THE ARTIST FONTS

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Abstract

Making individual display fonts on Picasso and Hussain, recreating their work in display typography was the soul objective that was to be fulfilled with this project. Display Typography denotes typefaces based around associative and decorative values and is impractical to use at a small scale. It is a statement of creative intent, hence this form was perfectly suited for this project. Display type reflects some vernacular sources; hence it was easy to branch into devanagari script for the Hussain font. Neither of the fonts is based on a grid, in hope to capture the essence of an artist. The freedom was kept intact by treating characters like a blank canvas. The alphabet had to be bold, emotive and eye catching – encompassing the look of a display font and that of a painting. Every character was designed with a painting as an inspiration or on a phase of the artist's life and illustrated from scratch, while maintaining it's identity. Division was done on phases of their lives, showing the transformation their work as well as they underwent over a period of time.

Keywords

Display, Artists, Font, Experimental

Introduction

"The answers lie within.
Just as the artist does."
Creating legacies, reaching people through one's art, being able to move people and have the capacity to touch a person through a simple painting or even a brush stroke.This project embodies this very hope of every artist. As a project, it had to be something as iconic as some of the artists that were picked while attempting to re-create their work in typography. In contemporary use, the practice and study of typography is very broad, covering all aspects of letter design and application. Display Type denotes a font that points towards the fact that it may be impractical to use at a small scale or for continuous setting of type. Type is combined with negative space, graphic elements and pictures, forming relationships and dialog between words and images, as an artist does between form and space. Colour and size of type elements are much more prevalent than in text typography. Most display typography exploits type at larger sizes, where the details of letter design are magnified and where colour makes it emotive.

Aim and Objectives

To create two display fonts (basic alphabets) based on the artists Picasso and M.F.Hussain.

The aim was to re-create the work of two artists – Picasso and M.F.Hussain, using Display Typography in an experimental form, taking inspiration from their work as well as from different phases in their life and applying that to typography. Upon completion, one must be able to identify these fonts as fonts that represent these timeless artists and it should present itself as a display type that is a balance between art, design and typography.

Methodology

Some rules of font design were broken - like that of following a certain grid in the creation of a single character. A grid was absent in this project in totality as that limited or restricted the area of exploration which is averse to what an artist believes in. Hence, the grid was given a miss. Other basic forms and rules have been followed.

Picasso

The essence of Picasso and his work needed to be captured and presented effectively. Pablo Ruiz Picasso was a Spanish painter, draughtsman, and sculptor who lived most of his life in France. Widely known for co-founding the Cubist movement and for the wide variety of styles that he helped develop and explore. Picasso demonstrated extraordinary artistic talent in his early years, during the first decade of the 20th century his style changed as he experimented with different theories, techniques, and ideas. His revolutionary artistic accomplishments brought him universal renowned and immense fortune, making him one of the best-known figures in 20th century art.

Here, a font based on Picasso, his works, and his life was to be designed. Every single letter or number that has been designed has behind it some meaning, some painting as an inspiration and a phase of Picasso's Life. The alphabet has been divided into phases of his life. The transformation his work as well as Picasso, while painting these works, went through.

The Division:

A - The Picasso trademark, colour blocking style

B, C, D - The Blue period of Picasso's life, showing a deep sadness, in his work and life. Hence, blue. It lasted 3 years, hence 3 letters were chosen to depict it.

E, F, G - The Rose period. He fell in love with his wife and that started showing. Pink and red hues were used to show the transformation in mood.

H - Experimental style. Nudes, Harlequin reference.

I - Picasso trademark, he started experimenting with it.

J - Based on the great painting, D'emoiselles des Avignon in a breakthrough style.

K, L, M, N - Cubism. It lasted for a length of 4 years but did show appearances later in his work. Since chunk of it was 4 years, 4 letters depict that.

O, P - Based on the art of light writing which Picasso invented. It was a photographic technique and Picasso took the help of many photographers to master this art and use it effectively.

Q - Inspired by the famous painting the 3 dancers.

R,S - Based on the collage work technique that Picasso invented too.

T,U - Inspired by paintings of his muses and mistresses. One painting is called La Lecture and the other is a portrait of Dora Maar.

V - Based on the great painting Guernica, for which the subject was the war which was going on in Spain.

W,X,Y,Z - Colour blocking / signature style and influence of all other styles.

<u>M.F.Hussain</u>

Maqbool Fida Husain (Hindi: मक़बूल फ़िदा हुसैन) was an eminent painter. He has been widely regarded as the "Picasso of India" and has influenced a whole generation of artists in the country. Husain was associated with Indian modernism in the 1940s. A dashing, highly eccentric figure who dressed in impeccably tailored suits, he went barefoot and brandished an extra-long paintbrush as a slim cane. He never maintained a studio but he spread his canvases out on the floor of whatever hotel room he happened to be staying in and paying for damages when he checked out. He created four museums to showcase his work and had a collection of classic sports cars. He applied the formal lessons of European modernists like Cézanne and Matisse to scenes from national epics like the Mahabharata, Ramayana and to the Hindu pantheon. His narrative paintings, executed in a modified Cubist style, can be caustic and funny as well as serious and sombre. His themes—usually treated in series—include topics as diverse as Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the British raj, and motifs of Indian urban and rural life.

