



Words in the Forest

Commentary by Jiyeon Song
& Related writings

on Forest protection campaign poster by Ryuichi Yamashiro



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(1954, Silkscreen, 41" X 29")

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Forest protection campaign (1955) by

Ryuichi Yamashiro Ryu

1920 Osaka, Japan – graphic designer, typographer, teacher – 1938: completes his graphic design studies at the School of Arts and Crafts in Osaka. Then works as a graphic designer in Osaka. 1952: opens his own graphic studio. 1958: designs the Japanese pavilion with murals for the world exhibitions in Brussels. Founder member of the Nippon Design center. Has taught intermittently at the Kuwazama Design School. 1973: founds the communication Arts Agency. Yamashiro has received numerous awards for his work.

Excerpt from
Typography by Friedrich Friedl, Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1998

Yamashiki designed poster

that uses typography as image.

What is poster art?

From its lowly beginnings to its elevation to high art, posters have been part of our cultural landscape forever - well at least for the last 150 years. Wikipedia defines posters as "any large piece of paper which hangs from a wall or other such surface. They are a frequent tool of advertisers, propagandists, protestors and other groups trying to communicate a message."

The poster with its connections to the delightfully sordid worlds of advertising and cinema is often dismissed as lowbrow; occupying the same slot as say pulp fiction vis-à-vis the poem or epic. The creations of the three-colour lithograph in Paris, France in 1850 kick-started the development of the poster. Jules Chéret, considered the father of the industry, developed the poster into a cost effective communication tool.

His Maitres de l’Affiche(master of the poster) series between 1895 and 1900 was a commercial and critical success. With a poster one could tell the populace of coming theatrical attractions, sporting events or even what is selling at the store. This jolly marriage of art and commerce, attracted artists of every persuasion who needed to earn their daily bread.

He uses Chinese

It does not contain cliché visuals such as trees or pollution that most ecology campaign posters use.

By the 1870s, there were poster art specialists and the sidewalks of Paris had turned into a gigantic art gallery. Poster art came to its own with a major exhibition in Paris in 1884. By the 1890s poster art had spread through out Europe and with artists like Henri De Toulouse Lautrec trying their hand at the art form, poster art had gained currency and legitimacy. Artists like Eugene Grasset and Alphonse Mucha used the principles of art nouveau for their posters. There are different kinds of posters including the propaganda posters (for recruitment), the pin ups, comic book posters, protest posters, affirmation posters (with edifying text and scenery) and educational posters or charts.

Excerpt from
<http://www.hinduonnet.com>

Chinese characters,

“林” (grove) and “森” (forest), developed from the “木” pictogram, not only to convey the meaning of the words but also as visual elements.

Formation of Chinese Characters

In the early days when Chinese characters were invented, pictograms dominated the early writing system, in which it was possible to discern the meaning from shapes. The evolution of characters, notably the need for expressing abstract concepts and ease of writing, has boosted the emergence of more conceptual characters.

Around 100AD, a linguist Xu Shen classified all Chinese characters into six categories: pictogram, pictophonetic compounds, Ideograph, Logical aggregates, Associate Transformation, and Borrowing. Although the categories are arguably inconsistent to reflect complete nature of Chinese characters, it has been perpetuated by the long history and its pervasive use.

The biggest size of word,

“森” (forest), focuses viewer’s attention and works as a headline.

The composition also helps the viewer to see the overall image as a shape of a forest. Repeated words “林” and “森” emphasize the meaning of the words.

One of categories is pictogram. Contrary to popular belief, only small portions of Chinese characters are pictograms, which reflect the shape of real objects. These characters have evolved into a simplifier form to make ease of writing. Examples include 日 (ri) for "sun", 月 (yue) for "moon", 木 (mu) for "wood". There is no concrete data to show the number of pictograms in modern characters, but 2000 years ago Xu Shen estimated that 4% of Chinese characters fell into this category.

