

Love At First Sight

Throughout my years working in the graphic design industry, I have had many struggles as an artist. Art and design came naturally to me, and so did creating artwork with the old medias, such as pencil & paper, pen & ink, paint & canvas. It wasn't until I was first introduced to the world of digital art that I saw a whole new world waiting, unexplored, limited only by the outreaches of my imagination. But learning this new technology of graphic design was not easy, for instead of drawing with a pencil, I had to learn how to draw with a mouse. This was awkward indeed, and it was very intimidating, to say the least.

A friend of mine had been teaching herself how to create artwork on a computer and invited me over to her house one day. She had just bought a Macintosh Quadra 700, and it was quite impressive. She showed me that she could create logos, flyers, catalogs, and run her business all from a little box. She had no need for a large art table, rulers, tracing templates, or pens and pencils that took up a whole room, but only a box that sat on a desk. It could do whatever she wanted, all with the click and flick of a mouse. She showed me the basics, and asked me to give it a try. I was frustrated. I knew what I wanted to do, but couldn't figure out how. In anger, I flipped the machine off and walked away.

After seeing my frustration, she encouraged me to give it another chance. I told her "no way was this box going to replace conventional art." I was wrong. I kept thinking about that little box, slowly coming to realize that it was the future, and if I was to be successful, I needed to learn how to use it. So I kept at it, studying every single piece of information I could get my hands on. I even went to a local print shop after midnight on the weekends to learn how to use it since I didn't have one I could call my own.

I fell in love with the Apple Macintosh. It could do things I never could do,

and it opened doors to a bigger and brighter future. It gave me the opportunity to become a much more intelligent designer and allowed me to create designs I never thought possible, all with a learning curve that required very little effort on my part. For the most part, I became an addict, and bought one for myself. I recall feeling so proud the day that I opened that box when I got it home.

Taking It To A Higher Level

Years have passed, and I use my Macintosh every day. Without it, I would feel useless. Not only do I use it for designing graphics, but writing letters, balancing my checkbook, and learning new technologies on the Internet. Both personally and professionally, I use my Macintosh to provide a living, a career, and a future. Because I got into the game in my early 20's, which is considered in the design business to be "over-the-hill" since most 10 year-olds can log onto the Internet and write programs, I have overcome my age handicap by becoming a self-taught designer, all with the simplest and best tool available, the Macintosh.

I must admit that I had never even heard of a Windows machine until I began working for an engineering firm that used Windows-based PCs for engineering electrical parts. This was due in part to the fact I was in the graphics industry, and most companies use the Apple Macintosh for their superior capabilities in print and design. What a nightmare! I was used to my Macintosh, so simple and easy to navigate. My Macintosh even made noise, but these Windows machine were mute — they only "beeped" at me when I made a mistake (and that first Windows machine I used beeped a lot). It was a nightmare. Gone were the familiar menus, icons, keyboard shortcuts, aliases, and just about everything else that was familiar on my Macintosh. It felt cold and shallow, not full of the life and energy that my Macintosh has.

Trying to find a file was like trying to find a pebble in an ocean — it took forever. I would know that I had just created a document and saved it to the hard drive, but where had it gone? There is no Find File, or Command-F on these things, and everything was organized in some strange kind of hierarchy, or is that anarchy? I tried to save the document onto a floppy (which I finally found after a half hour's worth of searching, looking through every folder), but where is the floppy? I stuck it in the drive, now where do I have to go to find it? That is what makes the Macintosh so great. Everything is at your fingertips, in the most logical locations, neatly figured out. Everything on a Mac has icons so that you can distinguish between your hard drive and CD-ROM. Windows, no way. Everything looks the same and will confuse not only the first time user, but even an experienced user as well. Needless to say, I stayed away from those machines, they made me

feel useless, and intimidated. I stuck with what worked, and worked the best.

Intel Inside? I Think Not.

I try to be objective in everything I do, looking at things from all sides. When it comes to using my tool of trade, it's gotta be a Macintosh. It is by far superior in design and education, and does things with ease and simplicity. Heck, it even does things I never knew it could do. While looking for employment in my area, I always respond to those ads that say the company uses the Apple Macintosh, and I simply pass up those that don't. Even though the jobs I've passed up may pay more, it's the aggravation of using equipment that won't and can't do the things I need to do that weighs heavily in my decision.

Recently, I took employment with a multimedia company that uses Windows PC's exclusively, and was told that during my interview. I explained that I wished to develop on a Macintosh and was assured that I would be accommodated. However, for the short time it took to order and deliver my equipment, I was stuck using a PC. At first, I thought that it would be no big deal. It was only to be a week or so. I began my first day excited about the new opportunity that lay before me, and when I was given a PC to begin creating web content, I met the challenge head-on.

