



Ken Barber and the magic of House Industries

By Marc Salinas

To speak about House Industries and the impact that this studio specialized in the design of fonts has caused in our profession, is to speak of a full race of commercial successes and multitude of prizes granted by organizations, companies and associations worldwide.

This American company, founded on 1993 by Andy Cruz and Rich Roat like Brand Design Co. in the storage room of the apartment of this last one, they knew to canalize of very intelligent way its fervent passion and influences towards the graph aesthetic of half-full of century XX. With all a series of fresh fonts, funny and of an excellent quality that supported by some promotion elements that made the delights of all professional lover of the typography, they caused with time, that there was not an agency of publicity or study of design that was ended up rendering to its enchantments and bought some typography designed by them.

Ken Barber joined House Industries in 1996. Their enthusiasm by the American handwriting of 60's and 70's and its great productive capacity in the design and development of new types, has turned it into a key piece in the company.

UnosTiposduros spoke with him to know a little more about House and which is their particular vision of typography.

Betty Cracker
Camping & Fishing
Soft Lips
Fairtrade Cocoa



Can you explain me, in a short form, who you are and what represents House Industries?

House Industries is a Yorklyn, Delaware based digital font foundry and design studio. In addition to being a letterer and typeface designer at House, I am also the company's director of typeface development.

When you will start a new project, how is your work process and what is the thing that you give the most importance?

When beginning a new typeface project it is important for us to consider a number of factors. First, the theme of the project must be personally fulfilling to us. That means the subject matter of a new project must be stimulating enough to justify the time and effort necessary to produce it. Secondly, we need to evaluate whether or not customers will be interested in the proposed fonts and related products.

Also, the new project must be distinctly different than the other products we offer.

We then begin to research and develop the fonts, while conceptualizing possible products connected with the theme of the project. After thoroughly testing the typefaces and accessories, we create marketing material to advertise the final product.

Are all the House Industries's projects developed in a collective form or do you like to work alone?

All House Industries projects are the product of a collective effort. While not everyone in the studio is involved with every particular project, the creative process nonetheless remains very collaborative.

Your types breathe a great admiration for the graphic styles of the 60 and 70 years. What is the thing that

Dollhouse
Children's Songs
Little Miss
Embroiderers Thread



Persia
Athletics Dept.
Señoritas
Mandarin tea
Regency

more fascinate you of this period?

During the past few decades there has been a decline in the use of the traditional design and illustration techniques that were commonly used during the better part of the twentieth century. Consequently, craftsmanship appears absent in much of contemporary graphic design. House is simply interested in exploring and perpetuating these traditional practices, incorporating them into our work.

All your products have got a graphic care presentation; you give a lot importance to the details...And this, it happens too in all advertising materials that you produce (catalogues, your book, the clothes...)

Tediously working on typefaces for months at a time can get quite boring. Designing elaborate catalogs, packaging solutions and even clothing gives us the opportunity to escape from the routine of moving points and pixels around on a computer screen all day. It is also vital that each element of every project receives that same amount of attention that we put into all of our work. Finally, customers benefit by getting something more than a font or a T shirt: they actually experience graphic design in a very practical way.

One of the proposals that I most like of House Industries is the themes of your types. How emerged the idea of not design fountains in an independent form, but creates packs with a concrete theme?

Andy Cruz, co founder of House Industries, first introduced the idea of collectively packaging and marketing thematically related fonts. Prior to this, most font manufacturers and distributors were selling individual fonts or typeface families. We expanded on this model by grouping stylistically distinct fonts and selling them as a single product. Using an underlying theme also gave us a great excuse to make some cool packaging and inform our customers about underappreciated artists and design genres they might have otherwise never heard of.

Nowadays there is a huge presence of little foundries thanks for digital technology. Some of these foundries have got a great quality in their works. Do you like some of this in concrete?

I am always happy to see new type designers and foundries offering graphic designers quality fonts.

In our country, unfortunately, the type's pirate is in the order of the

day. What do you think that can the cause and the most important, which could be the solution to decrease this problem?

The solution begins with professional graphic designers. Type users should offer type designers the same respect they themselves expect. Piracy not only devalues type design, but it serves to devalue graphic design on the whole. This has caused graphic design to lose respect in the eyes of the public; as a consequence, practically everyone thinks they are a graphic designer. We, as professionals, must give respect in order to get respect. This will set an example for the public at large and do much to bring respect to both graphic design and type design professions.

Your new project calls Studio Lettering. Can you talk about it?

Studio Lettering is a collection of three script faces and one dingbat font inspired by mid twentieth century advertising lettering. The typefaces also explore stylistic nuances that are particular to certain languages and cultures. These "colloquial" features make particular letterform and diacritic substitutions depending on the chosen language. The changes are primarily informed by handwriting copybooks, historical observations and my discussions with native speakers and letterers. The Studio Lettering fonts also make extensive use of OpenType technology to suggest the form and movement of traditional lettering. The purpose of the font programming is not to replicate the appearance hand lettering; rather, it is an attempt to find common ground between lettering processes and contemporary type design.

What do you think that it has been the secret of your success?

I think hard work, an open mind and a willingness to take risks can be attributed to any success that House Industries has had.

Which are your future projects? (Typographically talking, of course)

By the end of the year, House Industries will release the Alexander Girard font collection and related products, inspired by the work of the late American design icon.

Thank you very much Ken, it was a pleasure.

Thanks. The pleasure was mine.

More info:

www.houseind.com
www.typeandlettering.com