

MASTER'S THESIS



The character of empty spaces

- implementing character of things into graphic design

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D Master thesis

Media Design

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THE CHARACTER OF EMPTY SPACES

IMPLEMENTING CHARACTER OF THINGS INTO GRAPHIC DESIGN

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THE CHARACTER OF EMPTY SPACES

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Abstract

When working with graphic design and typography the empty space between the graphic elements is vital when obtaining balance in the form. Certain characteristics are often (if not always) used when dealing with visual communication. A graphic product can be perceived as luxurious, cheap, masculine, feminine etc. Can character be assigned to empty space?

To answer the question, four theories regarding character of things from the domain of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) are used to see if they are possible to use in graphic design.

Ethnographic studies, based on a loosely structured approach, semi-structured on site interviews, and observations were used on two different settings to establish how space is used and how it affects the character of the material. The data that was gathered clearly shows that character cannot be applied to space itself since the space is dependant of the relations with the surrounding objects.

Character can however be applied to space and graphic elements as a unity. Assigning character to graphic material can assist in generating expectations with the receiver of the visual communication. The character of the product can act as a context where the appearance of the product can be interpreted. As graphic design is static, character in graphic design cannot generate explanations. For the same reasons character in graphic design cannot act as a schema for normal functioning.

Keywords

Graphic design, character, HCI, space, typography.

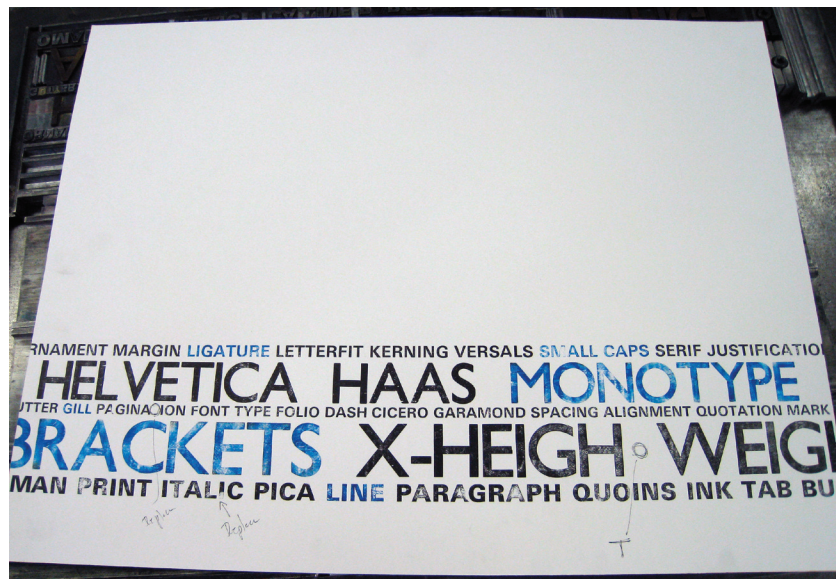
The work of a designer

Everyday graphic designers are preoccupied with choices concerning character of the material. The product must be made with awareness on how the values it is intended to convey are displayed. The choices available to the designer in this matter must always be the foundation in the designers work. (Bergström, 2004, p288) What kind of paper should be used to get the right look and feel? What typefaces are suitable? What colours should be used? When the choices above are narrowed down the rest of the product must be created using sets of visual rules. The creativity and artistic talent of the designer determines the aesthetics of the product, and how appealing it is to the consumer. Regardless of, if it is a small business card, or a big billboard. Graphic design is associated with plenty of subjective values that are hard to define and critique. (Meggs & Purvis, 2006)

Balance in design

Balance can be obtained by the use of aids, such as gridlines and the optical centre point of the surface that is being treated. The rule of thirds or the golden section can be used but ultimately the designer must have a certain 'eye' for what is right and what is wrong. Sensitivity about the disposition of the surface that is being treated is vital. The statement 'less is more' will probably come across a designer at one time or another. *'Use space and let the headline pop out of the paper.'* And *'Use space to amplify the effect of this picture.'* Space is an important thing to consider when producing graphic material.

The empty space in a graphic product and the thought that something that is perceived as 'nothing', can have such an impact on the end result is fascinating. This area of interest serves as a backdrop in this thesis.



