

JCU ScholarShip

Visual Heritage and Motion Design: The Graphic-Cultural Legacy of Saul Bass's Title Sequences

Item Type	Article
Authors	Maselli, Vincenzo;Panadisi, Giulia
Citation	Maselli, Vincenzo, and Giulia Panadisi. "Visual Heritage and Motion Design: The Graphic-Cultural Legacy of Saul Bass's Title Sequences." <i>Heritage</i> 8 (8): 329. 2025.
DOI	https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8080329
Rights	Attribution 4.0 International
Download date	2026-05-08 07:59:34
Item License	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/1163

Article

Visual Heritage and Motion Design: The Graphic-Cultural Legacy of Saul Bass's Title Sequences

Vincenzo Maselli ¹  and Giulia Panadisi ^{2,*}

¹ Department of Planning, Design, Technology of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome, Via Flaminia 72, 00196 Rome, Italy; vincenzo.maselli@uniroma1.it

² Department of Communication and Media Studies, John Cabot University, Via della Lungara 233, 00165 Rome, Italy

* Correspondence: giulia.panadisi@johncabot.edu

Abstract

Opening titles are more than introductory devices supporting the film they have been produced for; they are artistic and cultural artefacts with a powerful visual identity. Among the most emblematic figures in this design field, the graphic and motion designer Saul Bass (1920–1996) pioneered an approach that redefined the identity, the design, and the experience of cinematic title sequences, opening a path of experimentation aimed at bridging visual communication, moving images, stylistic innovation, and aesthetic synaesthesia, through a combination of sound, movement, and image into a single expressive unit. This article investigates Bass's contribution through a historical-critical and comparative lens, reconstructing the network of artistic and technological influences that shaped his design philosophy. It analyzes a selection of Bass's title sequences, highlights his connection to European modernism, and identifies the seeds of postmodern culture in several aspects of Bass's work such as the merging of principles coming from design and animation studies, the ambition for technological experimentation, and the openness towards a mass audience. By framing Bass's creative legacy as a form of visual heritage, the article examines the ways in which his kinetic typography and moving compositions can be, therefore, recognized as resources for art historians, media scholars, designers, and visual communication theorists to track down the first and impactful aesthetic and narrative experiments conducted in the postmodern and contemporary motion graphic design field.



Academic Editor: Francesco Soldovieri

Received: 17 June 2025

Revised: 26 July 2025

Accepted: 11 August 2025

Published: 13 August 2025

Citation: Maselli, V.; Panadisi, G. Visual Heritage and Motion Design: The Graphic-Cultural Legacy of Saul Bass's Title Sequences. *Heritage* 2025, 8, 329. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8080329>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Saul Bass; title sequences; motion design; visual heritage; modernism

1. Introduction: Theoretical Framework and Objectives of the Study

The Saul Bass has been one of the most influential motion designers of the 20th century, an acknowledged pioneer and innovator of opening titles' aesthetic and role within the film industry [1]. Over the course of forty years, he introduced an avant-garde design sensibility to film titles, transforming not only their visual style but also the way they were conceptually understood [2] (p. 106). Saul Bass authored opening sequences for more than fifty films, for directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick, Otto Preminger, and many others, developing his visual language through the knowledge, application, and reconfiguration of principles; tools; and aesthetic approaches inspired by the modernist movement, and by the audiovisual experiences that shaped the first half of the 20th century [3]. Bass's connection to Modernism began early in his education at Brooklyn College in New York, where he studied with György Kepes—a

close associate of László Moholy-Nagy—who had been trained at the Bauhaus in Weimar. Kepes—and, through him, Moholy-Nagy—had a profound impact on Bass, helping him transform his early, undefined artistic ambitions into a clear framework of objectives and values that would later define his distinctive style [4] (p. 36). Starting with his highly intellectual approach to design, Kepes introduced Bass to the design realm of moving images since the beginning of his studies [2]. According to Kepes, graphic design and motion pictures have the potential to transform the world, as they are less constrained by tradition [5,6] (p. 13). This perspective deeply resonated with Bass's ethical values and artistic vision, long before choosing to focus his own career on putting graphics and moving images as central to his creative practice. Kepes's exercises helped him develop a deeper understanding of the importance of this approach, along with key design principles such as dynamic balance, tension, contrast, and the expressive use of lines, planes, and light [6]. Kepes's lesson, indeed, stressed Bass's openness to understand and assimilate composition principles, contemporary design perspectives, and artistic knowledge and to learn the newest technological tools to create experiences that simultaneously engage sensory, emotional, and intellectual dimensions.

Although the basis of his visual training with Kepes was in Bauhaus-style graphics and the “new typography”, in Bass's work, it is possible to trace a rich interplay of influences drawn from the major European modernism and avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, each contributing to the development of his distinctive visual language [2]. From Cubism, with its geometric deconstruction of forms and fragmented perspectives, Bass was inspired to break down the human figure in several of his graphic compositions and title sequences. De Stijl and Neoplasticism, particularly through the legacy of Piet Mondrian, are evident in his use of orthogonal grids, spatial rationalization, and a limited colour palette based on primary colours and essential forms. Dadaism influenced Bass's visual experimentation with irregular lettering and dissonant compositions that convey rupture and disorientation. Finally, his interest in computer art and video-graphic experimentation during the 1960s and 1970s led him to further refine the concept of movement in art, opening it to temporality and kinetic typography. By rooting in these modernist principles, with his titles, he suggested many of the potentials of contemporary motion graphics, inhabiting a hybrid territory between design, animation, and audiovisual experimentation, and designing an immersive multisensory experience of different visual and sound elements that shape the idea of a sort of ‘artistic synaesthesia’ [2,7]. In the book *Saul Bass: A Life in Film and Design* [2], Pat Kirkham—in collaboration with Bass's daughter Jennifer—highlights Bass's ability to combine sound, movement, and image into a single expressive unit, through the creation of ‘a choreography’ of forms and rhythms that is not just visual, but musical in nature. “Saul—according to Kirkham—believed that a film, like a symphony, deserved a mood-setting overture [. . .] to reshape the time before the film proper began” (p. 106). This dynamic, layered, and synesthetic approach in the design of opening titles is the distinctive element of Bass's work, his unmistakable signature, and showcases his effort to make the principles of Modernism his own, personalizing and overcoming them.

Considering these premises, this article explores more deeply the relationships between Bass' work on opening titles and the domain of figurative art and motion design experiences occurred in the first half of the 20th century, by analyzing a cluster of his opening titles selected as clear examples of the application of visual features derived from the artistic and design traditions above mentioned. In this framework, the article aims to demonstrate that the work of Saul Bass can be interpreted as a form of visual heritage, not only because of its historical significance but also due to its enduring influence on contemporary practices in motion design, film graphics, and visual communication. His opening

titles represent a codified repertoire of aesthetic, narrative, and technical solutions that have shaped the language of audiovisual media over time, renewing the sector of opening titles by overcoming the aesthetics of Modernism and the artistic instances and design processes contemporary to him. By examining Bass's title sequences as both historically situated artefacts and generative models for postmodern visual cultures, therefore, this study adopts a heritage-based perspective that considers the transmission, adaptation, and reinterpretation of modernist visual paradigms in the evolving field of motion design. The notion of visual heritage is thus understood as a dynamic process of cultural continuity and formal innovation, through which Bass's legacy is continually reactivated in contemporary media environments, continuing to impact animated graphics in digital, advertising, and cultural domains in addition to cinematic motion design.

2. Structure and Methodology

The article is structured in two main sections. The first endeavours to compare Bass's work and the aesthetic, linguistic, and compositional choices of artefacts belonging to the field of figurative arts created between the 20s and 50s by artists such as, among others, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Paul Klee. The second part, instead, investigates the relationship between Bass's projects and the computer art experiments conducted in the first half of the century by video artists such as Oskar Fischinger, John Whitney, Hans Richter, and Walter Ruttmann.

