

National College of
Art and Design
Department of Visual Communications, 1997

Dubo Dubon

The Typography of A.M. Cassandre

by Susan Carberry

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Introduction

A.M.Cassandre's ability to adapt the visual languages of the Avant Garde to the advertising industry ensured his success as one of the most significant posterists of the Art Deco era. Michael Horsham notes that as representations of distilled 1920s and '30s, "Cassandre's work is hard to better" (Horsham, 1994, p.82).

It is perhaps ironic then that the Ukranian-born Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron did not set out to become a graphic designer. He simply saw poster design as a means of earning money while he perfected his painting skills. He chose to design under the pseudonym 'A.M. Cassandre', so that when the time came he could pursue a painting career under his real name. In the same way Cassandre did not set out to become a typographer. Yet, during his lifetime he created no fewer than seven typefaces, along with numerous typographical solutions to accompany his poster illustrations.

In this thesis it shall become apparent that Cassandre's fine art sensibilities and lack of formal typographic training allowed him to treat type in a unique manner, a manner that deserves further investigation. In his hands type became an illustrative element, a brushstroke rather than a set of rigid letterforms. In his work we can see an artist/designer attempting to fill the role of a typographer. His typefaces alone, while clearly not typographically conceived, offer a unique insight into a fine artist's interpretation of a typographical task.

While Henri Mouron deals extensively with Cassandre's illustrative techniques, he fails to address the importance of typography in the designer's work. This thesis shall focus on Cassandre's use of typography in his poster designs and examine three of the typefaces he created.

Firstly, Cassandre's fine art origins shall be established. This shall be done through visual comparisons that connect his work to various contemporary design movements. His use of typography shall be divided into specific categories including; choice of typeface, integration of type/image and use of typographical signature devices. Through comparison with his contemporaries use of type (when advertising similar products), I hope to determine whether Cassandre's fine art approach produced typographical solutions which were anymore successful than those of his peers. Finally, Cassandre's typefaces shall be examined, in an attempt to assess whether they have benefitted from having been conceived and designed by an artist/designer rather than a professional typographer.

The Art historical context of A.M.Cassandre's graphic designs:

This chapter will set in art historical context the work of the French graphic designer A.M. Cassandre, 1901-1968. Having looked closely at the various design movements of the '20s, I have tried to make visual comparisons which show Cassandre's connection to these movements. Subsequent chapters hope to reveal how these art movements helped to shape Cassandre's typographic sensibilities.

France:

By 1920 in Paris, the home of Cassandre, Cubism, one of the most influential modern art movements, had emerged. Although Cassandre's 1934 WAGON BAR (fig. 1.0) juxtaposes several forms in a Cubistic composition, similar to Gleizes' 1920 painting, (fig. 1.1), his painting style is closer to that of another French movement, Purism.

Cassandre's PIVOLO, 1924 (fig. 1.2) bases its composition, including position of type, on the "Golden Section", a geometric grid often used by the Purist architect Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). PIVOLO also reflects Jeanneret's use of crisp lines and two dimensional shapes, such as those in his 1920 STILL LIFE composition (fig. 1.3).

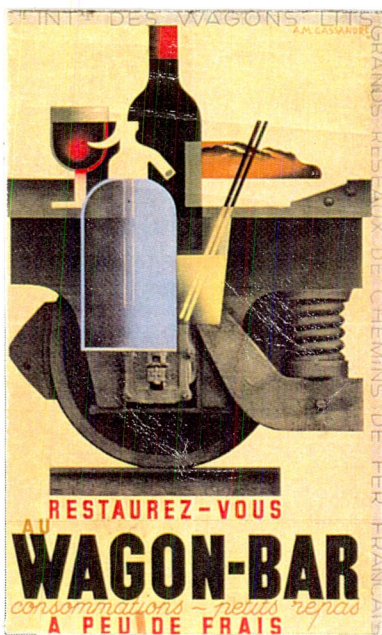


Fig. 1.0: AMC: WAGON BAR, 1934.

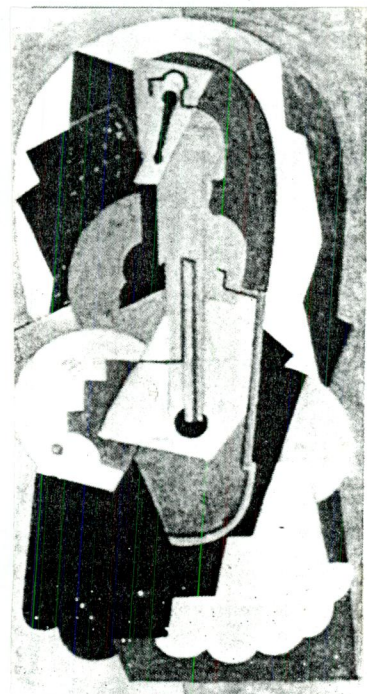


Fig. 1.1: Gleizes: COMPOSITION, 1920



Fig. 1.2: AMC: PIVOLO, 1924.

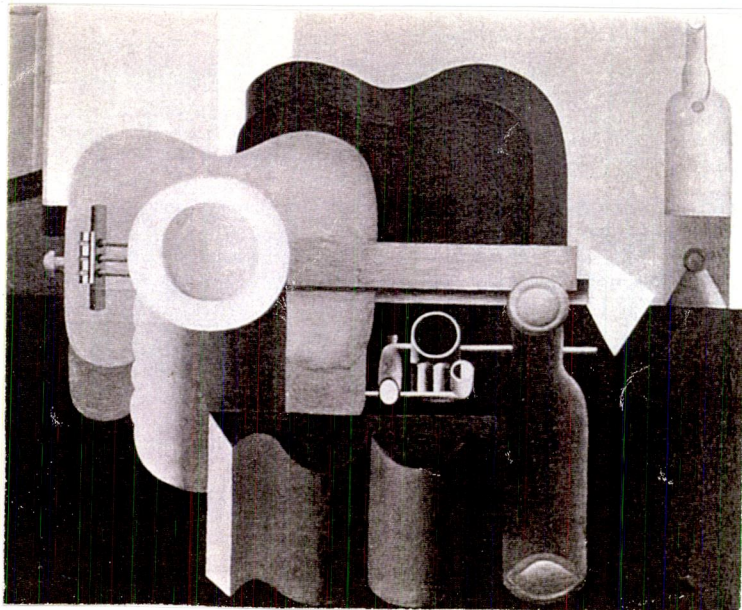


Fig. 1.3: Jeanneret: STILL LIFE, 1920.

John Barnicoat notes the 'decorative and humourous' use of Purist lines in Cassandre's DUBONNET series, 1932 (fig. 1.4) (Barnicoat, 1986, p. 76). This work follows the Purist practice of reducing forms to their simplest and most basic shapes. The influence of French artist, Ferdinand Leger, can also be seen in this work. Leger's reduction of the subjects within his paintings to rounded, tubular forms and cylindrical surfaces (fig. 1.5) bears a clear connection to Cassandre's simplified Dubonnet figures. I have also noticed a particularly strong connection between Leger's LE SYPHON, 1924 (fig. 1.6), and Cassandre's A L'EAU, 1934 (fig. 1.7). In his 1934 design Cassandre almost perfectly reproduces Leger's tubular rendering of a hand and streamlined syphon.



Fig. 1.4: AMC, detail from DUBONNET triptych, 1932.



Fig. 1.5: Leger: detail from LUNCHEON, 1921.

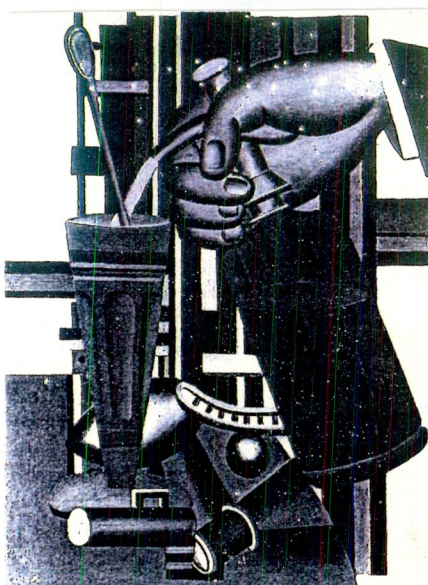


Fig. 1.6: Leger: LE SYPHON, 1924.



Fig. 1.7: AMC: detail from A L'EAU, 1934.

Another French movement which filtered into the graphic arts through designers such as Cassandre (just as Cubism and Purism had done) was Surrealism. In his VU newspaper advertisement, 1928 (fig. 1.8) Cassandre manages to capture the dreamlike quality of many Surrealist images. The fluid lines of a figure resting upon the world appear to be a more focused version of Miro's naturalistic squiggles (fig. 1.9).



Fig. 1.8: AMC: VU, 1928.



Fig. 1.9: Miro: detail from SWALLOW LOVE, 1920s.

Of course, while Cassandre was naturally influenced by the art movements which surrounded him (he studied at the Julian painting academy upon arriving in Paris), there is no doubt that he was also very aware of Design movements in Europe and America.

Europe:

In Italy, under the guidance of Marinetti, the Futurists were embracing the machine age with fervour. They proclaimed that the world had been "enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of speed" (Frantz Kery, 1986, p. 25). Cassandre's own LMS BESTWAY, 1928 (fig. 1.10) while not painted in the Futurist style, is clearly a homage to this obsession with speed. In this work, Cassandre has endeavoured to capture the beauty of train wheels in motion.

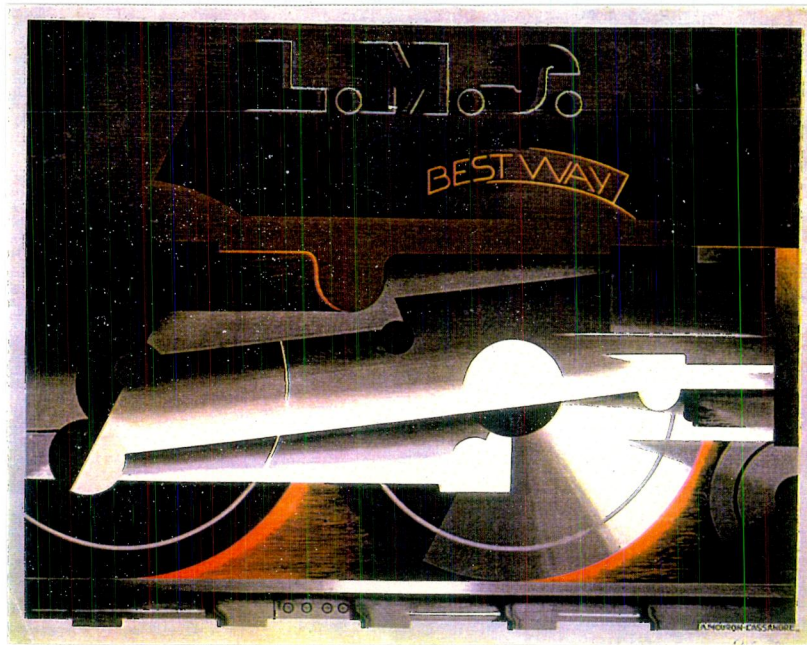


Fig. 1.10: AMC: L.M.S BESTWAY, 1928.

In Russia, the Constructivists were exploring the boundaries of geometry and asymmetry in design. Cassandre's L'INTRANS, 1925 (fig. 1.11) while bearing certain Cubist traits (use of collage, cut-off type) also echoes the Constructivist El Lissitzky's use of radiating and parallel lines in his poster project of the same year (fig. 1.12).

The Constructivists, along with the German Bauhaus school were also responsible for the rejuvenation of the sans serif face. Responding to a "machine" aesthetic, designers began to re-interpret letterforms and produced typefaces with clean efficient lines and geometric curves. Paul Renner's FUTURA face, 1926, and Herbert Bayer's geometric UNIVERSAL face, 1923, are just two examples of this new direction in type . (figs. 1.13, 1.14).



Fig. 1.11: AMC:
L'INTRANS, 1925.

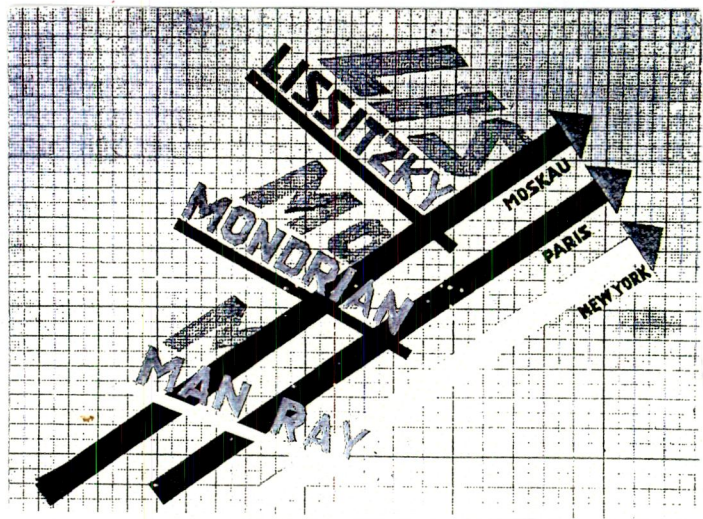


Fig. 1.12: Lissitzky:
poster project, 1925.

A B C D E F G H I J K
 L M N O P

Fig. 1.13: Renner: FUTURA,
1926.

a b c d e f g h i
 j k l m n o p q r
 s t u v w x y z
 a d d

Fig. 1.14: Bayer: UNIVERSAL,
1923.

In Cassandre's poster designs we can see an almost exclusive adherence to the sans serif faces promoted by these European design movements. Indeed, the sans serif would provide a starting point for many of the unique type designs he created to integrate with his 'Avant Garde' illustrations.

Cassandre's typographical poster, A LA MAISON DOREE, 1926 (fig. 1.15) shows the strong influence of the Bauhaus typographer Joseph Albers. The geometric headline type, constructed using the three basic shapes of a square, triangle, and half circle, is reminiscent of Albers' earlier STENCIL alphabet, 1923 (fig. 1.16). This work also resembles, in its composition, an earlier work by French designer Auguste Herbins, advertising a ball for Russian artists in Paris, BAL DE LA GRANDE OURSE, 1922 (fig. 1.17). Both posters use a central block of type surrounded by a border of geometric shapes. Cassandre's work is a little more inventive in that his border is actually comprised of geometric letterforms.



Fig. 1.15:
AMC:
A LA MAISON
DOREE,
1926



Fig.1.17: Herbins:
BAL DE LA GRANDE OURSE,
1922.

