

LAYOUT STAGES AND FORMATS

Chapter 5

The Design of Advertising

Roy Paul Nelson

D. Cenci's "Details, Details" ad selling men's high-style clothing makes use of a Mondrian design approach, putting elements into a near-formal balance. Agency: Severin Aviles Associates. Art director and designer: Anthony Aviles. Copywriters: James Severin and Kathleen Cooney Severin.

D. CENCI
MAD AVE

To me, spring in New York is a little less a (dramatic) season: less and less. One minute, hot and sunny, the next, cool and rainy. At Cenci, we've developed an ensemble in fine and fine silk, cotton, and wool - three natural fibers that work well and look great together. Perfect chemistry. Cenci's cotton gabardine blazer is classically styled in subtle shades of tan, olive green, and ice, and unlined - which makes it cool.

These fine wool trousers are truly light as a feather and smooth as butter, with remarkably wrinkle resistant... and pleated, so they're comfortable as they are handsome. And for back (or trouser) silhouettes will see you through a season while looking as elegant as ever. So, you may not always be able to laugh at spring weather, but Cenci classics will certainly make you smile.

D. Cenci

New York
601 Madison Ave.
48 68th Street
New York 10021
212/628/5410

Rome
Via Campo
Marzio 4-7
00196 Rome
06/678/4537

DETAILS
DETAILS

Ten Basic Formats

Whether you start right off on a comprehensive or try some thumbnails and rough layouts first, you will be trying to put the elements of the ad into a pleasing and useful arrangement. The number of arrangements and patterns you can come up with as a designer are almost endless, but it is possible to fit most print-medium advertisements into ten basic categories or formats, if you interpret them loosely enough. A professional designer might balk at such categorizations, saying that the art is too lively, too full of surprises to pin down so abruptly. And some other writer on design might come up with a different set of categories. But a set like the one that follows may help the beginner see some new possibilities for design.

1. *Mondrian Layout.* Let us start with one of the most widely recognized formats: Mondrian layout, named after the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. Involved in a lifetime affair with proportion, Mondrian, using black bars and lines and solid areas of primary color, divided his canvases into vertical and horizontal rectangles and squares.

Mondrian reworked his designs many times before he was satisfied with the sizes and relationships of each of the rectangles to be painted. He carried this concern to the decor of his studio: an out-of-place ashtray greatly disturbed him. To Mondrian, beauty was exclusively geometric. He avoided the color green because it is too close to nature. "All in all," he is quoted as saying, "nature is a damned wretched affair. I can hardly stand it."

The advertising designer, while not sharing Mondrian's intensity, nevertheless freely applies Mondrian's principles to the printed page. The designer uses rectangles of type or art much as Mondrian used solid blocks of color. Sometimes the designer retains the lines or bars Mondrian used to separate elements; sometimes the designer leaves them out.

Mondrian ads appear everywhere for a few months, then die out,

then come back again. And no wonder the style returns to popularity: A Mondrian arrangement is an easy, logical, workable, effective way to display type and art.

The designer of Mondrian ads, like the master himself, is more interested in proportion as a design principle than in eye travel or emphasis or any of the other principles. There is nothing wrong with this. For some advertising, proportion deserves chief consideration, if for no other reason than to set the ad apart from other ads whose designers have stressed some other design principle.

Designers with newspaper backgrounds take naturally to Mondrian layout because of their experience with column rules and cutoff rules and boxes on the newspaper page. But Mondrian layout is considerably more subtle than newspaper makeup. The idea is -to come up with a fitted set of vertical and horizontal rectangles (with perhaps a square thrown in)-all in different sizes. Lines separating the rectangles can be of even or varying widths; at their thinnest they are bolder than ordinary newspaper column rules. Sometimes the designer uses Ben Day or color.rules in combination with solid black rules.

One or two of the rectangles may be filled with halftones; others may contain copy; others may be blank.

If the ruled lines are heavy, typefaces should be bolder than normal. Sans serifs or gothics are appropriate types to use.

Mondrian layouts are used more frequently in magazines than in newspapers, because the multiplicity of lines and resulting rectangles tend to break the ad into sections that may be scattered optically when smaller ads are placed alongside, as on a newspaper page. Large reverse L-shape ads (or step ads) in newspapers sponsored by department stores or women's fashion stores, however, make use of the Mondrian principle with considerable success.

