New Perspectives:
Critical Histories of Graphic Design

Special Project of *Visible Language* in Three Issues

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Andrew Blauvelt

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New Perspectives:
Critical Histories of Graphic Design

Part 2: ***Practices***

Andrew Blauvelt, guest editor

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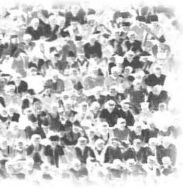
The quarterly journal concerned with all that is involved with being literate.



Foreword:

The Personal is Political:
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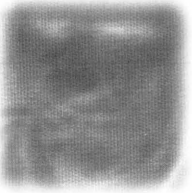

... to win institutional space for a proto-discipline [of design history] does not mean that the conditions have been secured in which the intervention of that activity will be progressive or that it will even disrupt the hegemonic order. This in turn indeed begs reappraisal of design beyond its currently perceived representation as a social and economic construct.

Tony Fry [1]

Graphic design history's relationship with the object of its study, the practice of graphic design, can be characterized as one in which the issues relating to both are critically underexplored. If graphic design history has been constructed in service to the profession of graphic design, then the legitimating function it serves favors a historical positioning which only reaffirms the current conception of professional practice as the natural consequence of its historical precursors. In the process of constructing an appropriate narrative, graphic design history, like society, assimilates differences where possible and marginalizes the remainder, locating it outside of professional practice and, therefore, outside its disciplinary boundaries. By allowing only one definition of practice to be operative, graphic design history has effectively foreclosed the possibility of locating and understanding alternative pratices that fall beyond the range of its interests such as graphic design produced by untrained professionals, work that is produced in ways which seem oppositional to current definitions of professional practice or even work produced by those individuals who do not qualify under the racial, sexual and class aspirations of mainstream society, which practice reproduces (understood as the white supremacist, heterosixist, patriarchal bourgeoisie). By locating and understanding these other forms of practice I do not mean their incorporation into the discipline. After all incorporation, along with assimilation, is society's usual solution to the problem of difference.

1
Fry, Tony. 1981. "Design History: A Debate?" *Block*, 5, 18.

Of course many designers are subordinated to domination of the social relations of capitalist production — but — this does not mean that they cannot "make their own history" out of resistance to their circumstances, be they not of their own choosing.

Tony Fry[2]

The five essays which comprise this volume have been gathered to address a myriad of questions regarding the status of practice within the notion of graphic design history. Some of the essays speak specifically to the conditions of practice while others do so through some of the examples given. It is important to note that these essays generate important discussions for history, theory and criticism and not solely for practice. Because the question of practice is largely neglected by historians, who seem to favor instead the objects of production or the subjects of creativity, I have segregated these essays from other possible positions within these special issues in order to focus a discussion around this topic.

Marilyn Crafton Smith's essay "Culture is the Limit: Pushing the Boundaries of Graphic Design Criticism and Practice," outlines a fuller understanding of graphic design in cultural terms. Drawing heavily upon recent work in the fields of cultural studies and communication theory, Smith attempts to "push" the discussion and understanding of design objects beyond the notion of a simplified transmission model which tends to privilege the intentions of graphic designers and limits the responses of receivers. Understanding graphic design beyond the object and as a form of cultural production impacts the criticism and practice of graphic design through a greater knowledge of how its forms are consumed ("read" or "received") by audiences and what social practices constrain their production. The application of research in cultural studies is essential to those interested in the interpretation of graphic design because certain theoretical models, such as the deconstruction of a "text," are centered within the text itself and within other texts and are not necessarily or sufficiently interested in the social and cultural forces at play in both the

2
Fry, "Design History: A Debate?", 17.

reading and making of "texts." Despite repeated calls from graphic designers to move beyond aesthetic concerns and the "free play of the signifier,"[3] the field has not adequately addressed the issue of how people receive messages. Smith provides a concise accounting for how developments within the field of cultural studies could be applied to graphic design. Although she does not specifically implicate history in the discussion, the arguments apply readily since repeated calls for historical understanding ask for ways to address the specific historical conditions in which design was both produced and used.

Jan van Toorn addresses the need for us to conceive of an oppositional form of practice through his essay, "Design and Reflexivity." Van Toorn has written and designed his arguments through a presentation of four parts. In the first of these parts, *Le pain et la liberté,* van Toorn implicates the social practice of design as schizophrenic, trapped in a series of contradictions about its instrumental use by the dominant order which, in turn, grants legitimacy to its professional activities (*le pain*) and the emancipatory potential which is lost or neutralized by this ordering (*la liberté*). In the second section, *Symbolic Forms are Social Forms*, van Toorn addresses the roles of communicative vehicle and space for an oppositional practice. Acknowledging that design partakes of the forms through which "dominant culture forces all other cultures to define themselves in its symbolism..." and, evoking Jean Baudrillard's conception of an end to reality via the "hyperreality of the simulacrum," van Toorn searches for another conceptual space for oppositional practice. That space seems to reside within the individual when van Toorn draws upon Félix Guatarri's "mental ecology," as a location and when he urges that designers adopt a radically different strategy by "exposing the variety of interests and disciplinary edifices in the message...". Locating the individual mentality as a site for resistance would be consistent with Deleuze's and Guatarri's theories of desire,[4] which see no division between the personal and the social or the individual and the collective. The approach that such an oppositional stance would take is the subject of the third section, *Myth and Mediocrity*. For van Toorn oppositional practice, for both designer and society, is a "reflexive mentality" which "raises

3
I specifically reference here the work of many designers who seem to locate their role as decidedly outside that of the purveyor of "intended meaning" and instead divest themselves of this charge and adopt a post-structuralist attitude in regard to the seemingly infinite range of possible interpretations generated by their forms.

4
For a complete account of the production of the mechanisms of desire or "délire" see: Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guatarri. 1977. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* New York: Viking Press.

questions among the public which stimulate a more active way of dealing with reality." For the designer this would require that they begin to develop their own "needs, interests and desires," and "resist the fascination with endless fragmented and aestheticized varieties created by" the dominant order. In the concluding section, *Subversive Pleasures*, van Toorn recognizes the implications for reflexive practice for design and the wider public. Design must recognize "substance and style as ideological constructions," while exposing "the wider public with forms of communication intended for more independent and more democratic shaping of public opinion." In conclusion, van Toorn adopts a strategy of trading "truth" for a self-conscious, demystifying fiction whose forms serve to resist the "symbolic order."

Stuart McKee joins the notion of "making history" with the appropriation of graphic design as a practice of cultural activism. His essay, "Simulated Histories," discusses how visual language can be used by disenfranchised groups in order to construct their own cultural identities, thereby locating themselves in history. McKee discusses two particular instances, the Native American and the gay and lesbian civil rights movements. McKee shows how both groups exhibit an "ahistorical" position in society. For Native Americans, this manifests itself through the popular consignment of their various cultures to the past, effectively denying representations of the here and now or of the future. For gays and lesbians the ahistorical positioning is categorical exclusion on the basis of pathology[5] — a popular space for social "non-conformists" — which effectively denies temporal representation and the legitimacy of a history. McKee documents several instances — demonstrations — where such oppressed groups used (invented or appropriated) the means to representation. The fluctuating temporal dimensions of past, present and future are significant for cultural status and as such become important aspects of making history. In this way, for example, gays and lesbians can recover a past existence (prior to categorization), which can, in turn, serve to develop a sense of community and destiny. As the historian Michel de Certeau notes, "history is always ambivalent: the locus that it carves for the past is equally a fashion of making a place for a future."[6] McKee's essay is important to our under-

5
In Foucault's description the "homosexual" did have a "past" but one that was constrained by the category itself, that of the "case history." Consequently, the interpretation of that past is always in service to proving the pathology. In this sense I do not necessarily part with Foucault's account of the nineteenth-century category of the homosexual. See Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. New York: Pantheon, 43.

6
de Certeau, Michel. 1988. *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 85.

standing of practice because it bypasses the centrality of the professional arena and instead locates practice "on the margins." It also implicates practice in a fundamentally social way and exposes the production of history as just that and not simply a natural occurrence.

The areas of history, theory and contemporary practice converge in the essay by Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, "Deconstruction and Graphic Design: History Meets Theory." Lupton and Miller attempt to untangle the messy role of deconstruction in graphic design history, theory and practice on many fronts. They begin by offering an account of deconstruction from its articulation in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida through its importation into the American intellectual scene and its dissemination in the discourse of mainstream design practices. Of particular concern are the (mis)appropriations of deconstruction by graphic designers and its (mis)understanding by the graphic design press. Lupton and Miller attempt to recover deconstruction for design history and theory through Derrida's *grammatology* or "study of writing as a distinctive mode of representation." Here it is stressed that the language of typography, as the reproductive vehicle for writing, must play a central role in discussions of deconstruction.[7] They also make a suggestive gesture to recover such a history which would run "alongside and beneath the erection of transparent formal structures and coherent bodies of professional knowledge." In the last section of their essay, they rejoin deconstruction with the practice of graphic design by citing examples of work which confront "the politics of representation" and remake "design's internal language." Rather than adopting the categorization of visual effects which preoccupies the design press, they evoke a social and political orientation, whether explicit or implicit, to the practice of deconstruction in the form of graphic design.

In the concluding essay of this volume, Martha Scotford turns her attention to the roles played by women practitioners in the capitalist and patriarchal framework shared with male designers and their particular "experiences within a female network." To this end, Scotford offers a typology of roles of women in graphic design. Expanding the ideas which have been put forth in design history in general, Scotford attempts to locate the issues specifically within graphic

7
Walter Ong is among the first to state what seems rather obvious: "Deconstruction is tied to typography rather than, as its advocates seem often to assume, merely to writing." See his rather brief discussion: Ong, Walter. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* London and New York: Methuen. 129.

design. At the heart of the proposal is the recovery of women to the history of graphic design, not solely for their installation into some preexisting canon, dominated as it is by the rules of patriarchy, but for a better understanding of the conditions which lead to their exclusion. Although Scotford focuses on the roles played by women practitioners, this is not to suggest that they do not exist elsewhere — for example, as representations or as distinct audiences. A fundamental reconsideration is generated by Scotford's discussion, namely: What defines the practice of graphic design? Who qualifies as a designer? What other roles of activity exist (e.g., teacher, manager, critic or historian)? How and why are certain types of design practices marginalized? The answers to these questions have implications beyond those of just gender and begin to construct a realm of all those things estranged from field of history on whatever basis. The complicated nature of explicating a social history of graphic design is acknowledged in the title, "Messy History vs. Neat History: Toward an Expanded View of Women in Graphic Design," but as Scotford reminds us the task may be great but so too are the rewards.

The five essayists represented in this volume contribute to a varied notion of what may constitute the practices of graphic design. And despite my editorial ordering, they also implicate themselves in issues of history, theory and interpretation. The practices of graphic design directly affect the undertaking of its history and, in turn, impact its envisioned future. What all of the essays underscore is the understanding that graphic design is ultimately a social practice not solely the property of professionals, but an activity of individuals, where the personal is political.


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Marilyn Crafton Smith

Culture is the Limit: Pushing the Boundaries of Graphic Design Criticism and Practice

This essay attempts to redirect theoretical approaches to graphic design practice away from an emphasis on the design object and production (defined in terms of aesthetics and popular definitions of communication) towards an alternative cultural studies perspective. Conceptualizations of the design environment as the locus of authority over content and of graphic design as the sole mechanism through which interpretation occurs provide limited explanations for graphic design's role in the circulation and formation of meaning. Through a cultural studies perspective, graphic design is a dynamic component of a larger discursive field where meanings are negotiated through cultural forms.

