

## COMPARISON TOPICS TO ACCOMPANY:

*Graphic Design: A History*, third edition, by Stephen J. Eskilson

These comparison topics were written by Stephen J. Eskilson. Arranged by chapter, they are primarily intended as short essay exam questions with the two images projected side by side. Ten to fifteen minutes should be allowed for each comparison and students should be encouraged to explain what the juxtaposition means in terms of style history, context, etc. The topics can also be used to stimulate class discussion with students working from digital projections or from the images in the book.

### Introduction: The Origins of Graphic Design

1. Comparison: Martin Luther, trans., *New Testament*, 1522 [fig. 14] and Claude Garamond, Gros Canon Romain typeface, c. 1570 [fig. 15]

Style history: two original type styles—blackletter (Schwabacher) and Old Style roman (Garamond)

Context: type quickly becomes enmeshed with national identity, religious, and political struggles

Other: printing fuels the Protestant Reformation

2. Comparison: William Caslon, typeface, 1734 [fig. 17] and John Baskerville, typeface, 1761 [fig. 18]

Style history: both are “transitional” typefaces; Baskerville is more aggressively styled with greater contrast

Context: educated people were connoisseurs of type, aware of slight differences

Other: Caslon, the more modest type, is infinitely more successful

3. Comparison: Claude Garamond, Gros Canon Romain typeface, c. 1570 [fig. 15] and Firmin Didot, typeface shown in *Racine*, 1801 [fig. 19]

Style history: Old Style versus modern typefaces, latter has more stress, contrast, is geometric

Context: incremental stylistic evolution of mechanical, pre-industrial type

Other: Didot’s ties to Neoclassicism

### Chapter 1: The Nineteenth Century: An Expanding Field

1. Comparison: Firmin Didot, typeface shown in *Racine*, 1801 [fig. 19] and Anonymous, *Demorest’s Illustrated Monthly* magazine, 1865 [fig. 1.19]

Style history: modern elegant typeface and composition versus eclectic, dense composition of Victorian magazine

Context: impact of industrialization on printing, mass circulation

Other: unfair as this comparison is apples and oranges?

2. Comparison: William Caslon, typeface, 1734 [fig. 17] and Laurent & De Berny, specimen of decorative typefaces, 1850 [fig. 1.25]

Style history: graceful transitional face (Caslon) versus burgeoning decorative eclecticism in the age of the wood router

Context: impact of industrialization on printing, mass circulation

Other: does Caslon’s understated design speak as loudly in its own way as brash 19<sup>th</sup>-century decorative type?

3. Comparison: Jules Goury, *Window from the Hall of the Two Sisters*, 1845 [fig. 1.10] and Currier & Ives, *The Great West*, 1870 [fig. 1.14]

Style history: chromolithography

Context: new technology with an uncertain reputation, chromolithography

Other: British Colonialism and American Manifest Destiny

4. Comparison: William Morris, Golden typeface, 1896 [fig. 1.31] and Morris Fuller Benton, Franklin Gothic typeface, 1902 [fig. 1.27]

Style history: Golden based on Old Style type versus new sans serif faces; both value legibility in different ways

Context: impact of advertising on typeface design

Other: Morris sees the problem but not the solution

### Chapter 2: Art Nouveau: A New Style for a New Culture

1. Comparison: Jules Chéret, *Fleur de Lotus*, 1893 [fig. 2.1] and Théophile Steinlen, *Cabaret du Chat Noir*, 1896 [fig. 2.12]

Style history: Chéret's Rococo dynamism versus Steinlen's Japonisme

Context: entertainment purveyors more progressive in commissioning new styles

Other: nationalism, exoticism

2. Comparison: Hector Guimard, Paris Métro Entrance, 1899 [fig. 2.11] and Privat Livemont, *Absinthe Robette*, 1896

[fig. 2.10]

Style history: both French Art Nouveau; dense, curvilinear forms

Context: stylistic connections across media

Other: two best examples of Art Nouveau that is democratic and mass produced

3. Comparison: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Ambassadeurs*, 1892 [fig. 2.18] and Kitigawa Utamaro, *Young Woman*, 1792-93 [fig. 2.5]

Style history: pervasive influence of Japanese aesthetics on Art Nouveau

Context: exoticism, stylistic originality

Other: Toulouse-Lautrec brings fine art credibility to graphic design

4. Comparison: Alphonse Mucha, *Waverley Cycles*, 1898 [fig. 2.23] and Edward Penfield, *Ride a Stearns*, 1896 [fig. 2.22]

Style history: French versus American Art Nouveau; American Japonisme is understated and "realistic"

