

LUBALIN

The Father
of
Expressive
Typography

HERB LUBALIN

Herb Lubalin worked in many areas of graphic design – posters, advertising, signage, postage stamps, typeface design, editorial design, packaging design and logotypes. He is regarded as one of the most influential graphic designers of the 20th Century and was considered a rule-breaker and innovative designer.

After leaving high school, he applied to study at the Cooper Union placing 64th out of a possible 64. Thirteen years after graduating he won his first award - the New York Art Directors Club Gold Medal for his work as a creative director.

In the 1960s Phototypesetting allowed Lubalin to play with words, images and scale, creating a unique use of typography never seen before. Phototypesetting allowed ‘complete flexibility to intermix styles, weights and sizes of type, letter spacing and kerning, line spacing, word spacing, hyphenation and justification’ (Strizver, 2013).

Lubalin gave letters a leading role in graphic design, calling it ‘expressive typography’ or ‘designing with letters’ (Cannon, 2017). The word ‘typographics’ came about as a result of Lubalin’s creative use of type.

Lubalin was colour blind and ambidextrous, and consequently many of his works use only one or two colours (red/green or

red/blue). Colour blindness enabled him to focus on letterform and layout, without the distraction of colour.

Lubalin was dedicated to perfection, had a sense of the impact of words, and could combine humour and subtle detail. He paid great attention to typographical detail, his work was elegant and he created a new legibility using type. Lubalin used type as a graphic element and he employed techniques such as tight letter and line spacing, with extreme kerning in his designs.

Lubalin designed many logos with creative and clever use of type and negative space. His most well-known logo designs include the PBS, Cooper Union and World Trade Centre logos.

He also created typographical puns where the typography reinforced the meaning of the words. The ‘Marriage’, ‘Family’ and ‘Old Age’ designs illustrate how type can be used to create an image. His favourite work is “Mother & Child” where the ampersand creates the baby inside the O of the word ‘mother’.

Lubalin also collaborated with other designers to create popular typefaces such as L&C Hairline Gothic (with Tom Carnase), ITC Avant Garde Gothic (with Tom Carnase), ITC Lubalin Graph (with Tony DiSpigna

and Joe Sundwall), and ITC Serif Gothic (with Tony DiSpigna and Joe Sundwall). Lubalin was also a co-founder of ITC, an organisation that aimed to licence original typeface designer and ensure royalties for the creator.

He collaborated, as art director and designer, with Ralph Ginzburg on magazines such as Eros, fact and Avant Garde. All of these magazines were considered controversial and challenged conservative American society.

He has been both the subject and author of many articles on graphic design. He was a visiting professor of art at The Cooper Union and taught at Cornell and Syracuse Universities. He was involved in many professional organisations such as The Art Directors Club, AGI and AIGA. He won numerous awards over his career and was held in high esteem in the graphic design community.

Lubalin was not only a ground-breaking designer of his time but still serves as an inspiration to graphic designers today. The work of designers Matteo Bologna, Tony Brook, Justin Thomas Kay, Mark Owens reflect the innovative use of expressive typography pioneered by Herb Lubalin.

TYP E F A C E S

Pistilli Roman
SERIFGOTHIC RONDA
 Stymie?
Fat Face
 LSC Condensed
LUBALIN GRAPH
 BUSORAMA **Didi**
 Hairline

A A B C C A C D E E A F F A F R G G A H H T
 I J K K A L L A L A I L M M I N N N T
 O P R Q R R A S S S S T S T T T H U U T
 V V W W N W X Y Z
 abccdeefghijklmn
 opqrstuvvwxyz
 12345678900!?!&

Herb Lubalin and Tom Carnase the designed Avant Garde typeface in 1968, basing it on the masthead of Avant Garde magazine.

Avant Garde Gothic is a ‘geometric sans serif typeface’ (Wikipedia, nd) constructed from circles and straight lines. There are different forms and variations of some letters and numerous ligatures.

It was meant to be used for headlines and short texts. Avant Garde is not readable when used for text because the letter shape causes eye fatigue. Despite this it is still one of the most popular typefaces ever designed.

Avant Garde typeface are use today by the Royal Air Force, Century 21, Texan number plates, Government of Alberta, Defected Records, Macy’s, Adidas.

Avant Garde characteristics:

- the R isn’t closed, but P is
- short descenders
- large x-height
- rectangular dots over i and j.

It is often called ‘the world’s most abused typeface’. (DiSpigna, nd) Ed Benguiat said, “The only place Avant Garde looks good is in the words Avant Garde.”

Lubalin also corroborated with designers Ed Benguiat, Joe Sundwall, Tony DiSpigna and John Pistilli to create other well-known and enduring typefaces (see illustration at left).

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LOGOS

COOPER UNION

WIP



WORLD
TRADE
CENTER

PBS
Leggs®

22

'69 WAS GOOD

'72 IS BETTER

ES

ZZZ

oh!
ah!

