

Coffee
Hour
Ashdown
Dining Room
Mon·Fri
10·11 am



Yan Cohn

3/14/2021

Coffee Hour, Massachusetts Institute of Technology poster

Jacqueline Casey,1979

Printed material, lithograph.

This design by Jaqueline Casey was a poster created for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1979. The title is “Coffee Hour” which its composition goes into its meaning. Simplistic and elegant, creative and consistent poster with one color red background. There are many white circles combined that look like eyes but what it really is coffee cups and the mixture of people creating a shareable moment in the coffee shop or place represented with the black part of the circles as a result of the combination of the two circles. The text makes reference to the crystal goblet idea where everything is more about function rather than art and beauty with clean and readable typography perfectly aligned with the composition. Jacqueline Casey was a fashion illustrator and advertising, editorial, and interior designer who worked with the Design service office at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was influenced by Swiss school designers when it comes to typography and style. Reaching a less complex approach to communication design and addressing problems while catching the attention of everyone with her striking puzzling images. Casey found herself in different era of design, pre macintosh and after, but this poster, in particular, wasn't digital because it was made in 1979, 5 years before the accomplishment and its medium is lithograph. Casey's work also shows strong use of different language approaches either they are symbols or icons that play in a universal form and don't sit to a specific style or medium.

These factors benefit the point of view of different avant-garde artists such as El-Lissitzky or Rodchenko remarking on the evolutionary aspect of technology and its relation with design. In comparison to their time, Casey's design evolved according to their vision of what it was going to be in the future with more access to different interfaces and mediums. It allowed designers to implement a better approach when it comes to delivering a message through design and typography. It's also noticeable how Casey's work can also be referred to as the theory of Moholy-Nagy typophoto. She's recognized for its imagery and use of symbolic differential meaning illustrations that say a thousand words with or without any typography in it. For her, typography in some of her pieces looks like a fundamental supportive option to give her design direction and clarity to the audience. However, she strictly respects and follows the rules of typography, not going crazy with it and focusing on readability and delivery. In fact, in this piece typography is minimalistic and just a few lines with title, place, and time for the event being advertised. This resonates with Bayer's idea when he says that "once more it became clear that typography is not self-expression within predetermined aesthetics, but that it is conditioned by the message it visualizes" (page 45). It such a spectacular description to visualize what Casey's idea was. Her typography completely depended on the context of the message being visualized by balancing both qualities and establishing the connection between each other. What Bayer was looking for was a great easing reading and freshness of perception at the time of looking at the text of any source of design. In previous design movements, this couldn't be found or wasn't just a trait that they persuaded such as constructivism, where typography consisted of various fonts and sizes that didn't follow a hierarchy. Since Casey was influenced by the Swiss school, which came after such movements, it complemented her work and made it formal and acceptable regarding Bayer's idea and prediction of the future of design. In contrast, while her work supported some of the visions of the avant-garde movement it also turned into different ways in few

aspects. According to the Graphic design theory by Helem Armstrong “1 Swiss-style design solidified the anonymous working space of the designer inside a frame of objectivity, the structure of which had been erected by the avant-garde” (page 10). This is relevant because Casey’s used the technique of grid to create such compositions and visual metaphors that are attractive to the eye for its organization and hierarchy. The avant-garde artist mentioned before missed a point that Armstrong states “Rather than immerse their own identities within a critical avant-garde paradigm of social change, these designers sought to efface their identities in service to the total corporate image, bolstering the existing power structures of their day”(page 14). Referring to Paul Rand, Lester Bell, and Hebert Bayer. This idea is contextualized by Casey for her work dedicated to the organization she was working for. Not by the creation of art, but for the clarity of work that can transmit a message and influence and change behaviors deserving the recognition and respect that she has nowadays.

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