

Jacqueline Casey

INTRODUCTION

I selected Jacqueline Casey because she worked at MIT, which I visited during my college search. Along with this, it was my dad's dream school, and he loves everything about the university. Even though he didn't go there, he somehow owns three shirts.

Born in 1927 in Quincy, Massachusetts, Casey was a graphic design artist who broke gender boundaries, as well as played a role in building up the image of the Ivy-League university. Studying at the Massachusetts College of Art, she graduated in 1949 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and certificate in fashion design and illustration.

WORK

After graduation, Casey had a number of jobs within the fashion illustration, interior design, and advertising fields. However, her best work, and what she is now known for, was created during her time working at MIT's Office of Publications. She joined in 1955 under Muriel Cooper, the design director and fellow alum. Through Cooper and Theresa Moll, a Swiss designer who also worked at MIT, Casey learned the concepts and principles of graphic design. Moll was very large influence on her, as Casey went on to adapt Swiss design elements, such as the grid.

In 1972, when Cooper left to become a professor, Casey filled her spot as Director of the Office of Publications; she was one of only two women on MIT's campus who held a such a high position. During her time working as Director, Casey designed a number of posters promoting events around campus. Her work was high-contrast and type-heavy, making it stand out when put next to a cluster of other posters advertising for other events on campus. Along with this, her work included a flow between the type and graphic image, making it easy to follow and get the information.

Due to her design work, she achieved a number of successes and awards. In 1971, Print Magazine held a competition called Poster USA: 1960-1970. In it, seventeen of Casey's works were showcased -- the second largest number by an individual or studio. In 1982 she received the Design Leadership Award from the AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts).

Her most famous piece that promoted a large event on MIT's

campus is 'Intimate Architecture', which can be found on page 6.

Now, Casey's work is now held in the Library of Congress, the museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. RIT also has a collection of 99 posters, donated at the request of Casey herself.

CONCLUSION

Casey always said her job is "to stop anyone [she] can with an interesting or puzzling image, and entice the viewer to read the message in small type, and above all to attend the exhibition." In order to do this, she didn't follow typical design practices. Her text was too small to be read from a distance, and some of her graphics were unrecognizable. However, she was able to design effective posters that caught people's attention, made them read the information, and attend the event.