The selection of Bass's filmography is carried out through a purposive case study approach. His titles, indeed, are chosen based on their capacity to embody the formal and conceptual convergences with the avant-garde and early computer art visual traditions. The criteria guiding the selection stems from the synthesis of the main modernist graphic design principles formulated by Stuart Crawford, who tries to merge the parameters codified and described by Jan Tschichold, Walter Gropius, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Hannes Meyer [8]. According to Crawford, the main Key characteristics of modernist movements include the use of geometric shapes, limited colour palette, absence of unnecessary ornamentation, abstraction, asymmetric balance, typography treated as a visual element infusing "expressive qualities into the overall composition" [8], and moreover an enthusiastic openness towards the creative use of technology. Starting from these requirements, the parameters adopted for selecting Bass's works are as follows: (i) the use of abstract and ornament-free forms, identified in particular in the recurrent use of fragmented and stylized body and asymmetrical geometrical compositions; (ii) the use of modular, geometric structures that recall neoplastic and constructivist vocabularies; (iii) the innovative deployment of typography as both a compositional and narrative element; (iv) the creative exploration of the new digital experiments produced by contemporary computer artists.

Selected Bass' title sequences are, consequently, paralleled with modernist and computer art artworks by applying a qualitative and comparative methodology grounded in visual and media analysis, aiming to trace the graphic-cultural legacy of Saul Bass' openings in relation to twentieth-century modernist and experimental visual practices. The modernist artworks under analysis are chosen by understanding the connections already partially highlighted in the existing literature and in studies on Bass's work over the past decades by scholars such as Pat Kirkham [2], Michael Betancourt [9], and Jan-Christopher Horak [4]. In line with the interpretive method proposed by visual media scholar Gillian Rose [10], the analysis investigates a series of recurring aspects linked to visual language, symbolic apparatus, composition, and cultural context: visual rhythm, spatial dynamics, chromatic patterns, and the interaction between image, typography, and movement. Saul Bass's body of work is, therefore, examined as a dynamic archive of technical, linguistic, and aesthetic experimentation, offering a critical lens into the visual codes, imageries, and his-

torical contexts in a hybrid and evolving dialogue between Modernist art, communication design, technology, and popular culture [3,11,12].

3. The Dialogue with the Modernist Principles

Bass always considered design as a toolkit of principles, recommendations, and experiences to consult for approaching specific visual, functional, and communicative requirements. As stated by Pat Kirkham, for Bass, design was a “problem-solving process” that provided him with different aesthetic solutions for answering the different characteristics of the films on which he had to work, that were as different as the title sequences he designed for them [2] (p. 109). Nevertheless, in his copious production, it is possible to detect some recurrences that—in addition to guaranteeing the recognizable authorship—emphasize the modernist origins of his design method and graphic choices. In this section, the modernist roots and connections of Bass’s work will be tracked down through the identification of some recurring visual and narrative elements and where they can be distinctly recognized. The three visual features identified as *fil-rouge* in many of his title sequences concern: (i) the use of abstract, decomposed, and often disturbing anatomies; (ii) the preference for basic but dynamic geometric shapes and flat colours; and (iii) the typography, a narrative, and aesthetic devices of great importance and treated with an innovative approach. As emblematic case studies in which it is possible to identify the original and innovative treatment of these elements, the openings of the films *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, dir. Otto Preminger), *The Seven Year Itch* (1955, dir. Billy Wilder), and *The Facts of Life* (1960, dir. Melvyn Frank) have been selected.

3.1. “Anatomy of a Murder” and the Abstract Fragmented Bodies

Bass had a clear fascination with body parts which frequently appear in his designs and film openings. This approach echoes earlier experiments from the Bauhaus, where artists also abstracted bodies—particularly hands—for both artistic and advertising purposes [13]. For example, Hannes Meyer’s 1929 back cover of the Bauhaus brochure “junge menschen kommt ans bauhaus!” (Young People: Come to the Bauhaus) features a disembodied hand that “encapsulated the Bauhaus educational model, which focused on hands-on workshops where students could actively experiment in conjunction with their teachers” [4] (p. 193) (Figure 1). Similarly, Moholy-Nagy’s photo of a hand gripping a paintbrush reinforces this metaphor. The picture, shot by Lucia Moholy-Nagy, indeed portrays the hand as a functional tool that embodies the artist and his craft [14].

Images of disassembled body parts appear throughout many of Bass’s openings, and this is especially prominent in the title sequence for the 1959 crime drama *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), one of the most iconic of American cinema for its synthetic, expressive, and conceptual strength [4]. In this opening, Bass transforms the film’s title into a striking visual metaphor by introducing the production team names alongside fragmented body parts, as though assembling a puzzle [15]. The sequence begins with the full silhouette representing director Otto Preminger, which is then disassembled into isolated limbs and shapes. The sequence is created with simple black paper cutouts on a flat grey background (Figure 2), without relying on advanced technology. Narratively, the sequence mirrors the film’s core tension: just as the human body is dissected visually, so is the law case at the heart of the story, with facts and testimonies broken down and scrutinized in the courtroom [2] (p. 131). Bass’s deliberately crude, almost “primitive” aesthetic—with uneven hand-cut shapes and irregular hand lettering—underscores the theme of tension, uncertainty, murder, and dehumanization [2].



Figure 1. Recruitment poster for the Bauhaus by Hannes Meyer, 1929.

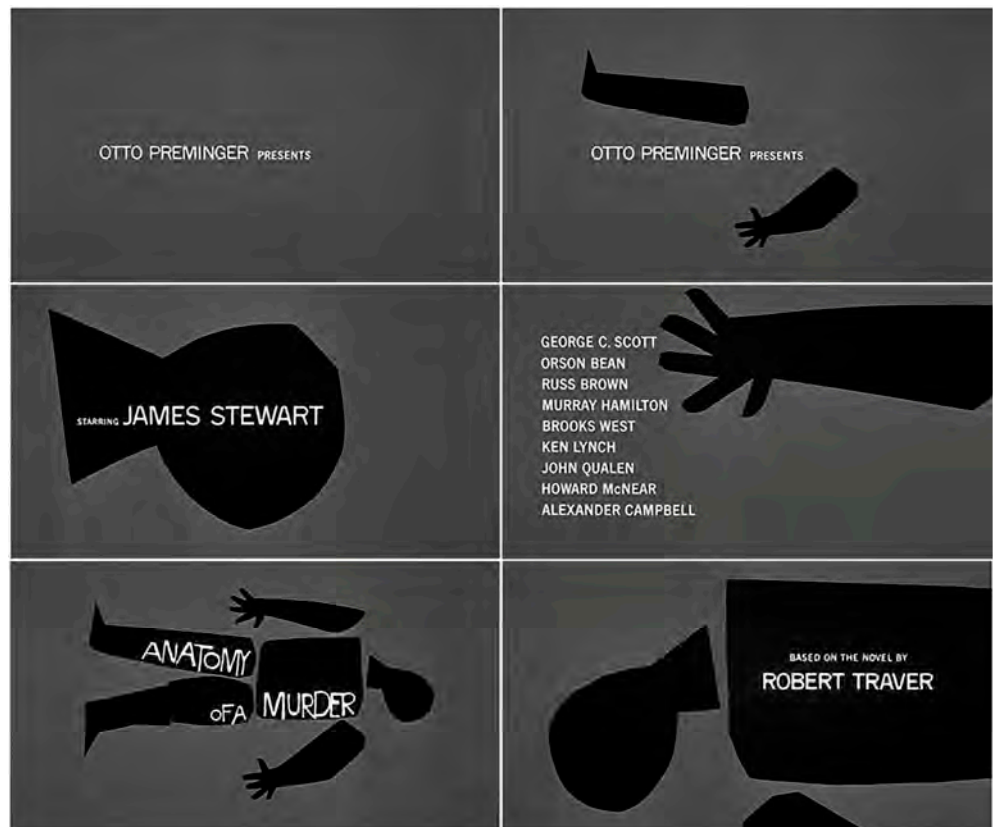


Figure 2. Still frame composition from *Anatomy of a Murder* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1959.