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Discourse about graphic design practice in the United States has been strongly associated with an emphasis on the visual "object" and its attendant production practices. However, graphic design is implicated in the circulation and formation of cultural and social meaning. A limited focus on the design object, even when the latter is conceived as something a "message" moves through, has tended to remove the design product from its social moorings and further underscores the lack of engagement design discourse has had with "subjects" of design, interpretive strategies and design as cultural practice. Additionally, there has been little critical elaboration of the relationship between audience and design in terms of cultural sources and contexts through which interpretations are made.

In this essay I review some of the ways graphic design practice has been conceptualized, particularly those whose central concerns are aesthetics and popular notions of communication processes. This review is undertaken in order to examine assumptions about the generation and location of meaning which underlie these frameworks. A cultural studies perspective is then proposed as an alternative means to theorize graphic design practice, a perspective in which the relationships between meaning production and cultural practices are accorded primary consideration.

Residual Frameworks for Graphic Design

Much of the discourse about graphic design has derived from continued attempts to define and reposition graphic design practice as a profession. The outcome has produced numerous conceptualizations of graphic design, as a form of aesthetic expression, communication, persuasion, information management, problem-solving or as a vehicle for social responsibility and/or political activism.[1] While each of these conceptualizations may not be so firmly rooted in the '90s as in the past, the residual thinking about them still guides much of our current understanding of graphic design.

No one can dispute the significance of graphic design's legacy, the dual traditions of art and craft. The location of academic graphic design programs in predominantly fine arts, rather than communication or technology departments underscores this visual heritage. Under the rubric of aesthetics, graphic design foregrounds personal expression and the development of personal style. Through this practice graphic design achieves aesthetic recognition while also accommodating commercial, scientific or public interests.[2] Design products not only evidence their aesthetic sensibility through their "hand craftedness," but are also associated with a high regard for individual artistic achievement. Although the public may not be familiar with the individual designers whose work is circulated for popular consumption, a quick perusal of trade publications and graphic design history texts reveals this particular discursive strategy for framing popular understandings of design.[3] Concern with a cultivation of "craft" also serves to center the object, particularly when this concept refers to technical expertise and the satisfaction of utilitarian functions required of an object's design and production. Finally, graphic designers' preoccupation with aesthetic and perceptual responses to their products has also meant an over reliance on formalist principles, including those derived from gestalt psychology. Frances Butler observes that twentieth-century theories about visual literacy and visual thinking have reified gestalt theses, a "theory of genetic compositional preferences," into models of composition that "infallibly align with man's [sic] genetic

1
Buchanan, Richard. 1992. "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking." *Design Issues*, 8:2, 5-21; Lorraine Wild. 1992. "On Overcoming Modernism." *I.D.*, 39, 74-77. Design as information management is discussed in Bonsiepe, Gui. 1994. "A Step Towards the Reinvention of Graphic Design." *Design Issues*, 10:1, 47-52.

2
A brochure produced by the American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA) defines graphic design as an "aesthetic ordering of type and image" that may be used "to interest, inform, persuade, or sell." n.d.

3
I refer to trade periodicals such as *Communication Arts, Graphis* and until recently *Print*, and, to a lesser degree, to graphic design history texts such as that by Philip B. Meggs. 1983. *A History of Graphic Design*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

cognitive map."[4] According to Butler, these models have been used by graphic designers to "assure the transmission of their intended message to the perception of the audience."[5]

Graphic design's alignment with technological and scientific values, what Victor Margolin identifies as a "modernist" impulse,[6] may indicate design's turn toward the function of communication. Conceptualizing graphic design as communication realigns its professional identity with social utility.[7] However, as Raymond Williams has cautioned, much of what is called communication is "no more than a one-way sending, no more than a transmission in itself."[8] There needs to be greater clarification of the use of the concept "communication." Often when designers and theorists speak of communication, what they refer to is a mechanistic transmission model of communication and attendant concerns about audience that are based on a long line of mass media audience research.[9] My concern is that a reductionist model will unquestioningly be reproduced when communication is defined solely in terms of imparting, sending, transmitting or giving information to others; perhaps more problematic is the fact that central to the mission of transmitting messages is the purpose of control.[10] In contrast to the idea that meaning is derived from an engagement with the design object, or "text," by the audience, it is assumed that the authority of the message and "source" of meaning are located primarily in the designer/client relationship.

To rectify the simplified notion of communication as transmission, structuralist and semiotic approaches have been applied to graphic design. In their application greater attention is given to the discrete structural components that comprise a message, and the interaction between designer and recipient of the message is rendered more complex by the consideration of cultural signs and codes. An appropriation of semiotics manifests itself in the designer's engagement with "encoding" messages into designs, the latter constituting material artifacts that are later "decoded" by viewers. This encoding/decoding model assumes the transmission of transparent messages "from and to fully autonomous subjects."[11]

4
Butler, Frances C. 1984. "Eating the Image: The Graphic Designer and the Starving Audience." *Design Issues,* 1:1, 30-31; an additional critical perspective is offered in Lupton, Ellen. 1987. "The Mystique of Visual Language." *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design,* 5:3, 9.

5
Butler. "Eating the Image," 30-31.

6
Margolin, Victor. 1989. "Introduction," in Victor Margolin, editor, *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 10.

7
Frascara, Jorge. 1988. "Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?" *Design Issues,* 5:1, 20, 24-25; Margolin, Victor. 1994."The Age of Communication: a Challenge to Designers." *Design Issues,* 10:1, 65-70.

8
Williams, Raymond. 1983. *Culture & Society: 1780-1950.* New York: Columbia University Press, 302; Carey, James W. 1975. "A Cultural Approach to Communication." *Communication,* 2:3.

9
Some examples of this research are based on "effects," "uses and gratifications," "agenda setting" and "cultivation analysis;"

▶

There is a danger that semiotic analytical employment will remain at the level of the designed product itself, featuring the designer's efforts to embed cultural codes into visual language. While audience responses may be acknowledged during the designing process (encoding), designers as well as design theorists may assume that the receiver will "get" the message as set forth by its producers. When this occurs, concern with audience stops at the point of delivery of the message — hence a return to the idea of transmission. Even applying the compositional formulas associated with perception (gestalt principles) tends to replicate the transmission model of communication: their application assumes a clean transmittal of visually organized content to a genetically predisposed (and welcoming) viewer.

Recognizing the limitations of the transmission model, other graphic design critics argue for a more dynamic interaction between audience and designer. They contend that linguistic approaches to graphic design, as achieved through the lens of semiotics, enable design practice to be seen as a relationship that includes designers, audiences and the content of communication. While this more dynamic conception of graphic design has the capacity to account for relations between graphic design practice and the construction of meaning, its explanatory potentiality will be curtailed when the communication goal is restricted to that of persuasion.

For example, Richard Buchanan argues that the outcome of the relationship of designer/content/audience for visual communication is that designers are no longer expected to "decorate messages," but to actively engage in persuasive argumentation.[12] Jorge Frascara's theorization of graphic design is similarly based in behaviorism. His intent is to shift the designer's center of attention away from an engagement with visual components to the moment of contact between the design object and audience. However, Frascara then proceeds to set up numerous hurdles to his project. He clearly situates graphic design within the framework of communication, and sees communication efficiency as a goal of that process. However, communication efficiency is determined solely at the level of individual behavior insofar as

see McQuail, Denis. 1984. *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction.* Beverly Hills, California: Sage.

10
Carey, James W. 1975. "A Cultural Approach to Communication." *Communication*, 2: 1-22. Carey points out that the transmission model derived from metaphors of geography and transportation; in the nineteenth century, the movement of goods and the movement of information were conceived as identical processes and described by the common noun "communication"(p. 3).

11
Ang, Ien. 1985. "The Battle Between Television and Its Audiences: The Politics of Watching Television," in *Television in Transition.* Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson, editors. London: British Film Institute, 250.

12
Buchanan, "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking," 12.

the goal of graphic design is defined as behavioral change. Frascara conceives of visual communication as "the modification of people's attitudes or abilities," suggesting that a review of the entire field of graphic design would indicate that "specific changes in attitudes and conduct are, indeed, the final aim of graphic design in most areas."[13]

Frascara's construction of the recipient as "an active participant in the construction of the message"[14] is contradicted by the latitude of freedom ascribed to the viewer, which as outlined throughout his article, is limited to behavioral responses. Conceived in this way, the activity of decoding is entirely prescribed through the designer's production of the message. The only recourse the audience member is permitted as an "active participant" is to willingly participate in behavior modification stipulated on someone else's terms.

A brief detour through mass communication theory may prove instructive to graphic design if only because so much thinking about audience response has been dealt with there.[15] I want to recall two early models of mass communication which, I believe, underlie some of the current thinking about the communication function in graphic design, particularly when communication is linked with persuasion or behavior modification. Earlier "effects" research was based on a stimulus-response model: single message — individual receiver — reaction, and dealt with behavioral responses to mass media. This research takes for granted a more or less direct effect which is related to the intention of the initiator and built into the message.[16] It was developed to account for the relation between the sender and receiver, at the level of the individual.[17] However, little evidence of direct effects was found because this approach failed to account for intervening factors such as selective exposure or selective perception.[18] Following the effects research, "uses and gratifications" of the media were proposed as the intervening variables mediating sender and receiver.[19] Here, the emphasis on effects of the producer became the effects of the audience, the move from "effects" to "uses and gratifications" representing a shift from causal to functional approaches. Critics of this research point

13
Frascara, "Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?" 25.

14
Frascara, "Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?" 25.

15
My inclusion of mass communication theory is not to imply that graphic design is simply another form of mass communication. Some parts of it may be, others may not and graphic design will have to develop its own theories and problematics applicable to specific practices in the design discipline.

16
McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 183.

17
McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 182-184.

18
Carey, James W. and Kreiling, Albert L. 1974. "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications," in *The Uses of Communication*. J. G. Blumler and E. Katz, editors. Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 227.

to its weaknesses: *1)* while this approach may indicate that consumption of the media has functions, it failed to show that mass media was the only means of satisfying the functions; and *2)* because it is unable to link functions of the mass media with symbolic content and to explain the actual experience of interpreting the media, uses and gratifications research provides no way "to conceptualize the significance of symbolic experience."[20]

Graphic designers know little about the specific ways their audiences respond to graphic design and the ways that graphic design is made meaningful to their lives. Few practitioners or critics have put much effort into understanding these audiences, whether through systematic studies of their audiences or by theoretically assessing the ways audiences make meaning of graphic design products.[21] Graphic design's close alignment with business suggests marketing strategies as a model for understanding audiences. However, in addition to the fact that such strategies are suspect among many designers,[22] lingering marketing approaches are problematic because they construct the audience solely in its commodity form — that of advertising.[23] In this form, audience members are conceived narrowly as buyers of products rather than as viewers who actively make meaning from graphic design.

