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Cipe Pineles

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Cipe Pineles

In 2019, 61% of working graphic designers were women. The modern history of this industry has been written by both women and men, however for decades prior, females were rarely accepted into the field, and almost never allowed into the design field hierarchy of art directors. Thanks to very few female design pioneers who paved the way, women now have bountiful opportunities as not only designers, but design leaders. A young Austrian born woman with a passion for food and fine art influenced not only a creative movement, but a feminist movement at the turn of the 20th century.

Early Life & Career

Cipe Pineles was born in 1908 and immigrated to Brooklyn, New York with her family as a child. She was both intelligent and creative from a very early age and excelled in grade school even as a young European immigrant. From winning an essay award about her transition to America to being acknowledged as “the little Polish girl who knows how to draw well” by her senior class, it was evident that Cipe had a creative future ahead (Rich et al., 2017, p. 9).

She enrolled at Pratt Institute in 1926 where she began her journey to a career in design. While pursuing a degree in fine art, Cipe honed in on her technical drawing and painting skills with watercolor and gouache as her medium of choice. Food was a passion of hers. Food was often the subject of her art, continuing throughout her entire life. As a college student in the

midst of the Great Depression, she wandered around her neighborhoods of New York attempting to sell paintings of sandwiches and Coca-Cola bottles (ACD Global, n.d.).

After graduation, Pineles continued down the path of fine arts and became an instructor of painting at the Newark Public School of Fine and Industrial Art in New Jersey. That was until she entered the design scene when she was eventually hired by Contempora Ltd, a group of

European immigrant designers. This association of artists claimed to have design experience in a diverse assortment

of industries, including architecture, transportation, glassware, carpentry, ceramics, and most importantly for

Cipe's growth, textiles (Scotford, 1999, p. 28). In her time

there, Pineles designed promotional materials, patterns, and store displays for Contempora's portfolio of clients.

One project in particular was an important stepping stone to the rest of her career in design. She led a campaign for

Everfast, a cotton mill and textile brand who wanted to market their products in a more fashion forward approach.

The display she created merged her meticulous eye for design, fine arts skills, and interest in fashion. This

immense store display caught the eye of Leslie Foster Nast, wife of Conde Nast. Leslie soon met

Cipe at a party where a discussion about her piece led to a job offer at Conde Nast, where her

journey to become a trailblazing art director in the fashion magazine industry began. As assistant

to Dr. M. F. Agha, Cipe began to contribute her creative talent to many publications that were



Window display created out of cardboard and textiles for Contempora and Everfast. Cipe's knowledge of fabric presented itself through this project which eventually landed her a career in fashion.

often dominated by men. While working on titles such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, she learned the in's and out's of the magazine world. During her years spent with Conde Nast, Pineles' first hurdled the gender barrier successfully to earn the title of the first of the first female art director of *Glamour* magazine in 1942 (Opus Design, 2020).

***Glamour* Magazine**

In the 1930's, it was rare for a woman to be in the design industry, and nearly impossible to be an art director. Young women were expected to stay at home, become a wife, and raise a family. However through trials, rejections, and much time as a mere assistant, Cipe's eye for design and fine art talents finally spoke for themselves. She prevailed and rose to the top as an art director, above of many of her male colleagues. Cipe forged her own path to do something that was seldom done before; create content for woman coming from a woman's point of view.

As an official design leader, Pineles truly defined her personal style during her time as art director at *Glamour* starting in 1942. Her playful approach to editorial design was reflected across the entire publication. European modernist was trending throughout publication design, and Cipe was no stranger to this style as she was heavily influenced by her European roots.



European influenced spreads of *Seventeen* magazine directed by Pineles. The layouts feature bold, wide headlines at the top, large amounts of white space, and wide margins.

Headlines became larger and margins became wider, block lettering was avoided, and modern fonts with high contrast replaced traditional typefaces.

There was an increased use of white space, while also integrating the content, text and images in more experimental compositions (Vianello, 2015). Cipe pushed creative boundaries with cover design by introducing cut paper letters, hand lettering, and other unconventional forms of typography. Though she only lead the creative of *Glamour* for five years until her departure in 1947, this was only the beginning of her long-lasting career in the publication world.



Cover of Glamour directed by Cipe Pineles featuring hand lettering and cut paper collage, one of the first occurrences of this design technique in a magazine.

