Reimagining Design Histories – Research

The major project brief that I have been set is to design a poster to celebrate a specific period of modern graphic design history. I was given the movement/period of Art Deco which I had a brief understanding about having come from Art and Design A level courses.

I started my research in the library using Met search to find books that could potentially give me an insight into what Art Deco what influenced by, where it began, forms, shapes and just more in general about the movement. From this research I learnt that the movement began in Paris, France but is often mistaken for only existing in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the movement was actually an evolving style which doesn’t really have certain decades which it is related to. Typically the 1920s through to the 1940s is when the movement occurred with it ending just before the second world war. I also used online e-books to support my research where I found that some of the influences of the Art Deco where cubism, constructivism and futurism. It was an art movement that didn’t just affect graphic design but all areas of the creativity from architecture to film to fashion. It was a era of art that majority of disciplines followed and agree with.

I then came across A. M. Cassandre who was a painter, typographer and theatre designer but was the leading protagonist during the period. His work was rigorous filled with geometric shapes which was a major contrast from earlier movements. Cassandre appears to be the ultimate communicator within this era of design. He believed that by eliminating floral detail would sharpen the message that you were trying to communicate, this is evidently practiced throughout his work. The style of Cassandre’s posters varied from simplistic and minimalist through to using visual puns. This often depended on what Cassandre had been commissioned to do. The images that Cassandre used often had a cubism element to them which highlights how cubism had a influence over the movement.

As the movement was one of the first to be mass produced and is considered to be based around the idea of commercialisation, the typography of posters was key to many designs. Often the type was set in all capitals to make it bold and draw attention to the viewer. In the typefaces there is a clear distinction between thick and thin strokes to create a fun and playful effect while still be based on geometric shapes. Cassandre created the typeface Bifur which was one typeface that used vertical lines as decorative feature, this was another distinctive aspect that set Art Deco typefaces apart. Other typefaces created and used during the movement included; Acier Noir, Peigont and Broadway.
As part of my research I decided to look at poster designs during the period using the various source online I began to sketch layouts that designers used. I also used the book ‘The Art Deco Poster’ by Williams W. Crouse which contains an array of posters from the movement. I chose a select few to photograph then deconstruct in my sketchbook. I found that the images used were often illustrative and more often than not they used geometric shapes to create them. Angles were often very prominent within designs including the way that text was set. Colour also played a significant part in the design however, most commonly blues, reds, black and white appear to be favourite during the period the time. Occasionally there were brighter colours, yellows and oranges, but mainly the colour are quite flat. Other than A.M Cassandre another designer I found was Jean Carlu who like others new how to make a masterpiece out of everyday objects which appears to be important to some advertisements. From deconstructing my poster research I learnt that the layouts often had the hierarchy set to either the bold heading or the illustrative image.
As another stem for my research I worked with others who were also doing Art Deco to brainstorm ideas about the typography, images and concepts of the movement. This allowed us to share ideas about the movement but also the opportunity to consolidate my knowledge of the movement. I learnt that the idea that it was based around the purpose of commercialisation was a concept we all had thought about and that it was highly likely to be the basis for our poster designs.

From this research I have managed to gain a greater insight into the period of time, as the brief states to ‘reimagine’ I will have to regenerate ideas that place a modern twist to the movement while still highlighting the essence of the art era. I will use my research as basis for my idea and will start to develop my own images.

References


Reimagining the Digital Monograph — White Paper, June 12, 2017. Opinion: Reimagining the Paper. Breaking down lengthy, narrative-driven biomedical articles into brief reports on singular observations or experiments could increase reproducibility and accessibility in the literature. May 2, 2016. Scientists could, for example, publish their findings through journal-associated online portals where they undergo peer review. More elaborate “hypothesis papers” could take the place of the current research paper in which various pieces of data are logically connected to produce a generalizable conclusion. This radical shift from publishing hypothesis-driven narratives to pure empiricism would, in my opinion, provide a durable solution to the problems facing scientific publishing. This post will show my research and design developments throughout the project and will show how I got to my final outcome poster.

Firstly, I just researched the basics of the movement which was that it is also called ‘Swiss Style’ as it was developed in Switzerland in the 1940s. I researched all the key people and movements that helped influence the International Typographic Style from the website http://smearedblackink.com/swiss_style_timeline/ which shows a timeline which I then summarised in my sketchbook. I also did research on the layout, typography and imagery that I gained from https://creativemarket.com/blog/swiss-design-history-examples which was very useful to the history of the Swiss Style.