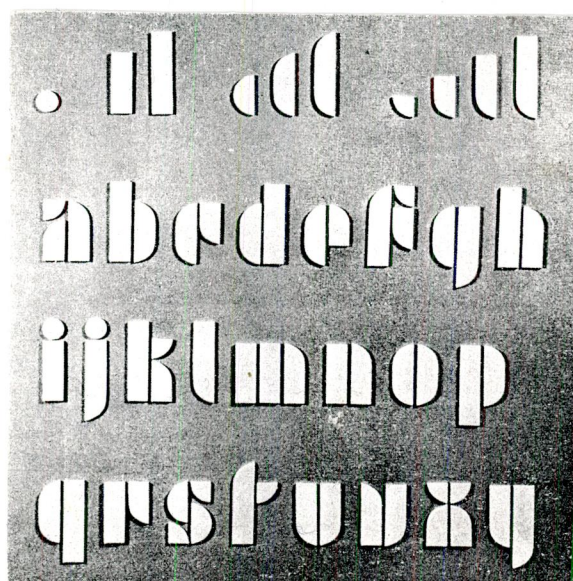


Fig. 1.16: Albers:
STENCIL alphabet, 1923

America:

While it is not surprising that Cassandre appears to draw inspiration from these European movements, it is perhaps more curious that his style so closely resembles that of the American Precisionists. The Precisionist artists, such as Charles Demuth, endeavoured to expose the purity of line in objects around them, although their work adopts a less fragmented approach than their Cubist counterparts.

Cassandre's *STATENDAM*, 1928 (fig. 1.18) bears a striking resemblance to Demuth's earlier *PAQUEBOT "PARIS"*, 1922 (fig. 1.19). Both pictures use large areas of flat colour and rely on crisp line and geometric shapes to create structure. Both artists have also chosen industrially based subject matter.

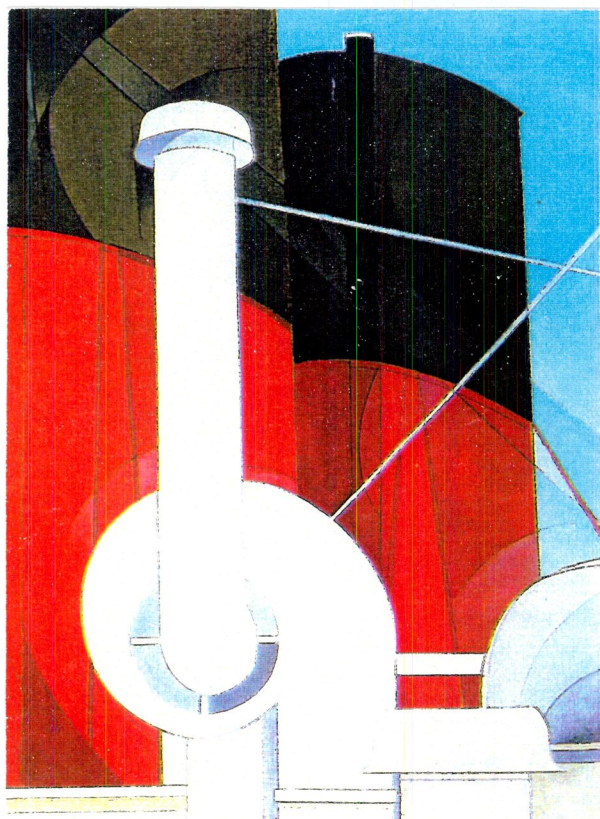


Fig. 1.19: Demuth:
PAQUEBOT "PARIS", 1922.

Fig. 1.18: AMC:
STATENDAM, 1928.



Art Deco

While drawing from various painting movements, Cassandre's work also reflects the dominant design style of the twenties. Essentially an eclectic style drawing from many cultures "Art Deco" took its name from the 1925 Paris exhibition "l'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratif". The Design Style embraced the new industrial era and added luxury and extravagance to stark modern designs. Its prismatic, angular lines were largely derived from cubism. Indeed Bevis Hillier describes the style as

"Cubism tamed for public consumption" (Hillier, 1983, p. 70).

Cassandre's NORD EXPRESS, 1927 (fig. 1.20) could be classed as an example of 'Deco graphics with its flat, geometric shapes and radiating lines. Patricia Frantz Kery notes that Cassandre's L'Atlantique, 1931 (fig. 1.21) also bears certain hallmarks common to designs of this era including "optical simplicity" and "distortion of perspective and proportion" (a tall stately liner next to a tiny tugboat) (Frantz Kery, 1986, p. 25). An interesting phenomenon is Cassandre's AU BUCHERON, 1923, (fig. 1.22). This work exhibits classic art deco hallmarks - geometric stylisation of naturalistic forms (the woodcutter and the tree) set against a background of radiating lines. Yet was produced two years before Art Deco manifested itself in the commercial art world. It seems Cassandre's painterly sensitivities and commercial intuition led him to anticipate a design style not yet firmly established.



Fig. 1.20:
AMC: NORD
EXPRESS,
1927.

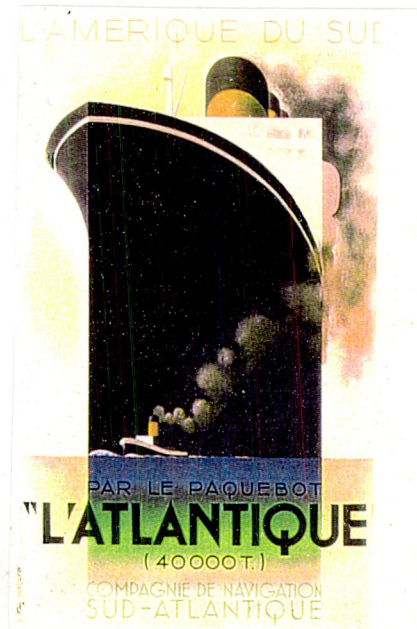


Fig. 1.21:
AMC: L'AT-
LANTIQUE,
1931.



Fig. 1.22: AMC: AU BUCHERON, 1923.

In the world of print, Art Deco also exerted a considerable influence. Many of the sans serif faces favoured by the Constructivists and the Bauhaus school were modified under the Deco aesthetic to reflect greater sophistication. They were also modified to reflect the streamlined quality of the Deco products they were used to advertise. Letterforms became elongated and uniform stroke thickness was abandoned in favour of contrasting thick and thin lines. Other characteristics included a low cross bar on the upper case 'A', tilted 'S' and 'F' letterforms and the use of a large circular 'O' within an alphabet of thin angular characters. M.F. Benton's *PARISIAN*, 1928 (fig. 1.23), and *BROADWAY*, 1929, (fig. 1.24) are typical examples of these modified sans serif type-faces. The next chapter shall show that Cassandre used many variations of these 'Deco' faces in his poster designs.



IMPORTED GOWNS
Enthusiastic Buyer Rewarded

Fig. 1.23: M.F. Benton: *PARISIAN*, 1928.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S S S
T U V W X Y Z & ! ?
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p a r s s t u v w
x y z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Fig. 1.24: M.F. Benton: *BROADWAY*, 1929.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt as to the influence of many 1920s design movements on Cassandre's work. In particular his designs bear many connections to those movements which expressed a strongly geometric language such as Purism, Constructivism, and Precisionism. It is this predilection towards geometry which would have the most profound effect on Cassandre's typography. His use of various linear illustration styles would lead him to choose sans serif faces, which would in turn be modified to further complement the illustration. Out of these modifications would come innovative type solutions and the quirky BIFUR typeface.

Choice of typeface:

This chapter will examine Cassandre's choice of typefaces in his poster designs. It will identify the wide variety of typefaces used by the designer and attempt to ascertain the reasons behind their use.

Upon careful examination of Cassandre's poster designs we can see that his choice of typefaces falls into two categories:

- (1) the standard selection of typefaces available to designers of that era,
- (2) the unique designs created by Cassandre himself.

(1) Standard typefaces; script face, serif, slab serif, sans serif, outlined, shadowed and stencilled letterforms.

(a) Script faces:

Cassandre's use of typography in his first large scale commercial project PATES GARRES (fig. 2.0) is by no means innovative or unusual. In fact, the 1922 poster barely hints at the typographic sensibilities he would later develop. The food advertisement uses a hand-rendered, cursive scriptface, not unlike Jean de Paleologues 1894 Art Nouveau lettering (fig. 2.1). Placed at the top of the page, this particular typeface in no way enhances the angular illustration below it.

SADAC, 1922, (fig.2.2) also uses a script face. It seems logical to conclude that the young designer was "playing it safe" typographically by using faces that had already proved successful in the poster arena. In SADAC, although Cassandre has chosen to use a linear sans-serif for the headline type, he uses a traditional cursive script face for the by-line.

After 1922 Cassandre all but abandoned the script face, in favour of standard Art Deco designs and his own innovative solutions. There are a few occasions when he returns to it, including ERNEST, 1926, (fig. 2.3) and A L'EAU, 1934 (fig. 2.4). In the first poster the product name becomes a logo, separated from the linear illustration and in A L'EAU, the script face complements the rounded illustration and adds a human element to the advertisement. In both cases Cassandre has chosen the typefaces for their appropriateness and not merely because other designers had used them previously.

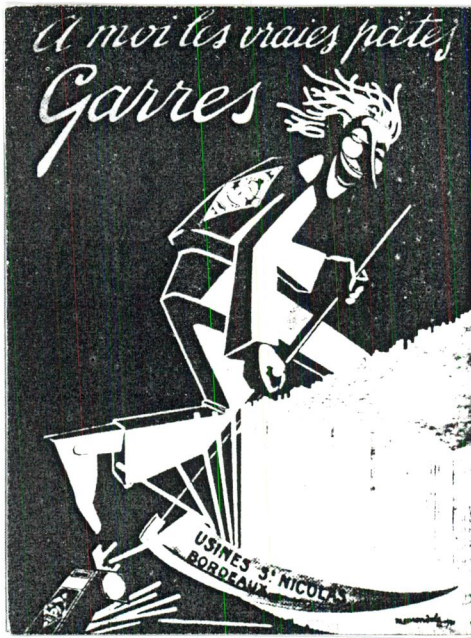


Fig. 2.0: AMC:
PATES GARRES,
1922



Fig. 2.1:
Paleologue:
CLEMENT,
1894

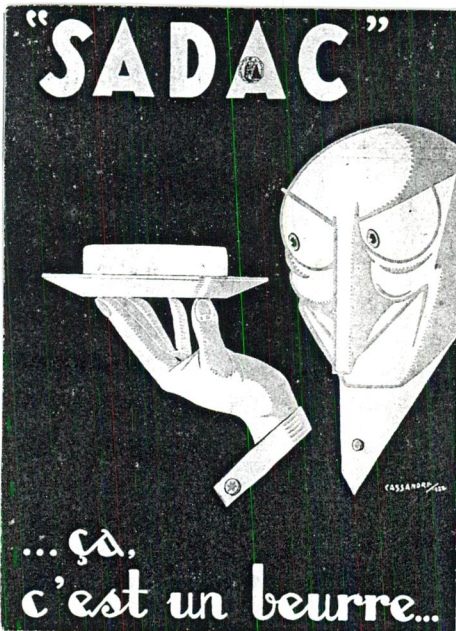


Fig. 2.2: AMC:
SADAC, 1922



Fig. 2.3: AMC:
ERNEST, 1926



Fig. 2.4: AMC:
L'EAU, 1934

(b) Serif faces:

While sans serif faces were promoted by the design movements and considered a la mode in advertising circles, a number of serif faces were still in use by designers. Cassandre chose an italicised Latin serif face for his *ITALIA*, 1936 design (fig. 2.5). This typeface captures perfectly the historical feel of the illustration. A serif face is used in *L'INTRANS*, 1925 to distinguish the newspaper's slogan "Le plus fort" from its name. It also adds contrast to the linear composition. *LEROY*, 1933 (fig. 2.6) also uses a serif face, contrasted with an angular sans serif.



Fig. 2.5: AMC: *ITALIA*, 1936

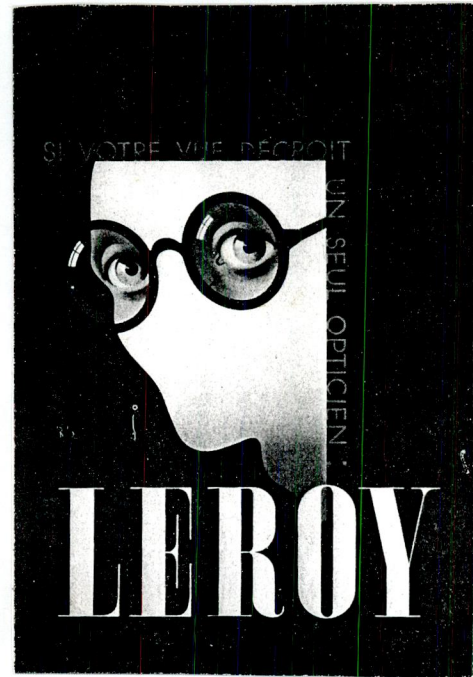


Fig. 2.6: AMC: *LEROY*, 1933

(c) Slab Serifs:

The slab serif face was a revised version of a 1900s typeface, rediscovered by typographers in the '20s. It gained its name from the rectangular 'serifs' of its letterforms. Cassandre's *ETOILE DU NORD*, 1927, (fig. 2.7) uses a bold slab serif face in upper-case to add a suitably modern, yet scholarly feel to a book advertisement. Cassandre uses an Egyptian slab serif in *DR. CHARPY*, 1930, (fig. 2.8). German designer, Joseph Binder uses a similar slab serif face in his *DONAU* insurance advertisement (fig. 2.9) , almost six years after Cassandre had demonstrated the ability of the font to work as headline type.

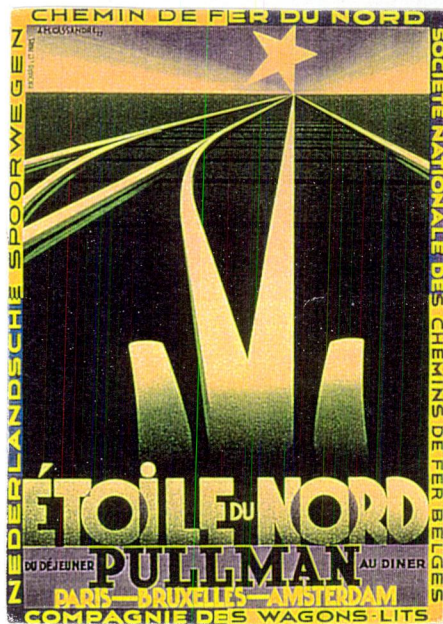


Fig. 2.7: AMC:
ETOILE DU NORD,
1927

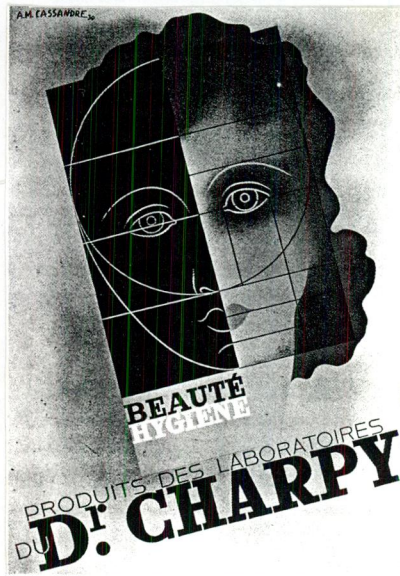


Fig. 2.8: AMC: DR.
CHARPY, 1930



Fig. 2.9: Binder: detail
from DONAU, 1933

(d) Sans Serifs:

Moving on to the most popular typeface of the Art Deco era, we shall see that Cassandre used many variations of the sans serif face in his poster designs. These ranged from those inspired by Johnson's linear 1918 Underground typeface to the more elegant Art Deco faces, many of which were designed at the Deberny and Peignot type foundry, Paris, home of Cassandre's BIFUR and PEIGNOT typefaces.

