PAYKAREH
Volume 15 Issue 43 Spring 2026 Pages 1-16

Original Research Article

Grunge Style as Deconstructive Graphic Design: A Case Study of David Carson

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Received: 13 July 2025 Revised: 7 December 2025 Accepted: 2 January 2026

Abstract

Introduction: The grunge style emerged in the mid-1980s, coinciding with the spread of postmodernism in art and the introduction of deconstructive ideas. With his innovative approach and unique designs, David Carson brought this style from the realm of music into graphic design. The main objective of this research is to explain the characteristics of the grunge style as a deconstructive graphic design by examining its connection to the foundations of deconstructive thinking in Carson's works. Additionally, this study seeks to answer the following question: «Which visual features of Grange are most frequent in his works?» and «Which dimensions of deconstructive thinking are more evident in these designs?»

Research Method: This study is developmental in its objective, qualitative in its data nature, and a case study in its design. To achieve this, written resources on deconstructive thinking, deconstructive graphic design, and the grunge style were reviewed, and, accordingly, a checklist of analytical features and a conceptual model were developed. Following this, 369 poster and layout examples from David Carson's website were examined using a checklist of grunge style characteristics. Then, three works that best matched the characteristics of the grange were selected and analyzed using the research's theoretical framework.

Findings: Examining 369 samples of Carson's work reveals that the characteristics of the grunge style are primarily manifested in three areas: Production method, composition, and use of texture. The five most frequent features (over 73%), in order, are: Computer-generated, fragmented elements, extra or confusing elements, use of texture, and elements with depth and dimension. In contrast, three features, including grunge typography, torn edges, and the use of kodalith photos, had the lowest frequency (below 12%).

Conclusion: Analysis of three selected samples shows that deconstructive thinking in David Carson's works is evident through the use of grunge typography or incomplete images to create polysemy, the inclusion of extra elements to draw attention to the margins, and the utilization of computer or traditional techniques that lead to intertextuality and the lack of independence in the work. The combination of qualitative analysis with the abundant evidence of grunge-style characteristics clearly shows that deconstruction in Carson's works is primarily based on creating polysemy, achieved through frequently used elements such as fragmentation, extra elements, texture, and depth.

Keywords

Grunge, Deconstruction, Graphic Design, Deconstructive Typography, David Carson

How to cite this article: Mesripour, AH, & Salehi, S. (2026). Grunge Style as Deconstructive Graphic Design: A Case Study of David Carson. *Paykareh*, 15(43), 1-16.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22055/pyk.2025.20478

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Introduction and Problem Definition

The emergence of the grunge style in graphic design coincided with the rise of postmodernism and deconstructive thought in the 1980s. This thought, which sought to disrupt stability, hierarchy, and centrality in texts and structures, quickly manifested in art and then in graphic design, giving rise to «deconstructive graphic design». In the meantime, David Carson, with his unique, rule-breaking designs in the magazine «Ray Gun», brought this design approach to its peak, and his work became a visual and practical symbol of the grunge style. Since the grunge style in Carson's works is, in practice, an attempt to disrupt the principles of modern and orderly design, many critics consider these works a reflection of deconstructive thinking. But the main gap in the research lies here: Despite the apparent similarities and common claims, there is no systematic, substantiated analytical model in the research literature that precisely explains the relationship between deconstructive thought and the grunge style. In other words, it is still unclear how the main characteristics of the grunge style in David Carson's works are systematically linked to deconstructive philosophical concepts and which of these dimensions are more prominent in his works. Therefore, the present research seeks to address this gap by providing a coherent analytical framework and answering several key questions, thereby expanding knowledge in this field. The main question of the research is how to explain and elucidate the connection between the grunge style and deconstructionist thought in Carson's works. Furthermore, to provide a comprehensive answer, the research also addresses the following key questions: «Which characteristics of the grunge style are most prevalent and visually prominent in David Carson's works?» and «Which aspects of deconstructive thinking are more evident in his designs?»

