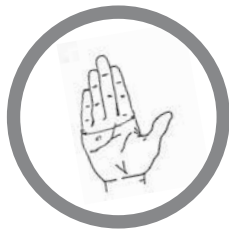


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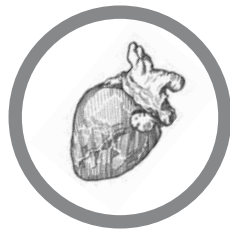
Design is the discipline of defining interfaces between a product and its user, between abstract ideas and a tangible reality, between the rational and the emotional.



Knowledge



Craft



Passion

Good design embodies the brain, the hand, and the heart.

As a common symbol for knowledge, the brain signifies the importance of a thorough understanding of design. As practitioners in the field of design, we constantly draw on findings and methods from adjacent disciplines such as theories of perception, behavioral psychology, and market research.

As designers too, we also need to be aware of current developments.

The hand represents the quality and craftsmanship of a design piece, while the heart illustrates the capacity to reach the audience on an emotional level. A design is successful when it convinces its audience both visually and with regard to content.

At the Unfrozen Conference, I will be presenting “The Anatomy of Design,” a lecture that aims to inform the audience about the fundamental principles that constitute the expertise of visual designers. “The Anatomy of Design” references my own professional work using real-life examples. It is not a theoretical account of design research. The way I visually translate those fundamental principles into my work will be illustrated by a recent corporate design project for the “ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences.”

Designklinikum: The Anatomy of Design

As its name suggests, “Designklinikum” translates into “design clinic.” It is an informal cooperation of specialized practitioners with a variety of professional backgrounds. Participants at the Designklinikum are designers, concept developers, copywriters, thinkers, creative consultants, type designers, teachers, and students – even sinologists. We developed the “Anatomy of Design” lecture as a means to help our clients understand our work.

Some design concepts are more successful than others. Our goal is to raise awareness of the basic elements of good design and the way they interact – to train the eye of the beholder, so to speak, so that our clients are able in future to independently distinguish between meaningful design and design nonsense. We do so by “dissecting” existing visual design precedents. This detailed evaluation helps the audience to grasp the complex ideas involved.

We chose an analogy everybody can relate to: medical science – hence the name Designklinikum. Just as one would differentiate in the field of health and medicine between a doctor and a quack or a charlatan, the same distinction can also be made in the design field between specialists and dabblers or dilettantes. “Designer” is by no means a protected job title – practically anyone can call



him or herself a designer, even without formal training. Any self-proclaimed designer can examine a gullible patient and mistake an A for a B while doing so. This practitioner then amputates a digit, when in fact the appendix was ruptured. It goes without saying that most professional fields consist of qualified practitioners as well as those who are far from competent. Downloading amateur programs or using artificial intelligence to create a design does not make one a designer. In most cases, a recognized design professional has laid a thorough foundation for his practice by graduating from a reputable design school or university, has then gained experience at various agencies, and demonstrates a lifelong commitment to furthering his education and increasing his knowledge base.

It is, however, worth noting at this point that relying exclusively on renowned and award-winning agencies to deliver a communication concept is no guarantee for success either – and that design errors occur in small businesses as well as in large enterprises. We aim to equip our audience with the tools they need to select the design approach that is most suited to their project.

This raises the question of how we define design. In the public's perception, the design factor is often used when describing goods that are sold at a higher price than their actual value, such as Nike sneakers. The customer pays a premium because of the product's branding.

Design solutions are also found in public places such as supermarkets. Aldi, one of Germany's biggest grocery store chains, will serve as an example. The brand is known for its concept of reducing everything to the absolute minimum, including the number of employees, with the goods arranged on cardboard boxes instead of on costly shelves. This allows Aldi to offer products at much lower prices compared with other supermarkets. The stores are always clean, well lit, and organized. Most customers value Aldi's excellent price-performance ratio.

The company's advertising material mirrors the essential topic. Letters are distributed very sparingly and promotions are disguised as informative flyers. Aldi carefully selects the means of reaching its target audience and spends a lot of money on full-page newspaper or billboard advertisements. This is very expensive, yet effective in terms of targeting potential customers.