Rick Tharp uses a Mondrian approach for the cover of *The Good Toy Book* published by BRIO Scanditoy Corporation, Milwaukee. A note inside says; "Cover art inspired by Piet Mondrian." A square die-cut reveals the child's face. Jane Kimball wrote the book, which contained "Guidelines for Play and Toy Selection." Profits from the sale of the book went to children's charities. Agency: Tharp Did It.



These thumbnails show some approaches to Mondrian layout.

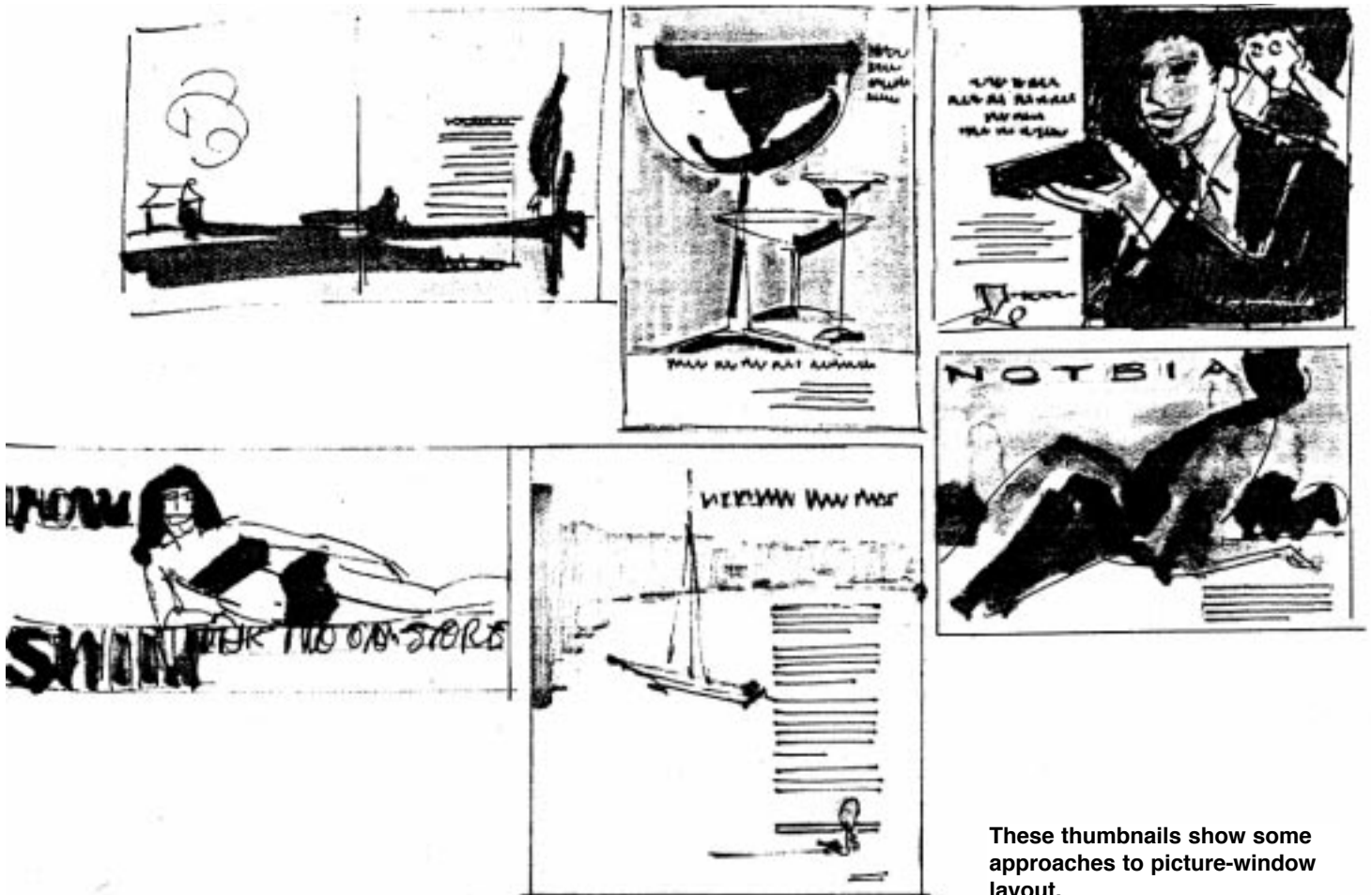
In arranging the rectangles, the designer lightly rules a series of horizontal and vertical lines, then eliminates some of them, either entirely or partially, and strengthens others, striving to leave rectangles of varying sizes and dimensions. The balance is almost always informal.

