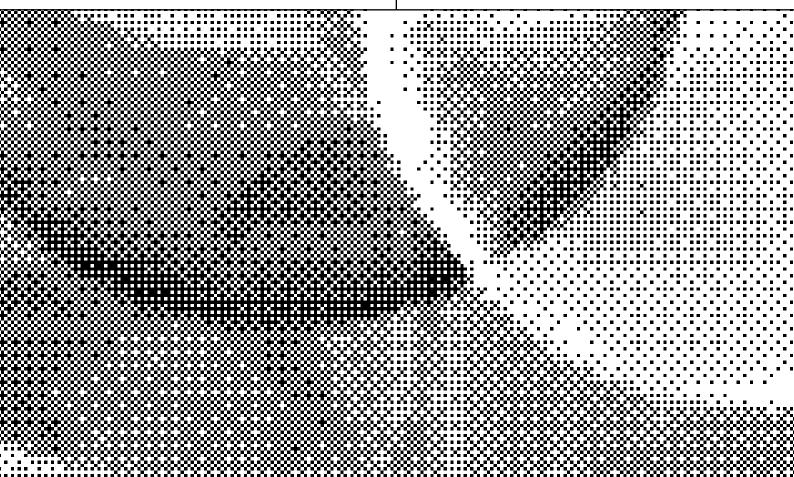
Graphic Design Thesis 2016 2017

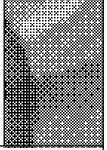
Bohye Woo (KR)

A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

A Journey to Nothingness







A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

A Journey to Nothingness

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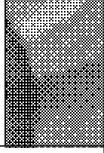
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A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

A Journey to Nothingness

00 Abstract

The role of the graphic designer is to create an effective visual language that can be communicated to viewers. It is similar to creating a diamond ring from an unearthed diamond in the rough. Although one begins with an uncut stone, it is eventually crafted into a visually arresting piece of refined jewelry while retaining the appearance and essence of a stone.

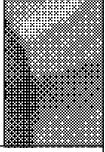
The question is: how does one make a beautiful diamond ring? How does one make beautiful designs while also preserving the essence of the original material? This is a question that graphic designers seek to answer.

In order to examine the notion of "nothingness" as a possible term for the

involvement of the designer, I intend to explore artists from Russian Constructivism to contemporary graphic designers such as Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondriaan, Laszlo moholy-Nagy, Experimental Jetset, and Sang-Soo Ann. The graphic designers mentioned above best exemplify the concept of "nothingness" in regards to the involvement of the designer.

Along with the artists, I intend to examine Taoism, the theory of Less is More, the essence of form, function, and content, proper composition and pure color, mathematical grids, and neutrality. Moreover, I would like to delve into the idea of nothingness as an approach of minimizing involvement, and how it can be applied conceptually to graphic design.





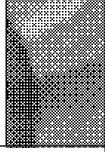
A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

A Journey to Nothingness

00 Abstract

The topics I delivered are the fundamental elements of minimizing the involvement of the designers, while maximizing the effect.

This can be applied to current graphic design practices. Through this essay, I will attempt to alter perspectives and consider nothingness as the backbone of design, which is the most valuable part of design.



A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

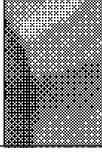
A Journey to Nothingness

01 Introduction

From the inception of the Universe, everything under the sun has been created as existence. Although existence occurred from seemingly nowhere, and the genesis of creation may still remain an enigma, the evolution of existence has been gradually being unveiled before us. Such knowledge has been unraveling before us despite being uncertain of the origin of all creation. This leads to ontological pondering such as what originated first; the chicken or the egg? In what capacity did they exist before its creation? The contemplation of creation eventually spawned questions with broader implications. It also had a profound influence on the notion of 'nothingness', which is inextricably linked to existence. The recognition of nothingness is not prevalently discussed, but occupies a very important position in our lives.

This notion of 'nothingness' can be found in graphic design as well. The fact that we are confronted with endless alternatives in graphic design has provoked deep reflection of 'nothingness' in design. The concept and form of 'nothingness' in graphic design is an interesting theme because it stimulates a detailed exploration of the essence of creation. Moreover, it is an important element of graphic design when considering fundamental shape and color, the essence of content and element etc.

The following thesis introduces the research question: How can 'nothingness' be applied as a concept in graphic design? This research question examines the investigation of the connectivity between 'nothingness.' or 'minimizing designer involvement' in graphic design.



A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

A Journey to Nothingness

01 Introduction

It challenges the reader to accept 'nothingness,' or 'minimizing designer's involvement' as a new graphic design principle. Therefore the thesis introduces fundamental possibilities of minimizing the involvement of the designer through the timeline of graphic design history.

This thesis has been assembled into two chapters, introducing the idea that 'minimizing the involvement of the designer' is a new graphic design principle of 'nothingness'.

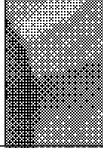
The first chapter contains three sections:

- Understanding terms of 'nothingness' and 'existence'
- Contrasting perspectives on the eastern and western notion of 'nothingness'

-Declaring a new perspective on 'nothingness'.

The second chapter consists of five sections, showing chronological examples of minimized involvement of designers in graphic design history.

- The first section in the first chapter introduces a brief definition of the term of 'nothingness' and 'existence' that will facilitate the reader to understand its exact meaning.
- Next, there will be a juxtaposition on the eastern and western perspective of 'nothingness' by crystallizing the definition and presenting examples in the next section.
- The final section of the first chapter consists of presenting the new perspective



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A Journey to Nothingness

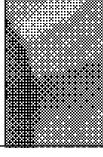
01 Introduction

of nothingness as following: 'By minimizing the involvement of the graphic designer, a state of harmony could be achieved'.

In the second chapter, the aforementioned new perspective will be applied to graphic design.

- The example of using form and function through Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky who were in the Suprematist movement will be examined in the first section.
- Moreover, the geometrical shape and pure color will be the fundamental aspect of minimizing the involvement of the designer in the second section embodied by graphic designers such as Piet Mondriaan, Theo van Doesburg, and Vilmos Huszár.

- In the third section, Bauhaus and the new typography will be used as examples to show the essence of content as demonstrated by Joost Schmidt, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Herbert Bayer.
- Systematic grids are introduced in the next section. such as Josef Müller-Brockmann's poster series at the Zurich Tonhalle and Emil Ruder's systematic grid structure based work.
- Finally, the fifth section will examine neutrality as the last fundamental principle of minimizing the involvement of the designer by showing the Experimental Jetset's idea of Helveticanism and the typeface called 'Ann sang-soo'.