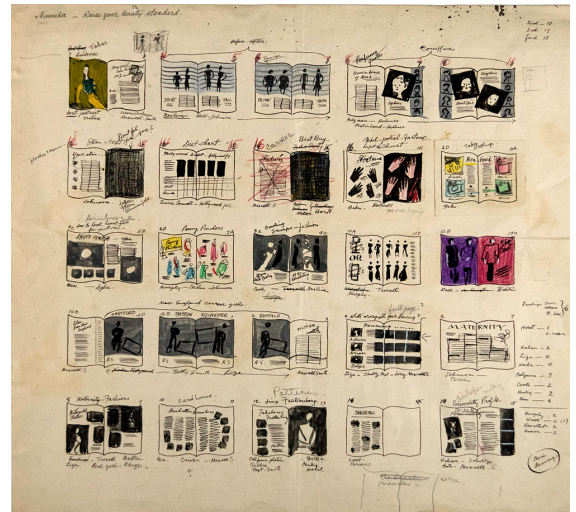
Design Process

Colleagues and acquaintances of Cipe Pineles remember her for her process of bringing publication covers and spreads to fruition. By incorporating her fine art background into her art direction, she exercised a distinct and precise level of exploration and planning for each and every article. Her detailed sketches were produced with gouache, pen, and ink, which as we know was Pineles' medium of choice since childhood. When comparing thumbnail sketches to final magazine spreads, the pieces can easily be identified. Due to such a high level of precision and direction from Cipe, her team of designers were able to efficiently and effectively translate her vision into a successful editorial piece.



Cipe's pen and ink sketches compared to the final spread in Glamour magazine. The two share many visual similarities, including the color, the positioning of the figures, the contrast in the articles of clothing, and even the slanted script text.

Fellow Art Directors Club member Steven Heller recalls Pineles' explanation of her practice. "We used to make many versions of the same feature. If we did, let's say, twenty pages on beauty with twenty different photographers, we made scores of different layouts in order to extract every bit of drama or humor we could out of that material," she once told him (Rich et al., 2017, p. 25). Especially with trials in unconventional typography, hand lettering, and hand painted illustrations, each experimental version was a crucial step to a polished, completed piece. The irreplaceable works of Cipe Pineles, including her original meticulous sketches, photostats, paste-ups, and book maquettes have been preserved and located in the archives at the Rochester Institute of Technology.



Persevered original sketches of Glamour magazine layouts in the archives at Rochester Institute of Technology

Seventeen Magazine

After the end of World War II, an untapped market of readers were being explored by American publishing houses. Adolescent females were often ignored by this industry, and Cipe was on a mission to change that through her design. Teenage girls were becoming a more recognizable economic force in the 1940's, yet they were not being acknowledged as smart, serious, growing young adults (Vianello, 2015).

Cipe who worked alongside Helen Valentine, a writer for the magazine, and Estelle Ellis, a marketer for the magazine, worked to not only educate woman, but break the gender norms and try to capture this young affluent female teenager (likely a babysitter or waitress/hostess) the

magazine *Seventeen* was developed. The choice of fashion models and how they were presented in photography needed to be done thoughtfully, due to the impressionable age of this younger demographic.

During her time at *Seventeen*, Cipe imposed what many people consider to be her greatest creative innovation as an art director— sourcing illustrations for publications through fine artists.

Illustrations by professional fine artists had never been incorporated in mass-produced media like magazines and newspapers. Pineles, a fine

artist herself, wanted to introduce traditional illustrations into what had become a

“modernized” publication. She commissioned

many famous artists such as Andy Warhol,

Ben Shahn and his wife, Berarda Bryson,

Richard Lindner, Jacob Lawrence, Reginald

Marsh, John Sloan, and Dong Kingman for

artwork to be featured within the lifestyle

articles of *Seventeen* (Munafo, 2021). In doing this, contemporary modern art became more

accessible to the young demographic that *Seventeen* was after. This also validated a sense of a

larger world of sophistication out there for these young women to aspire to.

