

KYMENLAAKSO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Degree Programme in Design

Anne Hildén

VISUAL IDENTITY FOR OULUN TÄHTISIRKUS

Bachelor's Thesis 2012

ABSTRACT

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HILDÉN, ANNE

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Supervisor

Petteri Lehtinen, Visiting Lecturer

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The subject of this Bachelor's Thesis is Visual Identity for Oulun Tähtisirkus. Oulun Tähtisirkus (Oulu Star Circus) is a circus school based in Oulu, Finland. Oulun Tähtisirkus teaches traditional circus arts and performs at various events. The teaching is targeted mainly at children and young people, but there are groups for older people and families as well.

The goals of this thesis were to gain a deeper understanding of the circus and to provide Oulun Tähtisirkus with a visual identity which would best represent them. The thesis begins with research on circus and visual identity. The research was conducted with the help of books and Internet sources, as well as consulting Oulun Tähtisirkus. A questionnaire about the visual stereotypes of circus was also conducted. The thesis ends with a process description of the design process, which includes the ideation and development of a logo, followed by the creation of suitable applications and a style guide based on those applications.

The process suffered from timetable issues and therefore this thesis does not include client feedback, which is a significant deficiency, but otherwise the results of the process were satisfactory.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Bachelor's thesis is a study of the circus in general, visual identity and branding, and a productive design project the goal of which is to create a visual identity for a Finnish circus school that also arranges performances. The subject is interesting to me and I chose it because the circus to me appears as something very visual, but I do not know about its visual world. The task is ethically influential in the sense that by improving the image of the circus school, more children and young people are likely to join its operation. Circus training as a hobby is both physically and mentally healthy, as it helps develop one's physical skills and communication and trust in group situations. The circus school in question is also taking part in the Social Circus - project, which aims to improve social skills, self-confidence and acceptance by means of teaching circus skills. There is at least one previous project-based thesis made for a circus school in Finland, but its research does not include any information about the circus in general. Providing more information about the circus as a form of culture and its connection points to visual identity can be helpful for future academic purposes. In key position are the potential issues of creating a visual image for a modern circus school. Another goal of the project is to learn more efficient and communicative cooperation with the client.

The time reserved for this project is roughly three months. The project will be conducted by studying relevant books and internet sources concerning circus and visual identity, meeting the client and communicating with them through email, and consulting teachers when needed. The design part will consist of ideation, developing the logo and each application for it that is agreed with the client. At the end of the project, a style guide will be produced and handed to the client to assure the correct usage of the new visual identity.

2 BRIEF

The brief of this thesis project is to design a visual identity for Oulun Tähtisirkus. It is a modern circus school that teaches traditional circus skills to all age groups. The goal for the circus is to get a more cohesive visual identity which it can apply to all its needs. The challenge with the design is to try to build a visual bridge between the traditional circus and the new circus. Both are represented by Oulun Tähtisirkus as its teaching is all about learning traditional circus skills in a fun environment, and the

performances are more in the style of new circus. The visual identity will consist of a new logo, a business card, a letterhead and envelope, a poster template for performances, a handbill template, a brochure, T-shirts and a style guide which will give valuable advice to the circus on how to best represent their new visual identity and not harm it.

The circus likes the atmosphere that they have on their existing brochure. They wish to maintain a colorful look but, at the same time, also speak to a different audience by introducing muted colors along with the more traditional bright ones.

2.1 Research questions

The primary research question is how to represent Oulun Tähtisirkus visually in the best possible way. The secondary research question is how to build a visual bridge between traditional and new circus. It is also important to study circus in general to some extent, to be able to understand the contexts.

3 INTRODUCTION TO CIRCUS

3.1 Traditional circus

The roots of circus lie perhaps as far back as ancient Greece, Egypt and Rome. In those times, chariot racing was one of the most popular sports and entertainment. Exotic animals were collected by rulers, exhibited to the public and used as entertainment for the masses at amphitheaters, also called circuses - the most famous being Circus Maximus - in the Roman Empire, where they were set to fight other animals or gladiators. The traditional circus of more recent history can be traced back to these early forms of sports and entertainment. Another important and more recent setting for the history of circus is England, where an equestrian and horse trainer, Philip Astley gave performances of his talent as a horseback rider and an animal trainer, exhibiting performing animals in London in the 1770s. This is regarded as the beginning of circus as we know it today. From Britain, circus spread to the United States and was made even more popular by performing groups such as Barnum and Bailey. Circus in these early days often included oddities such as goats with implanted horns. (Croft-Cooke, Cotes 1976: 7, Entertainment Animals, History) It used to be a

family business where skills were passed on to the next generation, whereas nowadays that is no longer the case. (Kent 2002: 64)

Typical acts in traditional circuses include juggling, clownery, acrobatics, and animal acts with horses or elephants (Inter Circus), and it is based around a range of feelings from curiosity to surprise and anxiety to relief and laughter. (Jacob 2001: 31)

“A traditional circus performance begins with a parade as the performers arrive on stage to greet its audience, accompanied by a brass band. The announcer presents the artists and their acts throughout the entire performance. The ensemble is formed by independent numbers which get harder towards the end. The goal is a varied spectacle combining sense of danger and comedy in the right proportions. In the core of the performance’s structure can be seen the defiance of the sense of balance and the tension caused by its constant variation.” (Goudard 1999: 43-44)

Animals are used even today by some traditional circuses, and although they are no longer mistreated in as obvious ways as mentioned above, their living circumstances are considered quite poor, and in some countries it is nowadays forbidden to use animals in circus acts altogether. (Entertainment Animals, Circuses)

3.2 Revolution of circus - Cirque Nouveau

Just like the rest of the world and its culture forms have developed, circus has had to change with time as well. In a world that by the mid 1900s had witnessed two World Wars, revolutions both in Russia and China, an economic recess and the crumbling of the colonial system, it was inevitable that a cultural form of the 18th century would not survive in its original form. (Purovaara 2005: 61) People now had more free time and there were more entertainment options to choose from, such as television, radio, and cinema. Urbanization and the development of technology broadened the opportunities and thus made competition even tougher, as people were now able to travel distances better than big circus entourages, which did not have much room in the developing cities. (Barré 2001: 43-44) In order to survive the changing times, circuses needed to become more creative. Contemporary circus numbers which are performed within the same show are - unlike the traditional ones - often linked to each other and tell a story. (Maleval 2001: 66) They are also often more critical towards different things than the traditional circus shows. The main focus remains in the skills

of human performers, whereas animal tricks are not usually seen in contemporary circus. (Purovaara 2005: 170) In addition, the recognition of the independence of different circus skills and the shift from teaching within the family to teaching in actual circus schools, are prominent changes from traditional circus. (Purovaara 2005: 125-126)

Contemporary circus is clearly its own form of culture, but it has been strongly affected by contemporary theater and dance. (Purovaara 2005: 122) Nor has it completely drifted apart from traditional circus. The idea of contemporary circus is to honor the traditional skills and bring them forward in new, innovative ways. (Barré 2001: 42) It is no longer said that circus is something that is performed in a round tent - it can even happen in the streets. (Purovaara 2005: 133)

3.3 New Circus in Finland

The base of new circus in Finland lies in the circus schooling. The first Finnish circus club, Haminan Teinisirkus (Hamina Teen Circus), was founded by Claes Cedercreuz in 1972. Since then, more and more circus clubs and schools have began operating around the country, and today the number of members within Suomen Nuorisosirkusliitto ry are counted in thousands. In the 1990s, groups such as Sorin Sirkus (Sori Circus), strongly influenced by Cirque du Soleil, began incorporating new expression in their performances to create visually impressive shows. Performances by foreign visiting circuses provided new inspiration and interest in the field. There had never been a very extensive professional circus tradition in Finland, so the changes had quite a lot of room to enter. Sirkus Finlandia (Circus Finlandia) was founded in 1976 but was already suffering by the 1990s because of the recession. It was finally revived by individual artists who studied new ideas by themselves using literature and videos as their guide. Slowly, the profession gained state recognition. The first Finnish contemporary circus group, Circo Aereo was founded in 1996. Its intention is to study the possibilities of juggling as an independent form of expression. The concept of contemporary circus in Finland is still quite young and ever-evolving. In 2002, the new circus production and information center Cirko - Uuden Sirkuksen Keskus (Cirko - Center of New Circus) was founded to promote the position of new circus in Finland. (Purovaara 2005: 184-188)