(1) Junior Ganymede, "All cats have three tails", http://www.jrganymede.com/2011/08/09/all-cats-have-three-tails/, 9 August 2011.

A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

02-1 Understanding Terms



Fig.1 A cat with three tails

The definition of 'existence' and 'nothingness' will be thoroughly explained in this chapter. Based on the definitions, mentioned in this chapter, I will define the Western and the Eastern notion of nothingness in the next chapter. Furthermore, I will examine how differently the definitions can be translated depending on its perspective.

2.1.1 What is Existence?

NO CAT HAS TWO TAILS.

EVERY CAT HAS ONE MORE

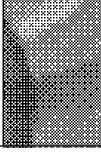
TAIL THAN NO CAT.

THEREFORE EVERY CAT HAS

THREE TAILS 1.

When I consider the concept of existence, I mention this poem. It illustrates the relationship between existence and nonexistence. This poem suggests that, 'No Cat' can also be an existence in the context of this poem. There are many controversial theories about the definition of 'Existence', because many people have conflicting views on its definition. This concept has not always been very clearly distinguishable because it is difficult to define this word.

According to Dictionary.com, 'existence' means: 'The state or fact of existing.' It always has to do with being ². In general, existence is mostly translated to: independent of one's presence. In other words, it is defined as 'the state of having objective reality'. From the philosophical discussion of the notion of existence, or



(2) No author,"The Definition of Existence", http://www.dictionary.com/browse/existence, 15 Dec 2016.

A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

02-1 Understanding Terms

the book of nothing vacuums, voids, and the latest ideas about the origins of the universe john d. barrow author of Theories of Everything and Impossibility

(3) Barrow, John D (2000). The Book of Nothing: Vacuums, Voids, and the Latest Ideas about the Origins of the Universe. New York: Pantheon, 2000.

being, it is also related with ontology: the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.

2.1.2 What is Nothingness?

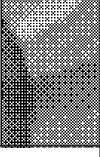
"BECAUSE IT'S NOT THERE'
MIGHT BE A REASON TO WRITE
A BOOK ABOUT NOTHING 3."
by Barrow, John D

Before I start with this chapter, I, myself am questioning how 'existence' and 'nonexistence' are related to each other. Is 'nonexistence' the same as 'nothingness'? How can we describe 'nothingness'? Where is 'nothingness'? Does 'nothingness' exist? If yes, in what form does 'nothingness' exist? In order to solve these questions, I have thoroughly researched 'nothingness'.

The idea of 'nothingness', which could be defined as an empty space, is very broad to define. Therefore, I am convinced that it is necessary for everyone to be aware of the multiple definitions of 'nothingness', because everyone has experienced 'nothingness' at least once in their lifetime. The definition of 'nothingness' seems very powerless and meaningless. However, it has various possible meanings behind it. Therefore, I have to admit that it is an interesting term to research.

To understand the term 'nothingness' more clearly, ⁴ multiple definitions are supplied below:

- 1. The state of being nothing,
- 2. Something that is nonexistent,
- 3. Lack of being; nonexistence,



(4) No author, "The Definition of Existence", http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ existence.

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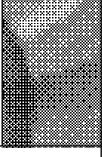
02-1 Notion of Nothingness

- 4. Unconsciousness or death,
- 5. Utter insignificance, emptiness, or worthlessness,
- 6. Something insignificant or without value.

As demonstrated, one can say that 'nothingness' means literally nothing. The other can say that it has a different meaning depending on its situation. However, if I would have to define 'nothingness' with a few words, I would define it as follows: it literally means nothing. It could also mean indifference, nihility, invisibility and etc. It can also be a state of 'white' or 'black', because most people consider that white or black space has nothing in it.

From the graphic design point of view, 'nothingness' could be a plain screen, surface, paper and so on. It can be translated

as a white space, which is one of the important aspects of the graphic design. However it can be a self-imposed limited involvement that the designer sets for oneself.



(5) Eli Siegel, "Nothing: A Study." "Nothing: A Study.", http://www.aestheticrealism.net/poetry/nothing-a-study.html.

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Notion of Nothingness Nothingness

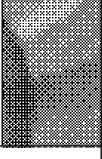
2.2.1 <u>Eastern and Western definition of notion of 'Nothingness'</u>

In this chapter, I will define the Eastern and the Western notion of 'nothingness'. Furthermore, I will show examples of the two different notions of 'nothingness'. In doing so, the differences between the Eastern and the Western notion of 'nothingness' will be made clearly discernible.

"I drew the earthling symbol for nothingness, which was this: o, I drew the earthling symbol for everything, which was this: infinity symbol."

"Everything is nothing with a twist ⁵." by Kurt Vonnegut

The Eastern perspective of 'nothingness' is dissimilar to its Western counterpart. In the East, they consider 'nothingness' as a whole existence. They do not see a distinctive divide between 'existence' and 'nothingness'. Furthermore, the Eastern 'nothingness' is a relative term, which means that this concept lends itself to paradoxical juxtapositions. 'Nothingness' can have a bipolar manifestation. That is why Kurt Vonnegut said the following: 'Everything is nothing with a twist'. The symbol for 'nothing' is a zero -0-, and the symbol for 'everything' is an infinity symbol - ∞ . In other words, if you take 'nothing' and give it a twist, you will get infinity. Depending on how people



(7) Luck Mastin, Branch Existentialism, http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_existentialism.html.

A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

Existence as well as Non-existence



Fig.3 Translation of the Eastern notion of Nothingness

02-2 Notion of Nothingness

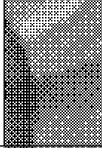
observe 'existence' and 'nothingness', the perspective can be changed.

Therefore, the perception of the Eastern notion of 'nothingness' can be flexible depending on the viewer's viewpoint. The Western perspective of 'nothingness' will be described by making use of the philosophy of Western existentialism. The Western perspective recognizes 'nothingness' as void, naught, non-being or non-existence. In other words, 'nothingness' is an absolute concept because it does not have any other meaning than the meaning of 'nothing'. Existentialism emphasizes individual existence and its relation to the freedom of choice. This means that humans define their own meaning in life, and live their life in their own way 7. Therefore, the

only way to counter this 'Nothingness' is by embracing 'Existence'. And, if somebody defines something as 'Existence,' it can eventually become actualized. However whatever is not actualized becomes 'Non-existence' which means 'Nothing'. From the Western perspective, I interpret 'Nothingness' as defined by human decision. If humans can choose to define 'Existence', its antithetical counterpart would end up being 'Nothingness'.