Research Method

This research is of a fundamental nature; it seeks to expand the boundaries of knowledge in deconstructive graphic design by presenting a new analytical framework and establishing a reasoned and structured relationship between the theoretical foundations of deconstruction and the visual characteristics of the grunge style in the works of David Carson. Furthermore, the present research also falls under the category of case studies. Research that involves the detailed description and analysis of a specific subject or instance is referred to as a case study (Yin, 2018, 35). In this research, David Carson has been chosen as the subject of study because he is considered one of the well-known and influential figures of the grunge movement in graphic design and is referred to as the father of grunge typography (Patterson & Saville, 2012, 86). In this study, deconstructive thinking and deconstructive graphic design are considered the foundations of the grunge style. These theoretical foundations are derived from the study of printed and electronic sources and summarized in two diagrams to provide an analytical model for examining the works from a deconstructive perspective. Based on the literature review, a researcher-created checklist is compiled in a table to identify the key features of grunge graphic design as observable variables in Carson's works. Next, 369 samples of David Carson's graphic designs are examined using this checklist to determine the frequency percentage of each grunge characteristic in his works. After analyzing the results and extracting the frequency of grunge characteristics, three works exhibiting the highest levels of these features are selected and analyzed in detail using a specified analytical framework. In analyzing David Carson's works, a mixed-methods approach has been used: initially, all samples are examined using a quasi-quantitative method, and then a few are analyzed qualitatively. Mixed-methods research is a study in

which quantitative and qualitative methods are employed simultaneously (Creswell, 2002, 208).

Research Background

To gain a more precise understanding of the grunge style and its characteristics in graphic design, this research focuses on the analysis of David Carson's works. Initially, the relevant research backgrounds were examined. The results of this review indicate that no research has directly analyzed the characteristics of the grunge style in graphic design or examined David Carson's work independently; however, there are significant studies in the field of deconstructive graphic design. «Shams Javi» (2013) analyzes Wolfgang Weingart's influence on the formation of deconstructive design in his thesis and examines its connection with the Swiss style and New Wave. He also introduces grunge as one of the techniques associated with Weingart's works. «Mobasheri» (2010) also examines the impact of deconstructive ideas on typography in print advertising design, identifying features such as random organization and multilayering as characteristics of deconstructive graphic design in the works of April Greiman, Neville Brody, and David Carson. Additionally, «Poynor» (2003) in the book «No More Rules: Graphic Design and Postmodernism» elaborates on the background of deconstruction and its impact on graphic design, briefly mentioning the grunge style and the work of David Carson. Additionally, «Heller and Fili» (2006) in the book «Stylepedia: A Guide to the Styles, Features, and Concepts of Graphic Design», first introduce grunge in the realm of music and then in graphic design, with a focus on typefaces, and also mention David Carson. «Gómez-Palacio and Vit» (2011) also examine the history of grunge typefaces in their book «Graphic Design, Referenced: A Visual Guide to the Language, Applications, and History of Graphic Design», and mention the Ray Gun Magazine, although they do not delve into the deep relationship between this magazine and the grunge style. Overall, a review of the research literature shows that not only has no independent, systematic study been conducted on the grunge style, but the existing materials are also often scattered and lack a coherent analytical framework, primarily presented in the context of introducing a specific period in the history of graphic design. Therefore, the necessity of conducting the present research to more precisely elucidate the characteristics of the grunge style and its related theoretical foundations becomes clearly evident.

Deconstructive Thinking

The concept of deconstruction was first introduced in 1967 by Jacques Derrida in his book «Grammatology» (Derrida, 1977, 14). This approach, namely deconstruction, is a subset of post-structuralist critical theory and paves the way for postmodernism (Newall & Pooke, 2021, 169). Derrida's term «différance» encompasses both Saussure's idea of difference and the continuous deferral of meaning. He argues that the meaning of a sign is constantly deferred because its ultimate meaning depends on the meanings of other signs in the text or image. The process of examining the continuous referencing of signs to one another is called deconstruction (Newall & Pooke, 2021, 97). In deconstructive thinking, the text always contains unseen elements beyond the data (Ahmadpanah & Afarin, 2014, 54). Thus, in the deconstructive interpretation, writing acquires a multidimensional, multifaceted nature, and the multiplicity of interpretations undermines the foundations of rational and logical ideas. In this view, a single meaning, stability, and coherence have no place, and each text can