Definition of Space

For graphic designers, the space surrounding the graphic elements becomes extra important when working with text. (Helvetica, 2007) Typographers know that typography is all about the space between the letters. *“Good typographers always have sensitivity about the distance between letters. We think that typography is black and white, it’s really white. It’s not even black. It’s the space between the blacks that really makes it. In a sense it’s like music. It’s not the notes; it’s the space between the notes that makes the music.”* (Vignelli, M, Helvetica, 2007) Graphic designers and typographers agrees that these spaces between letters are extremely important in order to make the end result successful. (ibid) It is often heard that; *“Increasing the spacing between the upper cased letters, will make it look more elegant.”* This being said, you can ask yourself if you can apply character to empty space of white. Another question is if the space affects the character of the product itself.

The space is often thought of as an important factor, but the statement usually ends right there. What theories can be applied to the empty space to make it less abstract? We came across the concept of character of things in the field of human computer interaction (HCI) and we realised that we had to try to connect the theories behind how awareness of the character of things is used in HCI on typographic and/or graphic products.

The purpose of this thesis is as follows: By investigating empty spaces in graphic design, we hope to be able to show that the spaces can be assigned character and in what way. One reason why this was interesting to investigate was the hope of being able to implement the findings in the design process. Careful design with character in mind can hopefully be rewarding in terms of hitting your target audience and conveying your values. Character is a well known factor in certain domains of HCI and it would be interesting to see if it can be applied on traditional graphic design, and more specifically, empty spaces in graphic and typographic products.

Can space between the graphic elements be associated with character?

This thesis will focus on this question.

Definition of character

Lars-Erik Janlert and Erik Stolterman describes character as high-level attributes that assist in helping us to understand and relate to them. *“A character is a coherent set of characteristics and attributes that apply to appearance and behaviour alike, cutting across different functions, situation and value systems – esthetical, technical, ethical – providing support for anticipation, interpretation and interaction.”* (Janlert & Stolterman, 1997, p302) In this article it is also mentioned that character can be associated with artefacts. Graphic designers tend to assign character to their design. In the eyes of a designer a brochure can feel luxurious. A poster can look masculine and a magazine can feel modern, to name just a few examples. Designers are used to talking in these terms when they work. The character of the products needs to be considered in order to successfully communicate the values that were intended.

The previously discussed article originates from the research domain of HCI. When software design is discussed, character associated with the program can be character such as fast, friendly, inert, hyperactive and many more. When applying character to design products for print such as magazines, ads, billboards and brochures it can be, modern, feminine, youthful, elegant and much more. Character can be applied to an artefact or product on many levels. (ibid, p297) this means that in a magazine a spread can be given a certain character and a headline can be given a certain character. In the article the conclusion is that it is desirable to use the fundamental skills that humans have developed throughout the years of interaction with each other and objects that surround us. One of these skills is the use of character.

Graphic designers naturally have an interest in obtaining balanced products. While trying to accomplish this, the designer has to pay attention to the empty spaces and what impact they might have on the end result. The appearance of the product will change when spaces are being tampered with. (Elam, 2004, p15) Large portions of the document is filled with space. It can be discussed if this space really is empty, if it can affect the end result in such dramatic ways. If it is not ‘empty’, then it should be possible to manipulate it in favour of the result. Even if the designer is unable to pinpoint exactly what he is doing, he or she might have this awareness of space as some sort of silent knowledge that lies idly in the back of his or hers head, ready to be used when the need arises.

The concept of character in artefacts

The basic thoughts behind the theories of character, in HCI, have been described earlier in this thesis. It can further be explained that character can have several purposes. We must keep in mind that these theories were born under the banner of HCI. Character can be applied to a

wide range of artefacts. The purposes of character can be broken down into four general headings:

1. Generating expectations

Associating an artefact with a certain character might generate a certain expectation. The user of the artefact, or in this case the receiver of the visual communication, might anticipate certain behaviours. However the character will give expectations rather than predictions. (Janlert & Stoltermann, 1997, p308)

2. Generating explanations

Character can also be used to explain the behaviour of an artefact. It is important to understand the behaviour in many situations. To help evaluate the acceptability of the results, to help understanding why the outcome was undesired or surprising. (ibid, p309)

3. Context for interpretation

The character can give the user a context where behaviours can be interpreted. Though the character does not prescribe functions and actions on a detailed level, it can be used as a context where behaviour and appearance can be interpreted. (ibid, p309)

4. Schema for normal functioning

A character can be used as a norm. As something that specifies the normal state. The user will relate the behaviour of the artefact to the character that is associated with it. If the artefact behaves off-character this can be a signal that something is wrong. (ibid, p310)