Also translated as associative compounds, it symbolizes an abstract concept with pictograms. This are in Logical aggregates category. For instance, while 木 (mu) is a pictograph for wood, putting two 木 together makes 林 (lin), an ideogram for "forest". Combining 日 (ri) sun and 月 (yue) moon makes 明 (ming) bright which reflects the sunlight and moonlight up the sky. Xu Shen estimated that 13% of characters fall into this category.

Excerpt from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_character

Italian Futurism,

words are represented typographically by highlighting the space between words. Imagery is composed by the words and becomes concrete poetry.

Italian Futurism

Italian Futurism was initially a literary movement created by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909 with the manifesto *Le Futurisme*. The intentions of this manifesto was a wake-up call to Marinetti's countrymen to make them aware that they had been 'wearing second-hand clothes for too long.' It was time for them to create a new art for themselves, forged out of the beauty of speed and a glorification of war: Art, in fact, can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice. That the manifesto was first written in French and published in the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* before any of the new Futurist art existed, typified Marinetti's understanding of the power of the media to work for him and disseminate his ideas.

F. T. Marinetti along with the artists that he gathered around him, wrote manifestos not only on literature, music, dance, performance, painting, architecture, etc. but also on almost all aspects touching everyday life, such as clothing, food, smells, war and lust.

Empty space at the bottom helps to compose an image of the forest, and the negative space, creates the shape of the land.

Limited colors and space makes the whole piece look like Eastern art.

Futurism was the first attempt in the 20th century to reinvent life as it was being transfixed by new technologies and conceive of a new race in the form of machine-extended man. Futurism succinctly reiterated a cognate set of ideas which reverberates all through a multitude of forms in 20th century art expression.

These were ideas which were already in the air, many filtering up through the Symbolist and Expressionistic poets of the 19th century. The impact of radically new forms of technology had made profound effects upon Western culture, and these too were at the core of the Futurist enterprise. From the collapse and bankruptcy of traditional Western art forms and aesthetics at the end of 19th century, the art of discontinuity and rupture was produced.

Excerpt from
<http://cotati.sjsu.edu/spoetry/folder6/ng63.html>

Hearing the shape?

The juxtaposition of different sizes of in the forest and in the forest and the hue of the green color evokes the smell of pine trees.

Listening to type?

Harmony of space and letters brings a rhythmical sensation.

Hearing Type

One description of typography could be visualizing language through the hierarchical organization of glyphs in a spatial field. Our perception of shapes, such as glyphs or letterforms, is based on the contrast between forms and counter form colors, produced by different wavelengths of light. Patterns of light waves influence our ability to recognize the glyphs within a typeface.

Music and typography are temporal experiences and forms of communication, expressing ideas through different languages. Although they occur in different dimensions, aspects of structure, motion and time are common to both languages. Music and typography have a common ancestry: spoken languages. Originally based on the rhythms of speech, music is a form of storytelling that is structured by phrasing acoustic information. Since typography is the visualization of a spoken language, a notion of time and grammatical syntax are inherent to the process of reading a composition of typographic elements.

Introducing a series of lectures on the correspondences between linguistics and music, composer Leonard Bernstein said, "The best way to 'know' a thing is in the context of another discipline." Verbal languages can be both denotative (a communicative function, as in prose) and connotative (an aesthetic function, as in poetry). Music communicates exclusively as a connotative language. Bernstein reached the conclusion that "Language must therefore reach even higher than its linguistic surface structure, the prose sentence, to find the true equivalent of musical surface structure. And that equivalent must of course be poetry." Like language, typography can also communicate on an aesthetic or semantic level, higher than its syntactic surface structure. As Paul Rand said, "To design is to transform prose into poetry."

Excerpt from
<http://designforum.aiga.org>
Written by Frank Armstrong Published on June 27, 2005.



Class Communication 3, MDP, ACCD
Instructor Anne Burdick
Design Jiyeon Song, *Design/ Writing/ Research*

Type Baskerville, Helvetica Neue
Paper HP Vellum
Printer Epson StylusPro 7800



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Words in the Forest

Commentary by J.P.
& P.

Forest graphics campaign 2010-12

Ryūichi Yamashiro

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Keisaku Yamashiro

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