Jacqueline Casey

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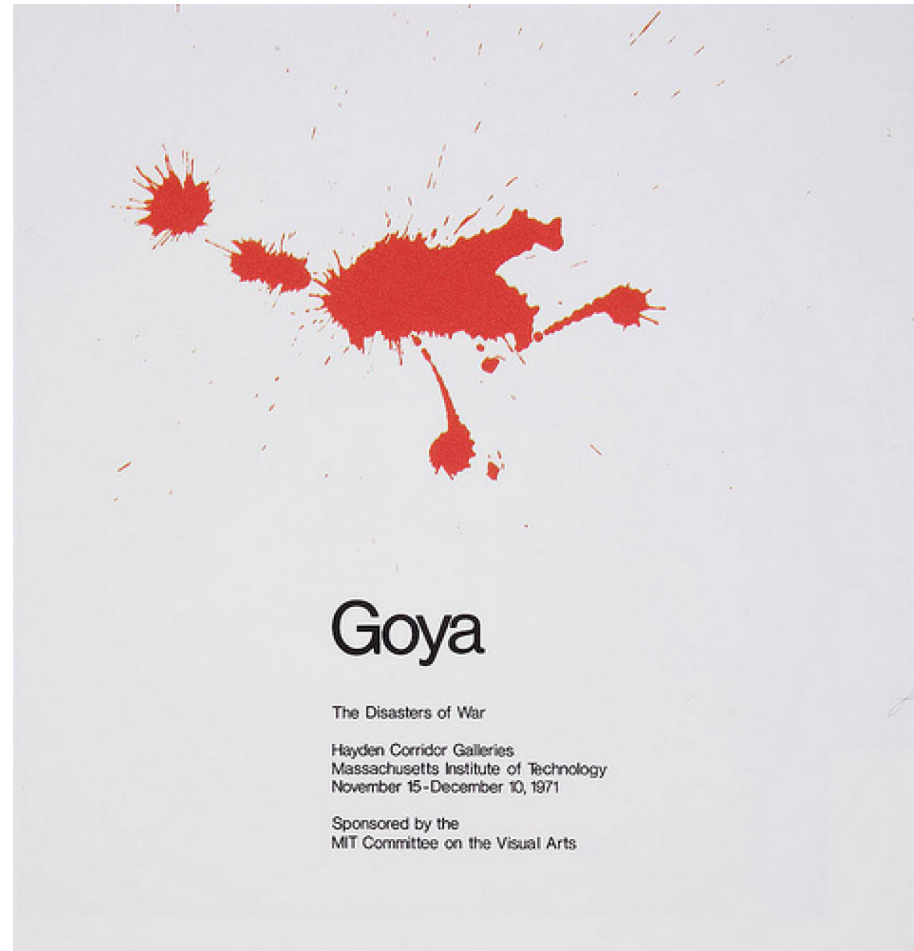
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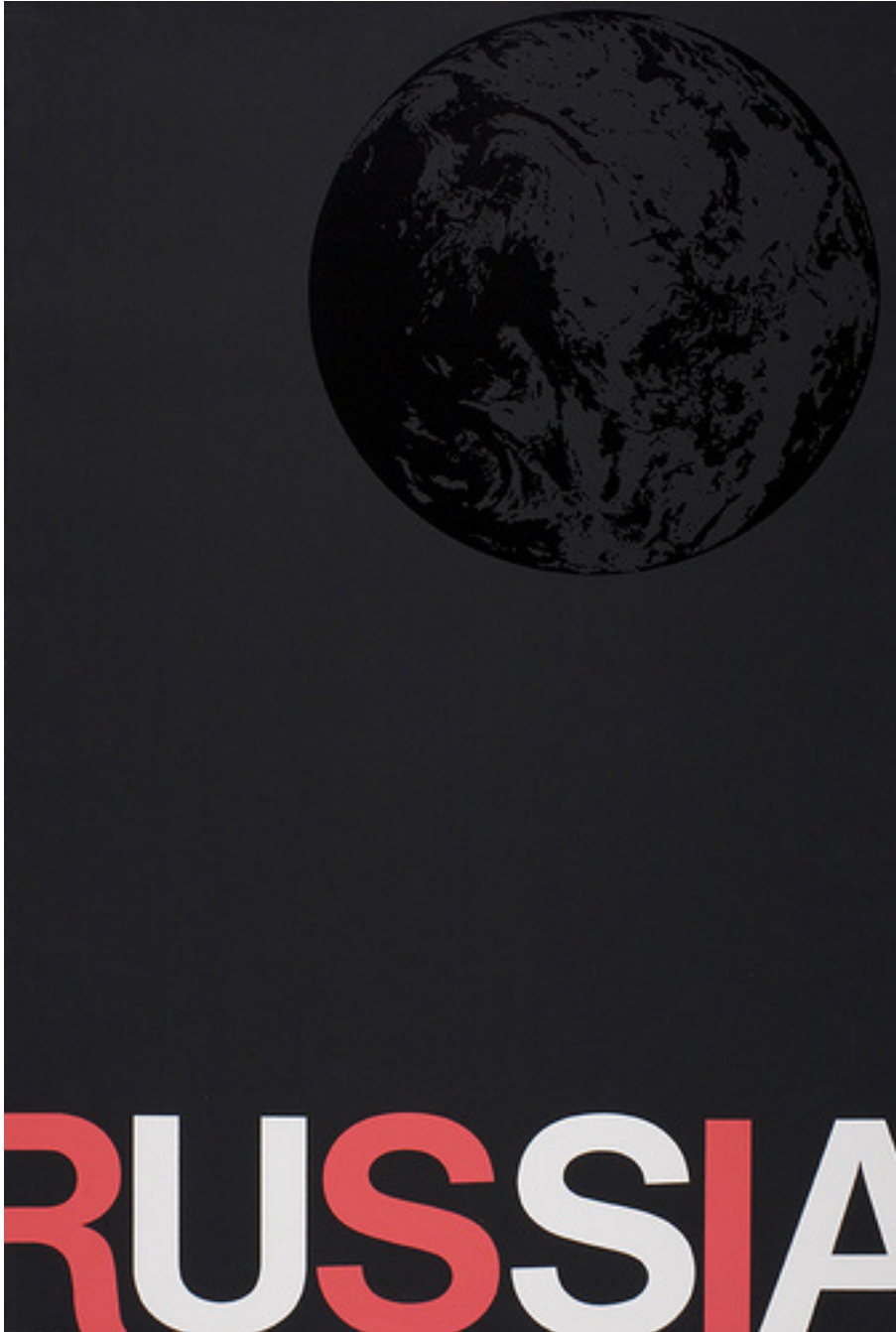
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“Goya, the Disasters of War”