Empty spaces

Space plays a great role in graphic design. (Bergström, (2004); Elam, (2004) The list of authors can be made long. Space is commonly known to be three-dimensional. Arnheim (1997) However, when space will be mentioned in this thesis it will always be the two-dimensional space that is referred to. When perceiving shapes on a two-dimensional surface they can be distinguished by the directions they point in and their relation to each other can be endlessly varied by the placement of the shapes. (ibid). Even the simplest shape as a line drawn on a paper cannot be perceived as itself. It is always related to the two dimensional extent that surrounds it. And the appearance of this line changes depending on the range and shape of the empty surface around it. (ibid) The line in the previous example cannot be seen as integrated into the background and the line and the background cannot be seen as a flat plane. The line will be perceived as lying in front of an uninterrupted ground. With this example it is shown that there is no such thing as a completely flat, two-dimensional image. The human eye will perceive the image as having depth or motion. (ibid)

At this time it would be in order to introduce a visual perception law named the law of vicinity. This law explains how the human eye perceives grouped objects. If objects are placed close to each other they seem to belong to a group of objects. Arai (2001)

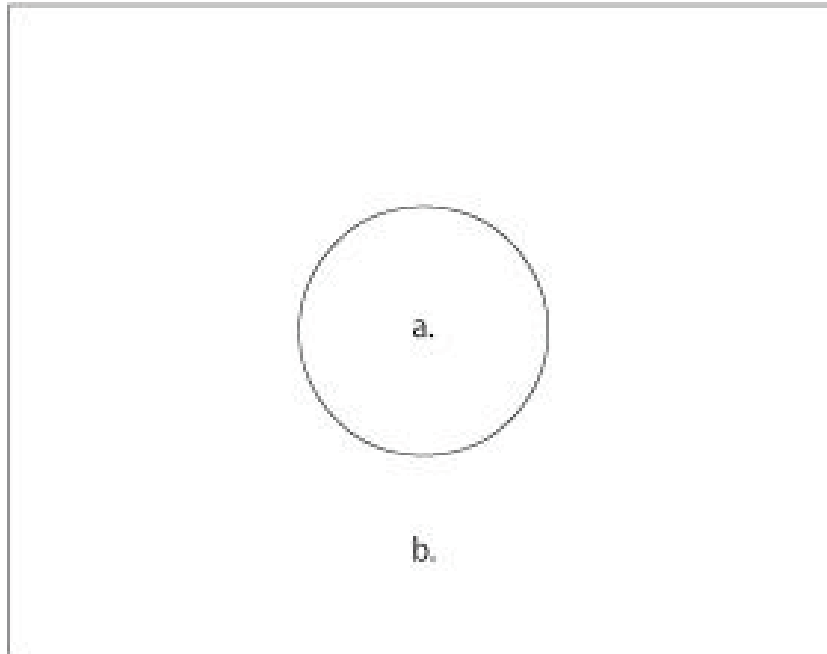


Fig 1.

A line, drawn as a loop, will divide the surface into two entities. The space inside the circle or loop (*space a*) will be perceived as one surface located above the background (*space b*). Arnheim (1997) By drawing a simple circle on a piece of paper the surface will be rendered two separate spaces. A line embracing an area will also create a visual object. (ibid) The different spaces will be divided into objects relating to each other. If the space between these grouping of objects is uneven, interrupted or unbalanced the human eye will detect this anomaly. Grouping these objects so that the space that surrounds them seems natural, smooth and balanced is what graphic design is about. Elam (2004) The above statements determines that the space will influence how an image is perceived, and that the space is of great importance in how the product will be received by our mind.

There space inside the circle in the example above could not have existed without the circle. This philosophy resembles ancient thoughts originating from Chinese philosophy. The thoughts of yin and yang. Yin and yang is thought to represent two contracting parties in one unity. I. e. warmth can not exist without cold. Light could not exist without darkness. And in the same way space could not exist without objects or elements to relate to. Makrobiotik.nu, (2008)

When summarising the information obtained above it is shown that balance can be obtained with numerous aids but to achieve desirable outcome the designer must have an “eye” for balancing the form. Space in the design is important; space is needed to emphasize the different graphic elements. The concept of character of things in HCI is introduced and the question is raised if the HCI concept of character of things can be applied to empty space in typographic and graphic design. The definition of character is said to be “*A character is a coherent set of characteristics and attributes that apply to appearance and behaviour alike.*” Character is also used to describe graphic products. Headlines, spreads and even magazines and books can be said to have i.e. a sophisticated appearance. The purposes of character of things in HCI can be broken down into four general headings: 1. Generating expectation, 2. Generating explanations, 3. Context for interpretation and 4. Schema for normal functioning. Space needs an element to relate to. Without a second element the empty space can not exist. With the four general headings of character of things in mind the question: *Can space between the graphic elements be associated with character?* With this information in mind we will proceed to view the design of study.