2.2.2 Example of 'Nothingness'

Here is an example to explain the Eastern perspective of 'Nothingness'. Imagine that I have one apple to represent 'Existence,' on a white space. From the Eastern point of view, it can be translated as followed:



(8) Russell Kirkland, 2004. Taoism: The Enduring Tradition, Routledge. p 7. ISBN: 0415263220

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02-2 Notion of Nothingness

Existence

Fig.4 Translation of the Western notion of Nothingness

Non-existence

An apple can be deemed 'existence', but at the same time, the rest of the white space can also be considered as 'existence'.

According to the Eastern perspective, the aforementioned example could also be seen in the reverse. The 'white space' could be seen as the 'existence' and the 'apple' could be seen as 'nothingness'. As a result, both components can be 'existence' or 'nothingness'. The Eastern 'nothingness' and 'existence' is a circuitous relationship that morphs due to its fluid definition.

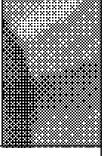
Furthermore, the Eastern perspective of 'nothingness' and 'existence' are not defined by the choice of Humans. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Eastern

perspective of 'nothingness' is free of human entanglement. Depending on the perspective, the definition of the notion of 'nothingness' can be malleable.

However, from the perspective of the Western notion of 'Nothingness', the earlier mentioned example should be translated as followed:

An apple can be considered 'existence' on the white space that is defined as 'Non-existence'.

The apple is defined as an 'existence, which automatically relegates the white space to 'nothingness', In the Western perspective, the idea of 'nothingness' literally becomes 'nothing'. This means that the white space



(9) Stephen Little, Shawn Eichman. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. University of California Press. p.33. ISBN: 9780520227842

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02-2 Notion of Nothingness



Fig.5 Yin Yang is the most known and documented concept used within Taoism

can be ignored, because the apple is the only 'existence'. This example confirms that the definition of the Western 'nothingness' exists in the space of the cause-and-effect relationship.

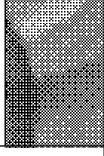
2.2.3 Philosopher 'Laozi' and 'Permenides'

Laozi and Parmenides are Eastern and Western philosophers, who addressed 'Nothingness' and 'Existence.'

"We do not see its form,
We do not hear its sound,
Yet we can perceive an order to its
accomplishments.
We call it "the Way" [Tao] 8."
by Nei-yeh/Inward Traning

First and foremost, Laozi is one of the earliest philosophers to extensively ponder the notion of 'Nothingness' in the East. Laozi was the founder of Taoism, which is seen as the everlasting principle at the origin of the universe. Tao means, "road," and is often translated into English as "the Way." The way of all things. Tao is described as an empty void that spontaneously generates the cosmos⁸. Taoism teaches that in the pure emptiness of the Tao, there is an infinitely powerful force that can transform the world. It transcends all beings: it is at the origin of all transformations. At its most fundamental level, the name Taoism does not refer to a god or a founding figure, but to a universal principle9.

"We can speak and think only of what exists. And what exists is



(10) Parmenides Quotes, Inspirational Parmenides Quotes, http://logicalquotes.com/ parmenides-quotes/, 24 August 2016. A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

02-2 Notion of Nothingness

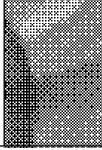
uncreated and imperishable for it is whole and unchanging and complete. It was not or nor shall be different since it is now, all at once, one and continuous¹⁰." by Parmenides

Next, Parmenides was one of the philosophers who comprehensively explored metaphysical theory and Existence in the West. He is a Greek philosopher who insisted 'non-existence was impossible, as something cannot simply disappear, just as something cannot originate from nothing'.

He didn't agree with the opinion that 'nothingness' could coexist with 'existence'. In other words, he believed that, 'There is no such thing as nothing'. He excluded the notion of 'Nothingness' and substantiated only 'Existence'.

Through this chapter, I contrasted the different perspective of the Western and Eastern notion of 'Nothingness.' This notion changes drastically depending on the origin of the perspective. Through these contrasting perspectives, I will purpose a new perspective in the next chapter and apply that concept to graphic design.





A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

02-3 A New Perspective

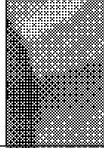
In the last chapter I expounded on 'Existence' and the 'Nothingness', and how the Eastern and Western perspectives vary. Based on these differences, I would like to suggest a new perspective.

The Western notion of 'Nothingness' and 'Existence' is contingent on the involvement of humans. So 'Existence' can only originate from humans. However the Eastern notion of 'Nothingness' is not reliant on human involvement. Nothingess can exist without the involvement of humans. Ultimately, it is a matter of involvement.

This concept can be applied to graphic design. The graphic designer produces a new design, and it becomes a creation under the supervision of the designer. From this application, I suggest a new perspective:

By minimizing the involvement of the graphic designer, a state of harmony will be achieved.

I suggest that 'Nothingness' is defined as a graphic design principle by minimizing involvement of the designer. As I introduce this new perspective, I will illustrate how a graphic designer can minimize their involvement through nothingness. Moreover, I will examine how the designer can achieve harmony through their involvement in the next chapter.



(11) Adolf Loos, 1998. Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays, Ariadne Press, p.19-24. ISBN: 9781572410466. A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-1 Form and Function



(12) Fig.6 Aubrey Beardsley, first cover for The Studio, 1893. Beardsley's career was launched when editor C. Lewis Hine featured his work on this cover and reproduced eleven of his illustrations in the inaugural issue.

In this chapter I shall examine the timeline of graphic design history from Constructivism to the international typographic style, while keeping the designer involvement in mind. This will demonstrate how nothingness as a principle of minimizing involvement of the designer, can be used in graphic design. Moreover, I explain how a designer could maximize the effect by minimizing their involvement.

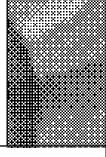
For instance, excessive ornamentation in a poster can easily look messy and even become distracting to viewers. By considering the role of decoration, we are able to contemplate the essence of composition in graphic design.

Many designers aspire to create a visually attractive poster, book, as well as other

graphic work. But sometimes their attempts fail because it gets too cluttered in the composition. Layout is not even considered because decorations overwhelms the design. In the 1900s, 'Adolf Loos,' an architect and an influential European theorist of Modern architecture wrote the essay 'Ornament and Crime' that advocated for clear surfaces instead of lavish decorations¹¹.

