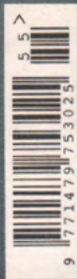


Yorgo Tioupas



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Special Report
Fashion
Profile
Yorgo Tioupas
September 2007 £8





Magazine magazine,
design and art
direction.

Profile Yorgo Tloupas

He left college with a £50K contract, now works with the likes of Yves Saint Laurent and his art direction of *Intersection* runs every other car mag off the road: you'd think Yorgo Tloupas had a pact with the devil. But, as **Yolanda Zappaterra** finds out, his enviable position is down to hard work, excellent humour and big talent. And there's also that business about his name...

01-07
Crash magazine, logo design and design and art direction of first twelve issues



03



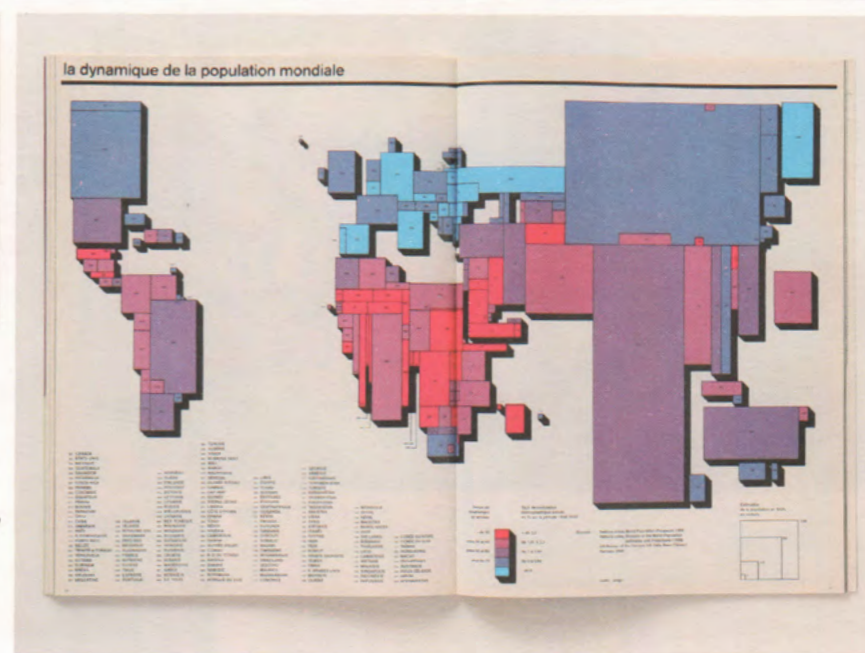
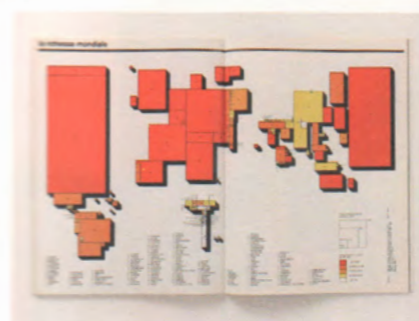
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Behind the desk of his office in Old Street, Intersection art director and graphic designer Yorgo Tloupas has a large board on which are pasted dozens of address labels, all of them featuring ridiculous misspellings of his name. It's admittedly an unusual name, but to get it as wrong as some of these do is unforgivable. Fortunately, Tloupas is a forgiving sort and obviously takes pleasure in these mistakes, rather than offence at the fact that his unusual moniker, derived from a mixed background of Greek and Italian/French, seems to bring out such cultural cock-ups. "I don't think of myself as Greek, or French, or Italian; I think globally, particularly in terms of where I look for inspiration, which is partly why I chose to come and live in London," says Tloupas genially.

Tloupas came to the city in 2001 from his native France, where he was born to a Greek sculptor father and a French/Italian art teacher mother in 1974, happy to have received a design education at ESAG (École Supérieure d'Arts Graphiques) under the tutelage of such great mentors as Polish poster designer Roman Cieslewicz and happy to have established a successful career in design, but equally happy to put behind him the country's

"absence of any kind of design culture". Given his views on French design, it may be just as well that Tloupas doesn't think of himself as French. "The problem with France is it got caught between English and Swiss design in the 60s and 70s and got left behind, and it's never really recovered. And the worst thing is the logo genocide that the French are practising right now," he fulminates.