I soon became helpless, frustrated, and angered at the simple fact that even though I was using Windows 95, which was "supposed" to be just like a Macintosh, it fell short in every matter. My first assignment was to create a simple logo for a product, and this is when I learned first-hand how terrible these machine are. What normally would take me a matter of minutes to create on my Macintosh took me well over three hours on a PC. Everything was, it seemed to me, backwards. Even though Adobe Photoshop is nearly identical on a PC compared to a Macintosh, they are worlds apart. No easily remembered keyboard shortcuts exist, nor were they the same in every program! For each application I used on my flashy new PC I had to re-learn how to use them since no two had similar ways of accomplishing simple tasks like cut-and-paste, copy, print, clear, undo, redo and on and on.

Windows 95 still holds on to the former Windows 3.1 way of setting up file directories — everything is hidden away, confusing to find and navigate. Keep in mind that this is "supposed" to be just like a Macintosh, and I should have no trouble at all doing anything on it. Quite the opposite. I insert a CD-ROM into the drive, and I must dig through levels to find it. And don't think of ejecting it if you are using an application that opened it is still running, for you'll drop into this DOS-like mode, screaming at you to reinsert the disk.

Adding fonts is a lost cause. On my Macintosh, I simply drag them onto my System and my Macintosh knows exactly what to do with them. On my PC, forget it, it's as dumb as a doorknob. There are folders inside of folders on this machine, and there is no way to figure out what is what, and where stuff needs to go. Installing applications on a PC installs files that give absolutely no indication as to what it does or what purpose it serves. These files, hundreds of them, become buried in a seemingly bottomless folder. And don't even think of throwing away anything after installing a program, for if you do, the program will refuse to work anymore, and you'll have no clue as to why. Ask a Macintosh user to identify ten common items in their system folder, and a high percentage will have an idea what they are, why they're there, and what they do. Ask the same of a PC user, even an experienced one, and they will have no clue what this .dll or that .exe file is for, or even where it came from.

After watching the Windows Technician attempt to repair a machine that was having problems, I realized that they really don't seem to know what is going on, guessing, and hoping that installing this or re-installing that will make the problem go away. So what the hard drive looks like is a big mess, with no way of removing un-needed files to conserve disk space, for doing so could cause severe problems, so the user is stuck with a magnitude of junk that serves no purpose, which increases the chance of having future problems down the road.

I especially like the way that Windows applications have a tendency to just go away. I think Macintosh users are spoiled in this area, even though Macintosh users see their fair share of Type errors or crashes, but nowhere as many as I have encountered in a short three weeks using Windows 95 on a PC. I would be using an application, doing whatever, and then for no apparent reason, a dialog box flashes on the screen that says that the application has encountered an illegal error, and will close now. Great. Happens daily, all the time. I have to save now, save often, for it will only be a matter of time before that not-so-friendly dialog box will make another visit to my screen.

Lessons Learned

I can go on and on about Windows, for it really is a poorly-executed and designed operating system. I myself will continue to support the best tool in the industry, not only for design, but just about everything else as well. My Macintosh is like an old friend, someone I can trust, be comfortable with, and know that it will give everything in return.

Being a Macintosh user at times can seem trying, since many will poke fun

at your little fruitbox, calling it nothing short of a toy. What makes it even harder is that businesses and industries alike fail to realize the potential of this machine and instead endorse a platform that is far from carefree and plug-and-play. But to each his own, and since some people drive imports, and others drive domestic, it all boils down to a matter of choice. The same holds true with the Mac vs. PC debate. I choose a Macintosh for its superior power and simplicity, allowing me to be more productive and less of a technician. I choose it because it does everything I want right out of the box and I don't have to add this card or that card just to get my PC to play sounds or connect to a network.

I have learned a valuable lesson the past few weeks — that everything that is drilled into my head from ad after ad that Windows is the future, it's the greatest thing on the planet and so on, is nothing short of baloney. I fail to see how one can be truly productive on a PC, regardless of what task they are trying to accomplish. I can honestly say that the Apple Macintosh is by far a superior technology, then, now, and in the future.

Oh, you may be wondering about this job I took that I have had to use a PC. Well, I took another position with a company that doesn't believe that one machine is better than the other, and allows freedom of choice in platforms. It seemed that the company I worked for wasn't too eager to purchase the equipment that I needed, so I decided to look elsewhere. For me, the choice is Macintosh.

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