Cassandre's GRAND SPORT, 1925, (fig. 2.10) uses a typical sans serif face in upper case, with the common tilted 'S' of Art Deco faces. English designer Tom Purvis uses an almost identical condensed sans serif face in AUSTIN REEDS, 1930 (fig. 2.11). The A, S and N letterforms closely resemble those in Cassandre's work.

French designer, Bernard Boutet de Monvel, also uses a variation of this particular face in his 1929 car advertisements. Could Cassandre's use of this particular face in 1925 have inspired his contemporaries to use it or was it merely a natural choice for designers in the Deco era?

In TRIPLEX, 1930, (fig. 2.12) Cassandre also chooses a sans serif face, again in upper case and resembling Renner's FUTURA BOLD (Fig. 2.13). While he chose an overtly elegant face to advertise the hats of GRAND SPORT, Cassandre recognised the need for a 'reliable' looking face when advertising Triplex's windscreen glass. His typeface has been chosen to assure the buyer of the product's durability and strength, while also complementing the linear illustration.



Fig. 2.10: AMC:
GRAND SPORT,
1925



Fig. 2.11: Purvis:
detail from
AUSTIN REEDS,
1930

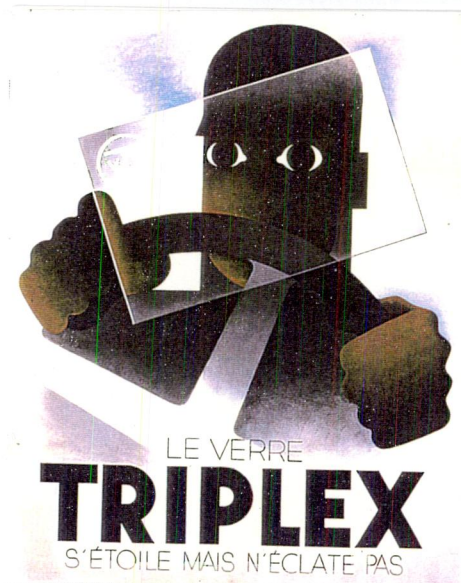


Fig. 2.12: AMC:
TRIPLEX, 1930

GHIJKLMNOPQ
WXYZ
ghijklmnopqrstu

Fig. 2.13: Renner:
FUTURA BOLD,
1926

(e) Outlined and Shadowed characters:

Cassandre's flexibility as a designer allowed him to use outlined and shadowed characters when he felt them appropriate. FETES DE PARIS, 1935 (fig. 2.14) uses a bold shadowed slab serif in uppercase. The typeface adds a monumental feel to the design while the shadowed characters highlight the event advertised. BUVEZ DU CHAMPAGNE, 1932, uses outlined sans serif characters, placed over an illustration of a bottle to capture the transparent quality of the product.

(f) Stencil Typefaces:

The Stencil typeface, widely used by the Bauhaus and Constructivist artists, consisted of letterforms where letter segments did not meet. Joseph Albers' stencil typeface of 1923 consisted of characters formed from basic geometric shapes.

Cassandre's LE KID, 1925 (fig. 2.15) uses a blocky stencil face in upper case to highlight the product name. The German designer Toni Zepf uses a similar stencil face in his later 1930s hairstyle advertisement (fig. 2.16).

Paul Renner's 1929, FUTURA BLACK (fig. 6.17). typeface contains characters startlingly similar to those in Cassandre's earlier LE KID, as does W.A. Woolley's 1930 BROGGA DOCIA face. Could these designers have seen Cassandre's type manipulations in LE KID and built upon it to create their own typefaces?

In GALERIES LAFAYETTE, 1928, (fig. 2.18) Cassandre uses a serif stencil face quite inappropriate for the posters subtle illustration. His earlier SAGA, 1927 (fig. 2.19) uses a similar face with much greater success. In this work Cassandre has printed the names of the ports served by the shipping company on the side of a crate in stencilled letters. The typeface resembles shipping typefaces still widely in use today. The type (port names) and image (crate illustration) become one unit, creating a harmonious poster design.

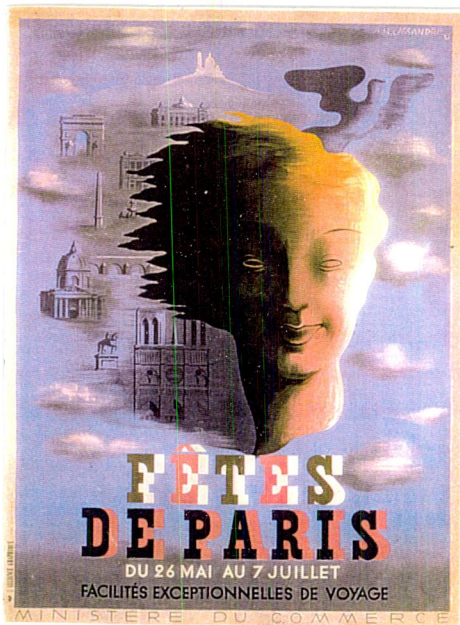


Fig. 2.14: AMC:
FETES DE PARIS,
1935



Fig. 2.15: AMC:
LE KID, 1925

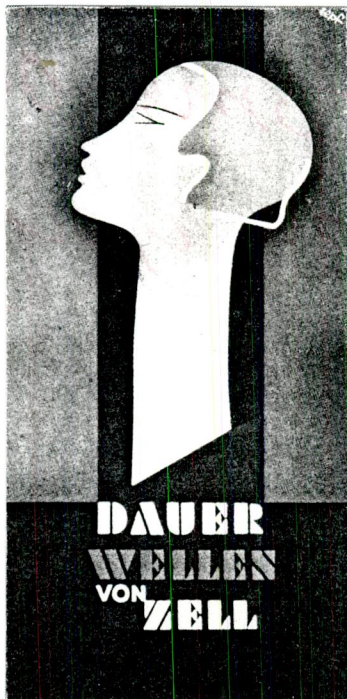


Fig. 2.16: Zepf:
Hairstyle advertisement.

Fig. 2.18: AMC:
GALERIES LAFAYETTE,
1928

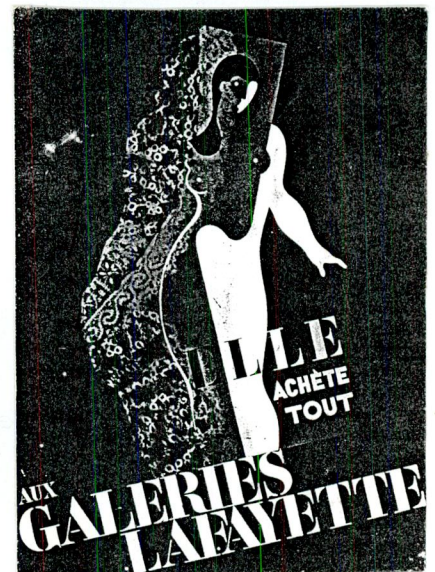


Fig. 2.17: Renner:
FUTURA BLACK, 1930s



Fig. 2.19: AMC:
SAGA, 1927



Having identified the wide range of typefaces Cassandre used in his poster designs, we can see that the sans serif, slab serif, outlined and stencilled faces he chose were no different from those chosen by his contemporaries. We can conclude, therefore, that in his choice of typefaces, Cassandre was neither particularly innovative nor revolutionary. Although, it must be noted that in some cases Cassandre's choice of typeface could have been due to market force rather than personal preference. Advertisers in the Art Deco era demanded a certain look from designers, which would portray their product as modern and sophisticated. This look was typified by the many streamlined sans-serif faces created during this era and designers had no choice but to use them.

(2) Typefaces manipulated or created by Cassandre for a particular poster design:

Cassandre's earliest attempt to create a unique typeface for a specific project can be seen in his highly successful AU BUCHERON, 1923 (fig. 2.20). While the title uses a typical sans serif face, "Le Grand Magasin du Meuble" beneath it is composed from manipulated letterforms. In AU BUCHERON Cassandre has created various characters from geometric shapes which complement the linear quality of the illustration. The cross-bar of the A has been substituted by a triangle, as has the middle arm of the E. The R appears to have been constructed by the addition of a triangle to the letter P. The G is perhaps the most intriguing character. A rounded C ends in a triangle and the letterform resembles a curved arrow. Cassandre also uses this G letterform in FLORENT, 1925 (fig. 2.21) where it adds interest to a standard typeface.

Jean Carlu attempts a similar manipulation of letterforms in PEPA BONAFAE, 1926 (fig. 2.22), although he uses a circle in place of a triangle. Jose Morell's hand rendered type in BANYS DE SALOU, 1933 also develops along the same lines as Cassandre's AU BUCHERON typeface and, interestingly enough, both men choose to use a lower case 'i' among capital letterforms. This seems to be a quirky feature that often appears in hand rendered posters by amateurs. In Cassandre's AU BUCHERON, a lowercase 'i' with a triangle instead of a dot enhances the overall consistency of the letterforms, more effectively than an uppercase I.

A rather humorous type manipulation can be seen in Cassandre's TURMAC, 1925 (fig. 2.23). Here the letterforms have been modified to resemble Turkish architectural forms, echoing the origin of the product (a Turkish cigarette). While the overall design is ultimately a little too contrived and overbearing, it serves as a pleasant reminder that there is another side to Cassandre's often stark typography.



Fig. 2.20: AMC: detail from AU BUCHERON, 1923

Fig. 2.21: AMC:
detail from
FLORENT, 1925

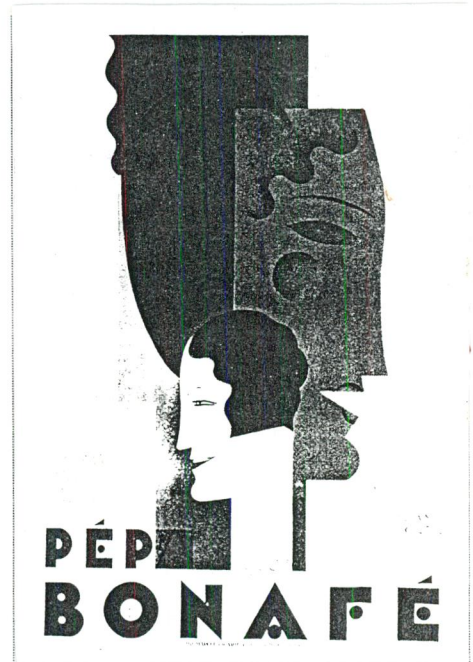
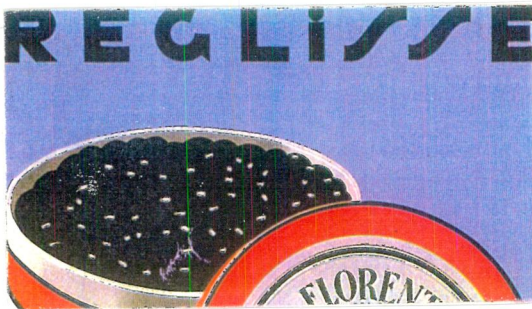


Fig. 2.22: Carlu:
PEPA BONAFAE,
1926



Fig. 2.23: AMC:
TURMAC, 1925

In PIVOLO, 1924, (fig. 2.24) the geometric letterforms evident in AU BUCHERON have been further manipulated, to produce quirky letterforms which resemble illustrations. This work could also be seen as an early experiment in BIFUR as the letterforms have been reduced to their essential elements. This is perhaps one of Cassandre's first uses of letterforms for their visual impact. PIVOLO uses an upper case V among lower case characters in the headline type, directing our attention to the illustration and echoing the 'V' shape of the birds beak. He also, once again, uses a lower case i among the capitals. The dot above the i plays with the other circular type elements and echoes the bird's eye. The word Aperitif has been elongated to contrast with the upright illustration and to echo the grey band of type at the bottom of the page.



Fig. 2.24: AMC:
PIVOLO, 1924

Two posters which continue the theme of reduction of letters to their essential elements are LMS BESTWAY, 1928 (fig. 2.25) and GRECE, 1933 (fig. 2.26). In LMS BESTWAY, drawing on the accompanying train illustration for inspiration, Cassandre has managed to create a train-like form from the type. Set against a dark background the thin letter strokes are quite legible yet intriguing. The type consists of outlined characters with various portions missing. Cassandre has used the large dots between each letter of the abbreviated word to suggest wheels, while the tilted S further suggests the curves of a mechanical object. The letters become lines of the illustration yet can still be read as a word. Cassandre has successfully integrated type and illustration without sacrificing the unique qualities of either element.

Conceived just five years later, GRECE 1933 could be seen as the ultimate attempt by the designer to 'strip bare' his typography. Any unnecessary information has been discarded. The R is missing its upright stroke, as is the E which consists of three horizontal lines floating one above the other. This floating technique is also evident in the G, whose horizontal bar is not attached to the rest of the letterform. This poster is an example of one of Cassandre's most experimental manipulations of type and shows his growing confidence in his abilities as a typographer. Perhaps it is no wonder that only four years later Cassandre would attempt to stretch the boundaries of type even further with his PEIGNOT typeface.



