

Development of Corporate Identity and Visual System

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Abstract

Corporate identity design system was an inevitable byproduct of after world war period when war efforts were converted to consumer products and for mass use worldwide. This article discusses the development of full fledged corporate identity system and the reason for its development. Discussing upon the fine tuning and nuances of it in this article further. Great graphic designers and graphic design firms were employed to produce meaningful and effective design systems with strategy that targets specific group of the market. It further discusses about how designers preferred universal design system rather than developing individual designs. A new development took place and public design system was also introduced. Now strategic design systems were employed in public events like the Olympic Games.

Key Words: *Corporate Identity System, visual system, Design, Corporate graphics, Graphic Design, Advertising, Trademark, International Prototype, grid system, uniform visual identity, graphic communication.*

Introduction

The period after Second World War, witnessed major economic development and expansion. The Technology utilized in the war was converted into the production of consumer goods. “With this bright view of the future in mind, “Good design is good business” became a rallying cry in the graphic-design community during nineteen fifties. Prosperity and technological development appeared closely linked to the increasingly important corporations, and the more perceptive of these comprehended the need to develop a corporate image and identity among diverse audiences. Design was seen as a major way to shape a reputation for quality and reliability.”¹

Corporate Identity System: The corporate communication goal is to increase the awareness of a company’s image and to establish empathy between the company and the target audience. The corporate communication must be dynamic, correct and planned, and it must show the target audience the company’s global plans. Corporate communication means to transmit the company or organization’s identity, making it understandable and convenient and giving it a determined image. The corporate identity is the company’s being; it is its essence. The corporate identity is the integration, in the mind of target audience, of all the messages conveyed by a company or organization.”²



Figure1. William Golden, Logo for CBS Television, 1951, USA. Showing the awesome power of video image.

It was during the same time, the international typographic style and corporate identity system together gave rise to the visual system of global corporations. During late nineteen fifties and sixties, the corporate philosophy and approach to advertising was seen. The initial period in the development of postwar visual identification was started by the efforts by strong individual designers who put their personal impression on a client’s designed

image. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) of New York City was among the first to design corporate identity design. The CBS eye was designed by William Golden. Advertising was created not by an outside agency but by internal staff; this permitted CBS to maintain a unified approach to advertising and other graphics.

Even fine artists like Feliks Topolski, René Bouche, and Ben Shahn were commissioned to create illustrations for the advertisements of CBS. The CBS corporate identity design appeared on everything including television screen to advertisements on print and even on every other items and stationeries that was used by the company for its communication process.

The approach of CBS towards its corporate identity and design was more dependent upon the management and its policy towards its design and the creative ability of its design professionals. Rather than depending upon any specific style or system. The witty and elegant advertising campaign of CBS gave a new way to advertising, which promoted television and radio advertising to advertisers and account executives.

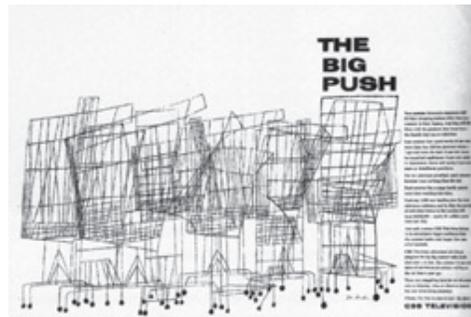


Figure 2. William golden,

Illustrator Ben Shahn, trade ad. for CBS television, 1957.USA.

The advertisement “Big push” Fig 2 is an example of a print advertisement promoting even television advertising. In a design conference during nineteen fifty nine Golden asked the designers to have a sense of responsibility and rational understanding of the function of their work.

