

Interactive Web Design – Art 545

Project 2: interface

In this project, you will create a mini-website, a Flash interface presenting information and imagery about one of the three following artists. Each of these artists has been chosen for their particular take on the relationship between form, material, and subject. Only one of the artists worked in what we consider “new” media, and none of them make web-based works; what makes them relevant to this course is a part of the investigation of this project.

The interface must include 3-6 images, biographical information, and sample text by or about the artist; you may include other content if you wish. The biographical text can be from Wikipedia; some sample quotes from the artists are attached to this project sheet.

How the interface best presents this information is up to you. You must determine:

1. the structure of the website as a site map;
2. the navigation as a real, environmental interface, not just a static series of pages;
3. the visual presentation.

All these things must go together naturally.

The artists, in chronological order of their birth:

- *Jan Tschichold*, typographer
- *Ed Ruscha*, painter and conceptual artist
- *Bill Viola*, video and installation artist

Technical considerations:

- The swf file may be of any dimensions.
- It must be embedded in an HTML page.
- Keep in mind the visual context for your movie: how is the interface contained, or set off from the rest of the page?

Schedule

March 4: proposals

March 18: final critique

Jan Tschichold

from *The New Typography*, 1929

Instead of recognizing and designing for the laws of machine production, the previous generation contented itself with trying anxiously to follow a tradition that was in any case only imaginary. Before them stands the works of today, untainted by the past, primary shapes which identify the aspect of our time: Car Aeroplane Telephone Wireless Factory Neon-advertising New York! These objects, designed without reference to the aesthetics of the past, have been created by a new kind of man: **the engineer!**

...

Neue Typographie layouts text by leading the eye of the viewer from one word, one group to the next. Thus we need to structure the text meaningfully, using differences in size, boldness, position in space, colour, etc. Neue Typographie uses the possible effects of the former background consciously and considers both the white background segments and the black type and shapes as design elements of equal value. With that, Neue Typographie has added a new element to the expressive potential of printing. It is exactly the use of large white areas that creates the startling impact of Neue Typographie.

Some principles of the New Typography

- A meticulous letter spacing of words in capital letters. Faultless spacing [of capitals] to achieve an even rhythm is absolutely necessary.
- The selection and use of clear and well proportioned typefaces. The classical typefaces such as Garamond, Janson, Baskerville and Bell are undoubtedly the most legible.
- In typography neither the old style nor a new style matters; quality does.
- An exceptional care in the placement of items on the page.
- Nor is asymmetry in any way better than symmetry; only different. Both arrangements can be good.
- Thoughtful consideration of materials, with regard to the needs of a particular job.
- Obeying good rules of composition and book design in the manner of traditional typography is not 'putting the clock back'; but an eccentric style of setting is almost always debatable.
- The use of a limited palette of typefaces and elements on the page. Leading to a certain level of clarity, and a simplified and unified whole relationship of all elements.
- A limit to the number of type sizes used - normally three to not more than five - is always to be recommended.
- Matter should be arranged in groups, the eye can assimilate two or even three groups, but more than three, a page will lose clarity.
- A contrast of typographical elements, with regard to the task required. The strength of a design can be improved by increasing contrasts between elements in any given design.
- The ways to achieve contrast are endless: the simplest are large/small, light/dark, horizontal/vertical, square/round, smooth/rough, closed/open, coloured/plain; all offer many possibilities of effective design. Large differences in weight are better than small.
- The closer in size different types are to each other, the weaker the result.

Ed Ruscha

Premeditated: An Interview with Ed Ruscha

Jana Sterbak: How do you come up with the phrases for your paintings?

ER: Some are found readymade, some are dreams, some come from newspapers. They are finished by blind faith. No matter if I've seen it on television or read it in the newspaper, my mind seems to wrap itself around that thing until it's done. It's strange, I don't know what motivates me, but each of the works is premeditated. I don't stand in front of a blank canvas waiting for inspiration. At one time I loved the word "ace." It meant something to me that was powerful. I made a few paintings of the word. I always like monosyllabic words like "smash" and "honk." Single words kept my interest for a while and then, later, there was only one thing to do—heap more words in. Until finally, I found myself doing a painting which says, Study of Friction and Mating Surfaces [1983]... I see this thing and, being a good little art soldier, I go and do it. I just put the questions out. I don't sit there thinking, "Why am I doing this?" There is no answer.

Statement in *What Artists Like About the Art They Like When They Don't Know Why*

When I was a baby to art I was disarmed by Arthur Dove's 1925 painting *Goin' Fishin'*. His unorthodox materials—the use of collage—drove home some point I never expected. So did Alvin Lustig's book-cover illustrations for New Directions Press back in the '50s. I had a terrific initial response but I didn't try to ponder it.

Art has to be something that makes you scratch your head.

Bill Viola

from "Will There Be Condominiums in Data Space?" 1983

Possibly the most startling thing about our individual existence is that it is continuous. It is an unbroken thread—we have been living this same moment ever since we were conceived. It is memory, and to some extent sleep, that gives us the impression of a life of discrete parts; periods, or sections, of certain times or "highlights." Hollywood movies and the media, of course, reinforce this perception.

If things are perceived as discrete parts or elements, they can be rearranged. Gaps become most interesting as places of shadow, open to projection. Memory can be regarded as a fier (as are the five senses)—it is a device implanted for our survival. The curse of the mnemonist is the flood of images that are constantly replaying in his brain. He may be able to demonstrate extraordinary feats of recall, but the rest of the banal and the mundane is playing back in there too, endlessly. The result can be lack of sleep, psychosis, and even willful death, driving some to seek professional psychiatric help (and thus become history on the pages of medical journals and books). This reincarnates one of the curses of early video art—"record everything," the saturation-bombing approach to life which made so many early video shows so boring and impossible to sit through. Life without editing, it seems, is just not that interesting.

It is only very recently that the ability to forget has become a prized skill.