Fig. 2.25: AMC: detail from L.M.S. BESTWAY, 1928

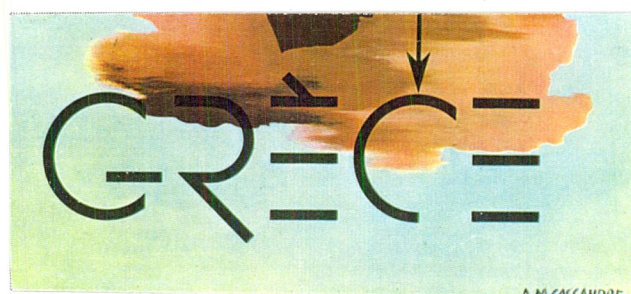


Fig. 2.26: AMC: detail from GRECE, 1933

Having examined a selection of the typefaces used by Cassandre, we can draw the following conclusions. The first is that his typography displays an almost rigid adherence to uppercase letterforms. Cassandre explained in his first published text that he limited his work almost exclusively to capitals because it enhanced the "modularity and monumental nature of his work" while also allowing "proportional distortion without affecting legibility" (Mouron, 1988, p. 20). Uppercase characters are also more suited to the headline type required in poster design.

His choice of typeface was governed by several logical prerequisites including the ability of the typeface to:

- (1) reflect the nature of the advertised product/industry,
- (2) highlight or contrast with existing design elements,
- (3) complement the style of illustration.

Characters specifically designed by Cassandre either embody a certain typographical theme i.e. the reduction of letterforms to essential elements (as in GRECE), or have been carefully manipulated to integrate with the illustration (as in PIVOLO). Chapter six shall show that some of these themes were later realised in Cassandre's unique typeface designs. Overall, Cassandre's typeface solutions show a progression in his typographical abilities. This progress has been documented from his use of clichéd scriptfaces to innovative designs such as LMS BESTWAY.

Use of type as a tool for the integration of lettering and image:

This chapter shall discuss Cassandre's use of typography as a tool for the integration of lettering and image within his posters. Through examination of his poster designs, the various typographical devices used by Cassandre to achieve this integration will be identified.

Cassandre cites one of his earliest works AEROCLUB DE BOURGOGNE, 1923 (fig. 3.0) as a key factor in his realisation that the integration of type and image was vital to the success of his designs. He considered AEROCLUB's elegant Art Deco illustration, with its type crammed into the corner, (almost it seems, as an afterthought) a "mistake" and declared that ever since this work he had used the "diametrically opposite approach" (Mouron, 1985, p. 19). This "diametrically opposite approach" involved the use of several typographical devices, including careful consideration of typeface, type application, layout, and colour of type.



Fig. 3.0: AMC:
AEROCLUB DE
BOURGOGNE,
1923

(1) Appropriateness of typeface:

As already discussed, Cassandre often created a typeface to suit a particular poster. By allowing his illustrations to influence his typography, the two elements often mirrored each other.

In PIVOLO, 1924 (fig. 2.24) the circular and geometric letterforms begin to echo the illustration and vice versa. The magpie itself resembles the letter U, while the rounded counters of the P, Q and the dot above the i echo the birds gleaming eye. The illustration and type are both rendered using flat, geometric areas of colour.

When not creating a typeface to suitably complement an illustration as in PIVOLO and LMS BESTWAY, Cassandre often modified an existing typeface to achieve the same integration. BUGATTI, 1925 (fig. 3.1) , project for an unpublished poster, uses a linear sans serif face that has been altered to reflect the illustration. Rather than simply using an italicised font, Cassandre has tilted each letter to duplicate the exact angle of the horse's head. He has left the O in an upright position, echoing the car wheel in the illustration. The U letterform, in particular, is quite ingenious. It combines both the curvilinear and angular quality of the illustration. BUGATTI also exposes Cassandre's unconventional attitude towards type. Each letter has been modified individually with minimal regard for the overall consistency of the typeface.

The treatment of the BUGATTI title is another attempt to integrate type and illustration. The letterforms are reversed out of a black background, just as the horse's head is reversed out of a light background. The curves of the B and G reflect the shape of the car wheel above them.

When placed alongside a poster which does not incorporate such integration, e.g. GALERIES LAFAYETTE, 1928 (fig. 3.2) the benefits of this approach become obvious. BUGATTI's crisp type and efficient lines communicate a clear, authoritative message while GALERIES' detailed illustration and equally cluttered type compete for attention.



Fig. 3.1: AMC: BUGATTI, 1925

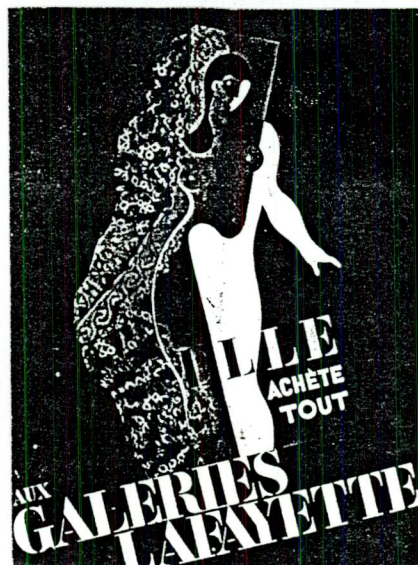


Fig. 3.2: AMC: GALERIES LAFAYETTE, 1928

(2) Application and layout of type:

With regard to the application of type, Cassandre prided himself on playing a part in asserting the primacy of the letter within design. His work revolted against the traditions of the past where lettering was placed at random, "squeezed into a corner" (Mouron, 1985, p. 19).

Upon examination of his poster designs, I have observed several devices Cassandre uses, in his application of type, to insure the successful integration of lettering the image. These devices include; integration of typographical elements (such as product or service name) within the composition, physically connecting type and image, using the shape of the illustration to guide the placement of type.

(1) Integration of product name within illustration:

CHAMPIONS DU MONDE, 1930 (fig. 3.3) and PATHE DISQUES, 1932 (fig. 3.4) are both examples of 'illustrative advertising', where the drawn or painted image includes the sole product identification, without any other type or lettering. In CHAMPIONS DU MONDE, a book is advertised by its cover while PATHE DISQUES uses an illustration of a record, bearing the company name.

It must be noted, however, that Cassandre was not the only designer to practice this illustrative advertising, although his designs were among the first to use it. French designer Charles Loupout places the product name on a cafe canopy in his ST. RAPHAEL series, 1938 (fig. 3.5), while Swiss designer Niklaus Stoecklin's 1934, BINACA toothpaste advertisement (fig. 3.6) simply shows a tube of toothpaste in a glass. As in his choice of typefaces, Cassandre's typographical layouts were often "borrowed" by his contemporaries, after he had proven their success in the poster arena.

Fig. 3.3: AMC:
CHAMPIONS DU MONDE, 1930

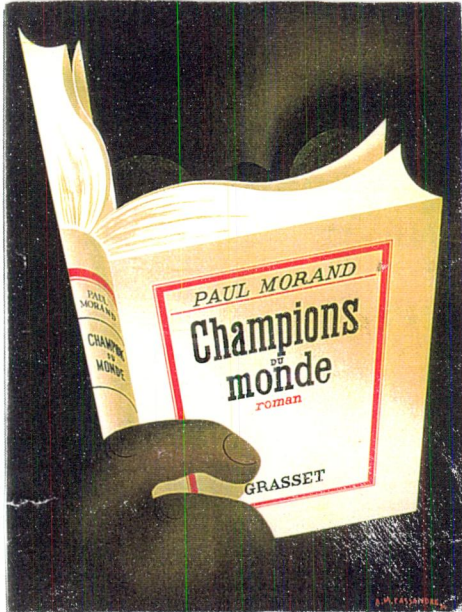


Fig. 3.4: AMC:
PATHES DISQUES, 1932

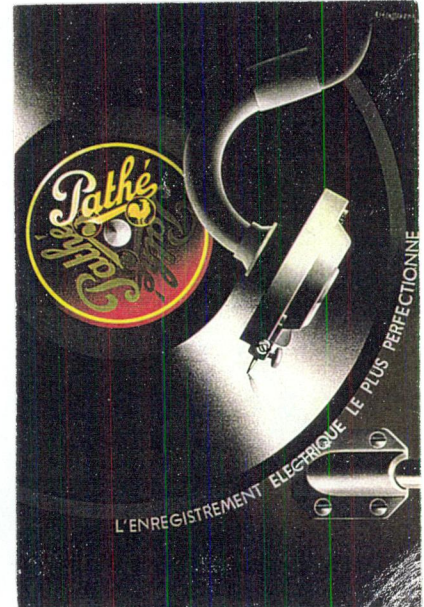


Fig. 3.5: Loupout:
ST. RAPHAEL, 1938

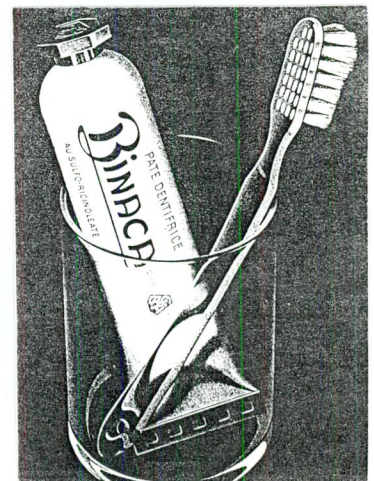


Fig. 3.6: Stoecklin:
BINACA, 1934

(2) Physical connection of type to illustration:

In THOMSON, 1931, (fig. 3.7) Cassandre physically connects lettering and image by allowing the T of the brand name to form part of the electric cable. In GRECE, 1933 the image of a ship is connected to the type by a vertical arrow resembling a plumb-line. Cassandre's SPIDOLEINE (fig. 3.13) uses a simple, straight line to connect the product illustration with its by-line.



Fig. 3.7: AMC:
THOMSON, 1931

(3) Placement of type :

CASSANDRE'S BUGATTI (fig. 3.1) allows the shape of the illustration to govern the placement of type. The lettering is aligned with an imaginary line running through the centre of the illustration. The upper and lower line of type are placed at right angles to the illustration, stabilising the rounded image and creating an intriguing geometric shape. Here Cassandre's Purist illustration has clearly affected his use of type.

In several of his designs, Cassandre places the type, with varying degrees of success, around the illustration. In HUILOR, 1932 (fig. 3.8) the type is reduced to an ornament when treated this way. Its shape follows the curve of the bottle, but for no obvious reason. The relationship between the two elements, type and image is not strengthened by this treatment, they simply appear to have been placed beside each other.

However, in PERNOD FILS, 1934 (fig. 3.9) Cassandre combines the use of curved type and the image of a bottle far more successfully. The type flows from an image of a smiling face, creating the illusion of a clown's wig. This, in turn, reinforces the idea behind the illustration - that drinking Pernod will make you merry!

Another of Cassandre's designs which uses curved typographical elements is MILTON 1934, unpublished poster (fig. 3.10). The curve of the lettering "Tastes so good you could eat it" follows the flight path of an insect hovering over the product. This is an ingenious method of leading the viewer to the product by way of its byline. It also demonstrates Cassandre's willingness to allow one graphic element, in this case, a bee, to influence his treatment of type within a design. However, Loupout's use of curved type in L.T. PIVER, 1924 (fig 3.11) suggests that Cassandre was by no means the creator of this method of integration.



Fig. 3.9: AMC:
PERNOD FILS,
1934

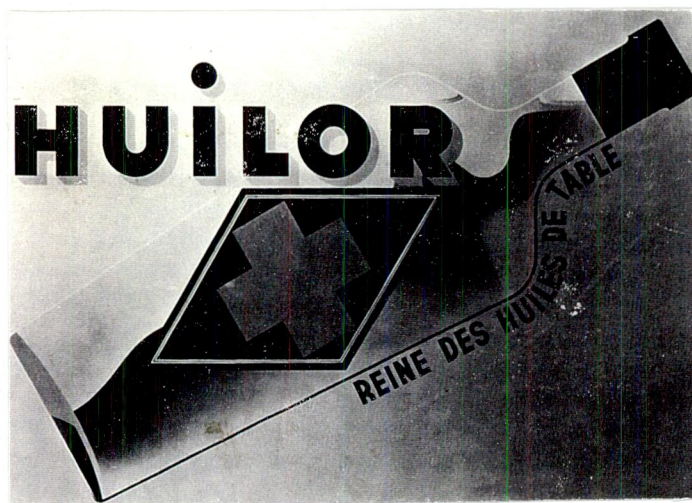


Fig. 3.8: AMC:
HUILOR, 1932

Fig. 3.11: Loupout:
L.T. PIVER, 1924

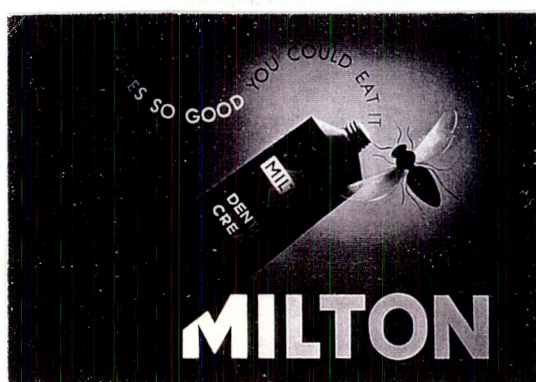


Fig. 3.10: AMC: MILTON (unpublished poster), 1934

(3) Colour of type:

The final ingredient Cassandre used to unify his lettering and image, was coloured type. In his designs whole pieces of text, individual letters and sections of letters were coloured. Just as Cappiello had recognised the ability of colour to add an element of surprise to an advertisement, (Mouron, 1985, p. 32) Cassandre recognised the ability of coloured lettering to not only integrate type and image, but also to highlight a product name.

In PIVOLO (fig. 2.24) the characters have been broken down into coloured geometric shapes, reflecting the blue, grey and black colour scheme of the illustration. The P is comprised of a blue rectangle and a grey and black circle. The stroke of the i has been split into two colours and the dot enlarged by placing a grey circle behind it, echoing the magpie's eye. Alternating colour schemes have been used for the two O letterforms. The bottom band of type reflects the blue and grey elements in the illustration. This use of coloured type transforms the lettering into pictorial elements resembling the illustration.

SAGA, 1927 (fig. 2.19) uses highlighted letterforms, to abbreviate the shipping company's name for greater impact, while the T of THOMSON (fig. 3.7) has been highlighted to complement the red electric cable.

WAGON LITS COOKS, 1933 (fig. 3.12) uses alternating blue and wine letterforms to echo the porter's uniforms. The illustration bleeds into the type, allowing the two elements to integrate successfully. In SPIDOLEINE, 1931 (fig. 3.13) vibrant yellow type is placed against a black background, immediately attracting attention. A thin yellow line drips from the brand name to spell Securite, suggesting the product is reliable and trustworthy.

While ITALIA, 1936 (fig. 2.5) uses lettering predictably coloured to resemble the Italian flag, a subtler use of colour can be found in NORD EXPRESS (work in oils), 1927 (fig. 3.14). In this work, the greys and blacks of the fractured illustration provide the colour scheme for the typography. As in PIVOLO, the letters have been broken into coloured segments and, through the use of colour, become part of the illustration while preserving their identity as a word.