The conceptualizations discussed thus far provide limited ways for thinking about the interaction between audience and design. Audiences respond to design works from a number of positions, perhaps as consumers, but also in ways that fall outside the behaviorist, functionalist or commodity models. Once a cultural product, such as that which results from graphic design practice, is put into circulation, the meanings assigned to it and the uses to which it is put are not necessarily "fixed" nor determined by the producers/designers of this "text." Graphic design criticism needs to forego the task of defining strategies for determining or controlling meaning. Whether as practitioners, theorists or educators, all those associated with graphic design practice need to pursue making relationships between audience and design honest ones.

19
The "uses and gratifications" research was grounded in functional and systemic theories in sociology, and in functional and gestalt psychology; the particular sociological context for audience effects and the manner in which perceptions are organized mediate an audience member's experience of mass communication. Carey and Kreiling. "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications," 227-228.

20
Carey and Kreiling. "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications," 227-232.

21
Butler. "Eating the Image," 28; exceptions include the work found in *Design Discourse*, Section II, "The Interpretation of Design," Victor Margolin, editor. 1989. See in particular: Butler. "Eating the Image," 157-170; Lupton, Ellen. 1989. "Reading Isotype," 145- 156; and Kinross, Robin. 1989. "The Rhetoric of Neutrality," 131-143.

22
Butler. "Eating the Image," 28; Holland, D.K. 1993. "Think First, Design Later," *Communication Arts*, 34, 30.

23
Allor, Martin. 1988. "Relocating the Site of the Audience." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5, 220.

Developments of new means of communication, starting with the beginning of the "mass media" press, brought with them the unworkable formula of mass audiences. In answer to his own question, "Who are the masses?," Raymond Williams notes that masses are conceived as "other people," but that "there are in fact no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses."[24] While graphic designers do not necessarily think of their audiences as "masses," the key lesson to be learned from Williams is that *"the way that audience is conceived will proceed from our intentions"* (emphasis mine).[25] The way we conceptualize the audience is a crucial first step to understanding how meaning derives from graphic design. When design is conceptualized in a mechanistic form of communication, it is requisite that the "intentions" of transmission be examined. As the next section will show, the ways that graphic design has been conceptualized as communication, thus far, have proven inadequate for explaining graphic design's role in the formation and circulation of cultural, symbolic meaning.

24
Williams. 1983. *Culture & Society: 1780-1950.* New York: Columbia University Press, 299-300.

25
Williams, 1983. *Culture & Society: 1780-1950,* 303.

Towards Reconceiving Graphic Design as Cultural Practice

Sophisticated means for interpretive approaches have been provided by contemporary theorists employing a range of perspectives, among them cultural studies, critical communication theory, feminist criticism, literary criticism, semiotics and/or structuralism. In the sections that follow I want to: *1)* outline particular theoretical contributions from the cultural studies tradition; *2)* situate the practice of graphic design within a cultural studies perspective by introducing a model for cultural production; *3)* argue for enlarging the definition of the object of design studies; and finally, *4)* return to the audience/text nexus as a location for exploring the relationship of graphic design and signification.

Cultural Studies' Intellectual Precedents

The cultural studies "tradition" that I draw upon is based in the theoretical work initially identified as British cultural studies which originated at the Contemporary Center for Cultural

Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England under the leadership of Stuart Hall and others.[26] The goal of cultural studies analysis at its inception was two-pronged: to reject the reductionism and economism of classic Marxism (economic determinism), and to break with elitist conceptions of "culture." As evidenced by its early work, cultural studies has been characterized throughout its history by a willingness to traverse a wide range of intellectual terrains. Among the intellectual forays that have contributed to and redirected cultural studies at different historical moments are the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, a philosophical rereading of Karl Marx, appropriation of Antonio Gramsci's work on state and civil society and his metaphor of hegemony, Louis Althusser's work on ideology, Jacques Lacan's reworking of Sigmund Freud, and in more recent years, development of a theory of articulation derived from the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe,[27] and feminist work on gendered subjectivity and the reconceptualization of power.[28] This tradition understands culture not only as lived traditions and practices, but also as the meanings and values of social groups that derive from specific historical conditions.

Implicit in this cultural approach is the conception of society as unequally structured and comprised of diverse groups that are positioned in asymmetric relations to structures of dominance. In recognizing unequal relationships of power, cultural studies analyses contrast with the "objectivist" stance of traditional social science and with the restrained use of politics in criticism aimed at promoting an appreciation of elite culture.[29] An explicit acknowledgment and interrogation of relations among culture, language, ideology and the symbolic is a distinguishing feature of the cultural studies endeavor (particularly as developed through the British tradition).The aim of cultural studies goes beyond offering explanations for cultural and social practices; it strives to transform structures of power as they currently exist.[30]

26
For a theoretical history of the Center see Hall, Stuart. 1980. "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems," in *Culture, Media, Language.* Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, editors. London: Hutchinson, and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 15-47. More recent discussions of this approach are found in Grossberg, Lawrence, Nelson, Cary and Treichler, editors. 1992. *Cultural Studies.* New York and London: Routledge.

27
Laclau's theory of articulation is adapted by Stuart Hall in Hall, Stuart. 1986. "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," Lawrence Grossberg, editor, *Journal of Communication Inquiry,* 10:2, 45-60.

28
Previously formulated by Althusser and Lacan, the "subject" is explored further by feminist critics attempting to explain the unconscious processes of becoming engendered as female subjects. Kristeva's work first comes to mind, although it has been criticized for its lack of theoretical attention to wider social relations and its strict adherence to a Lacanian perspective. On Lacan's

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A Model for Cultural Production

Traditional communication research has conceived of the communication process as constituted by at least three discrete components (sender/message/receiver) and has tended to focus on a single component of the process (either sender, message or receiver) instead of addressing the connections among all three. In contrast, cultural studies attempts to show the relationship between cultural "texts" and social systems through a focus on social meanings. Cultural studies move interpretive analysis beyond the text or object, and, instead, conceives of the latter as one component among many in a larger discursive field.

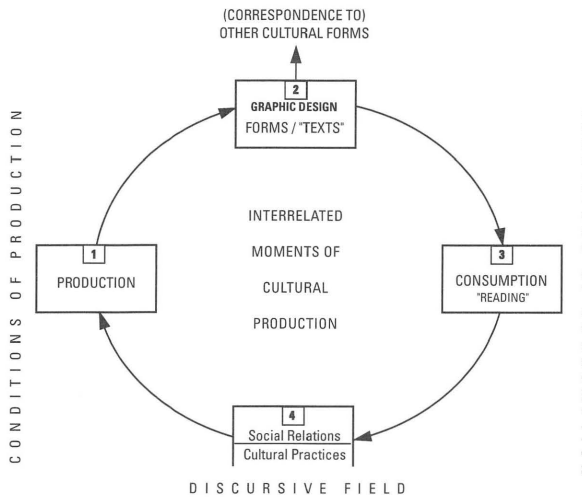

Figure 1

For the purpose of proposing an alternative formulation of graphic design practice, we can adapt a model for cultural production developed by Richard Johnson. Following Johnson, this model diagrammatically represents "a circuit of the production, circulation, and consumption of cultural products," with each "moment" in the circuit contingent upon the others. *(figure 1)*[31] Not only are the moments of production, circulation and consumption conceived in complex and interactive relations with each other, they also engage with "lived cultures and social relations." Much of the emphasis in graphic design has focused on the object and its production strategies.

subject, his rereading of Freud, and Kristeva's appropriation of Lacan, see Weedon, Chris; Tolson, Andrew and Mort, Frank. 1984. "Theories of Language and Subjectivity," in *Culture, Media, Language*, 200-208. For a review of feminist cultural studies and the collaborative efforts of U.S. and British critics is this area, including work on subjectivity, see Schwichtenberg, Cathy. June, 1989. "Feminist Cultural Studies." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6:2, 202-208.

29
During, Simon, editor. 1993. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. New York and London: Routledge, 1-2.

30
Hall, Stuart. 1992. "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," in *Cultural Studies*. Lawrence Grossberg et al., editors. New York and London: Routledge, 279.

31
Johnson, Richard. 1986/87. "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text*, 16, 46. While Johnson's primary goal is to analyze "the social life of subjective forms" and construct a theory of the subject (62-63), I adapt his model to emphasize the more basic point of the distinct "moments" and their relationships with one another that a cultural product must be conceptualized through.

If graphic design is reconceived as a cultural practice in the larger sense, further critical consideration may be directed to the various "moments" that proceed from the designed object's production. Design can be theorized in terms of the various moments that constitute the life of the object.

Each moment in the circuit may be distinguished by its own characteristic form. For example, a cultural product such as graphic design must undergo a process of production. It is not possible, however, to understand the conditions of production entirely through a deliberate examination of the graphic design products or "texts." Similarly, the meanings that are generated by "readers" of graphic design products cannot be determined by analyzing the products themselves nor can they be inferred from conditions of production.[32] Assessing the specific conditions under which messages are transformed and given meaning provides insight into the ways cultural forms are inhabited subjectively by their readers.

32
The terms "reader" and "reading" are commonly used in cultural studies to suggest a pro-active response to cultural products. Reading implies "perceptual and cognitive activities closer to a form of 'construction' than to passively and merely reactive operations suggested by the term reception." Corner, John. 1983. "Textuality, communication and media power," in *Language, Image, Media.* Howard Davis and Paul Walton, editors. New York: St Martin's Press, 267.

33
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 61.

From Object to Text: Decentering the Text as Object of Study

Whether the design object itself is conceived as a single entity, a combination of related parts, a genre (a particular form of graphic design) or a medium, it is a closed system for understanding how meaning is communicated and constructed by the reader. Such a system assumes that audiences make interpretations based solely on their interaction with the text. Far from being a discrete entity, a cultural product such as graphic design is characterized by a "proliferating intertextuality" and, thus, is encountered by the viewer through its relations with coexisting media. Johnson cautions that this "proliferation of allied representation in the field of public discourses" may present large problems for anyone involved with the study of contemporary cultural studies.[33] Cultural studies redirects the study of representation beyond the single text, to decenter the text as an object of study; instead of focusing on the text for its own sake or for the sake of its social effects, the text is studied for the "subjective and cultural forms it realizes and

makes available."[34] To Johnson, the text is only a means in cultural studies, a "raw material from which certain forms (e.g., of narrative, ideological problematic, mode of address, subject position, etc.) may be abstracted."[35]

One of the stronger insights provided by cultural studies is the recognition that cultural products exist in a culture which pre-exists their production, their materially realized form. Culture is made of multiple sign systems — signifiers — that coexist in any given society and are in existence prior to the encoding of cultural products. Culture comprises the conceptual forms and accumulated stocks of knowledge by which social groups and heterogeneous subcultures structure their everyday experience within a social and material context.[36] Whereas the specific conditions of production (encoding) and reception (decoding) vary, the cultural material from which texts are produced is also available to enable readings of those texts. These resources exist in the culture and beyond the text (extratextually). Textual materials may be described as "complex, multiple, overlapping, coexistent, juxtaposed, in a word, 'intertextual' they are "interdiscursive," indicating that they consist of "*elements* that cut across different texts."[37] Readers bring to their interpretations "common-sense" meanings (in Gramscian terms) that have emerged out of private cultures; their individual contexts include their social locations, their histories, subjective interests, private worlds and the contexts of both immediate situations (domestic) and the larger historical one.[38] Thus, to read (in the most active sense) popular cultural texts, readers draw from a variety of textual material as well as their own store of knowledge to become "producers," themselves, of cultural meanings. Although the combinations inherent in "intertextual" interpretations cannot be determined, in advance or if ever, through formal or empirical means of analysis, referencing them in a study of a cultural text may enhance our understanding of textual strategies relative to signification. To speculate on how readers may be positioned within a text, or foresee its popularity, we must first know "which stories are already in place."[39]

34
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 62.

