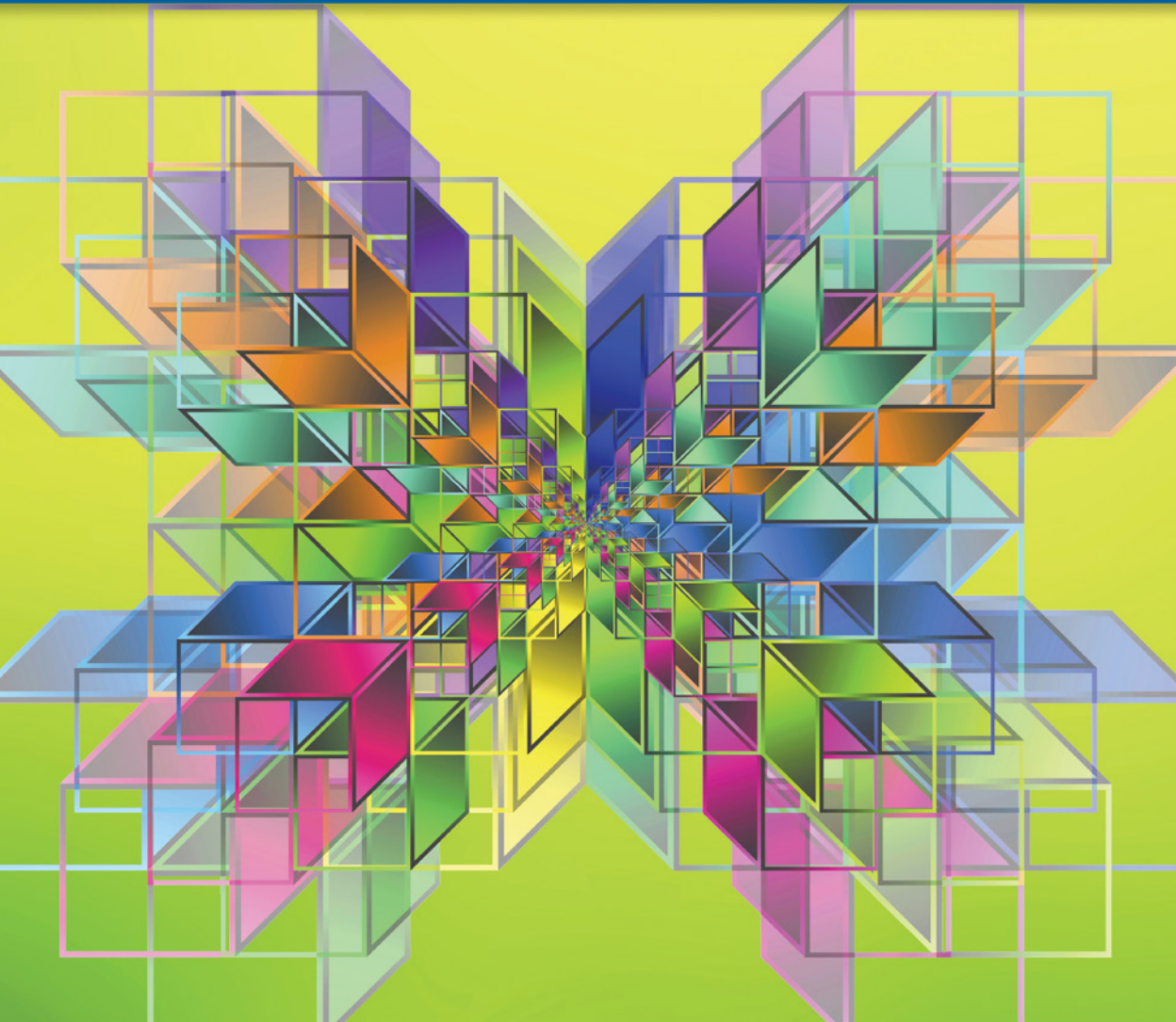


Discovering *ART*

# Graphic Arts

Gail B. Stewart





### About the Author

Gail B. Stewart is an award-winning author of more than 250 books for children, teens, and young adults. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband and is the mother of three grown sons.

