



ITALIANO ENGLISH



INTERVIEW TO PAULA SCHER



The Florence Biennale steering committee is delighted to announce that the **"Leonardo da Vinci" Lifetime Achievement Awards for Design** will be bestowed to internationally acclaimed talents who have excelled outstandingly in the design domains. One of them is **Paula Scher**, principal of the Pentagram studio in New York specialising in communication and graphic design.

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Public Theater Signage, Location: New York NY, Architect: Ennead, Graphic Design: Paula Scher, Pentagram Design



Paula Scher is one of the most acclaimed graphic designers in the world. She has been a principal in the New York office of the distinguished international design consultancy Pentgram since 1991, where she has designed identity and branding systems, environmental graphics, packaging and publications for a wide range of clients that includes, among others, Citibank, Microsoft, Bloomberg, Shake Shack, the Museum of Modern Art, Tiffany & Co, the High Line, the Public Theater, the Metropolitan Opera, the Sundance Institute and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

During the course of her career Scher has been the recipient of hundreds of industry honors and awards; she is a recipient of the National Design Award for Communication Design, the AIGA medal and the Chrysler Award for Innovation in Design, among others. Scher has served on the Public Design Commission of the City of New York from 2006- 2015. She is an established artist exhibiting worldwide, and her designs are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, the Library of Congress, the Victoria and Albert Museum and other institutions. She is the author of "Make It Bigger" (Princeton Architectural Press, 2002) "MAPS" (Princeton Architectural Press, 2011) and "Works" (Unit Editions, 2017). Scher holds a BFA from the Tyler School of Art and a Doctor of Fine Arts Honoris Causa from the Corcoran College of Art and Design, the Maryland Institute College of Art and Moore College of Art and Design. A documentary on her and her work can be seen in the 2017 Netflix series Abstract: The Art of Design.

Unveiling this year in a dedicated space at the Fortezza da Basso, in the Spadolini pavilion, is the Design exhibition to be held within the framework of the XIIth Florence Biennale, scheduled from 18 to 27 October 2019, and as usual showcasing works by contemporary artists from around the world. The forthcoming edition, themed '*ARS ET INGENIUM. Toward Leonardo da Vinci's legacy of Similitude and Invention*', will thus shed light on art and design as two separate yet conjoining spheres of creativity.



Paula Scher. Courtesy of the designer

Florence Biennale is glad to release an interview to Paula Scher regarding her career as one of the most important graphic designer in the world and her participation to the XIIth Florence Biennale.

At the beginning of your career, you have conceived and created the covers of many important albums, spanning from Muddy Waters and Charles Mingus to Boston, Bruce Springsteen and Paco de Lucia / Al Di Meola / John McLaughlin: what can you tell us about that period? Did you use to listen to those albums before working on their covers? Which is the one you are most hooked on and why?

I did listen to the music before working on their respective covers, but I also met with the recording artists, like I do with all of my clients. I was always more interested in how they felt about the music — what they thought it conveyed — than

about what I thought. In terms of favorite covers, I still like Waters' *Hard Again* and *I'm Ready*. I also still like my covers for Bob James (*One on One*, *Touchdown*, and *Heads*).

In particular, the album "Boston" was a huge success: how did you coinceive it? Why did you choose a Sci-fi design for that cover?

The lead guitarist of Boston was Tom Scholz and he started his career as an Engineer at Polaroid. We had shown him some designs that he didn't like so we thought that if we did something that incorporated technology, science, or sci-fi, he might respond to it. And he did. Then we created this narrative up for what the cover depicted and went with it.

You have been a Pentagram partner since 1991: what motivated you to be part of it and what can you tell us about that studio, which is a centre of excellence in the international design scene?

In the 80s, I ran a small business with one partner, Terry Koppel, who was mostly an editorial designer. He left the partnership after the Gulf War recession, leaving me to run the business alone. I realized that I was about to turn 40 and the kinds of projects I was getting were the same ones I had been getting for the past 10 years. I hadn't really gotten mainstream identities, which I wanted to do. I thought that if I joined Pentagram, I'd have the chance to get these larger-scale projects.

When I joined Pentagram in 1991, I was the only woman with 15 men, and it was pretty awful. And then it wasn't.



Quad Cinema, Signage, Location: New York NY, Architect: Project Design Associates, Graphics: Pentagram (Paula Scher)

What is your design work you are most proud of?

I'm proud of my work for the Public because it's an entire body of work. I'm also proud of my ability to conquer and push forward environmental graphics.

On the occasion of the XIIth Florence Biennale, to be held in October 2019, you will receive the Leonardo da Vinci Lifetime Achievement Award. Leonardo da Vinci is considered by many experts as the first designer. What do you think about it? Are art, design and science connected in your opinion?

I am incredibly honored and humbled to receive the Leonardo da Vinci Lifetime Achievement Award. I think that design is the art of planning. And da Vinci is the best planner there ever was.

