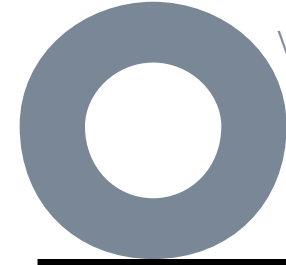


JAYME  **DGERS**

FULL CIRCLE

image!

JAYME ODGERS



INTERVIEW

Antique Calculators

Illeft—
Information Graphics 1963 (detail)
IBM Pavilion, 1964 World's Fair, Flushing, NY.
client: International Business Machines
project: Herb Rosenthal & Associates

Obsessed by peripheries over centers, opposites over likeness, crossovers to mainstream, Jayme Odgers' work exists in the space *between* things—between graphic design, photography, and fine art. Boundary blurring is a necessity in order for him to manifest his vision. Assiduously seeking steep learning curves, he invites risk and newness while eschewing patterned behavior, customary ways and standards.

Professional life began for Odgers with Herb Rosenthal & Associates in 1963, resolving wayfinding graphics for the IBM Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in Flushing, NY. A major, high profile assignment for any designer, this project became a life changing event for the neophyte Odgers.

While working on the World's Fair project, he met the father of American graphic design, and IBM's legendary graphic design consultant, Paul Rand. His approval was required on any graphic work done for IBM. Upon seeing Odgers' ideas for the IBM Pavilion, he not only approved them, Rand retracted work formally given to the Ray and Charles Eames Office for the same project and gave it to Odgers to complete. This act displayed an amazing degree of confidence in the fledgling designer's capabilities. Most significantly, Rand hired Odgers on the spot to become his full-time assistant.

As Paul Rand's sole assistant in the mid-1960s, Odgers studiously absorbed the essentials of graphic design thinking. Under Rand's apprenticeship he adopted the Zen-like dictum, *the solution to any problem lies within the problem itself*, a method of thinking used by design luminaries such as Bradbury Thompson, Alvin Lustig and Louis Danziger, as well as the modernist architects Louis Sullivan and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier.

Odgers tells a story of daily life with Paul Rand to illustrate Rand's commitment to the *problem-equals-solution* analogy. One day for lunch, he was asked by Paul to set the table for a meal of sandwiches, which he dutifully did by putting out napkins along with the requisite knife, fork and spoon.

