

Major assignment 1B

Essay

Manifesto for Communication Design

A personal first perspective

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Topic

Personal 'Manifesto for Communication Design'.

To write passionately about your own concept of graphic design. One that takes account of the post modern ideas and critiques proposed by people like Fry and Baudrillard. I have described this account as a manifesto because it should be something that is intensely personal and political, in that it should acknowledge the values and insights that you have developed and that you would like to impart to others – such as to colleagues who might share your understanding or to students who might be studying to become graphic designers in their own right.

'Manifesto for Communication Design'

The Title Graphic Design, evokes many emotions for people, some of wonder, some of curiosity, anxiety, bewilderment and perhaps even void of meaning altogether. What is it that a Graphic Designer actually does ? It seems a mystery for a lot of the population, do we draw pictures on computers and its as simple as that ? I think that the image of the profession of Graphic Design has something to do with a lateral perception based on the words and its interpretation by general society. Everyone has heard of the term Graphic and Design, naturally the most simple explanation for this profession is that it has something to do with graphics or pretty pictures and arranging them some how and that's pretty much it.

If we compare say, the word Architect, then everyone knows that they design homes and dwellings, there is never anything ambiguous about the descriptive word Architect and the communication of the profession. People not knowing just what it is that I do for living really does not effect me in my profession. My attitude goes along the line of my profession as an irritating enigma for the ignorant people who do not understand what I do for a living, which makes them dig deeper to learn and understand the profession of graphic design. Which is the common goal to universally define just what a graphic designer is.

I know that the general consensus of designers would like to have their craft and skill acknowledged, but find it difficult and almost impossible to encapsulate Graphic Design into a field of profession. We find it difficult as the profession of graphic design in its raw and physical state is a representation of manual labour, to create design with the utilisation of images for communication and to utilise ones intellect and experience to solve a problem. This is a very broad category which is a synthesis of parts of multi skilled operations which covers what a Design / Creative Department or Art Department would have been categorised not so long ago.

An Art Department would have, Type setting, Photography, Illustration, Composition, Proof, Finished Art then Pre -press, in the form of out putting plates for printing, advertising or other media, initially graphic design was just in the realm of printing as there was very few alternative disciplines which required the service. Today we have a multitude of media avenues, print, television, cinema and recently the internet all requiring the service. So the humble Graphic Designer of print has had to evolve and branch off their skills to accommodate the new. It is in this instance that we could believe that the profession and its meaning has been diluted to the point where it appears to be vague and incomprehensible. Does the profession design, for print, or other media as illustrated ? So this is the problem that faces the future of Graphic Designers. We could compare it to the many facets and components and departments that are required to produce and cinema movie. Although the end product is a piece of entertainment communicative, there is a large infrastructure which is required to develop it to this stage, but now this infrastructure has been compressed into a much smaller and more efficient container, with multi tasks and multiple out put being the focus of being a graphic designer. The saying, " jack of all trades, master of none ", seems to be a beacon. It is this understanding that the public seem to have of the new breed of graphic designers which is an adding factor in achieving solidity of understanding.

I think part of the confusion of trying to define Graphic Design has been due to technological advances as well. Now in contemporary times, we carry an entire "Art Department" in the form of a laptop computer and a suite of applications that can do everything that the old Art Department could do yet much more efficiently and with greater speed and with less staff. There are always positives and negatives to any scenario. One example which I could see in the industry and especially in the new generation of Graphic Designers is the issue of quality and craftsmanship. As a result of this great technology and the availability of media and material in the comfort of the chair, I believe that the creativity has suffered.

With media available at the fingertips, we have lost the desire to discover, experience and learn new things, something like a surprise discovery or innovation has been suffocated due to the inability or willingness of the Graphic Designer to reach out and make a discovery as the current trend, any form of media is available to study and apply without ever looking out of the studio window. The sense of feeling and emotions has been deflated to an almost robotic and industrial cycle, create, consume, excrete, regurgitate and so forth. Six years ago I witnessed the industry following one trend after another, it took one to create or utilise as typographical format and accents and suddenly it was the new style that everyone wanted and so the flock followed the non-existent shepherd. A point of the continued cycle. In cases of design where the new trend would be applicable as a means of communication, it would function, but over use of the style would be its ultimate demise, so therefore design is a contradiction onto itself. Design needs to have these styles placed in a cycle, as this in turn makes the designers aware that the style has been milked to death and fresh new innovation is called for. This is an opinion of design which is appropriated to mass consumption even though the original design had no such aim. This is the nature of the beast in the design world.

The other contradiction or hypocritical argument of design is that while the cycle continues, there are always the exceptions who innovate or try at every opportunity. The success and failure depends largely in the environment that one is in at the time. As Graphic Designers, we must realise that our profession is bound by code or law for the environment that we are in as is the influence on the outcome. Free will and creativity must be curbed as we must realise that we are creating with the aim of functionality and to serve a purpose. Sometimes we let this suffocate our inner artist, but once again functionality and purpose must be served before creativity in communication. An example of an object as used by Tony Fry, a telephone, the first and only function of a telephone is communication. The secondary function of a telephone may be the aesthetics by design, is it industrial or residential décor? The secondary function is determined by the placement or usage of the telephone, which would also add upon such things as status, innovation, value etc. leading to the impressions that it provides to the world and on a society level, the value of the phone or product is a reflection of the individual who is the beholder, image of self and the creation of levels of society.

So if we take Graphic Design and swap it with the telephone, we would say that, the first and only function of Graphic Design is communication. Functionality and purpose must be served first, creativity and aesthetics must be injected within the codes and law of the environment that has defined the functionality. How the piece of design communication serves its function is determined by the corporation which provides the definition, the results of such can be pre-determined or planned, yet the outcome seldom according to planning or statistics as humans grow and evolve daily. The stream of communication grows wider by the minute in society so the function of the designed communication by the corporation may already be redundant by the time it has been injected to the target demographic, population, society.

