

WAAR LIGHT ONZE
BEHOEFTE AAN
GRAFISCHE
COMMUNICATIE
NOG ?

EEN VISUELE ESSAY OVER

DIGITALISERING IN DESIGN



...terug

KIJKEN

Although we as humans have always

felt the need to communicate with one another—as we did even with cave paintings—true graphic design emerged in the Middle Ages. While the Middle Ages saw the invention of the first printing press, which made spreading information much easier, this would not have been possible without the development of writing systems.

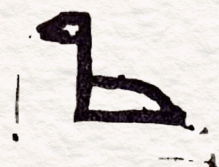
These early writing systems made it possible to record information and represented an essential step in the development of the written word. Partly thanks to this development, the Middle Ages saw the

emergence of a new essential component of graphic design at the time: typography. Thanks to the growing global population, rising literacy rates, and improved connections between regions, the need for information in the form of text and images was greater than ever during the Middle Ages. And typography played a major role in this; typefaces, font sizes, and layouts were used to create visual hierarchy and aesthetics. [1][2]

Since these early developments, we have seen a constant stream of new technologies and ideologies emerge. For example, in the early 20th century, the Bauhaus introduced a new approach to graphic design. They sought to achieve a simplified and functional aesthetic, thereby laying the foundation for modern design. [3]

Following the Bauhaus's innovations, graphic design has made enormous strides, but its core principles remain the same.

Graphic design fulfills part of the need to share information with one another.



And although graphic design plays a major role in sharing information, the internet makes this even easier in our digital world.

The internet originated as a means of communication for the U.S. Department of Defense and was then called ARPANET. This network was initially intended only for government and educational institutions. Communication became increasingly easier thanks to ARPANET; for example, the first email addresses were created in the 1970s using the “@” symbol, and on May 3, 1978, the first email spam was sent to 400 people. In 1993, the internet became available to consumers as well, marking the beginning of the internet as we know it today. [4][5]

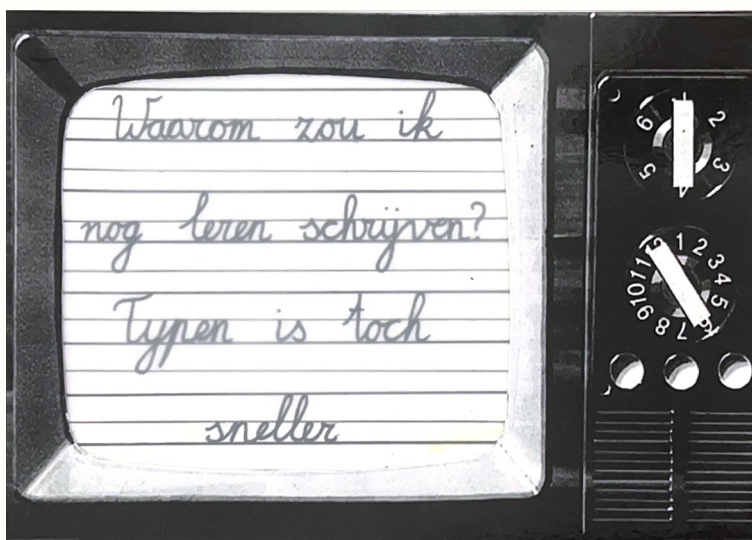


In addition to offering more opportunities for communication, the internet also requires us, as people, to navigate this new digital world—and to do so from a young age. This raises the question of whether it is still necessary to teach children to write, given that they will primarily be typing.

Research shows that writing and typing have different effects on various cognitive functions. Recognizing letters is a preliminary step in learning to read fluently. Researchers believe that children learn to distinguish between letters by writing them.

