

The Crystal Goblet

or Printing Should Be Invisible

by Beatrice Warde

Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favorite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in color. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine.

For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.

Bear with me in this long-winded and fragrant metaphor; for you will find that almost all the virtues of the perfect wine-glass have a parallel in typography. There is the long, thin stem that obviates fingerprints on the bowl. Why? Because no cloud must come between your eyes and the fiery heart of the liquid. Are not the margins on book pages similarly meant to obviate the necessity of fingering the type-page?

There are a thousand mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port in tumblers of red or green glass! When a goblet has a base that looks too small for security, it does not matter how cleverly it is weighted; you feel nervous lest it should tip over.

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BEATRICE WARDE

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We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something. That is why it is mischievous to call any printed piece a work of art, especially fine art: because that would imply that its first purpose was to exist as an expression of beauty for its own sake and for the delectation of the senses.

Calligraphy can almost be considered a fine art nowadays, because its primary economic and educational purpose has been taken away; but printing in English will not qualify as an art until the present English language no longer conveys ideas to future generations, and until printing itself hands its usefulness to some yet unimagined successor.

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1900 – 1969

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It is sheer magic that I should be able to hold a one-sided conversation by means of black marks on paper with an unknown person half-way across the world. Talking, broadcasting, writing, and printing are all quite literally forms of thought transference, and it is the ability and eagerness to transfer and receive the contents of the mind that is almost alone responsible for human civilization.

If you agree with this, you will agree with my one main idea, i.e. that the most important thing about printing is that it conveys thought, ideas, images, from one mind to other minds. This statement is what you might call the front door of the science of typography. Within lie hundreds of rooms; but unless you start by assuming that printing is meant to convey specific and coherent ideas, it is very easy to find yourself in the wrong house altogether.

Before asking what this statement leads to, let us see what it does not necessarily lead to. If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility.

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The fine arts do that; but that is not the purpose of printing. Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas. and ot

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was talking to a man who designed a very pleasing advertising type which undoubtedly all of you have used. I said something about what artists think about a certain problem, and he replied with a beautiful gesture: “Ah, madam, we artists do not think — we feel!” That same day I quoted that remark to another designer of my acquaintance, and he, being less poetically inclined, murmured: “I’m not feeling very well today, I think!” He was right, he did think; he was the thinking sort; and that is why he is not so good a painter, and to my mind ten times better as a typographer and type designer than the man who instinctively avoided anything as coherent as a reason. I always suspect the typographic enthusiast who takes a printed page from a book and frames it to hang on the wall, for I believe that in order to gratify a sensory delight he has mutilated something infinitely more important. I remember that T.M. Cleland, the famous American typographer, once showed me a very beautiful layout for a Cadillac booklet involving decorations in color.

He did not have the actual text to work with in drawing up his specimen pages, so he had set the lines in Latin. This was not only for the reason that you will all think of; if you have seen the old typefoundries’ famous Quousque Tandem copy (i.e. that Latin has few descenders and thus gives a remarkably even line). No, he told me that originally he had set up the dullest “wording” that he could find (I dare say it was from Hansard), and yet he discovered that the man to whom he submitted it would start reading and making con-

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There are ways of setting lines of type which may work well enough, and yet keep the reader subconsciously worried by the fear of “doubling” lines, reading three words as one, and so forth.

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There is no end to the maze of practices in typography, and this idea of printing as a conveyor is, at least in the minds of all the great typographers with whom I have had the privilege of talking, the one clue that can guide you through the maze. Without this essential humility of mind, I have seen ardent designers go more hopelessly wrong, make more ludicrous mistakes out of an excessive enthusiasm, than I could have thought possible. And with this clue, this purposiveness in the back of your mind, it is possible to do the most unheard-of things, and find that they justify you triumphantly. It is not a waste of time to go to the simple fundamentals and reason from them.

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Before asking what this statement leads to, let us see what it does not necessarily lead to. If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility. A page set in 14-pt Bold Sans is, according to the laboratory tests, more "legible" than one set in 11-pt Baskerville. A public speaker is more "audible" in that sense when he bellows. But a good speaking voice is one which is inaudible as a voice. It is the transparent goblet again! I need not warn you that if you begin listening to the inflections and speaking rhythms of a voice from a platform, you are falling asleep.

We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something. That is why it is mischievous to call any printed piece a work of art, especially fine art: because that would imply that its first purpose was to exist as an expression of beauty for its own sake and for the delectation of the senses. Calligraphy can almost be considered a fine art nowadays, because its primary economic and educational purpose has been taken away; but printing in English will not qualify as an art until the present English language no longer conveys ideas to future generations, and until printing itself hands its usefulness to some yet unimagined successor.

It is not a waste of time to go to the simple fundamentals and reason from them.

There is no end to the maze of practices in typography, and this idea of printing as a conveyor is, at least in the minds of all the great typographers with whom I have had the privilege of talking, the one clue that can guide you through the maze. Without this essential humility of mind, I have seen ardent designers go more hopelessly wrong, make more ludicrous mistakes out of an excessive enthusiasm, than I could have thought possible. And with this clue, this purposiveness in the back of your mind, it is possible to do the most unheard-of things, and find that they justify you triumphantly. It is not a waste of time to go to the simple fundamentals and reason from them.

