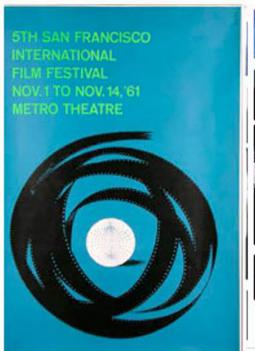# Saul Bass

Saul Bass was a leader in the fields of graphic design and filmmaking – especially in movie posters and motion picture title sequences. Bass' posters changed the whole approach the film industry had to film advertisement, with typically simplified and symbolic ideas to communicate with audiences.

An example of Bass' very altenative thinking was the animated paper cut-out of a heroin addict's arm in is film poster for 'The Man with the Golden Arm'. It sent shockwaves through the film industry, and did not go without controversy from more conservative perspectives – and understandably so as the 50's were teeming with the notion that formalities in the public scene were be invaded by modernism. While he was still alive, there were some film posters made which looked remarkably like that of Bass' earlier work. It was stated by the so-called 'thieves' that they were homage to the work of Bass. This just goes to show the level of influence he had on the film poster industry.

"My initial thought about what a title can do was to set mood and the prime underlying core of the film's story, to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it." This is my favourite Saul Bass quote. This is because it shows how much of a revolutionary thinker he was. He never really had much inspiration in the way of previous artists, but he did have inspiration for the idea that artworks can have much deeper meaning to just the direct visual aspects. Saul Bass' poster for the film 'Anatomy of a murderer' is one that is constructed by means of cutting paper into shapes, which are very irregular giving the poster a certain roughness also with the whole image in landscape. This is a far cry from what film posters had been before the era of Saul Bass. Usually consisting of dark/bland colours or a snapshot of a scene in the movie, there wasn't much that would grab the attention of the viewer and it certainly didn't give such an in depth connection to the characters or the ideas that were being portrayed as Bass' revolutionary largely symbolic style. I hope that Saul Bass' ideas of construction of words and shapes will rub off onto my work to give it a more rough and true look, as my theme is very connected with authentics and purity.

One of my artist models, David Carson once said: "Don't confuse legibility with communication. Just because something is legible doesn't mean it communicates and, more importantly, doesn't mean it communicates the right thing." By this he means that type/text is saying things to us all the time. Typefaces express a mood and an atmosphere. They give words a certain colouring that is beyond the meaning of the words that are being 'advertised'. **(4)**

The ideals set forward by David Carson also connect with the unique style of Oded Ezer, another artist model of mine. Carson talks about the unseen depth of text and the text as being seen as objects rather than single words, whereas Oded takes this into a literal meaning by constructing 3 Dimensional text, which is sometimes unreadable but you still know that it is made from letters. Alongside these two artist models, I looked at Saul Bass who had a saying - "Symbolize and summarize" which I understood to mean, make your design something simple, that has an immediate impact on the viewer, and one of the most crucial aspects to this is typography which is why his input into my work fits in easily with my other artist models.

One of the biggest points of difference between these typographers and graphic designers is the language that they each work with. Carson and Bass, each American born and bred have spent their career advertising in English and are otherwise 'limited' to their audience base in an advertising sense. You could argue that it is the visual aspect of a design that conveys a message, and it is indeed true to Carson's quote at the start of this essay, but to create such work you really do need to have some basic understanding of a specific language to make sense of what you are doing to be able to make that visual connection. Carson's article for the Beach Culture Magazine 'Hanging at Carmine Street' (1991) shows this as the word 'hanging' is doing just that – hanging – and to be able to construct a design in a way that does that you first must understand the meaning of the word. **(5)**

Carson was quoted saying "My environment always influences me". This we now see and understand in more modern/liberal times as the root for artistic inspiration but in the times where David Carson and Saul Bass were in the fledgling stages of their design careers each had a social barrier that they had to overcome to release their potential. The animated paper cutout of a heroin addict's arm in Saul Bass' film poster for 'The Man with the Golden Arm' was a shock to the film industry, and did not go without controversy from more conservative perspective's – and understandably as the 50's were teeming with the notion that formalities in the public scene were be invaded by modernism. While he was still alive, there was some film posters made which looked remarkably like that of Bass' earlier work. It was stated by the so-called 'thieves' that they were homage to the work of Bass, which he flatly denied – this just goes to show the level of influence he had on the film poster industry. The work of David Carson also came into question with the issue of legibility. For one of his more famous magazine articles, which was about the singer Bryan Ferry, he stated that he found the article "Incredibly Boring" and therefore decided to convert the whole text into a font style called 'Zapf Dingbat', which consists of various shapes and codes that replace specific letters. It was clear that this was a questionable thing to do, but as it has turned out, it has gone down in history as one of the more famous magazine double-page spreads ever created!