3.4 Social circus

Social circus is global methodology that promotes circus as means to improve everyday social skills which are needed in school and working life, as well as in any social scene. Its goal is to prevent any kind of exclusion and provide social support for groups of people with different needs. Oulun Tähtisirkus is taking part in the Social Circus project in Finland by incorporating students with special needs and international/multicultural backgrounds in their curriculum. (Oulun Tähtisirkus)

3.5 Circus visually

3.5.1 Visual stereotypes connected to circus - questionnaire

A questionnaire of five questions was conducted online. (Appendix 1) 55 people of the average age of 32 answered the questionnaire. 84 percent of the respondents had seen a circus performance live, 15 percent had only seen a circus performance through television, and two percent had never seen a circus performance. Clearly ahead the others, the color that was most associated with the circus, was red, with 82 percent of votes, whereas yellow came second with 67 percent. Most people mentioned clowns and animals as their first image of the circus. Quite a few people felt negative about the circus because of the animal cruelty that has been connected to it. Shapes, forms and visual elements that people associated with the circus were for example stripes; balls and circles; stars; triangles, flags and ribbons.

The results of the questionnaire did not surprise me much, except perhaps for the amount of negativity. The questionnaire was mostly conducted because there don't seem to be many articles/ books around sharing this type of information. It is important to know what the stereotypes are, to be able to work around them in a way that the logo of Oulun Tähtisirkus will generate association to the circus, but not so that it will be full of stereotypes and become totally kitsch.

3.5.2 Visual differences between traditional and contemporary circus

Despite my expectations, it is not easy to find reliable, written information about the visual world of circus. Thus it is useful to compare my own findings of both traditional and contemporary circus visuals. I use one example of both traditional and

contemporary circus images to analyze some of the differences and similarities between the traditional and the contemporary.

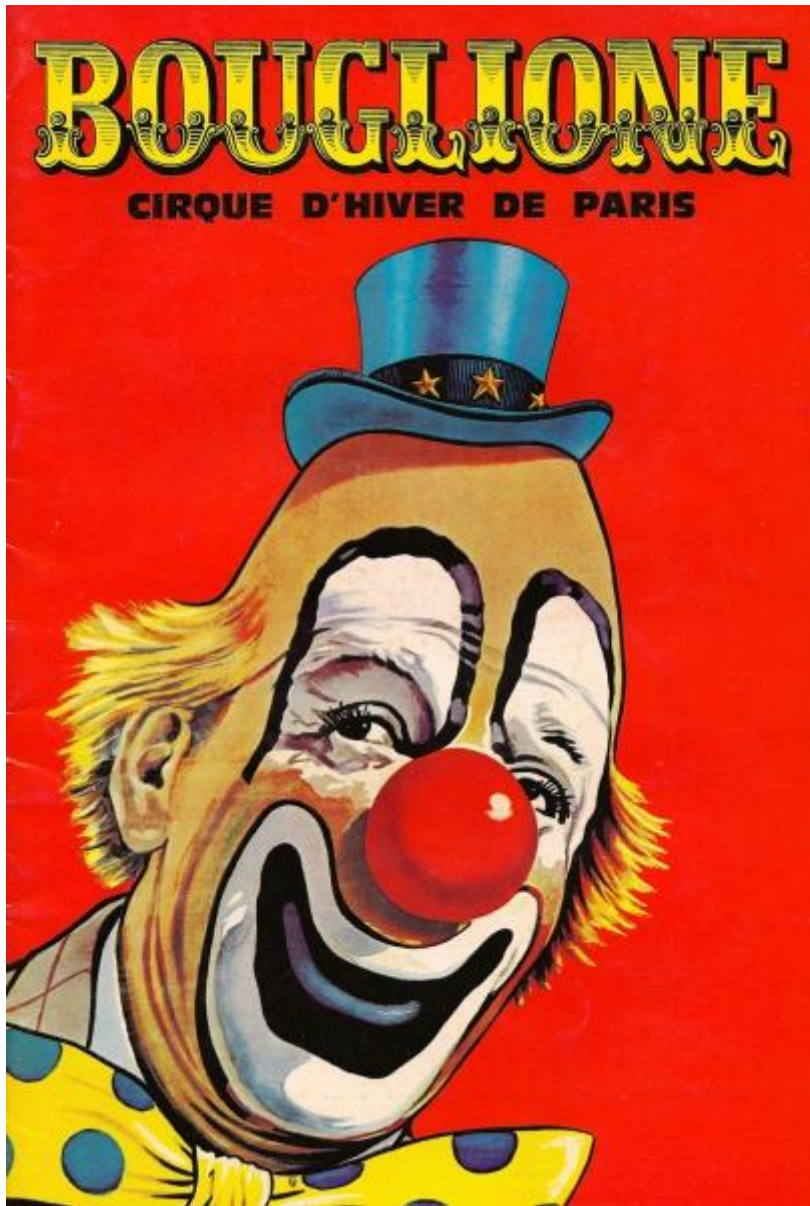


Image 1. Old circus poster

This old poster is full of bright primary colors; red, blue and yellow. It portrays a circus element that is closely associated with the circus; a clown. The typography is very decorative and the layout very straight forward. Now let us take a look at the contemporary poster. It also has an image of a clown, but unlike on the traditional poster, this clown is not happy. She is looking straight in the viewer's eye, and her face is cropped. The color scheme is very monotonous, introducing only a tint of pink along with black and white. The typography is a mixture of a few different, bulky typefaces. The transformation from old to new is effortless and beautiful.



Image 2. Contemporary circus poster

Oulun Tähtisirkus is a circus school so the challenges are a bit different than in this example, because there are three or more groups of people to reach out to with its marketing: the students, their parents, and the circus audiences.

3.5.3 Other circus schools in Finland

There are tens of circus schools of different type in Finland. Some are clearly aimed at children, some for all age groups and some for more advanced students. Here are a few logos and website banners of them (as some of them did not provide a logo):



Image 3. Examples of Finnish circus school logos

Haminan teinisirkus, Tykkimäen sirkuskoulu (Tykkimäki Circus School), Sorin sirkus and Linnanmäen sirkuskoulu (Linnanmäki Circus School) visualize circus acts in their logos, but the rest of the circus schools do not particularly come across as circuses based on their logos/ website banners. Sirkus Supiainen (Shrew Circus) portrays a shrew on their logo as it is appropriate to their name. As to why they have chosen this particular name, I do not know, but it has nothing evident to do with circus as far as I know, and so has not the logo. Sirkuskoulu Keikaus (Swing Circus) has an image on their website banner that reminds me of a ballet school instead of a circus school. Hakasirkus (Clasp Circus) and Nuokun Sirkus (Nuokku Circus) do not provide a brand mark or any imagery connected to the logotype, so the typography is the only communication channel for them. In my opinion, the typography fails to communicate circus in both cases.

4 INTRODUCTION TO OULUN TÄHTISIRKUS RY

4.1 Background

Oulun Tähtisirkus (Oulu Star Circus) is a circus school based in Oulu, Finland. It has been working since 2000 as Stellan sirkuskoulu (Stella's Circus School) under the operation of Suuri Tähtiteatteri (Great Star Theater). In 2008, Tähtisirkusyhdistys (Star Circus Association) was founded to support the operation of the circus and its goal is to maintain circus activities around the former Oulu province area. (Oulun Tähtisirkus ry) Tähtisirkusyhdistys is part of Suomen Nuorisosirkusliitto ry. (Youth Circus Alliance of Finland) which hosts altogether 31 sub associations in Finland. These associations are circus schools, clubs or other multi-artistic and athletic teaching institutions. (Suomen Nuorisosirkusliitto ry) Oulun Tähtisirkus arranges teaching for all age groups, as well as performances both on-demand and by themselves.