Swiss design, with its orderly approach, has some ties to Mondrian layout. But in Swiss design, lines or bars are not shown; they appear only in the mind of the designer. And the design is based often on a grid of squares instead of rectangles.

2. *Picture-Window Layout.* More popular than Mondrian and especially suited to magazines is the format known in the trade as “Ayer No. 1,” after the agency that pioneered its use. We will call it “Picture window.” Doyle Dane Bernbach for Volkswagen had particular success with this format, but probably theme and copy brilliance and wit were more important than layout. The least you can say for picture-window layout is that it does not get in the way of the ad’s message. No “art for art’s sake” here, just generous display of picture and tight editing of copy so it will fit the small space remaining.

The designer often bleeds the picture and crops close, almost overpowering the reader. Below the picture is a one-line, centered headline; copy may be broken into two or three short columns. The logo may be worked into the last column of the copy, thereby saving some space.

To tie the picture with the copy, the designer may overprint or reverse some of the headline onto the picture. Or the designer may line up the copy with some-axis within the picture. The picture is



These thumbnails show some approaches to picture-window layout.

usually at the top, but nothing prevents the designer from pushing it down a bit, placing the headline and even the copy above. A smaller picture-or perhaps a line drawing for contrast-can be placed near the copy.

The nature of the picture will affect the designer's decision on placement and type style for the headline.

Leading the body copy from 2 to 6 points helps keep the copy from looking as if it is merely fill and also makes it more readable.

3. *Copy-Heavy Layout.* The advertiser chooses a mostly-copy format for two reasons: (1) What is to be said is too involved, too important, too unique, too dignified to be put in pictures; (2) most other ads in the medium will be picture-window or at least heavily picture-oriented, so a gray, quiet, copy-heavy approach makes a good change of pace.

Because copy-heavy advertising takes itself rather more seriously than other advertising, it usually puts its elements into formal balance. Lines of the headlines, set in @roman, are centered; copy begins with a large initial letter and is broken into two or more columns. The logo is centered underneath. But a more interesting arrangement can result from less formal balance, with the ad retaining the dignity it would have in a more formal arrangement.

The designer should plan for a blurb or secondary headline as well as a main headline.



These thumbnails show some approaches to copy-heavy layout.

Even though the copy is voluminous, there may be room for a few quiet illustrations.

When copy is long, it must be broken somehow into easy-to-take segments. The beginning designer often makes the mistake of marking such copy to be set solid, because it is so long. But long copy, even more than short copy, should be leaded, by at least a point or two. Furthermore, the copy at logical breaks should be refreshed with subheads of one kind or another. Subheads can be flush right, flush left, or centered, in a typeface slightly larger or bolder than the body type, or in all caps. Extra space should frame such subheads.

Subheads can also be formed from the first two or three words of a paragraph, set in boldface. Extra space should be provided to separate the bold beginning from the paragraph above.

4. *Frame Layout.* A photographer can get a pleasantly composed picture by taking the shot from one of nature's nooks, with foliage and a rock formation in the foreground, dark and out of focus, framing the heart of the picture. In advertising, the designer easily frames a layout with a border, doing it sometimes with artwork that is drawn to leave room in the middle for headline and copy.

Frame layout, used more in newspaper advertising than in magazine advertising, keeps elements within bounds, preventing their being associated with some other ad on the page.

There is something cozy about frame layout.

But it does tend to decrease the optical size of the ad.

These thumbnails show some approaches to frame layout.



Two will be promoted.
One will be demoted.
One will move laterally.
Two will resign.
One will retire.
One will be fired.

That's the most predictable thing about a business. It's totally unpredictable.

And what position does that leave you in?

Needing an office system that can change as your company changes. The Morrison System by Knoll.

Morrison is the one office system that at a moment's notice can be any office.

It can be data processing offices for your data processors. It can be open plan offices for your administrative staff. It can be private offices, with full height movable walls for your corporate staff.

* It can be converted from private to open or from open to private, very quickly. And with our wide range of durable wood veneers, plastic laminates, fabrics and colors it can be designed to reflect your company's personality.

