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Typography and branding: creating ideas and image

Industry Committee Event

Freeman David Morgan reports that 170 people attended this open hour-long event.

Type is so ubiquitous that it is frequently forgotten that someone, somewhere, consciously has to design each typeface and ensure that it is 'fit for purpose'. The right words, in the right style of type and the right colour can even help change someone's opinion. With this in mind Freeman Benedict Richards organised a Stationers' Company Zoom talk with three different type designers on the subject of Typography and Branding and asked them to share their experiences of type creation, choice and use.

Luisa Baeta a designer specialising in typography and branding, speaking from Brooklyn, gave an example of custom typefaces working on small and large scales. Whilst working at type designers Dalton Maag Louisa helped create the global Nokia Pure type family, a typeface needing to have the same style and feel in both Latin and in non-Latin scripts such as Greek, Cyrillic, Thai and Devanagari and which also needed to remain legible at many different sizes. She also expanded on the thinking behind Lush Cosmetics' branding, Burger King's new 'Flame' typeface, and one of her smaller client identities, the New York restaurant Frenchette.

Freeman Richard Chapman gave a more personal story of technological change in parallel with his working life. The changes stretched from the original ten global web fonts (Arial & Co), hampered by early computers and dial up modems, through to today's universally functioning custom fonts that the Web Open Font Format allows to be hosted on the websites themselves. The Web has caught up with most aspects of graphic design – but Richard did wonder whether the restrictions of the 'good old days' might actually have made one more creative.

David Livingston of Buttercross Creative then talked about typography and branding in the transport sector and the differences between placemaking (context, history and

community), wayfinding (pictograms, typography, maps etc) and signing (information, direction, identification, regulatory) as opposed to simple brand recognition through typography. He ran through the many challenges facing a font family in the field of transport wayfinding where it can need to function just centimetres away or as far away as 20 metres. David bemoaned the demise of a national type style for British Rail following privatisation but lauded the functionality of one of the world's most iconic typefaces: introduced in 1916, adjusted since for changing technologies, the typeface works system wide, is on brand and one of the world's longest-lasting examples of corporate branding. London Underground's Johnston Sans!

There were lots of lively comments, and questions, in fact too many to do justice to, but a short Q&A session followed David's presentation. At the mention of Comic Sans, Benedict Richards felt the need to draw proceedings to a close.

References

luisabaeta.com

richardpchapman.com

buttercrosscreative.com