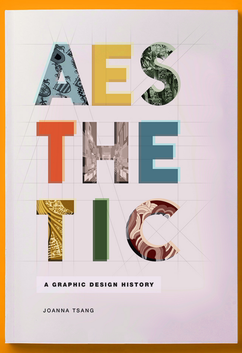
AES
THE
TIC
A GRAPHIC DESIGN HISTORY
JOANNA TSANG

MID CENTURY MODERNISM
Minimalism in A New Frontier of Endless Possibilities
With endless possibilities and strong patriotism rising after the World War II, the nation was dominated by American innovations. Graphic design, consequently, took a new turn to stay consistent with the age of innovation and optimism.
imballaggio
2 Aesthetic
Mid Century Modernism 3

1950s
Design Trends in the 1950s
During this period of advertising boom, New York was the center of advertising and designers, and graphic design had emerged as a profession in the 1950s. The common theme that can be found with the designs in 1950s design are "less is more", functionalism, and the use of images and geometric or organic forms to convey a message.
"Common themes that can be found in the design in the 1950s design are "less is more", functionalism, and the use of images and geometric forms to convey a message."
Newport Jazz Festival Poster (1954)
This poster is a perfect example of the design trend that was popular in the 1950s, in which it includes different simple geometric shapes and lines, and a rich and warm color palette.
Overlapping simple geometric shapes, such as triangles, rectangles, circles, squares and straight lines abound, are often found in different designs throughout this decade. Saul Bass, one of the most celebrated graphic designers in this era, is known for his use of simple, geometric shapes and their symbolism. Often, he would create a single image that is designed to deliver a powerful message. Bass first started his career by doing film poster design, like "The Anatomy of a Murder", he had the ability to capture the mood of a film with simple shapes and images. He would then move on to creating title sequences for many films, like "Psycho" and "Vertigo".
Color is often vibrant and optimistic. The color palette tend to range from light, bright and vivid to warm, rich and earthy. Pastel colors are also very popular during this period as well. Utilizing negative space and positive space within a design is also a definitive feature in the design throughout this decade. Designers in this decade used negative and positive space to not only create an improvisational energy and movement, but also to demonstrate how negative and positive space can be arranged carefully to show a relationship between different elements within a design.
4 Aesthetic
Mid Century Modernism 5

beethoven
Left: Beethoven Poster (1951) by Josef Müller-Brockmann
Bottom: Kaiser-Frazer Car Brochure (1951) by Paul Rand
Kaiser
Typography in the 1950s
Typography in this decade is greatly influenced by the Swiss Style and the Bauhaus Modernism, which encompass the core idea of simplicity and importance of functionality.
Swiss typography was also widely used during the 1950s. Swiss typography is a style that relied on order, mathematical proportions, and within a grid structure. Designers, like the swiss graphic designer Josef Müller-Brockmann, would use the "Golden Section" to organize elements within a design and in typography. The "Golden Section" is a grid-based design, which excludes subjective feeling and extraneous illustration. Simple geometric forms were scaled and placed with meticulous and mathematical precision. Following the same ideas, designers believe that typography should always be dynamic and functional. From the success of Müller-Brockmann's Journal "Neue Grafik" (New Graphic Design), the Swiss style moved into the rest of Europe and America. Both the Bauhaus and Swiss typography have been adopted by designers in the US during the 1950s. However, designers had a lighter touch of the Swiss style
"Less is More"
If there's one phrase to describe the design trend in 1950s, it would be "less is more". Adopting from the Bauhaus movement and the Swiss style, designers in the U.S. at the time wanted to utilize every element within the design to serve a purpose for the message they wanted to deliver, from typography to the positive and negative space, instead of using extraneous elements that don't serve a purpose to the message, the design approach of minimalism is widely celebrated throughout the 1950s.
OTTO PREMINGER'S
ANATOMY OF A MURDER
"Anatomy of a Murder" Film Poster (1959) by Saul Bass
6 Aesthetic
Mid Century Modernism 7