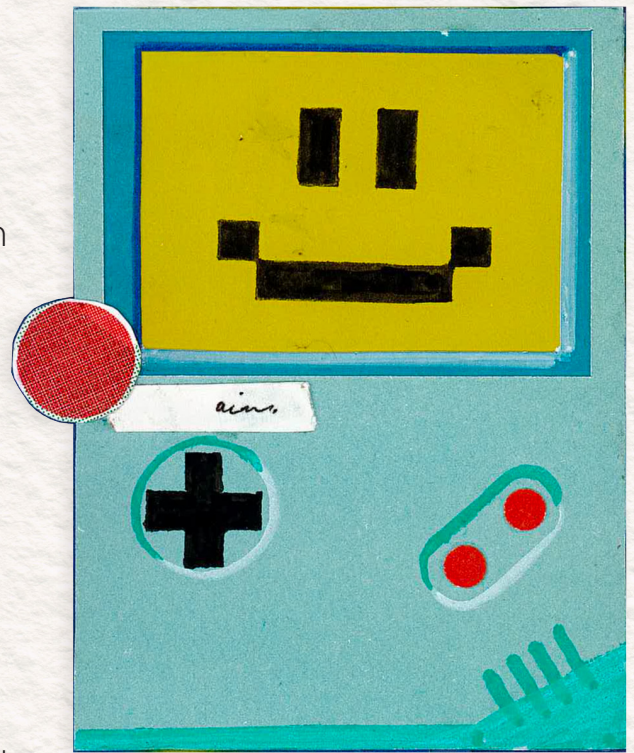
This hypothesis was tested by teaching a group of children who could not yet read to recognize letters—either by having them write the letters or by simply showing them the letters. Both groups

successfully learned to recognize the letters, but the group that learned by writing showed higher brain activity in an area associated with reading while viewing the letters. [6]



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also playing an increasingly important role in our lives; it has already become an integral part of large companies, search engines, and websites. While AI can solve problems for some people, it can also create problems.

“Digitization isn’t always fair. Systems act according to what their designers have programmed them to do. They’ve been trained using a specific set of example data collected by humans. As a result, they aren’t neutral; they act in accordance with the assumptions of their designers and trainers, as well as the datasets used to train them.” [7]



AI may have inherited biases from its creator, but a bias can also arise from the AI learning incorrectly.

For example, an algorithm was created to detect “toxic comments”; the algorithm was designed to assign a higher score to a toxic comment.

Because the term “gay” is frequently used in a toxic context, the algorithm recognized the word “gay” as a toxic comment and assigned a higher score to it—even in comments like “I am gay,” which are not toxic at all. These kinds of patterns lead to discriminatory algorithms and biases in AI. [8]

It's not just how the systems are designed that affects us, but also how we use them. AI uses existing data and transforms it into something "new," because while AI can mimic our creativity based on existing patterns, these algorithms cannot come up with anything new.

And yet we are becoming increasingly dependent on AI; we use it not only for daily tasks but also for complex decisions. This can cause us as humans to become increasingly lazy, because we are not challenged to improve our own skills. This dependence can also lead to a decline in our critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. [9]



Research by MIT students on the use of chatbots like ChatGPT shows that if you want to remember something, you shouldn't use ChatGPT.

The study* involved having 54 people write essays over a four-month period. These 54 people were divided into three groups: ChatGPT users, Google search engine users, and those who used no tools.

And what did they find? After four months, the brains of the ChatGPT users had become the laziest of all; their brain activity was the lowest across the board. Not only that, but they had already forgotten most of the information they had written "themselves." [10]



*The study has not yet undergone peer review. However, the researchers did not want to wait to publish their findings because they believe it is important to establish policies regarding the use of ChatGPT in schools and universities as soon as possible.

Although we are encouraged to use AI everywhere—for example, by companies and websites that have integrated AI into their own systems—we see a trend in graphic design toward a certain humanity. For instance, in 2025 we saw the “human touch” trend, which refers to the idea that it’s okay to make mistakes. And in 2026, this trend is taken even further, with a “mistake” becoming an asset to the final design.