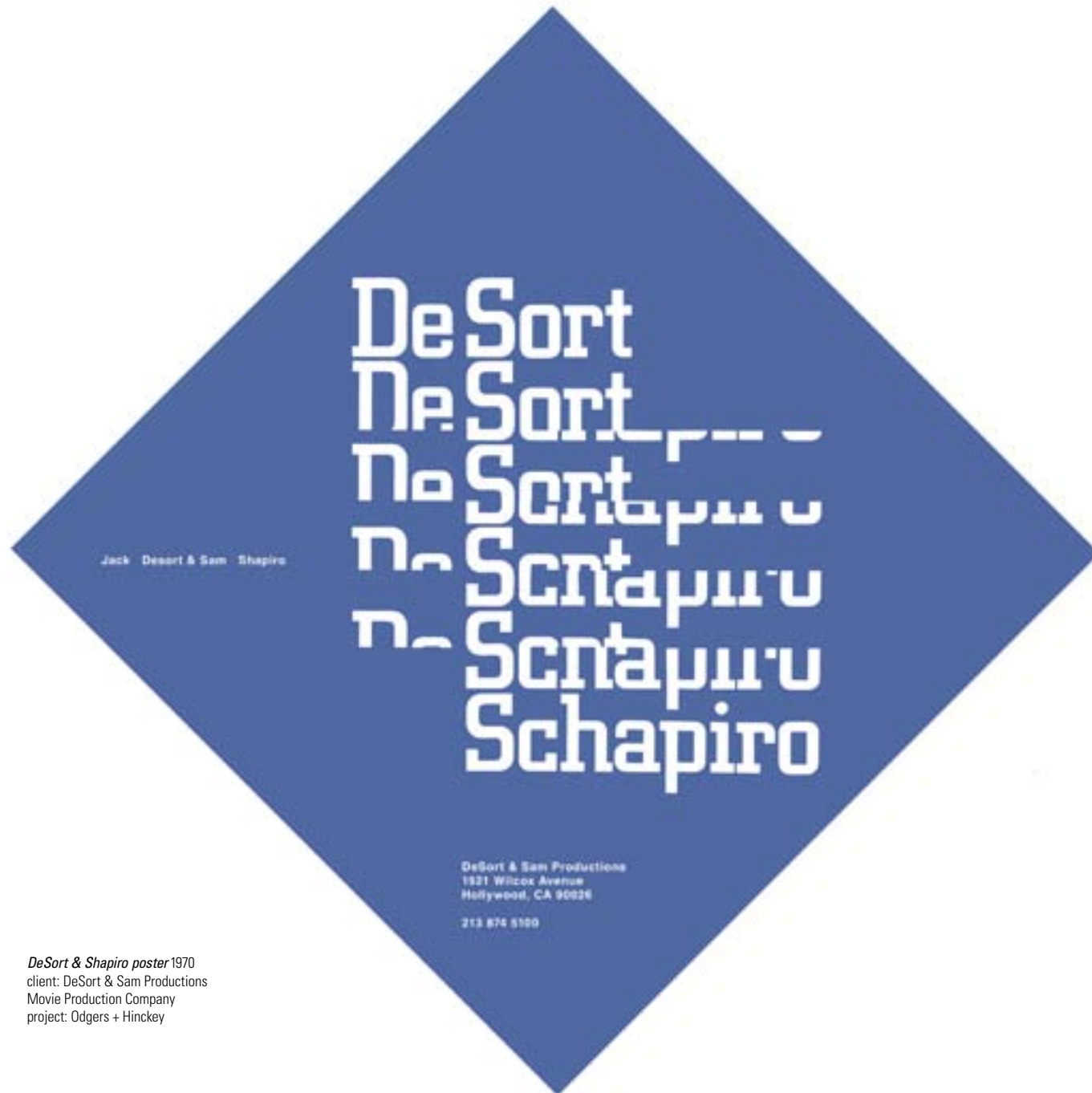
"The minute Rand sat down he interrogated me, 'Are you having soup?' Completely shocked, I responded, "No", he ferociously challenged me by asking me what the hell the spoon was for? For Rand everything had to be essential, nothing unnecessary was allowed—ever—*everything* mattered. He made absolutely no distinction between design and life itself. Formality mattered naught, necessity ruled."

Odgers had entered a no-frills, bewildering, brave new world. While working for Rand, he became conversant in a mathematically-harmonic, programmatic style of international graphic design called *Kalte Kunst*, translated means *cold art*, in which the personality of the designer is sublimated. This was related to *Concrete Art*, a rational-driven movement led by Max Bill, the graphic designer-artist-architect and, eventually, politician. This constructivist form of graphic design was famous for utilizing Akzidenz-grotesk type, and in only two sizes—one large and one small.

In reaction to Akzidenz-grotesk's success, Neue Hass Grotesk was created, later called Helvetica, which has become the world's most ubiquitous typeface. In the mid-1960s, Helvetica was not yet available in the U.S., so Paul Rand had to use Standard Medium, America's answer to Helvetica. From Rand, who would rather have been known as a great typographer than a great designer, simply because there are far fewer of them (Rand was clearly both), Odgers learned the art of typography, a love that persists to this day.

Simplicity is not the goal. It is the by-product of a good idea and modest expectations.

