Words in the Forest

Commentary by Jiyeon Song & Related writings

on Forest protection campaign poster by Ryuichi Yamashiro
Words in the Forest
Ryuichi Yamashiro

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
What is poster art?

From its humble 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 a poster as “any large piece of paper which hangs from a wall or other such surface. They are a frequent tool of advertisers, propagandists, protestes 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 was selling at the store. This jolly marriage of art and commerce, attracted artists of every persuasion who needed to earn their daily bread.

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 throughout 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

It does not contain cliché visuals such as trees or pollution that most ecology campaign posters use.
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 the complete nature of Chinese characters, it has been perpetuated by the long history and its pervasive use.

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 simplified form to make ease of writing. Examples include  ri for “sun”,  yue for “moon”,  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 is in Logical aggregates category. For instance, while  mu is a pictograph for wood, putting two  mu together makes  lin, an ideogram for “forest”. Combining  ri for sun and  yue moon makes  ming bright which reflects the sunlight and moonlight up the sky. Xu Shen estimated that 13% of characters fall into this category.

He uses Chinese (grove) and forest, developed from the pictogram, not only to convey the meaning of the words but also as visual elements.

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Italian Futurism

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

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’s life—lifework for him and devastating his ideals.

F. T. Marinetti along with the artists that he gathered around him, wrote manifests 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.

Italian 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 cogitate set of ideas which reverberate 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

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

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

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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.

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.
Words in the Forest
Forest protection campaign (1955) by

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Futurism

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Empty space at the bottom helps of the forest, and the negative space, creates the piece look...
Hearing the shape?

Listening to type?

The juxtaposition of different sizes of type in the forest and in the forest.

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Music and typographic time are temporal experiences and forms of communication, expressing ideas through different languages. Although they share dimensions of structure, motion, and time, they are common to both dimensions. Music and typography have a common ancestry, both used in oral languages. Originally based on the rhythms of speech, music is a form of storytelling that is structured by phrasing and accent. 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.
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