He explains his philosophy, describing how ornamentation can have the effect of causing objects to go out of style thus becoming obsolete. He said ornamentations in design was a crime because effort would be wasted in creating poor quality work.

The essay, caused me to reevaluate the role of decoration and the importance of



(13) Rob Horning, Ornament and Crime, http://www.popmatters.com/post/ornament_and_crime/, 26 April 2006.

A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-1 Form and Function

preserving the essence we deliver to the viewer through graphic design.

For instance, 19th century's Art Nouveau style¹² is very ornamental and decorative. They even add decorations to the artwork in order to make the entire piece aesthetically pleasing. I think ornamentation and graphic in the artwork is so exquisite. However, I had to question what was truly necessary. I am beginning to conclude that adding too much ornamentation may ultimately lead to disharmony and the elements to veer away form its original concept.

In Loos' opinion, he considered ornamentation as wasted labor, and cause of artificial inflation of material prices while most egregiously of all, contributing to uselessness¹³. He believed

ORNAMENT AND CRIME



WE HAVE OUTGROWN ORNAMENT; WE HAVE FOUGHT OUR WAY THROUGH TO FREEDOM FROM ORNAMENT.

THE PAPUAN TATTOOS IN SHORT EVERYTHING HE CAN LAY HANDS ON, HE IS NOT A CRIMINAL THE MODERN MAN WHO TATTOOS HIMSELF IS EITHER A CRIMINAL OR A DEGENERATE. THERE ARE PRISONS IN WHICH EIGHTY PER CENT OF THE INMATES SHOW TATTOOS. IF SOMEONE WHO IS TATTOOED DIES AT LIBERTY, HE HAS DIED A FEW YEARS BEFORE COMMITTING A MURDER.

THE URGE TO ORNAMENT ONE'S FACE AND EVERYTHING WITHIN REACH IS THE START OF PLASTIC ART. THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURE IS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE REMOVAL OF ORNAMENT FROM UTILITARIAN OBJECT. WHAT MANKIND CREATED WITHOUT ORNAMENT IN EARLIER MILLENIA WAS THROWN AWAY. WE POSSESS NO JOINER'S BENCHES FROM THE CAROLINGIAN ERA, BUT EVERY TRIFLE THAT DISPLAYS THE LEAST ORNAMENT HAS BEEN COLLECTED AND PALATIAL BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN ERECTED TO HOUSE IT. PEOPLE WALK SADLY ABOUT BETWEEN THE GLASS CASES AND FEEL ASHAMED OF THEIR IMPOTENCE.

EVERY AGE HAD ITS STYLE, IS OUR AGE ALONE TO BE REFUSED A STYLE? WHAT DEPRESSED FEOPLE WAS THE REALIZATION THAT THEY COULD PRODUCING A NEW ORNAMENTS. THERREIN LIES THE OPERATIONS OF OUR AGE, THAT IT IS INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING A NEW ORNAMENT.

ORNAMENT DOES NOT HEIGHTEN MY JOY IN LIFE OR THE JOY IN LIFE OF ANY CULTIVATED PERSON.

NOT ONLY IS ORNAMENT PRODUCED BY CRIMINIAL BUT ALSO A CRIME IS COMMUTED THROUGH THE FACT THAT ORNAMENT DIVILATED SERIOUS NIGHTS SERIOUS NOTES ARTHORIS. BURDET AND SENCE OF CULTURAL EVOLUTES HEALTH AND SENCE OF CULTURAL EVOLUTES HEALTH AND THE NATIONAL BURDET AND SENCE OF THAT ORNAMENT THE ORNAMENTOR HAS TO WORK TWENTY HOURS TO ACHIEVE THE INCOME EARNED BY A MODERNWORKER IN EIGHT. ORNAMENT IS WASTED LABOUR POWER.

IT THERE WERE NO ORNAMENT AT ALL - A SITUATION THAT MAY COME ABOUT IN SOME THOUSANDS OF YEARS -

THE MAN OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY WON'T

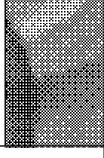
UNDERSTAND ME. BUT ALL MODERN PEOPLE

Fig.7 Ornament and Crime by Adolf Loos

the modern human did not have much need for decoration, and most ornament and decorations were meaningless.

From a graphic design perspective, I believe that the designers' choice should result in the removal of unnecessary ornaments. Discarding the possible ornamentation process minimizes the involvement of the designer, and maximizes the effect. This makes the work more significant. Moreover, I agree with Loos' opinion that ornamentation is frivolousness. Why create something that is unnecessary or inessential?

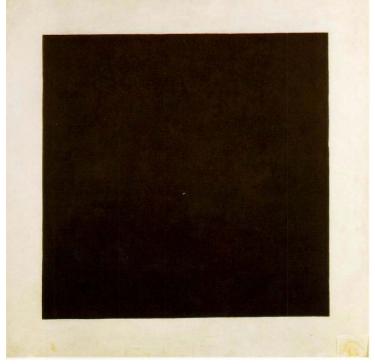
As a graphic design student, I am torn between aesthetically beautiful design and simplicity. A creator who fundamentally grasps their role as a designer, should



(14) No author, Kazimir Malevich, http://www.theartstory.org/artist-malevich-kasimir.htm.

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03-1 Form and Function



(16) Fig.8 Kazimir Malevich, The Black Square, 1915, oil on linen, 79.5 x 79.5 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

contemplate not only aesthetic actualization but also the essence of the message they would like to convey.

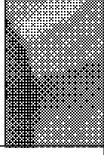
Sometimes ornaments are necessary for a design concept whether it is visually stunning or not. If a designer truly comprehends the essence of the design concept, it will not end up as a muddled, incoherent mess. Therefore, I would like to sum up that a designer must understand when ornamentation is appropriate for a specific design. In addition, they must consider the layout by assessing every element. By being cognizant of unnecessary ornaments, the designer can achieve the best harmony through their involvement.

"To the Suprematist the visual phenomena of the objective world

are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth.¹⁴" by Kazimir Malevich

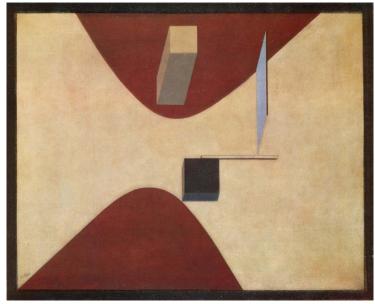
By the end of WW1, the graphic designer was challenging the notion about form and function. Russia particularly had an international influence on 20th century graphic design¹⁵.