4.2 Teaching

Oulun Tähtisirkus teaches traditional circus arts such as juggling, balancing, acrobatics and aerial acrobatics, clowning, presentation skills and hoops. The teaching is targeted mainly at children and young people, but there are groups for older people and families as well. Oulun Tähtisirkus has 10 teachers and about 150 students at the moment. The students are divided into different groups based on age and skills. Oulun Tähtisirkus offers all their students teaching that is versatile and of high quality, and wants to encourage everybody to embrace their unique personality, which ultimately brings circus and the performances alive. The circus currently has students including children and young people with special needs, immigrants and people with multicultural backgrounds.

4.3 Performance

Oulun Tähtisirkus teaches one group that specializes in performance, Titaanit (Titans) Most of the performances are prepared on-demand, but the circus also arranges some performances itself around the year. Performances by Titaanit are usually quite mystical and designed to evoke a range of feelings and thoughts, whereas the goal of the other performances is more to showcase the skills the students have learned

throughout the year, in a fun and visual setting. All Oulun Tähtisirkus performances aim to give the viewer an exciting experience in the spirit of circus. The circus numbers are planned by the students.

4.4 Existing visual material

Oulun Tähtisirkus has existing visual material, but they do not have a clear visual identity. Most of the time, they have produced new material for new performances and for other purposes when required, so the visual world is quite inconsistent. They have a logo, a collection of brochures and handbills that have been used for different purposes and some occasional fliers and leaflets. They are also featured in different brochures by, for example, Oulun kaupunginteatteri (Oulu City Theater) and Sosiaalinen sirkus -hanke (Social Circus Project) which have their own visual setting. Oulun Tähtisirkus does not have any distinct typography in use, but uses different typefaces for different publications.

4.4.1 Logo

The existing logo features a hand-drawn star in the middle and the text Oulun above and Tähtisirkus under it. (Appendix 2) It is designed by Hanna Säynäjäkangas. The typeface of 'Tähtisirkus' gives a hand-written impression. The color of the logotype and the brand mark are the same and the logo currently appears in pink, black, yellow or orange on several different backgrounds. It is not thought through very carefully. The star in the existing logo gives an impression of inwardness instead of expanding and pulsing as is more usual for a star. The latter mentioned are also characteristics most probably sought after when using a star as a brand mark. For the circus' purposes, it would seem obvious to try to create a feeling of positive energy that is directed outwards to the audience. The inwards growing star seems bottom-heavy and may even cause negative associations to the viewer.

4.4.2 Other marketing material

Oulun Tähtisirkus has used a set of brochures for marketing and appeared in the local papers occasionally, but other than that, they are marketed by other instances as mentioned above. The most recent brochure is in a form of an A4 sheet folded in three. (Appendix 3) It contains all the basic information on the circus that is also

found on their website. The front and back covers of the brochure are colored with bright, warm and orangey yellow, earthy, dark orange and black. On the front cover, there is a cropped illustration of a hoop, and a ball, which continues to the back cover of the brochure. The dirtiness on the ball creates a feeling of an old globe. On top of the ball, there is an illustration of a human figure that is performing a circus act. Their logo is shown in orange on a dark background, on the bottom of the back cover. When the front cover is opened, the first third of the inside as well as the last third of the outside page are revealed at once. The right side of the spread has clearly been designed to match the front and back covers instead of the environment in which it is shown in reality. The white text is on a black background, whereas on the inside of the brochure, a photo is used in the background, heavily edited in grayish turquoise and dirty yellow. The text on top is black, which makes the legibility quite poor. The idea behind this design is to have strong, more obvious circus colors on the cover to lure people's interest, and to reflect the more mysterious and artistic side which is their circus performances, on the inside. The biggest issue is still not the clash in the appearance, but usability: in order to be able to read the inside of the brochure, it needs to be turned upside down.

Oulun Tähtisirkus also has a recent handbill (Appendix 4) which uses the same theme as in the brochure, but is in grayscale. It is an A4, vertically folded in two. The overall feeling is a little bit calmer, but their logo is not portrayed on it.

5 VISUAL IDENTITY

Visual identity is a term that depicts the visible characteristics of a brand. (Business Dictionary) It is how the outside world experiences a company or a brand. A visual identity may include everything from the logo to the smells that are associated with the brand. (Wescott Alessandri 2009: 3)

“Visual identity is a strategically planned and purposeful presentation in order to gain a positive organizational image in the minds of the public. A positive identity is established in order to gain a favourable reputation over time. More practically speaking, an organization's visual identity includes all of the observable and measurable elements of the organization's identity manifest in its comprehensive visual presentation of itself, including - but not limited to - its name, logo, tagline, color palette and architecture. Visual identity also includes the organization public

behaviour, including - but not limited to - its reception of employees, customers, shareholders, and suppliers.” (Wescott Alessandri 2009: 5)

5.1 Importance of good visual identity

One is constantly predisposed with brands in the modern world. It is impossible to get through a day without seeing any logos. Paying attention to visual identity is important for a few reasons. Firstly, products are often bought because of their perceived value instead of their actual product characteristics. In the same way, the visual identity of Oulun Tähtisirkus plays a big role in whether or not a parent is going to enrol their child on one of their courses. A logo is often the first introduction one gets to a brand or a company, and a company without a logo could be compared to a man without a face. The biggest brands are closely connected to their logos: if one is asked to think of a brand such as McDonald's, the first image in one's head is most likely the McDonald's logo. Such huge brands are of course a matter of their own, but a smaller company or organisation, such as Oulun Tähtisirkus, should also pay attention to their visual identity as it is the factor that either adds value to the company or reduces it. (Airey 2010: 2,8,10) Although the logo is immensely important for the visual identity, its applications are where it will either exceed or miss its target. Often companies spend a lot of money to produce a logo, but fail to understand the importance of spending time in designing the visual material it will be used on. (Whitbread 2009: 77)

5.2 Color

Color is one powerful aspect of visual identity. It has been shown to have physiological, psychological and sociological effects on people (Brand Identity: The Importance of Color). The way color is perceived varies also quite a bit between different cultures, so multicultural organisations need to consider the use of color very carefully (Holtzschue 2011). Oulun Tähtisirkus is a local organisation, but it has students with multicultural backgrounds, so considering color from that perspective would not be an entirely irrelevant thing to do. Still, exploring the color language of the circus as a form of culture instead is perhaps more important for this thesis.

5.3 Typography

Typography is as important for the visual identity as color is. Most importantly, it affects the legibility. In fact, color and type together can work for or against the legibility. The forms of a typeface should be appropriate for the visual identity, and complement the logo. Often it is smart to use fewer typefaces and instead get variation through different cuts of the same typeface. (Landa 2011: 267)

5.4 What is a good logo

There are many definitions for what is a good logo. Airey (2010) states that simple, relevant, and memorable logos, that stand out from the crowd are most likely to succeed, and that a good logo works perfectly in black and white. Hardy (2011) mentions timelessness, multi-functionality, openness for growth and an ability to catch the viewer's attention by surprising them, as important characteristics of a good logo. All these points should be considered designing the logo for Oulun Tähtisirkus as well.