Design of study

After researching the subject of character in HCI, the outlines of the study was sketched. It was desirable that the target audience for this thesis were graphic designers. Because of this, a lot of research has been done on typography. At an early stage in the process the opportunity to visit Camberwell College of Art opened up. Here, access to a letterpress workshop was possible, where a lot of empirical work could be done. To be able to compare the findings to a more modern setting it was decided that a visit to a modern printing office was required. When the two settings were visited, as much as possible related to the subject of this thesis was observed. After the two settings had been visited the data was compared against each other and theories were tested on it. The two settings and the scientific method used will be more thoroughly described under the 'settings' paragraph.

Ethnography

The ethnographic approach was used because the advantages that comes along with it. By infiltrating a setting without any pre-fabricated assumptions the ethnographer will get a bigger picture than if a certain field was to be examined. Wiberg, C, (2001) By approaching the settings in an ethnographical way a large amount of data can be obtained. Ethnographers and designers might have difficulties in understanding each other. Designers normally research a specific problem area while ethnographers, as stated earlier, look at the bigger picture. (ibid) In this study, a designer acted as ethnographer while performing the study. This have had consequences. The designer might have an idea about what to look for in a specific setting, from a design angle, and might not be as able to observe the big picture as an ethnographer might be. This can result in the designer overlooking details that, from his/hers angle, might seem unimportant. It is however suitable in this study to approach the settings in an ethnographic way. Because it was difficult to decide in advance what problems or details of interest was, a holistic approach to the setting resulted in more data in which interesting aspects could be extracted.

The social context of the settings was important to research. The lack of attention to the social context is the reason why many systems fail. (ibid) The design needs to be adapted to the social context it is intended to be used in. A group of design students indulging in an obsolete craft such as hand-setting type is a complex setting to approach. (*Referring to the students at the setting of Camberwell College of Art.*) In order to reach them an ethnographic approach was exemplary. A design student is ideal to infiltrate a design sub-culture at a college or a workplace where people work with design. There will be advantages in a two fold way. By letting a design student act as an ethnographer the enormous data amount from ethnography was available and at the same time the design aspect was considered. A design student can

easier relate to other design students than a pure ethnographer could. Even though this approach does not come without disadvantages, it was a more preferable approach than for instance qualitative interviews. In an interview the answers can, in worst case, be prepared and rehearsed. Thoughts that normally only would surface in a casual conversation may be impossible to reach in an interview. The question if the space in a design can hold a specific character is abstract, perhaps not easy to explain in an interview, but when discussing a product that just have been made with colleagues or fellow students, these thoughts may come up.

Ethnography is a time-consuming approach. Wiberg, (2001). This is a disadvantage when used here. It was only possible to visit the settings for two weeks each. To be able to extract as much information as possible, months or even years are desirable. In this case it may result in important data being missed.

Phase 1 – Planning the study

The first phase was to plan the study. After establishing contact with the two intended settings and deciding when the visits was going to take place, the approach to compile data was finalised. It was decided that a loosely structured approach was to be used. Semi-structured, on site interviews was going to be the cornerstones of the data-gathering, and to be certain that enough data was gathered, observations was going to be conducted throughout the stay as a supplement. These were the techniques used in the study.

Phase 2 – Gathering of data

The two settings visited are described in detail below. On these settings gathering of data was performed. Visiting the two settings and actually ‘working’ there would facilitate the way the researcher would blend in. Rather than saying that the settings were going to be visited in order to be able to gather data, cover stories were made so that the researcher would blend in. And by blending in, it was hoped to be able to extract facts and data in a way that would not be possible in any other way.

Internship at the printing office was arranged and a cover story for the Camberwell College was constructed. The researcher would visit the printing office under cover of an intern. The researcher would come there and work. And at the Camberwell College of Art the researcher would visit to produce material for an exhibition and to gain knowledge of old fashioned typography.