Both the aesthetic and narrative choices suggest some touchpoints between this sequence and two famous twentieth-century works of art: Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) (Figure 3) and Henri Matisse's *Blue Nude III e IV* (1952) (Figure 4). From the point of view of visual language, all three works stage a figurative abstraction: the body is simplified, reduced to elementary forms, but maintains a very strong expressive charge [16]. In *Anatomy*

of a Murder (1959), the human figure is reduced to black silhouettes, cut out, and assembled in animation like fragments of paper. A technique that recalls the two-dimensionality of Matisse's collages, particularly his Blue Nudes, made with coloured paper cut out and glued together. Matisse also works on the reduction of the human figure to a sign: the body is dismantled and recomposed to pure, soft, and abstract forms [17]. However, where Matisse seeks harmony, contemplation, and calm, Bass introduces a narrative tension that accompanies the viewer towards the heart of the drama, which in some way recalls the tragic and political value of the fragmentation of the bodies in Picasso's *Guernica*. Picasso deforms and decomposes the figures, creating an iconography of pain and destruction and a metaphor for historical violence [18]. In this sense, Bass's opening can also be read as a visual representation of the disintegration of identity and truth: what is dismantled before the eyes of the viewer is not just a body, but a court case to be reconstructed [2]. The use of colour intensifies this dichotomous interpretation: *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) presents a sharp contrast between black and grey, a choice that recalls the monochrome of *Guernica*, made in shades of grey to amplify the dramatic charge of the visual story. On the contrary, *Blue Nude* is characterized by a saturated and vibrant colour (cobalt blue), which Matisse uses to create an effect of visual and spiritual lightness [17]. The visual composition also contributes to this contrast: *Guernica* has a chaotic structure, full of internal tension [18], while *Blue Nudes* present a stable and balanced composition. In Bass's sequence, the arrangement of the body parts occurs according to a sequential, temporal logic and a rhythm that expands the viewer's sensorial experience, thus managing to mediate between these two polarities: his visual grid is ordered but progressively destabilized by fragmentation.

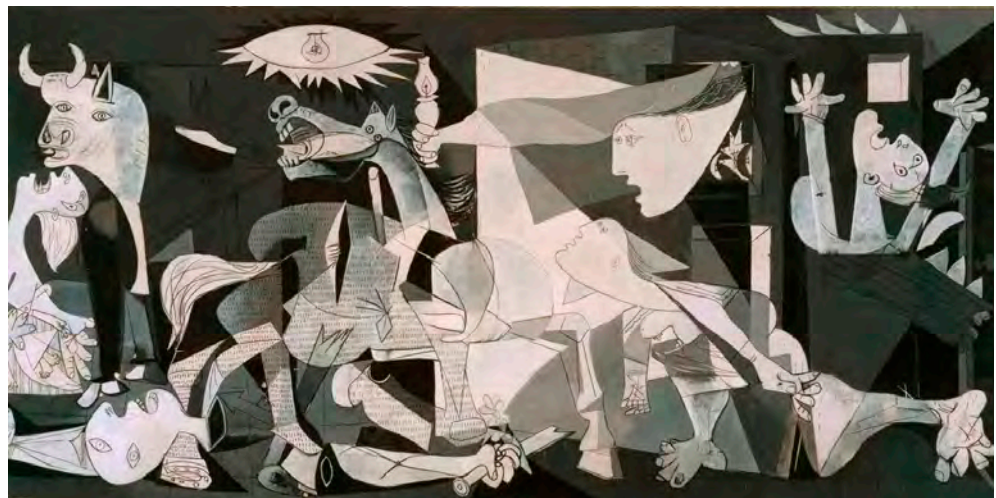


Figure 3. *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso, 1937. Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid.

This comparison must naturally consider that the three works respond to very different needs. *Anatomy of a Murder* is a work designed for the cinema; it has the function of introducing the tone of the film, suggesting its themes, and predisposing the viewer. *Guernica* is a work of political denunciation, conceived as a visual monument against war. *Blue Nude* series is part of Matisse's formal and spiritual research during the years of his illness: it does not have a narrative or social function but is the product of a poetic reflection on form and colour. However, what these three works have in common is the fact that they treat the human body as a territory of symbolic representation through fragmentation and abstraction which, despite the inevitable formal simplification, make it a powerful communication tool.



Figure 4. *Blue Nude III* and *Blue Nude IV* by Henri Matisse, 1952.

As mentioned, the *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) title sequence is not the only one in which Bass has disassembled human anatomical parts using them as visual and narrative tools. Some titles that are worth remembering for having referred to similar imagery are: the opening of the film *Saint Joan* (1957, dir. Otto Preminger) for which Bass used the image of a broken body of a woman “who in life battled conventional ideas of femininity” [2] (p. 125); in the opening of the film *Exodus* (1960, dir. Otto Preminger) abstract fighting hands “symbolize the struggle of the Jewish people to establish their own land” [2] (p. 140); and the opening for *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955, dir. Otto Preminger) for which Bass created the image of a disjointed and disfigured arm that “has the appearance [. . .] of being transformed into something else, just as [the protagonist] in the film is transformed by his addiction” [2] (p. 116). These recurring images of bodily fragmentation in Bass’s work can be interpreted not just as formal experiments, but as deeply tied to the thematic content of the films themselves. The broken body becomes a metaphor for internal and external conflict—social, psychological, or existential. In *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), as argued above, the literal dissection of a human figure aligns with the narrative dissection of truth in a courtroom, where facts, motives, and identities are examined in pieces. Similarly, in *Saint Joan* (1957), the fractured female form echoes both the physical violence inflicted on Joan of Arc and the symbolic shattering of normative gender roles. In *Exodus* (1960), the fighting hands embody both collective resistance and personal sacrifice, while in *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), the mutilated limb visualizes the distortion of self through addiction. All these dismembered bodies serve as powerful visual devices that externalize inner ruptures or historical trauma. they successfully anticipate and condense the film’s emotional stakes into a few evocative, memorable shapes.

3.2. *The Geometric Language of “The Seven Year Itch” Opening Title*

The opening title of the film *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) represents one of the clearest examples of the transposition of the geometric and rigorous language of the artistic avant-gardes into the medium of commercial cinema. In this sequence, Bass animates coloured rectangles and squares that appear on the screen following the rhythm of a jazz soundtrack, composing a modular graphic surface (Figure 5). This visual grammar resonates deeply

with two fundamental models of early twentieth-century art: Piet Mondrian's orthogonal and neoplastic compositions (Figure 6) and Paul Klee's geometric and pictorial grids, as in the case of the painting *Flora on Sand* (1927) [19] (Figure 7). Although different approaches, all three artists explore the possibility of simple and modulated shapes to generate complex and suggestive visual meanings.



Figure 5. Still frame composition from *The Seven Year Itch* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1955.

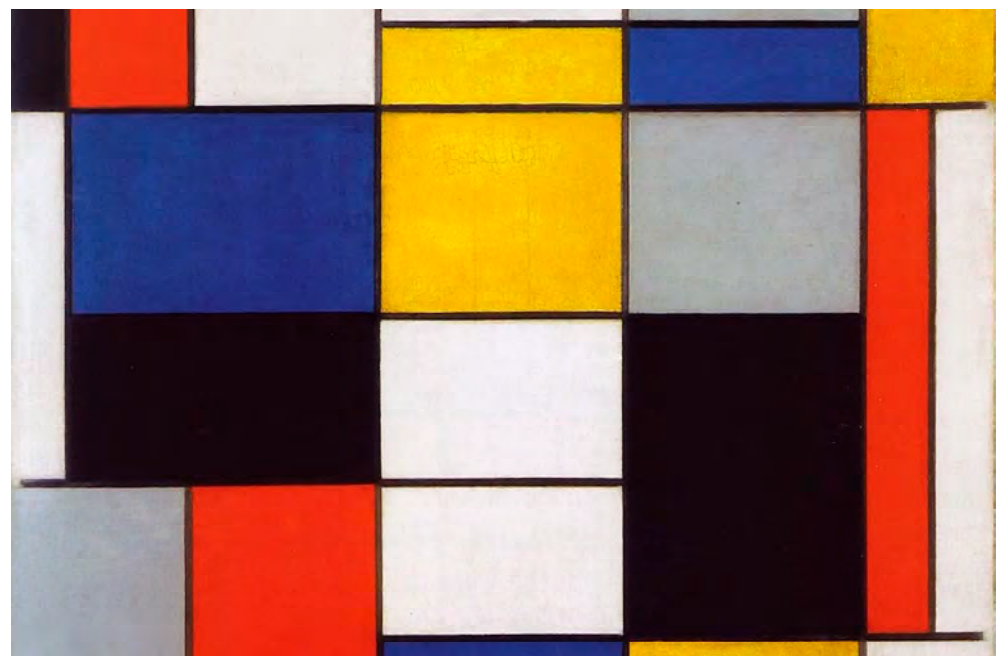


Figure 6. *Composition with Black, Red, Gray, Yellow, and Blue* by Piet Mondrian, 1919.

