

Hot For  
Teacher: 132 pt

Some Notes on  
Graphic Design  
and Pedagogy 66 pt

by Mark Owens 34 pt

## 01. Writing Matter

The roots of European typography can be found not only in the cutting of metal type and the mechanics of the printing press but in the practices of Renaissance handwriting and humanist pedagogy. The subject of numerous instruction manuals published over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, handwriting served as a crucial marker of class distinction, granting a degree of social mobility to those who could master and reproduce its forms. This required a strict disciplining of the body through iterative drills of copying and re-copying texts by hand. Derived from the marks of the humanist pen, within its very forms typography thus encodes a pedagogic program and its fashioning of a newly literate, modern subjectivity.

12 pt

## 02. Kunst und Industrie

The Werkbund emerged in Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century, just as mass culture and consumerism were beginning to take hold with the advance of industrialization and commodity culture. Grappling with these new developments from capitalism's front lines, this group of applied artists, architects, critics, and theorists formulated new approaches to design and advertising for the marketplace. This included rethinking the point of sale as a place where the consumer, alienated from the means of production that had created the products on display, might be educated as to the realities of contemporary manufacture. Imagined as a kind of stage or teaching theatre, the shop window and the showroom were proposed as a place where economics and aesthetics could meet, not in the interest of distracted desire, but as a site where art and industry might be reconciled.

10 pt

## 03. Josef Albers' Teaching Whites

Best known for his legendary color course at Yale and the subsequent book, *Interaction of Color*, Josef Albers surprisingly favored a certain chromatic restraint in his sartorial choices in the classroom. As a Frederick A. Horowitz notes in discussing Albers' teaching methods at Black Mountain College in the recent book, *Josef Albers: To Open Eyes*: "Noticeably well dressed for his classes, Albers conveyed the impression that class was an event for him and that he'd come prepared. A student recalls him bounding into the classroom 'with an air of expectancy; spank-ing clean, very crisp, in really white pants and white shirt and his hair combed nicely with that little curl on the side of his forehead, freshly shaven, and ruddy from the walk down the hill.'"

9 pt

## 04. The Red of La Chinoise

Jean-Luc Godard's prescient 1967 film *La Chinoise* stages a critique of the counter-culture's flirtation with Mao-ism through the device of a mock documentary that follows a group of student radicals who convert a bourgeois Parisian flat into an ad-hoc Marxist think-tank. The setting of the film is itself a pedagogic space, and central to Godard's method is the schematic deployment of text, image, and the colors red, yellow, and blue as on-screen hermeneutic devices. As the philosopher Jacques Ranciere has argued in his discussion of the film, "Inside the frame structured by the three primary colors, Godard organizes the mis-en-scene of the different modes of discourse within which the Maoist text can be spoken. There are three such modes: the interview, the lecture, and the theatre. Godard's task is to examine and modify the value of truth and illusion normally accorded to each of these three modes." Relocating the basic tools of graphic design to the cinematic frame, *La Chinoise* thereby dismantles the construction of authenticity underpinning both the language- and gestures that constitute the theatre of radical politics.

8 pt

## 05. Van Halen

Formed in Pasadena, CA in 1974, the band Van Halen rose to prominence playing parties and clubs around Los Angeles. Without the benefit of a manager the group built up its fan base through an ambitious campaign of DIY publicity and promotion. As guitarist Eddie Van Halen recounted in a 1982 interview: "We used to print up flyers, with some local people helping us. But it was basically our own thing. We'd print up flyers and stuff, like, thousands of 'em in high school lockers. And the first time we played, I guess we drew maybe 900 people." Building on this success, the band would reach the height of its fame ten years later, with the release of the album 1984. By this time the band's iconic =VH= logo, designed by Dave Bhang, had become ubiquitous in American high schools, scrawled on desks, binders, and book covers by countless budding graphic designers. It seems only fitting, then, that the album's final single, *Hot For Teacher*—with its narrative of adolescent male sexual awakening and outrageous music video featuring teenage dopplegangers of each band member—would find the group returning to the pedagogic site of its initial success.

7 pt

## 06. The Paper Chase

James Bridges' 1973 film *The Paper Chase*, based on the novel by John Jay Osborn, Jr., follows first year Harvard Law student James Hart as he negotiates an anxious one-sided relationship with stern contract law professor Charles Kingsfield, complicated by a romantic entanglement with the professor's daughter, Susan. In order to cope with the workload Hart joins a study group whose members agree to divide up each course and share detailed xeroxed outlines in preparation for final exams. At a crucial moment in the narrative Hart learns of the existence of the "Red Set," a locked special collection in the law library containing all of the professor's notes from their own years as law students, and shortly thereafter Hart and Ford, his closest friend in the study group, break into the stacks. Awestruck by the sight of the rows of red hard-bound volumes, Hart proclaims, "This is the unbroken chain. This is the ageless passing of wisdom," but when they recover Kingsfield's notes Ford remarks, "They're just notes. And they look just like mine."

6 pt

5.5 pt

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