“He declared the word *Design* a verb ‘in the sense that a designer designs something to be communicated to someone’ and added that a designer’s primary function is ensuring that the message is accurately and adequately communicated.”³

There were several other early corporations like Container corporation of America(CCA), Society for chemical industry in Basel (CIBA), International Business machine (IBM), American Broadcasting corporation (ABC), etcetera, employed modernist

designers and artists to design sophisticated identity designs to sell their products. Corporate graphics was promoted and documented by a magazine named “Print” during nineteen fifties. James K. Fogleman was hired by CIBA in nineteen fifty one as its director when the company developed itself into a global firm. At that time the lengthy name of “Society for chemical industry in Basel” was reduced to CIBA. In nineteen fifty three, Fogleman called for a need of integrated design or controlled visual expression of the company personality in order to achieve a definite corporate identity. He also called for a sense of unity, clarity and single viewpoint. He was responsible for popularizing the corporate image concept. Later on this design philosophy of consistency was applied to almost everything of the company, from signage, promotional graphics, vehicles, etcetera that played an important role in building unified corporate identity. Through his frequent lectures and writings, Fogleman popularized the concept of corporate image and identity.

American industries survived the devastation of the world war two. Thus the American giant corporations employed designers to produce Corporate design programs for their wide range of consumers.



Figure 3. CIBA Corporate identity Program including pharmaceuticals packaging (Type face selection, Color, Symbol Placement).



Figure 4. Paul Rand IBM Trademark, USA, 1956.

During nineteen fifties and sixties, popular American designers had a lasting impression on the overall design fraternity of the world. Designers like Paul Rand, Lester Beall, Saul Bass and few design firms like Lippincott and Margules, Chermayeff and Geismar took over the design of visual identification system in a major way. Paul Rand designed the trademark of International Business Machine (IBM). He realized the importance of reducing the trademark to elementary shape or easy recognition, universal appeal and visual uniqueness as well as stylistically timelessness. He redesigned IBM corporate logo later on in nineteen seventies by striping it into unifying the three forms and evoked a scan lines on a video terminal. Thus it was applied to overall corporate identity program.

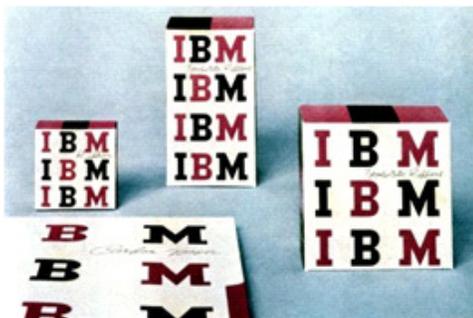


Figure 5. Paul Rand, Package design , 1950s

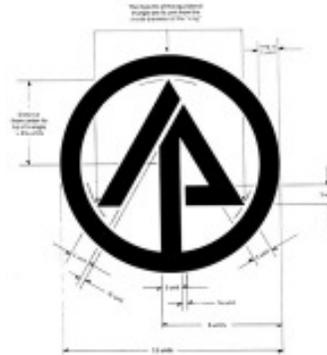


Figure 6. Lester Biall, Internatuional paper Company trademark, 1960. Combining a tree and an upward arrow.

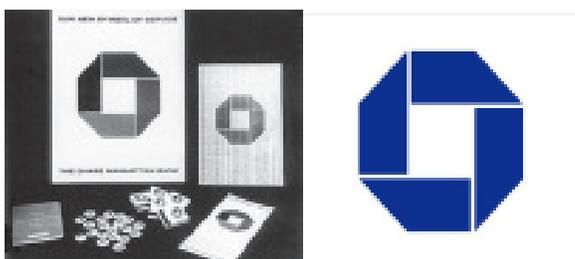


Figure 7. Chermoeff&Giesmar Associates, Signage and typeface for Chase Manhattan Bank, 1960.

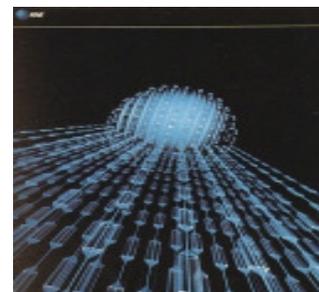


Figure 8. Saul Bass & Associates, AT&T Computer graphics animation identification Tag, 1984

Lester Beall was among those designers who started Modern Design Movement in America. During his later years he was involved in the corporate identity design program and created few best designs. International Paper Company corporate identity program was one of his best designs.