The Aldi example highlights the vast variety of specializations that exist in the field of design. The scenario described is only possible because of the

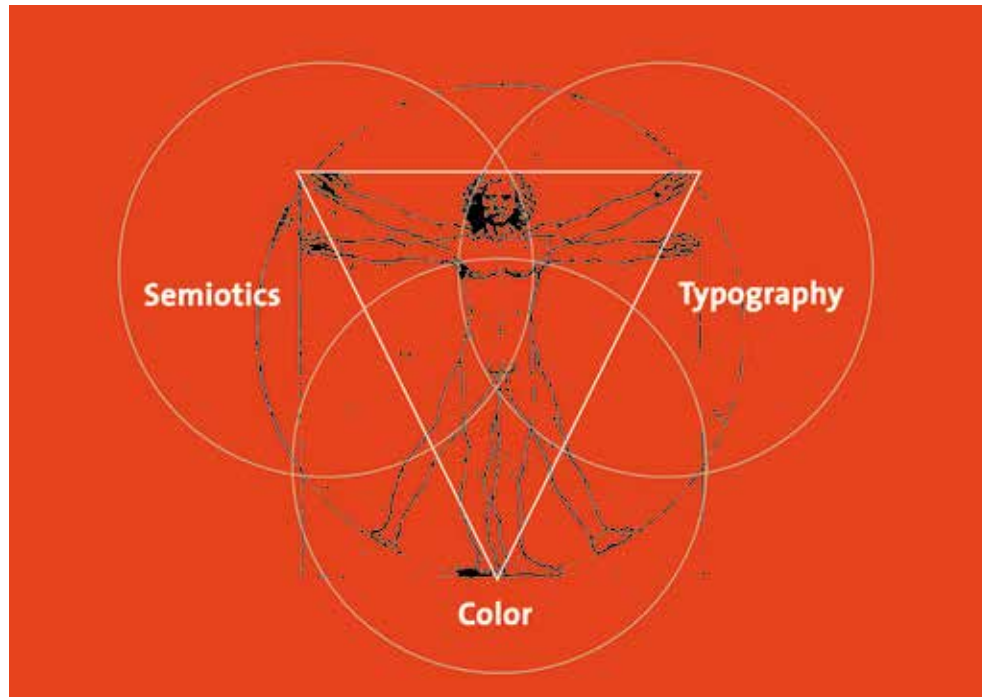


collaborative work of a range of designers. An interior designer is responsible for and creates the physical characteristics of the store, often in cooperation with a lighting designer. An art director will develop a visual concept, while a web designer and programmer will work on the online appearance. A packaging designer will create the look of the products and branding, and occasionally, an organization designer will be employed as well.

The work of a designer goes beyond visually communicating luxury brands. The majority of things surrounding us in our day-to-day lives are tailored through visual communication design. “*One cannot not communicate,*” said Paul Watzlawick. Even a handwritten market-stall sign carries several layers of information, some of which we automatically and subconsciously recognize and decode. Apart from price and product information, the orthography and handwriting may also lead us to infer that the sign is from a Turkish fruit stand in a particular part of town.

Design is all around us and bombards us with new pieces of information on a daily basis. It often aims to filter and organize data and make it visually appealing. Design is supposed to facilitate the acquisition of information. Content should be made accessible and unique by the considered application and cohesive combination of typography, form, and color. Our eyes and minds are constantly engaged with visual precedents, deciphering their various messages. As designers, we find this process incredibly fascinating. We want to understand how branding works. Why, for instance, do most of us perceive the supermarket chain Aldi as a distributor of high-quality products despite the incredibly cheap prices? This question – and finding answers to it – lies at the core of the Designklinikum’s purpose: to discover the reasons for this gut feeling. We do so via in-depth analysis of design products, in order to develop guidelines for future reference – in much the same way that student doctors try to acquire an overview and thorough understanding of the various parts of the body.