Context: new social roles for women, impact of bicycles

Other: address different viewers, mostly by gender

5. Comparison: F. Macdonald, M. Macdonald, H. MacNair, *The Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts*, 1895 [fig. 2.33] and Koloman Moser, *Secession XIII*, 1902 [fig. 2.40]

Style history: influence of Scottish graphics on Viennese *Secessionstil*

Context: 1900 eighth secession exhibition features Scottish work of "The Four"

Other: national identity

6. Comparison: Gustav Klimt, *Secession I*, 1898 [fig. 2.37] and Egon Schiele, *Galerie Arnot*, 1915 [fig. 2.46]

Style history: teacher/student, relationship of Symbolist Art Nouveau to Expressionism

Context: fin de siècle, Sigmund Freud

Other: polished perfection versus purposeful awkwardness

### Chapter 3: *Sachplakat*, The First World War, and Dada

1. Comparison: Lucian Bernhard, *Priester Matches*, 1905 [fig. 3.2] and Henry van de Velde, *Tropon*, 1899 [fig. 2.53]

Style history: *Sachplakat* decisively rejects Art Nouveau style

Context: which is more functional as advertising?

Other: Bernhard's legendary anecdote

2. Comparison: Ernest Ibbetson, *At the Front!*, 1915 [fig. 3.9] and Tristan Tzara, *Dada*, no. 3, 1918 [fig. 3.28]

Style history: conventional poster versus Dada anarchy and rule breaking

Context: both are a direct outgrowth of the war effort (pro/anti)

Other: Dada longevity as a stylistic and conceptual resource

3. Comparison: Savile Lumley, *Daddy what did YOU . . .*, 1915 [fig. 3.11] and Julius Klinger, "8<sup>th</sup> War Loan," 1917 [fig. 3.23]

Style history: British retrograde style versus aesthetic sophistication of *Sachplakat*

Context: British need for recruits fuels emasculating, bullying posters

Other: post-war reevaluation of each country's strategy

### Chapter 4: Modern Art, Modern Graphic Design

1. Comparison: Filippo Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb*, 1914 [fig. 4.11] and Francis Meynell, *The Iliad*, 1931 [fig. 4.21]

Style history: Futurist "words in freedom" wants to destroy conventions of book design

Context: Futurist dream of revolution versus Meynell's conservation of tradition  
Other: both deal with a world of new technology

2. Comparison: Wyndham Lewis, *Blast: War Number*, no. 2, 1915 [fig. 4.17] and Edward McKnight Kauffer, *Soaring to Success!*, 1919 [fig. 4.19]

Style history: *Blast* has aggressive Futurist influence, Kauffer poaches the style

Context: Lewis appropriates Futurism for Vorticism, the process is perversely repeated by Kauffer

Other: loss of historical context

3. Comparison: Amédée Ozenfant, *Guitar and Bottles*, 1920 [fig. 4.22] and A. M. Cassandre, *Wagon-Bar*, 1932 [fig. 4.25]

Style history: Cassandre transforms Purism into elegant advertising

Context: commercialization of modern art styles

Other: loss of historical context

## Chapter 5: Revolutions in Design

1. Comparison: Theo van Doesburg, *NB De Stijl*, 1921 [fig. 5.5] and Theo van Doesburg, *Mécano*, no. 3, 1922 [fig. 5.12]

Style history: De Stijl's universal geometric harmony versus Dada playfulness, rule breaking

Context: how to reconcile van Doesburg's embrace of both

Other: is there any Dada in De Stijl?

2. Comparison: Boris Zvorykin, *The Struggle*, 1919 [fig. 5.16] and El Lissitzky, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1919 [fig. 5.21]

Style history: El Lissitzky adopts the message/style of realist propaganda to fit his Suprematist interests

Context: rise of abstraction in post-revolutionary Russia

Other: which poster is more effective as agit-prop?

3. Comparison: El Lissitzky, *The Constructor*, 1924 [fig. 5.31] and El Lissitzky, *Pelican Drawing Ink*, 1925 [fig. 5.33]

Style history: El Lissitzky transforms his Metonymic, Constructivist hand into a German advertisement

Context: El Lissitzky never sees Constructivism as constrained by ideology

Other: decline of Constructivism under Stalin soon to come; Bourgeois formalism

## Chapter 6: The Bauhaus and the New Typography

1. Comparison: Lyonel Feininger, *Cathedral*, 1919 [fig. 6.7] and Walter Gropius, Bauhaus buildings, 1925-26 [fig. 6.16]

Style history: Expressionist and Constructivist phases at the Bauhaus

Context: key transition under the influence of László Moholy-Nagy, et al.

