

Re-creating 1960s poster type

Groovy, baby. With the mod clothing making a comeback in fashion, its time to revisit the psychedelic '60s, an era of unique design and typography. One hallmark of the era was swirling, sinuous lettering such as that found on rock posters.

Adobe® Illustrator® lends itself to making the curved shapes and fluid forms of the era through its Envelopes feature, in which you distort objects by enclosing them in stylized graphic containers. Luanne Seymour Cohen, one of Adobe's original art directors, shows how to use this technique to great effect.

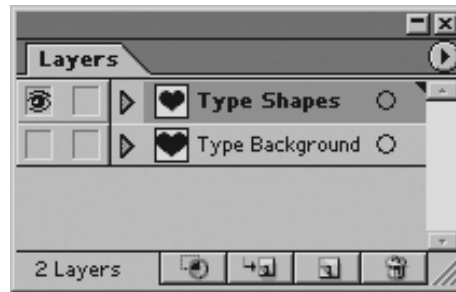
Many of the posters from the 1960s and '70s had hand-drawn typefaces that flowed into curved shapes. The posters were reminiscent of the Art Nouveau posters from the late 1800s. Inspired by flowers, leaves, and vines, the artists created sinuous shapes that encapsulated the type. With Illustrator's Envelope feature, you can create type just as they did in the '60s. First you create the basic shape and divide it into type containers. Then you create the type and combine it with the shape to distort it. Choose your typeface carefully. The ones that work best are very fat, dense display faces.

1 In a new Illustrator file or on a new layer, create the basic shape that will contain all of your type.

Keep the shape as simple as possible. The more intricate and complicated the shape, the less predictable (and satisfactory) the type distortion will be.

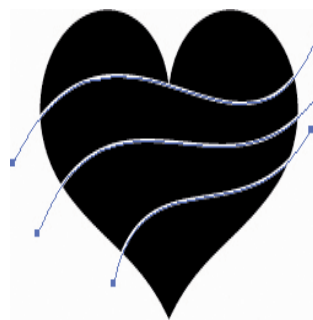


2 In the Layers palette, name the layer that contains the shape Type Background. Choose Duplicate "Type Background" from the Layers palette menu. Rename the new layer Type Shapes. Hide the Type Background layer.



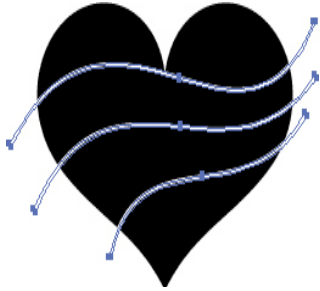
3 Using the pen tool, create lines that define where the type shapes will separate. Paint the lines with a stroke weight that's the width of space that you want between each type shape.

In this example, the lines are 2-pt strokes because the desired separation between the type blocks is 2 points.



4 Select all of the lines you created in step 3, and choose Object > Path > Outline Stroke. The lines have now become shapes. This will help when you create the separate type shapes in step 5.

If you want a backup file in case your type doesn't fit nicely and you need to change these lines, choose File > Save a Copy and save a backup version of the artwork at this stage.



5 Display the Pathfinder palette. With the selection tool, Shift-select the lines you just outlined and the basic shape. Option/Alt-click the Subtract button in the Pathfinder palette to subtract the lines from the basic shape at the same time you expand the lines into regular objects. While the artwork is still selected, choose Object > Ungroup. Deselect the art.



6 Use the type tool to create one type object for each shape. Choose a heavy, thick typeface. Plan the text according to the size of the shape that will hold the text.

For example, the two top shapes in the heart will contain small text blocks, while the two middle shapes will contain longer words or phrases.

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7 With the type still selected, choose Object > Arrange > Send to back > Deselect the type.

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8 Select one of the shapes, and then Shift-select the type object that will fit into it.



9 Choose Object > Envelope Distort > Make with Top Object.



10 Repeat steps 8 and 9 for each type object in your artwork. If you are satisfied with the effect, skip to step 13. If you want to edit or change the type, continue with the next step.

If you want to edit the dividing lines and you saved a copy of the file at step 4, open that file; edit the lines and start again at step 5.



11 If you want to edit the text or change the typeface, select the envelope object that needs editing. Choose Object > Envelope Distort > Edit Contents. To view the type more easily, choose View > Outline. Select the type tool in the toolbox and make the type changes.



12 Choose View > Preview. If you are satisfied with the type changes, choose Object > Envelope Distort > Edit Envelope.



13 If you want to change the color of the type, select the envelopes and choose Object > Envelope Distort > Edit Contents. Use the Color palette to select a new fill color. Deselect the type.



14 To complete the effect, in the Layers palette show the Type Background layer. Select the original shape and paint it with a fill color. If you want the shape to appear slightly larger than the type, add a stroke to the shape that is the same color as its fill. Deselect and save the file.



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