The most evident aspect that these works have in common is their compositional structure based on pure geometric forms, in particular, squares and rectangles. In Bass's work, these shapes enter the screen as mobile elements, building a sort of kinetic architecture. Each module seems to respond to an invisible grid that orchestrates the appearance and arrangement of the elements over time [2] (p. 154). In this sense, the opening works as

a moving Mondrian grid, in which each rectangle has a precise but changing compositional weight [20]. Mondrian's static compositions, on the other hand, are based on a rigid orthogonal grid that articulates the space according to a mathematical balance, made of either coloured or empty white spaces. In Klee's work, especially in *Flora on Sand*, the grid is irregular, the modules become textures, and the distribution of the shapes follows a more fluctuating logic, almost as if they generate a landscape seen from above [21]. As suggested by Will Grohmann in the richly illustrated book *Paul Klee* (1954), the balanced and apparently effortless distribution of colours suggests a hidden natural structure, evoking the organic way plants might grow across a sandy terrain, thus justifying the title *Flora on Sand* [21].

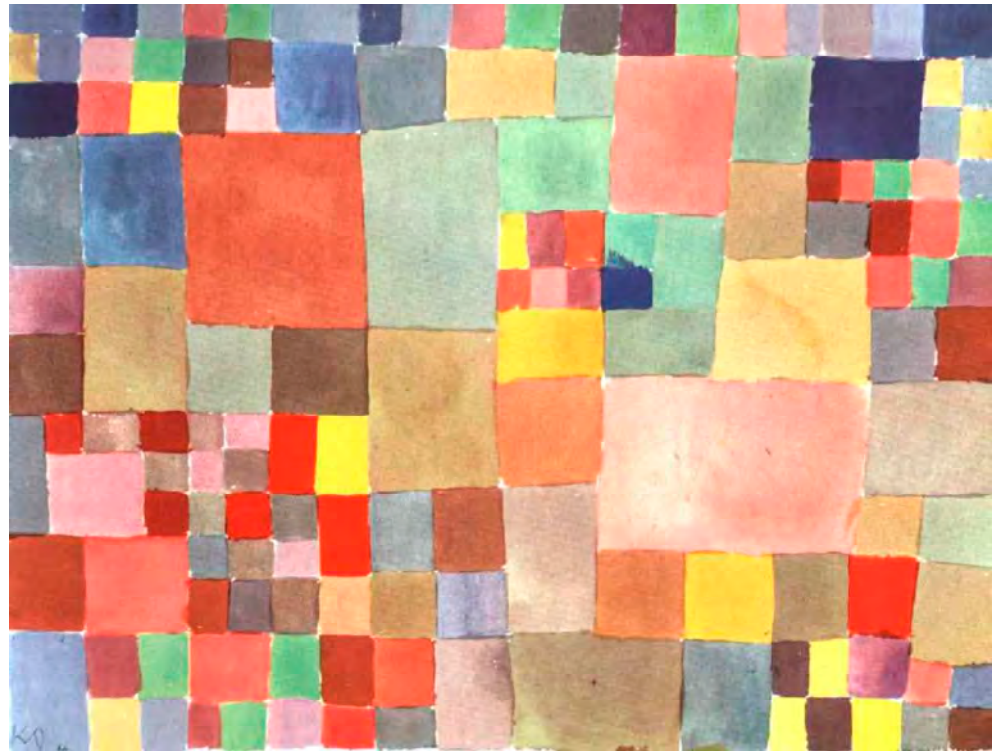


Figure 7. *Flora on sand* by Paul Klee, 1927.

The use of colour also reveals interesting similarities and differences. Bass uses a lively, warm, and saturated palette (red, yellow, pink, orange, green), typical of the American visual culture of the 1950s [2]. Klee, on the other hand, develops a more intimate and delicate relationship with colour: in his works, the pigment is spread in glazes and warm, often earthy tones, which evoke a slow time, a silent contemplation [21]. Mondrian, on the contrary, uses only primary colours (red, blue, yellow), combined with neutral white fields and the black lines of the grid. Bass places himself halfway: he retains Mondrian's modularity but animates colours that recall Klee's warmth and sensitivity. According to Jan-Christopher Horak Bass's colour palette emphasizes the topographic aspiration of Klee's paintings as *Flora on Sand* but mixes it with abstract—and geometric—depiction of American modern city plans as he argues that Bass's colours are "at some level representational, since the browns, ochres, yellows, and lavenders are reminiscent of the New York City brownstones that are the setting of the film" [4] (p. 231).

An element that radically distinguishes Bass from the other two artists is naturally the temporal dimension. The opening of *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) is a composition in progress, which uses time as an expressive element: the shapes appear, flow, and fit together. This movement is not arbitrary, but choreographed with precision, in direct dialogue with the

music, and with the hierarchy of information that appears in the black spaces left by the coloured shapes. Bass borrows the balance, clarity, and synthesis of the above-mentioned visual experiences, but translates them into a grammar of time, where graphics, rhythm, and colour merge to create a visual moment that is not only decorative but also semantic and performative [19]. The use of elementary geometries that create meaning through kinetic, chromatic, compositional and dimensional characteristics is another element that can be tracked down in numerous works by Bass, including the title sequences of the film *Psycho* (1960, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) in which simple bars of equal weight but different heights slide onto the screen in various patterns and oppositions [2] (p. 183), and again in *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) in which white bars appear against a black background, disappear and “form abstract patterns before finally coalescing into the film’s symbol.” [22].

3.3. “The Facts of Life” and the Typography as Active Ingredient

The typographic element in Bass’s works has an unmistakable appeal since it takes up and surpasses the principles of balance, harmony, and contrast derived from the theories and experiments of the Bauhaus [4] (p. 94), guaranteeing a strong visual impact on the public. In thirty-seven out of fifty-three designed title sequences, Bass uses sans serif type, a typical choice of the International Style, but manually alters the morphology of his letters. His letters are imperfect, “look scrawled, like writing on a blackboard or graffiti on a brick wall, [as they are] written by his own hand” [4] (p. 97). Bass therefore distances himself from the Bauhaus model, which aimed to suppress individual expression in favour of a mechanical and rigorous aesthetic, and recalls the role of typography as a narrative device not only for its meaning but also for its morphological features, as claimed by the futurists and the protagonists of the typographic revolution in the 1920s, Jan Tschichold, László Moholy-Nagy, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and El Lissitzky, pioneers of “the promotion of a more aesthetic approach to typography” [23]. In *North by Northwest* (1959, dir. Alfred Hitchcock), for instance, Bass uses kinetic typography integrated into a grid of converging lines, aligning the movement of the credits with the reflective façade of the C.I.T. Building in Manhattan, where the film is set [24]. In the opening of *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), Bass introduces rough, asymmetrical typography that mirrors the fragmented psyche of the main character [2] (p. 116). In *Not with My Wife, You Don’t!* (1966, dir. Norman Panama) title sequence, the typographic element is playful, colourful, and animated in sync with cartoonish visuals, embracing a comic and irreverent tone that reflects the film’s absurd story. In the opening of *It’s a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* (1963, dir. Stanley Kramer) typography is integrated into a sequence of stylized animated gags, participating in the graphic composition by taking on the role of the character [25]. In the openings of these and many other films the originality of the treatment of the letters, always different from each other, never symmetrical, and without serifs, seems to recall the morphological aspirations typical of calligraphic writing, referring to the poetic practice typical of the avant-garde movements, also called visual poetry, concrete poetry, or experimental poetry, in which the text is laid out so that its visual form reflects or symbolizes the content it conveys [26,27].

The opening title of *The Facts of Life* (1960) explicitly manifests this intent. The animated sequence uses dynamic letters to compose not only the words of the title and the names of the actors and the production team, but a real visual dramaturgy made of objects, bodies, and symbolic interactions performed by the text, often at the expense of readability (Figure 8). As stated by Pat Kirkham [2] (p. 188), the sequence begins:

with gifts of flowers; with candy which reveals the names of actors in the bottom of the paper wrapper when the candy is removed; gifts, one of which is composed of credits. Eventually our two-some progress to a friendly drink, the ice cubes of

which are credits; a typographically jewelled necklace is proffered; cigarettes are smoked leaving typographic ashes; [. . .] typographic coats are hung.

