

**An exhibition of the idea-based
graphic design of Bob Gill**

5 October to 21 October 2006
Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm
open to the public admission free

Bob Gill Lecture Wednesday 4 October 6pm
Blackfriars Hall St Andrews Plain St Georges Street
Tickets free from Norwich Gallery
info@norwichgallery.co.uk or s.a.e

Reception at Norwich Gallery 4 October 7.30 to 9pm

Dispatch 129

Norwich Gallery

location
St George Street

correspondence
Norwich School of Art and Design
Francis House, 3-7 Redwell Street
Norwich NR2 4SN
tel +44 (0)1603 756247
info@norwichgallery.co.uk
www.norwichgallery.co.uk



After two years at The Philadelphia Museum School of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Gill began free-lancing in New York. His first job: a magazine cover. They credited Leslie Gill, a well known designer/photographer. Not an auspicious start.

Gill was drafted during the Korean War from 1952 to 1954.

When he returned to New York, he built a primitive proof press, so that he could send woodcuts to advertising agencies and publishers. The one shown here said, "Call Bob Gill for sweater drawings."

Gill, along with most designers, was preoccupied with what was trendy. He wasn't as interested in communication as he was in "good design," whatever that means.

His illustrations began to appear in Esquire, Vogue, Fortune, etc.



In 1955, CBS asked him to design a title card for a sitcom about a dizzy secretary.

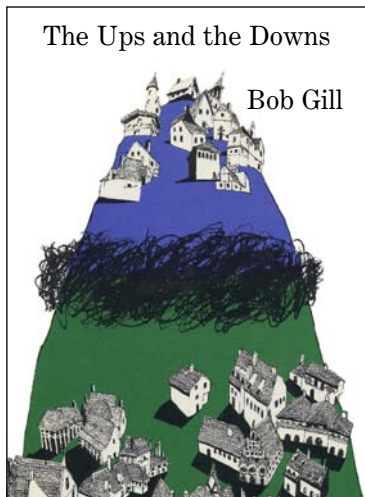
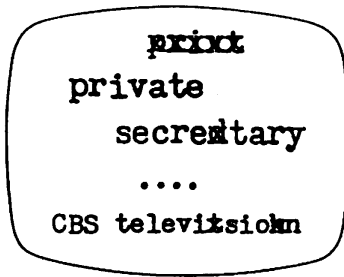
While working on this job, he first realized that graphic design was about much more than fashionable type and layouts looking like Mondrian, that for him, the real satisfaction comes from solving problems with unique images, and that the more interesting the problem, the more interesting the solution.

He started teaching at the School of Visual Arts in 1956, obsessed with “problem solving.” Gill was unrelenting. “Tell me your idea. Don't show me a layout.”

He also did his first film title. “Hollywood is a great place to do film titles, but I wouldn't want to live there,” he said.

And he began to write and illustrate children's books.

One of his clients owned an office building in Times Square. Gill wanted to make a statement about the Vietnam War. He suggested a 40 foot tall sculpture of used military hardware sprayed black with a white marble plynth for the forecourt. His model was rejected by the City of New York's art commission. Perhaps they thought, it would lower the tone around the porno theatres and the massage parlors in the area.



In 1960, although he was busy designing, illustrating, and teaching, in New York, he accepted a job, his first and last, as an art director in London, on a whim.

It was a mistake – working in an advertising agency – not London. London was amazing.

He had one-man shows in New York and London, wrote more children's books and had a column, *The last word*, in *Queen Magazine*.

