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## Development and pathology of Graphic Design in Iran

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**Abstract:** *Graphic Design is an aggregative art and has a huge function in its international field. But, in Iran there isn't any correct understanding of that because the different branches of this amazing art has not separately been defined and utilized to make the people see and receive its effect in their life environments. The graphic designer has to be like a working machine and does work in all of the branches alone to propound the functions in society. Although the designer knows all of these branches, such as designing a logo, they are not supposed to be included in her work experience, because each of those requires academic professional experience. On the other hand, the communications has taken a special new form these days and although the Iranian designers haven't still reached such technical development in the framework of graphic design profession, they have to follow the global direction and use digital technology but, the presence of digital technology has forced them to almost quit working with the previous tools and equip themselves to this new one, because the mentioned presence has been put into work before creating a suitable ground of acceptance for it. This occurrence has made the situation worse. Old hand designers have lost their jobs and even though just a few of them could have learnt skills in this regard, the power of computer is completely at the hands of young generation. According to my research, some solutions can be offered for this problem.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Environment, Graphic Design, Iran.*

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## **Introduction**

The word 'Graphic' is derived from a Greek word 'Graph' which means to write or to paint and because that writing or painting had an effect of the color of brush on the paper or on the white surface and created a contrast, it was known to be capable of a design activity. Later, the meaning of that Greek word changed to some other subjects like display and showing the opposed quality of ground, a ground or a thing on which the title was brought up (text), either in the form of a picture or a written text. For this reason, we may be able to say that the Calligraphy or in some cases, the writing has totally the quality of being understood as part of the Graphic design. Although they are different branches, they have the same design manner or influence for exhibiting their icon. It is generally believed that all of these should be in the Graphic design family because they have a function similar to the design works. However, other people emphasize that the discussions about every subject must be set separated from together which in fact is the action of Historiography or the theoretical aspect of story. There was no example of the icon like European countries in Iran. Instead, they knew the technique of decorating the books which was indirectly divided into three parts. One was the inscription which was done by a Calligrapher. The second part which was named as 'Miniature' included two sections: Illumination and Hair-pin Ornamentation that together created the art of Border-decorating. Finally, the last part was Illustration which always got done by painters. The important subject here is about the technical aspects of the work for demarcating which in fact, was Tabulation and that specifically was in the profession of special people. In this process, no one corporated to do the job with the title of 'Graphic designer' regarding today's understanding ,but all the professionals of art did these jobs as minor works besides the other important ones. Of course, we, in the 21th century, do not still have the individuals with that high technical accuracy in our land.

## *Literature Review*

In a study done by Morteza Momayez who was known as the Father of Iranian Graphic design, it was discussed how Graphic design emerged in Iran and in the peoples' life.<sup>1</sup> He has mentioned that the wall writings were the first forms of design works which were done by the usual people. After these, the works created by a painter or a designer and hung on the walls, were the pictures whose contexts consisted of the prisoners' faces that were killed by the last regime in Iran, the leader of the groups and parties, national champions and the portrait of Emam Khomeini. These were the first art works which the Graphic designers generated based on the design elements and had somehow the quality of a real design piece. In addition, he added that with his attempts, he could establish the Graphic design field in the Faculty of Fine arts in Tehran University to teach the students and to hold exhibitions and biennials in the country and more importantly, to propound this art and it's functions in society. But, with the presence of computer everything became almost out of control and never let the real Graphic works be produced in Iran and the talents came into view. Old skillful designers lost their jobs because they did not have any familiarity with this new strange equipment and the modern Graphic design were and still are in the control of some young and completely amateur people who create very bad and awful art pieces based on no elements.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, the communications has taken a special new form and in the countries where people work with the computer and digital world, the connection will be

