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COMD 1112 Digital Media Foundations

Assignment – Essay on Modernism/Post Modernism/Analog and Digital Art of Sagmeister/ TED talk

The Modernist movement started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and went into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Technological advancements in machinery and mass production affected design and art dramatically. Modernism created a shift from elaborate imagery and type to a clean grid system, emphasizing the use of negative space. Communications, graphic design, and typography starting using simple sans-serif type, including Helvetica and Futura. Modernism was a movement that was the antithesis of commercialism and promoted the approach “form follows function”.

Post Modernism was a movement, in the mid-1960s, that was a direct reaction to modernism. Post Modernism moved away from the Modernist idea to let the information relay the point. Post Modernists emphasized artists’ creativeness and encouraged designers’ personalities to show in all their work. Digital technology was just starting to come into play during this period. Wim Crowel, a Dutch designer, was among the first to use computer technology to create images. Computers used dotted matrix and letters all had rounded edges. This contrasted sharply with the Modernist sans serif fonts and started a new type of typography.

Stefan Sagmeister is a graphic designer whose motto is “STYLE=FART”. The motto meant that style can be equated to hot air and should be replaced by attitude. The picture below is Sagmeister’s poster for an AIGA conference. He had his assistant use an exacto knife carve the words into his flesh to show the literal pain of the creative process.



We watched a TED talk in class today called “Happiness by Design”, given by Stefan Sagmeister. He uses examples from his own experiences to create a very thoughtful, insightful talk about how he creates happiness by design. He discusses times of true happiness which he calls “moments that take your breath away.” He’s a list maker so he makes a lot of lists. Fifty percent of his happiness list have to do with design. He talks about the difference between being happy while experiencing design or being happy designing. The scale of happiness when talking about design are comfort (bottom of scale), contentment, joy, delight, and bliss (top of scale). He discusses his experience at the Mori Museum in Tokyo during the “Happiness” exhibit. His take from the exhibit was that the visualization of happiness is an easy thing to do but creating actual happiness is not. “Happy” has a bad reputation and the only way to display in advertising or the movie industry is to be cynical and show the dark side of happiness, e.g. Sagmeister’s Talking Heads album cover.

Stefan Sagmeister believes that it's extremely difficult for designs to evoke happiness. He gave three examples of artists who've made him truly happy with their projects. One is named "True" and he printed stickers which he used to replace signs in the subway trains. True did this to see if people would notice that things said something different than they normally would. James Turrell created an installation at PS.1 MOMA with a retractable ceiling where you could watch the sky and the different nuances of the different times of the day. Finally, he talked about a Korean artist who printed 55,000 various sized speech bubble stickers and stuck them around NY. Stefan felt that "everybody involved wins" for this project. Stefan looks at his lists and talks about what he actually likes about his job. Among the things he likes are trying not to get stuck doing the same thing and working on projects that matter. At the end of the TED talk, he talks about things he's learned in life and how he uses those thoughts projects he does now. These thoughts include, "Everything I do always comes back to me.", "Trying to look good limits my life.", and "Having guts always works out for me."

**Sources:**

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