And finally, the name of the title sequence designer is engraved on a rotating disc, probably a reference to the soundtrack with the voices of Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme that holds together the various images of the sequence like a pearl necklace. Bass thus makes the form of the word speak as much as its content in a dynamic way, adapting to the rapidity of the transitions typical of the animated medium.

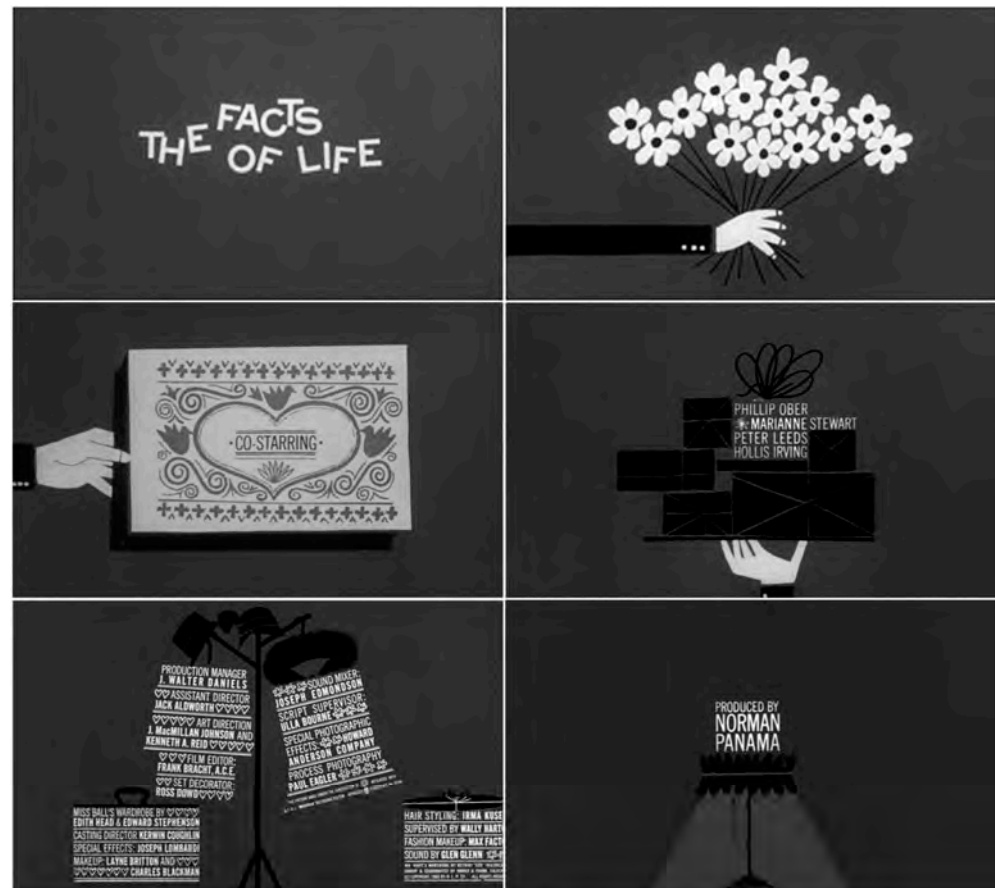


Figure 8. Still frame composition from *The facts of Life* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1960.

In the context of modernist experiments, a similar strategy can be found in the typographic compositions of Bass's indirect teacher László Moholy-Nagy. In the essay *The New Typography* of 1923, Moholy-Nagy suggests taking advantage of the “elasticity, variability, [and] freshness” of the text and freeing it from the cultural and compositional constructs that impose a mainly functional and rigid use of the typography [28]. Moholy-Nagy typography, and so Bass's, works in combination with illustration, photography, and hypothetically any other “device of civilization” [28]. This new graphic design process is clearly recognizable in the poster ‘Pneumatik’ that he designed in 1924. The poster features a photograph of a car driving along a track formed by the letters of the word ‘Pneumatik’ (Figure 9), highlighting the typographic element's plasticity, which in this case is exploited for product advertising purposes [23]. In the dynamic typographic composition Moholy-Nagy experiments with letters, words, and graphic forms and arranges them along diagonal, curved, and perspective trajectories, suggesting movement and elasticity. From Moholy-Nagy to Kepes, Bass inherited the use of typography as a dynamic compositional component in dialogue with the other elements and applies the same principles systematically to motion design, where each part is at the service of narrative communication. Like Moholy-Nagy,

therefore, Bass's text seems to move in the space of the page like an active image [28]. If the traditional calligram acts in the two-dimensional space of the page and in a contemplative frozen time [29], both Moholy-Nagy and Bass expand this principle in a dynamic direction. Moholy-Nagy does so in the context of advertising printing, introducing implicit movement thanks to the diagonal arrangement and the tension between typographic elements; Bass, on the other hand, transports these concepts into the cinematographic animation, building a typographic visual choreography that evolves in front of the eyes of the spectator.



Figure 9. *Pneumatik* by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 1924.

4. The Narrative Power of Experimental Moving Images

With a compositional rigour rooted in the avant-garde artistic experimentation of the early twentieth century, Bass's sequences are innovative since they use animated graphic design for transmitting psychological and symbolic content [1]. Specifically, Bass is part of an ideal continuum that begins with the experimental and abstract animations of pioneers like Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann, and Viking Eggeling. These artists, who worked in the 1920s and 1930s, created a series of abstract films which were based on an aesthetic that emphasizes rhythm, pure form, and movement. In Eggeling's animation *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924), a notable example of a study on dynamic abstraction that codifies movement as a continuous and harmonious flow of geometric forms is found. In his work, diagonal lines, curves, and geometric shapes evolve and transform in carefully choreographed sequences that mirror musical composition principles, demonstrating how abstract forms can generate narrative tension, establishing movement itself as the primary vehicle for artistic expression rather than representational content. In the works of Richter and Ruttmann, the object of experimentation is the visual rhythm of basic animated shapes as an emotional and cognitive experience. These pioneering filmmakers explored how simple geometric elements—squares, rectangles, circles, and lines—could be orchestrated temporally to create complex psychological effects through their systematic manipulation of scale, position, contrast, and timing. These visual experiments influenced Bass's works where a rigorous use of forms, typography, rhythm, and visual composition is used as narrative devices.

In this paragraph, three emblematic case studies will be examined to explain the influence of avant-garde animated artistic experiments in the works of Saul Bass: first, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955, dir. Otto Preminger) will be examined in relation to the experimental animations of Ruttmann and Richter, exploring how Bass translates abstract dynamism into an emotionally intense visualization of dependence and anguish. Subsequently, the case study of the title sequence of *Psycho* (1960, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) will then focus on the relation with Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonale*, which is achieved using fragmented and unsettling rhythms and the deconstruction of geometric forms, both of which foreshadow many psychological motion design techniques. Lastly, an analysis of *Vertigo* (1958, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) will discuss how Saul Bass combines elements from Oskar Fischinger's analogue *Optical Poem* (1938) and the new digital experiments produced by John Whitney's first computer.

4.1. "The Man with the Golden Arm" as Climax of Modernist Abstraction

The Designer's Title Period begins with the title sequence for *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955). The characters' photos were either removed or downplayed in the accompanying campaign, making Bass's recognizable shapes the focus [9]. The title sequence designed by Saul Bass for this film marks a radical turning point in the language of motion design: the title becomes an autonomous expressive microfilm, synthesizing the narrative content and emotional tension through a visual form reduced to the essential. The implied violence of the graphics reflects the history of a jazz musician who battled his drug addiction. The design subtly alludes to its content by abstracting the reference to heroin into a more conceptual engagement with the subject while still confronting it through the twisted shape of the arm itself. These titles, designed by Bass, are more conceptual in their sourcing and modernist in design. The limited formal vocabulary of lines, sans serif type, and graphic composition mark these titles as belonging to the International Style that emerged as the dominant post-war graphic design school.

The iconic element of the opening title sequence is the rectangular black bars that emerge, slide, misalign, generated in syncopated rhythm, in synchrony with Elmer Bernstein's jazz—a powerful metaphor for the protagonist's dependence and psychic fracture (Figure 10). Bass adopts experimental paradigms drawn from Walter Ruttmann and Hans Richter, both protagonists of the abstract cinema of the 1920s. Ruttmann develops a very particular and still largely unknown technique, perhaps based on wax forms, which allows him to work with masses rather than lines. Above all, the figures set in motion by Ruttmann are a mixture of something evanescent and at the same time extremely material. In particular, the similarities between the titles made by Bass for *The man with the golden arm* (1955) are noticeable with Ruttmann's *Opus IV* (1925) that is a short film in which the artist simplifies the technique by eliminating nuances, working more on simple geometric forms, more linear and less sinusoidal, while still recalling elements of mechanized civilization, especially speed and movement [30] (Figure 11). The rhythm of Ruttmann's lines with the sharp contrast between black and white recalls Bass's conceptual and minimal graphics, which allude to drug addiction.