Defending his outspoken and arguably unfair stance—M/M, Jean-François Porchez, Joris Clerfé and Sylvia Tournerie spring to mind as some strong forces in contemporary French design—Tloupas concedes that Crash, the magazine he worked on in Paris in the 90s, and its contemporaries Purple and Self Service, might well have been "part of a French style of graphic design that was a reaction to the country's terrible graphic culture". Crash was an amazingly erudite and sophisticated example of editorial design from any design perspective, and it served as a calling card to high-calibre clients such as Yves Saint Laurent, Emporio Armani, L'Épicerie, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Lacoste, Shu Uemura and Eurostar. "On Crash," recalls Tloupas, "I was able to impose a certain way of



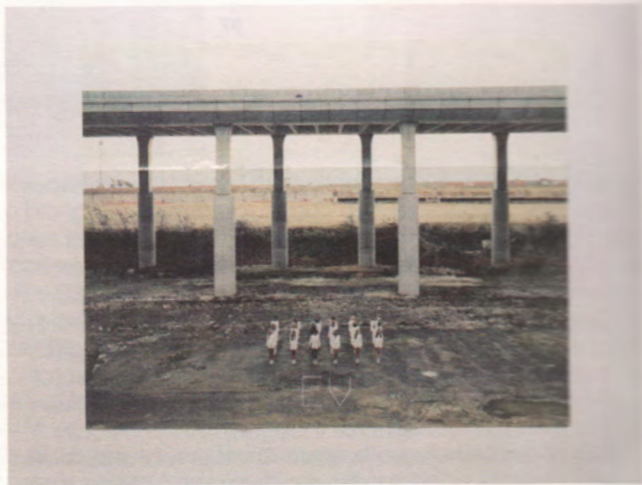
looking at things that was entirely my own." One of these was playing with the format of a magazine, bringing into play qualities too many art directors ignore, such as the possibility for narrative playfulness and sculptural or three-dimensional exploitation—"playing with the physical object," as Tloupas puts it. On one issue a male torso is laid out over a spread; when you pull the pages in opposite directions a horrendously visceral and brutal scar is revealed down the middle of his chest. "It makes you really uncomfortable, as though you're physically pulling at the flesh," says Tloupas. Another feature creates a filmic, narrative-led storyboard deftly using graduating close-ups and disturbing crops to create a landscape of Lynchian off-kilter otherness.

In both Crash's art direction and the ensuing branding work it led to, Tloupas was able to draw on age-old influences and graphic concerns both personal and universal to graphic design history: Op Art, conceptual thinking, form and material, the subversion of codes and the legacy of a passionate snowboarding youth among them.

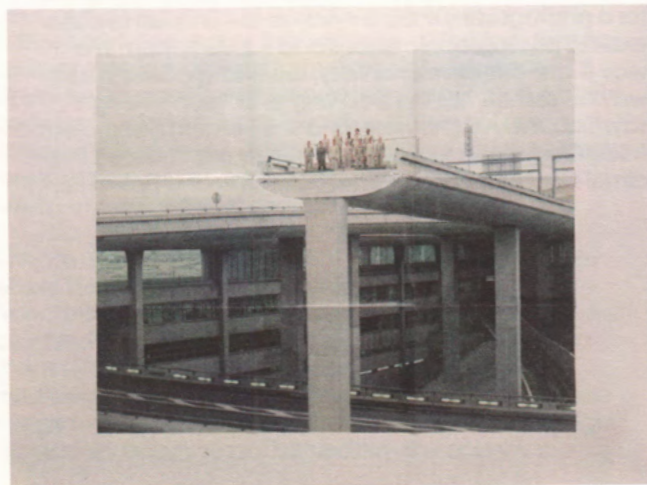
Catalogues and invitations for Yves Saint Laurent use subtle black on black to deliver an understated conceptual approach to classic fashion indices, Lacoste invitations and a graphic identity programme for Et Vous, the fashion label EV's sub-brand, feature delicate die-cuts and sumptuous substrates, exhibition literature for a photography show by Annabelle D'Huart reworks existing photographic codes and subverts them in a way that is effective and witty; reworking codes in such ways is "sometimes the best way of applying design", says Tloupas. And his work for a Shu Uemura nail project takes Op Art and turns it into a literally multilayered three-dimensional piece that is delicate, sexy and powerful.