disabled and the dialogue between you and the other person cannot be established if you do not use computer. You have to get in the line. Although the Iranian designers have not still reached such technical development in the framework of Graphic design profession, they have to follow the global direction and use digital technology but, the presence of digital technology has forced them to almost quit working with the previous tools and equip themselves to this new one, because the mentioned presence has been put into work before creating a suitable ground of acceptance for it. This issue is not merely limited to Iran. For example, in America, when working with computer was provoked, after a short period of time, many of the American Graphic designers lost their jobs. They had to follow the new technology, i.e. the computer or they had to give up the design work totally. Already, this problem in Iran has been so hard and pitiful that it is out of imagination. This occurrence has made the situation really intolerable. Old hand designers have lost their jobs and even though just a few of them could have learnt skills in this regard and become unique in the design field, the power of computer is completely at the hands of young generation. Unfortunately, my country has not still reached such academic, technical and professional development and most of the works are done just by one person. To do the jobs, the correct way is what we see today in modern societies as every body works best in a defined framework. When you do your job correctly and perfectly, you will get a good and enough experience but swimming upstream is likely to cause bad results. It is the same as you go to visit a general practitioner and ask her to prescribe medicine for your eyes, ears, nose, nerves or your bones and brain. Naturally, this practitioner will not be a skillful one and in this harmful situation there would be no proficient in our society.

In fact, there is no specific history of Graphic design in its exact meaning in Iran and by following the documents and symbols; we are able to set the past drawings in a selection called 'Graphic design' because they merely had a pictorial function. As this subject was not propounded in other countries like the present time, no one actually knew anything about the art or Graphic design in this country. Overseas, a black and white drawing was considered a design work even though it was just a drawing. Already, there has been made no special attempt to define, analyze and regularize a history for the Iranian Graphic design. However, there are documents by which an atmosphere or a ground can be generated for paving the way to accept today's world Graphic design inside the country and with the presence of our own mental scheme. On the other hand, in the prehistory period (before Medes), we had pictorial signs and symbols which have a modern implication even though they come from the past.<sup>3</sup> During that time, the reason the painters did Illustration for the books was that they were following the primary basis of the painting and this was done in the field of Illustration, too. Therefore, such art pieces are the illustrative and pictorial reflections of our literature. This is what can be called 'The Old Graphic Design'. But, the contemporary Graphic design is completely involved with the printing industry and this industry is a technological method which turns all the original symbols and hand-made patterns into a technical quality for the purpose of printing. Graphic means the art which actually is reproduced in different forms and ways and this definition can not include all the concepts of Graphic design because the meanings of this amazingly huge art are changing permanently. New frameworks such as Visual design and Visual art have come into existence of which Graphic design has been as part of them and these frameworks have become so widespread that many of their old meanings are still changing especially after the development of digital technology. These days, Graphic design does not have a particular meaning anymore. There is a Graphic designer who is

one of the members of a group that are involved with the visual productions. Perhaps there is no single and self-limited art even in poetry or in writing or they are going to be disappeared. Finally, it is not appropriate to recount everything limitedly and put it aside because, by doing so, that would be restricted in an old fabric. If we make a marking-out for something while all the things are moving forward and reaching new borders, we have stood on the way backwards because we know that this issue will change to something else one day. Actually, the mentioned speech is an introduction which can be used to find a hypothetical genealogy of Graphic design in the art of Iran. Today, different methods of printing like the old printing, digital and audio-visual printing are being used by which the text come into better effect and becomes more alternative. This is the general working style of Iranian Graphic design which comes from many decades ago. The history of Iranian Graphic design reveals a secret that they could successfully connect themselves to the global network but, they still lack in some skills. Various specialties have not still made in society and there is no management in the field of Graphic design. Some people are trying to call themselves as 'Art Directors'. Art director is a person who directs and guides the design for a specific purpose and she may not take any practical action. There are new occupations and expertise which are unknown to the community and the most general and unknown one is 'Art Director'. People do not have a clear understanding and the degree of jurisdiction and decision-making for an Art director is vague. Unfortunately, the reason concerns with a set of economic factors.

As a Graphic designer, you have to both work in an office and propound many of the design functions in society, meaning that you have to do Illustration which is a distinct specialty, do Lay-out that is a completely different issue and also design Book cover, Typography and the Fonts. These days, with the help of digital technology all of the mentioned expertise is not in the skill of one Graphic designer. Of course, the design individual is familiar with all of them but because of technical expanding and development like many other careers, each of those requires academic knowledge. For example, in Justice Administration, the job is usually divided between a lawyer, a judge and a justice and these three branches have also different categories. For example, the lawyer branch consists of criminal issues lawyer, legal issues lawyer, court-appointed lawyer and many dissimilar titles. This can be found in any other occupation in community. For instance, in the profession of perfumery first stands someone with the specialty of perfumes, then someone expert in spices and maybe a person who is professional in groceries. The basic problem in the area of Graphic design is that the issue 'Design' is not correctly understood for us. This is perfectly done in western countries and they have such a great domination on the design especially on Typography and Letter design. The design matter, as it should, does not have a meaning in the community and we do design works mostly in the field of Illustration. One of the reasons is from the past times, painters who were the forerunners in the field of art, started the work via Illustrating and after that, they were used as a help for Lithography or Linear printing. Nowadays, the very Illustration has unluckily more importance than design.