Similarly, in *Rhythmus 21*, Richter animates rectangular forms in black and white according to a precise and modular visual metric (Figure 12). The rhythmic scansion of the bars in *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) follows exactly this mechanism: geometric forms that pulsate like visual beats, suggesting an internal disturbance without showing anything narrative. What is striking is how these sequences anticipate concepts of "visual music", where the image becomes a temporal expression, translating sounds and mental states into abstract visual gestures [9]. The sans serif typography, managed with rhythmic micro-movement, reflects the principles of clarity, legibility, and structural function; the

text is not only an information vehicle but an integrated rhythmic and visual element. His manipulation of typographic time transforms the written word into a kinetic gesture. The sequence thus becomes a visual crescendo: from rhythmic abstraction to the appearance of the distorted arm—a metaphor of the “crooked dealer” and addiction—closing the circle between form, contemporaneity, and narrative theme. The sequence also introduces the concept of “narrative visual metaphor” applied to cinematographic design. This approach demonstrates Bass’s ability to work simultaneously on multiple levels: semantic, graphic, and emotional. The result is a pre-verbal language that guides the viewer’s interpretation [31].



Figure 10. Still frames from *The Man with the Golden Arm* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1955.

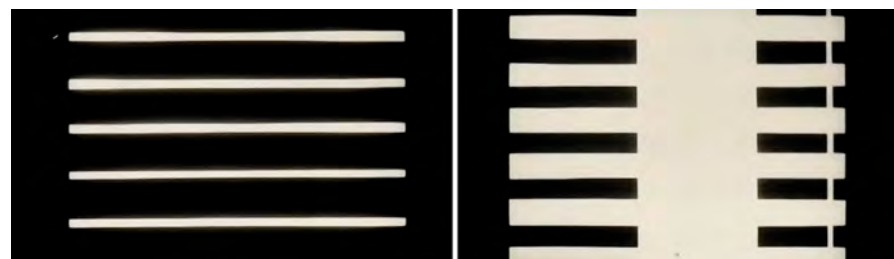


Figure 11. Still frame composition from *Opus IV* by Walter Ruttmann, 1924.

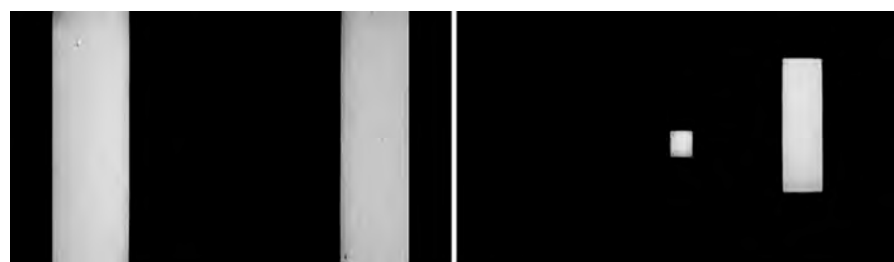


Figure 12. Still frame composition from *Rhythmus 21* by Hans Richter, 1921.

4.2. “Psycho” Schizophrenic Design for a Cult Movie

The title sequence created by Saul Bass for *Psycho* (1960) represents one of the expressive peaks of twentieth-century motion design. Composed of white linear bands on a black background that move syncopated, overlapping with an obsessive soundtrack by Bernard Herrmann, the title embodies a glacial, almost mathematical visual language that reflects and anticipates the fragmented mental state of the protagonists. Its construction is an example of pure “dynamic graphics,” where lines and typography are broken down and recomposed in a geometric dance of tension and division. The title design itself is a dramatization of the psychoanalytic term “schizophrenic”, which literally means a “splitting of the mind”, shown on screen by the splitting and disjuncture of the typography itself [9] (Figure 13). The moving bars that cross the screen have varying lengths and speeds, and the motions seem erratic. Only when the many components of the type momentarily align does the typography become readable. It is a title sequence where the fragmentation and momentary unities of schizophrenia are dramatized through the misalignment and break-up of the design into elements whose formal basis recalls the opening titles to *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955).



Figure 13. Still frames from *Psycho* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1960.

The influences of experiments in the field of abstract animation are evident, in particular the work of Viking Eggeling, and his famous abstract film *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924). Eggeling was influenced by the atmosphere that agitated the avant-garde pictorial circles that gravitated around Kandinsky; he frequented the Dadaists and became friends with Hans Richter. As early as 1916, Eggeling prepared sheets of paper with signs that he defined as “studies of abstract forms of nature”: a series of graphic signs that not only have the task of interpreting the essential lines of natural forms, but also aspire to a much higher purpose: trying to recognize the common and most recurring lines in those forms, and, above all, to identify the law that governs their similarities and differences. An arduous task, of a philosophical and scientific nature, approached with maniacal precision, which naturally leads,

but with fascinating results, to a common answer to philosophy and science: the rule that governs the forms of nature and their behaviour is that of opposites—positive/negative, black/white, high/low, horizontal/vertical, narrow/wide, and so on (Figure 14). *Symphonie Diagonale* is not only the first abstract short film in the history of cinema, but also the first abstract animated short film. The film is a short journey inside a series of white graphic signs on a black background that compose and decompose to the rhythm of a visual symphony [30]. In this work, Eggeling explores the rhythmic transformation of geometric forms in continuous movement, using a purely graphic vocabulary. Bass takes up this idea of composition by variation but declines it in an anxiety-inducing way: the lines do not flow harmoniously, but appear, disappear, and break in fits and starts, accentuating the perceptual discontinuity. The peculiarity of this sequence and its assonance with Eggeling’s work is its tense temporality: the acceleration of the lines, the sharp cuts, and the abrupt entrance of the typography create a “graphic choreography”.

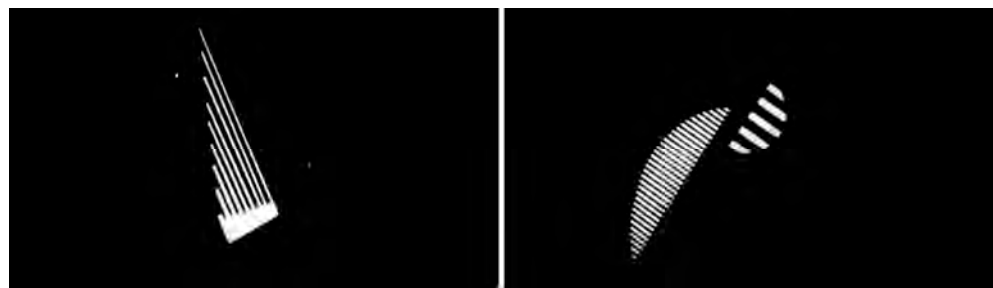


Figure 14. Still frame composition from *Symphonie diagonale* by Viking Eggeling, 1924.

Unlike Eggeling’s abstract symphony, *Psycho* (1960) builds a fragmented, syncopated structure, where dynamism becomes a visual symptom of trauma. The very concept of “graphic time”—that is, the synchronization between visual rhythm and musical rhythm—is exasperated here: the lines flow, slide horizontally or vertically, revealing and hiding the letters of the credits in a mechanical and implacable logic. In this sense, the sequence can also be read as a “graphic montage”: an abstract montage not of narrative images, but of pure visual forms. The lines appear to be representations of repression and the violent unconscious, such as blades, barriers, or fractures. The sans serif typeface is logical and well-organized, yet it gets disrupted, broken, and ripped to bits within the sequence. A feeling of instability is conveyed by the titles’ letters, which come and go as though they are deconstructed. The title’s visual construction suggests the idea of the decomposition of the self. The power of the *Psycho* sequence also lies in its role as an “anticipatory narrative device”: before even a single character appears, the viewer is immersed in a disturbing visual climate, marked by a claustrophobic rhythm. As Kirkham notes [31], the collaboration between Bass and Hitchcock is based on a shared understanding of the power of the graphic sign to anticipate profound narrative themes. *Psycho*’s design does not represent madness: it evokes it, letting it operate at a subliminal level.