1971, Poster

This design is successful because it catches the viewer's attention. The contrasted red against the gray background makes it stand out, especially when the rest of the page is white space. The text beneath it is simple typography, as it is not the main focus of the poster, but rather just supplying information about the event. Once the viewer's attention is caught, their eyes travel down the page and begin to read what the abstract art is communicating. The exhibit is titled 'The Disasters of War,' and was promoting an exhibition of Goya's aquatint prints from the 1810s. This explains the red splatter graphic, as it symbolizes the blood and gore that war brings.





“Russia, USA Peace, 1985”

1985, Poster

Casey was commissioned by the Shoshin Society (also known as the Hiroshima Appeals poster campaign) to design a poster for peace. The faded Earth in the background contrasts with the colorful text, and is almost unable to be seen. After catching the viewer’s attention with the white space and bold letters, the viewer can see Casey’s wordplay -- the white letters in ‘Russia’ spell ‘USA’. In doing so, it symbolizes that the two countries were intertwined. Here, Casey is referencing the Cold War and the race for nuclear weapons that occurred. By using a looming image of the planet and the wordplay she included, Casey effectively captured the tension during this time, and the countries responsible.

“Coffee Hour”

1979, Poster

This abstract image is unclear to viewers as to what it represents. One could see eyeballs, or some sort of opening, or anything else the viewer interprets it as. However, once reading the title of the poster -- ‘Coffee Hour’ -- it becomes clear that the abstract image is of mugs of coffee from an angle. By using the vibrant background color, the poster draws attention. Along with this, the coffee mugs are all aligned, despite some of them continuing off the page. The poster uses a combination of order and abstractness to create interest in the event. Along with this, there is little information about said event, sparking even more curiosity. However, the information provided is aligned using the grid element, which Casey enjoys so much.





“Jacqueline Casey”

1990, Poster

Created by Casey herself, this poster was promoting an exhibit of her own posters in 1990 at Tower Building in Massachusetts. At first, I thought the graphic she created looked like some sort of creature, but when reading what it was about, I recognized that it was actually the letters “J” and “C”, her initials. The distorted type is readable when one knows what the poster is about; without the context, viewers are left to see whatever they see. This design is very effective because without reading the poster, the text is so abstract that most viewers would not conclude her initials from it at first glance. It makes viewers need to read the poster information in order to understand it, and upon reading it, Casey hopes to get more attendees at the event.

“Intimate Architecture: Contemporary Clothing Design”

1982, Poster

Similar to Casey's other designs, this work uses a simplistic approach and contrast to add importance to the focal point, the dress. Along with this, on the dress there is a line that's almost pointing downward and leading the viewer's eyes towards the text. The poster's information, which was written in small text and utilizing the grid concept, did not fully explain the graphic, and curiosity was created. Curious people are more likely to attend the event in order to satisfy their intrigue. In this case, the poster did just this, as Casey's work was advertising MIT's first fashion exhibit. Over 1,000 people attended, which solidified fashion as a serious discipline at the university. In doing so, MIT showed it was not just a technologic school as its reputation suggests -- other disciplines had standing and support.





“Open House”