When I think about the involvement of the designer, I have to mention Kazimir Malevich, who was a Russian Constructivism pioneer of geometric abstract art. He founded a painting style of basic forms and pure color that he called Suprematism. He ignored utilitarian



(15) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 287. ISBN: 9780471699026

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(17) Fig. 9 El Lissitzky, Proun 23, No. 6, 1919

03-1 Form and Function

function and image representation, instead looking at the practical values.

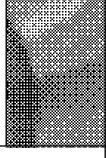
To demonstrate this, I reference his work called 'Black Square (1915)¹⁶'. He conceived the 'Zero point of painting,' to emphasize emptiness through white space. By showing the limitation of form, shape, and color, he created pure geometrical form on the canvas. It represents his personal choice. He limited himself to the fundamental form, color, and material.

In my opinion, he tried to capture the essence of the art experience that comes from the perceptual effect of color and form by minimizing the involvement of the designer. Moreover he asserted that sentimentality was contrary to the essence of art. He argued that art must remain an

essentially spiritual activity apart from the utilitarian needs of society¹⁵. So he rejected the social role and believed only inventing forms in space. By eliminating the social roles, he diminishes the relevance of tools as well. He desired to wholly focus on the essence of the message and form through painting.

There is another constructivist graphic designer I would like to mention, El Lissitzky who is a Russian avant-garde artist. As successor to Kazimir Malevich of the Suprematist movement, he also used fundamental colors and basic shapes to make a strong statement.

In his work called 'PROUN 23, no. 6, (1919)¹⁷', he developed visual ideals about balance, space, and form, which became the basis for his graphic design. Another



(19) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 291. ISBN: 9780471699026 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-1 Form and Function



(18) Fig.10 El Lissitzky, Cover for Veshch magazine, 1922

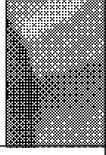
cover design for 'Veshch magazine (1922)' ¹⁸ also displays its geometrical forms and his moderation through composition. The design is constructed based on a dynamic diagonal axis with asymmetrical balancing of elements¹⁹.

He limited the color selection as well as the amount of element he used, the intention of the designer is shown through the work.

From Adolf Loos' essay to El Lissitsky, they thoroughly considered the role of essential form and function. In these works, the importance of properly using ornamentation by minimizing the involvement is shown through their works. In so doing, the works challenge the viewer to think about the essential message of the artwork, while

automatically providing a clean and coherent visual.

Therefore, the designer must look for appropriate possible tools in order to keep the simplicity of the basic form and function, which facilitates harmony after all.



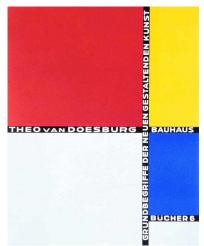
(20) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 300. ISBN: 9780471699026

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03-2 Composition and Color



(21) Fig.11 Piet Mondriaan, Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow, 1930



(22) Fig.12 Théo van Doesburg and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, book cover, 1925.

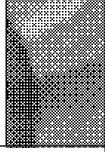
"Visual Art is attained through dynamic movement in equilibrium. It established through the balance of unequal but equivalent oppositions. It is the task of art to express a clear vision of reality." by Piet Mondriaan

The art movement 'De Stijl' also known as Neoplasticism, had indelible and profound impacts on the graphic designer. Working in an abstract geometric style, 'De Stijl' art movement was seeking for harmony in art. I believe this movement had tremendously influenced harmonious composition and encouraged designers to reevaluate color integration in modern graphic design.

When examining the concept of minimizing involvement as a new perspective derived

from 'Nothingness', I would be remiss to not mention Piet Mondriaan. He was a contributor to 'De Stijl', which was found by Theo van Doesburg. He tried to evolve from traditional landscape painting to a symbolic and geometric style influenced by Van Gogh. He attempted to retain abstract natural form and color in order to keep the fundamental principle of the geometry of the shapes, such as the straight line, the square, and the rectangle.

Moreover Mondriaan was inspired by cubism, which is an early 20th century avant-garde art movement. He pursued cubism in search of a pure and a geometric abstraction²⁰. His cubism inspired work called 'Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow, (1930)²¹' shows the search for universal harmony through colors and



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03-2 Composition and Color



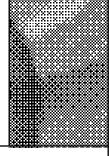
(23) Fig.13 Théo van Doesburg, exhibition poster, 1920.

forms. He advocated pure abstraction by reducing the essentials of form and color. In other words, I understand that he sought the absolute purity of the work by having subjective expression through exploration of composition and color. The primary color selections of the black and white with the vertical and horizontal strokes illustrates the simplicity in visual composition. His work captures how the composition of asymmetrical balance between the different squares is achieved harmonically.

As referenced earlier, Theo van Doesburg, the founder of De Stijl is an artist that warrants mentioning. He comprehensively pored over geometric shapes and pure colors before even 'De Stijl' movement was developed. His contrivance of flat color images and simple black bars, which

build shapes²², can be the considered the beginning of harmonious graphic design. This particularly resonates within the context of the involvement of the designer.

Another exhibition poster²³ he designed in 1920 shows geometrical restraint. All curved lines are eliminated and only sanserif fonts were used. Letter types were set in the rectangular boxes, and it seemed that he used rectangular boxes as a simple grid to create a subdued form of harmony. The asymmetrical layout on the edge illustrates the limited amount of involvement of the designer. He kept the design as neutral as possible by restricting the color selection. Moreover He didn't use a decoration but focused on the structural elements in order to achieve the strong graphical impression.



(24) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 301. ISBN: 9780471699026 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

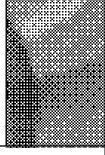
03-2 Composition and Color



(25) Fig.14 Villmos Huszár, cover design for De Stijl, 1917

One of the Neo-Plasticism artists Vilmos Huszár's way of working with rectangles, horizontal and vertical lines, and a limited color palette²⁴ also informed current graphic design principles. His cover design for De Stijl (1917)²⁵ shows the combination of his composition with typography and logo to create a rectangular shape in the center of the page. By creating the limited grid, it gives a concrete style of design. Moreover by narrowing the specific shape and color, it shows the minimized involvement of the designer that gives a clear visual of the image.

Through De Stijl art movement, I cite Piet Mondriaan to Vilmos Huszár as examples of designers who pioneered limited involvement in their work. As a result, through proper composition and pure colors they were able to attain the essential message of the design and maximal effect through harmony. In the next chapter I will present the idea of how a designer can deliver the essence of contents through the involvement of the designer in Bauhaus and new typography movement.