35
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 62.

36
Gottdiener, M. 1985. "Hegemony and Mass Culture: A Semiotic Approach." *American Journal of Sociology,* 90:5, 991.

37
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 67.

38
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 67-68.

39
Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 68.

In order to rethink the place of "text" in a cultural analysis, Johnson suggests as a first step the reformulation of each moment in terms of the others. For example, to examine the moment of production, semiological questions could be introduced about how graphic design draws on codes and conventions, how it transforms them and reworks them, to whatever end, at the same time anticipating the other moments. A text-based study, similarly "enlarged," could take into account production and readership views, to seek out signs of the production process in the text and anticipate reader-produced meanings.

40
Johnson. "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," 74.

To explain the expanded notion of "text," Johnson draws attention to the double layering of representation. For example, if we understand a graphic design product as a form of representation, and, significantly, if we comprehend what we are analyzing is a "representation of a representation," it is apparent that "the first object, that which is represented in the text, is not an objective event or fact, but *has already been given meanings in some other social practice"* [emphasis mine].[40] By taking into account the two layers, we can better determine the text's salience for particular groups. That is, we can examine the relationship between the characteristic codes and conventions of a social group and the forms of representation these take in a particular design environment. Moreover, we can focus on the indeterminate stocks of knowledge, common understandings and the disparate signifiers which offer some possibility of coherence within a cultural text. This type of analysis simultaneously highlights the moments of production and reading through the use of two concepts, *intertextuality* and *intersubjectivity*.

Intertextuality involves the process of drawing on previous multiple, interrelated forms and conventions to construct meanings. This may occur at both encoding and decoding moments although the combinations of intertextual materials utilized in the signifying process may vary. The prior existence of such forms or conventions, or codes, does not imply a neutrality of their part in that such raw material is also linked to specific ideologies and social practices. Disclosing linkages

between different texts may reveal "familiar" messages, which, through intertextual analysis, are legitimated as part of the present message.[41]

Subjectivity is encountered in the possible reading positions established by textual strategies which suggest, but cannot claim to equate with, possible positions of the agency of readers. A subjective response, or even speculation (inferences) about a single, individual reader is analytically distinct from the way in which a reader as a member of a community learns the meanings of conventions or symbols, or the *intersubjective* response.[42] The former response indicates those private interpretations that are derived in "specific circumstances unique to the individual," whereas the latter implies the activation of meanings that are widely-based in a community, meanings which draw on common-sense knowing and are activated in the public realm.[43] While readers' responses are not so clearly separated as is indicated by this analytical dichotomy, this distinction is necessary in order to highlight the arena where communication takes place. Meaning will remain private knowledge without conventions which enable the communication of that meaning. Therefore, a cultural text must appeal to the wider system of meanings, however transitory they may be, that constitute intersubjective interpretations.

41
de Lauretis, Teresa. 1979. "A Semiotic Approach to Television as Ideological Apparatus," in *Television: The Critical View.* (2nd Ed.). Horace Newcomb, editor. New York: Oxford University Press, 108.

42
Cluysenaar, Anne. 1987. "Text," in *Modern Critical Terms.* Roger Fowler, editor. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 247.

43
Cluysenaar, "Text," 247.

44
The former is exemplified by Brunsdon, Charlotte and Morley, David. 1978. *Everyday Television: Nationwide.* London: BFI/Open University, and the latter by Fiske, John. 1986. "Television: Polysemy and Popularity." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 3, 391-408.

A Return to Audience/Text Interaction

At different periods in the history of cultural studies the relationship between audience and text has been formulated according to differing notions of ideological power attributed to the text. Much of this theoretical work has focused on mass media, television in particular. Although graphic design needs to be examined more specifically in terms of its various forms and specific audiences, the television studies have provided much groundwork for understanding text/audience interaction. The way the individual "reader" has been conceptualized may be very generally described as moving from a "subjected subject" to a "resisting reader."[44]

In the 1960s and early '70s, when cultural studies began to incorporate semiotic and structuralist analytic methods, it began to acknowledge the power of "texts" and the significance of the social and political contexts of their production and reception. Out of this project came questions about the power of the text over audience and how culture was implicated in the production of meaning. Central to this project was the way in which the audience for cultural texts was theorized, not as an homogeneous mass, but rather as a mixture of social groups bound in different ways to dominant ideological practices and meanings.

In the '70s a strict form of structuralism derived from the work of Louis Althusser and psychoanalytic concepts saw individuals as structured in ideology. Much of the critical work assumed that texts were ideologically closed; that is, interpretations of the text were linked with larger systems of domination. A less rigid form of semiotics entered cultural studies through the theoretical concept of *polysemy*, a term implying that a signifier is embedded with multiple meanings (signifieds). In Hall's 1980 model for encoding/decoding, his reconceptualization of decoding proved significant in many ways for theorizing audience interaction with cultural texts.[45] He argues that although a dominant, ideologically "preferred" meaning is provided in the text, audience members may take up two additional positions in relation to the text: they may "negotiate" or "oppose" this "preferred" one, depending on their specific class positions. Thus, this audience-based theory acknowledges varying degrees of symmetry between the two points of encoding and decoding, and notes that any correspondence between the two is constructed, not given.

All too often the reception or decoding process is thought of as a simple mirror image of the production/encoding process.[46] In his critique of Hall's (1980) encoding-decoding model, Wren-Lewis notes that, for Hall, the basis for the "fit" between these two points (or lack of it) are the "codes of encoding or decoding [which] may not be perfectly symmetrical;"[47] that is, the symmetry depends on "the degree of identity or non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit or systematically distort what has been transmitted."[48]

45
Hall, Stuart. 1980. "Encoding and Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*. Stuart Hall et al., editors. London: Hutchinson.

46
Hall, Stuart. 1980. "Encoding and Decoding," 131; cited in Wren-Lewis, Justin. 1983. "The Encoding/Decoding Model: Criticism and Redevelopments for Research on Decoding," *Media, Culture, Society*, 5, 179.

47
Hall. "Encoding and Decoding," 131.

48
Wren-Lewis, "The Encoding/Decoding Model..., 180.

Subsequently, cultural critics have emphasized that the asymmetry between encoded and decoded meanings is not based in the non-identity of codes. Instead, it is the result of differing conditions underlying the two practices of production and reception/interpretation.[49] Thus, in application to graphic design, the process through which a designer encodes his or her work may be described as a "signifying practice selecting and interpreting a whole world of signifiers;"[50] the decoding of the same work requires that viewers negotiate with an object whose interpretive realm is strongly defined through graphic design practices.

In his study, *The Nationwide Audience,* David Morley applies Hall's theory of preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings. Morley's study was a sequel to an earlier textual analysis of the same television program.[51] In his empirical analysis he showed a single episode to a variety of audience groups and then analyzed their group discussions in terms of the three "readings." What he found was that the "preferred reading" theory of Hall was inadequate to cope with the variety and complexities of the responses. Morley's work also clearly indicated that particular readings cannot be predictably aligned with class positions, although they are socially motivated.

John Fiske exploits the notion of polysemy further as he develops the concept of "semiotic excess." He is concerned with the question of how each text, conceived as a "polysemic potential of meaning," intersects with the social life of the viewer or group of viewers.[52] He argues, in reference to television and through the work of John Hartley, that [a cultural product] is not simply a clean, self-contained discourse but one that is "dirty, contaminated through interaction with culture."[53] The deconstructionist insistence on the inherent instability of meaning, the multiplicity of meanings found in language and the possibility of various reading positions offered to viewers, allows Fiske to develop his idea of semiotic excess, that is, meaning that cannot be controlled by dominant discourse. Although dominant discourse is present, excess meaning "spills over" to become "available for the cultural interests of the subordinate."[54] His work is noted for framing

49
Wren-Lewis. "The Encoding/Decoding Model...," 180; and Ang. "The Battle Between Television and its Audiences: The Politics of Watching Television."

50
Wren-Lewis. "The Encoding/Decoding Model...," 180.

51
Morley, David. 1980. *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding.* London: British Film Institute. The earlier study referenced in the text is Brunsdon, Charlotte, and Morley, David. 1978. *Everyday Television: Nationwide.* London: BFI/Open University.

52
Fiske, John. 1986. "Television and Popular Culture: Reflections on British and Australian Critical Practice." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 3, 204.

53
Fiske. "Television and Popular Culture: Reflections on British and Australian Critical Practice," 209; Hartley, John. 1984. "Encouraging Signs: Television and the Power of Dirt, Speech, and Scandalous Categories," in *Interpreting Television: Current Research Perspectives.* Willard D. Rowland Jr. and Bruce Watkins, editors. Beverly Hills, California: Sage.

54
Fiske, "Television and Popular Culture: Reflections on British and Australian Critical Practice," 209.

the audience as "resisting readers," thus, returning to them power over the text.[55]

In his analysis of the ways that "audience" has been employed in audience research, Martin Allor contends that locating the impact of the media through this concept has come to embrace the "space of the individual/social distinction."[56] He suggests that the recent focus on audience has permitted media theorists to reconsider the place of the individual within the social formation in ways that move beyond the present discourses of structural functionalism and social psychology. Cultural studies work today addresses the tensions between the individual and the social, highlighting the question of how the individual becomes social.

55
See for example Fiske, John. 1986. "Television: Polysemy and Popularity," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 3, 391-408.

56
Allor. "Relocating the Site of the Audience," 217.

57
Kinross, Robin. 1993. "Design History: No Critical Dimension," *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, 11:1, 7.

Conclusion

Cultural studies can be seen as an alternative theoretical approach to the traditional formulations of graphic design discussed here — personal expression and communication. When graphic design is theorized as communication, design criticism, like mainstream communication research, tends to separate the communication process that it attempts to study from the social order as a whole. Redirecting graphic design practice and criticism toward an emphasis on the construction of meaning is a more productive avenue to follow if we are to understand the means of symbolic production and expression, the relationships between graphic design practice and cultural meaning systems (including the production of commonsense knowledge), and how audiences "produce" meaning.

Rather than simply include graphic design as "one more item" in the menu of culture,[57] cultural theorists need to specify the contexts, forms and practices that are unique to graphic design. Whereas broadcasting and literature have been influential resources for thinking about audiences, "reading" or viewing contexts that are specific to graphic design may be examined in conjunction with other ongoing practices outside these dominant models. For example, we could ask how audiences traverse museum displays — (are they connoisseurs or are they

there to pick up a date?); are there unique contexts in which audiences engage with periodicals or other published materials that evoke particular responses?; are there additional cultural practices in operation when audiences navigate sign systems at a public zoo or an airport?

Since all communicated messages do have a material point of origin, the designer/client relationship can be examined in terms of the level of intent. Conscious intention of a message may result from professional ideologies operating within graphic design practice, ideologies needing critical assessment. However, conscious intention is also bounded by an assemblage of unconscious ideological practices from which it must be distinguished.[58] By investigating how larger sets of cultural meaning influence the individual designer at the moment of design/production, cultural critics also engage theoretically with the individual/social distinction.

