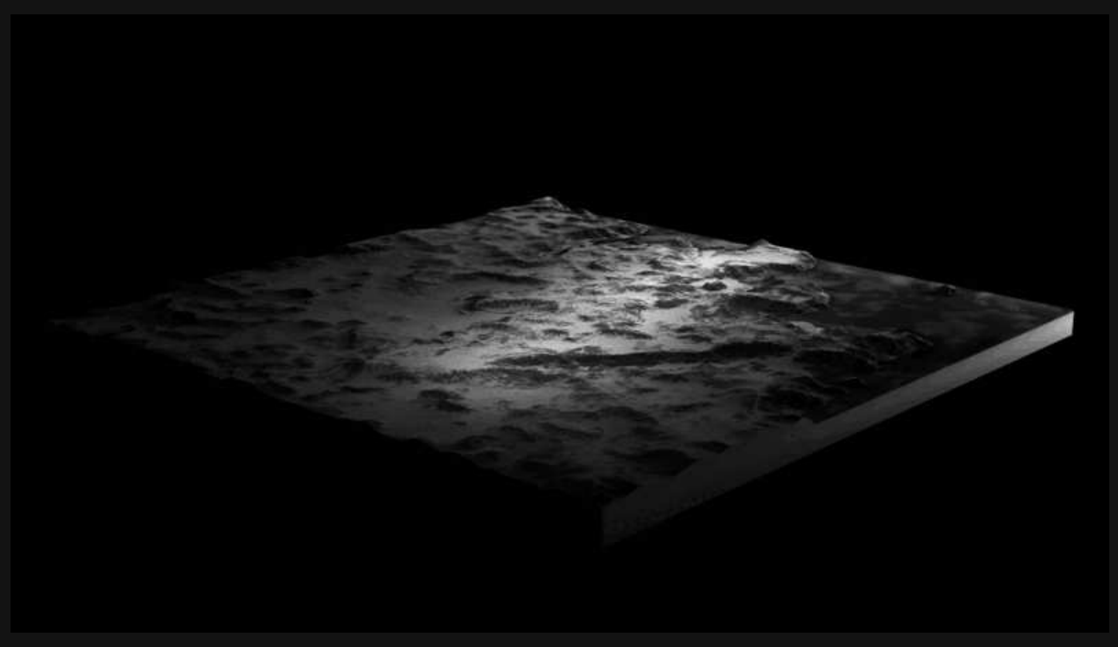
Graphic Design Retreat

Gilbert Again 0x6e31 16 hours ago 1 Collected Mint



your retreat

… and graphic design became an evacuated landscape populated by disparate factions of practitioners. Post-sniffles, all sense of taste lost, these lands were hybrid physical-digital, fractured and irredeemable. The affordable desk space in a communal studio and the grant-funded, theory-oriented MFA programme were comforts of the past. Work from the roadside and collaborative in-browser software-as-a-service were the prevailing conditions. Imperial tools monitored by you-know-who. All assets shared by default.

… some practitioners wandered familiar paths, hopeless and withdrawn. Others strode out, defiant, for new territories. All those who endured were animated by libidinal desire. They sought folders. Enclosures of digital files. *Content*. Dot DOCs, dot JPGs, dot EPSs, and dot MOVs. Not to consume, but to coddle. Content to relieve of its unformatted nakedness. To give believable form. Credibility. Cultural resonance. The old way.

… a terrible rumour had begun circulating among the factions. It was said that the sniffles had finally rendered graphic design's legacy techniques of Sincerity and Authenticity incompatible with content. FUD took hold. Talk of total exodus. Many admitted defeat and simply wandered into imperial checkpoints. Those who remained required strong stomachs and selective sight.

… of course a Neomodernist faction endured, their historic DIN territory emptied out but never — never! — abandoned. They defended their inheritance vigilantly. For generations they had unquestioningly identified with the cause. Their faith nourished by an incoherent, anachronistic fantasy in which the ultimate artefact of Modernist graphic design might still be created amidst these ruins, by the miracle of 2020s digital technologies whose precision the Forefathers had only dreamed of. Naturally, this ultimate artefact was to be a Book/Buch/Livre. Its colour photographs dynamically cropped, asymmetrically positioned and automatically profiled. Its narrow columns of text faultlessly ragged with custom GREP and unflinching dedication. As they worked, the Neomodernists silently mouthed their typographic credo: *Short line, long line*. *Short line, long line*. They chanted it with feeling as they made their nightly border patrols at the outer margins of their territory. *Short line, long line!* As they gazed upon the sacred posters in The Archive, they hummed it with dutiful reverence.