4.3. Between Graphic Design and Digital Computer Art in “Vertigo” Opening Titles

The title sequence for Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Vertigo* (1958) brought Bass into collaboration with John Whitney who digitally produced the spirals that dominate this opening. It represented the fusion of commercial media production with avant-garde filmmaking that had been evolving throughout the 1950s, particularly in relation to television [32]. The title is a visual combination of obsession, mental instability, and identity dissolution, characterized by a graphic construction that contrasts close-ups of the female face with mesmerizing animated patterns. Bass creates a compositional system that combines geo-

metric abstraction, photography, typography, and computer graphics to create a visually captivating yet confusing experience. The opening of the female eye, followed by the fading into the spirals, recalls a psychic subjective view: the viewer is dragged into perceptual instability (Figure 15). This device is already present in surrealism, but Bass transforms it into a replicable graphic code, compatible with the language of design [9].



Figure 15. Still frames from *Vertigo* title sequence by Saul Bass, 1958.

The central element of the title sequence is the spiral, a symbolic figure that returns obsessively both graphically and narratively: it represents an introspective and regressive movement in the psyche. Bass makes it a visual emblem of mental vertigo and the compulsive cycle of desire. The analogue computer that John Whitney used for the titles of *Vertigo* was built from an obsolete US Army M-5 Anti-Aircraft tracking system from World War II into a machine that used a pen to draw elaborate patterns which would then be photographed with an animation stand. The spirals generated by Whitney move and expand following a principle of logarithmic growth, evoking both infinity and loss of control: visual distortion is not an end, but integrated into a narrative logic [33]. This visual creation is reminiscent of Oskar Fischinger's abstract works, especially his well-known *An Optical Poem* (1938), in which geometric elements timed to a musical piece (Liszt's *Ungarische Rhapsodie*) create a synesthetic and immersive experience (Figure 16). Like Fischinger, Bass acknowledged that visual movement may elicit psychological tensions and abstract emotions without the need for overt storytelling [30].

Bass reinterprets this tradition in *Vertigo* (1958) by using spirals as a visual metaphor for the protagonist's mental state of vertigo, disorientation, and obsessive spiral, in addition to using them as a graphic device. The patterns generated by Whitney, with their mathematical regularity, are the exact opposite of visual chaos, yet they produce a disturbing reaction, precisely because of their hyper-controlled symmetry. In addition to being just captivating, this use of dynamic geometry prepares the audience for the film's central

theme—the dissolution of illusion and reality – by putting them in a condition of altered perception. In this way, *Vertigo* turns into a real modern “optical poem”— a case where visual psychoanalysis and graphic abstraction converse, turning the opening titles into a symbolic border between the visual consciousness and unconsciousness of the movie.

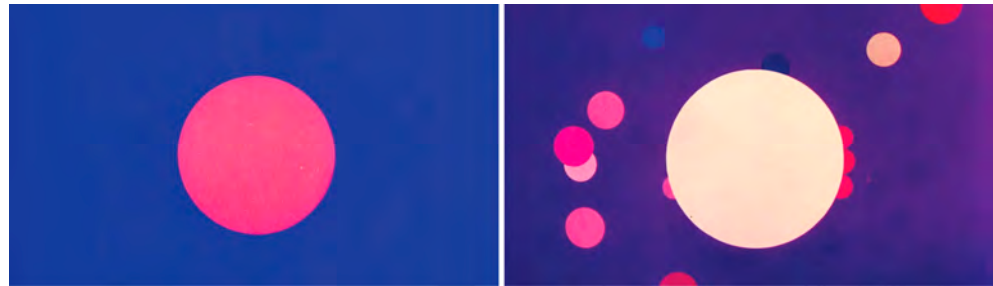


Figure 16. Still frame composition from *An Optical Poem* by Oskar Fischinger, 1938.

The *Vertigo* (1958) sequence has had a lasting influence on visual storytelling, not only in cinema but also in music videos, advertising, and digital design. The use of generative animation, vector-inspired visual transitions, and controlled repeating patterns has become a standard grammar in motion design. This technical innovation directly influenced the “psychedelic” aesthetic of many subsequent productions, where spirals and vortices became universal symbols of perceptual alteration. The *Doctor Who* (1963–1989, dir. Sydney Newman) title sequences have used the concept of a “time vortex” for decades—a spiral tunnel for time travel that, despite changes from analogue to digital, remains present in all episodes of the series, including the most recent ones. Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968, dir. Stanley Kubrick) also shows, in its stargate sequence, a strong influence from Bass and Whitney’s work on *Vertigo* through the use of geometric forms in continuous motion and the hypnotic effect of falling through an indefinite space.

5. Conclusions: Saul Bass Beyond Modernism

Bass’s works are artistic and cultural artefacts that, in addition to demonstrating the origins and influences that generated them, provide a picture of a transitional moment in the history of art, entertainment, and design. Considering the influence of his modernist teachers, Bass’s works echo the principles—both ethical and aesthetic—and the ambitions of modernist movements, but adapted them into a distinctly new form and environment, that is, Hollywood and the American entertainment industry, “just as Walter Gropius, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Gyorgy Kepes transplanted Bauhaus ideals to Chicago and New York in post–World War II America” [4] (p. 23).

In his works, whether commercials, posters, visual identities, opening titles, or his own films, the eloquent similarities in the concept of space and geometry with Lissitzky, Mondrian, and Van Doesburg [12] evolve and engage in dynamic forces inspired by the audio-visual experiments conducted in the same years [9]. These new hybrid creations subvert the compositional rules with an uncertain purpose and an ambiguous appeal. The dynamic dimension of Bass design allowed him to bridge together science and art by using, for instance, the above-mentioned experiments conducted by the filmmaker John Whitney, who in 1959 designed spiralling light patterns (Lissajous forms) for the opening title of the film *Vertigo* (1958) [2] (p. 179).

Bass’s innovative ideas perfectly answer the requirements of the flourishing (American) entertainment market he worked with for most of his life, spreading into Hollywood movies, advertising, and graphic design. In doing so, his visual styles became “less pure, more popular, accessible, vernacular”—as called by Miriam Hansen (1999) [34]—and so

capable of reaching a wider audience. In Bass's works, the distinctions between elite and mass, autonomous art and popular culture are blurred and so are the artistic genres, the roles of the designer, and the aesthetic canons [35]. Cubism, abstract expressionism, Brecht's theatre, Eisenstein's and Godard's cinema, and Walter Ruttmann's virtuous experiments are joined by commercial genres and "vernacular" forms of cultural practice entailing "connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability" [34] (p. 243).

Bass is a pioneer in this hybridization, and his works go beyond traditional hierarchies: they quote the masters but address a wider audience by reworking expressive forms such as advertising, comics, and animation with a fragmented and democratic aesthetic [36]. Bass's work paves the way for the conscious postmodern rejection of the clear distinction between high and low culture and of the canonization of taste. His seamless integration of commercial design principles with avant-garde aesthetics—evident in how the *Vertigo* (1958) sequence borrows from abstract expressionist art while serving a Hollywood entertainment function—exemplifies what Jameson identifies as postmodernism's collapse of hierarchical cultural boundaries. Similarly, Bass's approach to title design as simulacra, where the opening sequence creates its own reality rather than simply introducing the film's narrative (as seen in *North by Northwest*'s geometric abstractions that exist independently of the story's content), resonates with Baudrillard's concept of simulation preceding reality. Bass's design philosophy seems to mediate Baudrillard's veiled pessimistic thoughts about the loss of authentic referents with Jameson's more analytical attempts to define postmodernism as a cultural logic. For instance, Bass's use of corporate visual languages in film titles—the clean, systematic typography and geometric forms that could equally serve advertising or art gallery contexts—demonstrates how postmodern design operates in what Jameson terms the 'perpetual present,' where commercial and artistic aesthetics become indistinguishable. If the first sees in postmodern sensibility the new condition of culture, now inextricably linked to the realm of economy and production [36] (pp. 186–187), the second sees in the typical pastiche of postmodernism the culture of the everyday, of the reassuring and the nostalgic, but also of the experimental and the synesthetic [36] (pp. 191–192), the same characteristics described here in reference to the work of Saul Bass.

