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First Paper – Design Theory

Design Theory: 104 Manual– Experimental Jetset

Design theory includes the basics and standards of making visual correspondence and a wide range of craftsmanship. It manages how we see visual data and isolates thoughts of style, taste, and pattern from the widespread standards of feel that are regular to each individual. It is essential to the quest for the plan, photography, representation, and visual expressions when all is said and done. This normal visual language interfaces planners and picture creators from history to the current day.

It is of why something works or happens the way it does that involves an understanding of the ability to be touched/real elements including form, space, proportion, color, scale, texture, structure (grid), composition, line, shape, and (total space occupied by something) and how to arrange them to (accomplish or gain with effort) balance, rhythm, pattern, (a system where things or people are in separate levels of importance), importance and focus, and togetherness. It is blended with a purpose or problem to solve, results in effective design solutions. The value of designers to their clients and causes is the thinking and the ability to combine form and function to an effective and pleasing result. Form and function applied design ideas that were first defined at the Bauhaus, and have been the basis for good design ever since. The software has changed the design process and the way we work with design elements, but it has not changed the elements themselves.

Experimental JetSet is a small, independent, Amsterdam-based graphic design studio, founded in 1997 by (and still consisting of) Marieke Stolk, Erwin Brinkers, and Danny van den Dungan. Focusing on printed matter and site-specific installations, and describing their

methodology as “turning language into objects”, Experimental Jetset have worked on a variety of projects but first and even an organization called 104 where they created the ‘104 Manual’. It is a large and complex organization, which means that different groups of designers working on different elements of graphic identity. These different elements included the printed matter, website, and the sign system. These elements have in common that they’re all based on the graphic language that they themselves have developed.

The 104 Manual started off as a scaffolding structure, what they call ‘echafaudage’. This symbolized it as the concept of the work-in-progress. The metal construction of the ‘echafaudage’ refers to early-industrial architecture. Its purpose for the form of its typography was to develop a graphic language that is punk yet minimalistic with a blend of Swiss Modernism but always retain a recognizable thought process and aesthetic. Its composition was very clean, modern, and geometric. There is a basic rule that was no more than three sizes of Futura font in one piece. It’s color identity started off with a color scheme of yellow black to refer to the warning signs on the street. Unfortunately, it has to be changed to black and white was the strongest choice. This kept the graphic identity crisp and clear. The color most dominant in their work is white. They try to show the paper to give the reader/viewer a better understanding of the construction of the graphic design. They design in such a way that the result is clear and recognizable as ‘just’ a piece of paper. A good example of text as images are different ‘104’ logos. Words, phrases, and titles are used in a pictorial way and always set in a capital uppercase letter. The letter ‘A’ is replaced by a triangle, the number 1 is replaced by an ‘I’ whereas the number 0 is replaced by a round ‘O’. Four different sorts of Futura font to use in combination with the logos go from light, medium, bold, and extra bold.

The Bauhaus played an important role in their designs but most importantly the founding of the Bauhaus manifesto. “The world of the pattern-designer and applied artist consisting only of drawing and painting must become once again a world in which things are built.”

(Experimental Jetset 2008) The idea, of a world in which things are built, has a big influence on their work. They aren’t interested in creating images but produce things. From that same manifesto: “Let us, therefore, create a new guild of craftsman without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists!”. (Experimental Jetset 2008) Although this was written 100 years ago, it described the role of contemporary designers who stuck with them and have been applied to their designs.

One of the fundamental beliefs of the Bauhaus was the ‘total work of art’ also known as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. All types of artwork could be collated into one interrelated subject, project, or study so that an overarching design schema would cover all elements of creation. The idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was a real situation for these designers when studying at their academy. From seeing how it was in their time while studying design, examples like graphic design students creating flyers for events. They decided to do something similar but for them, the whole idea of post-punk and going to art school was the urge to get away from the feeling of being told what to do. They never considered their work to as ‘objective’, or ‘neutral’, or ‘functionalist’, or ‘rational’. From the very beginning, their purpose was to express themselves.

In addition to that, notions of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in architecture can be observed. The arts and crafts This was as well interpreted in Jet Set’s 104 Manual where they called it the ‘echafudage’ (french). As mentioned earlier, it refers to a ‘work-in-progress’. They realized that a sign system based on the idea of scaffolding would be a constant reminder of the continuous cycle of building, demolishing, and rebuilding. An ‘echafaudage’ has a very natural appearance

with the casualness of a 'ready-made' object. It was an awkward construction for them. They put a lot of emphasis on working on the finished, designed object. They believe in producing actual physical artifacts.

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