Whereas there may be greater similarities present in the production context (this would have to be discerned relative to different subjects and forms of design), the contexts of reading or interpreting design products vary considerably. As Morley points out, the practice of decoding suggests a single act of interpretation but in actuality it may involve a set of processes. Issues of attentiveness, relevancy and interpretive strategies can be addressed through cultural critique. If viewers are to be discursively literate they must learn the rhetorical competencies needed for functioning within a discourse. The degree to which viewers are competent corresponds to the degree of interpretive "work" they must undertake, and consequently, to the amount of pleasure they derive from interaction with graphic design products.[59]

Traditionally, the design object and its form have been given primary emphasis in graphic design practice and criticism. Instrumentalist notions of form, that form is a tool for the transmission of pregiven meanings, must be revised to consider the links among the content, ideological themes and the particular form a graphic design product takes. Rather than relinquish form altogether, cultural studies needs to recuperate

58
I am indebted to David Morley's prior discussion of intentionality, the instrumentality of language, decoding and form for the points I raise in reference to graphic design. Morley, David. 1981. "'The Nationwide Audience' — A Critical Postscript." *Screen Education*, 39:4, 10.

59
Condit, Celeste. 1989. "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6, 103-22. Condit's point concerning interpretive work is made in reference to two different viewers' responses to a *Cagney and Lacey* episode on abortion. However, her discussion of the differential workloads required of viewing audiences for different types of "readings" — dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings — is quite useful.

it by showing its relevance to content and the production of meaning. An audience member may respond positively or negatively to a graphic design product as a particular cultural form. Additionally, there may be a correspondence between two cultural forms, that of the graphic design piece and that of an external but related cultural form.[60] The interdiscursive connections of these forms may possibly contribute to how the viewer responds to the design product.

Although cultural elements may exist prior to their integration into cultural products, through their employment they are articulated to dominant discourses, the means with which we think about and frame the world. The notion of a "preferred reading" implicitly implies that power relations underlie the circulation of cultural meanings, and that some meanings are privileged over others. Design criticism must continually assess the various levels of determination when addressing issues of interpretation.

Application of a cultural studies critique to graphic design enables not only our understanding of the cultural rules which organize practices of graphic design production and consumption, but also of the organization and production of culture. The cultural studies model proposed here requires that the moments of production, circulation and consumption be assessed for their interrelationships, but always in relation to the larger discursive field where meanings are negotiated through cultural forms.

60
Morley cites the work of Cohen and Robbins who argue that a crucial factor in the popularity of one genre of texts (Kung-fu movies) among urban/working class/male/youth is the linkage of "two forms of 'collective representation' — a linkage between the forms of some oral traditions in working class culture and some genres produced by the media — i.e., a correspondence of form rather than content." Morley. "The Nationwide Audience — A Critical Postscript," 11; Cohen, P. and Robbins, D. 1979. *Knuckle Sandwich.* London: Penguin.

Jan van Toorn

Design and Reflexivity

Designers in the "information industry" increasingly conform to the neo-liberal concepts of the present socio-ecomonic circumstances. This leaves little room for a social engagement which attempts to unite the private interests of the information combines and collective objectives.
The consequence of this mental adjustment to the hegemonies of the communicative relationships is that design, despite what are frequently well-intentioned ethical starting-points, has become generalized and rudimentary in its substantive and instrumental choices, and naive in its thinking about its own public role. In my contribution I argue, following in the footsteps of Félix Guattari, for a "mental ecology," for a multidimensional realistic reflexivity, which makes possible the recuperation of a practice consisting of more effective oppositional strategies.

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mines the nature of the message, there is a primacy of the relation over being. In other words, it is the bodies which think, not the minds. The constraint of incorporation produces corporations, which are these intermediary bodies and these institutions of knowledge, abiding by norms and formulating norms known as schools, churches, parties, associations, debating societies, etc.

– Régis Debray, 1994

Criticism is not an innocent discipline, and has never been.

...

The moment when a material or intellectual practice begins to "think itself," to take itself as an object of intellectual inquiry, is clearly of dominant significance in the development of that practice; it will certainly never be the same again. What thrusts such a practice into self-reflexiveness is not merely an internal pressure, but the complex unity it forms with adjacent discourses.

– Terry Eagleton, 1975/76

– Terry Eagleton, 1985

Valid critical judgment is the fruit not of spiritual dissociation but of an energetic

Le pain et la liber

...ne given facts that appear ...
...s the positive index of truth are in fact
...e negation of truth... Truth can only be established
...r their destruction.
–Herbert Marcuse, 1941

Every professional practice operates in a state of schizophrenia, in a situation full of inescapable contradictions. So too communicative design, which traditionally views its own action as serving the public interest, but which is engaged at the same time in the private interests of clients and media. To secure its existence, design, like other practical intellectual professions, must constantly strive to neutralize these inherent conflicts of interest by developing a mediating concept aimed at consensus. This always comes down to a reconciliation with the present state of social relations; in other words, to accepting the world image of the established order as the context for its own action.
By continually smoothing over the conflicts in the production relationships, design, in cooperation with other disciplines, has developed a practical and conceptual coherence which has afforded it representational and institutional power in the mass media. In this manner it legitimizes itself in the eyes of the established social order, which in turn is confirmed and legitimized by the contributions which design makes to symbolic production. It is this image of reality, in particular of the social world, which, pressured by the market economy, no longer has room for emancipatory engagement as a foundation for critical practice.

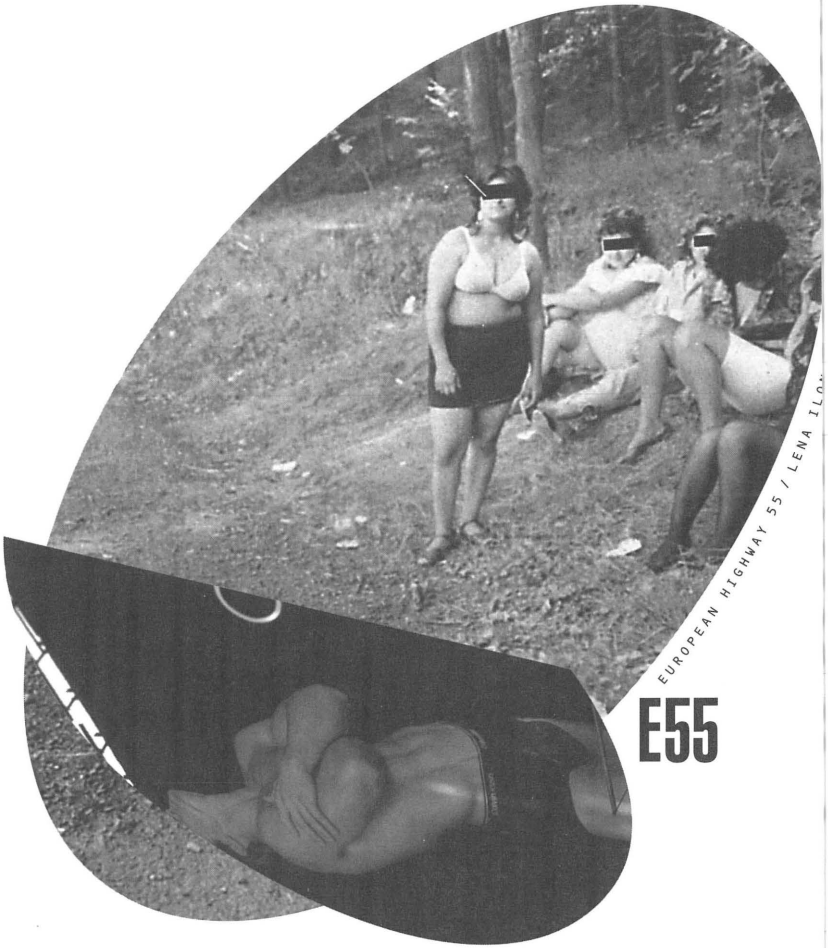
Design has thus become imprisoned in a fiction which does not respond to factual reality beyond the representations of the culture industry and its communicative monopoly. In principle, this intellectual impotence is still expressed in dualistic, product-oriented action and thought: on the one hand there is the individual's attempt to renew the vocabulary – out of resistance to the social integration of the profession; on the other there is the intention to arrive at universal and utilitarian soberness of expression – within the existing symbolic and institutional order. Although the lines separating these two extremes are becoming blurred (as a consequence of post-modernist thinking and ongoing market differentiation), official design continues to be characterized by aesthetic compulsiveness and/or by a patriarchal fixation on reproductive ordering.
The social orientation of our action as designers is no longer as simple as that. We seem happy enough to earn

Designers must come to reflect upon the functions they serve, and on the potentially hazardous implications of those functions. In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin wrote that humankind's "*self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.*"
– Stuart Ewen, 1990

form of an "illocutionary force" but ... is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e., in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced.

– Pierre Bourdieu, 1991

our living in blind freedom, leading to vulgarization and simplification of our reflective and critical traditions. That is why it is time to apply our imaginative power once again to how we deal with communicative reality.



The job facing the cultural intellectual is
herefore not to accept the politics of identity
given, but to show how all representations
re constructed, for what purpose, by whom,
nd with what components.
. Edward Said, 1993

Symbolic productions represent the social position and mentality of the elites which create and disseminate them. As ideological instruments, they serve private interests which are preferably presented as universal ones. The dominant culture does not serve to integrate the ruling classes only, however; "*it also contributes,*" as Pierre Bourdieu describes it, "*to the fictitious integration of society as a whole, and thus to the apathy (false consciousness) of the dominated classes; and finally, it contributes to the legitimation of the established order by establishing distinctions (hierarchies) and legitimating these distinctions.*"[1] Consequently, the dominant culture forces all other cultures to define themselves in its symbolism, this being the instrument of knowledge and communication. This communicative dependency is particularly evident in the "solutions" which the dominant culture proposes for the social, economic and political problems of what is defined as the "periphery" – of those who do not (yet) belong.

By definition, the confrontation between reality and symbolic representation is uncertain. An uncertainty that has now become undoubtedly painful, since, as Jean Baudrillard puts it, the experience of reality has disappeared "*behind the mediating hyperreality of the simulacrum.*" This progressive staging of everyday life gives rise to great tension between ethics and symbolism, because of the dissonance between the moral intentions related to reality and the generalizations and distinctions of established cultural production.

For an independent and oppositional cultural production, another conceptual space must be created which lies beyond the destruction of direct experience by the simulacrum of institutional culture. The point is not to create a specific alternative in the form of a new dogma as opposed to the spiritual space of the institutions. On the contrary, the point is to arrive at a "*mental ecology*"[2] which makes it possible for mediating intellectuals, like designers, to leave the beaten path, to organize their opposition and to articulate that in the mediated display. This is only possible by adopting a radically different position with respect to the production relationships – by exposing the variety of interests and disciplinary edifices in the message, commented on and held together by the mediator's "*plane of consistency.*"[3]

1
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 163-170.