German designer Willy Willrab also uses coloured typography to integrate image and type. His 1926 PROBLEM CIGARETTE (fig. 3.15) uses a red O letterform, resembling a mouth, to advertise the product.

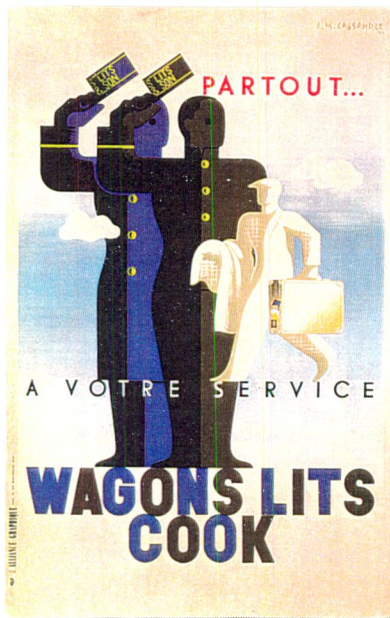


Fig. 3.12: AMC:
WAGONS LITS COOKS, 1933

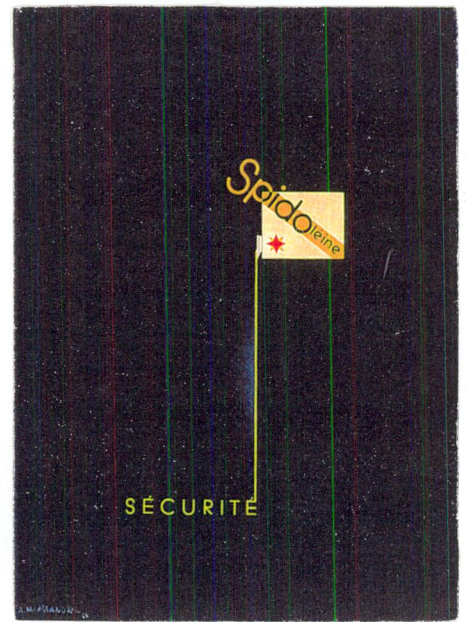


Fig. 3.13: AMC:
SPIDOLEINE,
1931

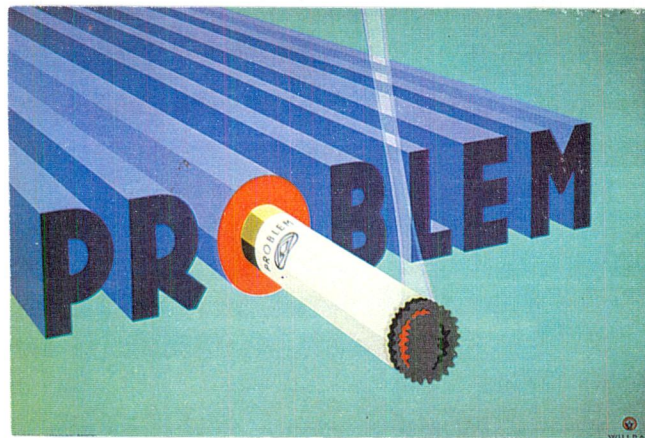


Fig. 3.15: Willrab: PROBLEM CIGARETTES,
1926



Fig. 3.14: AMC: NORD EXPRESS
(work in oils), 1927

Having examined Cassandre's integration of lettering and illustration within his posters, one becomes very aware of his unconventional approach towards typography. Layouts are often determined by a single graphic element within the illustration - an insect (Milton), a smiling face (PERNOD FILS). Letters are modified to produce hybrid forms which are neither exclusively typographical nor illustrative (PIVOLO).

Cassandre's painterly use of bright bold colours; red, yellow, blue, transforms typographical elements into extensions of his illustrations. This artistic use of colour also serves a purely commercial purpose. It highlights brand names and adds an element of surprise to his poster designs. The variety of typographical devices used by Cassandre to integrate lettering and image once again demonstrates his flexibility as a designer. His successful integration of type and illustration creates posters which are powerful unified statements, rather than merely a collection of separate elements on a page.

Chapter 4

Typographical 'Signature' devices:

In this chapter I will build on Paul Davis's recognition of "signature" devices in Cassandre's work (Davis, 1993, p. 49), and attempt to identify a number of signature devices which are purely typographical.

These devices include;

- (1) the frame of type,
- (2) patterned or textured letterforms,
- (3) the use of a dual-purpose letter,
- (4) the overlapping of characters within a word.

In discussing the existence of such devices one could be accused of contradicting Cassandre's own views. He expressed his disgust at clients who requested him to do posters "in the style of AU BUCHERON", saying that such repetitions were out of the question (Mouron, 1985, p. 24).

As we shall see, though never actually repeating a particular design, Cassandre did use certain distinctive typographical treatments more than once in his poster designs.

(1) The frame of type:

This is Cassandre's most recognisable signature device appearing in a variety of his famous railway posters. ETOILE DU NORD, 1927 (fig. 4.0) uses a frame of blue and yellow type to capture the viewers attention, drawing them into the illustration.

NORD EXPRESS, 1927 (fig. 4.1) also uses a frame of type around a stunning illustration. In this case, however, Cassandre has cleverly manipulated the type at the bottom of the picture to become the overlapping train tracks beneath the illustration. This creates the illusion that the illustration is travelling along the type, integrating the two elements smoothly. The use of such a framing device forces the separate elements within the poster to unite. The lettering and type combine to work as one "picture" within a frame.

Loupout uses a similar frame of type in his 1931 railroad poster (fig. 4.2) as does Joseph Binder in his 1937 Perfume advertisement (fig. 4.3). However, Cassandre's use of a frame of type is more successful, because it becomes part of the illustration.

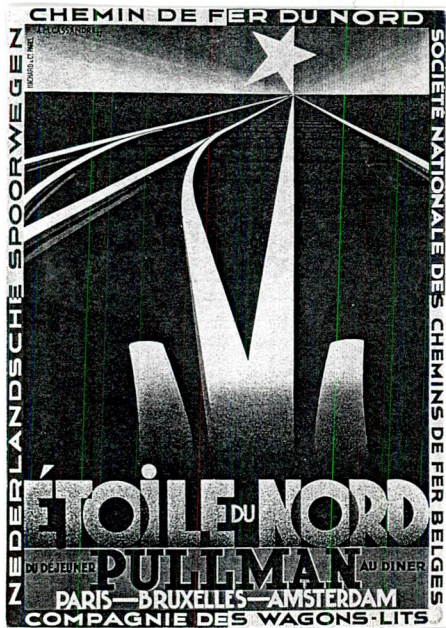


Fig. 4.0: AMC:
ETOILE DU NORD,
1927

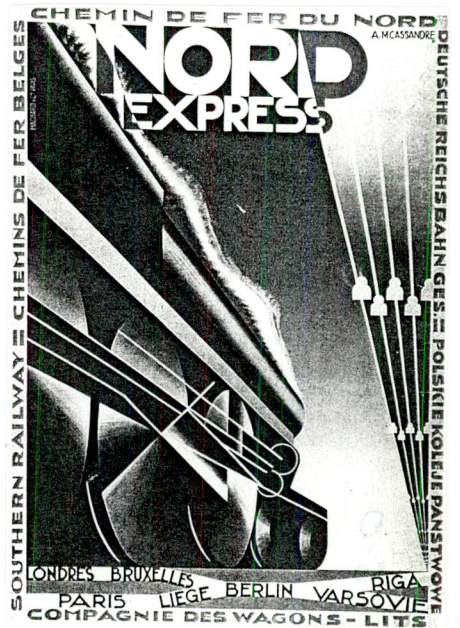


Fig. 4.1: AMC:
NORD EXPRESS,
1927

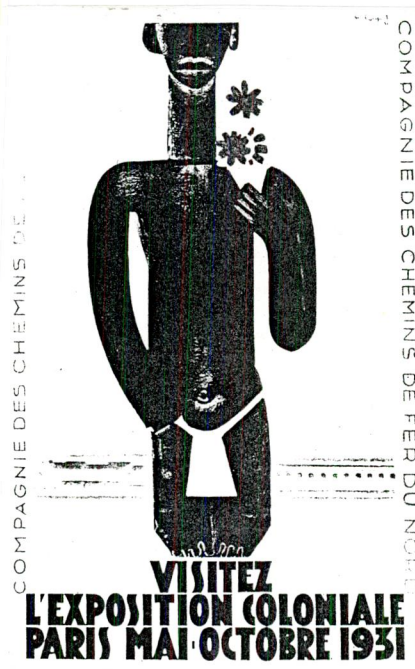


Fig. 4.2: Loupout:
Railroad poster,
1931

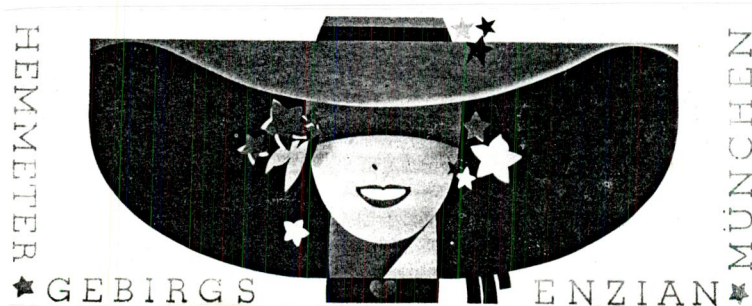


Fig. 4.3: Binder: Perfume advertisement, 1937

(2) Patterned letterforms:

There are two distinctive pieces of work in which Cassandre adds a pattern or texture to his letterforms. In his *Ne Ny To*, 1928 (fig.4.4) the headline type takes on the appearance of brickwork, echoing the tall chimney stacks of the illustration. The poster gains a certain industrial feel with the remaining letterforms becoming almost graffiti-like against the brickwork. The type begins to work on two levels, as words to be read and also as intriguing graphic elements.

PACIFIC, 1935 (fig. 4.5) is a humorous use of this technique. The letters display the stars and stripes of the American flag, reinforcing the products identity and assuring the consumer of its 'all American' quality.

A very subtle use of this technique can be seen in the title lettering of *ETOILE DU NORD* (fig. 4.0). The letters have been lightly airbrushed to resemble the steel railway tracks.



Fig. 4.4: AMC:
NY NE TO, 1928

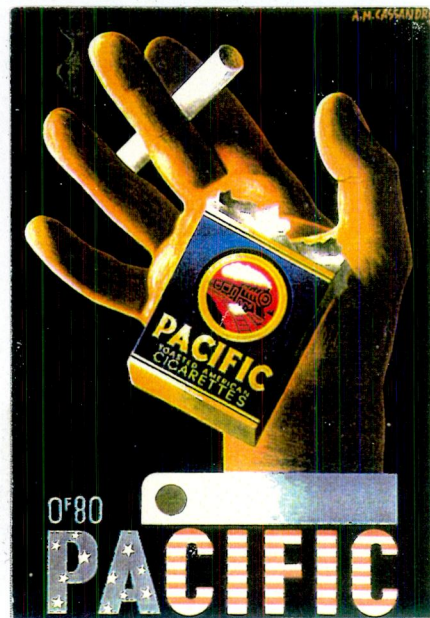


Fig. 4.5: AMC:
PACIFIC, 1935

(3) Dual - purpose letters:

This is a technique I have observed in two of Cassandre's designs yet have been unable to find in the work of any of his contemporaries. It involves the use of a common letter to combine two words, usually those of a product name.

This simple yet effective technique can be seen in SEAGER'S GIN, 1935 (fig. 4.6). The G of both words has been replaced by one oversized letter linking the two words together. This draws attention to the product name which was in danger of being eclipsed by the detailed illustration.

In KINA NECTAR, 1936, (fig. 4.7) the use of an oversized N to combine the two words has quite a different effect. The oversized letterform is placed over a simple illustration of a delivery boy and becomes part of his clothing. This allows the type and image to work as one unit, creating a distinct logo within the poster.



Fig. 4.6: AMC: SEAGER'S GIN, 1935



Fig. 4.7: AMC:
KINA NECTAR, 1936



(4) Overlapping letterforms:

Cassandre not only experimented with the layout of his lettering but also the letter spacing. In this technique spacing between individual letters is eliminated, creating interest within a word and demonstrating the flexibility of the typographical elements within his designs.

Cassandre's ETOILE DU NORD (fig. 4.0) uses overlapping letters to create new shapes within the word. The lettering begins to resemble the train tracks, reinforcing the posters illustration. Cassandre once again demonstrates the ability of type to work as an illustrative element. NE NY TO (fig. 4.8) uses colour as a means to distinguish overlapping letterforms. Through such use of colour legibility is increased and the individual characters do not merge completely with the other letterforms. In the treatment of the date a small number nineteen is placed over a larger twenty-eight with the nine becoming white as it touches the orange two. The composition is somewhat reminiscent of the Futurist artist Enrico Prampolini's 1923 BROOM magazine cover (fig. 4.9).

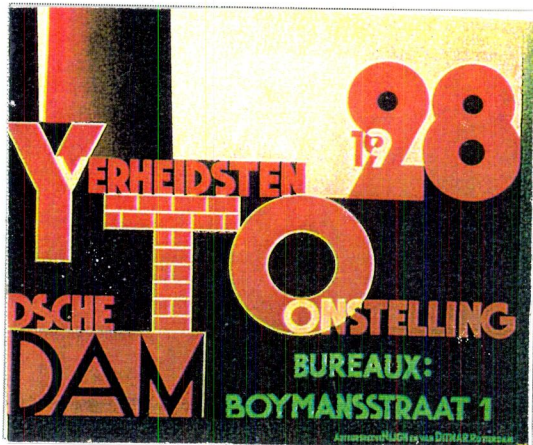


Fig. 4.8: AMC:
detail from NE NY TO, 1928

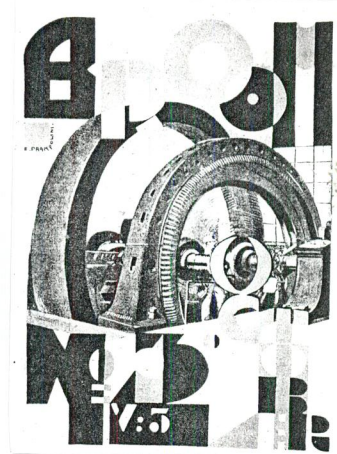


Fig. 4.9: Prampolini:
BROOM magazine cover,
1923

The particular typographical signature devices Cassandre used allowed his lettering to function on two levels; as intriguing yet legible typographical elements and as pictorial additions to the illustration.

These signature devices were used to:

- (1) highlight product names (an essential function of an advertisement)
- (2) create interest within a design
- (3) further integrate the typographical and illustrative elements of the poster.