(26) No author, Functionalism of Modernity, http://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/functionalism.html.

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03-3 Essence of Content



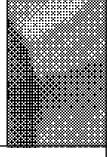
(27) Fig.15 Joost Schmidt, Bauhaus exhibition poster, 1923.

"A thing is defined by its essence. In order to design it so that it functions well — a receptacle, a chair, a house — its essence must first be explored; it should serve its purpose perfectly, that is, fulfil its function practically and be durable, inexpensive and 'beautiful'26." by Walter Gropius

From a graphic design point of view, nothingness is defined as a new principle of minimizing the involvement of the designer. As stated by Water Gropious, the involvement should be defined by the essence. And the essence of contents should be well preserved and coherently be expressed in the design functions.

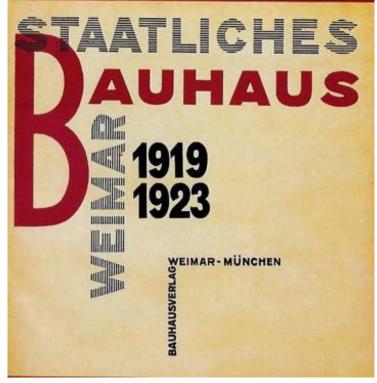
In order to expound on this essence, I would like to explain the Bauhaus art movement, which occurred concurrently 'De Stijl.' As Bauhaus typography was influenced by De Stijl, the influences left a lasting impression on graphic design. The Bauhaus shows the involvement of the designer through its content. Stylistically, it proves the designer can achieve harmony by harboring the essence of the content.

The work of a Bauhaus poster²⁷ from Joost Schmidt is very simple, yet contains various geometric content. The contents are placed in an abstract composition of rectangular segments and rounded shapes with the vivid colors²⁸. A proper hierarchy is established through its layout.



(28) N Kim, Typography Analysis, https://nkim24. wordpress.com/2009/03/09/ typography-analysis/, 9 March 2009 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-3 Essence of Content



(30) Fig.16 Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, title page, Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar.

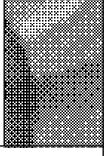
I think that the essence of contents is maintained its composition. It shows the minimal designer involvement through its shapes, composition, and background. So it is not cluttered with arbitrary elements, but the viewer can perceive the essence of the content by looking at the composition on the canvas.

The impact of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy also brought the essence of content to the fore as well. He made a lasting statement on typography, describing it as a "A tool of communication. It must be communication in its most intense form. The emphasis must be on absolute clarity... Legibility — communication must never be impaired by a priori esthetics.^{29"}

He considered that the clarity of legibility is the lynchpin of communication. I deduce that he considered the essence of typography with absolute clarity is the most important concept.

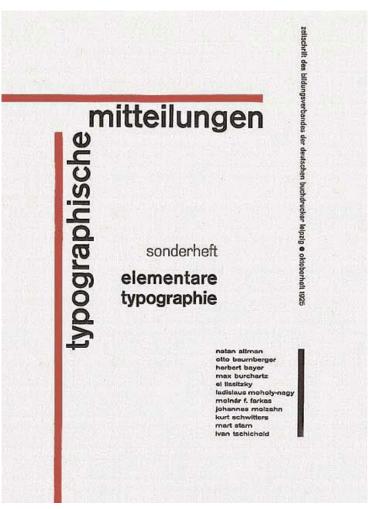
This is a piece called 'Title page³⁰' of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, capturing the essence of typography very well. Its structure is based on a rhythmic series of right angles. It has two styles based on the right angle composition. One is a normal typography, and the other one has stripes applied to two words.

I understand that this composition facilitates a more dynamic layout but retains the essence of the content, which is typography. This work represents the content very well



(29) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 313. ISBN: 9780471699026 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-3 Essence of Content



(31) Fig.17 Jan Tshichold, Cover of Elementare Typographie (a 24-page document)

as a tool of communication. It is not forced into a framework, but it gives freshness and an absolute clarity the typographical composition.

I am going to introduce Jan Tshichold to showcase his minimized involvement on design. A stunning example I would like to show is the cover for 'Elementare Typographie (1925)'³¹.

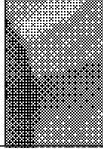
He advocated standardized paper and set guidelines for establishing a typographic hierarchy when he uses type in design. In his work, the essence of typography is also an important aspect. By creating the typographic hierarchy, which I consider is the essence of content, he was able to make a self-imposed limitation on his subjective choice in design. The layout harmonized by limited colors of the black and red is

absolutely palpable. Moreover, integrating some white space facilitates exceptional composition through the essence of content, which is typography.

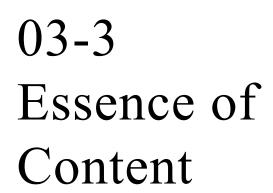
Finally, I present Herbert Bayer's symbol that is for the Kraus stained glass workshop³² in 1923. In the logo, a horizontal line divides a square in order to make two rectangular shapes. Again, each rectangular shape is divided with a vertical to form four squares after all. In the logo, a harmony of proportion is achieved with the content that is minimized by the designer.

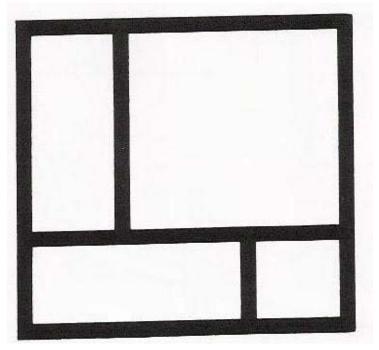
In summary, understanding the principles of composition in the context of the essence of content is the core guiding principle of the Bauhaus movement. The composition should engender harmony, and not distract





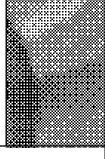
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(32) Fig.18 Herbert Bayer, symbol for the Kraus stained-glass workshop, 1923.

through overuse. I can conclude that the essence of content (in this instance: typography) should be considered as a tool that enables harmony through minimized involvement.



(33) Jarrett Fuller, The Myth of Neutrality, http://www.jarrettfuller.com/portfolio/writing/neutrality.htm, July 2016.

