

Beggars receiving alms, etching by Rembrandt





# 2

CHAPTER

## GRAPHIC ART DESIGN AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Graphic art and design span the history of humankind from cave paintings to the dazzling neon signs of the modern era. In both its history and in the relatively recent expansions of visual communication in the twenty-first century, there is sometimes a blurring distinction and overlapping relation of advertising art, graphic design and fine art. They share many of the common elements, theories, principles, practices and language. The essence of graphic design lies in representing information, providing form to ideas, expression and feeling and giving shapes to artefacts that document human experience.

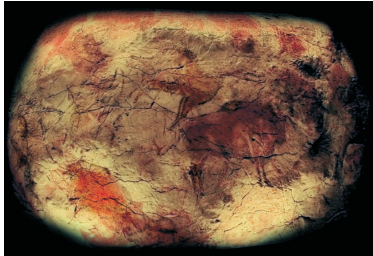
### GRAPHIC ART

The word 'Graphic' has been derived from the Greek word *Graphikos*. It stands for writing, drawing (pictorial or symbolic rather than verbal) and 'Art' meaning skill applied to a production of beauty or to a work of creative imagination. In general, the phrase 'graphic art' covers a large number of activities from designing logos to book printing, from symbol designing to artistic print-making, from commercial arts to fine arts. Diagrammatical drawings, signs and symbols either painted or printed are also included under the rubric of 'graphic art', but the phrase is largely used for printing activities.

It is possible to trace back the roots of the graphic design in history. Humans always have the desire to communicate and preserve their knowledge, ideas, skills and life experiences for future generations. This drive has revealed itself in many forms. Their first attempts to communicate were



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**Figure 2.1** Cave paintings, Altamira, Spain



**Figure 2.2** Bhimbetka cave paintings, India

through body signs, gestures and symbols. Later on through using words or language, through legends and story-telling; and then by means of some visible form through preserving in caves on stone, carving, engraving, etching and writing on clay, wood, metal, paper or any other available material.

The drawing expressions discovered in 1940 are considered to be the finest and the oldest examples of prehistoric art. Carbon dating suggests that images were created between 15,000 and 17,000 years ago in the caves near Montignac, in the Dordogne region, in south-west France. Whereas the earlier pictographic representations are about 5,000 years old while the most recent written language is around 1,000 years old. Similarly, in Europe, the cave drawings in the Altamira cave rocks of Mount Vispieres in Spain have similar artefacts of the Paleolithic Age or Stone Age. All are the significant milestones in the history of graphic design and other fields which have their roots in graphic art.

In India Bhimbetka caves surrounded by the northern boundaries of Vindhya mountain ranges near Bhopal have more than 600 caves that have the oldest prehistoric paintings in India. And out of the 24 world heritage sites Bhimbetka caves have been recognised by UNESCO in India, as one of the oldest. These caves had been used as a shelter by people from the earliest periods. Thus, you find paintings of all periods starting from the Paleolithic era to the medieval era. The paintings turn out to be a mirror showing evolution of humanity through time.

These are very old accomplished renderings of animals resting or in action. The depiction shows their draughtsmanship, sense of observation, memory and drawing skills which overrides the limitations of inadequate materials. These were drawn on rough walls of cave rocks. The meaning of some of them remains undiscovered.

Are these, symbols of magical power invoking favourable conditions, through the miracle of creative art?

Are these, drawings of animals to gain power for hunting?

Or perhaps they were primitive artists who had no message to convey but a desire to create?





**Figure 2.3** 'Los Caprichos'  
Aquatint by Goya



**Figure 2.4** Different designs

There are no simple answers to these questions. One thing is for sure that these are the earliest graphic documentation or representations of their experiences.

Across all the civilisations of the world, there is ample evidence of graphic practices for documentation and representation of life experiences. However, it was not called graphic design in those days. Historically, graphic design has originated from the art of painting during and after renaissance in Europe. Initially it was called graphic arts. The graphic arts were defined as the fine arts of drawing, painting, engraving, lithography, wood-cut, print-making and printing processes, etc.

During seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, engravers copied the works of other artists. Then the photographic techniques replaced the process of engraving, in print-making. By and large it denoted reproductive techniques and related processes and artists as well as craftsmen involved in this activity were called graphic artists. Many professional artists, viz. Durer, the first artist to engrave portrait, Lucas Cranach, used etching and woodcut for reproduction of their works. Rembrandt did more than 300 plates and explored the expressive possibilities of the medium of graphic arts. In the nineteenth century, many of the impressionist and post-impressionist artists such as Goya, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Gauguin used the lithographic process in new and original ways as an aesthetic and expressive medium.

## INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN

Design (French- *deeseing*; Italian-*Disegno*; Sanskrit- *Kalpa*, *Rachna*)

During Renaissance, design was considered as an integral part of painting in Italy when a systematic vocabulary of design was worked out. Around the fifteenth century, the art theorists identified design (*disegno*), colour (*colorito*), composition (*composizione*), and invention (*invenzione*) as the four elements of painting.

During that period, i.e. fifteenth century art critics used to divide design into two parts: *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno*. In its wider meaning *disegno* means a creative idea in the mind of an artist, as this was often thought to be embedded in initial drawing or conceptual sketch. Thus Baldinucci, an art critic and theoretician, defined design as a visible demonstration by means of lines or sketches on the paper



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which man had first conceived in his mind and developed picture in the imagination, then hand made them appear on a



**Figure 2.5** 'Transition'  
graphic print in  
aquatint medium



‘To design’ means ‘to create or execute’ in an artistic or highly skilled manner for example creating an artwork for an advertisement.

Thus, the term design as a noun as well as a verb has many meanings and usages in different contexts. The word design is used to refer to the process as well as the output of the process. Now, you must have realised that when a concept is created and you are engaged in the process of developing an idea — design as a verb, as well as you are creating beautiful patterns/design on your creation — design as a noun and also finally there is a new ‘design’ of a concept at the end.

Broadly, design involves two stages: the first stage is a mental activity of imagination, visualisation and generation of new concepts or ideas. The second stage is the stage of manifesting or articulating these ideas using some medium of expression and/or communication. When an idea is generated in the mind, it is in an abstract form. Then at the second stage it is articulated in some form which is perceivable or understandable. One can draw a sketch of the concept, write it down on a piece of paper, act it out or express through gestures and so on and so forth. The first stage is termed as ‘*disegno interno*’ (generation of mental image or an idea) and the second stage is called ‘*disegno esterno*’ (externalisation of the mental image or idea into a physical form). Therefore, the simplest definition of design would be as follows:

Design is a purposeful or intentional activity to generate concepts or ideas which are new in some sense and manifest or represent them. The output of this activity is also termed as design.

### INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHIC DESIGN

Graphic design differs from graphic arts because graphic design is goal oriented while graphic art is not. That is why graphic design comes under the rubric of ‘design’. Secondly, graphic design activity is always concerned about target user or target audience and attempts to fulfil user requirements. On the other hand, graphic art activity is not practised keeping the user in mind. Graphic art is practised for its own sake as well as for pursuing a higher aesthetic experience.

Graphic design involves the process of transformation of



**Figure 2.6** Drawings of different objects



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the mental concept into actual form through specific medium which is called representation. The activity of representation is



**Figure 2.7** A textile design

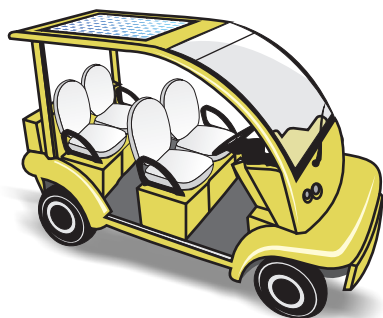


**Figure 2.8** Architectural layout design of a house

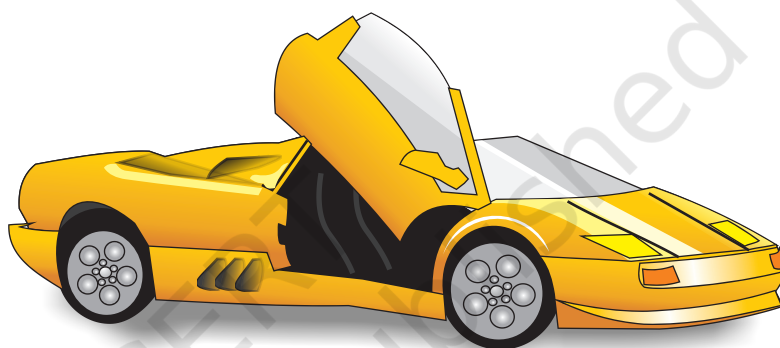


**Figure 2.9** User friendly gadget design includes design of the whole gadget as well as user friendly graphic images and typography on it.





**Figure 2.11** Solar energy vehicle



**Figure 2.10** A modern motor vehicle



**Figure 2.12** Structural design



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**Figure 2.13** Letterhead design

*Memories*



**Figure 2.14** Logo design



1. What is the difference between graphic art and graphic design? Explain by giving your own examples.
2. What is 'Design'? Elaborate on David Pye's concepts of design by using examples of graphic design.
3. Define 'graphic design' in your own language.

Design an invitation card for a school festival/annual day/sports day.