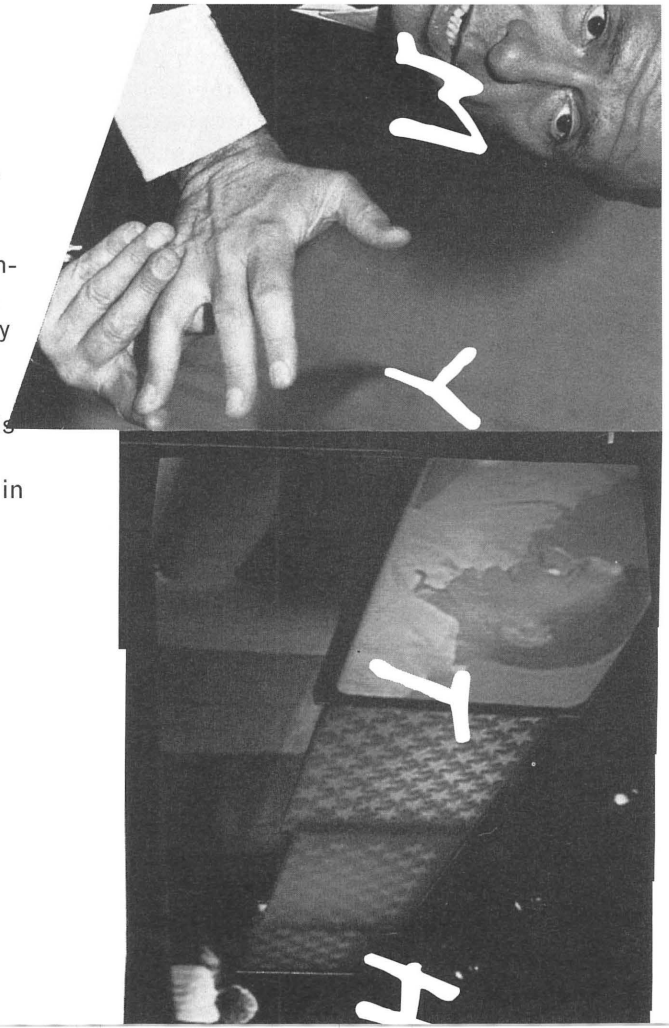
2
Guattari, Félix. 1993. "Postmodernism & Ethical Abdications," in *Profile,* 39. Australia Council for the Arts, 11-13.

3
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus.* Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 506-508.

Make a map, not a tracing.... What distinguishes the map from the racing is that it is entirely oriented towards an experimentation in ontact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious losed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connec- ons between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without rgans, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of onsistency.... The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification.
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1980

For me, as a filmmaker, admitting that you are stammering, that you are half blind, that you can rea
– Jean-Luc Godard, 1975

but not write, is,
in our everyday framewor
to respond more honestly
to this famous question
of communication.



SILVIO BERLUSCONI

There are two positions in the mass media. The first says that if something works, it is correct.... This idea is the enemy of our concept. On the other hand, you have a principle of authenticity. Enlightened narration accepts authenticity. I do not continually try to make general concepts that control the individual; rather I let something retain its own genuineness.... There follows from this a number of organizational principles.... In the structuring of a particular work, that is, in aesthetic method.
- Alexander Kluge, 1986/1987

Opportunities for renewed engagement must be sought in initiatives creating new public polarities, according to Félix Guattari, in "*untying the bonds of language*" and "*[opening] up new social, analytical and aesthetic practices*."[4] This will only come about within the context of a political approach which, unlike the dominant neo-liberal form of capitalism, is directed at real social problems. If we are to break through the existing communicative order, this "*outside thought*"[5] should also reverberate in the way in which designers interpret the theme and program of the client. In other words, the designer must take on an oppositional stance, implying a departure from the circle of common sense cultural representation. This is an important notion, because the point is no longer to question whether the message is true, but whether it works as an argument – one which manifests itself more or less explicitly in the message, in relation to the conditions under which it was produced and under which it is disseminated.

Such activity is based on a multidimensional, complementary way of thinking with an essentially different attitude to viewers and readers. It imposes a complementary structure on the work as well, an assemblage which is expressed both in content and in form. The essence of this approach, however, is that through the critical orientation of its products, the reflexive mentality raises questions among the public which stimulate a more active way of dealing with reality. In this manner it may contribute to a process which allows us to formulate our own needs, interest and desires, and resist the fascination with the endless fragmented and aesthetized varieties created by the corporate culture of commerce, state, media and "attendant" disciplines.

4
Guattari, Félix. 1993. "Postmodernisme & Ethical Abdications," in *Profile*, 39. Australia Council for the Arts, 11-13.

5
Michel Foucault.

Not surprisingly, institutions and galleries are often resistant to products which question generally held opinions and tastes.... But the peculiar dialectics of consciousness, ... and given the relative lack of uniformity of interests within the culture industry and among its consumers, nevertheless promote the surfacing of such critical works.... With this modicum of openness, wherever suitable, the [galleries'] promotional resources should be used without hesitation for a critique of the dominant system of beliefs while employing the very mechanisms of that system.
– Hans Haacke, 1977

The more it becomes clear that architecture is a total impossibility today, the more exciting I find it. I have a great aversion to architecture in the classical sense, but now that this kind of architecture has become entirely impossible, I am excited to involve myself in it again .... It is indeed schizophrenic. Our work is a battle against architecture in the form of architecture. – Rem Koolhaas, 1994

he should not look at cultural archetypes as timeless essences, but as e result of concrete social and economic relations. The specious illu- ons of harmony and unity in the bourgeois notion of culture should be stroyed first to expose what it is in reality: a heap of rubbish of stereo- pes and cliches, fragments that have piled against ruins.
– Walter Benjamin

Antagonism

remains concentrated in the products and services o media-cultural combines. That control can be challenged and lessened only by political means. Theories that ignore the structure and locus of representational and definitional power and emphasize instead the individual's message transformational capability present little threat to the maintenance of the established order.

– Herbert Schiller, 1989

1980

The challenge for anti-illusionist fictions is
ow to respect the fabulating impulse, how
o revel in the joys of storytelling and the
elights of artifice, while maintaining a
ertain intellectual distance from the story.
The subversive pleasure generated by a
Cervantes, a Brecht, or a Godard consists in
elling stories while comically undermining
heir authority. The enemy to do away with,
fter all, is not fiction but socially generated
llusion; not stories but alienated dreams.
– Robert Stam, 1992

Goal is to raise a critical attitude, raise ques-
ions about reality, curiosity.

Despite the symbolically indeterminable nature of culture, communicative design, as reflexive practice, must be realistic in its social ambitions. In the midst of a multiplicity of factors too numerous to take stock of, all of which influence the product, the aim is to arrive at a working method which produces commentaries, rather than confirming self-referential fictions. Design will have to get used to viewing substance, program and style as ideological constructions, as expressions of restricted choices which only show a small sliver of reality in mediation. The inevitable consequence is that the formulation of messages continues to refer to thefundamental uneasiness between symbolic infinity and the real world.
This mentality demands a major investment in practical discourse in those fields and situations where experience and insight can be acquired through work. This is important not only because it is necessary to struggle against design in the form of design, echoing Rem Koolhaas's statement about architecture,[6] but also because partners are required with the same operational options. It is furthermore of public interest to acquaint a wider audience with forms of communication contributing to more independent and radical democratic shaping of opinion.

Moving from a reproductive order to a commentating one, operative criticism can make use of a long reflexive practice. All cultures have communicative forms of fiction which refer to their own fictitiousness in resistance to the established symbolic order. "*To this end,*" Robert Stam writes, "*they deploy myriad strategies - narrative discontinuities, authorial intrusions, essayistic digressions, stylistic virtuosities. They share a playful, parodic and disruptive relation to established norms and conventions. They demystify fictions, and our naive faith in fictions, and make of this demystification a source for new fictions!*"[7] This behavior alone constitutes a continuous "ecological" process for qualitative survival in social and natural reality.

6
Koolhaas, Rem. 1994. "De ontplooiing van de architectuur," in *De Architect*, 25. The Hague: Ten Haagen en Stam, 16-25.

7
Stam, Robert. 1992. *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean Luc Godard.* New York: Columbia University Press, xi.

Survival in fact is about the connections between things; in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the "*other echoes [that] inhabit the garden.*" It is more rewarding – and more difficult – to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapunctually, about others than only about "us."
– Edward Said, 1993

Stuart McKee

Simulated Histories

Activism is the partisan performance of dissent, shaped and imposed for ideological distraction. Demonstrations have become one of the primary means with which cultural groups who lack political access gain public status. The success of any demonstration depends upon a group's ability to represent its struggle and reinforce its identity in the process. "Simulated Histories" examines the ways in which visual language politically promotes cultural identity, particularly the demands of overcoming an "ahistorical" identity.

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Milk comes in cartons, and cows are so strange an animal that hunters from large cities kill a substantial number every year on their annual hunting orgies. This despite the fact that in many areas farmers paint the word COW on the side of their animals to identify them.

Vine Deloria; *We Talk, You Listen*

By the time the last Native Americans were removed from their occupation of Alcatraz Island in June of 1971, they had made it seem like history. Reactivating a Sioux treaty from 1868 that entitled them to unused federal lands, they had initially claimed the site of the former federal prison "by right of discovery" nineteen months earlier.[1] Their intention was to establish a Native American cultural center, for which they offered the United States Government "$24 in glass beads and red cloth."[2] In commemoration of their first six months on the island, they proclaimed May 31, 1970 as "Declaration Day," and prepared a statement that they prominently displayed on a bearskin stretched across a large timber frame. Swelling at one point to more than six hundred residents, they shared a historically familiar way of life. Visual and verbal descriptions in the national media emphasized tribal clothing, a Thanksgiving celebration and peace pipe ceremonies. *The New York Times* published a photograph displaying a tepee set dramatically against the Golden Gate Bridge.[3] The group hoisted a flag up the island lighthouse that depicted their symbolic identity: "a broken peace pipe and a crimson tepee emblazoned on a field of azure."[4] Their original proclamation contains a passage summing up the visual significance of the event: "It would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation."[5]

Alcatraz was the first in a succession of demonstrations that have been heralded as the beginning of a new era of Native American history. The drama of capturing the prison, though it eventually faded from public prominence as daily life settled in, demonstrated that history can be reconstructed from an "ahistorical" past.

1
"Indian Group Stakes a Claim to Alcatraz," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1969, 49.

2
"New Flag Over Alcatraz," *Time*, January 5, 1970, 20.

3
The New York Times, February 22, 1970, 75.

4
"New Flag Over Alcatraz," 20.

5
The Council on Interracial Books for Children. 1979. *Chronicles of American Indian Protest*. New York: The Council on Interracial Books for Children, 311.

Vine Deloria, Jr., Sioux and former executive director of the National Congress of the American Indian, offers an insider's perspective in his sharply phrased *Custer Died for Your Sins,* published in 1969:

> *Because people can see right through us, it becomes impossible to tell truth from fiction or fact from mythology. Experts paint us as they would like us to be. Often we paint ourselves as we wish we were or as we might have been...To be Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical.*[6]

The transparent identity to which he alludes is the result of a history of federal attempts to dissolve the Native American way of life. An infamous example is the Dawes Act, which in 1887 institutionalized a policy known as "allotment," the removal of tribal lands from native jurisdiction and their redistribution, in modest parcels, to individual Native Americans; whatever remained was then offered to white settlers.