At Knoll, we offer everything from systems to seating and from desks to textiles. As well as the service that makes managing your office a lot easier.

Call 1-800-633-6003 to talk with a representative or authorized dealer nearest you.

Maybe you'll be one of those two people who get promoted next year.

Knoll

How many of them will be in the same position next year?

Furthermore, the ad, if placed at the edge of a page, loses additional white space between the edge of the ad and the edge of the page that an unframed ad would pick up.

A variation of the frame layout is the one in which kidney-shaped artwork is spread over a large portion of the layout, creating a cul-de-sac of white in which the headline and copy are placed. Another variation is the layout using a picture a photograph, usually that completely covers the area. Type is either surprinted or reversed in non-patterned or plain-toned areas.

People apparently flying through the air ("How Many of Them Will Be in the Same Position Next Year?") form a frame for well-leaded copy selling the Morrison System by Knoll in this memorable two-page, full-color ad directed to office managers.

Agency: Goldsmith/ Jeffrey, New York.

Art director and designer: Gary Goldsmith.

Copywriter: Neal Gomberg.

Get Cracking

Oregon Dungeness Crab is here!

Here's the time for incomparable fresh Dungeness crab, cooked, chilled and presented made with our famous tender Oregon Dungeness Crab. So get cracking... or buy these already packed... and take a fresh crab to dinner tonight!

Oregon Dungeness Crab Connection

FREE folder full of crab recipes and tips. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Crab, 5175 Capital St., E. Salem, OR 97301

A frame-for-this formally balanced ad is formed by the crab's claws reaching around the body copy. The boldness of the headline matches the boldness of the art, which has a woodcut feel.

Agency: Thuemmel, Marx & Associates.

Designer: Ray Dodge.

Copywriter: Candace McKinley.



This simulated thumbnail, sketched in gray felt markers, might have preceded the full-size layout or comprehensive for the Olivetti ad shown at the right. This is about the right size for a thumbnail. Some designers do thumbnails larger, some smaller-but always in proportion to the final size of the ad. Ordinarily thumbnails are drawn in rougher form than this. They are not meant to impress anyone. The designer is only thinking out loud.

With the copy concentrated inside a light area of the ad, this one could qualify as an example of frame layout. The original is in full, but muted, colors. Agency: Trahey/Wolf Advertising. Designer: Henry Wolf.



5. *Circus Layout.* An orderly approach in design is probably more important to the editorial than to the advertising side. The reader is already interested in editorial. The purchase of the newspaper or magazine proves this. Advertising has to work harder for attention. And to set itself apart from the staid editorial material, it takes more liberty with basic design principles. It does not mind standing on its head or wearing a lampshade.

Moreover, there is something to be said for some disorder in an ad. It slows down the reader, making things more difficult to take in. And in the process of working through the disorder, the reader may remember more.

We can call design of this type “circus layout.” Filled with reverse blocks, oversize type, sunbursts, tilts, and assorted gimmicks, it may not win prizes in art directors’ competitions, but apparently it does sell merchandise—at least a certain kind of merchandise to a certain class of customers.

Its apparent disarray (actually, under a good designer its elements are thoughtfully arranged) is sometimes found in advertising for lofty clients. It was this kind of layout, in the capable hands of art director Otto Storch, that helped bring



Another frame-format ad, this one selling Avon products, is directed to a Hispanic audience. UniWorld Group, Inc., the agency, specializes in well-designed culturally relevant ads that appeal to minority groups. Art director: Bill Allen.

McCall's out of its "Togetherness" rut to the number-one position among women's magazines in the late 1950s.

Circus layout takes in a wide range of layout approaches and deals usually with a larger-than-average number of components.

The secret of good circus layout lies in the dedication of the designer to basic principles of design. Elements are organized into units, which in turn are organized into a unified pattern.

Faced with many elements of equal weight, the designer achieves



These thumbnails show some approaches to circus layout.