Ultimately, they reveal Cassandre's fondness for certain 'themes' within his posters, note that he uses patterned letterforms in two designs within a year of each other, and demonstrates once again his ability to use type as an illustrative element.

Cassandre's use of type compared with that of his contemporaries, when advertising similar services/products:

Having discussed Cassandre's choice of typeface, manipulation of letterforms, use of typography to integrate lettering and image, the various signature devices which appear in his work, there is perhaps one more question left to ask.

Given that we know Cassandre's contemporaries were using similar typefaces, conducting similar experiments in type manipulation/integration and even using certain "signature" devices found in Cassandre's work, one has to ask whether his use of typography in his poster designs was any more successful than that of his peers. In short, we know Cassandre was successful but was any more successful? And if so, why?

In an attempt to answer this question in the fairest manner, I would like to compare Cassandre's use of typography with that of his contemporaries, when advertising similar services / products.

Railway Posters

For this service, I have chosen to compare Cassandre's NORD EXPRESS, 1927 (fig. 5.0) and English designer Tom Purvis's EAST COAST BY L.N.E.R., 1925 (fig. 5.1).

Although this comparison is being made in terms of type, it would be sensible to consider both artists' use of illustration as we know that, in Cassandre's case, illustrative elements often influenced his typographical approach.

Purvis has chosen to show the train's destination in crisp, Deco style using bold flat colours and precise lines. Cassandre uses a fractured, Cubist-like train image with dynamic thrusting lines. Both artists display the Deco tendency towards geometric stylisation of natural forms.

Cassandre has chosen a modern sans serif face in upper case echoing the geometric illustration, while Purvis uses a traditional serif face, also in upper case. This choice of a serif by Purvis is rather puzzling. The colours in the illustration provide adequate contrast without the need for contrasting typographical elements. Would a linear sans serif face have been more appropriate for the sophisticated illustration?

With regard to type application, Cassandre's dynamic approach is far more successful. Using a frame of type Cassandre has integrated the lettering and image perfectly. The band of type at the bottom of the picture has been manipulated to resemble train tracks, reinforcing the train illustration.

Purvis, however, allows his illustration to take precedence, leaving just enough room in the corner for the lettering. While both designs are equally appealing, Cassandre's NORD EXPRESS uses typography in a more innovative and creative manner.

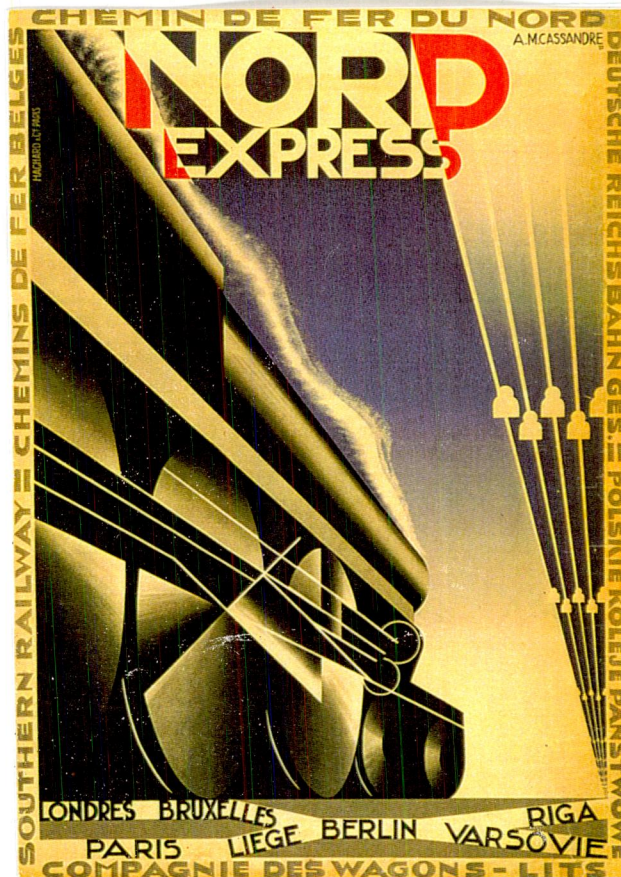


Fig. 5.0: AMC: NORD EXPRESS, 1927



Fig. 5.1: Purvis: EAST COAST BY L.N.E.R., 1925

DUBONNET:

Both Cassandre and the great French posterist Capiello, created poster designs for this product in the same year.

Before we discuss their respective designs, it is interesting to note that when Capiello received the Ribbon of the Legion of Honour in 1928, Cassandre and his comrades (Carlu, Loupout and Colin) wrote to the artist stating how much they admired his work and that they had all started out by "doing Capiello's" (Mouron, 1985, p. 157, note no. 31). As we shall see, Cassandre's DUBO DUBON DUBONNET, 1932 (fig 5.2) is certainly not an example of Cassandre "doing a Capiello".

Both artists based their illustrations on the 'little man', the Dubonnet mascot at the time. Cassandre uses a sans serif typeface in upper case as does Capiello, although Capiello's DUBONNET, 1932 (fig. 5.3) also uses a hand-rendered scriptface.

Capiello's typographical layout is traditional and somewhat static, with the lettering placed against a coloured background, in a horizontal strip at the bottom of the poster. While Cassandre allows his type to breathe by removing the coloured strip, he also places it at the bottom of the illustration.

Cassandre uses his lettering to reinforce the comic-strip style of his three-part poster. In the first segment the figure contemplates the product and four letters of the brand name have been coloured in to spell DUBO, meaning 'good'. In the second segment, one more letter is filled in to spell DUBON 'beautiful', echoing the figures apparent rapture (his eyes are cast to heaven) as he tastes the product. In the final segment the source of the figures delight is identified as the product name is revealed.

The first and second illustration are only partially coloured, while the last is fully coloured, parallelling the use of the complete brand name. The three part poster progresses from an outlined image with outlined type to a full colour illustration and strip of coloured text. Such close integration of type and image ensures Cassandre's poster creates a greater visual impact than Capiello's adequate illustration and straightforward type.

While Capiello's work has dated, particularly his use Art Nouveau style script face, Cassandre's design, created in the same year, is still fresh and exciting. Cassandre's typographical solution is both innovative and amusing although, his crisp, linear illustration played no small part in the success of this design.

Fig. 5.2: AMC: DUBO DUBON DUBONNET, 1932

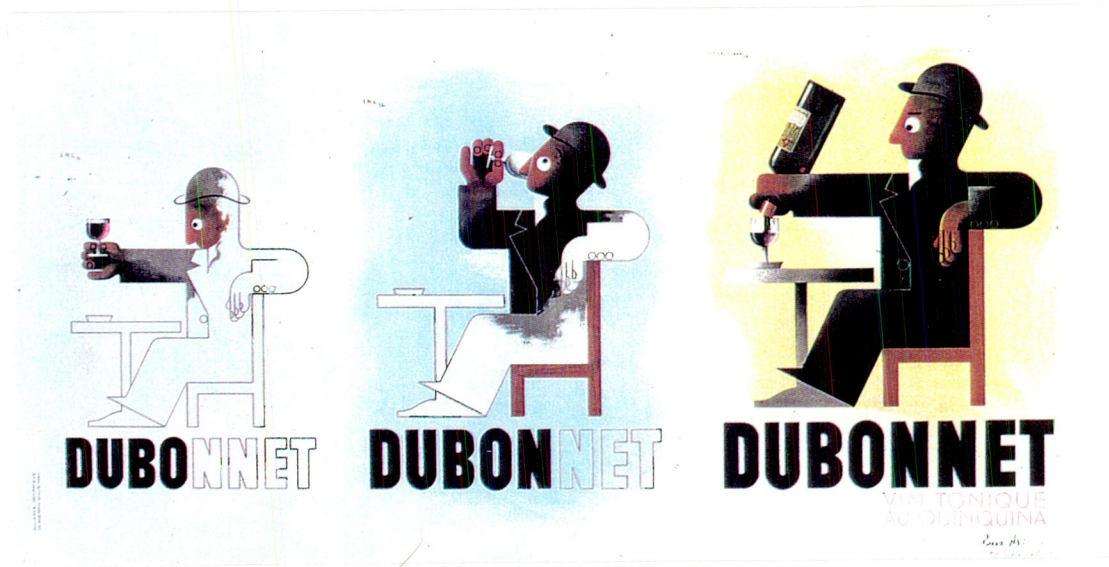


Fig. 5.3: Cappiello:
DUBONNET, 1932

While most of the designs we have discussed would lead us to the conclusion that Cassandre was in fact more typographically adept than his contemporaries, it must be noted that on one particular occasion Cassandre certainly met his typographical match.

Fellow Frenchman and comrade, Jean Carlu (his signature accompanies Cassandre's on their tribute to Cappiello) produced equally inventive advertisements. Thus demonstrating that Cassandre was not alone in his ability to use type as both a viable illustrative element and a tool of integration between lettering and image.

Paris Soir:

Within three years of each other, both men designed advertisements for the French newspaper PARIS SOIR, although Cassandre's poster was never published. From the same starting point both men arrived at quite different solutions. In my opinion, it is Carlu's design which is more typographically effective.

With regard to their illustrations, Cassandre chooses a rather symbolic image, a flock of birds, cut from newspaper, flying into the night (fig. 5.4). Carlu depicts, in cartoon-like simplicity, a paperboy dashing through the streets, delivering his familiar cry. (fig. 5.5)

Cassandre uses a slab serif face (similar to those used in newspaper headlines) set, unusually for him, in lower case. Carlu uses a condensed sans serif face set in upper case and in various decreasing point sizes. Cassandre's lettering is stamped at an angle across the illustration, like bold headline type, and the tightly set letterforms also resemble the bars of a cage (implying perhaps that PARIS SOIR captures the news for its consumers?).

Carlu's use of type is the icing on the cake, the vital ingredient which assures the success of an already appealing illustration. The type is set parallel to the line of the newspaper boy's legs and at a right angle to his torso. A piece of text also runs in a straight line from his mouth. The paper boy himself begins to resemble the letter L, reminding one of Cassandre's U shaped bird in Pivolo.

However, it is the use of various point sizes which transforms the lettering. The words become a chorus of cries rather than a collection of characters. One can almost hear the paperboy's cries of PARIS SOIR growing louder as he approaches and fainter as he continues his journey through the streets.

In comparison, Cassandre's surreal image struggles to make an impact. The client refused to publish the poster, complaining the birds looked too much like ducks, the french word for duck 'Canard' is also a derogatory term for a newspaper (Mouron, 1985, p. 78). The link between the image and lettering is rather tenuous and relies on the viewer's acknowledgement that birds have, in fact, a connection to the newspaper industry.

The whole poster is rather too vague to communicate any message about the

newspaper. While the type is set at an angle like Carlu's, the poster resembles an established logo rather than an advertisement. It seems, in this design at least, Cassandre has failed to use his typographical skills as efficiently as Carlu.

However, Cassandre's merits as a designer cannot be judged on the strength of one or two pieces of work. Like any designer, he is ultimately judged by the quality, consistency and innovativeness of a range of work over a long period of time.

Having examined Cassandre posters there can be no doubt that the majority of his work does display a consistent, creative and innovative use of lettering and image. It is his ability to treat lettering as both a typographical and illustrative element that insures the success of his posters. In contrast to the work of some of his contemporaries, Cassandre's type is never an addition but always, as Mason notes "an intrinsic part of the total pattern" (Mason, 1982, p. 460)

Cassandre's overall consistency in producing excellent typographical compositions within his poster designs, assures his place as a leading designer among his peers.



Fig. 5.4: AMC:
PARIS SOIR, 1930



Fig. 5.5: Carlu:
PARIS SOIR, 1927

An examination of Cassandre's typefaces:

Although Cassandre created seven typefaces during his lifetime, in this chapter I have chosen to deal exclusively with his three most innovative designs;

- (1) the intriguing BIFUR (1929),
- (2) the revolutionary PEIGNOT (1937),
- (3) the elegant CASSANDRE (1968).

In examining these typefaces, I would like to assess whether they have benefited from having been designed by an artist/designer, rather than a professional typographer.

(1) BIFUR: display face, Deberny and Peignot foundry, Paris, 1929
fig.(6.0).

Primarily designed as an advertising face, BIFUR is a continuation of Cassandre's experiments in type manipulation evident in such works as PIVOLO, 1924, and LMS BESTWAY, 1928. BIFUR draws on his experience in dealing with headline type and is an example of Cassandre's endeavour to reduce the characters of the alphabet to their essential features. In this way BIFUR also parallels his Purist illustration style, which often reduced figure and forms to their simplest, geometric state.

In BIFUR elements which were not considered necessary, some horizontal and vertical letterstrokes, were removed and the connecting spaces within the characters filled with thin lines or blocks of colour. It is interesting to note that having completed the BIFUR typeface, Cassandre continued this process of reduction in poster designs such as GRECE, 1933. Perhaps the designer was not satisfied with this innovative yet commercially unsuccessful design.

Composed entirely in upper case, the form of BIFUR's stark, monumental sans serif characters was chiefly governed by their function. As a headline typeface, Cassandre intended BIFUR's characters to inject an element of surprise into the posters they adorned.

Their monumental quality was enhanced by his use of upper case characters. His restriction of the typeface to capital letters was both a romantic and practical choice. He believed that the capital letter, a derivation of the original Roman letter, was the "purest" product of the T-square and Compass (Mouron, 1985, p. 20). Because of their simplicity, capital forms were also better suited to endure Cassandre's distortions while remaining legible.