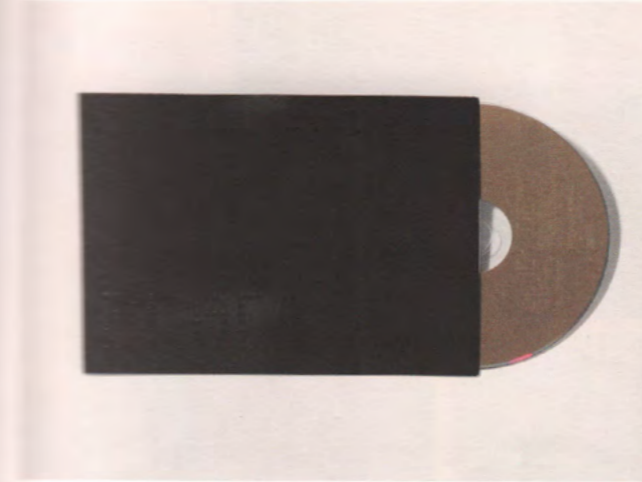
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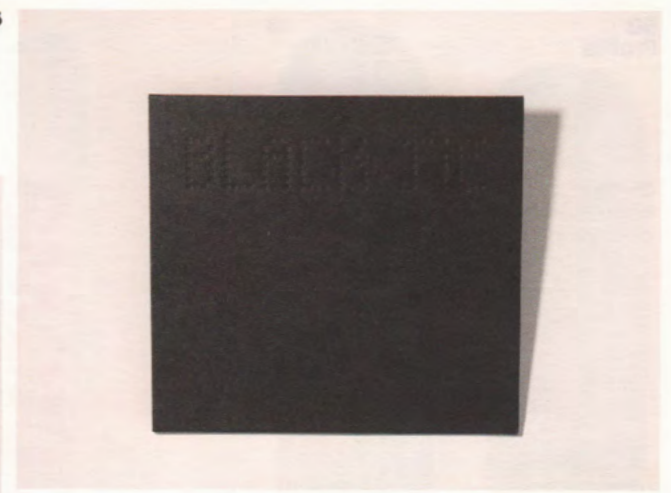
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01-03
EV/Et Vous, identity
and catalogues



05



06



04-06
Yves Saint Laurent,
show Invites

07-08
Street Machine,
visual identity



07

08



01-06
Black Crows, brand
identity and design



01



02



03

"There's a lot of Op Art in my world; people like Bridget Riley, Jesus Rafael Soto and Victor Vasarály are big influences. It's a logical graphic application that I keep coming back to again and again. Sometimes I worry that I'm painting myself into a corner with it, but then I look at artists like Sol Lewitt who did the same thing for their entire career," says Tloupas.

He shouldn't worry: looking at the numerous patterns that flow through Tloupas's career, in particular his heavily Op Art-influenced work on the Black Crows ski range, there is a visible thread and coherence in the work, but it's far from repetitive. This might come from the passion for snowboarding and skiing Tloupas had as a teenager, which he says led directly to his love of design. "There's a huge link between snow sports and design because there are around a hundred brands, each with three to four models which change every three months or so, and snowboards or skis are physically big surfaces to design on, so you get exposed to a huge range of graphics," he explains. "And the creativity around it is great too; the videos are great, the ads are great, and it bypasses entirely the corporate culture that's prevalent in virtually every other sport. It's an amazing way of shaping an understanding of graphic language," says Tloupas.

This obvious passion for the sport goes right back to Tloupas's final college project, a branding project for a fictional snowboarding brand ("called Orange," says Tloupas with a grin) which turned into a real-world—and big-money—project for Rossignol. "It earned me £50K... Can you imagine a student leaving college with £50K? It meant I could immediately go freelance, cherry-picking jobs and working on projects I liked for free," he recalls. He still works in this way; in five years at *Intersection*, an independent car magazine for people who love cars but wouldn't dream of buying car magazines, he has never drawn a salary, instead making his income from branding work.

But the two inform each other constantly. "Intersection has taught me a lot about the need to be commercial and think about the reader, but at the same time keep the independent spirit and feel of the magazine. With *Intersection*, I constantly tread a fine line between legibility and issues like not alienating the reader through self-indulgence. That now informs every other aspect of my work," says Tloupas.



05



06