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# Introduction

## The “Everywhere” Art

**T**he image takes one by surprise. At first it seems to be merely a drawing of a jar of horseradish sauce with a spoon leaning against it, a scene so realistic it could be a photograph. But something about the drawing seems a little off—and then one realizes that the shape of the shadow does not match the jar’s shape at all. In fact, the shadow cast by the spoon and jar is precisely the shape of a hand grenade. It is exactly at that moment that the message comes through loud and clear: This brand of horseradish sauce is strong—not for the faint of heart. And not a single word was needed.

### An Effective Way of Communicating

This is an example of graphic art, a means of communication that has been around for thousands of years. From the early humans who left colorful cave art showing where the best hunting spots were to the knights who carried shields embellished with colors and symbols identifying their lineage and their place of origin, people have been using art, text, symbols, or a combination of these elements to deliver a message in an eye-catching, visually pleasing way that a verbal message cannot.

Unlike fine art such as painting or sculpture, which are created primarily for the purpose of self-expression, graphic art is a means of selling a product, motivating or persuading people to do something, or communicating something about oneself. For instance, when a new business opens, often one of the first decisions the owners make is to hire a graphic artist to create a logo that can be used on everything from business cards and stationery to the sign

on the door. Fans of sports teams wear sweatshirts and caps emblazoned with team emblems designed by a graphic artist. A campaign button or a bumper sticker can show how one feels about a particular issue or announce the candidate one hopes will win in the coming election.

## The Explosion of Graphic Art

In the twenty-first century, the use of graphic art has increased as never before. Whether paging through a magazine, shopping for groceries, or frequenting a favorite website, people are besieged by thousands of examples of graphic art each day. From the colorful packaging of cereal boxes and the layout of the morning newspaper to the easy-to-spot road signs warning drivers to merge with traffic, graphic art images are everywhere.

Graphic artists, also called graphic designers, frequently use both art and text to get their point across. However, in many cases the art alone can do the job. Traffic signs, for example, rely on an understood collection of symbols that can communicate important information to a driver. A red circle with a diagonal red line through it means “forbidden” or “no.” The art within the circle communicates what it is that is forbidden—from a simple image of a campfire or cell phone to an arrow pointing right to indicate a right-hand turn.

Other well-recognized symbols include the colors of a traffic light, the six-pointed star of the Jewish faith, the cross as a symbol of a Christian church, the swastika symbol of the Nazis, and the peace symbol. In most public buildings a symbol on the door of a restroom indicates whether it is to be used by men or women.

### Words in Context

#### *logo*

An image, often created by a graphic artist, that is used to represent a business, a team, or any other organization.

## The Role of Graphic Art

Most of today’s graphic art reaches far beyond traffic signs and public restrooms. To create it, graphic artists rely on a variety of high-tech





Fans at a baseball game wear caps and shirts featuring team logos. Logos that symbolize sports teams, as well as other kinds of businesses, are created by graphic designers.

tools, some of which are computer applications. From the particular style of type to the size of the image or the colors, the designer must make dozens of decisions that will determine whether the graphic art is effective. Should the art be cartoonish or more serious? Should a photograph be used instead? Is text necessary, or can the art alone convey the intended message?

The specifics of the job depend on the audience and the message. Even so, the overarching aim of any type of graphic art must be clarity, or it will fail in its purpose. That purpose may be to communicate information about an upcoming concert or create an entertaining magazine ad for a new action movie. Its aim might be to make a brochure that will convince people to vote for a certain presidential candidate, or even an ad to convince a shopper to buy a particular brand of deodorant.

But no matter what the purpose of a specific design, the skill with which the designer creates the art or chooses the style of type to be used will have an immense effect on its success. Notes British designer Richard Hollis, “Designers, as well as the public, when asked for a definition of good design will answer, ‘Does it do its job? Did message A get communicated to audience B?’”<sup>1</sup>

# Chapter One

## The Foundations of Graphic Arts

**N**ot until the late nineteenth century, known as the Victorian era, did the concept of graphic design become widely known in Western society. For the first-ever world's fair, known as the Great Exhibition of 1851, Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, invited the nations of the world to showcase the advances they had made in science, manufacturing, and technology. Many of these advances had to do with printing and the use of color and varieties of style for text, as well as the emergence of photography. More than 6 million visitors from around the world viewed these new technologies. It was clear then that graphic art was revolutionizing the way people communicated, sold things, and expressed themselves via a combination of art and text. However, for thousands of years, people all over the world had been making contributions to graphic art.

