



APRIL

GREIMAN



The Modern Poster, 1988

FORWARD

Why is April Greiman one of the most influential Graphic Designers? Why is she studied in schools all across the world? Is her unique style still applied today? These are all questions that came to my mind when first researching April. I always find it interesting to look at where the artist started out; their roots. I love reading about how they were just a person with an idea, a passion, a desire. This part of everyone's success story is what is so inspiring and intriguing to me and is what drives me to one day have my own.



April Greiman was born in 1948 in New York City. She was very close with her family, in fact they were always referred to as the “Flying Greimans” because they were always looking up, searching for the next new thing, and were known for traveling often and by air. In 1966, Greiman applied to an art school with an interest in studio art but then got denied application and instead pushed to pursue graphics. She submitted her portfolio and then, upon further review, the admissions office told her that she was not what they were looking for, however, she was very strong in the graphics department. So, after hearing this, she decided to change her plans slightly. She then applied to a graphic design school where she proceeded to enroll in Kansas City Art Institute where she got her undergrad in Graphic Design. This is where she decided she was going to fuel her passion for design and pursue it wholeheartedly.



Kansas City Art Institute



Basel School of Design

After her studies at Kansas City , Greiman went to Switzerland to attend the Basel School of Design in 1970. Here she was taught the International Swiss Style. This was, simply put, the art of reducing images and simplifying them while exploring the importance of type as imagery. This style was about innovation and using a simple yet bold approach to design and the design process. She studied primarily under two artists who shaped her method of design for the rest of her career, Armin Hofmann and Wolfgang Weingart.



Poster for Warner Records, 1982

Hofmann started as a teacher at Basel at the age of 26 and was given the title by his students as the “most inspiring” teacher . He was the head of the Graphic Design program at the school and was pinned for developing the “Swiss Style”. He introduced his students to what is now known as New Wave. In short, this was a method of experimenting with art to make it more about stretching the limits of legibility and providing a break in the natural progression. This movement was more than just a fad, it would quickly become the influence for all pop culture and artists for several years. One thing that predominately made New Wave so influential is that it allowed for change. It wasn't just a movement that told you what you needed to do to be a current successful artist, it instead told you that you can express yourself as an artist in many unique ways. It encouraged creativity and individuality, two words that describe Greiman very accurately.



CalArts Viewbook, 1979

While Hofmann was the most praised professor at the school, Weingart was also one who is famed for instructing Greiman. Weingart started off as a student at Basel studying under Hoffman. After Hofmann observed him and saw his drive and dedication, he decided to give Weingart a teaching position at Basel as well. Like Hofmann, Weingart specialized in Swiss style as well and favored geometric type with heavy layering in his pieces.



CalArts Poster, 1978

As we look at April's work we see clearly the influence that these two teachers had on her. Greiman loved layering in her pieces to add dimension and depth; this is something that she drew from her time at Basel studying under Weingart. The way she incorporated geometric type, shapes, and patterns, is also very represented of Swiss Style which she gained directly from her studies under Hofmann in Switzerland. She was really able to grow as a designer because of the exposure she got to different styles and different methods of approaching this New Wave of art.

However, like every good designer, she took what she learned under their instructions and ran with it.