The term “anatomy” is of Greek origin and means “to cut open.” It encapsulates the scientific study of the structure of organisms, including their systems, organs, and tissue. It describes the appearance and positioning of various components along with the materials from which they are composed, as well as the relationship and interaction between the various parts. Anatomy examines the construction of things, with the aim of understanding the aesthetics and functionality of each element. By dissecting the organism, structures are made visible.



This scientific method of analysis can be carried over into our research in the field of visual communication. Being aware of the functionality of each component is crucial to understanding how and whether a product works. As an example, I will examine the Designklinikum's logo using the same approach.

As you can see, the logo uses a clear and modern-looking sans serif typeface, creating a notion of cleanliness often associated with hospitals – an impression underscored by the shape of the red cross, which is also part of the logo. However, the fact that a logo has all the necessary components does not necessarily mean that the design works – just as the presence of all vital organs in a patient does not automatically imply a clean bill of health. It becomes apparent that for a functioning design organism, the interaction of each part is fundamental. A balanced and working composition of type, color, and form – or in design terms: typography, color, and semiotics – is the key to a successful design. My presentation “Anatomy of Design” cites 21 examples of such interaction and highlights the way varying design tools can be used.

I have found this theoretical discourse around design incredibly useful in recent years. It is helping my clients to understand our work and to value my expertise as a design consultant. In addition to creating a communication concept and branding, designers have to be able to explain the concept of their work to clients, most of whom do not have a background in design or marketing. Providing clients with an understanding of the basic tools and principles of design will enable them to express their feedback on a much more sophisticated level. This is crucial to the successful implementation of a corporate design.

Gestaltungsinstitut – Anatomy of Design in Application

Interestingly enough, in 2015 we developed a corporate design project within the field of medical sciences for our client ZB MED (Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences) at my studio, Gestaltungsinstitut (Institute for Design). I will use this corporate identity (CI) project as a case study.

ZB MED has its origins in the Royal Agricultural Academy (founded in 1848) and the Library of the Academy of Practical Medicine (founded in 1908). Things have come a long way since then, and ZB MED is no longer restricted to the role of a traditional library, but is steadily transforming itself into a professional service provider for scientists and researchers. Today, life science interlocks the studies of medicine, health and nutrition, environmental and agricultural science. Scientists use multiple channels of communication and various types



of media for research and publishing. Information can be retrieved from complex search engines that use web crawlers and thesauruses. Flexible publishing formats like “living handbooks” are enabling scientists and researchers to create handbooks in a collaborative process. These formats are allowing everyone free access to research and facilitating the creation of multimedia, “living” handbooks that can easily be updated.

ZB MED adapts to the needs of its customers, who include researchers, academics, and librarians. Its collection profile and information services mirror contemporary changes, and yet its overall visual profile and external appearance were no longer a coherent whole in keeping with the professional services it offers. With the aid of several workshops, we were able to identify our client’s requirements and objectives. We involved all departments, as well as its stakeholders, in order to create a branding and communication concept that reflected every component of the company. The new umbrella-brand concept organizes the brand and subbrands. We set up a “toolbox” containing a range of typefaces, imagery, color palettes, and graphics – all of which need to be applied consistently to branding across media. All in all, we redesigned the entire communication strategy, including the way-finding system of the library in Cologne.

FH Salzburg – Teaching the Principles of the Anatomy of Design

Referring back to the statement made at the beginning of this essay – “*Good design embodies the mind, the hand, and the heart*” – this is what we want to teach our students: to become designers who think independently and adopt a holistic approach to projects – taking into account all aspects, from company culture, work flow, to public perception. The mind symbolizes the training of the eyes and the ability to develop concepts to a high standard. The hand represents the professional finish and high quality of our practice. The heart is a symbol for love and passion. Being passionate about the design discourse is the key to developing a creative personality. It is of utmost importance to us that our students develop such a personality and attitude. In German, the word “Haltung” – for “attitude” – also conveys “a position of the body or manner of carrying oneself” or, medically speaking, one’s posture. Having a good posture is fundamental to a strong and healthy body (of design). “Attitude” also means “the act of thinking, feeling, or behaving in a way that reflects a state of mind or disposition” and that is probably the most important component in anyone who wants to become a good designer.