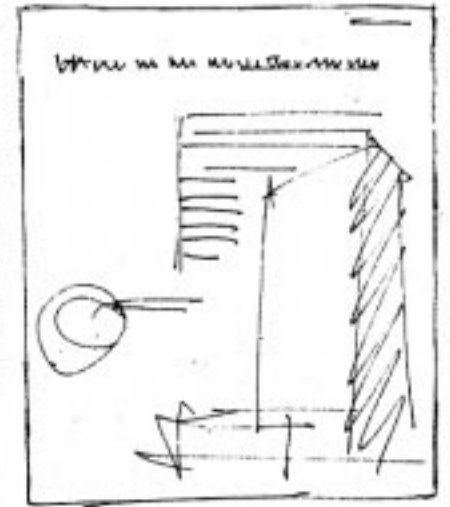
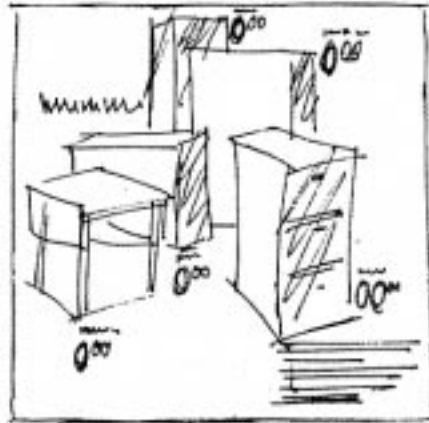
larger than the block that remains to house the headline, explanatory body type, and signature.
 The panels can be used to tell a story, or they can be used simply to display a series of products, pretty much in checkerboard fashion.

7. *Silhouette Layout.* In another kind of layout the designer arranges elements in such a way as to form one imposing and interesting silhouette. Professor Hallie J. Hamilton has explained to students at Northern Illinois University that silhouette layout evolves from the unique shape created by the design of the ad, not by the shape of the elements used.

This two-page full-color magazine ad shows some of the many uses of the ordinary-correction: the Sunkist-lemon.-The ad uses the multipanel format.
 Agency: Foote, Cone & Belding.
 Art director: Ralph Price.
 Creative supervisor: Jean Craig.
 Creative director: Jack Foster.

(Opposite Page)

This is a full-page, full-color magazine ad for Robert Bruce apparel. The second and third words in the headline are separated to make room for the art. Each element in this ad comes close to touching another to form one massive reverse silhouette that stands out strongly against a dark background.
 Art director and designer: Lawrence L. Alten.
 Copywriters: Edmond F. Cohen and B. J. Kaplan.
 Agency: Alten, Cohen & Naish, Inc., Philadelphia.



The more irregular the silhouette, the better. To test a silhouette, the designer tries to imagine the elements in the ad blacked in.

To illustrate the superiority of an irregular silhouette over a regular one, consider the ancient art of paper-cutting portraiture. The scissors artist always works from a side view, never a front view. Otherwise, no one would recognize the portrait. One portrait would look just like the next. The outline of a front view of a face is never as interesting as the outline of the side view. Silhouette layout is "side view" layout.

Just combining a silhouette photograph with some almost touching copy will give you a silhouette ad. But you can use regular square or rectangular photographs, too. *The way they are put together* – staggered rather than stacked-gives the ad its silhouette look.

Too much white space separating elements within the silhouette destroys the unity of the ad; so the designer usually pushes white space to the outside, forming a sort of border.

In silhouette layout many designers arrange elements so that something in the ad touches each of the ad's edges, preferably at spots unrelated to each other. This accomplishes two things: (1) It prevents the white frame from turning into an even halo that could diminish, optically, the ad's size; and (2) it prevents the medium's encroaching on white space the client has paid for. Another way in a silhouette ad to guarantee that the client gets all the space purchased is for the designer to place dots at all four corners of the pasteup. Checking tear sheets of the ad and finding that both dots at the top, say, are missing, the advertiser is alerted to the possibility that the medium has taken away some of the space.

8. *Big-Type Layout.* Type manufacturers, typesetting houses, printers, and periodicals all issue type-specimen sheets or books for their clients, so that the clients can look over the selection and marvel at it and pick those types that may be appropriate for a given job or use. In their largest sizes, types hold particular appeal to the artist and the designer, who derive an almost sensual pleasure through study of type's peculiar curves and corners and serifs and stroke variations. Suspecting that type beauty might also be appreciated by the lay reader, or knowing that big type commands greater attention than small type, designers sometimes turn to a type specimen approach in their layouts. "Second coming" type pushes boldly through the ad, leading to a small amount of body copy; or the body copy itself is set in a type that is well beyond the normal 10- to 12-point sizes used in ordinary ads.