DIMENSION

THIRTEEN

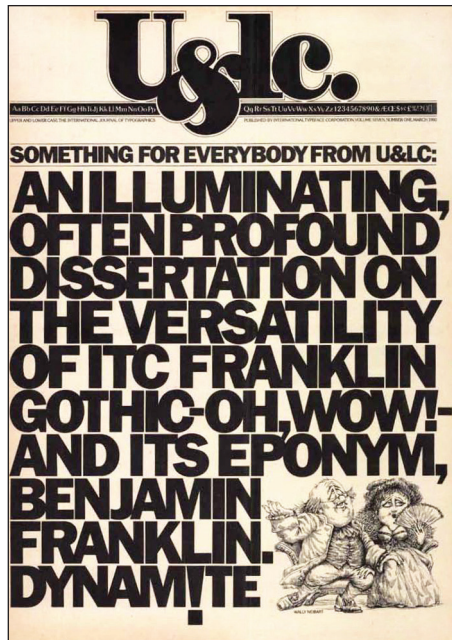
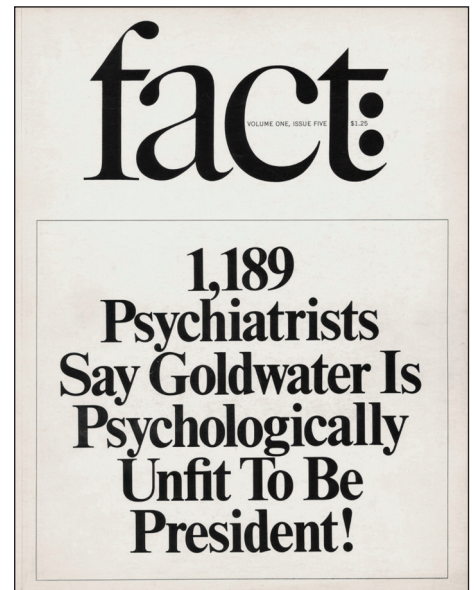
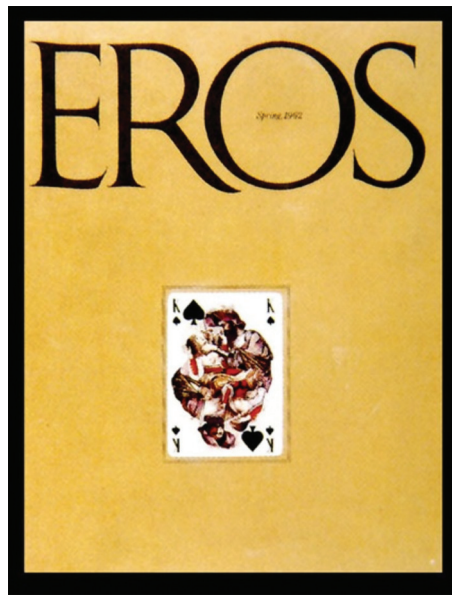


BEARDS

MOTHER

CHILD

MAGAZINES



AVANT GARDE

Lubalin was involved in the production of four magazines over his lifetime. Lubalin was a progressive liberal who wasn't afraid to say what he believed politically.

The first, 'Eros', challenged conservative American values and was closed after four issues due to censorship charges against Ralph Ginzburg.

'fact' was a small format black-and-white, text-dominated magazine with one single illustrator and one typeface per issue. 'fact' folded after being sued by Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater.

In 'Avant Garde', Lubalin used creative imagery often critical of American society, rules and government. The magazine pushed the boundaries of censorship by including sexual themes and crude language.

The typographical journal 'U&lc' was both an advertisement for Lubalin's designs and a showcase of typographic experimentation.

V
S U
A L

P U
S N

Lubalin was a master of the visual pun. A visual pun is word play is applied to an image or words and can be both humorous and analytical.

Families - Lubalin created a family using the letters 'ili'. This reinforces the message of the text.

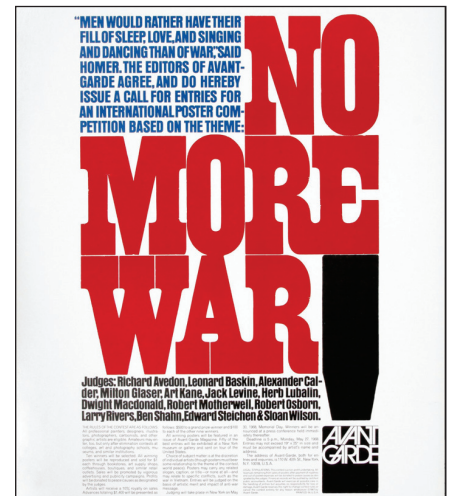
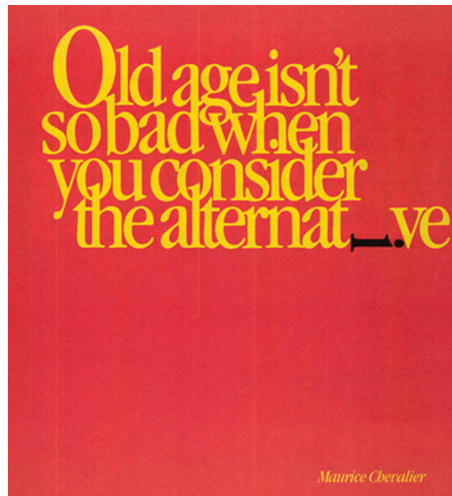
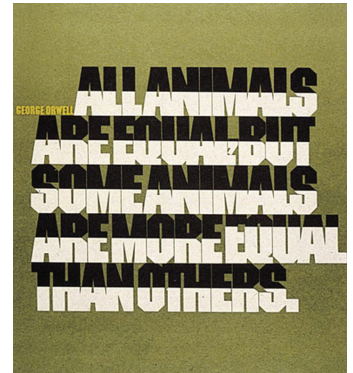
Marriage - the two Rs face to face form a couple.

Old age - The ascenders and descenders overlap with very tight line spacing. The 'i' lying on its side visually reinforces the alternative to old age.

Families
MARRIAGE

No More War - heavily kerned type and a very tight type alignment makes the image fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. The red and blue text forms the American flag and the exclamation mark could be either a bomb or a coffin. It became one of the defining visual statements of the Vietnam War era.

Orwell - tight line spacing and kerning keep the design very confined. All the letters are equally divided into black and white, except the word 'equal' showing a visual depiction of Orwell's words.





“ Sometimes you
have to sacrifice
legibility to
increase **impact** ”