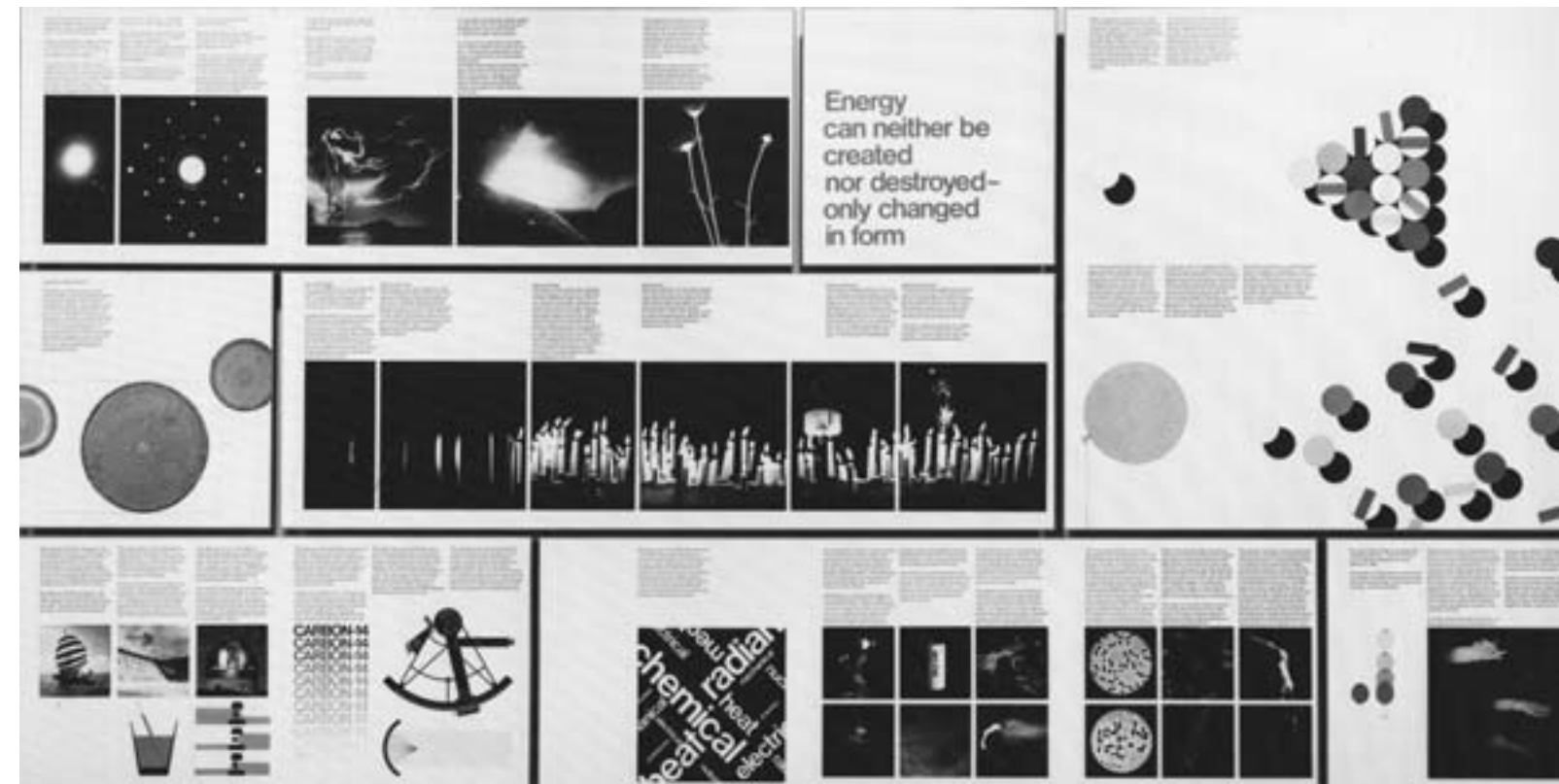
— Paul Rand



DeSort & Shapiro poster 1970
client: DeSort & Sam Productions
Movie Production Company
project: Odgers + Hinckley

U
Upon leaving Rand's Westport, Connecticut, office in 1966 by choice, Odgers moved back to Los Angeles. His first project was creating the graphics for the Los Angeles Museum of Science and Industry's *ENERGY* exhibition through the office of Herb Rosenthal & Associates. Initially, Odgers had to order the tacit two sizes of Standard Medium from New York City. No type shops in Los Angeles carried the typeface at that time, making changes difficult and mistakes untenable.