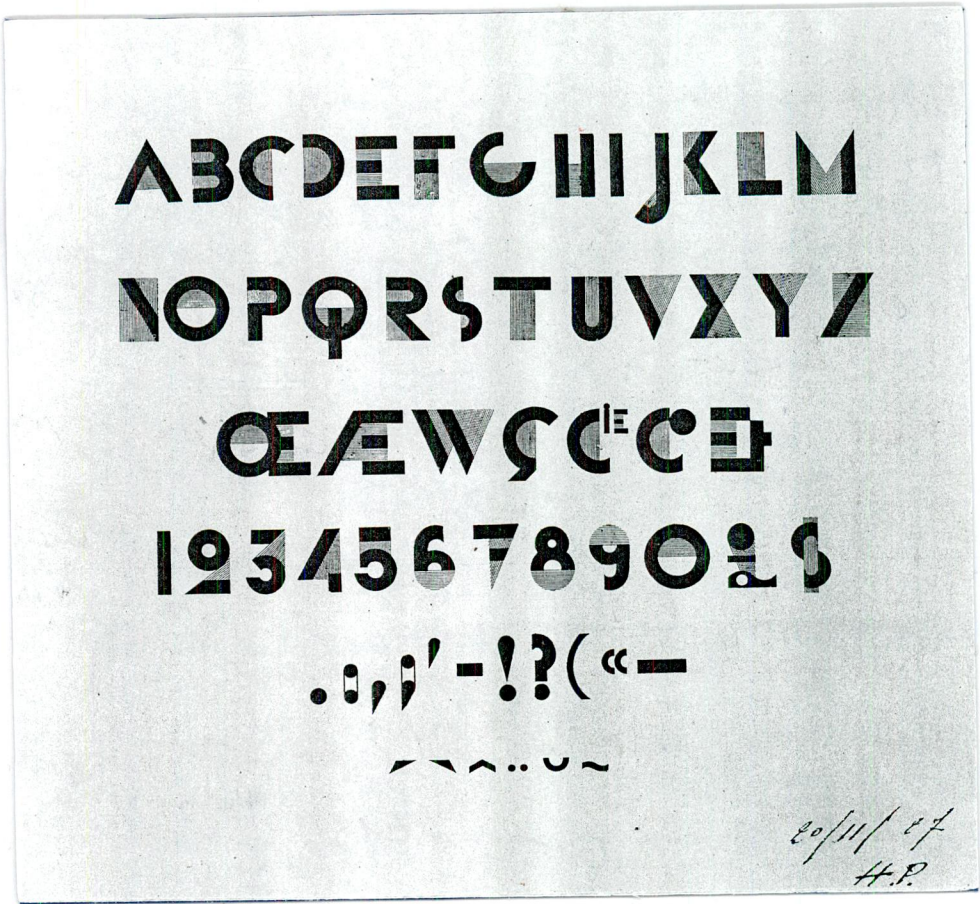


Fig. 6.0: AMC: first study for BIFUR, dated 1927

Each letter of this unorthodox face was dissected and effectively reduced to its simplest form, with varying degrees of success. An 'E' became three horizontal lines, one above the other, with spaces in-between filled by thin horizontal strokes. 'A', 'B', 'D', 'K', 'L', 'P', and 'R' were deprived of their upright strokes, while 'H' and 'M' possess no connecting strokes between their principle upright strokes.

The letters begin to resemble pictures rather than characters of the alphabet.

Uniform thickness of stroke ensures a cohesiveness within the typeface. The thin replacement strokes are also equally spaced to insure the characters are seen as consistent elements within an alphabet rather than a collection of abstract symbols.

However, there are certain elements within the design which betray Cassandre's artistic, rather than typographic, leanings. While the alphabet is based upon the reduction of forms, certain characters such as 'J', 'Q', 'U', and 'O' have had elements added rather than taken away, contradicting Cassandre's statement that BIFUR was "not an ornamental letter" (Mouron, 1988, p. 21).

The top half of the 'O' has been filled with thin horizontal strokes, but a similar circular 'Q' is filled from the bottom half up. While this identifies the letters as belonging to the BIFUR family, it is typographically inconsistent. Similar circular forms have received different treatment for no apparent reason. The numbers '6', '8', and '9' have had their circular portions replaced by a band of horizontal strokes. I find this solution rather weak, in particular when applied to the figure '9'. The numbers appear unbalanced and almost unfinished.

In a review of BIFUR published in ARTS METIERS GRAPHIQUES, No. 9, 1927, Cassandre compares his typeface to a "leading ballerina", commanding the spotlight while the other dancers sink into the shade (Mouron, 1985, p. 46).

While accepting that Cassandre's BIFUR is an ingenious experiment in the reduction of letterforms, I would tend to disagree that BIFUR itself has the presence of a "leading ballerina". In fact, some of its characters barely make it to the stage. The letters 'F', 'G', 'N' and 'Z', while not illegible, rely on the characters around them to confirm their identity. They lack a certain typographical sensitivity which would allow them to stand on their own as letterforms.

The 'Z' letterform, which should essentially mirror the 'N' letterform on its side, reveals another inconsistency in Cassandre's application of his typographical treatment. The diagonal replacement strokes begin further in on the upper portion than on the lower right portion.

Some of the characters appear uneasily balanced. The 'C' letterform appears to be toppling forward, unbalanced by the lack of a supporting curve on its lower portion. The 'S' letterform in contrast appears to be toppling backward, away from its accompanying characters. Again, the lack of a supporting base stroke has reduced the letterform to a character is rather unsettling to read.

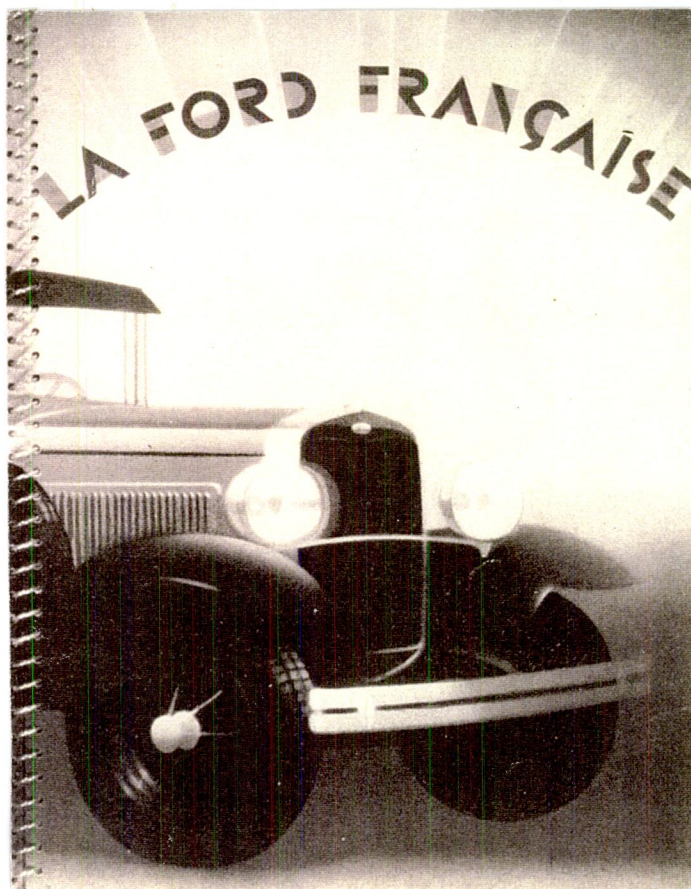
The 'G' letterform borders on the ridiculous. Again while not totally illegible in the context of BIFUR's other characters, this letter does require a second glance to confirm its identity. It could easily be mistaken for a 'C' or an unfinished 'O'. In BIFUR Cassandre has sacrificed typographical traditions, in this case the usual inclusion of some form of horizontal arm on the letter 'G', in favour of an artistic experiment and yet still presented his design as a legitimate typeface.

Thus, with all its quirky characteristics and Op-art appearance (due to the use of thin, tightly spaced replacement strokes), was BIFUR a success in the poster arena?

In short, the answer is no. Despite its successful use in a 1930s French Auto publication (fig. 6.1), where it proved to be quite legible, the typeface was never greeted with much enthusiasm by the printing industry.

Charles Peignot, founder of the Deberny and Peignot foundry where BIFUR was cast, stated that the design caused a real scandal in the publishing and printing industry (Heller, 1986, p. 64) when it first appeared. Basically, while the design does work as a novel headline type, printers of the Deco era considered Cassandre's unconventional, artistic approach to such a precise craft as typography, too radical for the commercial world. They considered the design to be an uneasy blend of geometry and "futuristic influences".

Fig. 6.1: Designer unknown:
French auto publication, cover design, 1930s



In contrast to the other display faces of the period, Cassandre's BIFUR design was indeed quite revolutionary. MOTOR, 1930 by K. Sommer, Ludwig & Mayer foundry, Germany (fig. 6.2) was a semi serif face with white dashes, presumably to imitate speeding car wheels. ORPLID, by Hans Bohn, 1929, was merely an outline face with a shadow. Even Cassandre's lesser known Acier Noir display face, 1936 (fig. 6.3) does not possess the intriguing quality of BIFUR's letterforms. Ironically, printers of today seem more appreciative of BIFUR's novel value. It is still in use in the posters of the Theatre de Chaillot, Paris.

Through research, I have come across a BIFUR inspired typeface, in a 1987 bookcover design by Arnold Schwartzman (fig. 6.4). Schwartzman's 'R' letterform is slightly stouter than Cassandre's, his 'A' is wider and his 'D' has fewer replacement strokes. He has chosen to fill the 'O' from the bottom to the top, a stronger solution than Cassandre's top heavy character. It is interesting to note that Cassandre's O has been filled in similarly in the French auto publication, was this a decision by the printer? While BIFUR's 'S' is more stylish than Schwartzman's, it is also weaker. Schwartzman's letterform creates a greater visual impact than Cassandre's 'toppling' BIFUR character (fig. 6.5)



Fig. 6.2: Sommer: MOTOR typeface, 1930



Fig. 6.3: AMC: ACIER NOIR typeface, 1936

Fig. 6.5: AMC:
BIFUR 'S', 1937



Fig. 6.4: Schwartzman: RADIO book cover type, 1987

However, while BIFUR may have been considered revolutionary in its time, it is fair to say that the next typeface we shall examine is by far Cassandre's most daring typographic experiment.

(2) PEIGNOT:

All - purpose typeface, Deberny and Peignot foundry, Paris, 1937 (fig. 6.6).

The PEIGNOT typeface was created to restore the dignity of the original roman alphabet. A dignity Cassandre felt had been sullied, in our own modern alphabet, by the inclusion of lower case letterforms. He believed that these lower case letters were no more than "bastardised forms derived from the deformation of cursives by generations of scribes" (Mouron, 1985, p. 96).

Walter Tracy identifies the PEIGNOT face as one in which the 'return to origins' theory was the *raison d'être* (Tracy, 1988, p. 25).



Fig. 6.6: AMC: PEIGNOT typeface, 1937

However, there was also one other factor which influenced its design. Having spent almost two years researching people's reading habits, Cassandre concluded that a word is primarily recognised by its outline, rather than its individual letters. He acknowledged that in a word, the exclusive use of capital letters created a monotonous rectangular outline, lacking in distinguishing features to aid legibility.

His solution was to combine the ascenders and descenders of lower case forms with the noble capital letters of the Roman alphabet. In doing so he created hybrid lower case characters which in every way challenged the traditional appearance of the alphabet. One could argue that Cassandre's transformation of uppercase characters into lower-case characters, by the addition of lances, was a much a deformation as the scribes so called bastardisation of traditional cursives.

While Bayer and Tschichold had suggested alternative, one-case alphabets in 1926, their designs were in no way as radical as those proposed by Cassandre.

With little experience in the design of textfaces, Cassandre set about putting his theories into practice. One could argue that in this design, Cassandre overestimated his typographical skills, because although the upper case Peignot characters were successful and widely used, there are certain uneasy elements in his lower case letterforms which betray his painterly origins.

Uppercase characters

PEIGNOT's uppercase, sans serif letterforms are based on traditional proportions, with varying thickness of stroke. Contrasting with the usual uniform thickness of stroke found in the modern text faces of the time such as FUTURA or HELVETICA. The letters combine delicate curves and sharp angles to create an elegant, refined typeface.

Lowercase characters

However, in the design of his lower case characters Cassandre has clearly tried to create a unique alphabet. The lowercase 'a', 'e', 'm', 'w', 'v' and 'z' have curved corners in contrast to the sharp angles of the capital letters. The leg of the 'l' letterform is also curved rather than angled, as is the top of the 'f'. The top and bottom of the 's' letterform tapers into a straight line rather than continuing the curve of the body as the upper case 'S' does. While the 'o', 'c', 'f', 'g', 'b', 'd', 'i', 'j' and 'k' letterforms have retained their traditional lower case appearance, the 'a', 'e', 'm', 'n', 'r', 't', and 'q' are clearly small capitals.

The 'p' letterform appears to be a capital which has dropped from the baseline.

The 'h' letterform is the most unusual letter of this lower case alphabet. Clearly a small capital, it has been forced to work as a lower case character through the addition of an ascender to its left vertical stroke. In the same way, a small capital 'g' becomes a lowercase letterform through the addition of a descender, as does the 'q' letterform.

When presented in a piece of text, the integration of traditional capital and lower case characters, hybrids of the two and small capitals, is ultimately unsettling (fig. 6.7)

The text appears to be set in small capitals and yet the eye becomes distracted by ascenders and descenders among the letterforms. Rather than increasing legibility, the use of traditional lower case forms causes confusion.

The typeface lacks an overall consistency to link its characters. Uppercase forms are angular and pointed while lowercase forms, in the same family, are curved and rounded. Clearly Cassandre's design has abandoned too many traditional typographical rules to be considered typographically sound. While quirky and imaginative, it does not persuade us that the words presented before us are going to be a pleasure to read.

Despite Cassandre's intention to create a multi-purpose face, his lower case forms were never fully accepted. Walter Tracy notes that their deviations from the normal were actually of no practical value to the typographer (Tracy, 1988, p. 25). Only once were Cassandre's lowercase characters used alone. On the title page of a 1938, *ESQUIRE* brochure, Paul Rand used three lowercase PEIGNOT characters - 's', 'k', and 'i'. This was the only time Rand ever used the typeface .

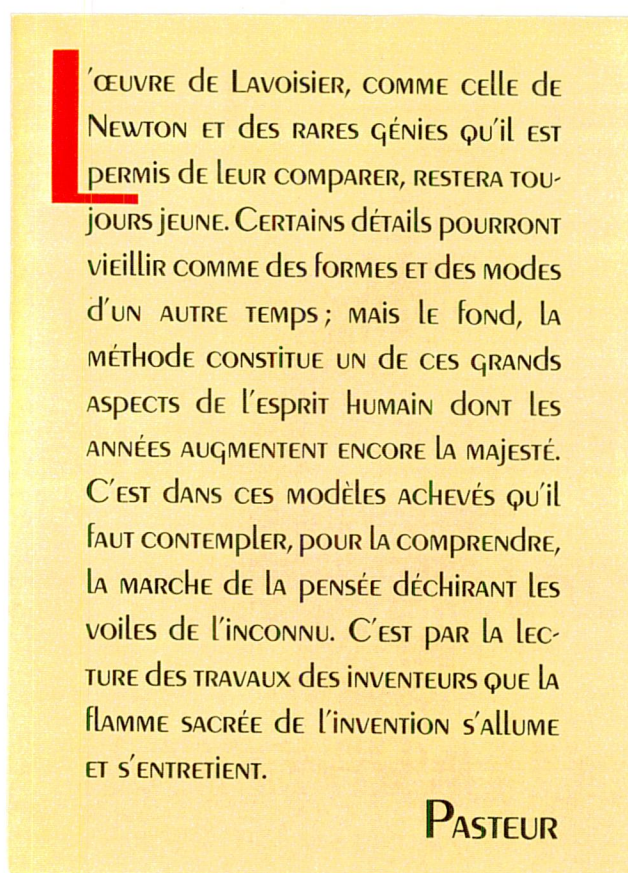


Fig. 6.7: AMC: PEIGNOT type specimen, 1937

In contrast PEIGNOT's uppercase alphabet was very successful. It became the "official" typeface of the World Exhibition in Paris and was chosen by Paul Valéry to inscribe the two towers of the Palais de Chaillot.