More recently, when Dillon S. Meyer was confirmed in 1950 as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "termination" became federal policy. The "Termination Act" was intended to bring Native Americans greater independence by scheduling their tribes for elimination, and thus accelerating the process of an "inevitable" assimilation by relocating Native Americans into non-tribal society. The policy was only partly successful, and termination became a primary impetus for Native Americans to consolidate themselves into the political pressure organizations that they began in the 1950s. "The best characterization of tribes," Deloria writes, "is that they stubbornly hold on to what they feel is important to them and discard what they feel is irrelevant to their current needs. Traditions die hard and innovation comes hard."[7]

Tradition is the pervasive pattern of thought and behavior that is the foundation of cultural identity. It is the evidence of an experience that transcends the individual, reaching back to indiscernible origins. Ahistorical by nature, traditions are cultural memories that cannot be used to index a particular past. By infusing the occupation at Alcatraz with their visual

6
Deloria, Jr.; Vine. 1969. *Custer Died for Your Sins.* New York: The McMillan Company, 2–3.

7
Deloria. *Custer Died for Your Sins,* 16.

tradition, the activists ensured themselves public legitimacy by lucidly recapturing the aura of popular history. As Michel de Certeau has written:

> *Even if ethnology has partially relieved history of this task of establishing a staging of the other in present time—the reason why these two disciplines have been in intimate rapport—the past is first of all a means of representing a difference.*[8]

8
de Certeau, Michel. 1988. *The Writing of History.* New York: Columbia University Press, 85.

Activism is the means with which politically disenfranchised groups advance into the public spotlight to press a claim for political reform. To demonstrate, as the word suggests, is to offer an alternative model of reality. The activist's goal is to stage a predicament with such force and authority that it receives enough publicity to affect the historical record. Demonstrations, marches, occupations and riots have all been history-making processes. For Native Americans, the dominant history reads as a chronicle of events, attitudes, prejudices and fabrications that attempt to undermine their identity. History is the literature of cultural validation, and only the engaged researcher or well-read citizen will be able to decipher what is history from what is myth. The visual language of Native American traditions, as represented by attributes that are easily recognizable to most Americans, becomes witting historical testimony to the "origin"-ality of their culture.

Whether by performance or publication, the mass-mediation of dissent is as important for attracting converts, sympathizers and like-minded ideologues as it is for increasing public awareness. No matter how alternative its articulation of society, activism is a communicative act, and the planners of a protest must make many of the same considerations as the publicist or professional communicator. Both political activists and graphic designers, for example, take advantage of the rhetorical strength of organization, recognize and target a specific audience, operate with the intention of eliciting a prescribed reaction and create and manipulate potentially striking visuals. The television and the newspaper, with their capacity to create headlines, become the complicit partners, especially for groups who lack the finances, professional resources or audience to publish their own record. Historians

are likely to rely on the mass media when researching any event that has occurred within the public realm, or that preoccupies the majority interest. As the historian Norman H. Pearson has observed, the press is valid "[i]f for no other reason than that a newspaper represents what the public knows about any event."[9] The media thus largely controls whether a demonstration will remain an isolated incident or become a spectacle played to a worldwide audience.

Of all the visual considerations the activist must promote, the most crucial is the legibility of the group's identity. The public must be able to associate an event with a particular political pressure group, and thus must be able to perceive some degree of "difference" about them, whether real or contrived. Activism compels a shifting scheme of social imagery; initially that which the pressure group engenders, and subsequently that with which society characteristically responds. A sociologically-motivated design process is set into motion, in which the visual equation of identity reveals the power of text and image to influence the historical record.

9
Taft, William H. 1970. *Newspapers as Tools for Historians.* Columbia: Lucas Brothers Publishers, 38.

10
"Indians in Capital Defy a Court Order," *The New York Times,* November 4, 1972: 42.

11
"Eviction of Indians by U.S. Delayed by Appeals Court," *The New York Times,* November 7, 1972: 36.

It is the way of power to surround itself with an array of things to be believed and admired, credenda and miranda. No power could stand if it relied upon violence alone, for force is not strong enough to maintain itself against the accidents of rivalry and discontent.

Charles Merriam, *The Miranda of Power*

In October of 1972, hundreds of Native Americans organized a caravan and headed for Washington, D.C. to emphasize their status as the "forgotten original Americans."[10] What began as their appeal to negotiate an agreement with officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) eventually escalated into a declaration of war on the United States.[11] Organized by the activist American Indian Movement (AIM), the caravan was named the "Trail of Broken Treaties." Members from a variety of Native American nations had planned their arrival by car, bus and station wagon to coincide with the attention-getting week that preceded the election of President Richard

Nixon to his second term of office. Though the participants had arranged meetings with administration officials in advance, upon arrival the officials refused to negotiate. Government guards attempted to clear the frustrated itinerants from the building, and a spontaneous rebellion began that led to the takeover of the BIA headquarters. Various accounts in the media relayed that 400 to 800 participants barricaded themselves inside the building for seven days, butting the doors with furniture, breaking windows and collecting "at least two truckloads of 'highly incriminating evidence'"[12] on Indian affairs against present and former members of Congress. In the words of AIM spokesman Dennis Banks: "We have destroyed the BIA."[13]

The legible factor of the takeover was the "occupation." Familiar to the then militaristic mood in American society, the reclamation of territory historicized the incident by conjuring up past injustices against Native Americans. The taking of the Bureau, which at the time had veto power over all Native American affairs, symbolized the taking back of the right to self-government. Both text and imagery played a significant part in the drama. A large banner was raised above the building entrance that retitled the site the "American Indian Embassy."[14] A photograph captured another verbal reclamation, a condemnation painted in dripping letters across an interior office wall. It read:

> *They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it.*[15]

Whatever doubt remained as to the participants' identity was erased by copious references to traditional culture. Armed Native American guards patrolled the front of the building, and a tepee was erected on the Constitution Avenue lawn of the Bureau grounds.[16] The occupants, who reportedly had no guns, fractured office furniture to make clubs,[17] and lashed knives to the ends of some to fashion spears.[18] They reportedly appeared in the windows wearing lipstick smeared across their faces in the manner of warpaint.[19]

12 "Indians Take Documents as They Leave," *The New York Times,* November 9, 1972, 52.

13 "Indians Take Documents...," 52.

14 Prucha, Francis Paul. 1985. *The Indians in American Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 82.

15 "Indians' Status Unchanged: Very Bad," *The New York Times,* June 27, 1976, 3:3.

16 "Eviction of Indians by U.S. Delayed by Appeals Court," *The New York Times,* November 7, 1972, 36

17 "500 Indians Seize U.S. Building After Scuffle With Capital Police," *The New York Times,* November 3, 1972, 78.

18 "Eviction of Indians by U.S. Delayed by Appeals Court," 36.

19 "Eviction...,"36.

But culturally loaded symbols rarely work their magic quietly; myths simultaneously emerge and diverge. Within one appears the legendary "first" American, reinforcing the most reliable of nationalistic motivations: "to invoke a historic past stretching into prehistory so as to legitimate claims they make on behalf of 'their' people."[20] Within another is marshalled the defense, the "primitive," "savage" or "helpless" *stereotype,* in which tradition is re-materialized into a form of cultural insult, proof that the "Other" is more than skin-deep in difference.

The visual cues of a stereotype straddle conflicting histories. By turning tradition against culture, the motive to typecast is a strategy in which threatened political interests fabricate an image of opposition for their own advantage, cleansing the mirror to reveal a clearer image of themselves. Stereotypes are among the offenses that activists must undermine as quickly as possible to wrestle their image from ideological control. The AIM has voiced specific complaints against the depiction of the Native American in the American film industry. They have pointed out that American motion pictures place Native Americans into fabricated family structures; that they ignore Native American accomplishments, history and intelligence; and that they characterize them as poor fighters or drunks who speak in insulting mannerisms.[21]

The mass media, in another example, perpetuates the myth that Native Americans are economically dependent on the non-Native American system. The contemporary American success story places its male protagonist in the global symbol of the three-piece suit, a guise which has been ill-suited to Native American tradition. Modernism, indeed, has its traditions. American corporate tradition requires that an individual must conform to its mercantile mannerisms if he or she is to be regarded as economically viable. A story from *The New York Times* illustrates the influence of material characteristics on an image, upholding the myth that tradition and economic progressiveness do not mix. The article describes Peter McDonald, then chairman of the Navajo Nation, as:

20
Griffin, Roger. "Nationalism," in *Contemporary Political Ideologies,* Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright. editors. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, 147.

21
Hartman, Hedy. 1976. "A Brief Review of the Native American in American Cinema," *The Indian Historian,* 9: 3, 27.

> *The man who has offered himself as the hope of the Indian future. He drives a Lincoln Continental, favors pin-striped suits, and when indicted for embezzlement in 1977 hired F. Lee Bailey to plead his case... The most important icon in his office in Window Rock, Ariz., is not a tribal artifact, but a softball-sized lump of coal on a brass stand.*[22]

When one cultural group controls the image of another, it gains the ability to use it to reinforce its own identity. That proud incidence of Colonial American activism, the Boston Tea Party, derives much of its remarkable character from the appropriation of Native American culture. When a group of colonial patriots disguised "in the Indian Manner"[23] raided three ships that were docked in Boston Harbor in December of 1773, and dumped 340 chests of tea from their cargo into the harbor waters, they insured themselves historical legibility. The historian Benjamin Woods Labaree has described that the colonists were only "[r]oughly disguised as Indians, in most cases with no more than a dab of paint and with an old blanket wrapped around them...others had dabbed soot or dirt on their faces to conceal their identities."[24] Reputedly, no one knows exactly why the colonists adopted the masquerade.[25] It was crucial that the message sent back to England contain reports of unmistakably fabricated identities, as the event would probably not have received such a festive name had the identity of the raiding party been actual Native Americans. The message sent to future Americans was one of the speed with which the representation of "difference" becomes politically strategic.

Contemporary Native American activists have focused much of their energy against the appropriation of their names and images to predicate the otherwise nondescript identities of our "nationalized" athletic teams, including the Atlanta Braves, the Washington Redskins, the Kansas City Chiefs and the Cleveland Indians. Corporate America knows too well the consequences of changing consumer traditions. Crowds of several hundred demonstrators have rallied at stadiums in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta to protest the derogatory connotations within the iconography, as well as the ritual

22
"Struggling for Power and Identity," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1979, 22.

23
Greene, Lawrence. 1938. *America Goes to Press: Headlines of the Past.* New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 18.

24
Labaree, Benjamin Woods. 1964. *The Boston Tea Party.* New York: Oxford University Press, 143.

25
Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party, 143.*

practices of donning warpaint and feathers[26] (by Redskins fans) and the performance of the "tomahawk chop"[27] (by Braves fans). One of the marchers, Dr. James Riding In, a historian and Pawnee national, stressed the significance of history when he was quoted at the scene: "It is to show that we are not just savages captured in the distant past and not to be made a mockery of."[28]

Radical factions frequently strive to reclaim the imagery that has been turned against them. Like other separatist "power" movements that gained strength in the 1960s and 1970s, the Red Power Movement asserted their affinity with the pejorative myth to render it useless. The Red Power insignia, as it was printed on the tactical paraphernalia of the United Native Americans, presented the Native American as a "warrior," outfitted in tribal clothing and mounted upon a horse, spear in hand; tensely poised beside such statements as "Indians discovered America" and "Custer had it coming." As long as any government politically favors certain cultures, the visual game of identity negotiation is not likely to disappear.