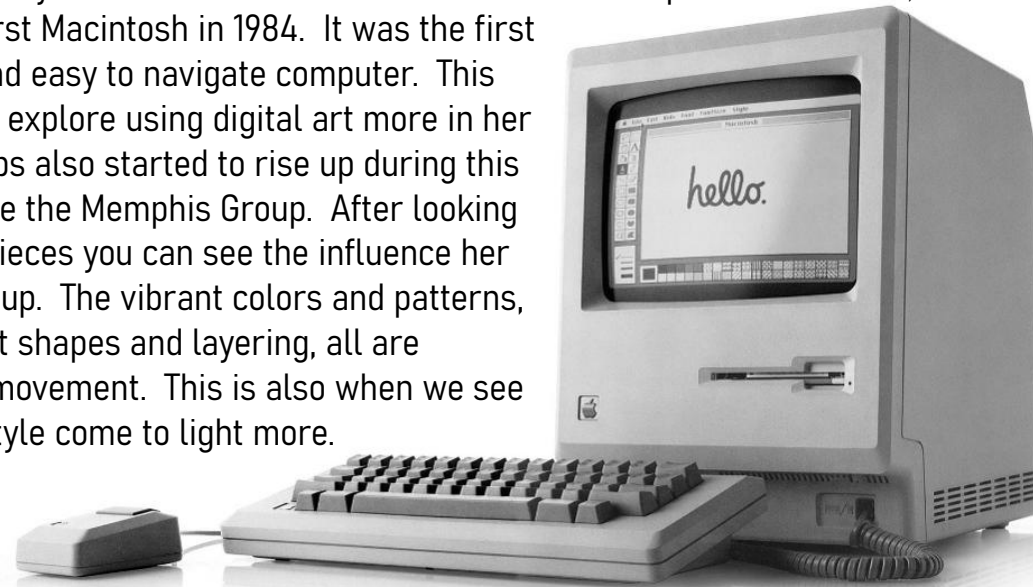


With her passion for design growing more and more, Greiman decided to move back to the states, and in 1976 founded a Design Group in Los Angeles California. The group was named "Made In Space" which, according to their missions statement, is a group dedicated to "exploring communication through collaboration with architects, urban planners, and city/civic agencies."

It was in this group that Greiman decided to explore computers and the marriage between technology and physical art. The group wanted to refer to themselves more as "visual communicators" versus narrowing

themselves to just graphic designers. They would create pieces of artwork that were not like your conventional artwork. Yes, some of them could be shown in a gallery, but then there were others that spanned the size of buildings. They were a group of creatives from all over the world, coming together and experimenting with art in a way that unfamiliar to most.

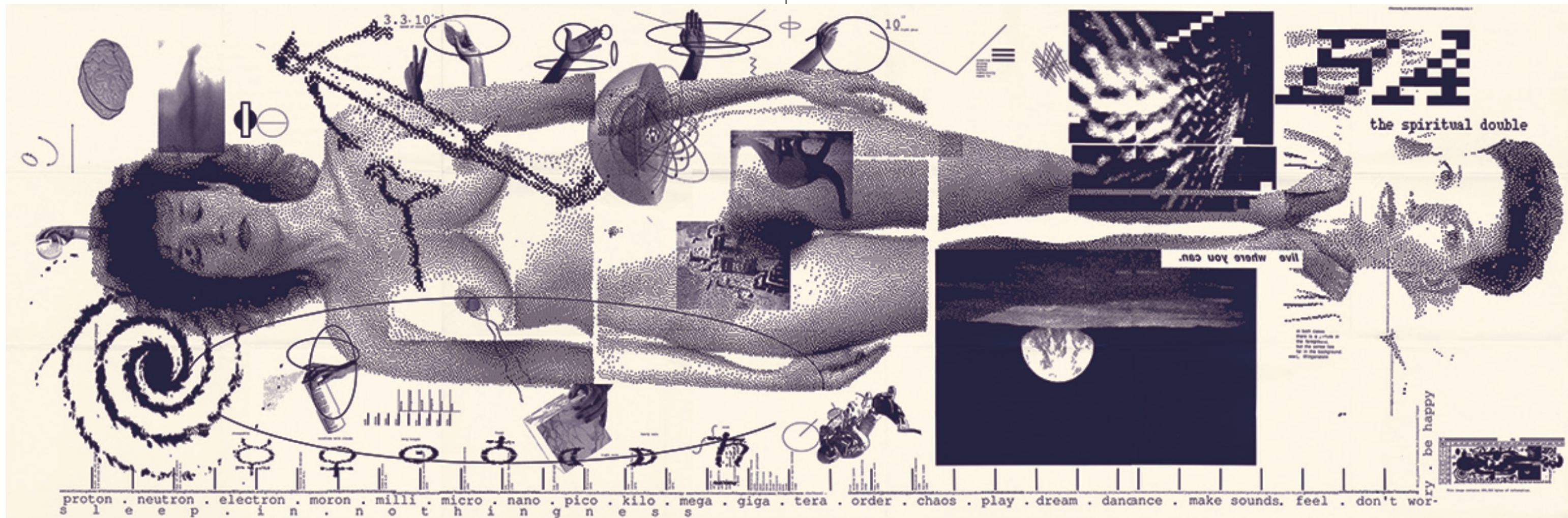
During this time, there was a movement taking place, one that moved from functional art, to conceptual art. One that took what was happening in the world and adapted to it. One that welcomed change and encouraged it. This movement was called Post Modernism. It was about stretching the norms of art and pushing past what was the current trends. Parallel to this movement computer technology was also on the rise and was changing the way artists were able to create. To further help this movement, Apple released their first Macintosh in 1984. It was the first portable, affordable, and easy to navigate computer. This allowed for Greiman to explore using digital art more in her art pieces. Other groups also started to rise up during this Post-Modern period like the Memphis Group. After looking at many of Greiman's pieces you can see the influence her artwork had on the group. The vibrant colors and patterns, combined with abstract shapes and layering, all are representative of this movement. This is also when we see Greiman's New Wave style come to light more.