In the country's contemporary Graphic design, the function of design is very weak because the dimensions of this prominent subject are unknown in public and in the professional gatherings and for the lack of academic teacher, it is not completely set forth for discussion in colleges and universities. Also, if the design was propagated by the artworks, that could not have attracted the designers' opinions perfectly. When the word 'Design' is used, it does not mean the kind of work which is created for painting.

Design means an applied work, one that has technical and useful function by which the Graphic designers can get into action and put the functions forward in community. For this reason, we, in the field of Typography for instance, act just like a follower, meaning that the works which are designed in the world, provide an idea or an inspiration for us which in fact, makes us take our designs into that universal frame and therefore, makes us heedless of what there is in our history of Calligraphy and the works done in that art. There are several types of scripts in Iran's Calligraphy which show the functional necessity for writing.<sup>4</sup> For example, in Kufic script there are different parts such as Western Kufic and Angular Kufic and because they had particular usages and caused many occasions, they were produced for the general needs in writing and eventually, they were designed and recorded and came down to us by inheritance. Actually, the absence of having a thorough and clear knowledge of design never allowed us to be active in Typography and many similar fields, as we should.

#### COMPENSATING THE DEFICIENCY

First of all, the Design subject must become clearly and thoroughly understood for us until we could have such great domination on it. We must perceive the design, the commission, and the purpose of design and they are the important factors which require more specific and detailed attention. One fast and effective way of reaching the mentioned goal is to get use of TV and in charming way, start showing about Graphic design, where it has come from, why it is used and what's the function of this universal art so that the people in various levels of community can see and know about it and they will understand that what ever they are facing with in daily activities, is directly or indirectly connected to the Design issue. The reason is the media especially the TV play a crucial role in the Iran's society and more than 85 percent of people watch TV during 24 hours a day so that it can be used as the best way to propagate the arts, specifically the Graphic design. Also, to reflect the correct design and to call the attention and the eyes for conveying the message, Graphic designers are expected to follow the design principles, because by not following the basics, design would be meaningless and can not be included any messages to transfer to viewers. This profession is a very young career and the persons working in this field are very young too. Therefore, they are required to work experimentally and experientially as much as they can and have a good study to get the great results because without having such deep and intense studies in this field of art, success seems almost unreachable. Secondly, the grounds of acceptance for the design works must absolutely be generated in the public so that the Designers would be able to play their roles effectively and would have the chance of living, working and becoming unique persons in society because for working, they absolutely need to have ultimate source of energy and the most possible way to gurarantee that for the group of Designers is the time when they could see that their created pieces have been appreciated and praised by their communities. In addition, it is urgent to control the degree of using the computer in the process of design and utilize it in correct way and there must be established Institutes or companies to do supervising on the degree of this uasge professionally and effectvally. Also, it is essential that the cultural trades become propagated like the economical exchanges and let the designers get in the process. Thirdly, the equipment and the tools must be provided from the viewpoints of individual, investing and applied to help designers express their ideas and the arts in the public and call the eyes for transmitting the message, for developing the Design without having the required tools available is completely impossible. Also, teaching design students requires a huge demand for

training along with the training atmosphere and therefore, we have to equip ourselves to academic and high level teachers and universities. Finally, people should regard the designers as the group of people who have artistic and creative characteristics and always let the design works originate by them.

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## Notes

1. Omid Ghanbari, *GRAPHIC instinct, the last dialogue with M.MOMAYEZ* (Tehran, Iran: Ana, 2006), 45.
2. Omid Ghanbari, *GRAPHIC instinct, the last dialogue with M.MOMAYEZ* (Tehran, Iran: Ana, 2006), 50.
3. Omid Ghanbari, *GRAPHIC instinct, the last dialogue with M.MOMAYEZ* (Tehran, Iran: Ana, 2006), 67.
4. Hussain Chan Anni, *TALKS of experience, with M.MOMAYEZ* (Tehran, Iran: Deed, 2003), 205.

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