During the interview for the Netflix series "Abstract: Art of the Design", you said that you usually take inspiration from contemporary culture: could you tell us some specific example of what gained your attention in the last few years?

This is a good question. What has attracted my attention more than anything else over the last few years, is the ability to control and program typography in eccentric ways that never existed before. Masses of people can begin to experience the power of typography in a way they never have, and they can do it without being fully educated in the field. They have learned to recognize visual languages, which opens up a whole new area to explore.

You said that one of your most favorite designs is for the Public Theater, what can you tell us about it?

Working for The Public Theater provided me an enormous amount of creativity and opportunity. I invested myself in it in a way that was much more personal than some of my other work. I continue to design for them—twenty-five years later—and still enjoy the process, the people, and the end results.



Is there anything that you regret in your career?

I regret that I never became a movie star...I would've liked to have designed some film titles.

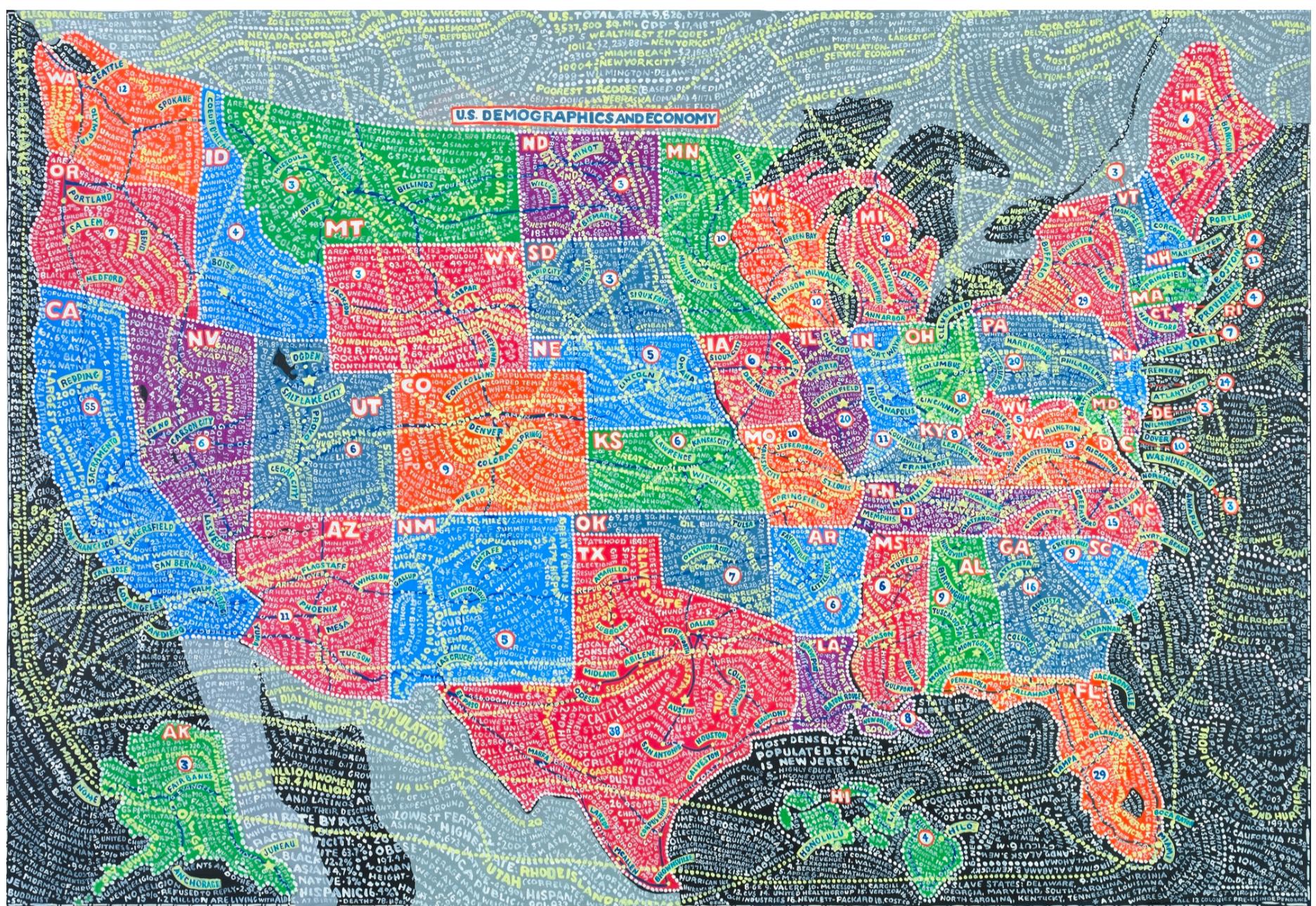


What's the secret behind your neverending success?

There is no secret to success. Only perseverance.

<https://www.pentagram.com/>

<https://www.pentagram.com/about/paula-scher>



Courtesy of Paula Scher / Pentagram



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