Phase 3 - Analysis

The third phase was to analyse the data extracted from the two settings. By looking at data that was collected at the two settings, it started to become more clear where the differences between the old-fash-

ioned way of working, and the more modern one, were. Analysis of the data begun and the data was tested against the theories. Conclusions were made and discussions about the findings recorded.

Settings

Camberwell College of Art, letterpress workshop.

Camberwell College of Art is located in the south of London. It has 1600 students enrolled to programs such as graphic design, sculpture and photography. The school has an abundance of studios and workshops. In the basement there is a workshop for working with typography in the old fashioned way. It is a popular place for the students to be and it seems as if the interest in working in this obsolete way was great. This place was interesting to study because it attracted people who had been giving a lot of thought to the process of working with led-types and all that comes with it. It is a time consuming way to produce products that easily can be designed in a computer in a fifth of the time it would take to produce it in the 'manual' way. So clearly they thought that the craft of setting in metal gave the product something extra. When working in this older way, a great deal of attention has to be directed to the empty spaces. The empty spaces continue to be 'empty' when software is used but when setting by hand the empty spaces needs to be filled as well. Since the process of designing a product takes more time, more time can be used to consider all aspects of the design, even the empty spaces.

The workshop was visited during two weeks and during this time casual conversations were made with lecturers, other students and also people who came to visit because they were interested in the historical aspect of typography. The students and lecturers only knew that we visited the workshop to produce material for an exhibition. They were not aware of the energy that was put into listening to conversations and mentally taking notes about remarks that were made regarding the character of their products and the empty spaces. It was easier to do the study in the UK instead of in Sweden. We had had contact with the college before and it was the easiest way for us to gain access to this, nowadays quite unusual, way of working with type. We had been told that the environment where the students were would be a creative one and that the surroundings and environment would inspire us and other students to think about the aspects we were investigating. It was also of interest because of the old letterpresses and rugged premises would stand in good contrast to the very modern printing office that was our other setting.

Luleå Grafiska Printing Office

The other setting was a modern printing office located in Luleå in the north of Sweden. The reason this setting was visited was to be able to compare the much more old fashioned setting of Camberwell with

a more modern one. A difference between the older way of working with typography and the much more modern one was hoped to be found. It was also of interest to find out the amount of thought that modern print-designers puts on the character of their products in relation to the use of space. Or perhaps had this disappeared along with the old craft of hand-setting. Or perhaps had it been transferred onto the modern ways of working with computers.

Luleå Grafiska is a company that are working with different kinds of work in an offset environment. Everything from small editions of business cards to large editions of printed hard-covered books. The place is interesting just because the variation in what they do. Some work they receive is already finished and some work have to be produced from scratch. It was important to be able to research a present-day design settings view of empty spaces and the character of the spaces. The setting was visited during normal work hours for two weeks time. Most of the time was focused on the pre-press department where the majority of the creative work was carried out.



Workshop at the Camberwell College of Art



Luleå Grafiska printing office

Results

Below, the data that was recovered will be tested against the four different aspects of the theories concerning character of things. As will be shown below there is clear evidence that certain parts of the theories are applicable on graphic design.

Generating expectations

The first out of four descriptions of character were that character assist in generating expectations. By associating an artefact with a certain character, this might generate a certain expectation. The user of the artefact, or in this case the receiver of the visual communication, might anticipate certain behaviours. At the setting of Luleå Grafiska a subject working with the printing press claimed that by producing material at an old fashioned printing press where most of the work was made by hand this influenced the character of the whole product. The end result was much more genuine than it would have been on a more modern press. By printing in the old fashioned way the type was given a whole different character.

Following Arnheims principles that the space is affected by the objects around it, the space must also be affected by the character of the print. So as a result of the character of the print the space is also assigned a certain character. As a result of affecting the character of the product, expectations will be generated. A person looking at the product will probably feel character such as: *"This product feels hand made and therefore more genuine and lasting than this other product that was made in 10.000 copies on an offset press. Therefore I will expect this first product to be more durable. And the hand made product will be expected to be more valuable."* It must be emphasised at this point that it is not the character of the space itself but the character of the space and the objects as a unity that can generate expectations.