6 IDEATION

6.1 Logo

As the name of the circus is Oulun Tähtisirkus (Oulu Star Circus), it seemed obvious to pursue with a star as a brand mark, because the image of a star visually supports the image of the circus. A potential customer is more likely to remember this particular circus if they have the visual association with a star, than, for example, a trapeze. The first rough idea for a brand mark was a stamp-like star with five points, which was empty on the inside. I found this idea quite bulky and perhaps too childish for a modern circus whose target audience is broader in age. The second idea was a serpentine-like star which consisted of three eight-point stars in different colors, on top of each other. This star was also empty on the inside, but a lot thinner, which gave it a lighter, more modern feel. Its appearance with eight points was quite round, and gave an impression of movement which I thought was quite nice. The third idea was to create a star from individual triangular shapes with different colors. This idea, I thought, would add a modern, artistic touch to the traditional idea of a star, and combined with a modern color scheme, might work well for the circus. At first I tried

using a four-point star with a longer tail, but it resembled a cross instead of a star. Then I moved on to using a five-point star either by itself or doubled, one on top of the other. I quite liked the richer version, because it felt somehow cozy, yet not too childish. The fourth idea was to use these triangles in a different way to form a circle of sparks around the logotype. I used a darker color in the background to create a feeling of shadow, which also gave the impression of movement. The fifth idea was to use standard Illustrator five-point outlined stars on top of each other in a similar way as with the serpentine version, the difference being that each star would be more visible on its own and thus the impression of stars would be more evident. A slight variation of this idea was to convert the stars into a live paint group and color parts of it. I tried out a few different layouts with all the logos. Horizontal, with the star above, in the middle, on the background or in front of the text, and round, in which the star is in the middle and the text goes around above and under it, like in the existing logo. As mentioned above, I also tried setting the text inside the brand mark. (Appendix 5)

6.2 Color palette

The first thoughts that I had about color were that there should be something bright, but that there should also be a sense of mystery involved. Yellow and orange are generally seen as happy and energetic colors, whereas purple is a color which is often connected with mythology (Color Psychology: The Emotional Effects of Colors). Yellow and purple are also complementary colors (Anderson Feisner 2006: 10). I got the feeling that this palette is very appropriate to new circus because of its contrasting, yet subtle nature. I added pink to the mix, which with orange would also create a slight sense of dispute to modernize the palette. Based on our discussions with the representatives of the circus, I also thought this was the direction they wanted to pursue, as they liked the feeling of their existing brochure.

6.3 Typography

I experimented with a few quite different typefaces. What I was looking for in typography was a sense of playfulness or perhaps youthfulness, still in a rather timeless form. An exception to this was the first typeface that I tried for the whole name (Century Gothic), which was not at all playful, but rather expressionless. The lightness of the typeface seemed to match the lightness of the serpentine star, and they together felt quite modern to me. When I saw the logo with this typeface, I personally

could sense circus in it. A reason for this I cannot really explain, it was a matter of intuition. The exact rigidness of the forms gave the type a slightly old fashioned feel, but definitely not too much or in any negative sense, as it was also the most timeless of all my typography experiments. This feeling was what eventually appealed to me, even though I cannot specify why.

The other typefaces that I decided to present to the client were Berlin Sans FB Demi and Rockwell, both paired up with Cursive standard, used for the word 'Oulun'. The first mentioned is a steady typeface with a sense of flexibility, which makes it fun. Rockwell has a slight college feel to it, which felt suitable for a circus school whose main target group are children and young people. The cursive typeface was something that I thought could soften the overall look of the logo and balance with the sturdier look of the word 'Tähtisirkus', as I thought the word 'Oulun' should also be smaller in importance and weight. The typeface is quite bubbly and happy, characteristics also associated with circus as a hobby.

After the first ideation, I had discussions with my classmates and lecturer Sarah-Jane Leavey. Sarah-Jane perceived the 10-point star (with the two 5-point stars put on top of each other) and the star constructed out of triangles as the ones with the most potential, as long as I worked the latter out of looking like a cross. She also thought Century Gothic was the most timeless out of the typefaces I had chosen, followed closely by Rockwell, which, according to her, is currently quite trendy, as most slab serif typefaces.

6.4 Discussion with client

I sent the client four different logo suggestions with one color scheme and a few different typefaces. (Appendix 6) I chose these logos based on my discussions with Sarah-Jane Leavey and my classmates, and my own opinions. The circus quickly replied with feedback about the things that they liked and the things that they thought needed to be changed. The horizontal layout was something they liked, as well as the serpentine star. They thought the ten-point star seemed too Christmassy. Typography-wise, Rockwell was their first choice and Century Gothic their second, and they did not like Cursive standard. They also wished to replace the dark purple with green. I made some changes and sent them new versions, using the serpentine star under the text, as in the layout they chose it as their favorite. I only raised the star a bit, because

it seemed to be too confusing when it was put completely under the text, as in the original. The client thought this made the star appear slightly separate from the rest of the logo, so I tried out different ways to be able to keep its original spot and make it less confusing to the eye. I did this by exploring multiple different versions of the star; with five or six points instead of eight, filled with color either entirely or leaving the center white. At this point the client said that the feedback they had received was that the ten-point star (which to them had seemed too Christmassy) was appealing to their students. So I tried to change it to remind less of yuletide and more of circus by combining the idea of the serpentine star into the sturdier, thicker one, thus also making the serpentine star clearer. This idea was basically the same that I had had among the first ones, but just had not showed to the client. As for the colors, the more we discussed, the clearer it became that they would like to have multiple colors to use, and that they actually did wish to use more of the bright and conventional circus colors. (Appendix 7)

7 DEVELOPING THE IDEAS

7.1 Logo

The client loved the new mix between the two stars and wished to see it in concave and convex forms, as well as to see the original serpentine star in the round layout, to see what a little editing would do for these logos. I tried to shape the new star according to the client's wishes, but the end results were not satisfactory. The concave star resembled the sun, and the convex one reminded me more of a flower than a star. The legibility issue with the horizontal layout was also not really solved by changing the star. The logo that to me seemed the strongest was the one with the new, basic star in the middle of the round logo layout, so I also suggested they choose that one, and they did.

I met my supervisor Petteri Lehtinen when there were only about four weeks until the day we were supposed to hand in this paper. We discussed my situation and decided to continue working on the logo, because it was not yet perfected. I made several sketches where the tracking of the logotype was looser than in the original brand mark, and I tried incorporating graphic elements such as circles and stars in the logotype, around the stars in the middle. I also changed the dark purple color of the type into black. In addition, I experimented with the stars and wanted to see how they

would look in a less regular form, but it was clear that the original symmetrical version was more balanced. (Appendix 8) The intention behind these actions was to make the logo stronger and more pulled together. I, together with Petteri Lehtinen, chose the version with little colored dots in between each letter, to be the final logo. This version appealed to me because of its playfulness. The dots added value to the logo but did not reduce the power of the stars. Once I decided on the final version of the logo, I tried it in black and white, grayscale and with white text. The black and white version was quite static and slightly messy, whereas the grayscale version perfectly captured the vibrant feeling of the color version. First I set both the pink and orange colors at the same level, 60 percent, of black, but I noticed it was better to make one of them 40 percent instead, to achieve the same feeling of movement in the logo. I decided that as the grayscale version worked so well and the black version not so well, there was no reason for me to incorporate the black version into the logo family.

7.2 Color palette

As the client wanted to use many different colors and preferred bright tones, I originally presented as the final color palette a four-color set with dark purple for the logotype and bright green, pink, and orange in the star. To add variety to the use of the brand in the future, I added pastel tones of all these colors in the mix. I felt that in order to achieve a varied color palette this is a better way than simply adding new colors in the mix, as the client first had suggested. They thought it would not matter very much if the colors were connected with the brand or not, and the same seemed to be the attitude towards typefaces at the end of the day. I think I managed to talk them out of this idea, though. Still, this is why the style guide will be very much needed to keep the brand image intact in the future.

