**Paul Rand** (August 15, 1914 – November 26, 1996) was an American art director and [graphic designer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_design), best known for his corporate [logo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logotype) designs, including the logos for [IBM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM), [UPS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Parcel_Service), [Enron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enron), [Morningstar, Inc.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morningstar%2C_Inc.), [Westinghouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westinghouse_Electric_%281886%29), [ABC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Broadcasting_Company), and [Steve Jobs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Jobs)'s [NeXT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NeXT). He was one of the first American commercial artists to embrace and practice the [Swiss Style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Typographic_Style) of graphic design.

Rand was a professor emeritus of graphic design at [Yale University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University) in [New Haven, Connecticut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Haven%2C_Connecticut) from 1956 to 1969, and from 1974 to 1985. He was inducted into the New York [Art Directors Club Hall of Fame](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Directors_Club_Hall_of_Fame) in 1972.

**Early life and education**

Paul Rand (Peretz Rosenbaum) was born on August 15, 1914 in Brooklyn, New York. He embraced design at a very young age, painting signs for his father's grocery store as well as for school events at P.S. 109. Rand's father did not believe art could provide his son with a sufficient livelihood, and so he required Paul to attend Manhattan's Harren High School while taking night classes at the [Pratt Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratt_Institute). Rand was largely "self-taught as a designer, learning about the works of [Cassandre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassandre) and [Moholy-Nagy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_Moholy-Nagy) from European magazines such as *Gebrauchsgraphik*." Rand Also attended [Parsons The New School for Design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsons_The_New_School_for_Design) and the [Art Students League of New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Students_League_of_New_York).

**Early career**

His career began with humble assignments, starting with a part-time position creating [stock images](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_photography) for a [syndicate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syndicate) that supplied graphics to various newspapers and magazines.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-heller-4) Between his class assignments and his work, Rand was able to amass a fairly large portfolio, largely influenced by the German advertising style [Sachplakat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sachplakat) (object poster) as well as the works of Gustav Jensen. It was around this time that he decided to camouflage the overtly [Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish) identity conveyed by his name, Peretz Rosenbaum, shortening his forename to 'Paul' and taking 'Rand' from an uncle to form a [Madison Avenue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madison_Avenue)-friendly surname. Morris Wyszogrod, a friend and associate of Rand, noted that "he figured that 'Paul Rand,' four letters here, four letters there, would create a nice symbol. So he became Paul Rand." Roy R. Behrens notes the importance of this new title: "Rand's new persona, which served as the brand name for his many accomplishments, was the first corporate identity he created, and it may also eventually prove to be the most enduring." Indeed, Rand was rapidly moving into the forefront of his profession. In his early twenties, he was producing work that began to garner international acclaim, notably his designs on the covers of *Direction* magazine, which Rand produced for no fee in exchange for full artistic freedom.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-heller-4) Among the accolades Rand received were those of [László Moholy-Nagy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_Moholy-Nagy):

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| **“** | Among these young Americans, it seems to be that Paul Rand is one of the best and most capable He is a painter, lecturer, industrial designer, advertising artist who draws his knowledge and creativeness from the resources of this country. He is an idealist and a realist, using the language of the poet and business man. He thinks in terms of need and function. He is able to analyze his problems but his fantasy is boundless.  | **”** |

The reputation Rand so rapidly amassed in his prodigious twenties never dissipated; rather, it only managed to increase through the years as his influential works and writings firmly established him as the [*éminence grise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89minence_grise) of his profession.

Although Rand was most famous for the corporate [logos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logo) he created in the 1950s and 1960s, his early work in [page design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typesetting) was the initial source of his reputation. In 1936, Rand was given the job of setting the page layout for an [*Apparel Arts*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apparel_Arts) (now [*GQ*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GQ)*)* magazine anniversary issue.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-heller-4) "His remarkable talent for transforming mundane photographs into dynamic compositions, which [. . .] gave editorial weight to the page" earned Rand a full-time job, as well as an offer to take over as art director for the [Esquire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esquire_%28magazine%29)-[Coronet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronet_%28magazine%29) magazines. Initially, Rand refused this offer, claiming that he was not yet at the level the job required, but a year later he decided to go ahead with it, taking over responsibility for Esquire's fashion pages at the young age of twenty-three.

The cover art for *Direction* magazine proved to be an important step in the development of the "Paul Rand look" that was not as yet fully developed. The December 1940 cover, which uses [barbed wire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbed_wire) to present the magazine as both a war-torn gift and a crucifix, is indicative of the [artistic freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artistic_freedom) Rand enjoyed at *Direction*; in *Thoughts on Design* Rand notes that it "is significant that the crucifix, aside from its religious implications, is a demonstration of pure plastic form as well . . . a perfect union of the aggressive vertical (male) and the passive horizontal (female)."