The example above is unique because the setting is a modern printing office but the material in this example is produced at an old fashioned press. But it also seems to work on more modern material. The following example is from the same setting but it takes place at the pre-press department and the example concerns a product that is intended to be printed on a modern offset print. A graphic designer looking at the screen of her computer states that: *"This product will look very cheap because it is crammed with graphic elements and text."* This shows that the product will be assigned with the character of 'cheap' because of the lack of space. Not having space to balance out the form of the product, the aesthetics will be affected and in this case make it look cheap. This might generate expectations such as: *"This product looks cheap so I might not treat it with the same respect as a luxurious catalogue."* The product may be rolled up and used to kill a spider after it had been red when maybe a more luxurious catalogue would be treasured in a bookcase.

Once again the character of the product has generated expectations, and once again the character cannot be applied to the space itself but at the space and graphic elements as a unity.

Similar examples can be shown from the other setting. The workshop at Camberwell College of Art:

A student at the Camberwell College of Art is spending weeks in the workshop hand-setting a book. The book could have been done swiftly on a computer and then printed at a printing office. And if printed in the more modern way the workload could have been reduced enormously. The student is painstakingly setting each page of the book by hand. The student claims that the value of the book would be lost if sent to a printing office. By doing it by hand the end result will breathe craftsmanship and artistry. Values, or character, that according to the student, (and other students concurred with him on this) would have been lost if printed on an offset or digital press. This shows that by printing in a certain way the material can gain certain character. Character that in their turn will help to generate expectations. In this last example the student claims that the character that he was trying to obtain was artistry and craftsmanship. The expectations that these character will assist to create is probably: *"This book seems hand made and it seems as if the designer have spent much time creating it. This elevates the value of this book."* In a way this example is identical with the first example of the Luleå Grafiska setting.

Through these examples it has shown that character will be assigned to graphic design, as an aware act or involuntarily. The person observing the product will most likely interpret character to it. These character can be manipulated and taken advantage of by the designer in order to strengthen the message the product is intended to convey. The designer must also be aware of that character can be assigned to a product as a result of how it is produced. This might affect the product in a negative way (as in example 2 of the Luleå Grafiska setting) and awareness of this is recommended.

One thing that also becomes evident is that character cannot be assigned solely to the space since the character of the space is dependant of the objects that surrounds it. Character can only be assigned to a graphical product as a unity. Meaning the graphical elements and the space between them.

Generating explanations

The second description of character of things is that character can also be used to explain the behaviour of an artefact. It is important to understand the behaviour in many situations. To help evaluate the acceptability of the results, to help understanding why the outcome was undesired or surprising. This is intended for interactive software. To

predict an outcome of static graphic material is not possible. An outcome, meaning the result of a chain of events is not transferable to graphic design. As soon as graphic material leaves the printing press it is static. The closest one can come to a behaviour in graphic material is if the appearance dramatically change from page one till the last page of i. e. a magazine. The readers' expectation from how the cover looks can be misleading if the body of the magazine does not follow the same visual language. This is not what is being referred to when discussing behaviour in HCI. Even if there is a chance of transferring this theory to graphic material as was mentioned above, the data gathered for this thesis does not support it.

Context for interpretation

The third part of the theory behind character of things is that the character can give the user a context where behaviours can be interpreted. Though the character do not prescribe functions and actions on a detailed level, it can be used as a context where behaviour and appearance can be interpreted. Even if this theory also describes behaviour this seems to be more transferable to graphic design than 'generating explanations does'. The following example explains this:

In the setting of Camberwell College of Art two students are talking of the appearance of one of the students products. The designer of the product have in this case chosen to disregard basic rules of typography. Printing almost white text in big letters on a white piece of paper. The second student asks the designer if this is good. *"It is almost impossible to read what it says."* The student says. The other student, the designer, explains; *"It doesn't matter. This poster is for a customer who values originality and surprise higher than readability."* When relating this to the theory that the context where the character is introduced helps to interpret the character it is understood that if the poster in the example is placed in a context that breaths originality and artistry this is an explanation for why typographic rules are broken. The context where the material is displayed justifies these sidesteps from graphic rules. Therefore one can say that the context helps to interpret the character of the graphic material.

Another example is from the other setting of Luleå Grafiska. The same example as shown in 'generating expectations': The product that was crammed with text and images that made the product look cheap. This also justifies the breaking of graphical rules. People reading the product will think: *"This is probably a low budget production, that explains why its appearance is so unappealing. There was probably not enough money to spread out the content over more pages, making it look more appealing."* The character of the product acts as a context where the appearance of the product can be interpreted. Notice how the word 'behaviour' in Janlert and Stoltermans theory was changed for the word appearance.