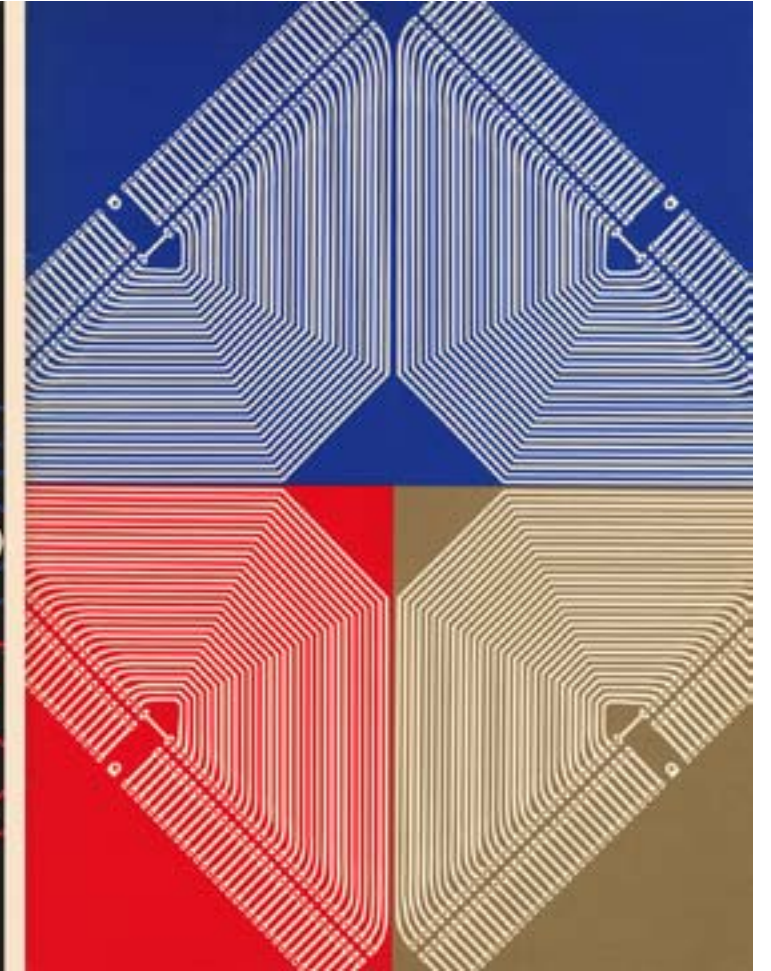
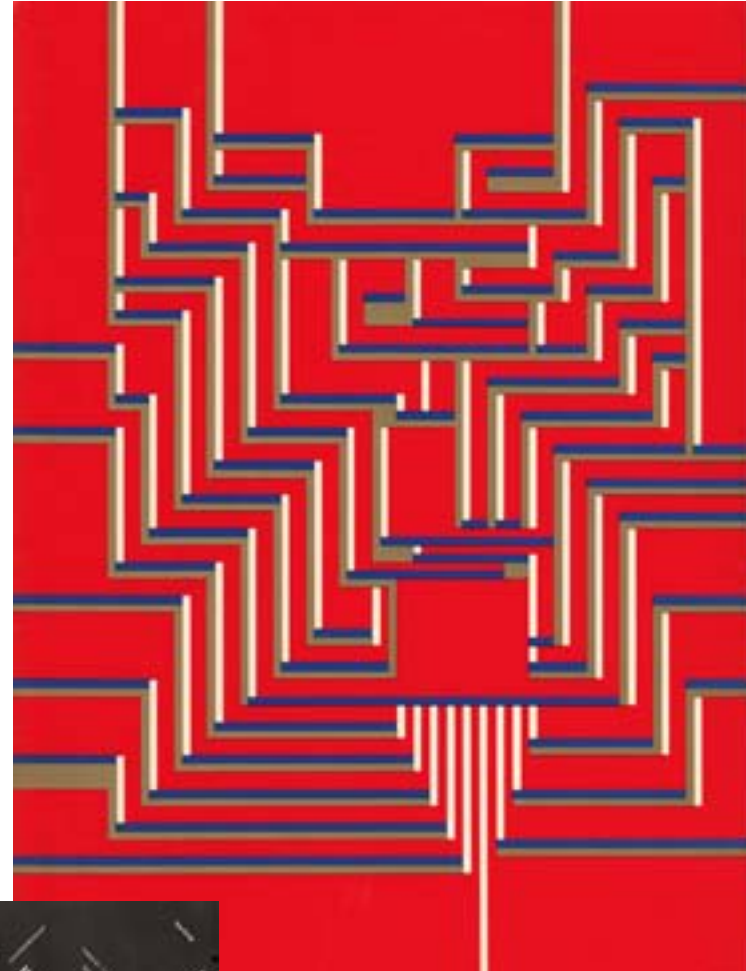
Odgers joined Ken Parkhurst & Associates once the *ENERGY* project concluded. Ken Parkhurst was Alvin Lustig's assistant in the late 1940s and ran the Lustig office on the West Coast. Alvin Lustig pioneered the principles of Modern art to design and influenced generations of followers including Paul Rand. Parkhurst contributed significantly to early Los Angeles graphic design focusing on trademarks and corporate identity, now called *branding*.



Energy Wall (detail) 1967
client: Museum of Science & Technogy, Los Angeles, CA
project: Herb Rosenthal & Associates

After working for Parkhurst's office, Odgers established his own graphic design firm in 1968, which eventually became Odgers+Hinckley. Odgers' partner, Paul Hinckley, was in charge of the three-dimensional and architectural aspects while Odgers managed the two dimensional graphic work.