Charm Magazine

Now onto her 3rd major role as an art director, Cipe left *Seventeen* and transitioned to a new

publication in 1950 where she continued to make her mark in the women’s lifestyle scene. With



“Pick Your Potato” spread from a 1948 issue of *Seventeen* illustrated by Pineles, exhibiting one of the first instances of fine art illustration in mass-produced publications

the same female-forward mindset as *Seventeen*, *Charm* magazine also was designed to break gender norms, but with a slightly older age group. According to PrintMag (2020), *Charm* was “a magazine for women stepping away from traditional roles as wives and mothers to become part of the workforce after WWII”. The demographic of *Charm* was comparable to *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Glamour*, all of which Pineles had lead prior, however she used *Charm* as a platform to redefine what the content of women’s magazines could be. The goal was to educate women on career and professional advice, while not losing their interest in fashion and beauty and it was Cipe’s task to communicate this complex message through visuals. According to Vianello, “she would often make fashion spreads of women at work, showing clothes for working women in use, on location”. Compositions often featured photographs of beautiful woman who wore makeup and dressed well, yet they were on the phone, typing on keyboards, or surrounded by office furniture. The visuals of women exhibiting both beauty and career conveyed that this could be ‘real life’ for women, rather than always having to remain marriage-minded. “We tried to make the prosaic attractive without using the tired clichés of false glamour. You might say we tried to convey the attractiveness of reality, as opposed to the glitter of a never-never land” said Pineles herself (Opus Design, 2020).



Cover and photo directed by Pineles for *Charm* magazine. The “modern working woman” is illustrated with models posing next to typewriters and talking on the phone.

Personal Life

Cipe also prioritized her personal life and family all while in the midst of her active career.

Design dominated her professional life, and extended into her romantic life as well. In 1939,

Cipe married William Golden, the notable graphic designer who is known for his creation of the

CBS logo. According to Eye Magazine (1995), Cipe helped Golden get started with a career in

the design industry through her connections at Conde Nast. They had a son and remained

together until his unexpected death in 1959 during her brief tenure as art director at

Mademoiselle magazine. Two years later, Cipe remarried another famous designer William

Burtin, known for his art direction at Fortune. Pineles partnered with her new husband on various

creative endeavors, the most prominent being the visual identity of the new Lincoln Center. They

also had a daughter and remained together until his death in 1972 (Eye Magazine, 1995).

Working with Students

Cipe left the publication industry after a robust career as an art

director with nearly six magazines. Though she transitioned out of

the editorial space, she continued with art and design in a new

way. Pineles joined the faculty at Parsons School of Design in

New York in 1962. As she taught various classes, she also held the

position of Director of Publications. In this role, she worked with

the student body to create informational books, brochures, and

posters for the school (Brower 2015). Pineles led two notable

projects while at Parsons—both related to food. First was *Parsons*



The cover of Parsons Bread Book, a student project led by Pineles. The use of real dough to create hand symbols demonstrates her passion for unconventional materials in editorial design.

Bread Book. The 72 page book organized and directed by Cipe and her class in 1974 is “a celebration of the art of baking bread and the great bakers of New York City” according to the front cover. The cover of the book has clear influence from Pineles’ publication work; using unexpected and unconventional materials.

The following year, another project called *Cheap Eats—The Art Student’s Coloring Cook Book* was created by the class of 1975 under Pineles leadership. College students and faculty members submitted their budget friendly recipes and favorite dishes that were designed into an editorial style book by the design students. Each recipe was hand illustrated, similar to the celebrated illustration style of Cipe.



Cover and inside page of Cheap Eats, student project led by Pineles during her time as faculty at Parsons. The book featured student drawn “colorable” food and recipe illustrations.

She continued on at Parsons throughout the 1970’s, influencing dozens of design students who took her course. Her colleague Steven Heller said, “Magnanimity showed in her dedication and love of teaching others. She was various parts conductor and catalyst using her own experience not as a template, but as an example to follow, modify or reject” (Rich et al., 2017, p. 25).

The Original “Foodie”

Taking into account her many projects centered around food, gastronomy was a lifelong passion of Cipe Pineles. It had been a consistent subject is much of her artwork from her youth, through her work in magazines, and into her time as an instructor.