After making the changes in the logo and experimenting with the applications, it became evident that there was no need for the additional pastel colors. The original pink, orange and green were accompanied with black, which makes the bright colors seem even brighter. (Bright Colors - Website Basics) These colors seem appropriate for the circus because they are bright, but based on my questionnaire they are not among the two colors that were most associated with the circus. (Appendix 1)

7.3 Typography

The client changed their mind about Berlin Sans FB Demi, as it looked good on the round logo, and they also thought it was a fun typeface, so that is what they chose in the end. Heli Juvonen gave me a good hint how to spot any imbalance in the typefaces, by turning the logo upside-down and squinting. By doing this, it was clear to me that Cursive standard was not the right choice for 'Oulun', as it almost disappeared. And as the client also didn't wish to use it, I chose Century Gothic instead. Light as it is, it gives most of the attention to 'Tähtisirkus', but goes better together with the rest of the logo and is slightly stronger. I used caps for this, as in the whole logotype. The client approved the combination. However, Petteri Lehtinen pointed out that having multiple typefaces in the logo may not be a good idea and that the Century Gothic -typeface was quite weak when paired up with Berlin Sans. After the new logo experiments mentioned above, I agreed that using only Berlin Sans, in the same point size, was a more balanced and stronger option.

For titles, body text, captions and so on I chose the Corbel typeface family; the regular, bold and italic cuts. It had a certain lightness and roundness to it which appealed to me in this context. It had no stems, so it felt quite informal and youthful. I chose to use a +30 tracking on all text which is written in Corbel, as it looked natural to me.

8 FINAL LOGO

As explained before, the final logo choice was the version with the round layout; the three stars on top of each other in the middle of the loosely tracked logotype in Berlin Sans FB Demi -typeface, small colored dots in between each letter.

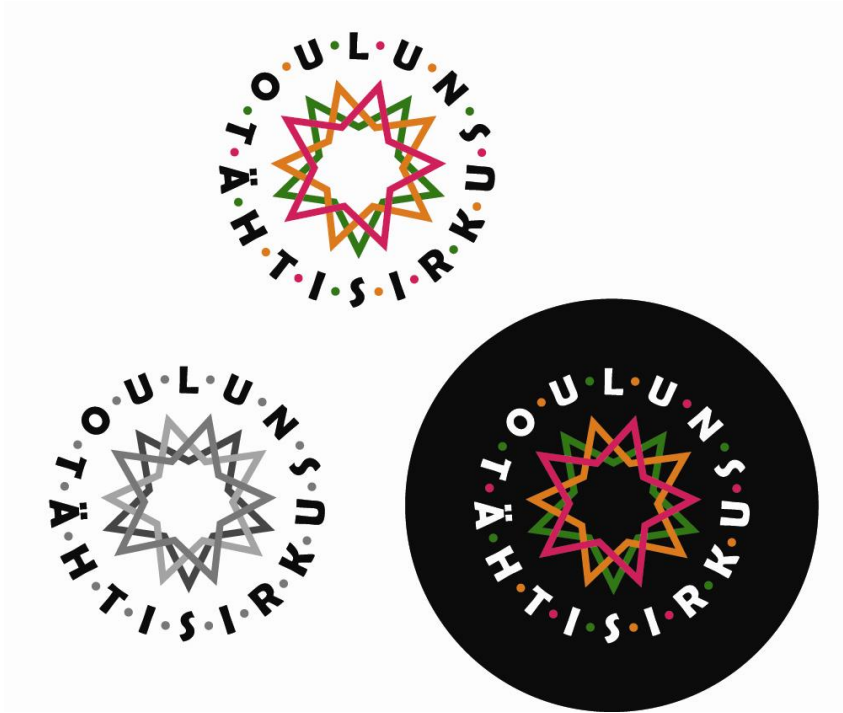


Image 4. Final logo in three color variations

9 CREATION OF STYLE GUIDE

9.1 Applications

The applications that were agreed on in the beginning were business cards, letterheads, envelopes, posters, brochures and handbills (programs). Besides these applications, I wanted to add T-shirts in the style guide because they are a simple, practical and cheap way to market Oulun Tähtisirkus.

9.1.1 Letterhead

I experimented with the colourful dots and the transparent stars with the letterheads, to see how they would work as graphic elements. I set the logo at the top of the page, in the middle, and a line of dots on the bottom, to divide the page into two: the letter and the contact information of Oulun Tähtisirkus. In addition, I placed two cropped, 30 percent opaque stars in the background of the text. Another version at this point was to use the dots as a round object around the logo and the contact information, with a centered 30 percent opaque star on the background. The third experiment was to use the dots as diagonal lines for dividing the areas for the text and the contact

information of Oulun Tähtisirkus. I decided to be adventurous and put the logo on the bottom right corner of the sheet and the contact information on the top left corner.

After having a discussion with Petteri Lehtinen, I decided the last version with diagonal lines was not a good idea, because the logo would not be visible enough while flicking through a pile of papers. The spot where I had planned the address of Oulun Tähtisirkus was also on the usual spot of the address of the receiver, which was not a good thing. I adjusted the other two versions slightly. I lowered the line of dots on the first version and centered the text in one line instead of having two small chapters at the sides of the page. I also left out the stars. In addition, I made another variation of the same layout by replacing the line of dots with single dots between each piece of information. I made two new variations of the second letterhead as well. I deleted the dots from around the logo and replaced the ones on the bottom of the page with bigger circles. I wanted to try it because this way it was possible to leave the same amount of marginal in the bottom of the page as there was space in between each circle. I was not too fond with the appearance of this letterhead, though; the circles were too heavy and lost the feeling of the logo. I tried also to set the logo and the contact information in the corner. I wanted to make a couple of versions with the stars as the main visual elements, so I made versions with the star surrounding the contact information in the center and corner of the page.

In the end I was more pleased with the dots than the hearts, because they were more cheerful than the stars and created a continuum on the page. I chose to combine the idea of a line of dots and a half-circle of dots into one, as the combination was more fun than the line by itself, and more steady than the half-circle by itself. This became the final letterhead.

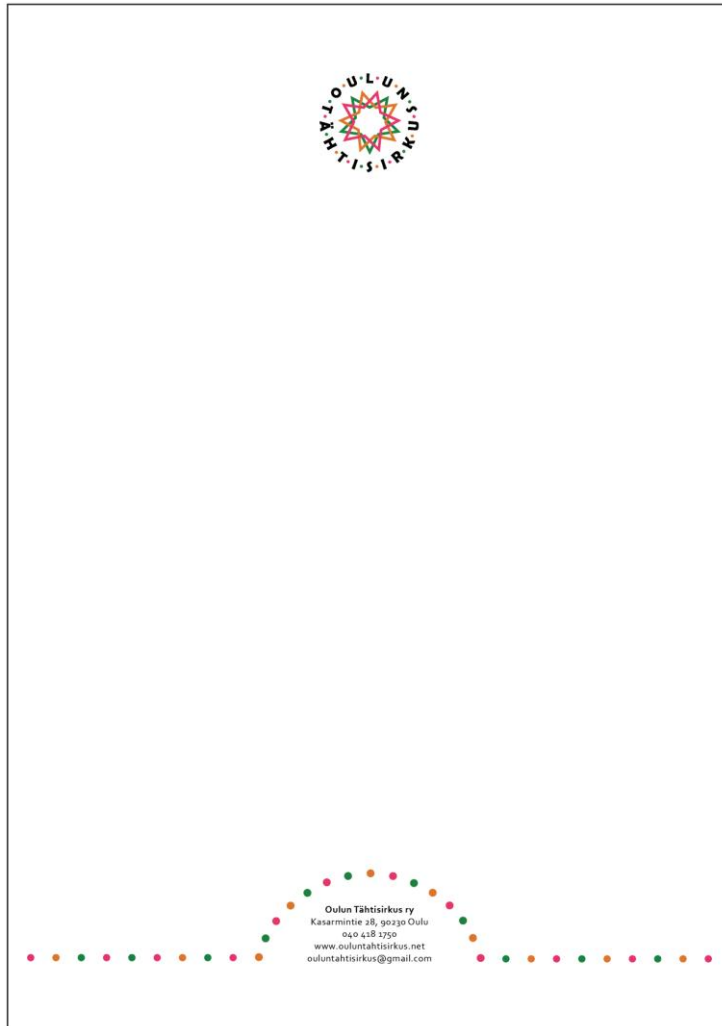


Image 5. Final Letterhead

9.1.2 Business card

I started processing the business cards based on the design of the letterhead. I used the same dot elements but also experimented with the stars. The first version was with two lines of dots leaving the contact information in the marginal and setting the name and title in the middle. The second version was with a circle of dots. I made two more with the stars, one horizontal and one vertical piece with a short line of dots on the top of the page. All these business cards had the logo on the backside.

