

PAUL RAND: DEFINING DESIGN

Museum of Design Atlanta Traveling Exhibition

Curated by Daniel Lewandowski

EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION:

Design helps to create everything that is around us – the cereal boxes on our breakfast tables, the ads we read, the websites we surf, the cars we drive, the buildings in which we work, the paintings we admire, the phones on which we talk – design shapes everything.

Design, however, is much more than the colors, the textures, and the shapes that give style to the objects and images that are part of our everyday lives. In fact, the concept of design is so broad that it can be quite difficult to define.

Yet, establishing a definition of design is precisely the task that the American graphic designer Paul Rand (1914 – 1996) pursued throughout his long career as he sought to understand and to enumerate the visual elements that combined to make some works of design stand out from others. Though he recognized that achieving the right combination of visual elements was quite difficult, Rand defined design quite simply, saying that it is:

the synthesis of form and content.

Born in Brooklyn and educated at the Pratt Institute, Rand found inspiration in the works of European modernists like Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, Alexander Calder, Joan Miro and others. Study of the modernists led Rand to develop a new avant-garde style for graphic design that was based on restrained minimalism, focused ideas, cut paper, and photographic collage. He first made a name for himself by designing playful layouts for such publications as *Apparel Arts* and *Direction Magazine*, creating memorable and effective images that reflect his deep understanding of design principles.

Rand is best known for the corporate identities he designed in the 1950s and 1960s for such firms as IBM, ABC, Cummins Engine, and UPS. In these and in all his designs, he sought to achieve that synthesis of form and content that was necessary for the creation of what he called “good work.”

A prolific writer, Rand documented his theory of design in articles and in four critically acclaimed books, all of which are written in a short and direct style and which examine complex subjects, namely the relation of graphic design to art, the relation of form to content, expression through typography, and humor in design.

Rand’s remarkable ability to combine theory and practice informs *Paul Rand: Defining Design*. Throughout the exhibition, Rand’s own writings are juxtaposed with examples of his work, demonstrating how he used both theory and practice in the development of his own highly influential definition of design.

CONTENT:

Over 250 objects including advertisements, magazine covers, books, and packaging.

Rand's work is presented in his own words through chapters of his ground-breaking books:

Rand, P. (1996). *From Lascaux to Brooklyn*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rand constantly wrestled with the question of why some objects are considered to be art, while others are not. *From Lascaux to Brooklyn* provides a primer in aesthetics, demonstrating the timelessness of design principles that enable communication.

Rand, P. (1985). *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- *Collage and Montage*
- *The Meaning of Repetition*
- *The Role of Humor*
- *Ideas about Ideas*
- *The Symbol in Advertising*
- *Typographic Form and Expression*
- *The Trademark*
- *Seeing Stripes*
- *The Rebus and the Visual Pun*

Rand, P. (1970). *Thoughts on Design* (Third Edition ed.). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Art.

- *Versatility of the Symbol*
- *Integrating Form and Content*
- *The Designer's Problem*

Additional didactic content:

- *Direction Magazine* – Rand's early work for *Direction* magazine provided him an outlet to address serious subject matter and lead him to develop his signature aesthetic style of collage and hand written text.
- *On the RCA Ad*
- *IBM Good Design is Good Business* – Rand revolutionized graphic design in the corporate world by creating graphic standards, logo usage requirements, and eventually a centralized graphic design staff for IBM. Rand designed numerous corporate logos, including IBM, UPS, Westinghouse, and ABC, many of which are still in use today.
- *The Presentation*

- *The Rand House* – Rand believed that everything could benefit from good design, not just graphics. In keeping with his love of modernism, Rand designed his own home, based upon the work of architects that he admired such as Marcel Breuer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and le Corbusier.

Video interviews

Timeline –Places Rand’s life and the evolution of his career as a designer and writer into historical context.

Ipad stations allowing visitors to continue their exploration of Rand’s work through videos, articles, and more on paul-rand.com

Interactive experiences

- *A Lesson with Paul Rand* – Participate in a graphic design lesson given by Paul Rand to his students at Yale University.
- *Create your own Collage* – Collage was one of Paul Rand’s signature design tools. Using dry erase boards, markers, and Colorforms, create your own collage inspired by the exhibition and share it on social media!

CURATOR:

Daniel Lewandowski, an Atlanta-based designer, is the founder and curator of the official digital source regarding Paul Rand, www.paul-rand.com. Since 2005 he has collected and cataloged many famous and rarely seen pieces of Rand’s work. This has been a personal undertaking and has been extremely well received by fans and by the Rand Estate itself.

SIZE:

A minimum of 3,700 square feet of dedicated gallery space is required.

LOAN FEE:

\$25,000 loan fee

Travel and lodging expenses

Shipping

REGISTRARIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- The exhibition space, staging and storage areas must have temperature and humidity controls to guarantee an environment of 45% to 55% relative humidity and 68 - 72 degrees Fahrenheit, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- No direct sunlight may reach the components to prevent fading. Light levels will be restricted to 5 footcandles.
- Empty crates must be stored in a secure, pest and temperature-controlled dry area.
- Smoking, eating, and drinking are prohibited in the staging, storage, and exhibition areas.
- Sufficient security must be provided throughout delivery, staging, installation, exhibition, and de-installation. Alarm and/or guard surveillance during closing hours is required.
- MODA's exhibitions manager will supervise installation and de-installation. Venue must provide professional installation support.

CONTACT:

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