Considering that Cassandre had little experience with text it is not surprising, given his work as a poster artist, that his font would have headline applications.

Although failing to fulfil Cassandre's prophesy that its alternative lower case forms would "influence succeeding styles and fashions" (Mouron, 1985, p. 100), PEIGNOT is nevertheless an intriguing typographical experiment. Perhaps the last word on its design should go to the man who gave it its name, Charles Peignot, of the Deberny and Peignot foundry, Paris. Commenting on the typeface nearly forty years after it was first issued, Peignot declared, "I am not entirely finished with it . . . I work on it because it still has the possibility of being a typeface of the future" (Heller, 1986, p. 67).

(3) CASSANDRE: All-purpose face for photocomposition, unpublished, 1968 (fig.6.8).

This calligraphic style typeface is a culmination of Cassandre's typographic experiments in works such as FOIRE DE PARIS, 1957 (fig. 6.9), the famous YVES ST. LAURENT LOGO, 1963 (fig. 6.10) and his post-war experiences as a set designer in the theatre.

CASSANDRE is also an attempt to liberate the alphabet from the constraints of geometry and the various static interpretations of the first Roman letterforms.

The letters themselves while based on the most recent forms to appear in contemporary architecture (the trapezoid and the ellipse) are also more fluid in style than Cassandre's earlier work. The erratic angularity of the letters are suggestive of those which have been carved in stone, another reference to the Roman letterform which inspired Cassandre's PEIGNOT typeface.

CASSANDRE's characters possess a painterly, hand-rendered feel, mirroring rhythmic brush strokes of Cassandre's 1950s theatre paintings. With their bold verticals, rounded curves and slightly modulated strokes, the letterforms suggest handwriting, but in a deliberate way - generic rather than individual. While there is no real sense of the typographer's individuality, it is unexplainably reassuring to read letters which possess a human quality and are inherently 'friendly'.

The "hand-written" characters also resembles Saul Bass's 1960s quirky cut - out letterforms (fig.6.11).

Cassandre achieved the overall rhythmic feel of his letterforms by omitting the baseline. The letters are allowed to float freely yet remain part of a choreographed routine due to the uniform treatment of their stroke and curves. In a statement explaining the reasons behind the typeface, Cassandre demonstrates his flexibility as a designer by revising his earlier views. He states that "it is a dangerous error to reduce the letter to a simple graphic architecture" (Mouron, 1985, p. 148). BIFUR was surely an example of such a reduction.

ABCDEFG
 HIJKLMNO
 PQRSTUVX
 YZ Æ Æ W &
 123456
 7890
 abcdefghi
 jklmnopq
 rstuvwxyz
 æ œ w s s ß

Fig. 6.8: AMC: CASSANDRE
(unpublished typeface, named after the
designer's death), 1968

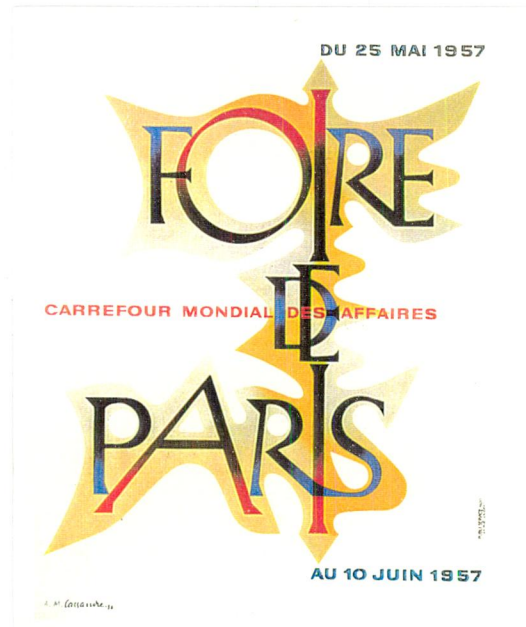


Fig. 6.9: AMC: FOIRE DE PARIS,
1957



Fig. 6.10: AMC:
YVES ST. LAURENT logo,
1963

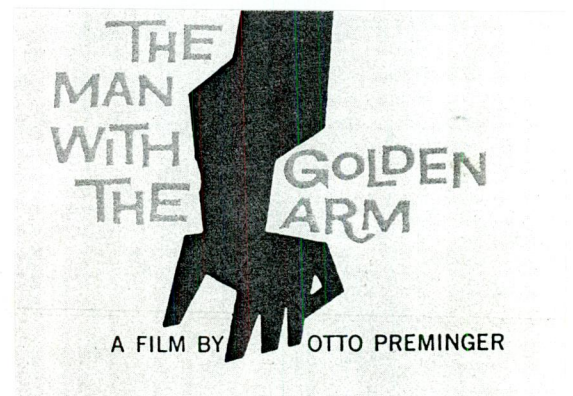


Fig. 6.11: Bass:
THE MAN WITH THE
GOLDEN ARM, title
typeface, 1960s

Comparison with PEIGNOT

When CASSANDRE, 1968 is contrasted with PEIGNOT, 1937, one becomes aware of certain typographical tendencies which govern both designs, mirroring Cassandre's use of certain "signature" devices in his poster work.

PEIGNOT was obviously a daring attempt to integrate upper and lowercase forms and introduce new habits in reading. CASSANDRE appears to be a more conventional design. However, on closer inspection there are certain similarities between the two designs.

Uppercase characters

While CASSANDRE's uppercase characters have no base line, they are governed by the same proportions used in PEIGNOT, roughly one third larger than conventional lower case characters. The 'M' and 'N' characters end in similar squared strokes, although CASSANDRE's are at an angle.

Lowercase characters

In the lower case alphabet both 'h' letterforms appear to be small capitals, with lengthened left-hand verticals. It is interesting that Cassandre would still attempt to replace a lower case character with a modified capital, thirty years on. The 'g' letterform has also been modified in a similar fashion.

In both alphabets, the 'q', 'b', 'i', 'j', 'u', and 'v' retain their original lowercase form. CASSANDRE also uses angular and curved edges on the 'm', 'n', 'v' and 'e' to distinguish between upper and lowercase forms.

While both alphabets use a small capital 'E', in place of the traditional 'e' letterforms, CASSANDRE uses an upper case 'D' in its lower case alphabet, next to a traditional lowercase 'b'. In PEIGNOT, Cassandre had refused to alter the cursive 'd' stating that due to our reading habits "it would not have been feasible to conceive it differently" (Mouron, 1985, p. 99). Why did Cassandre now consider an uppercase 'D' an appropriate replacement for the traditional lowercase letterform? Perhaps he was taking into account the public's increasing visual literacy after thirty years of exposure to advertisements containing various distortions of type.

Out of these comparisons one can conclude that both Cassandre's type faces challenge the idea of separate upper and lowercase alphabets. Both designs are, on some level, a continuing attempt to integrate the two, with CASSANDRE, in my opinion, achieving the most success.

CASSANDRE works better simply because all the letterforms have been freed from traditional constraints. While PEIGNOT's modified characters look odd beside its remaining traditional characters, CASSANDRE's characters possess a greater harmony with each other. The eye recognises that the whole alphabet has been altered and reads it accordingly. The various type manipulations in PEIGNOT are too drastic, particularly the length of the 'h's' descender (which has been noticeably reduced in

CASSANDRE) and hinder comfortable reading. CASSANDRE contains just the right amount of contrast between its characters to create interest and maintain legibility, allowing it to work as both a display and text face (fig.6.12).

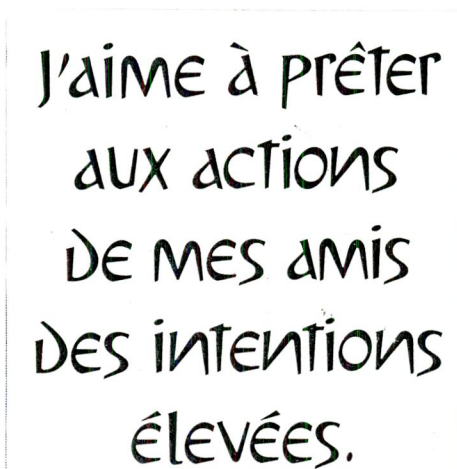


Fig. 6. 12: MOURON:
lower case composition in CASSANDRE, 1984

One final characteristic of this typeface, which demonstrates the progression of Cassandre's typographic skills, is its combination of semi serif and sans serif letterforms. By the addition of a slight angle to the end of the letter strokes on the 'b', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'p', 'r', 'u', 'v', and 'x' characters, both upper and lower case, Cassandre has created a typeface which is neither exclusively serif nor sans serif.

The addition of the serif emphasises the horizontal line of the letterforms and diminishes the common their reliance on vertical lines. The resulting characters are neither as stark as sans serif letterforms nor as static as those relying on a common upward stroke. His 1957 FOIRE DE PARIS (Fig. 6.11) also experiment with angled serif letterforms . The 'P' is in fact quite similar to CASSANDRE's letterform. Once again we can see that many of the ideas behind Cassandre's typefaces originated in his poster designs.

In his CASSANDRE typeface, the designer has created a font with more subtlety than previous French 'script' faces such as MISTRAL, 1955 (fig. 6.28) and with more charm than the Industrial style HELVETICA, 1957. While other typefaces of the 60s were perpetuating geometric forms, such as those in EUROSTYLE, 1962, Cassandre's final typeface offered a refreshing, 'quirky' alternative.

The examination of Cassandre's typefaces has revealed that their quirky, individualistic character is both their strength and their weakness. While they lack the consistency and discipline of a professional typographer, they are nevertheless intriguing.

BIFUR, while clearly legible, contains several characters (F, G, N) which are little more than abstract symbols. It does however, work well as a 'surprising' headline type.

PEIGNOT's attempts to integrate upper and lowercase forms produced an alphabet which was too far removed from typographical traditions to be of any real use to the printing industry.

CASSANDRE, in my opinion represents the most successful integration of the designers innovative typographic ideas and fine-art sensibilities. While containing certain typographical 'faux pas' (use of an uppercase D beside a lowercase b), it is both charming and quirky. It is, to my mind, a great shame that the innovative quality of CASSANDRE, particularly as a headline type, was never recognised by the printing industry.

Summary and Conclusion

This research has revealed that while Cassandre was clearly a graphic designer, drawing inspiration from various art/design movements and not a 'professional' typographer, his approach to type was neither random nor superficial. It has been shown that there are a series of set principles governing his use of type.

The influence of several design movements (Purism, Precisionism, Art Deco) on Cassandre's work has been duly documented in chapter one. I find it curious that in my reading I did not come across any mention of Cassandre's connection to the Precisionists, despite the fact that I have found clear visible evidence to support this link. I also find it odd that the obvious connection between Leger's LE SYPHON and Cassandre's A L'EAU has not been commented upon previously.

In chapter two we have seen Cassandre's considered approach to his choice of typeface. It is clear that each typeface has been chosen for a specific reason. These reasons included the ability of the typeface to reflect the nature of the poster's product, to highlight/contrast with existing design elements and above all to complement the illustration. We have also seen the emergence of specific typographical themes, which shaped Cassandre's type manipulations.

It becomes evident that these themes have been strongly influenced by Cassandre's fine-art based illustrations. His reduction of letterforms to basic elements (as in GRECE) directly mirrors his use of clear Purist lines in works such as DUBO DUBON DUBONNET. However, I find it strange that none of his letterforms ever actually accompany his Purist-style illustrations.

Chapter two also reveals certain trends in '20s type design which Cassandre perpetuated and in some cases may have actually created. In the print world (as in the art world), the tendency towards geometry and line was strong. The sub-title of Cassandre's AU BUCHERON uses geometrically based characters manipulated in a simplistic manner. It is not surprising that Carlu and others would attempt similar manipulations. However, it is interesting that Cassandre's geometric letterforms in LE KID bear a strong resemblance to those in Renner's 1929 Futura Black typeface. A typeface which was created 4 years *after* Cassandre's design.

While Mouron, in his book on Cassandre, applauds the designer's integration of type and image, he does not attempt to catalogue the specific typographical methods used to achieve this integration. Through my research, I have identified and provided visual evidence of several typographical methods used by Cassandre to integrate type and image. Many of these methods are not particularly innovative and were also in use by his contemporaries. Cassandre's most successful integrations of type and image (Pivolo, Nord Express {work in oils}), are as a direct result of his painterly use of colour. In these designs, Cassandre's type has clearly benefited from his fine art instincts.

In a further attempt to expose Cassandre's precise, consistent approach to type

(in his poster designs), I have identified several typographical signature devices evident in his work. Developing Davis's recognition of Cassandre's illustrative signature devices, I have shown that Cassandre also used signature devices which were purely typographical. These signature devices have proved to be both common (frame of type) and uncommon (patterned letterforms, dual-purpose letters) to designers of that era. Cassandre's sensibility to typographical trends is clearly demonstrated by his use of 'signature' devices which were also in use by his contemporaries. It is clear that as a graphic designer he used certain popular signature devices to give his work a modern feel.

The advantage of Cassandre's precise approach to type becomes apparent when contrasted with his contemporaries use of type.

However, his designs only achieve a greater success when they integrate type and image. As a graphic designer, Cassandre clearly recognised the visual impact of such integration. His fine art sensibilities and lack of typographical training often allowed him to achieve this integration in a unique and stimulating manner.

With regard to his typeface designs, Cassandre's inherent painterly instincts are both a weakness and a strength. These instincts allow him to create quirky yet somewhat typographically 'unsound' designs. It becomes apparent that Cassandre came to typography through his experience as a poster designer. BIFUR is based on the reductionist theme of LMS Bestway and GRECE, while PEIGNOT develops Cassandre's preference towards capital letters and his use of a lowercase 'i' among capitals, as in Pivolo and Au Bucheron.

Overall, Cassandre used his fine art sensibilities in his capacity as a graphic designer to influence his type for the better. In his use of colour and integration of type and image, his unique painterly approach is clearly an advantage. The drawbacks of his lack of formal typographical training only become apparent when he attempts more precise typographical tasks such as typeface design. While his PEIGNOT typeface is imaginative and visually dynamic, it is lacking in the typographers discipline required to create a design suitable for print.

Cassandre, to my mind, is a painter with an affinity for type. I hope that further studies will acknowledge the vital role his precise, orderly approach to type plays in the success of his graphic designs.

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