During this period Odgers earned numerous graphic design and typography awards including Gold Medals in the New York and Los Angeles Art Director's Clubs, and a silver international Typomundus type Award. However, the infinitesimally detailed world of graphic design proved too confining for his visual temperament. Sitting behind a drawing board all day with a T-square and triangle guiding his every move began to feel like a strait-jacketed. During this time he had recurrent dreams of grand fluted columns slowly falling, breaking into pieces in mid-air, hitting the ground in towering clouds of dust. The stabile data that had supported him thus far was crumbling with nothing to replace it. A need for greater creative expression became inevitable. He needed a radical change in his life, a break from his past.



upper left-
Electronic Memories Product Summary 1967
client: Electronic Memories Inc.
project: Ken Parkhurst & Associates

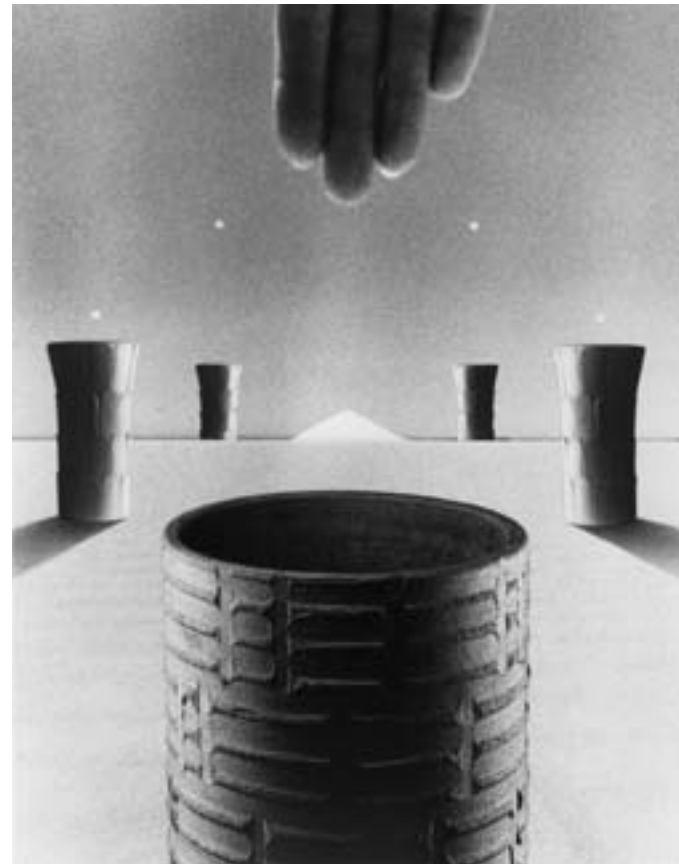
left-
Moving Poster 1970
client: Odgers + Hinckley
(with special thanks to Rosalie Carleson)

above right-
Electronic Memories Annual Report 1968
client: Electronic Memories
project: Ken Parkhurst & Associates

right-
Arcon Furniture catalog page 1972
client: Group Artec / Architectural Pottery
photo: Marvin Rand
project: Odgers + Hinckley

far right-
Group Artec Alphabet 1971
client: Group Artec / Architectural Pottery
project: Odgers + Hinckley





left—
Architectural Pottery Catalog images 1972
 Photo-composites
 client: Architectural Pottery
 project: Odgers+Hickley

Change a tool and it changes the results is a belief to which Odgers has long subscribed. For Odgers, that sea-change came by way of a Nikon 35mm. The camera had an immediate and profound influence on his life and vision. Under designer Louis Danziger’s art direction, Odgers’ landmark 1972 photo-composites for Architectural Pottery’s handmade division, featured planters and with the artist’s own hands and body mystically floating above the desert floor. These autobiographical spiritually-based works compressed past and present, myth and reality, memory and fiction. This idiosyncratic *floating-in-space* look originated from another series of recurring dreams Odgers was having at this time. In these dreams his life was blowing apart—myriad objects were timelessly suspended in mid-air—again, a compelling metaphor for his life at that time. These unique visions became a signature look for Odgers’ subsequent photographic work which would later evolved into California New Wave Design.

