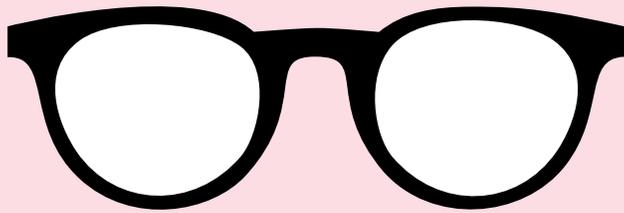


LOOKS

are everything



Design through the eyes of Carin Goldberg

Goldberg was born in New York in 1953, the daughter of a nature-loving clothier father and a housewife with a lively aesthetic streak. Her father, the rare Brooklyn Jew to graduate from Penn State University with a degree in forestry, entered his father's business selling evening gowns. In the early 1960s, not long after he moved the family from the well-heeled suburb of Glen Cove, Long Island, to Strathmore-at-Matawan, a New Jersey housing development built by William Levitt of Levittown fame, the business unfortunately went bankrupt, as corsages gave way to the times of flower power.

She enrolled at the Cooper University to study painting and graduated in 1975 with two invaluable resources for a prospering design career. One of them was Marilyn Hoffner, the school's director of alumni relations. Hoffner urged Goldberg to call Cooper alumnus Lou Dorfsman at CBS, though Carin had nothing remotely approaching a design portfolio. Dorfsman had been sketching logos for the Museum of Broadcasting and told Goldberg to "work them up." "I didn't know what he meant," she recalls.

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Clearly visible

Goldberg is as good of a performer as any, but she would rather bundle up her extroverted energies and invest them into her own creations. "The only work I ever wanted to do is visible work," she says. "Record covers, book jackets, magazines, because a record store or a magazine stand is like having a gallery space." Since 1983, Goldberg's most comfortable stage has been the classroom; she's taught graphic design at the School of Visual Arts to thousands of aspiring professionals. Women's lib notwithstanding, her female students are hardly beyond struggle, as she points out. The severe sexism of CBS's record department in the late 1970s, when drug-fueled hedonism was confused with liberation, has finally been muffled. But the majority of women still must work punishing hours to be first-rate professionals, spouses, parents and family-members.

*Poster for the novel
"Orwell", displays living
in a surveillance state.
Created for The New York
Times Magazine, 2007.*

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I try to bring an artful touch to all of my work, but I am very aware of the criteria and responsibility I have to the client as well as to the reader or viewer. But I always see everything I do as an opportunity to educate, illuminate and elevate the reader and the client visually. I try to be responsible to the subject while contributing a completely new or illuminating perspective. I remember being in college and having instructors who designed record covers for the big labels in Los Angeles. It seemed that they were all living in stylish houses previously owned by television stars and working with unlimited budgets to do things like making a cover out of fake fur. You were working at CBS Records around the same time. Did you buy a huge apartment from Linda Evans or make covers with ostrich feathers like others?

Not even close! I will say, though, that as a staff designer at CBS at the age of twenty-seven, I made more money than I ever dreamed I would make, twenty-seven thousand Dollars, and I had an expense account. I lived in a tiny studio in the West Village that cost threehundred-fifty Dollars a month. That was considered a lot then. And I did buy expensive shoes on occasion. The budgets at CBS were really big at that time, but, as I said earlier, we often rejected the opportunity to have obscenely expensive photo shoots and opted to do more hands-on, formal solutions whenever we could. Fortunately, we had the option most of the time. No fake fur though. We left that up to Tommy Steele.

