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Thesis Summer Letter
10AUG07

Designers have a unique opportunity to work within all subject areas in our world today. It is a powerful responsibility to be a designer in today's culture of global media and constant access to information. We have the job of controlling how, when, why and where people see information. It is our challenge to reveal this information in engaging, interesting ways.

The intent of my thesis process this year will be to explore the word *reveal*, its relationship to graphic design, and why I believe it is important. To begin this process I first looked back at methods of design that I have used in the past two years in which a recurring theme has been using alternative techniques to reveal information. I've been interested in using references to existing and familiar graphic language, exploring the use of exposed structures, closely examining and exposing details as a way of revealing information and the juxtaposition of things having a common thread in order to reveal a message. I have also been interested in exploring different materials and methods of making in the design process where information is revealed through various levels of observation.

I have been looking back over the two years of work that I have produced here at Yale in comparison to various visual influences that I have been attracted to in order to find a connection. The thesis for me is both a way to develop my working methods and thought process about design and a way of finding my own voice in the work that I make. There are four main areas of interest that I would like to initially explore, within the realm of revealing information. I believe these areas all tie together strongly as revealing structures.

REVEALING, HIDING AND CAMOUFLAGE

I believe graphic design projects should be a rewarding experience. Every project should involve some level of interaction and discovery. Maybe things can be both visually simple and complex at the same time? I am particularly interested in things that appear as one thing at first but upon closer inspection the viewer discovers something different. To a certain extent this idea relates to the idea of camouflage. Camouflage, however, is meant to conceal an object or information, while my intent is to reveal it. An example of this may be to use the existing graphic language of something that is not entirely related to the subject matter in order to convey meaning. To me, the use of types of "revealing processes" is a way to make design that is smart and clever storytelling. A person can unpack a message and, if well designed, it should feel effortless to the viewer.

PROPAGANDA

Much of my work in general appears to gravitate towards politically heavy subject matter. This is most likely because of my life experiences, and I feel that using graphic design to reveal these views and messages is something that I'm supposed to do. Strategically revealing messages has always been part of graphic propaganda on all sides of the fence. As a graphic designer it is my responsibility to adequately convey a message. Some of the best graphic design came out of propaganda messages.

ICONOGRAPHY

In my final review this past May, it was noted that I have a particular interest in iconography. Icons, symbols, pictograms and marks have been used since the beginning of human history to communicate information. Iconography reveals information quickly and concisely without relying on language if well designed. Important warnings, a company's entire mission statement, a function of a device, a purpose of a location, all these things revealed through the use of an icon, symbol, mark etc.

INFORMATION GRAPHICS

Information graphics are a way to take a large amount of information and reveal it in a small amount of space. When designed properly, they make use of iconography, hiding, revealing and camouflaging information to illustrate facts or propaganda or both; for this reason it is included as an area of focus. The topics I've discussed all are different but can go hand in hand under reveal. Each uses parts or wholes of the other to make a complete project.

My thesis work should be categorized as:

Revealing Camouflaged Iconographic Informative Propaganda.

Baker, James A. III and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs. The Iraq Study Group Report
New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

This is about an issue that is clearly close to me. I read it this summer and thought it was an interesting perspective on the war. It is also interesting to me how this “official” report like the 9/11 commission report is made into book form and sold at bookstores nationwide. Without blatantly saying it to people, it is instantly political propaganda.

Baker, Nicholson. The Mezzanine. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

This book is all about the details. In some instances there are more footnotes than actual text. It is an amazing story of examining details of ordinary objects. This is something that I can relate to, but also relates to my idea of reveal through closely examining details.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. Never Let Me Go. New York: Vintage Books, 2006

This book was recommended to me by Dan Michaelson because of a possible relationship to my ideas about reveal. I am currently reading this and will update this annotation upon completion.

Richter, Gerhard. Gerhard Richter: Atlas. New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2007

This book was recommended to me by Dan Michaelson because of a possible relationship to my ideas about reveal. I am currently still absorbing this book and Richter’s work and how “reveal” appears in different projects he has made. Again, this annotation will be updated upon completion.

Vanderbilt, Tom. “Designed to Deceive,” *Trace: AIGA Journal of Design* Vol 1 no. 1, 2001

I just discovered this interesting article about intentionally designing objects to be unseen or hidden, and it relates to some ideas I have been looking at regarding camouflage and its relationship to “reveal”.

Vienne, Veronique. Something to Be Desired: Essays on Design. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 2001.

Interesting collection of writings about design. I included this not so much for its relationship to reveal, but because I believe this book and others like it that I have begun to read are helping to expose me to different perspectives on design so I can better fine tune my own opinions about design.

Memento, 2000
directed by Christopher Nolan

The film *Memento* experimented with how we receive information about a story. By reversing the order of information and revealing parts of the story through just tattoos and polaroids, the film successfully alters the way we absorb information.