Heeding the mystic Manly P. Hall’s advice that “six months of quiet meditation can save an entire lifetime of misdirection”, Odgers “dropped out” in late 1972, taking four years off traveling mainly to some of earth’s most extreme regions, the ancient jungles of Mexico and the expansive deserts of Southwest America, exploring new horizons not only in his life but in his mind as well. This proved to be a transformational time for Odgers, akin to a snake shedding an old skin. The camera was helping him build a new and larger *Weltanschauung*.

below—
Untitled 1976
 (snake/arm)
 35mm photograph



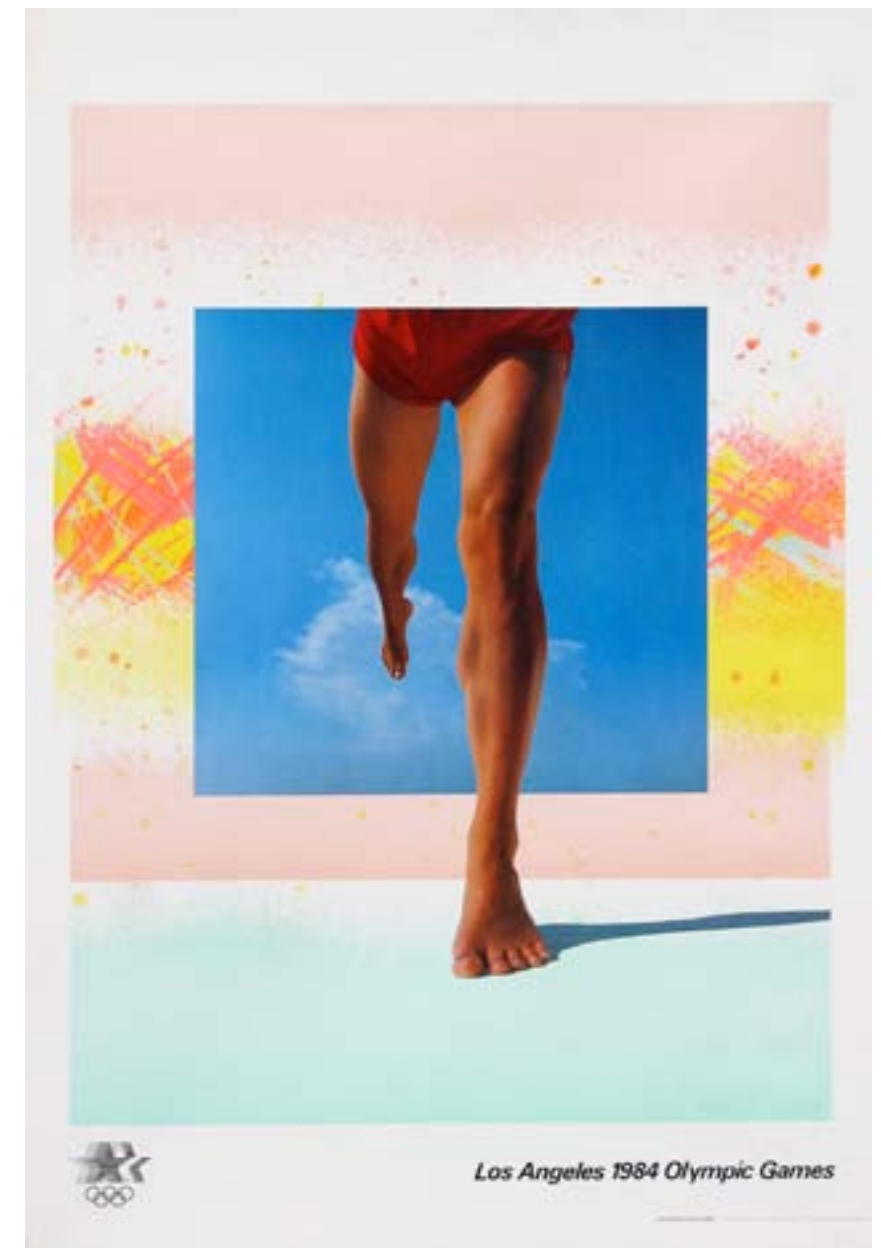
right—
Mercury 1976
 (self-portrait)
 35mm photograph





left—
Student Television Awards Poster 1981
 offset lithography
 client: Academy of Television Arts and Sciences
 design: Jayme Odgers
 photography: Jayme Odgers
 typography: April Greiman
 poster size: 36 x 24 inches

right—
Los Angeles Olympiad XXIII 1984
 Official fine art poster
 offset lithography
 client: Olympic Organizing Committee
 co-authored with April Greiman
 poster size: 36 x 24 inches



In 1983, Odgers and his then partner and collaborator, April Greiman, were two of fifteen world-class artists commissioned by the Olympic Organizing Committee (OOC) to produce an *official* fine art poster for the XXIII Olympiad held in Los Angeles, along with such art world luminaries as Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Diebenkorn, David Hockney and John Baldessari.

