Bible and the many copies that he produced, he was still in crippling debt.

The development of the printing press and the books that it produced made it possible for people to communicate and learn, therefore helping to increase literacy.⁸ Up until this point, the only people who owned books were wealthy, and even then, probably

⁵ Encyclopedia.com. “Johann Gutenberg | Encyclopedia.com.” <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/libraries-books-and-printing-biographies/johann-gutenberg>

⁶ Bellis, Biography of Johannes Gutenberg, Inventor of the Printing Press, <https://www.thoughtco.com/johannes-gutenberg-and-the-printing-press-1991865>

⁷ Lehmann-Haupt, Johannes Gutenberg | Printing Press, Facts, & Biography, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Gutenberg>

⁸ Lehmann-Haupt, Johannes Gutenberg | Printing Press, Facts, & Biography, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Gutenberg>

could not read. It was just a symbol of their wealth since books were so rare and expensive. This was because previous books were illuminated manuscripts that took up to twenty years to create.⁹

Although Gutenberg based his bibles on these illuminated manuscripts, there was one significant difference. When a scribe hand-lettered the words, it took at least six months, but, after his new invention, it could take as little as a week!¹⁰ His bibles also included illuminated ornamentation. This meant that the illustrations were very intricate and held religious meaning.

My work, unless it would be for a church, holds absolutely no religious connotations. His work consists of illuminated ornamentation and typography. The type part is all uniform and precise. While I appreciate the perfection and exact repetition of his bibles, I do not believe my work is directly influenced by it. Most graphic designers today instinctually align lines of text, shapes, or pictures with one another, and I do the same. I like to think that my work is clean and can be very simple, only getting the essence of what is necessary. The type in his books does that as well. Illuminated ornamentation covers a lot of the page it sits on and crowds it. Generally, it includes intricate detail, swirls, gold leaf, and color. My older work follows the style I had when I got to college before I was taught anything about layout or typography. Because of this, as I am sadly realizing now, it is crowded and the color palettes are too bright and don't go together at all. For example, I took Design Technology during the second semester of my freshmen year, and my work included lots of neon purples and blues, thick black strokes, and many unnecessary details. I thought that I had to cover every inch of the page with something. It was not until I dove into design classes that I learned the importance of white space. My work now, however, is much more simple and clean which does not align with anything that Gutenberg put his name on.

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⁹ Audrey Chan, Did Parchment Smell? Your Manuscript Questions, Answered, <https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/did-parchment-smell-your-manuscript-questions-answered/>

¹⁰ Chan, Did Parchment Smell? Your Manuscript Questions, Answered, <https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/did-parchment-smell-your-manuscript-questions-answered/>

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