We have with these examples shown that if the word behaviour is being changed to appearance the theory of 'context for interpretation' is also applicable on graphic design. However, placed in the wrong context, the character of the product can make a person interpret it wrong. Take the example of the poster that the student made at Camberwell College of Art and place it as an ad in a very traditional newspaper. Many of the readers of the newspaper might miss the message of the poster and misinterpret the almost white text on white paper as a mistake in the printing process. The message might not reach out to the readers who were not expecting to see such a creative and untraditional ad in a mundane situation. So when placed in the wrong context this might have a negative outcome. This further support the theory that context for interpretation can be transferable to graphic design.

The results presented here do not concern the question about connecting a character to empty space. The reason why this is not mentioned is because it has previously in this section been shown that empty space cannot hold a character on its own, it is dependant on graphic elements surrounding it. For this reason the results presented here only concern graphic design as a unity consisting of space and objects.

Schema for normal functioning

The last part of the theory describes how a character can be used as a norm. As something that specifies the normal state. The user will relate the behaviour of the artefact to the character that is associated with it. If the artefact behaves off character this can be a signal that something is wrong. Some words in this theory make it hard to transfer to graphic design. Normal state, behaviour, wrong. These words tell the reader that what is referred to here is something that is changing and interactive. Something that is able to change state between normal and abnormal. Something that has a behaviour and something that can jam or break down. A static product of graphic design cannot do this. This will not be discussed further as no data has been found to support this theory.

Conclusion

Character cannot be applied to space itself since the space is dependant of the relations with the objects surrounding it. Character can however be applied to space and graphic elements as a unity.

Certain parts of the theories about character of things can be transferred to graphic design:

Assigning character to graphic material can assist in generating expectations with the receiver of the visual communication.

The character of the product can act as a context where the appearance of the product can be interpreted.

Other parts of the theories about character of things cannot be transferred to graphic design:

No data gathered supports the theory that character in graphic design can generate explanation, as graphic material is static and not interactive.

No data gathered supports the theory that character in graphic design can act as a schema for normal functioning as graphic material is static and not interactive.

Discussion

Based on the observation that space is essential in graphic design we raised a series of questions: Can character deliberately be assigned to space in graphic material, and can the theories of character of things in HCI be transferred to the field of graphic design? Based on the analysis presented, this thesis will now be concluded with a discussion of these questions:

When observing designers work it will almost instantly be evident that awareness of character is a fundamental cornerstone in graphic design. Applying character to graphic design is in no way anything new or groundbreaking. Proving that character cannot be assigned to the space itself and pointing out that the character of the product can be used as a mean of generating expectations and as a context where the appearance can be interpreted is maybe not new to designers. This is probably a type of basic silent knowledge for all designers. Our contribution with this thesis is to establish the fact, on a scientific scene, and developing solid theories based on the previously mentioned questions, that have been tested in a scientific way.

The results of this thesis support that character cannot be assigned to space and that two of Janert and Stoltermans theories can be transferred to graphic design. This means that the concept of character in graphic design has been made less abstract and more easy to grasp. Hopefully it will facilitate the work of a designer when he can say: *“I’ve read this thesis that says that the character can be used as a context that assist the receiver to interpret the visual message. So if we place this product in this specific context this might be a problem, the receiver might interpret the message wrong. We need to revise this product before it can be launched in this context.”* Or *“I’ve read this thesis that says that you cannot assign character to the space itself. The only way of changing the character of the space is to change the character of the unity between the graphic elements and the space.”* Or *“Look, this thesis says that we can use the character to generate expectations with the receiver.”* The world of a designer is a world full of abstract values, gut feelings and subjective interpretation. It is a scene where it is difficult to point out dos and do nots since here will always be some designer who does not agree. It is easy to claim that one is right when one do not need to back it up with any facts, all one have to say as a designer is ‘this is appealing to *my* taste.’ By saying this he cannot be criticised. People might not agree but they will have to live with the fact that there are as many tastes as there are people. So by taking one of these subjective values, the value of character, and testing these theories on it we can prove in a scientific way that character *can* assist in generating expectations, character *can* act as a context where the appearance can be interpreted and character *can not* be assigned to space alone. This will hopefully be helpful in the future when the subject of character is mentioned in the design process.

THE CHARACTER OF EMPTY SPACES

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