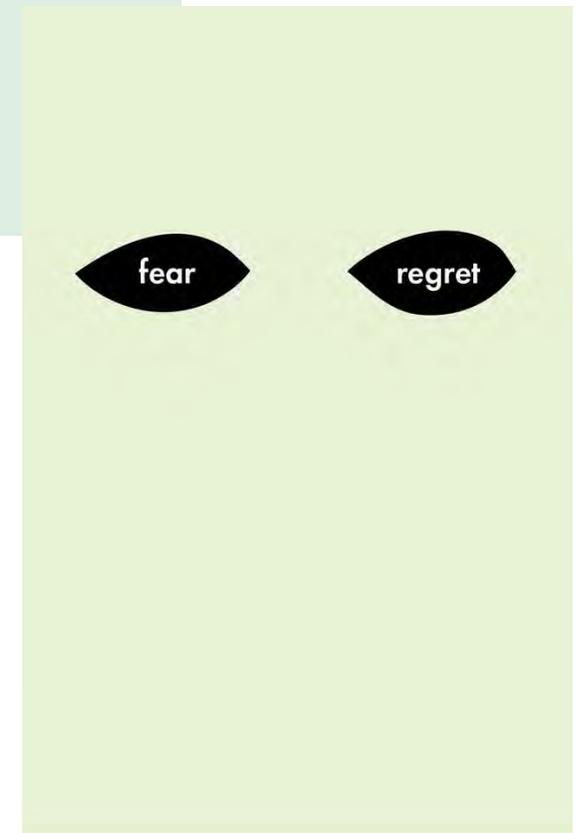
I started in the CBS music division as an art director. At the time the creative director was Myron Pollenberg. He was a force and a visionary. Although fairly young and inexperienced, luckily I was hired and given the opportunity to collaborate with smart writers and art direct some great images for music ads. I was given the budgets and the freedom to do almost anything I wanted to do and worked with my heroes like Duane Michaels and Art Kane. This experience enabled me to segue into the package department, with a year stint in between at Atlantic Records, where I worked particularly for Paula and Henrietta and John Berg.

Thousands of misconceived designer business cards have entered the world this way, and more than a few designer monographs. But freedom in the right hands can yield treasures. I think what made these references compelling and exciting was that it worked so well.

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Poster Series "Fear and Regret", on the topic of climate change, 2009.



Poster "The Eyes of Fear and Regret", 2009.

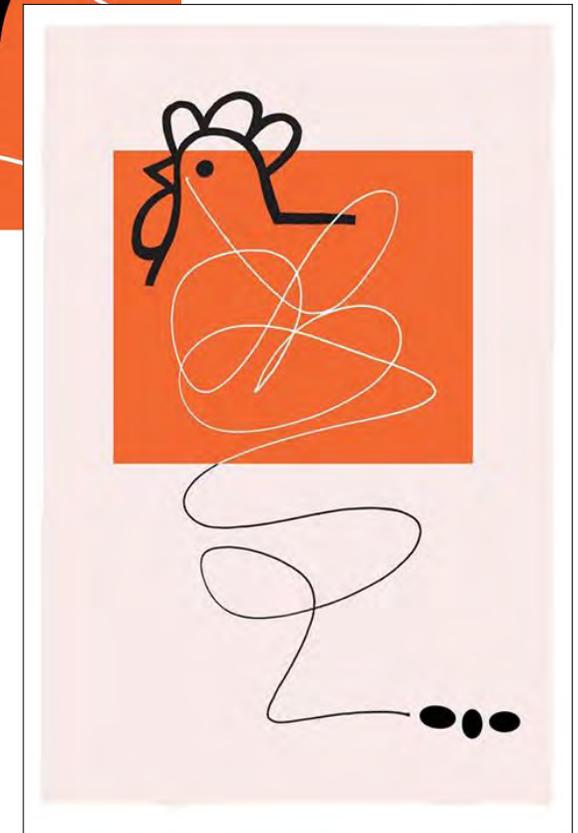
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In many
ways
design
is like
collage.