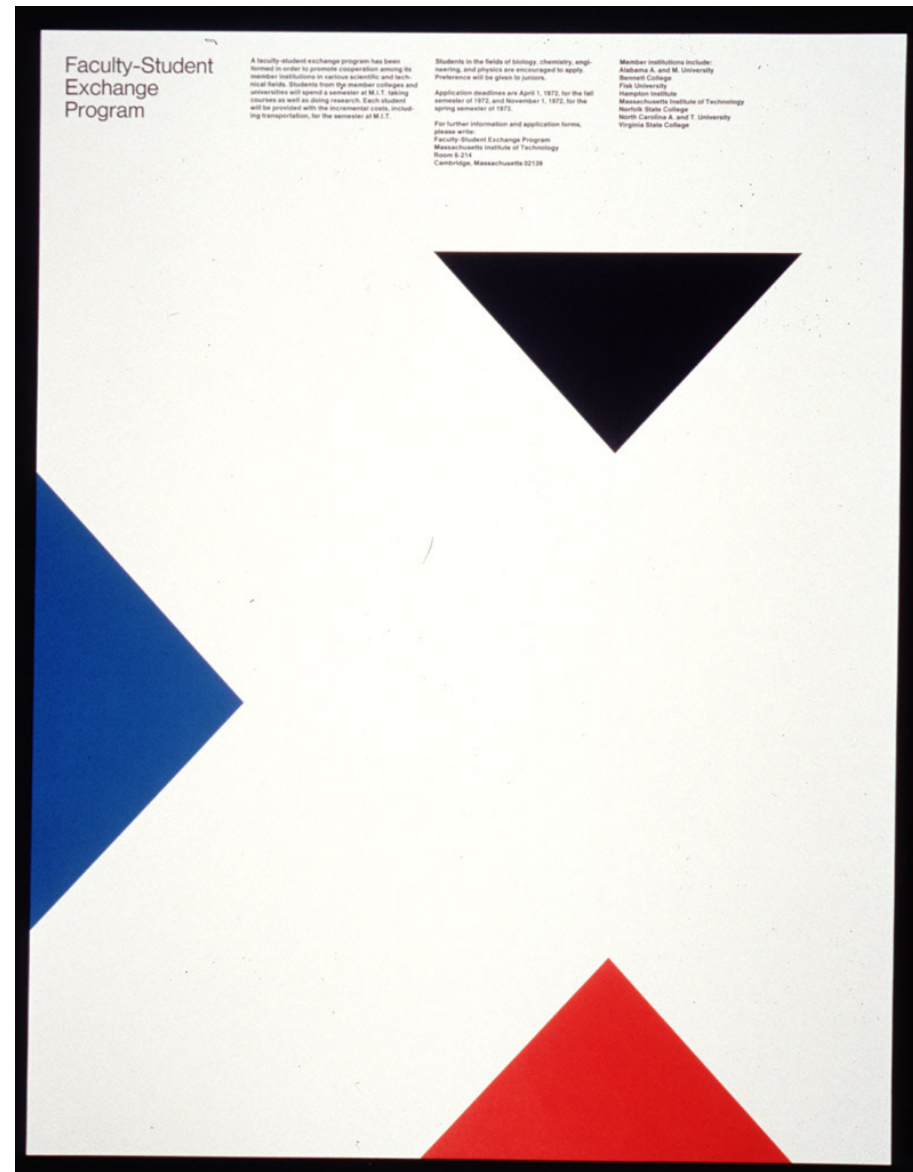
1969, Poster

As the title of the poster suggests, Casey created this piece for MIT to advertise the open house. The two bold, curved lines are contrasted with the small, blocked text at the bottom of the work. With the abstract lines and vibrant background color drawing the viewer in, the small text provides information about the event. The lines can be interpreted in many ways, and this was Casey’s intent. Personally, I interpreted the image as two lines coming together and forming the letter ‘O’ for open house. However, one could also just see the two lines coming together, representing the students meeting with faculty, and take meaning from that. Casey’s style was to create images that were interesting and left the viewer to interpret it, and this is exemplified with the ‘Open House’ poster.

“Exchange”

1972, Poster

In all of her posters, but this one in particular, Casey utilized white space to create abstract designs. Without knowing the name of the poster, the viewer would only see three colorful triangles. However, upon reading the poster's information, the viewer could pick out the 'X' created by the white space in between the triangles, which is in reference to the word 'exchange'. This is due to the fact that the poster was created with the intention to advertise for MIT's faculty-student exchange program. The words at the top, telling information about the program, contrast the minimalist design. Along with this, Casey chose to use various colors for the triangles that create an 'X' in the white space. Due to this, it further obscures the viewer from seeing the letter intentionally, as she wants viewers to read the information the poster provides.





“Die Jahreszeiten”

