100 Ideas that Changed Graphic Design
by Steven Heller and Véronique Vienne

BOOK REVIEW
BY FANNY CAMARGO
Dominican University
March 23, 2012
About the Authors: Steven Heller

• Co-chair of the MFA Designer as Author program and co-founder of the MFA in Design Criticism, MFA in Interaction Design, MFA Social Documentary Film and MPS Branding programs at the School of Visual Arts (SVA), New York.

• Over 40 years as an art director for various underground and mainstream periodicals. For 33 years he was an art director at the New York Times.

• Editor of AIGA VOICE and contributing editor to Print, Eye, Baseline and I.D. magazines.

• Recipient of the 1999 AIGA Medal for Lifetime Achievement.

• Author and editor of more than 130 books on graphic design, satiric art and popular culture.
About the Authors: Véronique Vienne

- Has worked at a number of US magazines as art director.
- Author of *The Art of Doing Nothing, The Art of Imperfection, and Something to be Desired*.
- A frequent contributor to *Graphis* and *Metropolis* magazines.
- Lives in New York and teaches at SVA on the Graphic Design MFA program.

Other Collaborations with Steven Heller:

*Art Direction Explained, At Last!* (2009)
*The Education of an Art Director* (2005)
About the Book

Published in London in 2012 by Laurence King Publishing for the 100 Ideas Series.
About the Book

Contents:

• 100 entries, arranged broadly in chronological order, presenting influential ideas in graphic design history:

  From Idea #1: The Book, to Idea #100: Designers’ Websites.

• 216 pages, 300 illustrations
• Glossary
• Further Reading
• Index
Theme

This book is not an anthology of “isms”

Instead, the authors’ goal is to determine, define, discuss and illustrate 100 big ideas that created the critical mass that produced the art and craft or contemporary graphic design.

What are big ideas?

“Notions, conceptions, inventions, and inspirations -- formal, pragmatic, and conceptual -- that have been employed by graphic designers to enhance all genres of visual communication. These ideas have become, through synthesis and continual application, the ambient language(s) of graphic design. They constitute the technological, philosophical, forma, and aesthetic constructs of graphic design.“

(Heller and Vienne, 2012, p. 6)
Tenets

1) Big ideas can be situated in one time or span different time periods.

2) These 100 are not the only big ideas.

3) Which came first, the big idea or the big change?
   “Breakthrough ideas might be credited to a single individual, but they are often ready for prime time, and waiting for someone to bring them forward.”
   (Heller and Vienne, 2012, p. 7)

4) Small vs. Big
   Some ideas started small, but carved themselves a comfortable niche over time.
   Some big ideas turned out not so big after all.

5) Not all big ideas are “good” ideas.
   Nevertheless, some not so “good” ideas have great influence and impact in the graphic design profession and visual culture.
Tenets

Big (and new) ideas are still essential

“You may never be credited for your contribution to graphic design, but the world might be a better place if you can help formulate a big idea.”

(Heller and Vienne, p. 7)
Editorial Reviews

“The scope is broad but intelligently refined, connecting all aspects of graphic design, from the age-old technique of text ornamentation to the relatively nascent appearance of pixelated images and digital type.”

- James Thorne in Cool Hunt

“It is both discerning and delightfully insightful. Graphic artists might want to put a copy in a handy location for later use as a kind of roulette wheel for idea generation.”

- Red Bubble

“A thoughtfully curated inventory of abstract concepts that defined and shaped the art and craft of graphic design. The sum of these carefully constructed parts amounts to an astute lens not only on what design is and does, but also on what it should be and do.

- Maria Popova in The Atlantic
User Reviews

“How many ideas do we now take for granted that didn't exist in human thought until someone tried to describe it through drawing? A great book for the thinker or just someone who likes to look at the pictures.”

- Carol-Jean S. Boevers (amazon.com)

“Not only is this book a great conversational piece, but it truly is an inspirational source for any designer. The large size is great to flip through the pages and get lost in the fascinating world of text, images, and messages.”

- Maria Gebhardt (goodreads.com)
Words become visual artefacts

IDEA # 18

TEXTS AS IMAGES

The relationship between words and images is one fraught with creative tension. Text people command the moral high ground as custodians of the printed word, while visual types counterattack by claiming that a picture is worth a thousand words. Their feuding is now legendary. In the publishing world, it is the responsibility of art directors to arbitrate their quarrels, but the conflict that pits words against images is as old, and as vexing, as the war between men and women.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Italian teacher Filippo Marinetti led a charge against printed matter, aestheticizing as an assault on moralists. The first of his 1912 manifestos was a call to arms by an emerging avant-garde movement. Marinetti, who joined the Futurist Manifesto in 1909 (see note), started what soon became a tradition among new-wave avant-garde artists. Today, countless magazines, newspapers, posters, design, photography, and even poetry is text in the form of visual protest. Bob Fink was a part of this game when, in 1965, he shot the most vivid of his dramatic photographs. "I saw a movie trailer for 'The Purge'," he said. "I was so moved by it, I bought a series of wide-angle shots from its director, the frame that shows him holding the, y'know, and I had photographed that."

