



Katherine McCoy

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: Katherine Jane McCoy

DESIGNER'S PSEUDONYM/NICKNAME: None

GENDER: Female

YEAR BORN: 1945

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: United States

YEAR DIED: ---

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: ---

RACE N/A | **ETHNICITY** Unknown | **RELIGION** Unknown | **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.

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? EXPLAIN.

She was known in the field of industrial design. The difference between the two is that a graphic designer's goal is to communicate with the public visually with tools like typography and shapes to make them feel a certain way; an industrial designer's job is to make a product that looks good for mass production.¹

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

She is responsible for helping to shape the education field of graphic design. Her revolutionary new education program was based on self-evaluation, experimentation, and independence. She decided to include social and cultural activism and brought 2D and 3D design, semiotics, deconstruction, literary theory, and poststructuralism to the curriculum.²

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.

Her education began with graduation from Michigan State University with a degree in Industrial Design. She then worked for many companies including Unimark International, the corporate identity offices of the Chrysler Corporation, the Boston design firm of Omnigraphics, the Detroit advertising design studio, Designers & Partners, and Xerox Education Group.³ There is no evidence that she had any further education after that; instead, she taught others.

¹ Invention Steps. Difference between Industrial Design and Graphic Design? – Invention Steps, <https://www.inventionsteps.com.au/difference-between-industrial-design-and-graphic-design/>

² Ryan Warren. Katherine McCoy | GD 203, <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121>

³ Warren. Katherine McCoy | GD 203, <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121>

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

She believes in the complexity of form and meaning and therefore made works that had layers and layers the viewer must try to sort through and understand.⁴

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

She is an icon in the education field for the design industry. Without her influence, the curriculum would not be the same and, we would not be taught the way we are now. She had roots in the modernist style, but is now known as a postmodern designer.⁵

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

While she was reshaping the design program at Cranbrook, she also served as the first woman president of the Industrial Design Society of America from 1983-1985, chaired the Design Arts Fellowship Grant Panel for the National Endowment of the Arts for three years, and was on the national advisory board of the AIGA.⁶

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.

When I was assigned this graphic designer, I had no idea who she was or how she was important in the history of graphic design. However, after reading more about her, I understand completely why she is iconic.

McCoy began her career mostly in the industrial design industry, and then eventually gravitated towards graphic design. The difference between the two is that a graphic designer's goal is to communicate with the public visually with tools like typography and shapes to make them feel a certain way, while an industrial designer's job is to make exceptional product designs for mass production.⁷

She was introduced to the field of graphic design after working with people like Muriel Cooper and Edward Fella.⁸ After giving many years of her life to several major design firms and advertising agencies, she decided to immerse herself in the educational side of design. What she is credited for is helping to shape the way that graphic design is taught all over the world. Her revolutionary new education program was based on self-evaluation, experimentation, and independence. Social and cultural activism, 2D and 3D designs, semiotics, deconstruction and literary theory, and poststructuralism were also added to McCoy's curriculum.⁹

⁴ Meggs, Phillip B. and Alston W. Purvis. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*, 5th Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012, 534.

⁵ Lorraine Wild, 1999 AIGA Medalist: Katherine McCoy, <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-katherinemccoy>

⁶ Wild, 1999 AIGA Medalist: Katherine McCoy, <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-katherinemccoy>

⁷ Invention Steps. *Difference between Industrial Design and Graphic Design? – Invention Steps*, <https://www.inventionsteps.com.au/difference-between-industrial-design-and-graphic-design/>

⁸ Meggs, Purvis. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*, 5th Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012, 534.

⁹ Warren. *Katherine McCoy | GD 203*, <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121>

She believes in the complexity of form and meaning, and therefore makes works that have layers upon layers the viewer must try to sort through and understand.¹⁰ When viewed, there are so many different visual pulls that it can be strenuous to comprehend. Sometimes it is challenging to figure out what should be the true focal point or if there is one at all. While I can clearly understand why she is important in the history of graphic design, her actual artwork is not relevant to anything that I personally create. Her work is confusing and hard for me to understand. What has influenced me, however, is her genius in the way graphic design is taught at universities.

Before I got to college, I was taught the basics of Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Premiere Pro. This is where I found a love for graphic design and decided to pursue it as a career. Since I was only taught how to use some of the tools within the software, I was left to decide what design choices to make. I thought I had to fill every inch of space; white space was non-existent in everything I did. Part of McCoy's teaching principal is centered around self-evaluation.¹¹ As I began to see other students' work in work-in-progress critiques, I realized that white space was essential, and the work I was producing did not portray this. At that point, I started to implement another aspect of McCoy's education program, experimentation. As projects were assigned, I commenced the trial and error process to find my style. Now, I am able to put only the essentials on the page, leaving the necessary amount of white space.

Katherine McCoy was an icon in the academic field of graphic design for taking the existing curriculum and making it into a program centered around self-evaluation, experimentation, and independence.¹² This new approach allows students to find their own style and helps them understand the importance of independence. While her work specifically has not influenced mine, her education program will forever make an impact on graphic designers all over the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. (2019). Poster, Architecture, Symbol and Interpretation, Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1980. [online] Available at: <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/objects/18617663/> [Accessed 14 Oct. 2019].

Invention Steps (2016). Difference between Industrial Design and Graphic Design? – Invention Steps. [online] Inventionsteps.com.au. Available at: <https://www.inventionsteps.com.au/difference-between-industrial-design-and-graphic-design/> [Accessed 14 Oct. 2019].

Meggs, Phillip B. and Alston W. Purvis. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 5th Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012, 534.

Warren, R. (2018). Katherine McCoy | GD 203. [online] Go.distance.ncsu.edu. Available at: <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121> [Accessed 14 Oct. 2019].

Wild, L. (1999). 1999 AIGA Medalist: Katherine McCoy. [online] AIGA | the professional association for design. Available at: <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-katherinemccoy> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2019].

¹⁰ Meggs, Purvis. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 5th Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012, 534.

¹¹ Warren. Katherine McCoy | GD 203, <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121>

¹² Warren. Katherine McCoy | GD 203, <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=24121>