When developing the business cards, I chose to move the logo on the same side with the information, to save on printing costs, and to reinforce the brand by letting the user see the logo when they are dealing with the information. (Otherwise, they will only see it if they happen to flip the card.) I took in use the same principle as with the

letterhead and set the logo on the top of the card, the name and title in the middle, and the contact information under the line of dots. I did the same in a horizontal form in two different versions: with all the text under the line, and with single dots between each piece of information. I tried to make a vertical version with the half-circle as well, but it was either too wide on the sides, or too low on the text. The last experiment was a very basic horizontal card with the logo on the left and the text on the right, but it lacked personality.

I was very happy with the first layout which I copied from the letterhead, so after a few small adjustments (for example changing the order of the dots to make the line more balanced) I decided to use this version as the final business card.



Image 6. Final business card

9.1.3 Envelope

At first I made a very simple version of a C5-envelope by adding the logo in the top left corner, 20 millimeters from the edges. Petteri Lehtinen mentioned that it is possible to have postal stamps printed with a picture of your own choice, so I thought one option could be to have first class stamps printed with the logo, which would enable the usage of any size envelope, as there would be no need for printing. I explored this option online and indeed, it is possible, but the logo would be reduced to a very small size if applied on the stamp, due to its existing marginals. Posti.fi (Finnish mail service website) also states that brands are not allowed to show on the

images. I am not certain of whether this includes one's own brand as well. This is anyhow a possibility worth further exploring.

I wanted to incorporate the dotted line somewhere on the envelope as well, as by this time I had used it on every application. Therefore I created an area for the address using the dotted line. It could be about the size of a business card (90 millimeters by 50 millimeters) to ensure that even the biggest address stickers would fit in the area.

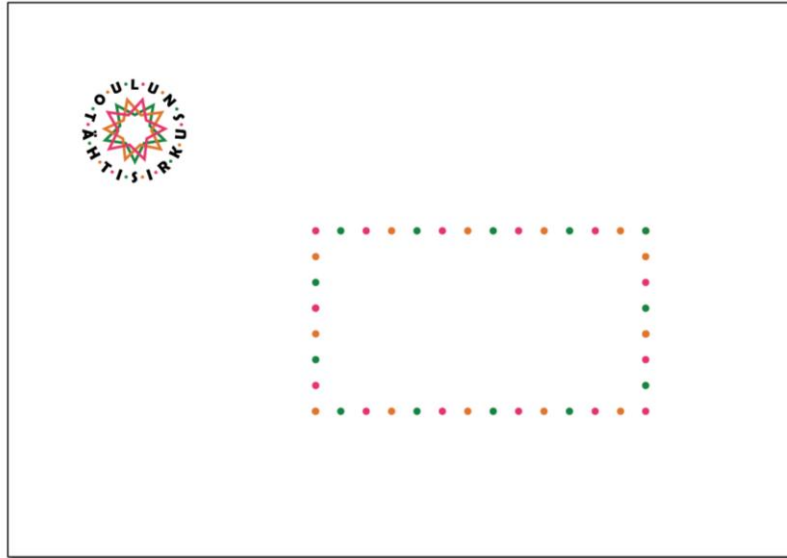


Image 7. Final envelope with printed logo

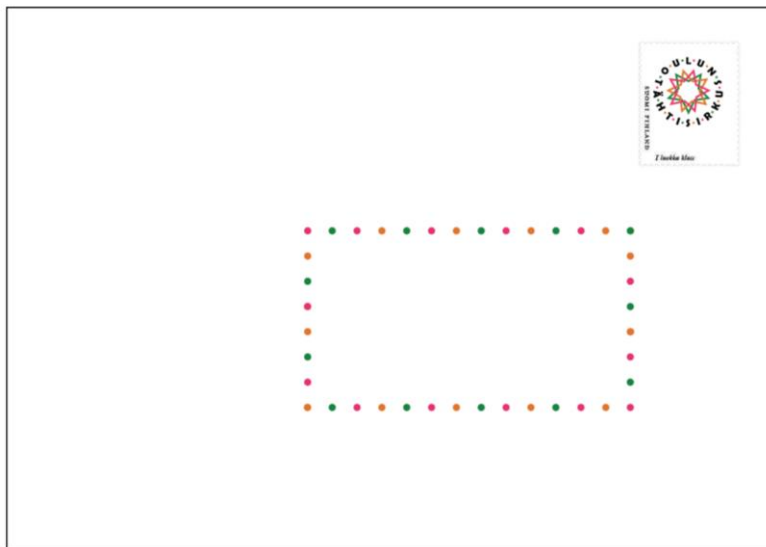


Image 8. Envelope with printed stamp

9.1.4 Brochure

The brochure Oulun Tähtisirkus had prior to this project was an A4 folded in three. I decided to go with the same format because I thought it had potential to work well when made in the right way. I wanted to do it so that when one opens the front cover and reveals the first page of the inside, it would connect with the page on the right, which is part of the cover page. As mentioned before, in the original brochure, this page was printed upside-down so on one glimpse, you had text going in both ways. I placed an image on the background of the inside with some white text on top. It looked ok from distance but from close-up it was a bit messy. I also centered the text on the back, which later on I realized was not a great choice.

I decided that the brochure should be mostly white with black text, because it was going to represent the fresher side of the circus - the children who are having fun while learning circus skills. I did place a 75 percent opaque, dark picture on the center page on the inside to give the brochure some contrast and depth, and added a few round pictures above and below the text, to make it more interesting to look at.



Image 9. Final brochure

9.1.5 Handbill

The handbill was something that I originally made a sketch out of, long time ago. The client needed a handbill for an upcoming performance, so I made a preliminary suggestion using transparent stars as graphic elements. They told me later on that it was too simple for Titaanit so they had used the old design with the logo I had designed at that point. When I started working on the handbill again, I knew I had to try to make it darker than the first sketch. I was wondering of what to do about the

type and the colors because I had the idea that the client did not want this performing group to have a similar look as the rest of the circus. I came to the conclusion, though, that it is a completely separate work to create a sub visual identity for this performing group and that I will not be able to spend enough time to create it, so I left used the same typefaces as in everywhere else. After all, other groups of Oulun Tähtisirkus might use the template as well in the future.

At first I thought I will use an image on the inside and cover it with transparent white masks to be able to write in black on it, but I soon realized it looked silly and that I should fill the whole page with the image instead. In addition, I noticed that the white transparent under the colored dots made the dots look very pale. That is why I decided not to use the transparent white boxes and decided to use pink instead of black text on top of some dark image. It already looked better, but some of the pink got mixed with the reds of the image so I decided to try another way. I made the background black, applied white text on top and placed a few round pictures on the page. The pictures were meant to go well together with the performance which they were portraying. I cleaned up the marginals and edited the text on the back.



Image 10. Final handbill

9.1.6 Poster

I made an A3 poster with the same principle as the cover of the handbill; using an image with a white bottom. At first, as I described earlier, I thought I should be able to create a special atmosphere for Titaanit, the performing group, so I chose to use brownish dots instead of using them in all three colors as usual. I also used a different typeface, but soon abandoned playing with it because of the reasons explained above. I also changed the color of the dots back to normal, added website information on the

bottom of the poster and moved the logo slightly more towards the center, to give it more space on the sides.



