

History of Icons

Icons are integral and commonplace to the modern world, but where did they start? How did they evolve? The first computers did not have a graphical user interface, and it took years of technological development to support and create the modern landscape we recognize today: folders, save, and emojis to name a few. Icons pervade more than just desktops today since we surround ourselves with electronic user interfaces. Our phones, tablets, and even refrigerators provide interfaces we interact with every day. And the applications and operating systems we use everyday use graphical representations to communicate with us.

I would like to explore the history and development of digital icons to learn more about the technology they helped to create and shape. I believe that exploring the historical trends of icons will reflect overall graphic design trends and movements while relative to a digital age. There are also social and psychological implications of designing icons and how icons represent real world things or abstract ideas. We use icons to communicate, whether that be on computers for efficiency, to each other via emojis, or to users in an application. The history and application of pictographic representations is at the heart of graphic design.

For this topic, I expect to explore the history of digital icons, understanding the significance, relevance, and power they hold. The evolution of the graphic style of icons is tightly coupled with technological advances as well as other graphic design movements. Icons are a unique intersection of history, graphic design, psychology, technology, and art.

Preliminary Research:

<https://historyoficons.com/>

<https://design.tutsplus.com/articles/10-styles-that-have-changed-the-face-of-icon-design--cms-29435>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon_design

<https://www.shutterstock.com/blog/iconography-graphic-design>

<https://www.creativebloq.com/netmag/10-golden-rules-digital-icons-11410286>

The Bauhaus Movement

The Bauhaus Movement has always stood out to me as very iconic and distinct. I've done some projects in previous classes in the Bauhaus style, but haven't dug into the details of the movement. The history of the movement and strong players would give me more context and deliberate understanding of the movement. The geometric shapes and bold colors are effective and iconic, and despite being bold and blocky, still manage to have movement and balance.

The Bauhaus movement embraced the relationship between art, society, and technology. It's an interesting balance of fine arts and industry. More than just graphic design or fine art, it's influence has made its way into real life buildings and objects, from architecture to furniture to utensil designs. I expect this research paper to develop the history of the movement and those that contributed to the movement as well as explore the effects on modern design and graphic design.

Preliminary Research:

<https://99designs.com/blog/design-history-movements/know-your-design-history-the-bauhaus-movement/>

<https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-bauhaus-art-movement/>

<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/bauhaus/>

Corporate Memphis

I watched the youtube video (see first link under *Preliminary Research*) on Corporate Memphis, or the Alegria art style employed by many large and modern technology companies. I find this fascinating because I've noticed my own aversion to the styles, as well as the glaring disconnect between the "trustworthy" art style and the distrust I feel toward large tech companies. Working as a software engineer in technology, I find this corporate Memphis and interesting intersection of my various interests—how large tech companies are currently attempting to use modern graphic design to connect with their audiences.

While I think this topic would be fascinating, from my preliminary research, I haven't found enough sources or topics that make me feel confident that I'd be able to write a full research paper on this topic. The best sources I've found were referenced by the video, so I'm leaning toward one of the other options outlined above.

Preliminary Research:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFb7BOI_QFc

<https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/dont-worry-these-gangley-armed-cartoons-are-here-to-protect-you-from-big-tech/>

<https://marilynmcgrath07.medium.com/the-alegria-style-why-does-big-tech-love-it-so-much-35804d547128>

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/66231245/Alegria>

<https://www.howtodrawastartup.show/episodes/step-3>