

Wim Crouwel

A graphic odyssey

30 March – 3 July 2011

The Design Museum celebrates the prolific career of the Dutch graphic designer **Wim Crouwel** in this his first UK retrospective. Regarded as one of the leading designers of the twentieth century, Crouwel embraced a new modernity to produce typographic designs that captured the essence of the emerging computer and space age of the early 1960s. This exhibition, spanning over 60 years, will cover Crouwel's rigorous design approach and key moments in his career including his work for design practice 'Total Design', the identity for the **Stedelijk Museum**, Amsterdam, as well as his iconic poster, print, typography and lesser known exhibition design. The exhibition will also highlight Crouwel's rigorous design approach exploring his innovative use of grid-based layouts and typographic systems to produce consistently striking asymmetric visuals.

Born in 1928, Wim Crouwel studied fine art in Groningen before moving to Amsterdam in the early 1950s where he initially worked for an exhibition design company. Heavily influenced by architecture, Crouwel's sense of spatial awareness and identity led to commissions for cultural institutions, most notably in 1956 for the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven. Commissions for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam followed leading to Crouwel taking sole responsibility for the museum's identity, posters and catalogues. Whilst at the Stedelijk, Crouwel developed his unique grid system which acted as a museum template for its graphic identity, an approach which realised a visual consistency for the museum and in doing so defined a turning point for the world of graphic design.

The dawn of the space age and computer technology throughout the 60s encouraged new approaches and possibilities for typeface design. Embracing the mood of modernity, Crouwel designed a radical 'New Alphabet' typeface, especially for the use in emerging computer systems. The 'New Alphabet' designed in 1967 appeared almost alien, a cipher script of vertical and horizontal lines. This Illegible font challenged the design establishment and provoked debate, a debate which Crouwel was happy to engage and openly admitted to placing visual aesthetics above function. The 'New Alphabet' was redrawn by Brett Wickens and Peter Saville for the Joy Division album, 'Substance' in the late 80s and then digitized and made available for use in 1997 by The Foundry. Crouwel designed a number of other fonts including Gridnik, an appropriate reference to his use of grid systems and Mr. Gridnik became Crouwel's endearing nickname.

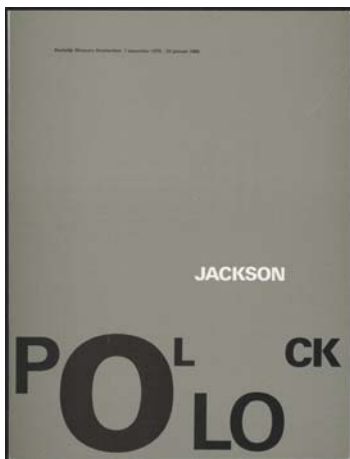
In 1963 Crouwel founded the multi-disciplinary design agency 'Total Design' creating the identity for numerous Dutch companies. Together with the founding partners, Crouwel shaped the visual landscape of the Netherlands throughout the 60's and 70's, working for clients such as IBM, and typeface commissions for Olivetti. In the 1970s Crouwel was part of a team of four designers who designed the Dutch Pavilion for the Osaka World Fair, Crouwel also designed numerous postal stamps for the Dutch post office and a controversial redesign of the telephone book using only lowercase letters.



EXHIBITION POSTER, LEGER NEW ALPHABET VAN ABBE MUSEUM, QUADRAT-PRINT, DE JONG & CO 1957



NEW ALPHABET 1967



EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, JACKSON POLLOCK, STEDELIJK MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM 1980

Original sketches, posters, catalogues and archive photography will be on display alongside films and audio commentary. In addition to celebrating Crouwel's career this exhibition will also explore his legacy and influence on contemporary graphic design with commentary from leading industry figures including **Peter Saville** and **Stefan Sagmeister**.