Here, a font based on Hussain, his works, and his life had to be designed. Every single letter or number that has been designed has behind it some meaning, some painting as an inspiration and a phase of Hussain's Life. The alphabet has been divided into phases of his life. The transformation his work as well as Hussain, while painting these works, went through.

The Division:

The Vowels:

The vowels are all inspired from Hussain's early time work and his learning as a child. He was mostly self taught and to make a living, painted cinema hoarding, hence the colours are inspired from that.

The Consonants:

Velars – Experimentation and discovering a style of his own

Palatals – Hussain's developmental years an artist. Everything is based on different styles and early paintings.

Linguals – Hussain's own style as he began discovering it. It has a growth of confidence and is based on his paintings of elephants mainly.

Dentals – Based on the first movie that Hussain made. It was called 'Through the Eyes of a Painter'. It is a black and white movie and hence the letters have a grayish tone and feel.

Labials – Hussain painted 4 different religions in different paintings. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.[Of which the paintings of the Hindu Goddesses was most controversial].

Semivowels – His 5 muses – Madhuri Dixit, Tabu, Urmila Matondkar, Amrita Rao and Anushka Sharma.

Sibilants – Based on the painting 'The Rape of India'. Again, controversial.

Aspirate – Work he did during the self imposed exile. The beginning letter depicting the reason for exile.

After basic drawings on chequered paper with general art material, the letters were compared with their paintings and then painted digitally (as opposed to canvas) as a contemporary alternative of their work.

Observations / Results

Images I and II show the two fonts that were hence developed.

Discussion

Th first question that was asked was, was it legible and justified as a display font?

Yes, as a font used only on a larger scale and not for continuous setting of type, it was legible and easily read when put in word format, not in a small point size.

Even after each character was combined with negative space, graphic elements and the use of the original form and space within, the letter or character was legible and justified the characteristics of a display font.


IV

III

As seen above, the figures show that in both fonts, when the letters are arranged together but at a large scale, the font is legible and justifies the characters of a display font - inclusive of the use of colours and form arrangement etc. Display typography is a potent element in graphic design, where there is less concern for readability and more potential for using type in an artistic manner and hence it was justified as a display font.

Second question was whether it justifies the subject that was taken to begin with - i.e. does it represent a font made on the artists picked?

When one sees the fonts, you can say that it does represent the artist that was picked. Upon magnification, one can see that each element picked justifies and shows that it has been taken from a particular artist's work or something that represents him. The colour makes it emotive and use of form and space including the freedom from grid and in comparison from the original paintings and phases, justifies the fact that it was in fact, made to represent artists. One can see this in the following example.

V

VI
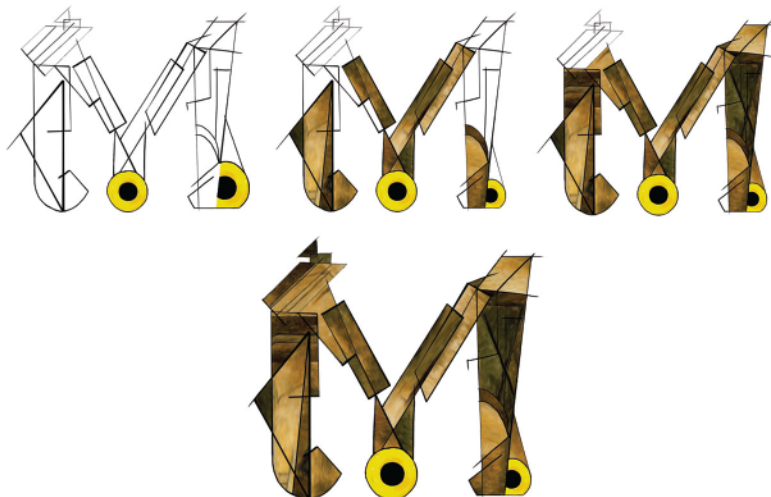
VII

The only few limitations to this font would be usage in sentences or on a small scale. Upon usage in sentences, the forms may sometimes not get along and may look like a mash up of random characters and at the same time making it look unappealing. As short quotes and words at a larger size, the font looks attractive. Also, backgrounds have to be chosen appropriately as they were chosen for certain applications of the font. Also it cannot be used as a workable font yet as it cannot be used without the use of colour.

These applications were done to prove and also check the way the font would look on certain backgrounds. Applications were chosen keeping in mind the nature of the subject. Book covers, wine bottle labels and canvas artist bags were chosen to show and express the font and how it looked when in actual use on products or posters.

VIII

Conclusion

Now, hopefully the fonts are as iconic as some of the artists that were picked while attempting to re-create the paintings and life of Picasso and Hussain, in typography.
The contemporary use and design as well as interpretation and adaptation of the work of the artists has been clearly shown in the making of these fonts.
As an experimental typography project, one may say it justifies the basic rules of display typography and is perched on a line between art, design and typography.

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Thank you.