The design was applied to each and every thing of the company including vehicles, stationary, packaging etcetera, in order to achieve a universal appeal and looks. The bold looks of the design was made it possible to be used on almost everything. During nineteen sixties Chermayeff and Geismar Associates became popular for their corporate identity program especially for their corporate identity design of Chase Manhattan Bank, New York. The design was used on each and every thing that the bank used. According to Geismar “Symbolic forms must be memorable and have some barb to it that will make it stick to your mind, at the same time it must be attractive, pleasing and appropriate. The challenge is to combine all those things into something simple.”⁴They also designed the corporate identity of Mobil oil and more than hundreds of corporatedesign programs. They were responsible for developing exhibition techniques like the super market principle, by clustering together large variety of objects and conveying an insight, collectively. Saul Bass designed the corporate identity program for AT&T, Minolta and many more companies. During late nineteen eighty four, he designed a mark for AT&T to reposition the firm as a global company, using a computer animated motion graphics and television commercials.



Figure 9. Saul Bass & Associates, trademarks for various companies

During nineteen sixties, the effort of both the International Typographic Style and Visual identification movement can be seen in the development of highly systematic and planned program of Lufthansa German airline identification system. It was developed at Ulm Institute of Design by Oto Aicher in collaboration with Thomas Gonda, Fritz Querengasser and Nick Poerich. This design program became an international prototype for the corporate identity system as it developed uniform packaging, Standardized paper format, grid system, detail typographic specification, uniform color scheme, photographs and advertisements, with every detail and specification addressed for complete uniform visual identity.



Figure 10. OtlAicher in collaboration with Tomas Gonda, Nick Roerich, Lufthansa identity manual pages, 1962.

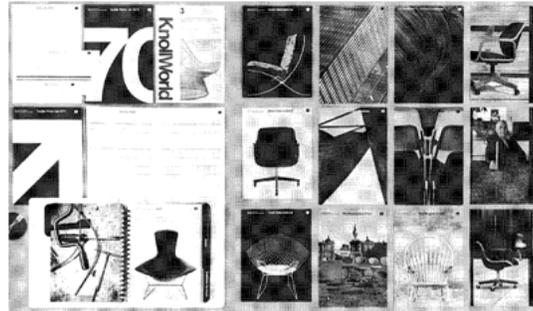


Figure 11. Massimo Vignelli and Unimarknew York staff, Knoll graphics, 1966-70.

The Center for Advance research in Design was established by Container Corporation of America, which was an independent studio where designers worked on advanced and experimentation projects. John Messy worked there as a corporate designer.

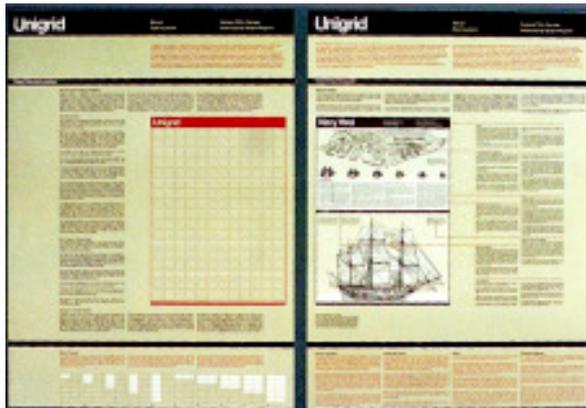


Figure 12. Massimo Vignelli, Knoll International poster, 1966

During nineteen sixty five an international firm named “Unimark” founded in Chicago by Ralph Eckerstrom, James Fogleman, and Massimo Vignelli. The design firm rejected individualistic design and stressed on the belief that design is a system and a basic structure, so that people could implement it effectively.

They used grid to standardize all their graphic communication programs. The objective was to spread common consistency across the face of multinational corporate communication. One of the excellent design programs can be seen in the Knoll program directed by Massimo Vignelli who was the director of design and head of the “Unimarks” United States New York office. He designed the Unigrd, unifying hundreds of information folders for United States National Park service. It was one of the major works by Federal Design improvement program. Vignelli was responsible for the evolution of information

design. Several Transport signage symbols were designed by American Institute of Graphic Art for international events, where large airports and other transportation facilities were handled by international travelers.