Rand's most widely known contributions to design are his [corporate identities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_Identity), many of which are still in use. [IBM](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM), [ABC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Broadcasting_Company), [Cummins Engine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cummins_Engine), [UPS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Parcel_Service), and the now-infamous [Enron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enron), among many others, owe Rand their graphical heritage.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-beirut2-5) One of his strengths, as Moholy-Nagy pointed out, was his ability as a salesman to explain the needs his identities would address for the corporation. According to graphic designer Louis Danziger:

Rand's defining corporate identity was his IBM logo in 1956, which as Mark Favermann notes "was not just an identity but a basic design philosophy which permeated corporate consciousness and public awareness." The logo was modified by Rand in 1960. The striped logo was created in 1972. The stripes were introduced as a half-toning technique to make the IBM mark slightly less heavy and more dynamic. Two variations of the "striped" logo were designed; one with eight stripes, one with thirteen stripes. The bolder mark with eight stripes was intended as the company's default logo, while the more delicate thirteen stripe version was used for situations where a more refined look was required, such as IBM executive stationery and business cards. Rand also designed packaging, marketing materials and assorted communications for IBM from the late 1950s until the late 1990s, including the well known Eye-Bee-M poster. [Ford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford) appointed Rand in the 1960s to redesign their corporate logo, but afterwards chose not to use his modernized design.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-Meggs-6)

Though Rand was a recluse in his creative process, doing the vast majority of the design load despite having a large staff at varying points in his career, he was very interested in producing books of theory to illuminate his philosophies. [László Moholy-Nagy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_Moholy-Nagy) may have incited Rand's zeal for knowledge when he asked his colleague if he read art criticism at their first meeting. Rand said no, prompting Moholy-Nagy to reply "Pity."[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-heller-4) Heller elaborates on this meeting's impact, noting; "from that moment on, Rand devoured books by the leading philosophers on art, including [Roger Fry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Fry), [Alfred North Whitehead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_North_Whitehead), and [John Dewey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey)." These theoreticians would have a lasting impression on Rand's work; in a 1995 interview with Michael Kroeger discussing, among other topics, the importance of Dewey's [*Art as Experience*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_as_Experience), Rand elaborates on Dewey's appeal:

Dewey is an important source for Rand's underlying sentiment in graphic design; on page one of Rand's groundbreaking *Thoughts on Design*, the author begins drawing lines from Dewey's philosophy to the need for "functional-aesthetic perfection" in modern art. Among the ideas Rand pushed in *Thoughts on Design* was the practice of creating graphic works capable of retaining recognizable quality even after being blurred or mutilated, a test Rand routinely performed on his corporate identities.



Rand's [Yale University Press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University_Press) logo that was used from 1985 to 2009.

During Rand's later career, he became increasingly agitated about the rise of [postmodernist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernist) theory and aesthetic in design. In 1992, Rand resigned his position at Yale in protest of the appointment of postmodern and feminist designer [Sheila Levrant de Bretteville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheila_Levrant_de_Bretteville), and convinced his colleague, [Armin Hofmann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armin_Hofmann) to do the same. In justification of his resignation, Rand penned the article "Confusion and Chaos: The Seduction of Contemporary Graphic Design," in which he denounced the postmodern movement as "faddish and frivolous" and "harbor[ing] its own built-in boredom".[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rand#cite_note-13)

Despite the importance graphic designers place on his book *Thoughts on Design*, subsequent works such as *From Lascaux to Brooklyn* (1996), compounded accusations of Rand being "reactionary and hostile to new ideas about design." [Steven Heller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven_Heller_%28graphic_design%29) defends Rand's later ideas, calling the designer "an enemy of mediocrity, a radical modernist" while Favermann considers the period one of "a reactionary, angry old man." Regardless of this dispute, Rand's contribution to modern graphic design theory in total is widely considered intrinsic to the profession's development.

### Modernist influences

The core ideology that drove Rand's career, and hence his lasting influence, was the modernist philosophy he so revered. He celebrated the works of artists from [Paul Cézanne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_C%C3%A9zanne) to [Jan Tschichold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Tschichold), and constantly attempted to draw the connections between their creative output and significant applications in graphic design. In *A Designer's Art* Rand clearly demonstrates his appreciation for the underlying connections:

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| **“** | From Impressionism to Pop Art, the commonplace and even the comic strip have become ingredients for the artist's cauldron. What Cézanne did with apples, Picasso with guitars, Léger with machines, Schwitters with rubbish, and Duchamp with urinals makes it clear that revelation does not depend upon grandiose concepts. The problem of the artist is to defamiliarize the ordinary.  |  |