But my creativity is suffering. Welcome to discipline. Aside from Graphic Design being served with the restrictions of code and law of functionality as designed by the corporations which govern society, as graphic designers we must restrict ourselves with our own set of codes and law first before we delve into the void of the profession. To seek clarification we must distance ourselves, spend time in solitude and create a moral code and law for ourselves. Only then can clarification be achieved in the profession and an explanation for the profession be sought if at all. It is not critical to explain your profession to people who do not grasp the actuality and reality of your work. I have travelled into many types of work that all forms of people participate in to get an experience of life on a humble and extravagant level. I have studied encounters and peoples point of view from the obscure to the systematic, studied reactions from actions which has all added up to reveal how complex life and understanding is, its as briefly as I can put it into words. Therefore when looking at what I do, I see no difference to what the next person does. I do not see a higher or lower level, its just work and its what you and I have chosen to do. For instance, having a conversation with a mentor and discussing the merits of working in an animation studio, an idealistic job to aspire to, but it was pointed out that at the end of the day its still a job that must be done to keep society and the globe rotating. One person may wake up and bake bread, while one may go and paint endless frames of animation, its just that.

Stimulation and satisfaction from design should not be derived from whether the corporation law has allowed free will in executing a design communication task. Stimulation and satisfaction should be attained that as a designer you exercised your own moral law, executed the requirement of the function in the best possible manner and received acclaim for utilising your discipline rather than substantiated intellect. If one cannot function within this, then one should sought to become and artist where creativity and vision and communication and intellectual property has no function aside to serve a personal one.

Another contradiction, design is indeed intellectual, yet not in the sense of free intellect, used by design, is well, designed with laws and codes of the corporation defining the function. Graphic Design as a tool for ideology plays the part of what we have discussed above. Society will always have an ideological view and opinion on most matter. It would not be human and it would not be a society that did not practice in ideology, for instance, we could compare ideology with emotion, which is a motivating factor of ideological views. What effects emotion? If we relate it in a sense of visual communication, we could use the example of colour, warm colours, desire, heat, anger, cool colours, wet, cold, sadness. Therefore we can see that colour and its usage's can be a medium additive to influence ideological views through the tool of graphic design.

The ideas of trying to define graphic design within the categories of innovation, evolution, marketing, concept, function, performance, construction, appearance as well as others described by Tony Fry are each a contradiction in its self, although the text speaks of design, it encapsulates it in the industrial sense and proceeds to say that design is derivative from the concoction of categories. We are discussing, Graphic Design, not Design. Although design is a major component of the descriptive for the discipline of Graphic Design, it is far too general and would throw more confusion than aid in formulating a clear definition of the Graphic Design profession. I could argue the point of the definition of the profession of architecture, why isn't it called Building Design or something similar, it is a single word which is a profession and a descriptive of the profession and it is taken without scepticism from society. My assumption for this would be that even though architecture is in essence design, the function or more importantly, the product is to say, solid or bricks and mortar. On a human scale, a dwelling or shelter is a first requirement, before fire and heat, so therefore it would be elevated in the field of skills and therefore gain a better understanding as a profession due to the nature of environment, which is basically humans and the world society.

Graphic design, although is consumed by humans and the world society, it is not something akin to the product of bricks and mortar, or shelter. Graphic Design, is more organic than other disciplines, more intellectual in a sense, more fluid than solid as it flows within the veins of society. It is the first step amongst other steps in a discovery of a problem and is the formulation and solution provider of such. From physical, electronics and analogue, its products are fluidized to be injected like a serum to aid in development or to rectify a problem which arises. It is an art at almost a level of alchemy where equal parts of science and belief are combined to create, yet following a code and law as set by a guild. It is a discipline which commands that the disciple first learn to discipline ones self to learn self control, to endure a period of solitude to reflect and balance the mind in a time of chaos to formulate a solution. Great design and innovation do indeed start from a blank sheet of paper or a clear mind. Now go and create.

All this discussion on design, yet it only being a theory. Yet when we add a word suddenly it begins to form an image. So we have Graphic Design, not to confused with industrial design, or product design or building design or design design. What is the significance of graphic design, more than most people know. I tend to put it as a creative, I created the face of your corporation, you could have chosen another out of the many designers, but you chose me, you could not be a corporation if you cannot communicate. I gave you the means to spread your word in all the media in the world. I gave you the means to your functions desired or designed before anything existed as an identity or trait. When I say I, this does not condone a team or group, on the contrary, I in the sense can be an individual or it can be a group, its is just an expression of Graphic Design speaking. So we can see from this discussion, the design , Graphic Design, is really more powerful than society perceives it to be.

An idea is just an idea that can be marketed, combined, invested, digested, but if it hasn't got an identity, public face and presence it is not worth a cent. All the ideological views are ineffective if they do not know one exists, all the markets, the societies, formulations by design. The gift of communication on a grand scale, the essence of Graphic Design or an aspiration. This is just a brief of Graphic Design and what it means to practice it. Hopefully by reading this we have become aware of the grand scale of things, everything starts out small eventually. For us, its like planting a seed sometimes, a seed planted now will bare the fruits of your labour in years ahead. If one cannot grasp your profession, let it be an enigma the aim is to live a life of satisfaction, and we get satisfaction from creating and following our discipline before the corporate formulation, not by trying to live a life of infamy, be humble, let your work speak for its self, let your professionalism speak for its self. You know you have been successful when you don't have to explain your self to any one that you are a Graphic Designer.

Notes