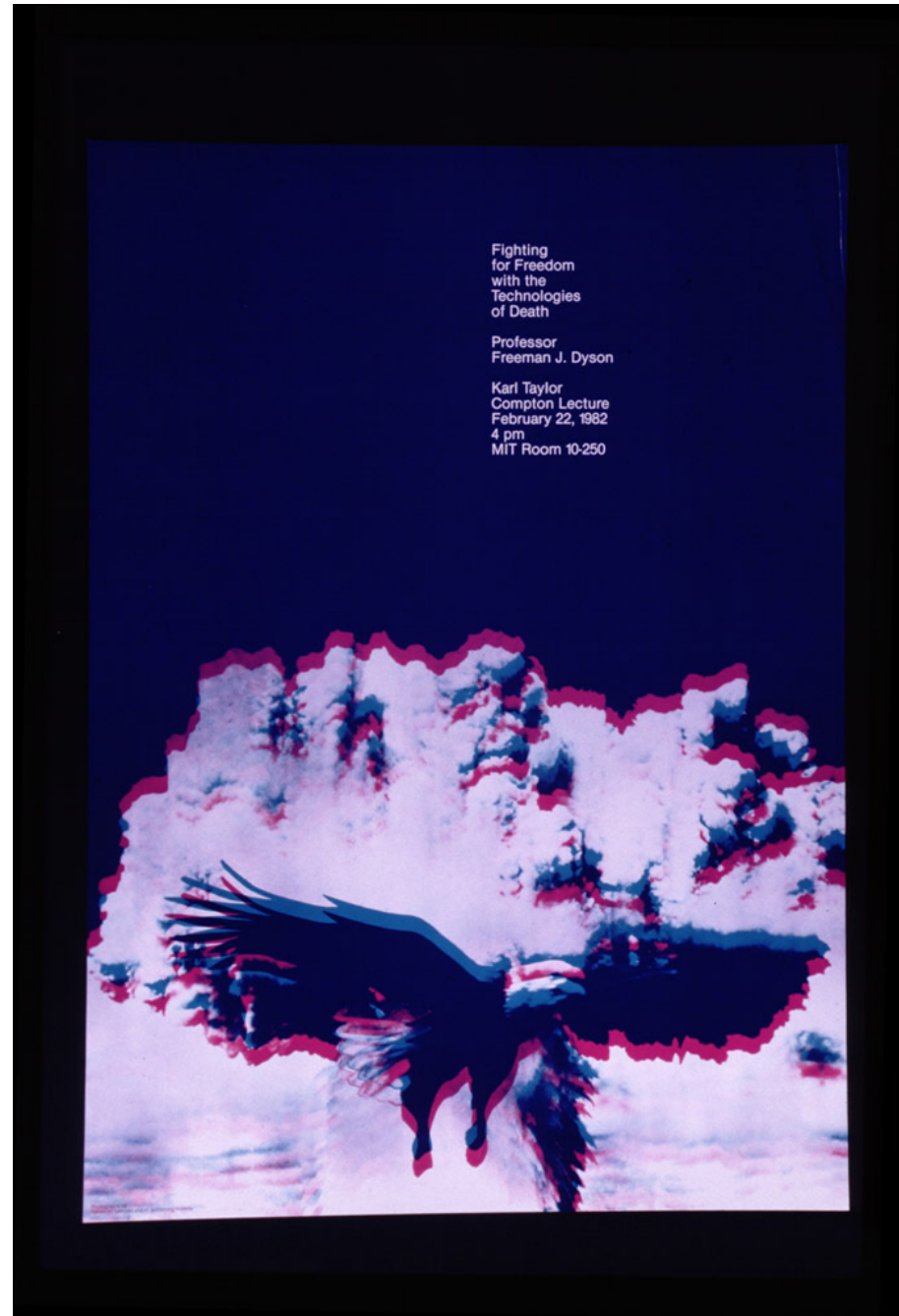
1983, Poster

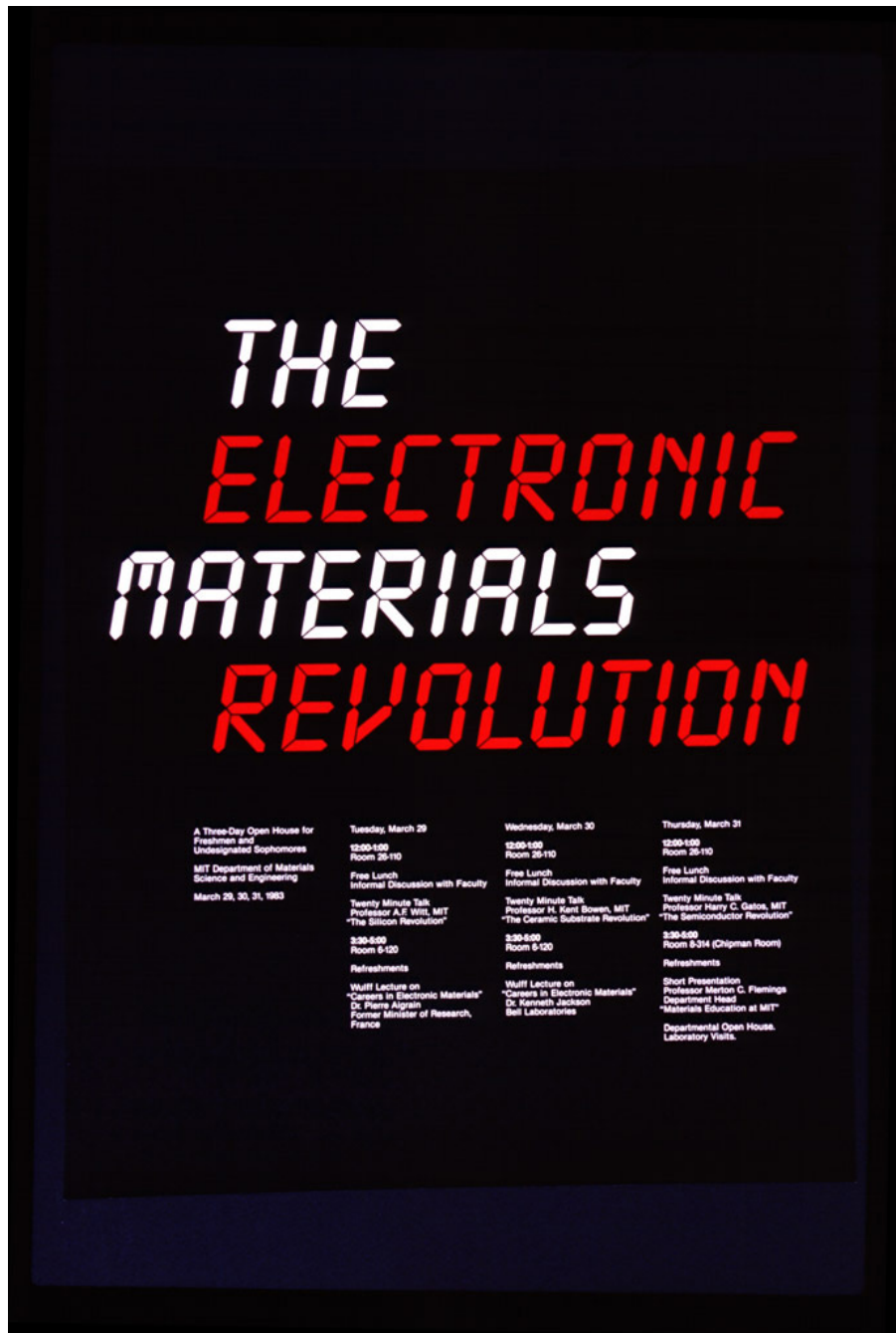
Casey stated herself that before she starts designing, she “research[es] the subject so that [her] work will be representative of it.” Her poster ‘Die Jahreszeiten’ proves this. Created to promote an MIT Choral Society concert, Casey researched the piece they were performing -- Haydn’s ‘The Seasons’ -- and learned it was originally written in German. Thus, she advertised the concert’s title in German, as ‘die Jahreszeiten’ translates to ‘the seasons’. Effectively, for viewers who don’t know German, the poster would create curiosity. For the viewers who do, there is still curiosity, as there is no other information in large letters. Along with this, the alignment of the poster is diagonal, suggesting something that’s dynamic and energetic. She conveyed the mood of the event through this alignment choice.

“Fighting for freedom with the technologies of death”

1982, Poster

From far away, this poster looks like nothing more than a blur of color. Upon closer inspection, one can make out an eagle, the national bird and a symbol of freedom. The poster was used to advertise a lecture by a professor, also titled “Fighting for freedom with the technologies of death”, on MIT’s campus. Usually, colors are used to make something stand out in a work; however, Casey used colors to make the image blur together. Along with this, the white space is a analogous color, further reducing any contrast. Casey does this intentionally, as she wants to blur and obscure the image from the viewer, making them come closer and read the text about the event. Along with this, when we imagine fighting, we don’t picture something static, but rather something dynamic, blurry, and fast-paced. By adding the colors that blur the image it gives it the illusion of movement and confusion.





“The electronic materials revolution”
1983, Poster

The purpose of this poster was for a “three-day open house for freshman and undesignated sophomores” for the MIT department of Materials Science and Engineering. The font Casey used is appropriate and suggests a technology centered event, and the contrast in color makes it bold. Specifically, her choice in using the color red, which symbolizes strength and power, make it fit with the title. Even more so, the word ‘revolution’ is in red, which is associated with strength and power. The font selected is what makes this such an impactful design.