simultaneously carry multiple and even contradictory meanings (Richards, 2008, 18). Deconstruction in postmodernism is recognized as an approach that highlights the margins and moves away from the rationality of modernity. Lyotard believes that the value systems and overarching ideologies that were proposed to organize society are no longer reliable and have themselves become contentious issues (Lyotard, 1984, 40). This perspective rejects the all-encompassing rationality of modernity, which sought to explain everything within a single framework. «Paul Feyerabend», a philosopher of science, also believes about scientific methods: «The only rule that does not make the process stagnant is that everything goes» (Feyerabend, 1993, 5). Therefore, deconstruction is considered one of the main pillars of postmodernism. Another important aspect of deconstructive thot is the principle of «intertextuality». Based on this principle, it can be said that no work exists independently of other works, and no text exists separately from other texts; rather, works are considered complementary to each other and are interconnected through an intertwined network. In fact, each text in some way feeds off the results or paths present in other texts and is not completely independent (Ahmadpanah & Afarin, 2014, 58). This issue can be linked to the diversity and extreme eclecticism present in postmodern art and culture (Newall & Pooke, 2021, 186-187). All the consequences and aspects of deconstructive thinking examined in the written sources can be classified into four main categories, as shown in Diagram 1.

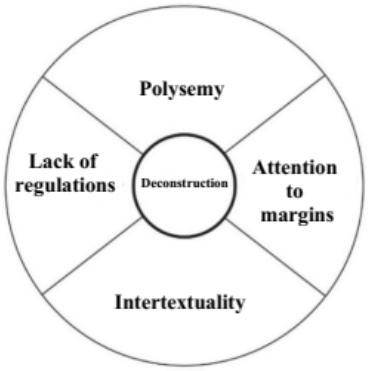


Diagram 1. General characteristics of deconstruction, based on a review of written sources. Source: Authors.

Deconstruction in Graphic Design

In the 1980s, the Cranbrook Academy of Art, under the leadership of Catherine McCoy, provided the groundwork for linking post-structuralist ideas with graphic design. This academy paved the way for innovative approaches to design by introducing disruptions in text composition, such as dividing text into irregular columns and creating staggered reading paths. Students of this academy played a significant role in the dissemination of post-structuralist thot in the visual arts (Lupton & Miller, 1994; Poynor, 2003, 50-51). In the early 1990s, Philip Meggs used the term «deconstruction» in graphic design and typography, defining it as «the disintegration of a unified whole or the disruption of the underlying order of graphic design». In deconstructive graphic design, illegibility is presented as a central concept, aiming to open meaning to the audience and invite them to actively participate in the process of interpretation and meaning-making. Lupton and Miller (1994) also believe that the study of deconstructive typography examines graphic structures that enable the dramatic influence of visual forms on written content. In this approach, graphic design serves as a critical tool for challenging established principles, revealing, and

revising display norms (Poynor, 2003, 66-67). In general, the characteristics of deconstructive graphic design are observable in Diagram 2.



Diagram 2. General characteristics of deconstructive graphic design, based on a review of written sources. Source: Authors.

The Emergence of Grunge

With the emergence of postmodernism in graphic design after the 1970s, several relatively cohesive deconstructive styles emerged in the field. At the same time, especially in the late 20th century, more designers turned to intuition-based design, abandoning rational frameworks. In fact, postmodernism in graphic design emerged from conditions in which designers, disillusioned with constructivist methods and grid systems, sought new paths. Among the movements in this field known as deconstructive styles, one can generally refer to the New Wave, Punk, and Grunge styles (Mobasheri, 2010). Grunge entered the mainstream of music art in the fall of 1991, following the release of Nirvana's «Smells Like Teen Spirit». Seattle, considered the center of this style's development, was a pathetic, depressing city. This style emerged from this city but did not remain confined to it, spreading worldwide (Yarm, 2011). Grunge among young people emerged more as a culture than merely an artistic style, playing an anti-fashion role against the mainstream fashion trends. This style was close to performance art, and those who operated in this domain had a disheveled, rebellious, and antisocial appearance. Grunge music reflected the dissatisfaction and indifference of the youth of that era (Heller, 2015, 202; Heller & Fili, 2006, 149; Yarm, 2011, 427-445). The 1990s were marked by a media explosion, during which magazines occupied a significant portion of the media space. David Carson, during these very years, brought about the highest level of disorder and deviation from conventional rules in magazine graphic design (Worthington et al., 2008, 10). He conveyed the main message of his compositions through the visual power of typography. This approach in graphic design later became known as the grunge graphic design movement (Adams et al., 2019, 23).