### The Egyptians' Books of the Dead

Beginning around 1600 BCE, the ancient Egyptians used graphic art as a means of helping dead pharaohs navigate to their place in the afterlife. The Egyptians believed that when a person died, he or she was immediately in danger from terrifying monsters whose aim was to keep the dead from reaching the afterlife. Scribes and artists combined their talents to create maps complete with magic spells that would enable the dead to bypass the dangerous creatures residing in the underworld. The combinations of maps and text were known as Books of the Dead.



One image frequently seen in Books of the Dead was a hideous monster named Ammit, who was the judge and executioner of the underworld. Ammit was believed to eat the bodies of the dead who could not answer her questions correctly. Artists portrayed her with the head of a crocodile, the torso of a lion, and the hindquarters of an immense hippopotamus—the three animals the Egyptians deemed the most ferocious. Not surprisingly, the spells and diagrams pictured in the Books of the Dead that explained how to avoid Ammit and other perils were considered invaluable.

The earliest Books of the Dead were created long before paper was invented, so they were carved directly on the walls of a pharaoh's tomb—an expensive process. By 1475 BCE, however, the use of papyrus to make paper made it possible for everyday people to afford Books of the Dead, too.

## Early Graphic Design in the Scriptorium

Centuries later, during the Middle Ages in Europe, beautiful examples of graphic art were created in the form of illuminated, or illustrated, manuscripts—almost always copies of the Bible or other religious documents. Though the printing press and paper were in use in China, both were unknown in Europe in medieval times. As a result, all manuscripts were copied by hand on calfskin, known as vellum.

Most of the manuscripts were produced by monks who worked in a large room known as a scriptorium within a monastery. They worked with quill pens made from the feather of a goose or crow. The ink they used was derived from plants, berries, burned wood, or minerals that could give them the colors they needed. The writing, known as calligraphy, was quite ornate, with designs and decorative marks that made the text more pleasing to the eye than plain text.

But copying the text was only part of the job. Frequently, a large, fancy capital letter would be highlighted in a rainbow of colors—from

### Words in Context

#### *illuminated*

A word that describes the first manuscripts that were decorated with hand-drawn illustrations.



This example of a medieval illuminated manuscript fancifully depicts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The text is written in the ornate script known as calligraphy and includes a large, elaborately decorated capital letter typical of such manuscripts.

deep blues and reds to glittering inks made from flakes of gold or silver mixed with a bit of egg to give them the right consistency. Each page also featured illustrations and border art.

No mistakes were allowed on these manuscripts. If a copier or artist made an error, the entire page had to be redone. Not surprisingly, a short manuscript might take six months to a year to complete, while a single copy of the Bible could take a team of monks working eighteen hours a day as long as ten years to finish.

## Gutenberg's Contribution

Because of the intense, detailed work required to make books by hand, few people owned one. An individual possessing a Bible during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries was almost unheard of. In fact, many churches did not even have a copy. However, that changed drastically in the mid-1400s, thanks to a goldsmith from Mainz, Germany, named Johannes Gutenberg.

Gutenberg did not invent the printing press—printers in China had been using printing presses since the thirteenth century. Instead, Gutenberg's genius was in perfecting printing techniques, as well as realizing what could be accomplished by combining the printing press and movable type. Until that time, the early printers relied on wooden or clay blocks painstakingly carved with drawings or raised letters (in reverse). But the blocks were not durable; they tended to crack and split after just a few uses.

Gutenberg believed that movable type made of metal was the answer. He used an alloy, or combination of metals, including tin, lead, and a shiny gray mineral called antimony. The type he created was strong enough to be used over and over again. He also created an oil-based alternative to the water-based inks that printers used, which was less likely to smear or puddle during the printing process—especially when it came into contact with his metal type.

Gutenberg's name is most often linked with the edition of the Bible he printed with movable type in 1454. Each page had forty-two lines of text and was printed at an astonishing rate of three hundred pages per day. Gutenberg left spaces for illustrations and highlighting that would be done by hand later. The Bibles were written in Latin and came in two-volume sets, each with six hundred pages. By 1500 half a million books had been printed throughout the cities of Europe on movable type printing presses using Gutenberg's system.

Moreover, not only were books becoming available to the masses, but so were calendars, posters, political pamphlets, and advertising leaflets. With so much demand for printed material, it is not surprising

### Words in Context

*vellum*

Treated calfskin used in the Middle Ages as paper for handwritten documents.