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03-4 Systematic Grid

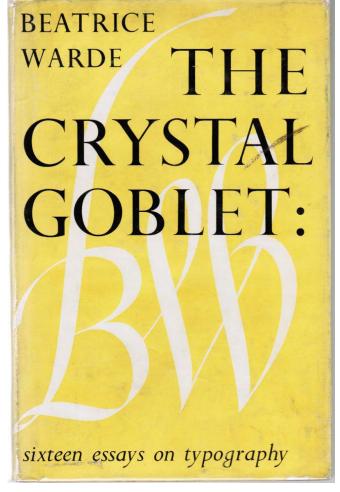


Fig.19 Beatrice Warde, The Crystal Goblet: sixteen essays on typography.

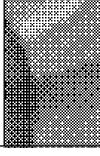
I would like to introduce a book 'The Myth of Neutrality: sixteen essays on typography' from Beatrice Warde, a journalist that expanded the discourse on typography. This essay became a manifesto for the International Typographic Style, also known as Swiss Design. It stemmed from the belief that graphic design should be clear and objective, while the role of the designer should be neutral in the decision making process³³.

She used a metaphor of an invisible vessel that contains the content in design. The book explains that design should include a clear message while preserving all the essential elements that need to be delivered to the viewers. In order to achieve it, I am convinced designers need to solidify their conviction of what they desire to express through graphic work.

I would like to go in greater detail about the International Typographic Style in the 1950s, also known as the Swiss Style. There was an emphasis on cleanliness, readability and objectivity. Asymmetric layouts, use of a grid, sans-serif typefaces and etc were characteristics of this style³⁴. It was an expression of mathematical grids that were the most harmonious means for structuring information and design.

This style insisted that graphic design should be clear and objective, and the role of the designer should be neutral. During this period, some designers applied this style of typography as a primary design element. And I will introduce some of this work as follows.

I have personally enjoyed the work of Josef Müller-Brockmann who is a Swiss graphic



(34) No author, International Typograpjic Style, http://smearedblackink.com/swisssyle-timeline/, 2008.

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(35) Fig.20 Josef Müller-Brockmann, Poster Series Zurich Tonhalle.

03-4 Systematic Grid



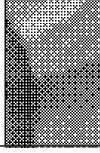
(35) Fig.21 Josef Müller-Brockmann, Poster Series Zurich Tonhalle.

designer, working with simple designs and colors. From his oeuvre, I would like to mention the 'Poster Series³⁵' at the Zurich Tonhalle. These two posters are part of the series that were created with mathematical harmony that reflected the harmony of music.

To clearly understand his idea, it is important to note that he regularly adopted the systematic grid in order to design his work. It seemed that he used only san-serif typefaces to maintain moderation in the design. In other words, he minimized his involvement through the systems he made. In addition, the graphics and typefaces are tightly structured, clearly positioned, and harmoniously held together.

Another system-based graphic designer I want to highlight is Siegfried Odermatt who mainly applied Swiss design to the communications of industry. He employed the use of straightforward photography or ordinary images with careful use of cutting, scales, and shapes³⁶. He is more mindful of the originality of an idea as opposed to the visual style of the design.

Through his modus operandi, he minimized his involvement on design. He created a system, whereby his self-imposed limitations enabled him to approach design with a straightforward concept, manifesting predominantly through typography and the visual form. I believe that this method allowed him to focus on the pure typographic design that maximized



(36) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 368. ISBN: 9780471699026 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-4 Systematic Grid



(38) Fig.22 Emil Ruder, Typographie: A Manual for Design.

visual impact. Moreover, his singular color selections elicited distinctively energy in his work.

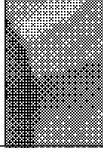
To further explore nothingness as a new principle of minimizing involvement of the designer, Emil Ruder will be discussed. He had a principle that type loses its purpose when it loses its communicative meaning; therefore legibility is the most crucial aspect in letterforms³⁷. He advocated systematic overall design and used a grid structure to integrate all graphical elements, for instance, typography, photography, illustration etc. In so doing, believed that harmony could be achieved.

In the book of 'Typographie: A Manual for Design³⁸' which he published, his principle on typography are made apparent. Among

his principle, 'function and form' which expounded on the importance of form and function and 'color' along with the advice on how to use colors between elements, are the most interesting to me.

First, designers need to consider the essence of function and form in order to design work. One can formulate a systematic grid based on this idea in order to minimize their involvement. Through this method, they can maximize the effect within the harmony.

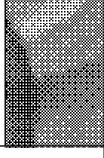
I strongly think that he created systematic grids by not only minimizing his involvement, but also considering the dynamic harmony in the work. By involving oneself with considerable moderation, the designer can achieve harmony where separate elements of design can be unified.



(37) Philip B. Meggs, 2006. Meggs' History of Graphic Design, Fourth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, p. 361. ISBN: 9780471699026 A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-4 Systematic Grid

In this chapter, I discussed 'Nothingness' as a possible principle of minimizing involvement through the systematic grid design. Through Beatrice Ward to Emil Ruder, I demonstrated examples of how these graphic designers and journalist operated based on the use of mathematical grids. By doing so, they maximized the effect by minimizing the involvement of the designer.



(39) Experimental Jetset, Helveticanism, http://www.experimentaljetset.nl/archive/helveticanism, May 2003. A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-5 Neutrality



Fig.23 Experimental Jetset, Long Lunch 52 poster.

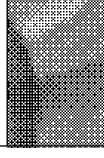
In this chapter, I will present Experimental Jetset's Helveticanism and the typeface of 'Ann Sang-Soo' in order to explain how current graphic designers are minimizing their involvement through graphic works, particularly in typeface.

Minimizing involvement is a big challenge for a designer to achieve. Designers always aspire to create great designs using interesting shapes and colors. However, Experimental Jetset attempted to minimize their involvement through typeface selections in making design decisions.

Experimental Jetset tends to use only Helvetica typeface when they design posters³⁹. One of many reasons why they only use Helvetica is because of the 'neutrality' of the typeface. In reality, it is

impossible to designate Helvetica as an objective typeface. I strongly believe that there is no such things as a neutral typeface (that goes for the objectivity of Helvetica as well). However, I concede that Helvetica is one of the most commonly used typefaces in graphic design. Moreover, Helvetica was designed specifically not to leave a lasting impression or strong connotations⁴⁰. Often times, it is primarily being used as a default typeface.

In addition, the reason why Experimental Jetset limited themselves to the use of Helvetica was the desire to remove themselves from the alienation of visual culture. An important initial first step of designing graphic works is the selection of typeface. I feel the process a designer goes through to choose the typeface is the most



(40) WebdesignerDepot Staff, The Simplicity of Helvetica, http://www.webdesignerdepot.com/2010/01/the-simplicity-of-helvetica/, 20 Jan 2010.