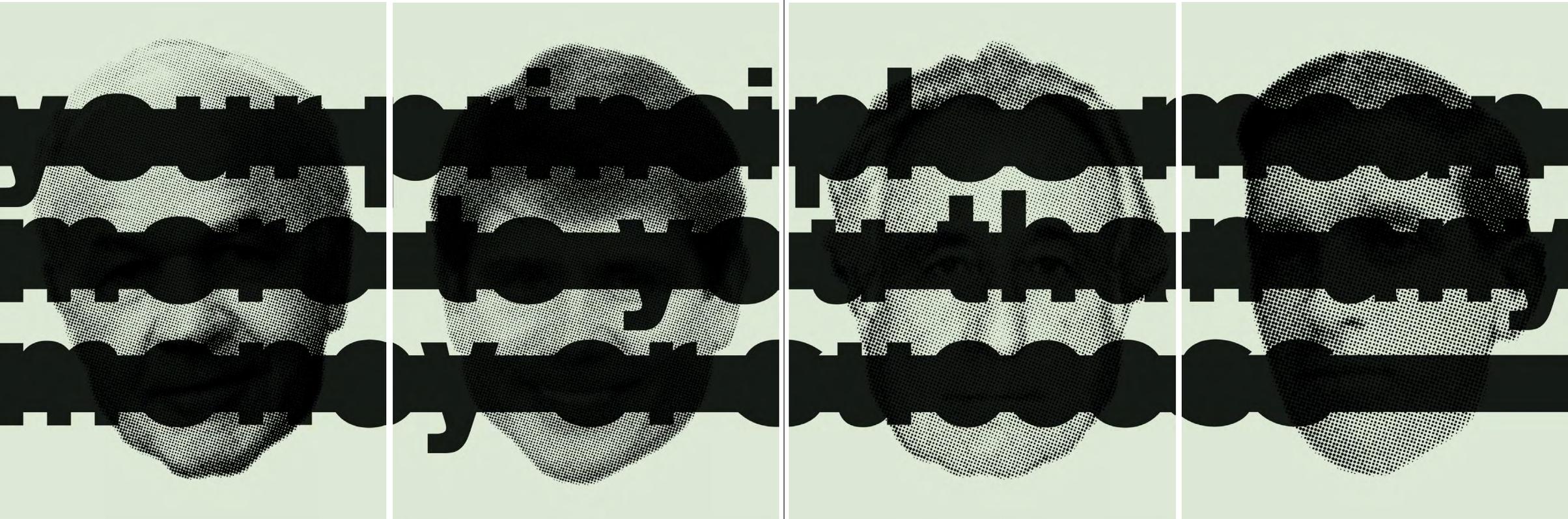
I had been working at CBS Records with Paula Scher, Henrietta Condak and Gene Greif in the late seventies. I had come from CBS Television under the tutelage of Lou Dorfsman shortly before that, where it was all about corporate identity and highly finessed typography. Lou was a fanatic about detail, lucky for me. I learned the craft of design from Lou and his designers. CBS Records was like a mini atelier/ art school and we were all searching for new ways to make imagery. I would say that Henrietta was the first there to introduce historical vernacular in her gorgeous covers for the CBS Masterworks Series. We were also blessed with an amazing library of new and vintage art and design books and had access to magazines like vintage Gebrauchs-Grafik, Life and Fortune. We were looking at Cassandre, Herbert Bayer, Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism and De Stijl for inspiration. Push Pin was a huge influence on all of us. We were educating each other daily. All that stuff totally thrilled us. And I think what made these references compelling and exciting was that it worked so well in the context of record packaging at the time. In answer to your "synthesis" question: If you work hard at your craft and keep your eyes and ears open to new ideas it is inevitable that a personal style or sensibility will unfold. It's not something that you can force or make happen. I studied fine art at Cooper Union and thought I would be a painter. I approach my work as a series of experiments, don't tell that to my clients, that inform each other along the way. Maybe that's why the personal finds its way into the work. I did not study only formal design at Cooper. I learned on the job. In those days my mentors were also my teachers. It was all about context and form. These influences inspired our own desire to do more formal work as opposed to just being art directors and smacking tasteful type on a gorgeous photograph by Avedon or Reid Miles or Norman Sieff. We were bored with that and wanted to do something different. We wanted to actually make stuff, paint, cut, paste and play. Unknowingly, we were right in the thick of the beginning of what only a few years later was labeled "postmodernism." Who knew? Our experience had a life of its own. We were not trying to be academic or pointed. We wanted to have fun and make stuff. Unfortunately, we are now stuck with the label of postmodernists or worse, "pillagers."



Poster "Tête...Orteil",
reinterpretation of
punctuation marks, 2004.



Poster "Chicken...Eggs"
by Carin Goldberg, 2004.