It was commissioned by United States department of Transportation. It was designed to bridge language barriers and simplifies basic message. It was designed by Roger Cook and Don Shanosky of Cook and Shanosky Associates, New Jersey.

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Figure 13. Massimo Vignelli, Vincent Gleason, Dennis McLaughlin. Unigrad System for National Park Service, 1977 .USA

In nineteen sixties the concept of comprehensive design system had become a reality. Nineteen sixty eight Mexico City nineteenth Olympiad, nineteen seventy two Munich twentieth Olympiad and nineteen eighty four twentythird Olympiad are some of the outstanding efforts of the design programs. Designing logos for the Olympiad was the first step, which was later applied to every printable items and visuals. After that, Pictographic symbols were developed for athlete and cultural event; directional signs were developed to be used throughout the city. Later on Posters, stamps film titles and television spots were developed.

Summary



Figure 14. Lance Wyman, logo for 19th Olympiad, 1968. Mexico

Call for an integrated design and creating personality of companies by Fogleman was a major step towards popularizing the corporate image concept. His design philosophy helped in building unified corporate identity design. Development of Corporate Identity system was a major change being brought about by the big corporate giants who wanted to establish

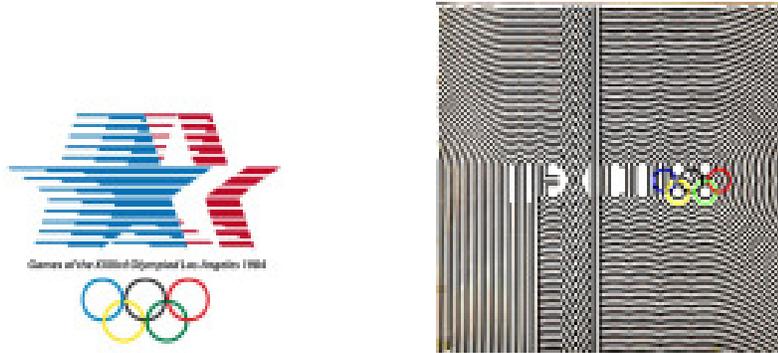


Figure 15. Lance Wyman, logo for 19th Olympiad, 1968. Mexico



Figure 16. Lance Wyman, Eduardo Terrazas, 19th Olympiad cultural and sports symbol, Mexico 1968.

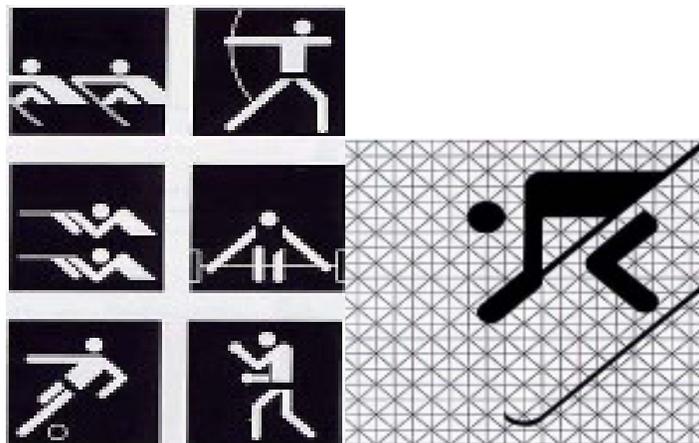


Figure 17, 18,. Munich Olympiad, Posters, athletic symbols,

their identity in their market. Their constant input for developing this identity system can be seen from the beginning where they employed renowned graphic designers in this purpose to produce corporate design programs for their worldwide consumers. Designers like Paul Rand, Lester Beall, Saul Bass and few design firms like Lippincott, Chermayeff and Geismar had a lasting impression on the overall design fraternity of the world.

Thus graphic design moved from advertising to embrace corporate identity programs and slowly it emerged as an identity and symbol development system for entire human civilization in the world.

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