Image 11. Final poster

9.1.7 T-shirts

T-shirts were an addition to the original plan. I did not have a great vision according to this application, but I strongly felt that it would complement the existing range of applications. A person (a student or a teacher) wears the shirt in public and at the same time functions as a walking advertisement. The big logo in the chest of the shirt is visible from quite far away, and it shows even when a person is wearing a jacket open. I placed the logo also in the back of the shirt because more visibility is always better.



Image 12. T-shirts

9.2 General rules

In the style guide I added a few general rules according the usage of the logo of Oulun Tähtisirkus. For instance, there is a minimum size that the logo may be scaled into. In this case the minimum size is 20 millimeters by 20 millimeters. It is also possible to use the logo in a wrong way, which will harm the brand. In case of Oulun Tähtisirkus, the logo cannot be set on colourful background or on a pattern, the logo with white text cannot be set on light background, the logo cannot be rotated, stretched, written on or given any effects such as drop shadow or glow. This is all for the best of the visual identity of Oulun Tähtisirkus.

10 CONCLUSION

This project has been very intense. There were some starting issues concerning not having a supervisor, but in the end I am happy that I received a supervisor even for the last month, because it had a big impact on my work. The subject interested me a lot in the beginning of the project and I was very enthusiastic to study everything there was to know about the circus. It did surprise me a bit how little information there was available concerning especially the visual side of the circus. I almost felt as if I had to do ground-breaking research, although I know there must be information out there that I just haven't been able to reach. The little research I did, felt a bit superficial at the end of the day. I am not sure how well I was able to combine it with the design process. There were also time management issues, as usual. When Petteri Lehtinen joined the project, I got into a hurry, because suddenly a new person was giving me advice. I found the advice extremely helpful, but I also had to worry about how to finish the whole project on time. As a conclusion, at a certain point Petteri and I

agreed that I would not present any of the work for the client before it was ready, to prevent delays. I acknowledge this is far from a desired way to work, as the client has had no say in the design of the applications or even the finalized logo.

What I have learned most from this process is -still- communication with the client. I have had a taste of how to try to read their wishes more intuitively and how to subtly steer them in the desired direction. I am quite satisfied in my final designs. I am sure they could be better, but there is nothing that I feel bad about. The only thing that has bothered me slightly during the process has been the uncertainty surrounding the direction of the handbill. I am also quite satisfied with my process, as I spent time with every part of the design. The only application that I did not have much of a process with was the T-shirts. If I had had more time, I think I would have continued with possibly a newspaper advertisement and matters of premises, as the client has recently moved into a new location. I would also extend my research and probably construct the written report differently, putting more weight on color, typography and analyzing the differences between traditional and contemporary circus.

As for the research questions, I think I managed to get some answers. Before getting the client's feedback, I cannot tell whether the visual identity is a success or not, but I can reflect back to my research, and how my work relates to the knowledge I gained through it. I learned that traditional circuses often used primary colors whereas contemporary circuses often choose secondary or muted colors. The colors that I chose for Oulun Tähtisirkus are secondary colors. I also learned that the typography used in traditional circuses is usually decorative whereas the typography styles of contemporary circuses may vary a lot. The typefaces I chose for Oulun Tähtisirkus are not decorative, but especially the logotype typeface is rather fun. My goal was to create something that is timeless yet contemporary, fun, and appeals to both children and adults. I think I managed to receive this goal quite well.

Overall I found the project both challenging and rewarding.

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Image 1. 1973. *Old circus poster*. [image] Available at:
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Image 3. Hildén A., 2012. *Examples of Finnish circus school logos*. [image]

Image 4. Hildén A., 2012. *Final logo with three color variations*. [image]

Image 5. Hildén A., 2012. *Final letterhead*. [image]

Image 6. Hildén A., 2012. *Final business card*. [image]

Image 7. Hildén A., 2012. *Final envelope with printed logo*. [image]

Image 8. Hildén A., 2012. *Final envelope with printed stamp*. [image.]

Image 9. Hildén A., 2012. *Final brochure*. [image]

Image 10. Hildén A., 2012. *Final handbill*. [image]

Image 11. Hildén A., 2012. *Final poster*. [image]

Image 12. Hildén A., 2023. *Final T-shirts*. [image]

Visual Stereotypes Connected to Circus

Most people have some idea of how circus looks like, but it is not too easy to find written information regarding these stereotypes. That is the reason for this small research which I'm doing for my Bachelor's thesis. The point of the questionnaire is that you answer with your gut feeling, so no googling! ;) Answering will take 2-5 minutes. Thank you!

* Required

1. How old are you? *

2. Have you ever seen a circus performance? *

- Yes, live
 Only on TV
 No

3. What is the first image that comes to your mind when you think of circus? *

Please describe freely.

4. Which colors would you associate with circus? *

You can choose as many as you want.

- Black
 Blue
 Brown
 Gray
 Green
 Orange
 Pink
 Purple
 Red
 White
 Yellow
 Other:

5. Which kind of forms, shapes, ornaments or motifs would you associate with circus? *

Please describe freely.



Suurin, kaunein ja ainutlaatuinen Oulun Tähtisirkus tarjoaa monipuolista ja tasokasta sirkustaiteen opetusta kaikille ikäluokille.

Pääasiallisena kohderyhmänä ovat lapset ja nuoret. Oulun Tähtisirkuksella on 10 opettajaa ja n. 150 oppilasta, joista jokainen saa laadukasta sirkusopetusta.

Sirkusta johtaa Stella-pellenäkin tunnettu Anna-Kaisa Järvi. Sirkustunneilla opetellaan jongleerausta, tasapainoilua, akrobatiaa, ilma-akrobatiaa, klovneriaa ja esiintymistäittoa sekä vanteita.

Sirkuskoulun oppilaat jaetaan 5-7-vuotiaiden, alkeis-, jatko- ja aikuisten ryhmiin iän ja harrastuksen keston mukaan. Lisäksi sirkuksella on esiintyvä ryhmä sekä lapsi-vanhempi-ryhmä.

Oulun Tähtisirkuksen voi myös tilata esiintymään tilaisuuksiin ja tapahtumiin. Huikean esityksen jälkeen on mahdollisuus tutustua sirkusvälineisiin workshoppeissa. Esiintymisten lisäksi tarjoamme laadukasta ja hauskaa sirkuskoulutusta esimerkiksi kouluiluokille.

Oulun Tähtisirkuksen kevätlukukausi 2011/2012 alkaa tammikuussa!

Jos oppilaspaikkoja vapautuu, ilmoittautumisia otetaan vastaan tammikuun alkupäivinä puhelimitse ja sähköpostitse.

KATSO TARKEMMAT OHJEET NETTISIVUILTAMME!

Oulun Tähtisirkus ry
Kasarmintie 28
90230 OULU
p. 0404181750

ouluntahtisirkus@gmail.com
www.ouluntahtisirkus.net

Oulun
Tähtisirkus

OULUN
Tähti sirkus

Sirkuskoulun opetussuunnitelma on joustava, joten se mahdollistaa myös erityistukea tarvitsevien lasten ja nuorten osallistumisen.

Sirkuksemme pyrkii kannustamaan oppilaitaan olemaan omanlaisiaan persoonia ja siten tuomaan väriä sirkukseen ja esityksiin. Kaiken kaikkiaan, sirkuksella vallitsee lämmin ja huumorintäyteinen tunnelma, joka vie jalat alta!

Oulun Tähtisirkus on muuttanut Värttöön uusiin tiloihin huhtikuun 2011 alussa.

Osoitteemme on Kasarmintie 28. Sisäänkäynti on K-Market Värtön vieressä.

Vuokraamme tiloja myös muille toimijoille.
Tervetuloa tutustumaan!