*"Your Principles are more important
to you than any Money or Success", 2011.
Set of four posters, conveying a fortune
cookies saying provided by the client.*

1 2

1 3

Bold but gold

Hoffner urged Goldberg to call the Cooper alumnus Lou Dorfsman at CBS, though Carin had nothing remotely approaching a design portfolio. Dorfsman had been sketching logos for the Museum of Broadcasting and told Goldberg to “work them up.” “I didn’t know what he meant,” she recalls. She was left to work at a desk on a nearly empty office floor where, “by a stroke of luck,” a freelance hand-letterer with “hands of gold” showed her how to draw ligatures, use a stat machine and master the ruling pen. Goldberg worked day and night for more than a week and ended with a stack of logotypes of every conceivable configuration. When she presented them to Dorfsman, he grunted his approval and led her to the bustling art department to begin her job as a junior designer. “It was like entering Grand Central Station after being holed up in bunker,” she says. “I passed the test and was escorted to Oz.”

*60th Birthday poster
for swiss graphic designer
Niklaus Troxler, 2007.*

It was like entering Grand Central Station after being holed up in bunker.

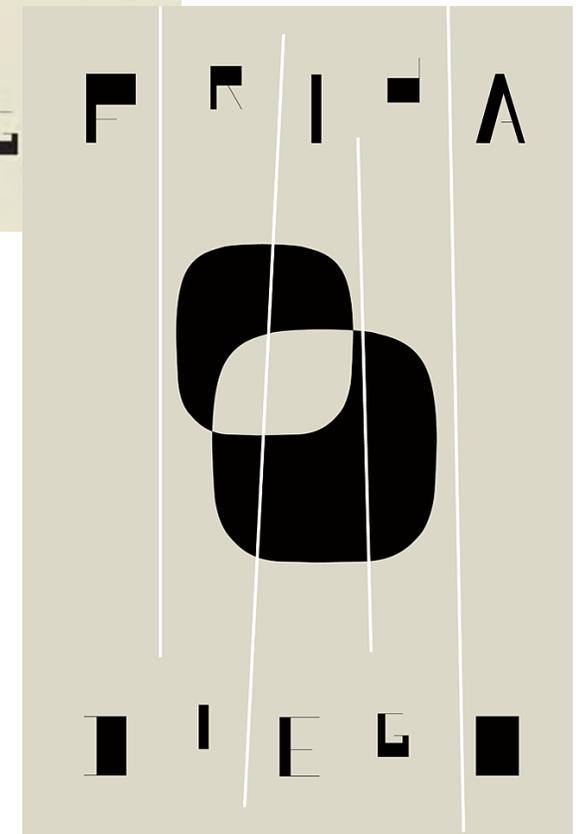
Ulysses placed Goldberg firmly in the 1980s culture wars, at least those being fought over appropriation. In his 1989 essay "The Women Who Saved New York!" Philip Meggs praised the foursome of Goldberg, Paula Scher, Louise Fili and Lorraine Louie for enlivening contemporary design with neglected historical styles, going so far as to credit them with "saving" New York from being overshadowed by burgeoning design movements in Dallas, Minneapolis and San Francisco. At the same time, Goldberg was vilified for senselessly pilfering the past. Tibor Kalman, in "Good History/Bad History," a 1991 Print magazine essay co-written with J. Abbott Miller and Karrie Jacobs, charged Goldberg with practicing "jive modernism." Fourteen years later, no less than John Updike weighed in on the fracas in a New Yorker magazine review of *By Its Cover: Modern American Book Cover Design*, which presented Goldberg's *Ulysses* design along with previous editions. (Updike found Goldberg's typography "bold and festive.") She opened her own studio in 1982 and was in business less than a year when she was commissioned by Warner Bros. Records to design the debut album for a young singer called Madonna. She has never stopped fielding questions about it. Even more notorious was her 1986 cover for an edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Instructed by Vintage Books' art director Judith Loeser to pay tribute to E. McKnight Kauffer's 1949 Random House cover of *Ulysses* by emphasizing the "U" in the title, Goldberg took inspiration from a 1928 exhibition poster by the German designer Paul Renner. She set the headline on a diagonal in Renner's Futura Bold and filled the bowl of the "U" in bright yellow.