David Carson and Ray Gun

Carson's disregard for graphic design and editorial rules began during his time at «Beach Culture» magazine in the 1980s. In this magazine, he did not set a specific frame for composing elements. He also used the worst available typefaces to create his attractive typography (Poynor, 2003, 62). Marvin Scott Jarrett, who had seen Carson's work in Beach Culture Magazine, asked him to become the art director at Ray Gun. He had more creative freedom at Ray Gun to establish an emotional connection with the audience. The result of Carson's creative freedom in the graphic design of the Ray Gun Magazine made it a paradigm of graphic design, and this magazine became the most famous project in the grunge style (Gomez-Palacio & Vit, 2011, 149; Poynor, 2003, 62-63) (See Fig. 1).



Fig 1. Two pages from Ray Gun under the art direction of David Carson. Source: Carson, 2001.

Carson, by holding workshops and serving as the art director of Ray Gun Magazine, introduced the world of graphic design to an experimental approach; a method that was novel for many designers. His successful collaboration with major companies further established his deconstructive style. Rule-breaking and adherence to a disruptive approach are considered key characteristics of Carson's design, as he disregarded any rules to effectively communicate with the audience (Poynor, 2003, 61-62). Carson used computer techniques in «Ray Gun» and «Beach Culture», disregarding conventional spacing rules by creating unconventional gaps between letters and words. His techniques included manipulated typography, distorted letters, and disorganized compositions. Sometimes these techniques were used to better convey the subject, and at other times they were used experimentally and without reason (Gomez-Palacio & Vit, 2011, 330; Heller & Fili, 2006, 149). In summary, the characteristics of the grunge style, as derived from the literature review, have been classified into three categories: elements, composition, and production method. Table 1 shows this summary.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Grunge Style in Graphic Design. Source: Authors.

Elements	Visual	Use of Kodalith photos / Distortion / Texture creation / Noise or grain / Dirt / Color spray / Use of stains / Torn edges / Confusing additional elements
	Textual	Not using standard typefaces/ typography influenced by graffiti Distressed/dirty/scratched writing, noise or grain
	Color	No specific rule has been mentioned.
Composition		Element displacement / depth and dimension through the combination of traditional and digital techniques / multilayered
Production Method		Computer-generated methods / tearing paper / scanning / combined traditional and digital techniques
Overall Characteristics		Postmodernist/ deconstructive/ against predetermined assumptions/ against computational assumptions/ against modernist materialism/ against modernist soullessness/ anti-technological appearance/ destroyed/ incomplete/ memorable/ unique/ expressive/ attractive/ youth-oriented/ revolutionary/ decayed appearance/ energetic/ full of anger/ offensive/ subculturally rooted/ with an underground design sensibility

Semi-Quantitative Analysis of David Carson's Works

The first step in this research was collecting David Carson's works. After reviewing the available resources, the most complete collection of his works was found on his personal website with specific categorization. These works included posters, layouts, user interfaces, visual identities, packaging, decorative items, collages, music covers, photographs, videos, and miscellaneous items. By counting the samples, it was determined that posters (175 samples) and layouts (194 samples) constitute the largest share of the total 530 collected works. Therefore, to focus more closely, only these two categories were examined in the present study. In this context, the posters were codified as A, and the layouts as B; each sample was numbered for separate examination. In the next stage, it was necessary to design a tool for reviewing the samples. For this purpose, the features extracted from the literature review (Table 1) were reviewed. After the review, some similar features were merged to create a more unified model (Table 2). For example, scratched, curved, stamped, dirty, and noisy typography were all categorized under «manipulated typography». Additionally, some unexaminable features were removed from the sources, such as «not using common typefaces», which is not feasible to identify among the numerous typefaces available today.

Table 2. The expanded Checklist for Sample Analysis Based on Table 1. Source: Authors.

