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Paula Scher: Typography Queen

Paula Scher once said, “It took me a few seconds to draw it, but it took me 34 years to learn how to draw it in a few seconds.” No one is born with perfect skill. Practice and experience are the keys to achieving their greatest potential. Even though struggles and heartaches will come their way it is just a test to bring them to where they are now. Paula Scher built a name for herself in the graphic design industry making her one of the best designers there is today.



Paula Scher attended high school in Washington, D.C... She was known as the school artist. She and her friends would make paper dolls and comic strips. While attending high school Scher also took weekend art classes at Corcoran College of Art and Design. Scher never told anyone about this because she thought it wasn't a cool thing to do. According to an article at The Great Discontent, Scher says "I took weekend art classes at Corcoran College of Art + Design, but I kept that to myself because it wasn't a cool thing to do." Scher loved art and design that she became the school's publicity chairman and made all the advertising posters for events such as

school dances. After graduating high school, Scher went to college at Tyler School of Art thinking she was going to be a painter, but she wasn't good at drawing. During her time in college, Scher experimented with different forms and mediums but felt like she didn't know what she wanted until she discovered Graphic Design in her junior year. Scher had the idea to illustrate her concepts with type. As she experimented with this idea Scher began to learn a lot about type combined with an image. Thus, she found a love for graphic design and typography.



After Scher graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Tyler School of Art in 1970 she moved to New York City with 50 dollars on hand and a dream. She landed her first job in a publishing company called Random House later known as the Penguin Random House. Scher's task was to design all the layouts for the children's books.



In 1972, Scher landed her second job in the advertising and promotions department of CBS Record. At the time, the department Paula was working in wasn't giving her the work she

wanted, which was a job designing cover records. She left CBS Records two years later and joined a competing label, Atlantic Records, as an art director. There she designed her first cover for an album. After acquiring some cover designing experience, she returned to CBS Records and worked there for eight years producing over 150 album covers annually. These were in a 12x12 format and included Eric Gale's *Ginseng Woman*, Bob James's *H and One on One* and Boston's *Boston*. Her contributions included reviving historical typefaces and design styles. In fact, she earned four Grammy nominations for her inspiring designs.



In 1982, she stepped down from CBS to explore graphic designing on her own. Based on Art deco and Russian constructivism, she developed a typographic solution. The solution employed outmoded typefaces into her designs. In 1984 along with Terry Koppel, Paula Scher formed the studio Koppel & Scher. Terry was an editorial designer and fellow Tyler graduate of Scher's. During the seven years of Koppel & Scher Paula produced brand identities, packaging, book covers, and advertising, including her famous Swatch poster based on Herbert Matter's previous work. Paula described the work she did there as a balance of editorial design and promotion packaging and covers.

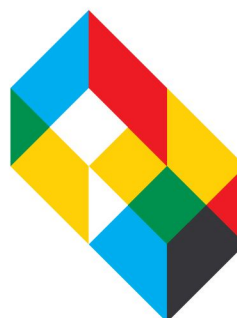
As the recession claimed many firms and companies stability, Koppel & Scher also suffered the consequences. Koppel left the firm for the position of Creative Director at Esquire magazine, while Scher joined Pentagram, in 1991.

Pentagram

In its New York branch, she consulted the design studio as a partner and eventually worked her way up to the post of principal. Moreover, she expanded her area of expertise from designing to teaching as she accepted a teaching position at the School of Visual Arts. In addition to teaching at SVA for over two decades, she taught intermittently at prestigious art institutions including Yale University, Tyler School of Art, and Cooper Union.



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Furthermore, Scher is credited with the new identity creation of The Public Theater. Her promotional graphic system for the program became highly influential in the theatrical promotion. The technique she employed to attract a more diverse crowd's attention involved the juxtaposition of street typography and graffiti. Paula Scher is undeniably an internationally recognized celebrity, who is awarded more than 300 awards by several international associations, AIGA, the Package Design Council, and The Type Directors Club. Her collection of work is showcased at New York MoMA, the Museum für Gestaltung, and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.



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