Graphic Narratives: Generative Book Covers

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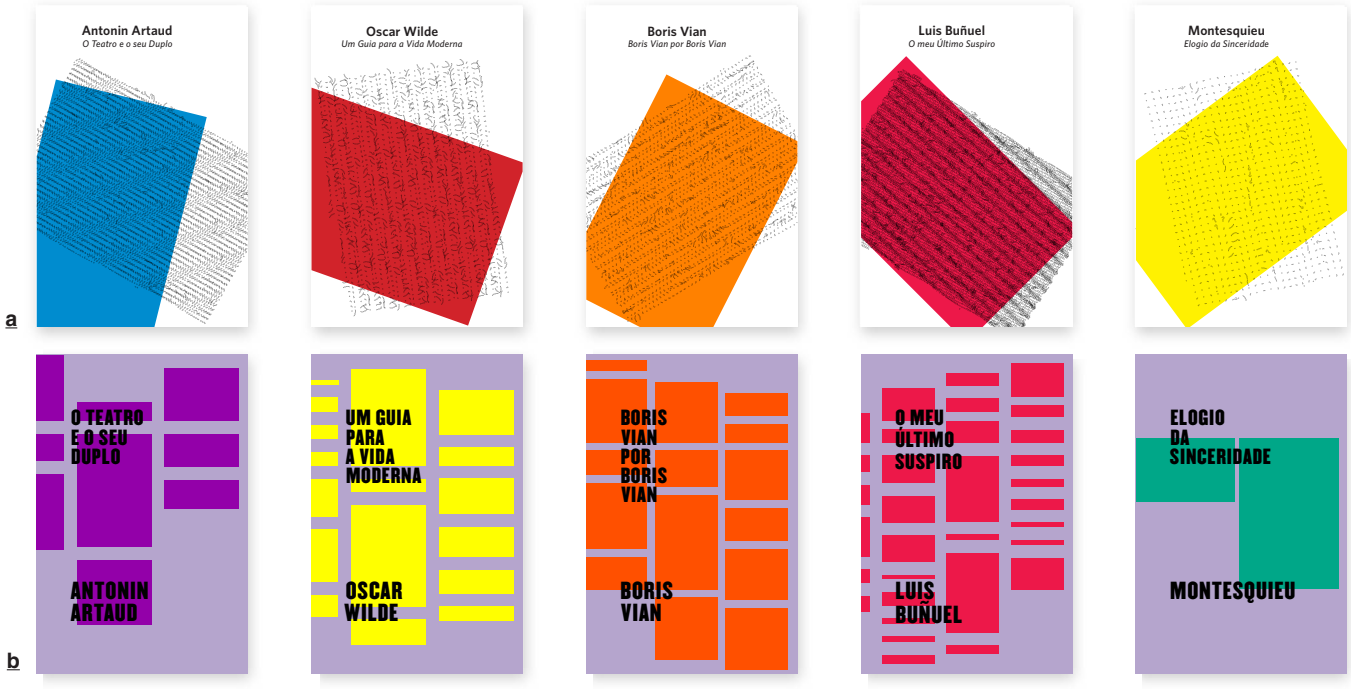

Figure 1 **a** *and* **b**.*Two different graphic lines for the same collection. From the punctuation marks (***a***) and the number and length of chapters (***b***).*

1 Introduction

Designing an individual book cover is substantially different from designing the covers for a book collection. In the latter case, the task of the designer is to establish visual and perceptual unity to a set of literary works that may be heterogeneous in their motivations, goals and literary contexts.The introduction of programming in the creative process of graphic design empowers the designer, freeing he from the constraints of predefined computational tools, and promoting creative freedom in the construction of visual metaphors. Resulting from the intersection of programming with the creative process of design, the work "graphic narratives" explores new creative possibilities in the design of covers for book collections.

2 Approach and results

Designing covers for a collection requires harmonizing the need of creating a visual unity with the individualization of each cover. Generative processes tend to implicitly define a visual language of akin, yet different, shapes. As such it is considered that they may be relevant in this context.
Striving to get away from the classical approach to cover design, simplification of the book's contents and reinterpretation, we explore the individualization of each cover through the analysis of the shape of the text, instead of the analysis of its content. This rationalistic approach, inspired by the literary movement of the 50s "Concretism", more concerned with writing in a rational way than in an emotional one, allowed us to attain the desired levels of unity and individuality.

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The ultimate goal is not to visually communicate the form of the texts in a quickly and easily interpretable way, as would be desirable in the discipline of information visualization, but rather the creation of graphical shapes that abstractly characterize the form of each text. Two different results for the same collection of books (various authors and epochs) are presented.
In the first case – taking into account that punctuation marks directly contribute to the construction of the rhythm of the text – a pattern is created through the direct mapping of the marks and the rotation of each element (Fig.1**a**).

Figure 2 *Detail of the graphic line of figure 1***a**.

In the second case, the high level structure of the text comes into play: the number of rectangles equals the number of chapters and the area of each rectangle is proportional to the length of the corresponding chapter (Fig.1**b**).
By using these elements, punctuation marks and chapter divisions, that bestow explicit structure to the text, we were able to create visual artifacts that assist the designer in the construction of elegant covers for collections. Other factors, such as the usage of different punctuation marks, paragraph frequency, the average length of sentences, its variance, could also have been explored.

References

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