Visual Elements	Visual	1. The use of kodalith photo 2. Distortion in the image and texture 3. The use of texture 4. Torn edges
	Textual	5. Grunge Typography
Composition		6.Fragmented elements 7. Elements with depth and dimension 8. Use of extra or confusing elements
Production Method		9. Computer-generated

After preparing the table as an evaluation tool, 20 test samples (10 posters and 10 layouts) were initially reviewed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. This initial evaluation helped clarify ambiguities in the operational definitions and refine the variables under study. The subsequent stages continued, with all samples being evaluated multiple times in total to achieve more accurate results. Finally, 369 samples (posters and layouts) were examined using the checklist developed based on the literature review. The findings were then presented and analyzed as percentage frequency diagrams, which show the frequency of grunge-style features in David Carson's works. Diagram 3 indicates that in Carson's posters, «computer-generated technique» is the most frequently used grunge feature, while «distortion in visual elements» is the least used. Features related to composition and «use of texture» are also considered the main characteristics of grunge in his posters. The results of the layout analysis (Diagram 4) are also similar; «fragmented elements» and «computer-generated» have the highest frequency, and no significant difference is observed between the two categories of works in the use of grunge features. By combining the results of both diagrams (Diagram 5), the order of application of grunge features in Carson's works is determined and presented in Table 3 for greater clarity. Based on this table, Carson's works belong to the grunge style in terms of production methods, composition, and texture application. The grunge composition in his works is due to «fragmented elements», «extra or confusing elements», and «elements with depth and dimension». It is worth mentioning that «texture» is used more in Carson's works than «elements with depth and dimension». Ultimately, «grunge textual elements» are rarely seen in his works. Additionally, «torn edges» and «the use of kodalith photos» are not widely used as grunge visual elements, and «distortion in visual elements» is not observed in any of his works.

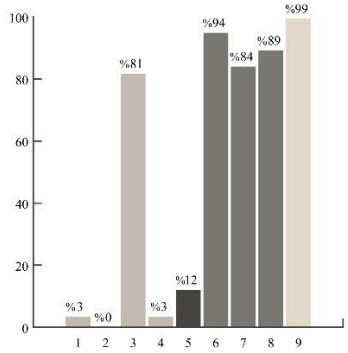


Diagram 3. Percentage of grunge features in David Carson's posters. Source: Authors.

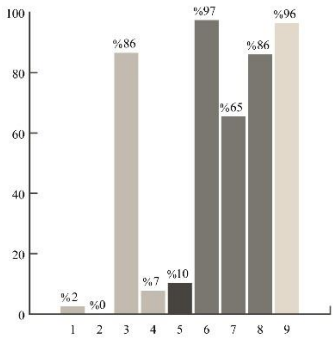


Diagram 4. Percentage of grunge features in David Carson's layouts. Source: Authors.

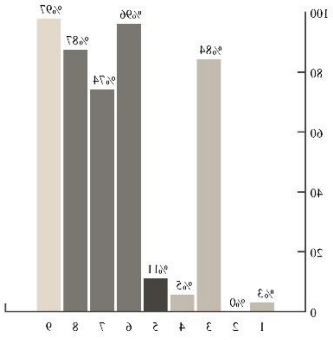


Diagram 5. Percentage of grunge features in David Carson's studied works. Source: Authors.

Therefore, it can be argued that Carson, by using «fragmentation» and «extra or confusing elements», creates complexity in his works and deviates from conventional rules. This complexity and ambiguity have led to «polysemy» in his works and reflect the youth culture of that era; the same dissatisfaction and indifference that had previously been reflected in grunge music, which Carson transferred to the world of graphic design. «The use of texture» and «elements with depth and dimension» not only create ambiguity in understanding meaning but also give his works a narrative and storytelling quality. Carson's limited use of «Grunge Typography», «torn edges», and «kodalith photos» indicates that these features are only suitable for certain projects; excessive use of them can make the design overly grungy, messy, and inappropriate for various graphic assignments.

Table 3. The Order of Frequency of Each Feature Examined in Carson's Works. Source: Authors.

Frequency Range	Feature Category	Grunge Style Characteristics
Over 73%	Production Method	1. Computer-generated
	Composition	2. Fragmented elements 3. The use of extra or confusing elements
	Visual Elements	4. The use of texture
	Composition	5. Elements with depth and dimension
Below 12%	Textual Elements	6. Grunge Typography
	Visual Elements	7. Torn edges 8. The use of kodalith photos
No Frequency	Visual Elements	9. Distortion in visual elements

Grunge, Design, and Deconstructive Thinking in Carson's Works

This section analyzes three selected works of David Carson that exhibited the highest levels of grunge characteristics in the previous examination. In this study, the manifestation of grunge characteristics and their connection to deconstructive graphic design and deconstructive thinking are explored. In fact, by selecting works that exhibit the most grunge characteristics, a more comprehensive understanding of how these traits are employed and their connection to deconstruction can be achieved.