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03-5 Neutrality



Fig.24 Experimental Jetset, Neen Manifesto Poster, March 2006.

interesting moment. Simultaneously it is a bit of a precarious situation as typeface should not be dominant in design. It must maintain harmony with the imagery and the layout.

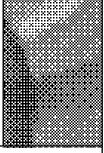
Sometimes, designers tend to opt for beautiful fonts rather than choose a reasonable font. Occasionally, I am irritated by peculiar typeface used in graphic works. I immediately got focused on the typeface itself which detracts attention from the content as well as the holistic harmony of the design.

In order to avoid distractions by funky typefaces, designers can neutralize the font selection, and direct the focus to the design as a whole. I wholeheartedly agree with Experimental Jetset's use of Helvetica

to neutralize the design. In that sense Helvetica can be a neutral font among the thousands of different typefaces.

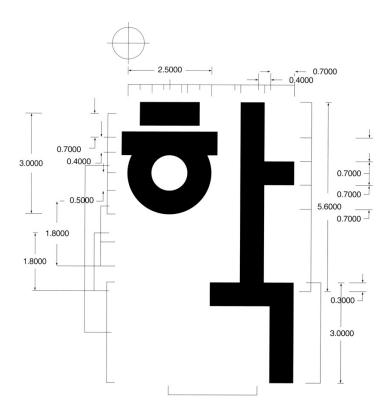
Therefore, the neutrality of Helvetica enables designers to fully focus on the design itself, and avoid being distracting through fonts. It makes design entirely neutral so that the viewers can appreciate the harmony of the concrete concept of whole design. Moreover, designers can strike a balance within the neutral typographical layers with imagery in design.

Next, I would like to introduce Korean typeface as an example of the importance of neutrality within the minimized involvement of the designer. Designing Korean typeface is very tricky because of the syllable, which is made in conjunction with consonants



(42) Kyuhee Baik, Original Creators: Sang-Soo Ahn, http:// thecreatorsproject.vice.com/ blog/original-creators-sang-sooahn, 2 May 2011. A Research on minimizing the involvement of designers through Nothingness

03-5 Neutrality



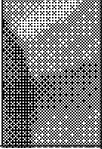
(41) Fig.25 Sang-Soo Ahn, Typeface Ahn Sang-Soo.

and vowels. The type designer needs to consider every permutation of the syllables that will contain varying proportion of alphabets, because each syllable can be built differently depending on how consonants and vowels are pieced together. To be more specific, Korean words consist of an initial consonant and a vowel or sometimes a consonant placed under a vowel. That is why all consonants and vowels of Korean have altering shape depending on the syllable.

Through any incident, if consonants and vowels get crammed together, they will not function as a typeface. So it is important to neutralize the typeface in order to bring harmony in type design. I think that the foremost role of a type designer is to create a harmonious typeface with good readability and legibility.

There is a Korean graphic designer who sought to neutralize his involvement through the font system. When considering a proper example of a Korean typeface that is handled with minimized involvement of the designer, I must mention a typeface called 'Ahn Sang-soo.⁴¹' It is created by Sang-soo Ahn who is accepted as the first designer who dealt with Korean typography⁴². This typeface marks the first Hangul type that always attained uniformity for each alphabet whereas others have a different proportion of for its respective alphabet.

As aforementioned, the most significant characteristic is that the shape of the alphabet was not altered regardless of how it was used in different permutations of the syllable. If you refer to this example, the word⁴³ on the top is uses a typeface SM



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굵은 안상수체

(43) Fig.26 Korean Word in Typeface SM SEGothic

03-5 Neutrality 굵은안상수체

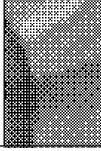
(44) Fig.26 Korean Word in Typeface Ann Sang-Soo

SEGothic, while the word on the bottom word⁴⁴ uses the font of 'Ahn Sang-soo.' As you can see, the left one varies depending on how consonants and vowels are cobbled together whereas 'Ahn Sang-soo' font maintains uniformity in every syllable.

This example drives home a similar point as the one made through the example of Emil Ruder from the previous chapter. Emil Ruder considered the systematic grid very important. This Font of 'Ann Sang-Soo' was made with the specific grid, so that the design of the vowel and the consonant has an unaltered style.

The designer could have meddled in each letter of every syllable, but he involved himself in a different way that sought to create a grid to fit every alphabet in it. Ann

succeeds in minimizing his involvement by creating this systematic grid. Through this system, he tried to neutralize the font style within the systematic grid.



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04 Conclusion

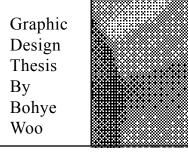
In my thesis I have expounded on how the Eastern and Western notion of nothingness are dealt with differently based on diverging philosophical perspectives. By contrasting the east and the west, I have emerged with a slightly alternate perspective. 'By minimizing the involvement of the graphic designer, a state of harmony is achieved.' In other words, from a graphic design point of view, nothingness can be defined as a new guiding principle that extols minimizing the involvement of the designer.

I detailed some artists and designers that embodied this principle—Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondriaan, Jan Tschihold, Experimental Jetset, Sang-soo Ann, and Joost Schmidt. They opened up the possibilities to apply this new perspective to diverse possibilities. These artists curtailed

their involvement to convey their essential message of the design unimpeded, which maximized the effect.

Designers are tempted to use many tools when they embark on their designs. This approach can easily hinder the essential message of the graphic design, due to the litany of unnecessary elements that could distract the viewer. Therefore minimizing the designer's involvement, along with the notion of nothingness could be the solution when aspiring for harmony.

This means that the notion of nothingness can be applied by minimizing the involvement of the designers. The possible ways of minimizing involvement are: considering the form and function, the geometrical shape and pure color, the

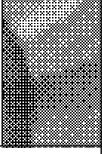


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essence of content and element, the mathematical grid, and the typeface.

This might be challenging, because of the wealth of options and tools available to the designer. However, the notion of nothingness, or in other words minimizing involvement, is a solution that facilitates harmony through work. This shift in perspective and embracing nothingness can be the backbone of design and an invaluable principle that can inform all future works.



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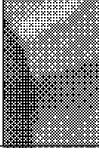
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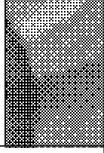
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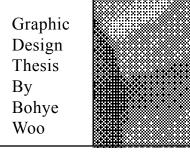
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