THE CRYSTAL GOBLET

Bear with me in this long-winded and fragrant metaphor; for you will find that almost all the virtues of the perfect wine-glass have a parallel in typography. There is the long, thin stem that obviates fingerprints on the bowl. Why? Because no cloud must come between your eyes and the fiery heart of the liquid. Are not the margins on book pages similarly meant to obviate the necessity of fingering the type-page? Again: the glass is colorless or at the most only faintly tinged in the bowl, because the connoisseur judges wine partly by its color and is impatient of anything that alters it. There are a thousand mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port in tumblers of red or green glass! When a goblet has a base that looks too small for security, it does not matter how cleverly it is weighted; you feel nervous lest it should tip over. There are ways of setting lines of type which may work well enough, and yet keep the reader subconsciously worried by the fear of “doubling” lines, reading three words as one, and so forth. Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a “modernist” in the sense in which I am going to use that term. That is, the first thing he asked of his particular object was not “How should it look?” but “What must it do?” and to that extent all good typography is modernist. Wine is so strange and potent a thing that it has been used in the central ritual of religion in one place and time, and attacked by a virago with a hatchet in another.

A public speaker is more “audible” in that sense when he bellows. But a good speaking voice is one which is inaudible as a voice. It is the transparent goblet again! I need not warn you that if you begin listening to the inflections and speaking rhythms of a voice from a platform, you are falling asleep. When you listen to a song in a language you do not understand, part of your mind actually does fall asleep, leaving your quite separate aesthetic sensibilities to enjoy themselves unimpeded by your reasoning faculties. The fine arts do that; but that is not the purpose of printing. Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas. We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something.

It is sheer magic that I should be able to hold a one-sided conversation by means of black marks on paper with an unknown person half-way across the world. Talking, broadcasting, writing, and printing are all quite literally forms of thought transference, and it is the ability and eagerness to transfer and receive the contents of the mind that is almost alone responsible for human civilization.

If you agree with this, you will agree with my one main idea, i.e. that the most important thing about printing is that it conveys thought, ideas, images, from one mind to other minds. This statement is what you might call the front door of the science of typography. Within lie hundreds of rooms; but unless you start by assuming that printing is meant to convey specific and coherent ideas, it is very easy to find yourself in the wrong house altogether. Before asking what this statement leads to, let us see what it does not necessarily lead to. If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility. A page set in 14-pt Bold Sans is, according to the laboratory tests, more “legible” than one set in 11-pt Baskerville.

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BEATRICE
WARDE

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or Printing Should Be Invisible, 1930

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GOB LET

1920

the crystal goblet

by Beatrice Warde

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Lecture to the British Typographers Guild, October 1930

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the *by* *beatrice* *warde* crystal Goblet

1900 – 1969

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THE CRYSTAL GOBLET

or Printing Should Be Invisible
by Beatrice Warde

Lecture to the British Typographers Guild, October 1930

Printing demands a humility of mind, for the lack of which many of the fine arts are even now floundering in self-conscious and maudlin experiments. There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page. Vulgar ostentation is twice as easy as discipline. When you realize that ugly typography never effaces itself; you will be able to capture beauty as the wise men capture happiness by aiming at something else. The ‘stunt typographer’ learns the fickleness of rich men who hate to read. Not for them are long breaths held over serif and kern, they will not appreciate your splitting of hair-spaces. Nobody (save the other craftsmen) will appreciate half your skill. But you may spend endless years of happy experiment in devising that crystalline goblet which is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind. There is no end to the maze of practices in typography, and this idea of printing as a conveyor is, at least in the minds of all the great typographers with whom I have had the privilege of talking, the one clue that can guide you through the maze. Without this essential humility of mind, I have seen ardent designers go more hopelessly wrong, make more ludicrous mistakes out of an excessive enthusiasm, than I could have thought possible. And with this clue, this purposiveness in the back of your mind, it is possible to do the most unheard-of things.

The Crystal Goblet

1900 – 1969

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The Crystal Goblet

THE CRYSTAL GOBLET

Bear with me in this long-winded and fragrant metaphor; for you will find that almost all the virtues of the perfect wine-glass have a parallel in typography. There is the long, thin stem that obviates fingerprints on the bowl. Why? Because no cloud must come between your eyes and the fiery heart of the liquid. Are not the margins on book pages similarly meant to obviate the necessity of fingering the type-page? Again: the glass is colorless or at the most only faintly tinged in the bowl, because the connoisseur judges wine partly by its color and is impatient of anything that alters it. There are a thousand mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port in tumblers of red or green glass! When a goblet has a base that looks too small for security, it does not matter how cleverly it is weighted; you feel nervous lest it should tip over. There are ways of setting lines of type which may work well enough, and yet keep the reader subconsciously worried by the fear of “doubling” lines, reading three words as one, and so forth. Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a “modernist” in the sense in which I am going to use that term. That is, the first thing he asked of his particular object was not “How should it look?” but “What must it do?” and to that extent all good typography is modernist. Wine is so strange and potent a thing that it has been used in the central ritual of religion in one place and time, and attacked by a virago with a hatchet in another.