This study contributes significantly to the historical understanding of cinematic title sequence design through the identification and analysis of direct connections between the artistic avant-gardes of the first half of the twentieth century and the work of Saul Bass. The research demonstrates how Bass did not operate in creative isolation but consciously drew from and reinterpreted the visual languages of the European avant-garde [37]: from the kinetic experiments of Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, and Walter Ruttmann in pioneering video art, to the compositional and typographic principles developed by the Bauhaus and systematized by theorists such as György Kepes. The innovation of the study lies in having traced a precise genealogy of these influences, documenting how artistic movements that were initially experimental found a second life and mass diffusion through the cinematic medium. This process of "democratization" of the avant-gardes represents a cultural phenomenon of particular relevance, which illuminates the dynamics of circulation and transformation of visual languages between high and low culture, between artistic experimentation and commercial communication.

Furthermore, the analysis of Saul Bass's work holds particular significance for understanding the evolution of contemporary motion design, as his linguistic approach continues to profoundly influence current design practice. Title sequence designer Kyle Cooper represents the most emblematic example of this continuity. His celebrated sequence for *Se7en* (1995, dir. David Fincher), considered a milestone of contemporary design, demonstrates how Bass's compositional principles—graphic synthesis, metaphorical narrativity, techno-

logical experimentation—have been reinterpreted through new digital possibilities. This influence also extends to British motion designers such as Daniel Kleinman, responsible for the James Bond title sequences, who applies Bass’s principles of symbolization and narrative synthesis in his work. Bass’s impact is also evident in contemporary television production, from the sequences of *Mad Men* (2007, dir. Matthew Weiner) to those of *Catch Me If You Can* (2002, dir. Steven Spielberg) where designers like Steve Fuller, Olivier Kuntzel, and Florence Deygas continue to apply his minimalist approach and his ability to “condition the audience” through visual metaphors [38]. The value of the research therefore lies in documenting how his principles of simplicity, conceptual clarity, and emotional resonance remain relevant and influential, highlighting the persistence of a design model that has been able to navigate technological transformations while maintaining its communicative effectiveness intact.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, V.M. and G.P.; methodology, V.M. and G.P.; validation, V.M. and G.P.; formal analysis, V.M. and G.P.; investigation, V.M. and G.P.; resources, V.M. and G.P.; writing—original draft preparation, V.M. and G.P.; writing—review and editing, V.M. and G.P.; visualization, V.M. and G.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The APC was funded by John Cabot University’s Open Access Publishing Support Fund.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were generated during the study. All sources cited are publicly available in the referenced literature.

Acknowledgments: This article shows the results of a common discussion and elaboration work, but the writing of paragraphs can be attributed to Vincenzo Maselli (1. Introduction: Theoretical framework and objectives of the study; 2. Structure and Methodology; 3. The dialogue with the modernist principles) and Giulia Panadisi (4. The narrative power of experimental moving images; 5. Conclusions: Saul Bass beyond Modernism).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Krasner, J. *Motion Graphic Design: Applied History and Aesthetics*; Taylor and Francis Group: Abingdon, UK, 2013.
2. Bass, J.; Kirkham, P. *Saul Bass: A Life in Film and Design*; Laurence King: London, UK, 2022.
3. Baroni, D.; Vitta, M. *Storia Del Design Grafico*; Longanesi: Milan, Italy, 2003.
4. Horak, J.C. *Saul Bass: Anatomy of Film Design*; University Press of Kentucky: Lexington, KY, USA, 2014.
5. Seckler, D. *Interview to György Kepes*; Audio tape recording; The Archives of American Art: Washington, DC, USA, 1968.
6. Kepes, G. *Language of Vision*; Theobald: Chicago, IL, USA, 1944.
7. Gordon, P. *Synaesthetics: Art as Synaesthesia*; Bloomsbury Academic: London, UK, 2019.
8. Crawford, S.L. Modernism in Graphic Design: A Visual Revolution. *Inkbot Design*, 2025. Available online: <https://inkbotdesign.com/modernism-in-graphic-design/> (accessed on 25 July 2025).
9. Betancourt, M. *The History of Motion Graphics: From Avant-Garde to Industry in the United States*; Wildside Press: Rockville, MD, USA, 2013.
10. Rose, G. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th ed.; SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2016.
11. Droste, M. *Bauhaus*; Taschen: Köln, Germany, 2006.
12. Bendazzi, G. *Animazione. Una Storia Globale*; Utet: Milan, Italy, 2017; Volume 1.
13. Efrussi, T. After the Ball. Hannes Meyer Presenting the Bauhaus in Moscow. *Moving Away*, 2023, Volume 3. Available online: <https://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/2083/after-the-ball> (accessed on 8 June 2025).
14. Moholy-Nagy, L. *Vision in Motion*; Paul Theobald & Co: Chicago, IL, USA, 1947.
15. Art of the Title. Available online: <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/anatomy-of-a-murder/> (accessed on 8 June 2025).
16. Brockmann, S. *A Critical History of German Film*; Camden House Publishing: Rochester, NY, USA, 2010.
17. Néret, G. *Henri Matisse Cut-Outs*; Taschen: Köln, Germany, 1994.
18. Ray, B. Analyzing Political Art to Get at Historical Fact: Guernica and the Spanish Civil War. *Soc. Stud.* **2006**, *97*, 168–171. [CrossRef]

19. Lupton, E. *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture*; Princeton Architectural Press: New York, NY, USA, 1996.
20. Poynor, R. *No More Rules: Graphic Design and Postmodernism*; Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, USA, 2003.
21. Grohmann, W. *Paul Klee*; Abrams: New York, NY, USA, 1954.
22. Art of the Title. Available online: <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/the-man-with-the-golden-arm/> (accessed on 10 June 2025).
23. Maselli, V. (Typo)Graphic Novels—Text as Pictorial Element of the Page in Cutting-Edge-Picture Book-Making. In *Comics and Graphic Novels. International Perspectives, Education, and Culture*; IntechOpen: London, UK, 2024.
24. Art of the Title. Available online: <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/north-by-northwest/> (accessed on 25 July 2025).
25. Art of the Title. Available online: <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/its-a-mad-mad-mad-mad-world/> (accessed on 25 July 2025).
26. Orazi, V. Avanguardia e scrittura calligrafica: Per una riflessione teorica con spunti ispanici. In *Learti Figurative Nelle Letterature Iberiche e Iberoamericane*; Londero, R., Ed.; Unipress: Padua, Italy, 2001; Volume 1, pp. 145–162.
27. Caputo, A.; Mercante, A.; Baldassarra, R. Il calligramma come scrittura filosofica? Questioni teoriche ed esperienze didattiche. *Logoi.ph—J. Philos.* **2018**, *4*, 208–224.
28. Moholy-Nagy, L. The new typography. In *Looking Closer 3, Classic Writings on Graphic Design*; Bierut, M., Ed.; Allworth Press: New York, NY, USA, 1999; pp. 21–22. (First published in Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919–1923; 1923).
29. Toschi, C. Lo Spazio della Pagina: Topografie della Nuova Tipografia (1912–1930). *Riv. Lett. Mod. Comp.* **2017**, *69*, 263–281.
30. Alonge, G.; Amaducci, A. *Passo Uno. L'immagine Animata Dal Cinema al Digitale*; Lindau: Turin, Italy, 2007.
31. Kirkham, P. Reassessing the Saul Bass and Alfred Hitchcock Collaboration. *West 86th J. Decor. Arts Des. Hist. Mater. Cult.* **2011**, *18*, 50–85. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Solana, G.; Borneau, A. *Uncredited: Graphic Design and Opening Titles in Movies*; Indexbooks: Barcelona, Spain, 2001.
33. Whitney, J. *Digital Harmony: On the Complementarity of Music and Visual Art*; Byte Books: Peterborough, UK, 1980.
34. Hansen, M.B. The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism. In *Disciplining Modernism*; Caughie, P.L., Ed.; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2009; pp. 242–258.
35. Krauss, R. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*; The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1986.
36. Storey, J. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 5th ed.; Pearson Longman: London, UK, 2009.
37. Dickerson, J. *Thinking Made Visible. Movement, Narrative and the Work of Saul Bass*; RIT Press: Rochester, NY, USA, 2025.
38. Allison, D. *Film Title Sequences: A Critical Anthology*; Independently Published: London, UK, 2021.

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.