Learn the rules to know how to break them

david carson

What really put Carson on the map

Overlapping blocks of copy, light text against dark backgrounds; dark text against dark backgrounds, running text across pages, including stories that are read horizontally across columns (just hop over the gutter between them), deliberately running photos upside-down. Quoted in a 1995 article called "Illegible" David Carson cannot not communicate, the question is asked. "Why break so many rules, David?" Carson replies "I never learned all the rules, all the things you're not supposed to do. I don't believe the attitude. ' Learn the rules to know how to break them.'

is his work as art director for Ray Gun, a magazine that debuted in November 1992. According to a cover tagline, it's "the bible of music & style." Though it's possible to draw some strained comparisons between Ray Gun and other typographic experiments of the past, the monthly magazine is strikingly fresh even now, taking Beach Culture's design mishmash to the absolute max. Typography is supposed to be invisible. At least, that's the prevailing view. If there's one cardinal lesson design students are force-fed, it's this: If the intended reader actually notices the typography and graphic design on a page, then you've failed as a designer. Every single typesetting rule of thumb you could possibly come up with has been broken in Ray Gun's brief history:

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1961 David Carson was born

1987 formed Beach Culture, a surfing rag with radical graphic design

1992 Ray Gun magazine debuted

1994 presented a sold-out slideshow sponsored by the Advertising & Design club

1995 designs 1st article which began on the inside and ended at the front

1996 Carson leaves Ray Gun

1997 returned to the magazine format with blue