EXHIBITION POSTER 1959



EXHIBITION POSTER, GERRIT RIETVELD, STEDLIJK MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM. MUSEUM BOYMANS BEUNINGEN 1959



EXHIBITION POSTER. DE STIJL 1983

Six contemporary designers will take inspiration from Crouwel's career to produce a series of limited edition prints, a unique Wim Crouwel inspired wallpaper produced by Cole & Son will also be sold exclusively in the Design Museum Shop. Manufacture Des Tapis De Cogolin and partner company Tai Ping will produce a handmade rug reflecting Wim Crouwel's 'New Alphabet' design, this rug will be available to order from the Design Museum Shop.

Ends.

DESIGN MUSEUM, SHAD THAMES, LONDON SE1 2YD

OPENING: 10.00 -17.45 daily. Last admission: 17.15

Admissions: £10.00 Adults, £9.00 Concessions, £6.00 Students under 12s Free.

PUBLIC INFORMATION T: 020 7940 8790

W: designmuseum.org Notes to editors:

1. Media View 29 March 12pm - 2pm. Wim Crouwel will be available for interview at the Media View. Interview slots should be requested in advance.

2. Exhibition Merchandise

The Design Museum shop will stock a selection of exclusive exhibition merchandise, including a series of Wim Crouwel inspired limited edition prints designed by: Experimental Jetset, Build, Cartledge Levene, Hamish Muir and Paul McNeil, Philippe Apeloig and David Pidgeon. A limited edition hand-screen printed wallpaper produced by Cole & Son and a rug produced by Manufacture Des Tapis De Cogolin and partner company Tai Ping will also be sold exclusively at the Design Museum Shop.

3. Talks & Events:

Design Overtime: April Font NIGHT

Friday 1 April, 6 – 10pm. £7.50 in advance/ £11 on the door

Letter forms are no practical joking matter, but they can be FUN! With a first chance to see Wim Crouwel: A graphic odyssey, be inspired to graphically design your way around the museum.

Designer Night: GraphicDesign&

Friday 15 April, 7.30pm. £15 / £7.50 Members

In this brain teaser of an event, celebrate how graphic design is always inextricably partnered with something else. Philosopher and writer Alain de Botton will join GraphicDesign& founders Lucienne Roberts and Rebecca Wright for an evening of discussion, presentations and workshops.

Working With Wim

Monday 9 May, 7.00pm. £15 / £7.50 for Members

The best way to gain an honest understanding of what it is like to have worked alongside Dutch graphic designer Wim Crouwel is to ask people who have. This two part evening will begin with Adrian Shaughnessy interviewing Ben Bos of Total Design, followed by guest curator of Wim Crouwel: A graphic odyssey, Tony Brook, talking to Mark Holt and Hamish Muir of 8vo.

Design Lecture Series:

Rick Poynor on Graphic Design in The Netherlands

Monday 23 May, 7.30pm. £15 / £7.50 Members

With ideologies and trends uniquely influenced by Holland's national attitudes towards creative endeavour, the evolution of Dutch graphic design has had exemplary moments that continue to generate global admiration and fierce discussion.

Wim Crowel: Pioneer of Industrial Culture

Thursday 23 June, 7.30pm. £15 / £7.50 Members

In this detailed discussion, Design Museum director Deyan Sudjic will interview Wim Crowel about his ideologies and achievements that have helped shape our current designed world. This public discussion is presented in partnership with Premsela, Dutch Platform for Design and Fashion, and is the latest in their international series *Pioneers of Industrial Culture* analysing how leading design figures have bridged the gap between society's cultural interests and industrialised practice.

Pecha Kucha X Wim Crowel

Friday 1 July, 7.30pm. £15 / £7.50 Members

Deriving its name from the Japanese term for the sound of 'chit chat', Pecha Kucha consists of a series of presentations where each participant shows 20 images for 20 seconds. This fast and furious event will include designers proclaiming their enthusiasm for the work of Wim Crowel and the influence he has had on their own practice.

4. Exhibition guest curated by Tony Brook, Creative Director, Spin.

5. Exhibition Design by 6a Architects. Exhibition graphics by Spin.

6. Media Partner **Wallpaper***

7. Exhibition Supported by The Mondriaan Foundation:



Press enquires, image and interview requests:

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