1984 Apple Macintosh

Pacific Wave, 1987





Does It Make Sense, 1986

Although many artists considered themselves New Wave artists, Greiman is the one who is credited with fanning it. In 1986 she was commissioned by Design Quarterly and made a piece called Does It Make Sense, in which she added, "It makes sense if you give it sense." In this piece she explores all forms of media as well as the digital aspect of design, later making it a staple piece for her company Made in Space. She also made a point to specify herself as a Trans-Media Artist versus solely a Graphic Designer. In this piece it is also shown how she drew a heavy influence from fellow Trans-Media Artist, Robert Rauschenberg. Their pieces show many similarities in that they use similar layering patterns and methods of layouts.

Her next piece that I'm going to be talking about, and her most visible piece, was a U.S. postage stamp that she commissioned for the anniversary of the 19th amendment. She was actually the third artist that they went to to design the stamp for them. She went against the postal trends of the time by designing a stamp that was less image focused and had a very illegible type on the designing. The stamp was a huge milestone for the New Wave art movement because of it's press and the amount of people that ended up seeing/ purchasing it.



19th Amendment Stamp, 1995

New Wave was not just a movement, but it was a lifestyle as well. It shows up in music, fashion, and furniture all around. It allowed artists to think freely and break from the norms of the time. New Wave is an expression of the self. It's about approaching art in a new way. It's about combining different mediums of art to cohesively make something new and inventive.

April is the perfect head for this movement because of her passion for exploring something new and sharing it with others. She said "I like to step into areas where I am afraid. Fear is a sign that I am going in the right direction." She was brave and bold and eager to making her name known. She helps us remember that we don't have to follow what everyone is doing or saying we should do in order to be successful as designer and in life. She was always looking for a way to something different, to put her name out there.

"You can't help breaking rules, if you want to stay alive."

There is a quote from April that I think summarizes her and her vision very clearly.

"You can't help breaking rules, if you want to stay alive."

She was always searching for something new and fun; and it didn't matter one bit to her if it was conventional or not, as long as it was interesting. Anyone can have a good idea, but it's the people who take risks that often stumble on the great ones.

SOURCES

Made in Space Official Website: <https://www.madeinspace.la>

Famous Graphic Designers Official Website: <https://www.famousgraphicdesigners.org/april-greiman>

AIGA's official Website: <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-aprilgreiman/>

MOMA's Official Website: <https://www.moma.org/artists/2330>

Design History's Official Website: <http://www.designishistory.com/1980/april-greiman/>

FONTS USED

Myriad Pro Black Condensed

Myriad Pro Semibold Condensed

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