It is sheer magic that I should be able to hold a one-sided conversation by means of black marks on paper with an unknown person half-way across the world. Talking, broadcasting, writing, and printing are all quite literally forms of thought transference, and it is the ability and eagerness to transfer and receive the contents of the mind that is almost alone responsible for human civilization.

If you agree with this, you will agree with my one main idea, i.e. that the most important thing about printing is that it conveys thought, ideas, images, from one mind to other minds. This statement is what you might call the front door of the science of typography. Within lie hundreds of rooms; but unless you start by assuming that printing is meant to convey specific and coherent ideas, it is very easy to find yourself in the wrong house altogether. Before asking what this statement leads to, let us see what it does not necessarily lead to. If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility. A page set in 14-pt Bold Sans is, according to the laboratory tests, more “legible” than one set in 11-pt Baskerville.

the crystal goblet

or Printing Should Be Invisible

Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favorite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in color. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine.

For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.

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We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something. That is why it is mischievous to call any printed piece a work of art, especially fine art: because that would imply that its first purpose was to exist as an expression of beauty for its own sake and for the delectation of the senses.

Calligraphy can almost be considered a fine art nowadays, because its primary economic and educational purpose has been taken away; but printing in English will not qualify as an art until the present English language no longer conveys ideas to future generations, and until printing itself hands its usefulness to some yet unimagined successor.

by *Beatrice Warde*

Par Sophie Duplaix
Conservatrice en chef des collections
contemporaines, Musée national d'art
moderne, Centre Pompidou

EXPOSITIONS: CHRISTO ET JEANNE- CLAUDE

Dès
1975,
Christo
et
Jeanne-
Claude
l'idée
d'em
Pont-
Neuf à
Paris
avec
grès.

2020

1er juil. 2020 - 19 oct. 2020 de
11h à 21h
Galerie 2 - Centre Pompidou.

C'est à 23 ans que Christo (Christo Vladimirov Javacheff) et Jeanne-Claude (Jeanne-Claude Marie Denat), nés tous deux le 13 juin 1935, respectivement à Gabrovo (**Bulgarie**) et à Casablanca (Maroc), se rencontrent à Paris. Christo a fui la Bulgarie communiste en passant par Prague, Vienne, puis Genève, pour s'établir à Paris en mars 1958. De sa formation à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Sofia, il retient une maîtrise des disciplines classiques, mais ne cesse de vouloir dépasser la peinture de chevalet. Les années parisiennes de Christo sont celles de la mise en place de son langage artistique : le travail en relief des surfaces, l'empilement, l'emballage, le début des vitrines occultées, et, en collaboration avec **Jeanne-Claude**, le développement des projets monumentaux en extérieur - qui caractérisent la démarche créative des deux artistes.

La première partie de l'exposition présente les créations des années **1958 à 1964**, date à laquelle les artistes s'installent définitivement à New York ; la deuxième partie retrace toutes les étapes du projet parisien The Pont-Neuf Wrapped (Le Pont-Neuf emballé), mené de 1975 à 1985. Au milieu du parcours, le film des frères Maysles Christo in Paris (1990) rend compte de l'élaboration de ce projet urbain tout en évoquant la biographie de ce couple exceptionnel, dont le travail commun a fait naître des œuvres parmi les plus spectaculaires de l'histoire des **20^e et 21^e** siècles.

À son arrivée à Paris, Christo réalise des portraits à l'huile sur toile de familles de la haute société, afin de gagner sa vie. Parallèlement à ces travaux.

Ces œuvres constituent l'une des propositions de Christo en réponse aux recherches picturales parisiennes de l'époque. Mais c'est surtout le travail matiériste de Jean Dubuffet qui impulse une série méconnue et présentée ici pour la première fois, les Cratères. Le vocabulaire de l'artiste s'étend bientôt aux barils, dont il réalise des empilements, sous forme de colonnes ou d'accumulations. À l'automne 1961, en réaction à l'érection récente du Mur de Berlin, il imagine de barrer la rue Visconti à Paris avec des barils, projet qu'il fait aboutir avec la complicité de Jeanne-Claude le soir du **27 juin 1962**, avant qu'il ne soit sommé par la police de démanteler son édifice. Dès 1961, Christo avait envisagé d'emballer un bâtiment public parisien. **Et en 1962**, il forme le vœu d'emballer l'Arc de Triomphe, projet qui verra le jour en 2021.

L'exposition majeure consacrée à Christo et Jeanne-Claude retrace l'histoire de ce projet, 1975-1985

Et revient sur leur période parisienne, entre 1958 et 1964,

Avant l'emballage de l'arc de triomphe prévu en 2021.

Ses quarante-quatre lampadaires, ainsi que les parois verticales du terre-plein de la pointe occidentale de l'île de la Cité et l'esplanade du Vert-Galant.

Fin 1962, Christo participe à l'exposition «New Realists» à la galerie Sidney Janis de New York.

Parmi les artistes dont la démarche relève du «ready-made».

Commissaire de l'exposition