Type overpowers art in layouts like this. Art may not even be needed.

Ordinarily we associate big-type ads with hard-s-ell retailers; but well-designed or graceful types, used large size, perhaps screened to a percentage of black, serve image-conscious clients as well.

Some of the best big-type ads use lowercase letters rather than all caps because lower case is more interesting.

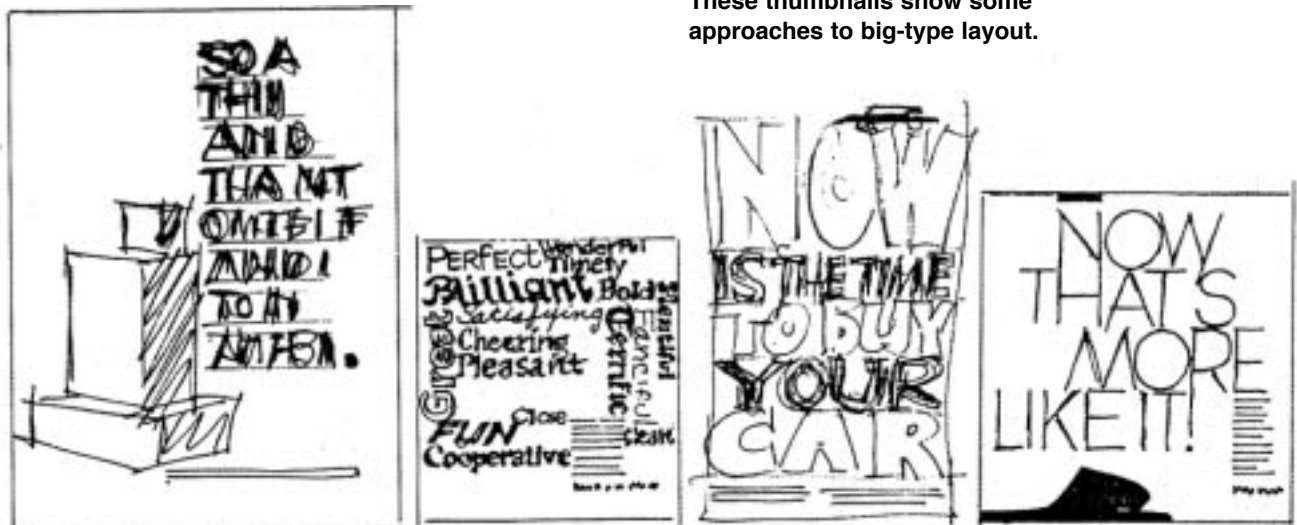
If only a few words are involved, the designer takes some liberties with readability. Lines may ride piggyback on each other; they may overlap; they may be doctored to intensify the mood of the ad.

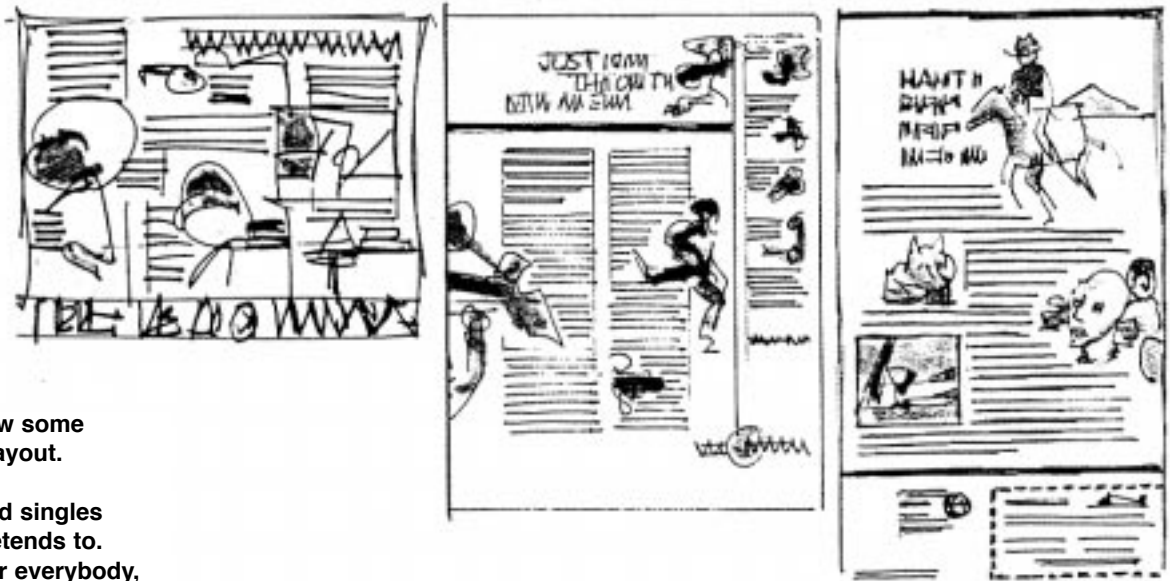
This example of big-type layout uses capital and lowercase letters. Capital and lowercase letters are basically more interesting than all capitals, especially in type so large. Notice that in this ad all type, including the lines of body copy, is centered. Agency: Benton & Bowles. Client: Avis Rent A Car System, Inc.