In the 1960's after her run as art director at various popular existing publications, Cipe planned to launch her own new publication dedicated to her love for food and recipes. Titled "Food & Drink", was intended for the enjoyment of both men and women, which was uncommon for comparable magazines at the time. According to Sarah Rich, the magazine intended to "not only be instructional but investigative and intellectual, looking at gastronomy through the eyes of some of the greatest writers of that era" (Rich et al., 2017, p. 12). Cipe gathered a team of writers and contributors to partner with on her new project, including James Beard, who had been the food editor at *McCall's* and *House Beautiful*. "Most of the material published in magazines seems to be aimed exclusively at women. And only at certain kinds of women, at that. It's coy and cute. Or frilly. Or dull. Or long-winded. Or meandering, with recipes as leaven for otherwise flighty essays. High time all that was changed, in our opinion. And changed it is, with the first issue of *Food & Drink*, the new magazine for the inner man". This is Beard's descriptive promotional copy for the magazine's launch (Rich et al., 2017, p. 13). Cipe spent most of her career paving a pathway for woman readers of publications, so creating a magazine to do the opposite and appeal to men was a notable idea.

Though *Food & Drink* magazine was short lived, Cipe's legacy lived on even years after her death. Designers Sarah Rich and Wendy MacNaughton found a sketchbook full of hand drawn recipes at an antique store in San Francisco. Awed by the effortless quality in the artwork, the two women purchased the sketchbook. MacNaughton, Rich, and a large team of writers and colleagues spent years researching the life of Pineles and her contributions to the design world. A full book containing a biography, essays from colleagues, and most importantly, Cipe's personal recipes and illustrations, was published in 2017 - nearly 72 years after the sketchbook was

created. *Leave Me Alone with The Recipes* features all of Pineles' hand-lettered and hand-painted recipes, many of which are traditional Jewish dishes passed down from her family.



Spreads inside of Leave Me Alone with the Recipes. Illustrations found in Pineles' sketchbook done in pen, ink, and gouache along with hand lettering titles.

Feminist Design Trailblazer

Cipe Pineles' career in the design industry was a successful 60 years long and repeatedly broke the glass ceiling along the way. A design career lasting six decades is an impressive feat alone, but Cipe accomplished this at a time when men dominated the field. Since the very start of her career, Cipe faced challenges as a female designer. Despite her opportunities being already limited, Cipe would get more interest from employers than the average female applicant, mainly because her unfamiliar first name did not disclose a clear gender. Once interviewers discovered she was a woman, she was often turned away.

Even to this day, Cipe Pineles is not a household name, despite the dozens of household publications she contributed to for decades. Contemporary artists and designers have been inspired by the concepts that Pineles once pioneered. Andy Warhol, whom she had

commissioned to illustrate at *Seventeen*, continued to incorporate food and illustrated cookbooks into his portfolio after working with Cipe (PrintMag, 2020).

After being nominated for admission to the Art Directors Club for ten successive years, she was finally accepted in 1943. Additionally, she was the first woman ever to be admitted into its Art Directors Club Hall of Fame in 1975 after her design career had come to an end.

According to *Eye Magazine* (1995), “the club refused to offer her membership until they wanted her husband William Golden, who pointed out that they were hardly a professional club if they had ignored his fully qualified wife.”

Many other organizations acknowledged the significance of Pineles’ work, including the Society of Publication Designers who awarded her the Herb Lublin Award and the Alliance Graphique Internationale who inducted her as the only female member. Lastly, five years after she passed, the American Institute of Graphic Arts awarded Cipe Pineles with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Though the publication industry has begun to fade as new media emerges, the contributions of Cipe Pineles are still reflected in editorial design today. Traditional women’s magazines such as *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair* are not just about the “pretty woman”, thanks to the innovations that Pineles implemented decades ago. The publications reflect a modern day woman who is interested in beauty and fashion, but also careers, relationships, travel, home, and Cipe’s personal favorite, food. Additional, hand-drawn typography, cut paper elements, and commissioned illustrations are all still found in major publications to this day as result of Cipe Pineles’ innovations.

Cipe had established herself as a design pioneer starting as a mere young European immigrant who loved to paint her food, until the very end of her creative career having served as an art director of the countries most esteemed publications. However, Pineles herself believed that being a woman who broke down barriers in her field was not necessarily an “accomplishment” or “legacy”. It was just a part of her overall career journey. (Rich et al., 2017, p. 27). Being one of the most influential designers of her time, many would disagree with her in that being one of the first female art directors is one of the most inspiring accomplishments in design history, especially for those 61% of designers who are female in the industry today. Even decades since her passing, Cipe’s artistic and innovative contributions to the publication industry will surely continue to be represented in our favorite magazines.

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