Sample 174B: This piece, which is a cover design for Wallpaper Magazine, has the highest number of grunge features among the works reviewed (Fig. 2). Wallpaper, which was established in 1996 as a print magazine, has now become a multi-channel media brand and a global reference in the field of graphic design. This collection is renowned for discovering emerging talents and fostering creative collaborations (Prince, 2022). The phrase «David Carson's Handmade Issue» alongside the magazine's title indicates that this issue of Wallpaper Magazine was created using David Carson's traditional design and techniques.



Fig. 2. Cover design of Wallpaper Magazine by Carson. Source: Carson, 2012.

Considering diagrams 1 and 2, the grunge style can be understood as an expression of deconstruction in this poster. As summarized in Diagram 2, the characteristics of deconstructive graphic design, changes in the form of writing, and the grunge typography are observable in this work. The red letters in this design have a state of distress, decay, and scratching, as if the red color has been scraped or spilled off the page. The layout of the text and other design elements also lacks a clear order; the text is not aligned, and in some cases, letters overlap. The visual elements not only overlap with each other but also with the text. The written section of the collage is completely illegible, as the use of scattered and fragmented letters has made no word correctly recognizable. In this design, the reader's or viewer's effort to read the words in the collage demonstrates their participation in creating

meaning. The viewer's mind, upon observing this design, attempts to establish a meaningful connection between the letters and the various visual elements. For example, the combination of the letters S, E, and A together can indicate that Carson intended to create the word «sea», and considering his interest in surfing, this word can remind the viewer of Carson. Other images in the design also reflect Carson's interests and past, showcasing cropped sections of photos of the sea and beach at night and day. By examining this work as a whole, one can observe its deconstructive graphic design and, consequently, consider it deconstructive. By comparing this work with Diagram 1, it can also be analyzed from a deconstructive-thinking perspective. The illegibility, combined with the scattering of letters and images, creates a polysemous quality in the work, so that each viewer with a different mindset may have a completely different interpretation when confronted with the magazine's cover design. Furthermore, as Derrida suggests, a text need not adhere to a conventional structure, and Carson's design likewise does not follow layout rules. In fact, the lack of regularity in the arrangement and selection of elements in this work has somewhat led to the dispersion of the available information. Additionally, upon looking at this work, one cannot recall a single theme. In fact, this cover design is not thematically coherent. The lack of centrality and focus on the margins in the work can be attributed to the use of the collage technique, as various images, from the texture of a wooden surface, the head of a woman, to the illustration of a bearded character, are hardly related to each other. The feature of «intertextuality» in this work is evident in the use of collage and the combination of images and texts cut from magazines and other sources. Intertextuality is one of the fundamental principles of deconstructive thinking and emphasizes that no work exists independently of other works, and no text is free from the influence of other texts.

2. Sample 78B: Carson designed this cover for the book «The End of Print». Lewis Blackwell has written this book about Carson's graphic design. From the perspective of deconstructive graphic design features (Diagram 2), this work is analyzable, and in it, changes in the form and layout of the textual section are considered prominent characteristics of deconstructive graphic design. Scattered and grungy letters combined with abstract shapes have rendered the text unreadable. The overlap of words like David, Carson, and End of Print makes it difficult for someone unfamiliar with the book's name and subject to read it easily. The color used for the author's name and other information has little contrast with the background, resulting in poor readability. Incomplete and damaged letters make the audience connect with the work, and the design becomes memorable in their mind. The viewer's mind can interpret this cover design in different ways; for example, the upper half of the background might appear to be a sky, while the lower half might resemble a garage door. This ambiguity exists throughout the design and encourages the audience to participate in creating meaning. Abstract shapes and their resemblance to English letters or meaningful forms also contribute to this ambiguity in the audience's mind. For example, one can imagine the shape of a cloud, an eye, a bird, or a ladder in some of these abstract forms. Additionally, the use of letters such as o, c, and n among the abstract shapes can remind the viewer of Carson's name. From a deconstructive perspective (Diagram 1), the work's ambiguity can be considered a factor in polysemy. Illegibility and disorder can reflect a lack of regularity, and the use of additional and confusing elements can draw the audience's attention to the margins. Carson's use of a cropped and enlarged image combined with a pre-existing typeface is an example of intertextuality.