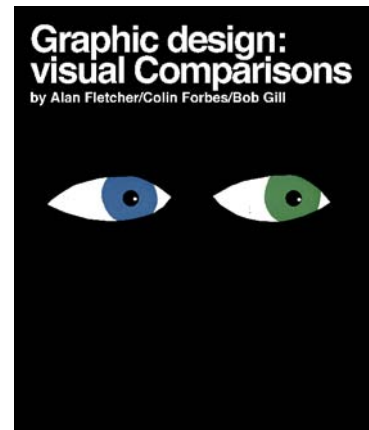
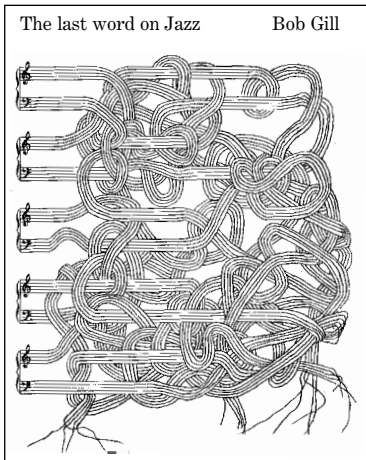
In 1962, with two of the most creative young designers in London, Gill started *Fletcher/Forbes/Gill* on April Fools Day.

They soon outgrew their small mews studio and moved into a huge former, Victorian gun factory on a canal, and started *The Designers and Art Directors Association (D&AD)*.

Within a year or two, *F/F/G* became *the* designers of “swinging London.”

As Alan Fletcher said, “it was like shooting fish in a barrel.”

They also opened a second office in Geneva, and a book they wrote about their design ideas, sold over 100,000 copies.



F/F/G began with two assistants and a secretary. Today, it's called *Pentagram*, with offices everywhere except Albania.

Gill left in 1967 to work independently again. The office was already getting too big.

He had a one-man show at the *Stedelijk Museum* in Amsterdam, started teaching at *The Royal College of Art*, and had his portfolio published by *Lund Humphries*.

During the next seven years, Gill spent half his time teaching, half his time making industrial films and the other half, writing children's books, and designing and illustrating.

Shown here is a logo for a company that makes very small industrial models.

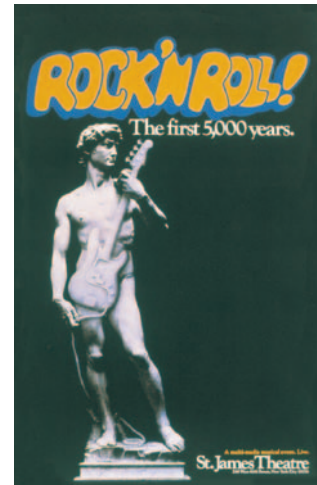
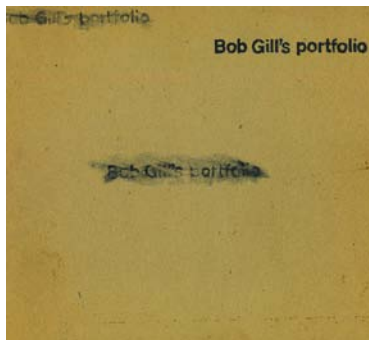
Problem redefined by Gill: how can the logo *appear* very small even when it is very large on the company's building or on their vans.

Back to New York in 1975.

He and a friend, Robert Rabinowitz, the painter, were asked to write and design a multimedia and live history of the sixties with a Beatle's soundtrack. "What's multimedia?" Gill asked.

Beatlemania ran for three years on Broadway and spawned several touring companies.

Next came *Rock 'n Roll, the first 5,000 years*, another event for Broadway. It opened in 1980, and closed as far as Gill can recall, in 1979.



Forget all the rules about graphic design. Including the ones in this book. was published in 1981.

It soon became required reading in design schools in Europe and in America.

The title and chapter headings reveal much about Gill's ideas: *The problem is the problem, Interesting words need boring images. Boring words need interesting images. Less is more. More is also more, etc.*

Lincoln Center, a cultural complex in New York, commissioned an event to celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Gill and Rabinowitz covered the 175 ft. facade of the opera house with five movie screens 70 ft. deep, and designed a split-screen documentary which was shown every night, weather permitting, in the summer. One critic called the show, "... the most spectacular event since Leni Riefenstahl did it for Hitler."

And Gill designed his first computer job, a logo for *The Third Eye*, theatrical lighting designers.

Gill was elected into the New York Art Directors Club Hall of Fame and he is also a recipient of D&AD's Lifetime Achievement Award.

He's still designing, and illustrating independently, still teaching, still writing books, still lecturing.

His latest books:
Graphic Design as a Second Language, 2004
Illustration, 2005
LogoMania, 2006