Among contemporary graphic designers, texts as images are now commonplace. Recently, Swiss graphic designer Jean-Christophe Gagné released a series of long, wide-angle shots, which he published on the Internet. This new genre, he says, is about "the intersection of the visual and the verbal."
Idea # 18 - At the library

Transforming typography to convey a message. Words become memorable once you have figure out what they mean.
Figures of graphic speech, striving to bridge the gap between words and images.
Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images*

"The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture "This is a pipe," I'd have been lying!"

This is not a pipe

Semiotic riddles
Deceptive nature of representations
Trickster?
Idea # 43 - At the library

Rebuses are fairly easy to translate into words. A staple of modern conceptual graphic and typographic design.
Idea # 76

**BIG BOOK LOOK**
*Big, Bold, buy me*

- Large Titles
- Large Author’s name
- Small symbolic Image

Jacket Design by Paul Bacon, 1956

*Compulsion*

Jacket Design by Paul Bacon, 1961

*Catch-22*
My Assessment

*100 Ideas that Changed Graphic Design* embarks readers in a chronological, illustrative and informative journey that covers an extensive corpus of subjects from body types and teen magazines to propaganda and Pixelation.

- Clean layout, enjoyable, easy to read.
- A comprehensive overview of the field.
- Great examples of the innovations and contemporary uses.
- Very informative, interesting historical context.
- Great for designers, art buffs, or anyone that likes pictures.
- Every entry chronicles and analyses the idea, but also includes the author’s opinions, who at times, act as critics.
Seeing the big ideas everywhere...

# 31. Red with Black

#77. Nostalgia
Seeing the big ideas everywhere...

#60. Abstract Graphs

Let us welcome controversial books and controversial authors.
- John F. Kennedy

#72. White Space
Want to Know More?

• Listen to Heller talk about the process and rationale behind *100 Ideas that Changed Graphic Design* in Debbie Millman's Design Matters podcast:
  

“History, as we all know, is written by the survivors. And there are certain historical facts that never get covered. And, in graphic design, it's fascinating how many things don't get covered until somebody uncovers them.”

- Steven Heller, 2012.
The full list

1. The Book  
2. Body Type  
3. Rub-on Designs  
4. Rays  
5. Pastiche  
6. Pointing Fingers  
7. Vanitas  
8. Clenched Fists  
9. Monumental Images  
10. Female Archetypes  
11. Colour Blocks  
12. Ornamentation  
13. Decorative Logotypes  
14. Naive Mascots  
15. Entrepreneurship  
16. Metaphoric Lettering  
17. Swashes on Caps  
18. Text as Images  
19. Visual Puns  
20. The Square Format  
21. Primitive Figuration  
22. Propaganda  
23. The Object Poster  
24. Paper Cutouts  
25. Manifestos  
26. Graphic Design Magazines  
27. Botanical Geometry  
28. Calligrams  
29. Loud Typography  
30. Asymmetric Typography  
31. Red with Black  
32. Super graphics  
33. Supreme Geometry  
34. Funny Faces  
35. Expression of Speed  
36. Corporate Identity  
37. Dust Jackets  
38. Found Typography  
39. Ransom Notes  
40. Design Handbooks  
41. Avant-garde Zines  
42. Collages  
43. Riddles and Rebusse  
44. Photomontage  
45. Pictograms  
46. Floating Heads  
47. Abstraction  
48. Triangulation  
49. Extreme Close-ups  
50. The Provocative Gesture  
51. Motion Graphics  
52. Night Spectaculars  
53. Shadow Play  
54. Good Design  
55. Forced Obsolescence  
56. Vibrating Colour  
57. Strips and Panels  
58. Frame by Frame  
59. Perfect Rectangles  
60. Abstract Graphs  
61. Dynamic Diagonals  
62. Stencil Type  
63. Comic Lettering  
64. Parody  
65. Sustainable Packaging  
66. Public Service Campaigns  
67. Branding Campaigns  
68. Layering & Overprinting  
69. Design Thinking  
70. The Grid  
71. Brand Narratives  
72. White Space  
73. Less is More  
74. Mono-Alphabets  
75. Film Title Sequences  
76. Big Book Look  
77. Nostalgia  
78. Illegibility  
79. Scan Lines  
80. Teen Magazines  
81. Culture Jamming  
82. High Contrast  
83. Psychedelia  
84. Split Fountain  
85. Underground Comics  
86. Record Album Covers  
87. Street Slogans  
88. Sexual Taboo Busting  
89. Self-Promotional Publishing  
90. Tags  
91. Universal Pricing Code  
92. Vernacular  
93. French Theory  
94. Do It Yourself  
95. The Fine Print  
96. Magazine Coverlines  
97. Guerrilla Advertising  
98. Pixellation  
99. Ambigrams  
100. Designers' Websites