

MOTION MEDIA DESIGN MANIFESTO

The proper implementation of motion media design delivers more assimilable information than practically any other method. The careful consideration of shape, color, motion, layout, fonts, as well as sound, music, and voice are critical factors in the efficiency and efficacy of a motion media project. The central tenant of motion media design is to break down a tortuously convoluted concept into irreducible chunks that can be visually consumed and understood with little or no effort.

Motion media projects should strive to be entertaining or attention-grabbing, but it is not entertainment. Nor is motion media design art. Artists can create it, it can contain the same level of creativity as a painting or sculpture, but it is a horse of a different color. Motion media is a language, a form of communication utilizing visual and auditory information. Its vocabulary consists of elements taken from visual language, visual rhetoric, musical compositions, sound effects, kinetic typography, and voice-over.

In the pursuit of excellence, the motion media designer must become proficient with the tools of the trade. One would not expect to pick up a musical instrument for the first time and immediately begin playing like a virtuoso. Software is the instrument of motion media, and as

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such, it requires us to put in daily practice time so we may reach a state where the software fades to the background, and we are free to focus on our creation.

Studies have shown that clean and simple graphic elements in a motion media project make them significantly more cognitively efficient.¹ Furthermore, an MIT study has shown that the brain can identify images in as little as 13 milliseconds.² Therefore, during the process of developing a motion media project, the focus should be on maintaining clean and simple graphic elements wherever possible. Focus on a limited color palette, simplistic designs, smooth surfaces, and less detail overall. The overall color scheme generally will be dictated by the client, however, if it is not, spend time considering the overall message being conveyed and choose a simple color scheme that helps in setting an appropriate mood for the piece.

Do not reinvent the wheel. In the pursuit of simplicity, do not ignore the existing visual literacy of the public. Although there can be cultural and societal differences, for this paper, we will speak in more general terms. For example, if you were to see a red circle with a slash through the middle over an image of a cigarette, you would understand it to mean "no smoking." A sign with a simplistic knife and fork would be interpreted as "restaurant." There are hundreds, if not thousands, of symbols and icons that exist in the collective visual literacy of the public.

¹ UMBCTube, *Visual Language for Designers*.

² "Art Manifestos and Their Applications in Contemporary Design."

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Taking time to create a different representation is not only wasteful, but it could also prove to confuse the audience ultimately. Use what works.

If a project requires text, the choice of font is another area that requires close attention to detail. Know the difference between a display font and a text font. Avoid using multiple fonts in a single project unless there is a clearly defined reason. Limit the amount of text on screen wherever possible. The audience should be shown the information, rather than asking them to read it on-screen.

Around 40-50% of your focus should be aimed towards audio, music, sound effects, and, if needed, voice-over. Music affects the heart rate and mood of the viewer. "Fast music, whether classical or techno, caused increases in blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate, and reduced baroreflex sensitivity."³ The dramatic impact of sound cannot be stressed enough. Without a soundtrack, a motion media project is only half-finished.

Voice-over is an area that requires careful consideration. A professional writer who only has written for magazines, newspapers, and so on, can create an extremely well-written script that falls flat when read-out-loud. Writing for print and writing for voice are completely different

³ Bernardi, "Luciano Bernardi, MD, a Cardiologist From Italy, Believes That Music Can Have a Beneficial Effect on the Cardiovascular System."

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and require a completely different approach. If you must use a voice-over talent, use a professional scriptwriter with experience writing narration.

As a project is being assembled, always consider the path, a viewer's eyes will take as they watch the project. We are naturally drawn to high contrast areas on a screen, as well as movement. Additionally, if there is a character, whether drawn, a photograph, or video, the natural tendency of humans is to focus on the eyes. Forcing the viewer to shift their focus from one side of the screen to another will become tedious quickly. Instead, consider the position of the viewer's focus when you transition from one scene to the next. Maintain a sense of connectedness by keeping key elements relatively close together as you transition to the next scene.

In every phase of production, be conscious of the message contained within. Every piece of this puzzle should exist to forward your agenda in the most efficient way possible. If you are unable to demonstrate an apparent reason for something to exist, it should not. The project momentum must always be moving away from the complex and toward the simple. You are taking brackish water, filtering out the sediments, bacteria, and chemicals, leaving something that is crystal clear and pure.