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COMD 1112

November 17, 2022

Jacqueline Casey

Jacqueline Casey is among the greatest American graphic designers of modern time. Her perseverance in a male dominated industry paid off with huge rewards and opportunities that propelled her career to new heights earning her national recognition and a coveted position as director of publications at MIT. She is a pioneer of the Swiss design influence using the grid, and her type-forward posters are exhibited around the country. Jacqueline Casey is an example that it is never too late in life to find your calling and to succeed immensely through hard work. Her inventive and alluring designs still influence artists and serve as a testament of the perfect balance between simplicity and impact.

Casey was born in Quincy, Massachusetts on April 20th, 1927. During her early life she always wanted to be an artist, a prospect that her parents did not initially support. Jacqueline eventually made it into the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, where she obtained her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree focusing on Fashion Design and Illustration. Casey struggled to find work in fashion and illustration and even ended up working as a cashier for some time. She quit her cashier job and traveled to Europe where she rediscovered her love for art and was inspired by the post-war art modernist movement.



*Figure 1. 1982 - Intimate Architecture
Contemporary Clothing Design*



Figure 2. 1979 - Coffee Hour

When Casey returned to America, she got in touch with her old classmate and now established graphic designer Muriel Cooper. Jacqueline joined Cooper at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Office of Publications, where she stayed on to eventually become director in 1972. It was at MIT that Casey found her voice and became known for adopting the modernist movement in her designs while being influenced by Swiss design principles, specifically the use of the grid. The modernist movement was essentially about letting go of the old standards of art and adopting new ideas and techniques that aligned more with the current times, doing away with tradition if you will. Casey was also inspired by brutalism and the many works of graphic designers of the 1950's, such as Gertsner, A. Hofmann, and Josef Muller-Brockmann. Brutalism emphasizes textures, type, and shapes used in unusual ways, often being layered to create impact.

Jacqueline Casey is most known for her work while at MIT. During the 70's and 80's, she produced a massive number of posters for various events at MIT. Her posters have her signature use of large graphics or abstract shapes, high contrast, and type-heavy designs. The use of the grid is extremely evident in her work as is the use of her favorite font: Helvetica. Because her

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Figure 3. 1970 - Six Artists

posters had to stand out amongst all of the other university posters on the bulletin board, she liked to use strong large graphics to draw the viewer in, and then using much smaller type to condense all the information in a smaller area of the poster so that the viewer could read it after being pulled forth by the graphic elements. Her use of color was minimal



Figure 4. 1970 - "Experienced secretaries—think"

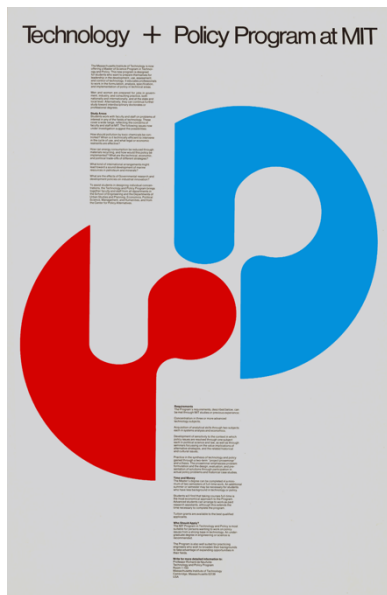


Figure 4. 1979 - Master of Science Program in Tech & Policy. MIT

and the real art in her work lies in organization, impact, and inventive layouts. Casey had two major exhibits, in addition to her work at MIT, the first was at The Chelsea School of Art in 1978 and the second was at The London College of Printing in 1980. A collection of 99 posters of her work at MIT was donated to The Rochester Institute of Technology posthumously at her request.

Casey's work stands as a testament of how successful her techniques were in using limited elements in a highly organized manner to convey a compelling message. She defined her technique as follows "My work combines two cultures: the American interest in visual metaphor on one hand, and the Swiss fascination with planning, fastidiousness, and control over technical execution on the other". Jacqueline's work is one of the best examples of something that



Figure 5. 1984 - Elijah Mendelssohn Concert



Figure 6. 1973 - Boston Visual Artists Union Poster

looks simple but is incredibly difficult to replicate successfully. Casey passed away on May 8th, 1992. Her works are still currently being displayed at many museums of modern art across America and Europe. Today she is credited for being one of the first major female graphic designer of modern times.

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