Other: explore how the Bauhaus ideals were shaped by Expressionism and centered on architecture both literally and figuratively

2. Comparison: László Moholy-Nagy, Bauhaus Press logo, 1923 [fig. 6.12] and Anonymous, *Fraktur in Closing of the Bauhaus*, 1933 [fig. 6.25]

Style history: universal versus nationalist desires resonate in type

Context: Bauhaus operating at times in a hostile, polarized political climate

Other: is there such a thing as a universal aesthetic?

3. Comparison: Herbert Bayer, *Universal Lettering*, 1925 [fig. 6.23] and Paul Renner, *Futura* typeface, 1927 [fig. 6.24]

Style history: a purist geometric versus Futura that is modified for readability

Context: both typefaces contend with a difficult political situation

Other: revisit the Caslon versus Baskerville situation (Introduction, question 2)

## Chapter 7: American Modern and the Second World War

1. Comparison: T.M. Cleland, *Fortune* contents page, 1930 [fig. 7.2] and Mehemed Agha, *Vanity Fair* contents page, 1930 [fig. 7.9]

Style history: staid design versus Agha's Constructivism and Futura

Context: magazines serve different audiences

Other: influx of European designers parallels late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Art Nouveau in United States

2. Comparison: Martin Weitzman, *Foreign Trade Zone No. 1*, 1937 [fig. 7.19] and Lester Beall, *Rural Electrification Administration*, 1939 [fig. 7.22]

Style history: Art Deco versus Constructivism

Context: gradual influx of European styles into United States

Other: MoMA champions Constructivist style at early stage

3. Comparison: Günther Nagel, "Hitler constructs," 1940 [fig. 7.37] and John Heartfield, "Adolf, the Superman," 1932 [fig. 7.44]

Style history: Heartfield uses Dada photomontage to contest retrograde Nazi propaganda

Context: reevaluation of propaganda under the Nazis vis-à-vis the First World War

Other: continuing relevance of Dada techniques

4. Comparison: Savile Lumley, *Daddy, what did YOU . . .*, 1915 [fig. 3.11] and Anonymous, "Never was so much . . .", 1940 [fig. 7.47]

Style history: retrograde style is supplanted by modern use of photography

Context: British propaganda features less guilt and emasculation

Other: striking contrast with new retrograde, manipulative German propaganda

5. Comparison: Howard Christy, *Gee!! I Wish I Were a Man*, 1917 [fig. 3.18] and J. Howard Miller, *We Can Do It!*, 1942 [fig. 7.1]

Style history: both realistic illustration, Christy more accomplished and artistic

Context: new productive role for women in war effort

Other: does Rosie the Riveter also serve the theme of emasculation?

## Chapter 8: The Triumph of the International Style

1. Comparison: El Lissitzky, *Russian Exhibition*, 1929 [fig. 5.36] and Hans Neuburg, *Liebig Super Boullion* [fig. 8.6]

Style history: El Lissitzky's Constructivist propaganda transformed into capitalist tool

Context: Swiss Style effaces political history of Constructivism

Other: El Lissitzky had already done this himself with his work in Germany

2. Comparison: LMNV, "New Graphic Design," 1958 [fig. 8.9] and Armin Hofmann, *Giselle*, 1959 [fig. 8.1]

Style history: staid Zurich versus rule breaking Basel styles

Context: is there a Dada element at Basel?

Other: is the Swiss Style too dogmatic, or does therein lie its strength?

3. Comparison: Jan Tschichold, *Typographic News*, 1925 [fig. 6.26] and Jan Tschichold, cover for *The Divine Comedy*, 1947 [fig. 8.19]

Style history: Tschichold renounces the New Typography

Context: quiet confrontation with the International Style

Other: which is more functional?

4. Comparison: Paul Rand, logos for IBM, 1956 [fig. 8.31] and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, Seagram building, 1957 [fig. 8.46]

Style history: International Style works as a unified corporate design style

Context: the re-conceptualization of Constructivism

Other: Mies van der Rohe and functionalism

5. Comparison: Paul Rand, logo for Westinghouse, 1956 [fig. 8.32] and Otl Aicher, logo for Lufthansa, 1969 [fig. 8.14]

Style history: logos with and without advanced theoretical underpinnings

Context: disparate working methods at Ulm versus the United States

Other: what are the benefits and hindrances of theoretical design?