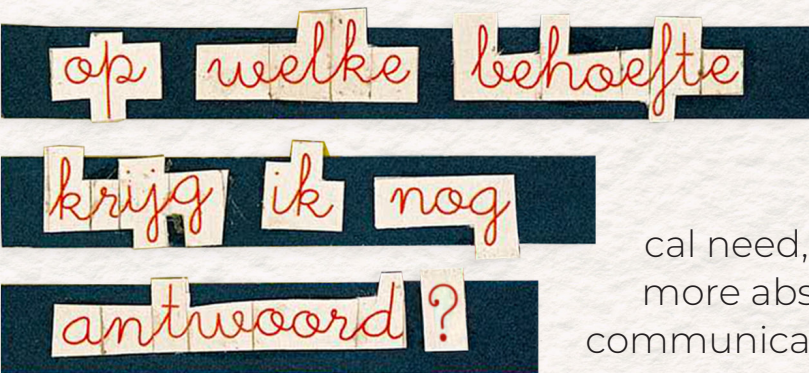
“In a world where anyone can generate perfect illustrations at the push of a button, the most rebellious thing a designer can do is draw something ugly.”

This design trend shows that we’re searching for something human, because what AI finds difficult is the awkward, low-effort mark of human laziness. [11]

Perhaps this trend is a reaction to an accelerated world, in which we crave imperfection.



Because when we look at how design used to be done—such as how, back in art school, everything had to be done with a drawing pen instead of at the push of a button—it’s not surprising that more time was spent deliberating on certain design choices. After all, it took much more time and effort to create something.

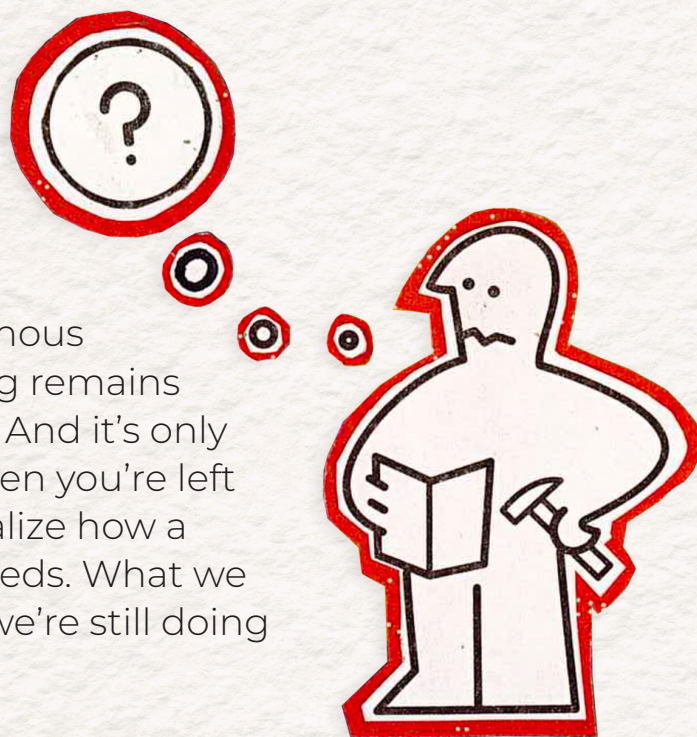


According to Charles Eames, good design is a response to a need—this could be a physical need, such as a comfortable chair, or a more abstract desire, such as the wish to communicate information clearly.

But these days, this desire no longer comes from the consumer; it comes from the seller. The designer does indeed respond to a need, but whether that is the right one remains to be seen. [12]

While a furniture retailer ponders how to sell even more sofas, we can look to the Swedish furniture giant IKEA, which uses graphic design to address the real need.

Because while they release an enormous number of new collections, one thing remains unchanged: the instruction manual. And it's only when you no longer have one, or when you're left with an unclear manual, that you realize how a clear manual actually meets your needs. What we used to do through cave paintings, we're still doing today: communicating.



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