Paris Montparnasse, 1993

Andreas Gursky

Atlanta, 1996

Andreas Gursky

Photos by Andreas Gursky challenge us to interact with them. They control scale in such an extreme way that asks the viewer to question what we are exactly seeing. The more time you spend with the photo the more information is revealed to us about the photo.



Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts,
2001, St. Louis, MO
Tadao Ando

This building designed by architect Tadao Ando is an example of revealing structures. The materials are left as they are, with very little “finishing applied”. In a building like this, the architect appears to want us to have our own experience with the materials and for each person to have their own personal reaction to the space.



Type the Sky

2007

Lisa Rienemann

Brilliant discovery of letterforms in the negative space between buildings. It reveals information where there is none.



Hektor Meets William Morris
2003, Amsterdam
Jürg Lehni

An example of a simple machine which reveals information over time. In a sense it doesn't really matter what the information is. What this reveals to us is the machine's interesting and mesmerizing function.



Mies van der Rohe portrait.

2003, IIT

2x4

This halftone portrait of Mies van der Rohe is actually comprised of a set of pictograms designed for signage at IIT. This reveals both the icon that Mies is to IIT and the communicative icons which appear through the building.



Removed Signs
found in Print Magazine July /
August 2007

An great example of something revealed by accident. This says that sometimes the absence of something is more significant and powerful than its presence.



This is a Poster

2006

Shepard Fairey

This example shows both camouflaged implementation of a known icon or symbol and also of Shepard Fairey's reuse of a known graphic language and making it his own. I'm interested in how he took this graphic reference and made it his style, now when people make work like this its as if they are referencing the Obey Giant posters, not propaganda from the turn of the century.

This is a POSTER graphic. This writing is the DESIGN upon the POSTER. The DESIGN is used to help SELL the POSTER. We hope to draw your attention to it and encourage you to look at it. When you have done that maybe you'll be persuaded to buy the POSTER, in this case an OBEY POSTER. Then we want you to hang it. The idea being that the more of you that hang this, the more other people will see it, and the more others will be indoctrinated by our propaganda, adding steam to the already vicious momentum of the OBEY juggernaut toward ultimate world domination. This can be a symbiotic relationship with OBEY because hanging a clever, or at least "conceptual" POSTER design can make one feel superior, a feeling which can also lead to PLEASURE. A good POSTER DESIGN will attract more buyers and give more pleasure. Therefore, buying a POSTER creates pleasure. When feeling depressed, do not forget this. OBEY is most known for creating eye-catching pictures. This writing is trying to pull you in much like an eye-catching picture. It is designed to get you to READ IT. This is called luring the VICTIM, and you are the VICTIM. But VICTIM of what? You have an inquisitive nature and discriminating intellect, so you want information but you will not be manipulated by subversive sales tactics. But you are a mover and shaker who's time should not be wasted on gimmicks, so you should STOP READING NOW! because all we are attempting to do is to get you to read on. Yet this is a DOUBLE BIND because if you indeed stop you'll be doing what we tell you, and if you read on you'll be doing what we wanted all along. And the more you read on, the more you're falling for this simple design device of telling you exactly how a good commercial design works. But, you have a free mind so you can decide for yourself. Exercise your free will. Psychological ploys... they're TRICKS and this is the worst TRICK of all since it's describing the TRICK whilst trying to TRICK you, and if you've read this far then you're TRICKED but you wouldn't have known this unless you've read this far. At least we're telling you directly instead of seducing you with a beautiful or haunting visual that may never tell you. We're letting you know that you ought to buy this POSTER because in essence it's a PRODUCT and PRODUCTS are to be consumed and you are a consumer and this is a good PRODUCT. And good products make you superior, and superiority brings you pleasure. We could have written the company's name in special lettering so that it stood out and you'd see it before you'd read any of this writing and possibly have bought it anyway. What we are really suggesting is that you are FOOLISH to buy or not buy a POSTER merely for the pretty picture. This is a con because if you agree then you'll probably like this writing - which is the POSTER design. Reflexivity ought not to be so ironic and paradoxical, but life is not always simple. Things are not always what they seem, or sometimes they are even more of what they seem, or land somewhere in between, or both, or neither. But... we're just warning you of all that. A con is a con. A good POSTER design could be considered as one that gets you to buy the POSTER, but that never actually happens to YOU because YOU know it's just a design for the POSTER, and a con. And this is the POSTER. A POSTER that is evidence of an awareness of, or a susceptibility to, CONSPICUOUS COSUMPTION. A product of OBEY... repeat.

GRA 2005, Poster series for the graduation show, Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam

Laurenz Brunner

This poster series intentionally causes tension in the type. I both love and hate this poster. I like it as a bold graphic, and its multiple levels of information, I hate that the type is almost illegible. However that is also something I love about it, since the point of the poster is to reveal a dilemma of multiple languages used in the Rietveld Academy.



Rotterdam Identity

2001

Mevis + van Deursen

This is an identity system which allows for an infinite number of combinations in order feel constantly fresh and different while still remaining consistent. By doing this it is constantly calling out to people to look at the information it is sitting upon.