**Hello
Avis,
I'm
lost.**

Avis has a toll-free Hot Line so you can tell us off when we goof, but we use our Hot Line for things other than gripes...like if you happen to get lost. Now, no matter where you lose yourself, all you have to do is call the special Avis Hot Line...800-231-4000...free of charge. You'll also find the number on a rental agreement envelope when you rent a sparkling new Plymouth or other fun. If we let our customers get lost, maybe that's what they'll tell us to do.
Avis is going to be No.1. We try harder.

These thumbnails show some approaches to big-type layout.





These thumbnails show some approaches to rebus layout.

The headline for this ad singles out an audience or pretends to. The ad, then, meant for everybody, tells readers who are “not altogether excited about a future of organic fiber flakes” that beef is “lower in calories, leaner on fat, lighter on cholesterol than you would ever imagine!” The crowded single-page ad includes some recipes for dishes using beef, as well as an illustrated table at the bottom showing beef cuts and listing calories. The sponsor is the Beef Industry Council and Beef Board.

Agency: Ketchum, San Francisco.
 Art director: John Donaghue.
 Copywriter: Lynda Pearson



9. *Rebus Layout.* The Beef Industry Council and Beef Board ad nearby serves as a good example of rebus advertising: advertising with copy broken up into small sections by illustrations. In most rebus advertising, the illustrations—and there are often many of them—take on such importance that the copy is set to wrap around them or to be interrupted by them.

Communicators in semi-primitive societies developed rebuses to stand for difficult words or phrases. Rebuses are small, simple drawings inserted at various places in text matter, sort of as visual puns. A puzzle-maker, Sam Loyd, popularized rebuses in America in the nineteenth century, but they found use in many societies before then. They are still used, although not widely, in word-and-picture puzzles for children.

A modified rebus is one in which an occasional word or phrase is omitted and a picture substituted. An advertiser will not make a puzzle of an ad—clarity is too important—but may want to amplify the copy by inserting a series of illustrations. They can be all the same size, for a staccato effect; or they can be in various sizes to add variety to the ad. The “copy” in some cases is nothing more than picture captions.

10. *Alphabet-Inspired Layout.* The beauty of letterform, established by scribes and type designers over a period of several centuries, provides one other source of inspiration for designers. The basic shape of letters, both capitals and lower case, can serve as the basic pattern for the arranging of elements within an ad.

An ad designed to approximate the shape of a letter of the alphabet—or a number, for that matter—usually is strong in both unity and eye travel, two important design qualities. The designer, however, should avoid an arrangement that too



These thumbnails show some approaches to alphabet-inspired layout.





Turn the ad upside down and you have essentially a T shape. This rough layout is one of several produced by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau to stimulate newspaper display advertising departments to produce better designed advertising for their jewelry store clients.

closely suggests a particular letter. The letter should serve only as the starting point. The reader ordinarily would not be conscious that the ad took off from a letter or number.

It may be helpful to consider each of the ten basic formats described here before beginning your assignment. Choosing one, you will find innumerable variations occurring to you as you doodle. Combining two of them into a single format, you will find your explorations even more fruitful.

(Opposite Page)

The letter X could be said to be the inspiration for this arrangement of headline, art, and body copy. At any rate, the two-page ad is dependent upon diagonals as a design pattern. This is one of a series, each ad showing users Without tops partly for ts quiet shock value and partly to show the product without other clothes distractions.

Agency: Hicks & Greist, New York.