Exercising an early form of post-modern repurposing, Odgers' experimental *running legs* photographic self-portrait, *Mercury: The messenger of the gods*, (page 9) shot in the desert seven years prior, not only appeared on Johnny River's *Borrowed Time* album cover (p. 10), it came full circle as the inspiration and basis for their metaphorical *stepping from one world into a larger hyper-reality* Olympic poster. The original photograph (bottom left) was also used by the OOC to market the XXIII Olympic Games, becoming synonymous with The 1984 Olympiad.



left—
Construct #1 1988
 Oil and mixed media on Cibachrome print
 60 x 48 inches
 collection: Graham Howe, Los Angeles



right—
Easel In The Room 2004
 Oil, dyes and paper on Cibachrome
 paper
 48 x 36 inches

*Note: To see 3-D effect,
 look at image at right with
 one eye through cupped hands
 blocking out the margins.*

Foregoing clients entirely in 1986 to focus on advancing his own personal vision as a visual artist, Odgers initially, made large-format photographs of set-ups in his studio. These were projected to up 60 x 48 inch Cibachrome prints. Working directly on the prints—treating them as liquid space in which he floated his visual elements—Odgers would deconstruct the normal spatial relationships inherent in photography, confusing surface and interior space. Reconstructing new spatial relationships with oil paint, collage elements and dyes, pushing and pulling the plastic photographic space he created a hyper-spatial 3-D effect. *Construct #1* (left), and *Easel In The Room* (below) are examples of these early *photo-paintings*. Curiously, the subject/objects appearing photographed were non-existent when the photo was taken. Surface materials appear *within*, as well as *on-top-of* the photograph simultaneously creating anomalous visual chicken-and-egg conundrums of which came first, which is applied, what is real, what is not.



right-
Habits Fall Hard 2009
 Gouache and graphite on paper
 16 x 24 inches
 collection: Tyler Blik, San Diego

HERE here 2009
 Oil and varnish on panel
 24 x 24 x 2 inches
 collection: H + L Martinez



After decades of using film (digital cameras had not yet been invented), Odgers felt a need to have a more direct relationship with his work. He took the next step and eliminated the camera altogether. Working directly on canvas, wood panel, and paper, what was he to envision now that the information gathering eye of the camera was gone? Again, his stable data crumbled under the resultant change, again, another steep learning curve ensued.

A significant catalyst for change came when Odgers discovered the book *The Alphabet vs. The Goddess, The Conflict of Word and Image*, by Leonard Schlain, M.D. This allowed his love of typography and language to resurface within a new context. Dr. Schlain describes how the brain processes images in one hemisphere, and words in the opposing hemisphere. Originally, language was pictographic and processed in the right-side of the brain, however, with the advent of abstract language the other side of the brain became dominant, according to Schlain. He postulates that this hemispheric change was instrumental in taking humans from a right-brain spatial, nourishing, goddess environment to the left-brain, linear, war-like patriarchal society in which we now find ourselves.

Whether Dr. Schlain's theory is valid or not, fantasizing about merging the left and right hemispheres by making paintings of words, captured Odgers. Again words were becoming images. Considering language as the basis for painting, Laura Hoptman, curator of New York's New Museum's retrospective of artist and "psychonaut" Brion Gysin, describes Gysin's belief that "by erasing the artificial distinctions between words and images, and disentangling the two from their determined meanings, new meanings—those that had been hidden or suppressed—would arise, opening the way to new psychic vistas, even a new consciousness."

But what words? Since words are abstractions of meanings, what meanings? Odgers' paintings are primarily informed by his fascination with the tenets of Zen Buddhism. His work may appear contemporary, however the underlying concepts are ancient Buddhist teachings such as the fundamental belief in the power of the present and that the lack thereof is a primary source of human suffering. Going beyond thought and simply *being* is paramount to Odgers. The act of painting is the pain-free present moment he cherishes most. Being other than present is like trying to be in two places at once, an impossible act unless one can go beyond our limited concepts of time and enter the timelessness of the expanded *now*.