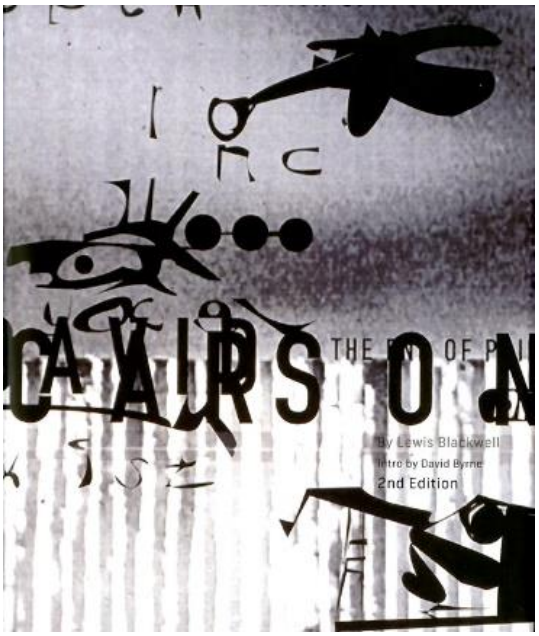


Fig. 3. Cover design of the book «The End of Print» by Carson. Source: Carson, 2013.

3. Sample 159A: This poster was designed for the Aspen Design Conference titled Hollywood and published in a magazine (Carson, 2002). Examining this poster through the lens of deconstructive graphic design and deconstructive thinking (Diagrams 1 & 2) reveals changes in the form and arrangement of letters, and in some parts of the text, noticeable illegibility. In this work, the textual and visual elements appear fragmented. The writing is misaligned, and in some cases, the letters overlap. Visual elements also overlap with each other and with the text. Extra lines, sand-like textures, and meaningless letters and numbers are all considered additional or confusing elements. The overlapping of letters in different colors creates a sense of depth and dimension, and the interaction of texture with the letters gives them a heavy, chaotic, and dirty appearance. Some of the incomplete letters and words have been used merely as part of the background design and are not intended to be read. This feature creates reader engagement and, consequently, polysemy in the work. However, the informative texts on the poster are identifiable and readable, referring to the Aspen Design Conference as 'Hollywood'. The stars on the matchbox, along with the word «star», can indicate the importance of the individuals present at the conference; even the design of the lit match emphasizes the significance of the event. On the other hand, there is no direct connection between the poster's visual elements and the subject of graphic design, but the specific design style makes its meaning and value comprehensible only to audiences familiar with the world of art and design. Another deconstructive feature of this poster is the lack of rules in the arrangement and use of elements. The use of unrelated visual elements also indicates attention to the periphery and a lack of thematic centrality. Ultimately, the use of textual and visual elements derived from the matchbox packaging or product barcode numbers indicates intertextuality and the lack of semantic independence of this poster.

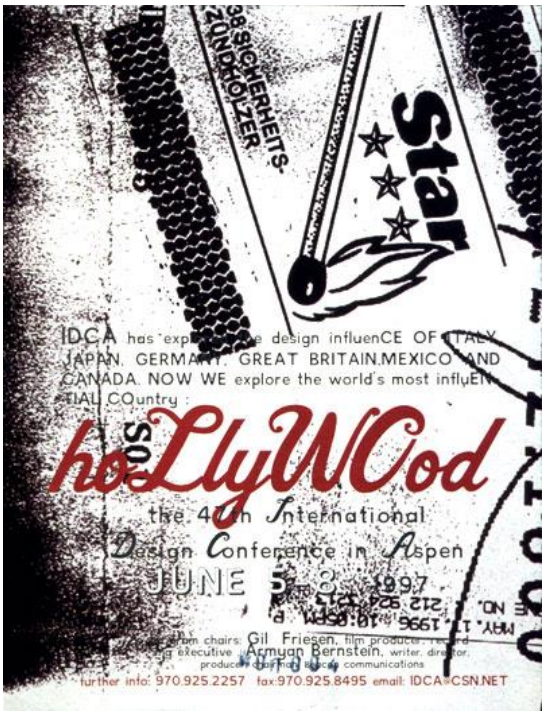


Fig. 4. Advertising poster for the Aspen Design Conference. Source: Carson, 2002.