## Chapter 9: Postmodernism: The Return of Expression

1. Comparison: Wim Crouwel, *Stedelijk, Where is Piet Mondrian?*, 1975-76 [fig. 8.17] and Jan van Toorn, *A Collection is only Human*, 1973 [fig. 9.2]

Style history: universal modern style versus expressive, idiosyncratic postmodern

Context: challenging the International Style

Other: public debate between Crouwel and van Toorn

2. Comparison: Milton Glaser, *Valentine Olivetti*, 1967 [fig. 9.15] and Robert Venturi, *Vanna Venturi House*, 1964 [fig. 9.30]

Style history: appropriation, vernacular sources, mixing styles

Context: interconnections between postmodern architecture and graphics

Other: has Postmodernism successfully collapsed the arts and crafts hierarchy? Graphic design and architecture gradually drift apart into specialized realms and graphic design is a helpmate no longer.

3. Comparison: Paula Scher, *Swatch*, 1985 [fig. 9.23] and Herbert Matter, *Winterferein*, 1936 [fig. 9.24]

Style history: postmodern appropriation and irony

Context: how many will get the reference? Does it matter?

Other: is this plagiarism? Is appropriation always a valid strategy?

4. Comparison: LMNV, "New Graphic Design," 1958 [fig. 8.9] and Wolfgang Weingart, "Writing Art" exhibition, 1981 [fig. 9.31]

Style history: deconstruction of the grid, layering with transparent films

Context: shows most complete response to International Style; new technology

Other: postmodern or late modern?

5. Comparison: Tibor Kalman, advertisement for the Florent restaurant, 1987 [fig. 9.44] and April Greiman, *The Modern Poster*, 1988 [fig. 9.34]

Style history: conceptual versus technology-driven designs

Context: postmodern appropriation and experimentation

Other: technophobe and technophile

6. Comparison: Gustav Klutsis, *Under the Banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction*, 1930 [fig. 5.28] and Barbara Kruger, *Your body is a battleground*, 1989 [fig. 9.60]

Style history: Kruger self-consciously appropriates some of the clichés of Constructivism

Context: renewed political activism in postmodernism

Other: is Kruger invoking Russian Constructivism or American advertising?

## Chapter 10: Contemporary Graphic Design

1. Comparison: LMNV, "New Graphic Design," 1958 [fig. 8.9] and David Carson, *Ray Gun*, no. 11, 1993 [fig. 10.2]

Style history: unkempt Grunge challenges the orthodoxy of the Swiss style

Context: aren't they equally expressive in their own way?

Other: amateur versus professional design

2. Comparison: Edward Penfield, *Harper's Magazine*, 1897 [fig. 2.20] and David Lance Goines, *Berkeley Conference Center*, 1993 [fig. 10.13]

Style history: postmodern appropriation

Context: is this a revival?

Other: how are the women depicted differently in terms of status or cultural context?

3. Comparison: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Ambassadeurs*, 1892 [fig. 2.18] and Kim Young-heon, *Chamber of Fear*, 2004 [fig. 10.41]

Style history: both are cross-cultural, feature Western and Asian elements

Context: which of these is more "global"?

Other: are global graphics a form of orientalism?

## Chapter 11: The Digital Present

1. Comparison: Tomato, *Dubnobasswithmyheadman*, 1993 [fig. 10.6] and Johan Vipper, *Wired*, no. 3.02, 1995 [fig. 11.3]

Style history: Grunge disorder versus polished techno-aesthetic; similarities in layering

Context: what are the different messages of these two styles?

Other: do either already look obsolete?

2. Comparison: Eduard Hoffmann and Max Meidinger, Helvetica typeface, 1960 [fig. 8.2] and Anonymous, Arial typeface, 1988 [fig. 11.35]

Style history: Arial, the poorly-proportioned stepchild of Helvetica

Context: does anyone outside the profession notice the difference?

Other: does anything other than aesthetics lie behind the strong criticism of Arial?

3. Comparison: Eduard Hoffmann and Max Meidinger, Helvetica typeface, 1960 [fig. 8.2] and Neville Brody, FF Blur typeface, 1990 [fig. 11.47]

Style history: deconstructive rejoinder to the ubiquitous Helvetica

Context: self-conscious attack on the International Style

Other: impact of new digital technology on type design

## Epilogue: The Citizen Designer

1. Comparison: David Carson, *Nike Europe*, 1994 [fig. 10.3] and Jonathan Barnbrook, *Virus says Stop American Cultural Imperialism*, 1999 [fig. E.4]

Style history: both richly ornamental, expressive, and densely layered

Context: visually interconnected, but politically at odds

Other: how central should social activism be to graphic design?