He feels painting may be the closest he can get to the *true self*, and the act of painting is his most productive form of meditation. His text-based works are meant to be transcended and proved useless once fully embraced. For example, *Surrender* (page 18) is a ladder of seven letters, reading from the bottom up as if each letter were a step, a chakra if you will, to help one spiritually transcend thought itself, and simply *be*, thus rendering the painting unnecessary. According to mythologist Joseph Campbell, the prime number seven represents "the key to almost everything", based on the Babylonian's knowledge of seven planets which they felt represented the whole universe. The bible is replete with sevens, the seven deadly sins, on the seventh day, etc.

Beyond his extensive body of work, beyond the design, the photography, the paintings, drawings and sculpture is the immense impact he has had on generations of students and colleagues. Odgers stands in a line that descends directly from the deStijl movement, the Bauhaus and designers such as Piet Zwart, Herbert Bayer and Jan Tschichold, all of whom inspired Paul Rand. Their spirit, their need to push out and their desire to bend if not break the accepted conventions lives on in Odgers' work and influence.



No Mind 2008
 oil and cardboard on canvas
 24 x 48 inches
 collection: Jill Bell, Kansas City

I don't paint things. I paint the difference between things.

— Henri Matisse

EREHTHERE

top and bottom—
Cenote For The Indeterminate 2009
Graphite, oil paint and gold leaf on wood
with string and plumb bob
5 x 36 inches (string length variable)
collection: Ken Carbone, New York, NY



above—
A Framework For Prejudice 2009
Oil, graphite, gold leaf and aluminum on panel
24 x 31 inches

far right—
Surrender (Beyond Thought) 2000
Oil on canvas
56 x 8 inches

THOUGHT



Promises Promises 2009
Graphite and gold leaf on wood, bamboo, string and lemon
size varies, roughly 48 x 72 inches
collection: H + L Martinez, Los Angeles

I make pictures and someone comes in and calls it art.

— Willem de Kooning



General Anxiety Disorder (About WHERE and THERE) 2009
Oil and acrylic on paper
22 x 30 inches



right—
A Dishonesty of Priorities 2009
installation
Wood, tar and acrylic paint
60 x 40 x 18 inches



The Bête Noir of The Busy Mind 2009
Oil on panel
48 x 72 inches
collection: H + L Martinez, Los Angeles

Art is making something out of nothing and selling it.

— Frank Zappa

B I O G R A P H Y

Jayme Odgers is a painter and graphic designer. With a B.A. from the Art Center School (now The Art Center College of Design) in Pasadena, California, Jayme is the recipient of numerous awards including a Fulbright Scholarship to Switzerland and over one hundred awards of excellence in graphic design. He was also selected to create an official poster for the 1984 XXIIIrd Olympiad held in Los Angeles along with such distinguished artists as David Hockney, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Jonathan Borfosky, and John Baldasari.

Jayme has successfully taught at many renowned art departments in the Los Angeles area including Art Center College of Design, California Institute of the Arts and Otis College of Art and Design. At the invitation of the Tokyo Gakuin, he toured Japan as a guest speaker, lecturing in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka.

In addition to his studio practice Jayme also has completed a public art commission designing two water fountains for the Metropolitan Water District's Headquarters Building at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

Numerous books and articles have included Odgers' work, most significantly *The 20th Century Poster. Design of the Avant Garde* (Abbeville Press, New York), *POSTMODERNISM, Style and Subversion 1970 - 1990* at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the forthcoming *Dictionary of Graphic Design and Designer* by Thames & Hudson.

His work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, The San Francisco Museum of Art, Arco Center for the Visual Arts, The Albright Knox Museum and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, with inclusion in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City and The White House in Washington, D.C.

Jayme Odgers lives and works in downtown Los Angeles.



There are scores of people to thank, however, most specifically I would like to thank the following people for helping me along the way.

.....
Bernard Dietz
Steve Madden
Herb Rosenthal
Paul Rand
Ken Parkhurst
Louis Danziger
Paul Hinckey
April Greiman
Eric Baker
Lisa Adams

maker



left—
Truth Be Told . . . 2009
Oil on wood
10 x 52 inches

back cover—
Lover, It's Over 2000
Oil, plaster letters, wasp's nest on linen covered panel
18 x 24 inches
collection: Kay Kimpton, San Francisco



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E Y E Q
P U B L I S H I N G