Conclusion

In this research, after clarifying the position of deconstructive thinking in graphic design and its connection to the grunge style through a literature review, the works of David Carson, a deconstructive designer, were examined and analyzed to deepen understanding and elucidate the characteristics of this style. In the first step, the prevalence of grunge-style characteristics across all of Carson's works was examined to identify the pieces that exhibit the greatest number of grunge features. The results showed that the characteristics of the grunge style predominantly manifest in three areas: production methods, composition, and use of texture in his works. Features of grunge that had the most presence in Carson's works and were observed in more than 73 percent of the samples include, in order: «computer-generated production», «fragmented elements», «extra or confusing elements», «use of texture», and «elements with depth and dimension». Other grunge features, except for one that was not observed in any of his works, were used with a frequency of less than 12 percent in Carson's works and include «grunge typography», «torn edges of images», and «kodalith photos». The grunge feature that was not observed in his works was «distortion of visual elements». Therefore, it can be concluded that Carson, by using «fragmentation» and «extra or confusing elements», creates a kind of complexity and defiance of design rules in his works. This complexity and ambiguity can create «polysemy» in his works and reflect the feelings and culture of the youth of that era; the same dissatisfaction and indifference that were previously seen in grunge music, which Carson has transferred to the world of graphic design. Moreover, the «use of texture» and «elements with depth and dimension» can not only cause ambiguity and delay in understanding meaning but also lend his works a narrative and storytelling quality. Ultimately, after examining the abundance of variables in Carson's works, three pieces with the most grunge characteristics were selected for a more detailed study. The analysis of these three works showed that deconstructive graphic design

in Carson's work overlaps with the grunge style in many respects. For example, «fragmented elements» are present in both grunge and deconstructive graphic design, and manipulated text, as a feature of deconstructive graphic design, appears in grunge in a limited form as «grunge typography». Additionally, the implications of the deconstructive approach were confirmed in all three of Carson's grunge works. In analyzing selected samples, the connection between deconstructive thinking, deconstructive graphic design, and the grunge style was examined, revealing how this thinking manifests in Carson's designs. By analyzing these works, it was determined that ambiguity stems from manipulated grunge text or from the incomplete use of images and other visual elements. The characteristic of additional and confusing elements in the grunge style can also be related to the lack of centrality and attention to margins in deconstructive thinking. The use of computers and traditional techniques such as collage is considered a factor in creating intertextuality in the work. Thus, Carson's works, by utilizing the characteristics of the grunge style, showcase deconstructive thinking. Ultimately, deconstruction in Carson's works primarily manifests through the creation of polysemy using fragmented elements, extra or confusing elements, texture, and elements with depth and dimension. Quantitative findings of the research strongly indicate that Carson deliberately creates ambiguity and defiance of classical design rules through these numerous features. For example, the use of «extra or confusing elements» directly contradicts the principle of simplicity and efficiency, and by eliminating centrality, it encourages the audience to engage more with the margins. «Fragmentation» and «use of texture» also prevent the understanding of simple meaning by increasing perceptual complexity and lead to polysemy. Therefore, the abundance of these elements indicates that deconstruction in Carson's works begins with ambiguity and culminates in multilayered meaning.

Research Suggestions

1. It is suggested that the works of contemporary Iranian graphic designers be examined using the conceptual model and visual feature checklist developed in this research. This not only provides the opportunity to measure the extent of the grunge style's influence on Iranian graphic design but can also pave the way for critical analyses aimed at reinterpreting local visual identity and moderating the impacts of global trends.
2. The framework and analytical process of this research can be utilized to examine other styles and the works of leading designers in the field of deconstructive graphic design.

Author Contributions

This article is derived from the master's thesis of the first author in the field of Visual Communication, entitled «The Grunge Movement in Graphic Design: A Case Study of David Carson», under the supervision of the second author at the University of Art in Iran.

Acknowledgment

This research has no acknowledgments.

Conflict of Interest

The author (s) declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to this research, in writing, and publication of this article

Research Funding

The author (s) did not receive any financial support for conducting the research, writing up, and publication of this article.

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