

## **POSTMODERNISM**

Shift away from seeking absolutes, totalizing systems, universally applicable values or solutions.

**SOCIETY LOST FAITH IN THE  
POSSIBILITY OF ABSOLUTES.**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF PRODUCTS  
OF POSTMODERN CULTURE:**

- fragmentation
- impurity of form
- indeterminacy
- intertextuality
- pluralism
- eclecticism
- return to the vernacular

TWO IMPORTANT REACTIONS TO  
MODERNISM IN THE LATE 60'S:

—Punk (Britain)

—New Wave

(US and Switzerland)

**NEW TECHNOLOGY:**

- photocopier
- camera ready art
- later computers

## THREE IMPORTANT NEW WAVE DESIGNERS

- Wolfgang Weingart
- April Greiman
- Dan Freidman

## WOLFGANG WEINGART:

**Intuition:** moved the contradiction between the rational system of Swiss Style and intuitive choice to the forefront

**Legibility:** explored sacrificing legibility to achieve visual appeal.

**Individuality:** design as self-expression. He moved back toward fine art.

**Informality**

**Technology**

“The typographer must be able to take the impersonal view; willful individuality and emotion have little place in his work.”

—*Emil Ruder*



“I was motivated to provoke this stodgy profession and to stretch the typeshops capabilities to the breaking point, and finally, to prove once again that typography is an art.”

—*Wolfgang Weingart*

## Muller-Brockman: Der Film, 1959



## Wolfgang Weingart: Kunstkredit, 1977



## Wolfgang Weingart: Kreative tief phase, 1972



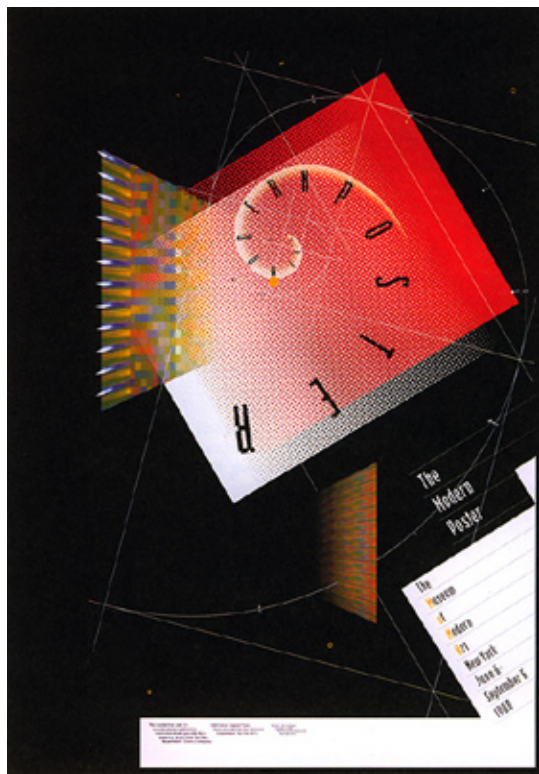
## Wolfgang Weingart: Swiss Poster, 1984



## April Greiman, Sci-Arc Poster, 1988



## April Greiman, Modern Poster, 1988



April Greiman, Snow White, 1986





# April Greiman, Your Turn My Turn, 1983



“During the 80’s, design moved firmly from objectivity and universality to ambiguity, complexity and individuality.”

**April Greiman, Vertigo Business Card, 1979**



**Lester Beall, International Paper Logo**



What constitutes good design?

**POSTSTRUCTURALISM:** “denies the objectivity of linguistic and cultural codes, language, and categories of conceptualization. It emphasizes the instability of meanings, categories, and the inability of any universal system of rules to explain reality. The result is a radically nonhierarchical plurality of indeterminate meanings.”

**DECONSTRUCTION:** “a mode of questioning central to poststructuralist thought.”

See explanation by Ellen Lupton in  
“Deconstruction and Graphic Design:  
History Meets Theory”

According to Derrida, language or “texts” are not a natural reflection of our world. Instead text actually structures our world.

Western thought (since Plato) has been governed by these oppositions. Within each of these pairs, the first is valued and the second is not.

reality / representation

inside / outside

original / copy

mind / body

male / female

Because meaning in language (and meaning within our reality through language) is defined by these oppositions, oppositions which deconstruction demonstrates are not really oppositions, definitive **meaning itself becomes a sloppy, slippery affair.**



**TEXT CANNOT BE REDUCED  
TO “ULTIMATE MEANING”**

## POST-STRUCTURALISM

“denies the objectivity of linguistic and cultural codes, language, and categories of conceptualization. It emphasizes the instability of meanings, categories, and the inability of any universal system of rules to explain reality. The result is a radically nonhierarchical plurality of indeterminate meanings.”

**Key figures:** Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault,  
and Jean Baudrillard

All of these key figures of post-structuralism  
look at “**modes of representation**”

Just as Derrida believed that language, a mode of representation, doesn't just reflect our world but shapes. These other figures expanded those ideas of apply to all modes of representation.

modes of representation: ways that our social world is represented

examples: photography, literature, architecture

Consider the design of schools and prisons

These writers, Barthes, Foucault, Baudrillard use deconstruction as they analyze these “modes of representation.”

Designers use techniques of deconstruction to question established rules of modern design

# CRANBROOK

Program headed by graphic designer  
Katherine McCoy and product designer  
Michael McCoy from 1971-1995.

## TYPOGRAPHY AS DISCOURSE

According to this concept the reader is expected to work to uncover the message of the design. The resulting design is typically complex and layered. “The compositions demand to be interpreted on their own terms, beyond the objective content.”

## FOUR MODES OF RECEIVING MESSAGES

**Seeing:** a visual process usually connected with images

**Reading:** the “verbal process of decoding text’s written language signs”

**Text functioning as images:** Text can be seen as well as read

**Images functioning as text:** Images can be read



## **DEATH OF THE AUTHOR**

The reader, in Barthes's theory, is more important than the writer because it is the reader who actively interprets the text.

Reflecting current linguistic theory, the notion of “authorship” as a personal, formal vocabulary is less important than the dialogue between the graphic object and its audience; no longer are there one-way statements from designer. The layering of content is the key to this exchange. Objective communication is enhanced by deferred meanings, hidden stories and alternative interpretations.”

—Katherine McCoy, *Typography as Discourse*