Oulun Tähtisirkuksen toiminnan voidaan nähdä sirkustaitojen kehittymisen lisäksi välittävän lapsille ja nuorille sosiaalista tukea, terveitä arvoja ja pysyvyyttä. Sosiaalinen yhdessäolo harrastuksen parissa, jossa kaikki ovat samanarvoisia taitoineen ja kykyineen, edistää suvaitsevuutta ja ehkäisee sosiaalista syrjäytymistä.

Tällä hetkellä sirkuskoulun ryhmissä on oppilaina erityislapsia ja -nuoria. Myös maahanmuuttajaperheiden lapsia on mukana sirkuskoulussa. Lisäksi osalla oppilaista on monikulttuurinen tausta. Nämä erilaiset persoonat nähdään sirkuksessa vahvuutena, luonnollisena osana erilaisten persoonallisuuksien kirjoa, jota sirkustaiteen toteuttaminen edellyttää.

Sirkusta hallinnoiva Oulun Tähtisirkusyhdistys perustettiin 15.8.2008. Sitä ennen sirkuskoulu toimi Suuren Tähtiteatterin alaisuudessa Stellan sirkuskouluna, joka perustettiin vuonna 2000. Yhdistyksen tehtävänä on edistää sirkustaidetta Oulun läänissä. Yhdistys ylläpitää sirkuskoulua ja nuorisosirkusta, jolla on myös esitys- ja koulutustoimintaa. Oulun Tähtisirkusyhdistys on Suomen Nuorisosirkusliiton jäsen ja kuuluu näin 22 nuorisosirkuksen valtakunnalliseen verkostoon.

OULUN TÄHTISIRKUS

Suurin, kaunein ja ainutlaatuinen Oulun Tähtisirkus tarjoaa monipuolista ja tasokasta sirkustaiteen opetusta kaikille ikäluokille. Oulun Tähtisirkuksen voi myös tilata esiintymään tilaisuuksiin ja tapahtumiin.

Oulun Tähtisirkuksen lukukausi 2011/2012 käynnistyy 15.8

Oulun Tähtisirkus
KESÄSIRKUS
TITAANIT

Ilmoittautumisia otetaan vastaan 1.8 puhelimitse ja sähköpostitse.
KATSO TARKEMMAT OHJEET NETTISIVUILTAMME!

Oulun Tähtisirkus ry
Kasarmintie 28
90230 OULU
p. 040 418 1750
ouluntahsisirkus@gmail.com
www.ouluntahsisirkus.net

TYÖRYHMÄ

Ohjaus:

Anna-Kaisa Järvi

Lavastus, valo- ja äänisuunnittelu:
Juhani Juutilainen

Ääni, lavastus:
Paula Jämsä (avustaja)

Puvustus:
Ulpu Korpua

Koreografia:
Anniina Kinnunen

Esiintyjät:

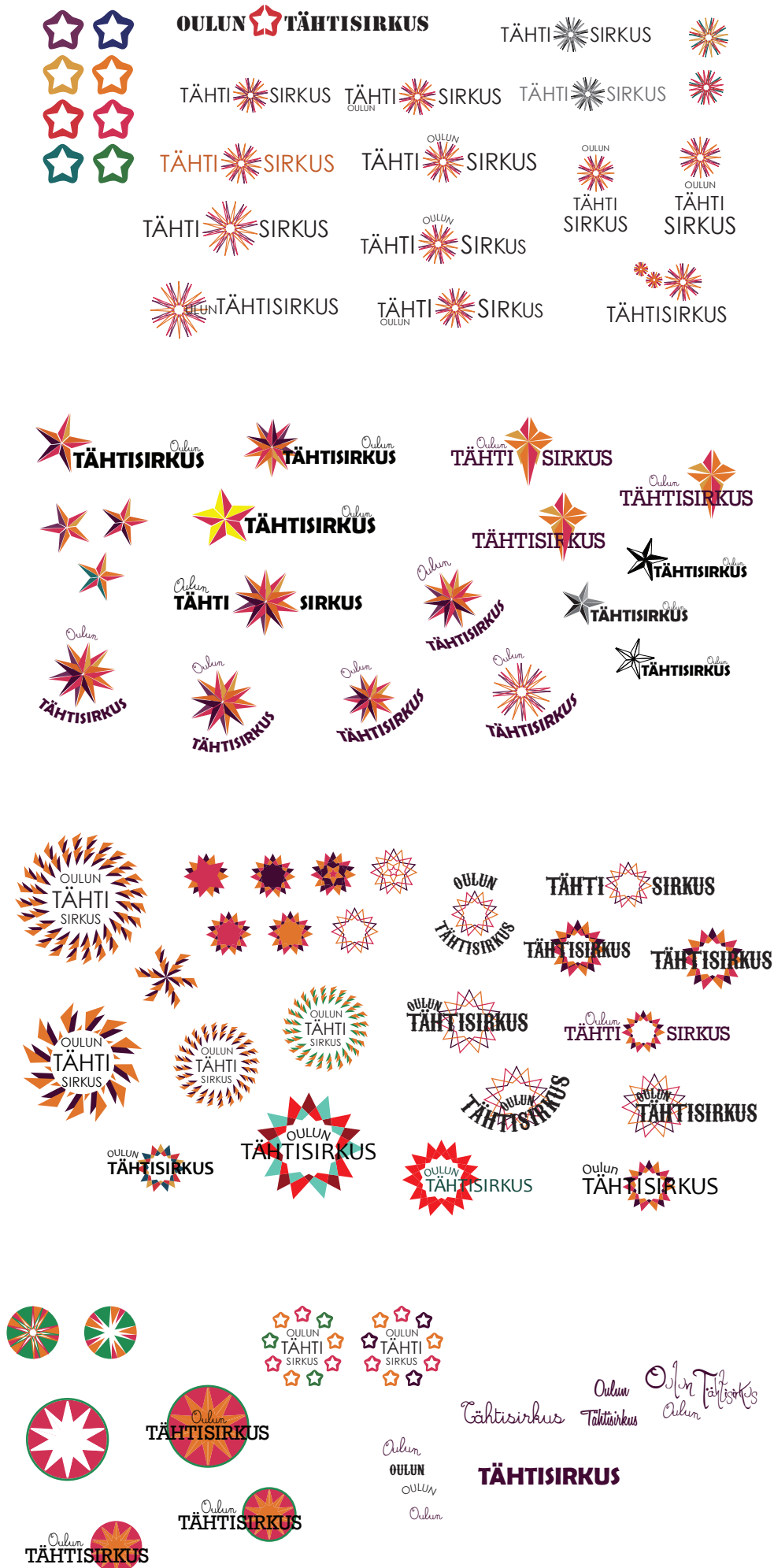
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Sirkusnumerot ovat esiintyjien itse suunnittelemaa!

SIRKUSNUMEROT

1. Sirkusperhe Titaanit esittäytyy
2. Tiina – Tinkkupelle
- Musiikkinumero
3. Alli – Theia
Kauaksi loistava, kirkas sininen taivas – Kangas
4. Saija – Tethys
Makean veden jumalatar
- Poit
5. Anna-Leena – Menoitios
Väkivaltainen viha, pöyhkeys ja ylpeys - Vanne
6. Tiina – Themis
Oikeuden ja järjestyksen jumalatar - Flowerstick
7. Henna – Foibe
Kuun jumalatar - Rengastrapetsi
8. Mikko ja Anniina – Foibos ja Metis
Auringon jumala ja Viisauden jumalatar - Diabolo
9. VALON JA PIMEÄN TAISTO
Ryhmäakrobatia
10. Noora ja Petri- Mnemosyne ja Hyperion
Matka onneen
11. Noora – Mnemosyne
Muistin jumalatar, synnytti muusat Nuora
12. Petri – Hyperion
Valon jumaluus, Maan ja Taivaan poika
Jongleeraus
13. RAUHA
Ryhmäakrobatia
14. Tiina - Tinkkupelle
Musiikkinumero
15. Sirkusperhe Titaanit kiittää

Appendix 5.
Logo ideation





Appendix 7.
Developing work on logo ideas