I was asked to play with a big capital U and to maintain the typographic direction of the previously published *Ulysses* covers. Therefore, style was the only way to approach the thing. I designed several variations, my references came from modernist typographic posters. I try to instill my sense of humor in much of what I do ... if not humor, then at least a particle of hope, humanity or joy. I rationalized that Joyce was a modernist. Was it a total rip off of an original poster? No. It was homage to the poster and to the period. In the same way that Vintage Books was paying homage to Joyce. In the meantime, that cover is considered a classic, for better or for worse. I moved on the day after I handed in the comp. Next!



"Frida and Diego: 100 Years", 2008.

Posters celebrating the 100th anniversary of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.





Embracing femininity

Having been praised by Philip Meggs as one of "The women who saved New York" (along with Paula Scher, Louise Fili and Lorraine Louie) thanks to their enlivening contemporary design with neglected historical styles, Goldberg's work has had a very big impact on contemporary design. Her style being called modernist, postmodernist, post-postmodernist and a multitude of other labels, her work is vibrant and clear.

Goldberg's unwillingness to shrug off such constraints led Meggs to write a postscript to his manuscript for "The Women Who Saved New York!" It began: "After completing my two-hour interview with Carin Goldberg, in connection with this article, I told her I had run out of questions. She looked me squarely in the eye and said, "Don't you have any questions about the fact that this article is about women?" Twenty years later, she remains unmoved by arguments that gender is irrelevant to one's professional identity. "Family and money dictate the life of the woman designer", she says firmly. "And yes, there is very much such a thing as a woman designer. I don't see anything wrong with that. In fact, I embrace it."

*"Superwoman #2",
for the Hong Kong Poster
Museum aims to explore
the social and psychological
aspects of women, 2002.*

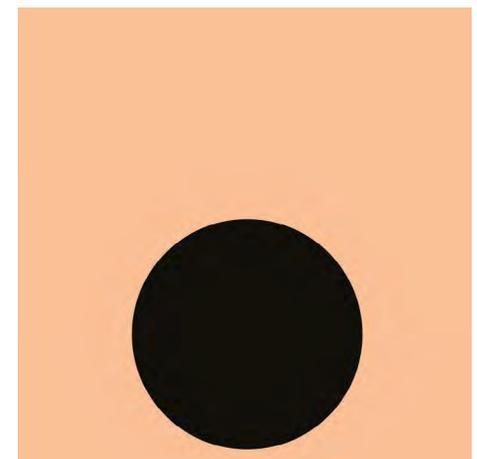
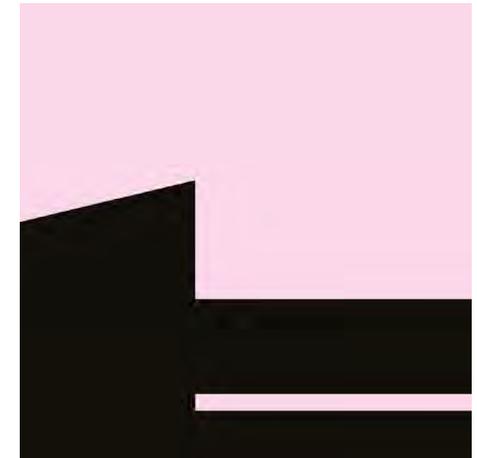
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Strangely enough, it wasn't as bad as it is now. The men I worked with at CBS Television were, for the most part, really generous, wise, fatherly mentors. And when they acted in a creepy way, and they did, it was always out in the open and surprisingly harmless. The advantage of being a young woman designer in the seventies was that the expectations of appropriate behavior had not been politicized yet. I am not suggesting that it was a feminist utopia by any means. But for the most part, there were a lot of classy, smart, talented people there, and the focus was on craftmaking good work. The really disgusting, chauvinist behavior was more overt when I worked in the music division in the late 1970s.

I had enough with the shenanigans and bad behavior I witnessed in the music business. Again, the creative environment in my department was as good as it gets. There was energy and a free-spiritedness that I treasure and nostalgically remember. But it was definitely the height of "sex, drugs and rock and roll." It was one big cliché: sexism, hubris, hedonism and bad behavior. Creatively, it couldn't have been better, as a staff designer, I did record covers for pretty standard fees.



*"Superwoman" Series
No. 2 for the Hong Kong
Poster Museum, 2004.*



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Thursday: 10 am - 21 pm
Thursday on or before
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