a forefather

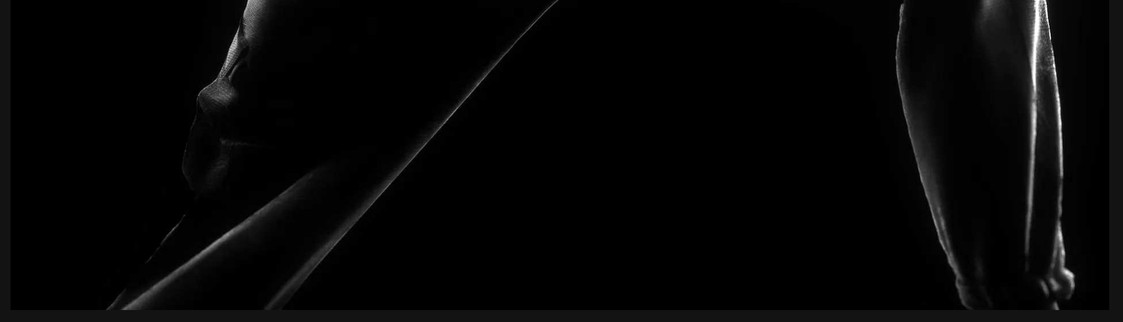
… the Forefathers had been treacherously undermined by the indiscipline of typesetters, printers and bookbinders. Well, DTP wiped out the typesetters long before the sniffles came. Paranoid Neomodernists plotted their circumvention of the remaining threats. They worked offline in an obsolete CS6 environment to avoid cloud detection. They destroyed all print-outs as soon as corrections had been taken in. When their work was finally complete, they planned to save their encrypted PDF to a USB drive, purge all backups, and await a signal from the Forefathers. Yes, they had always known that it would come to violence. But —

Short line: *“The ends”*.
Long line: *“Justified the means”*.

… once they took control of the factory, the specifications would be uncompromising. Book/Buch/Livre was to be printed with precision H-UV LED offset on high-bulk, spray-coated fibrous wood-free paper and bound with cold glue in an unlicensed Otabind® derivative style. It promised to be a glorious, timeless, exalted object. And yet, despite all the safeguards, and the metaphorical lateness of the hour, belief in this mythic artefact was undeniably shaken.

… beyond the outposts of Neomodernism, the Drawslave faction had gone giddy with a sudden apocalyptic energy. Rarely venturing out of their bunkers, they grafted for long hours to perfect their unique, Authentic, proprietary and ultracomplex graphic languages, self-consciously conceived at once to defy Neomodernist codes of restraint and to outrun the transformers. It should demand an exhausting amount of graphic labour! It should be at once hyper-realist and fantastically illusory! The photographic and the synthetic completely indistinguishable! Layered with inscrutable micro-cultural references! These virtuoso graphic labourers displayed their feats of excessive digital craft as intimidatory territorial markers. Theirs was no dumb craftsmanship of the hand. It was a heady blend of convoluted 3D-rendering protocols, elaborate custom typefaces, and logos for fictional crypto-corporations. With every night of lost sleep, staring intently at their laptops, the Drawslaves grew more convinced that they were players in a high resolution existential arms race in which ultimate self-actualisation was at stake. They grafted for the chance to become inimitable. Each new dawn they typed their own names into Midjourney and held their breath.





a drawslave

… an unlikely bond existed between the Neomodernists and the Drawslaves. Naturally, the Neomodernists could not abide the decorative. However, in certain exceptional circumstances, they found themselves willing to indulge in excessive and apparently futile graphic labour. A subgenre of Neomodernist Niggli fan fiction told of the existence of an archival box, possibly destroyed, possibly preserved in a safe beneath the mountainous region formerly known as the Swiss Alps. It was said to contain drawings for the Inevitable Sans-serif. An incorruptible typeface that would have ensured the fulfilment of the Forefathers vision if only it had not been tragically lost. It could not be located — or even noticed, supposedly — by just anyone. A fraught mission across the most remote territories of the Retreat awaited any would-be revivalist. They must prove a line of direct descendance from the Forefathers, and present an exemplary portfolio to numerous Gatekeepers along the way in order to secure passage. The Neomodernists had pledged — if the drawings were ever found by this as-yet-unidentified protagonist — to digitise the typeface so painstakingly and master it so definitively that even the Drawslaves would have begrudgingly acknowledged that the immense labour required made this a formidable asset.

This text is set of the autonomous world Graphic Design Retreat, a web3 project for graphic design history. The first publication of this project, the video WHAT THE GRAPHIC DESIGNERS WORE, is now live at dis.art, as part of my series I HATED GRAPHIC DESIGN.

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