Another disturbance in 1969 aroused a group whose identity seemed to materialize from thin air. "Hundreds of young men went on a rampage in Greenwich Village" began *The New York Times* account published on June 29 of the event that has come to be known as the "Stonewall Rebellion."[29] Early in the morning on June 28, a group of plainclothes policemen raided the Stonewall Inn, a watering hole for New York City's gay and lesbian community, with the intention of arresting patrons and seizing alcohol that was being served without a liquor license. It had been the third raid in the neighborhood within a one-month period, but the clientele did not take it passively this time around. Breaking away from officers and out of a police van, the Stonewall's patrons began to heave "bricks, bottles, garbage, pennies and a parking meter"[30] at their captors, and in the 45-minute "melee" that ensued, the protesting crowd, which grew from 200 to 400 participants, overturned cars and set trash cans on fire. Similar-sized crowds gathered to vent their anger on at least two other evenings within the following week; blocking the street, chanting their disapproval

26
"Indignant Indians Seeking Changes," *The New York Times,* January 26, 1992, 14.

27
"Native Americans Protest Chops, Fonda Complies," *The Washington Post,* October 20, 1991, D5

28
"Indignant Indians Seeking Changes," 14.

29
"4 Policemen Hurt in Village Raid," *The New York Times,* June 29, 1969, 33.

30
"4 Policemen..." 33.

and reading aloud condemnations of their mistreatment. Graffiti appeared on the Stonewall's boarded-up windows verbally capturing the burgeoning solidarity: "Support Gay Power."[31]

Before the incident at the Stonewall Inn, the overwhelming public image of the homosexual was pathological. *Time* magazine ran an article four months after the rebellion that typified the gay and lesbian community's status as outcasts. Homosexuals, it reported:

> *Are one of the nation's most despised and harassed minority groups. A poll taken for CBS-TV not long ago revealed that two out of three Americans look on homosexuals with disgust, discomfort, or fear, and one out of ten regards them with outright hatred. A majority considers homosexuality more dangerous to society than abortion, adultery, or prostitution.*[32]

The politically paranoid McCarthy era was particularly intolerant of gay and lesbian citizens. Historian John D'Emilio writes of the period: "The full (United States) Senate bowed to mounting pressure and authorized an investigation into the alleged employment of homosexuals 'and other moral perverts' in government," and adds that subsequent actions pursued by the government included firings, anti-gay reports, military purges, rampant suspicion and workplace scrutiny.[33] The fear that their identity might be publicly disclosed cloistered the gay and lesbian image far from the historical mainstream. Gay and lesbian Americans were an invisible minority, passing as "straight" in order to assimilate economically. No gay or lesbian public leader, figurehead or role-model was available to set an example. Censorship preserved a cultural record that was homosexually sterile, as exemplified, once again, by the motion picture industry, whose 1934 code prohibited any representation of "gayness" in American films. Gays and lesbians were extensionally "non-sensical" entities, without social distinction, without political delegation, without a tradition. Consequently, gay and lesbian identity was overwhelmingly ahistorical. A majority of Americans could neither accurately identify or imagine a non-stereotypical homosexual.

31
"Police Again Rout 'Village' Youths," *The New York Times,* June 30, 1969, 22.

32
"Coming to Terms," *Time,* October 24, 1969, 82.

33
d'Emilio, John. 1983. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 42.

Stonewall accelerated the historical process of activating the homosexual image in America.

Like the Native Americans, and like any culture that has a history of exclusion, gay and lesbian activists have favored the "occupation" as a demonstration tactic. The places that they occupy are the places of the collective memory that have denied them recognition. Contesting the national myth that homosexuals are socially corrupt, various gay and lesbian groups have chained themselves to the White House fence,[34] interrupted the programming of the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*[35] and attempted a stand-off inside the U.S. Supreme Court Building to contest discriminatory sodomy laws. With what means did their identity become legible? *The Los Angeles Times* reported that when the 600 activists at the Supreme Court demonstration "stepped forward" to be arrested in 1987, fellow demonstrators were "waving banners," and wearing T-shirts that demanded "Legalize my Love," all the while accompanied by chants of "Hey, hey, ho, ho, homophobia has got to go."[36]

Language has characterized protest in many forms, with visible language especially prominent since the legalization of picketing in 1938.[37] Portable placards are the most democratic, as well as the most public, form of graphic expression. Signs offer demonstrators an unrestricted form of self-publishing, a blow to ideological censors. Contemporary demonstrations gain much of their legibility from the distinctive manner in which signs visually replicate a protester's voice, as Norman Cantor's account of a typical turn-of-the-century English suffragette attests:

> *In the years after 1906 no government minister was secure from the harassment of these shameless militants. If he stood for a by-election, his speeches to the electorate were certain to be disrupted by at least one piercing female voice clamoring for an explanation of why women had no votes. Such interruptions could not be ignored. The lady would more than likely unfurl a huge banner to add a visual dimension to her demand.*[38]

34
Cunningham, Michael. 1992. "If you're queer and you're not angry in 1992, you're not paying attention," *Mother Jones,* May/June 1992, 63.

35
Ibid., 62-63.

36
"600 Gay Rights Activists Arrested in Capital Protests," *The Los Angeles Times,* October 14, 1987, 1:16.

37
Barbrook, Alec and Christine Bolt. 1980. *Power and Politics in American Life.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 138.

38
Cantor, Norman F. 1969. *The Age of Protest: Dissent and Rebellion in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 6.

The collective presence of a crowd of sign-carrying marchers has the visual advantage of defining group size, giving shape to their shifting mass and distinguishing them in the eyes of their spectators, who perceive a sudden, if only momentary, upset in the balance of power.

Much of what the press characterized as the "new gay militancy" during the "Gay Power" era of the early 1970s was nothing more radical than the rhetoric of the picket. Picketing was controversial during the "homophile" era of the 1950s, when the first organized gay and lesbian political groups emerged, and the issue of identity was much more tentative. Shirley Willer, one of the founders of the early lesbian group Daughters of Bilitis, felt that picketing presented a degree of extremism that contradicted what was then the primary political motivation: assimilation. As reported by historian Toby Marotta, Willer observed that:

> *Demonstrations which define the homosexual as a unique minority defeat the very cause for which the homosexual strives*—to be an integral part of society. *The homosexual must show that he is in fact, not a unique social problem.*[39]

Merely the presence of individuals unafraid of the repercussions of publicly proclaiming their homosexual identity in those days had, as it still has today, remarkable legibility. Examples within the media accounts of most protests cite a sign or graphic statement which is meant to mark the bearer as a homosexual: "Fag;"[40] "I am a lesbian;"[41] "We are wife and wife;"[42] "The Lord is my Shepherd and He knows I'm gay;"[43] and "I deserve the right to die in combat."[44]

In 1993, twenty-nine demonstrators from the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project attended a mass at St. James Cathedral in Brooklyn to protest what they called the "hypocrisy" of Bishop Thomas V. Dailey, who wrote in a pastoral letter "that homosexuality was 'ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil.'" As Bishop Dailey delivered his sermon, members of the group stood up two by two displaying their anger as well as their identity via statements painted across the fronts and backs of their shirts; a sample of which read: "I encounter anti-queer violence every day."[45]

39
Marotta, Toby. 1981. *The Politics of Homosexuality.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 51.

40
The Washington Post, April 26, 1993, A8.

41
"Thousands of Homosexuals Hold a Protest Rally in Central Park," *The New York Times,* June 29, 1970, 20.

42
The New York Times Magazine, October 11, 1992, 20.

43
"Thousands Hold March to Back Homosexuals," *The New York Times,* June 25, 1984, B3.

44
"Gay Rights Activists Stage Another Round of Protests," *The Washington Post,* April 27, 1993, D3.

45
"Homosexuals Turn Mass into Silent Protest of Pastoral Letter," *The New York Times,* August 30, 1993, B4

It is not surprising, given the closeted nature of the gay and lesbian past, that labels of "gay"ness, "lesbian"ness, and more recently "queer"ness have practically become mandatory. The function of labeling is to mark the presence of something that cannot otherwise be ascertained, such as ownership, prescription or content. With so limited a tradition from which to work, labeling has become the dominant strategy of cultural recognition for gay and lesbian activists. The need for distinction is not unique to their group. The technological and social equalization of individuals in modern society has eliminated, for many cultural groups, evidence of a connection to something that anticipates contemporary life. Thomas K. Fitzgerald has identified that these "post-traditional" cultures are in part the result of the "global" audience that international media conglomerates view as a homogenous community with similar needs.[46] Feeling that their sense of identity has been compromised, such groups adopt a process of *ethnogenesis* to develop a scheme for cultural distinction. Ethnogenesis attempts to create what nationalists aim to preserve: a tacit sense of history and patriotism that ideologically binds citizens to each other and to their past. Demonstrators typically eschew such quiet reform; militant activity is more likely to become historicized.

Print is a powerful mechanism for gay and lesbian nationalism as well as militancy. True ideological saturation of the community has come about largely through the development and dissemination of a homosexual vernacular.[47] As demonstrators have brought this message onto the streets, design has become as strategic a component as any that they employ. A diverse array of commodities including t-shirts, hats, flags, ribbons, pins and earrings have been popularized as markers that bear group names, slogans or gay and lesbian symbology including: the rainbow motif, the lambda character, the pink triangle and the cross-over red ribbon that marks AIDS political sympathizers. Seven men from the Washington, D.C. area presented themselves wearing "Boy Scout paraphernalia as well as tags that said 'fag' or 'queer' and pins from their gay rights groups" when they publicly submitted applications to become scout leaders to the National Capital Area Council of

46
Fitzgerald, Thomas. 1993. *Metaphors of Identity.* Albany: State University of New York Press. For a discussion of the influence of electronic media on cultural identity, see Meyrowitz, Joshua. 1986. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior.* New York: Oxford University Press.

47
See, for example: Thistlethwaite, Polly. 1990. "Representation, Liberation, and the Queer Press," in *Democracy/A Project by Group Material,* Brian Wallis, editor. Seattle: Bay Press, 207.

the Boy Scouts of America, according to *The Washington Post.*[48] Non-verbal forms have served as environmental markers, as when protesters draped the California State Capital building with a rainbow banner during a multi-day siege on Sacramento to protest Governor Pete Wilson's veto of employment discrimination protection in 1991.[49] Organizers for the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion have planned to unfurl the largest homosexual marker to date as part of their "International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Gay and Lesbian People." If all goes according to plan, on June 26, 1994, 10,000 participants will carry a rainbow flag measuring thirty feet wide by one mile long along their New York City demonstration route.[50]

The activist group Queer Nation has demonstrated the degree to which "graphic" ethnogenesis has come to identify gay and lesbian activists. In Alameda County, California in 1992, residents of a street named "Gay Court" began a petition that would change the name to "High Eagle Road," to avoid the stigma that it attached to their exclusive neighborhood. Queer Nation members designed special membership cards and mounted a "welcome wagon" campaign. Carrying banners and speaking into bullhorns, they introduced themselves to the Gay Court residents door by door and offered them their sympathy, as well as group membership, for being victims of homophobia. While moving from house to house, they "stickered" the street with their identity, consisting of "from ten to fifteen" different stickers featuring statements such as "What causes homosexuality?" and "Fag Power."[51]

The demonstration placards that represent many gay and lesbian political organizations have gone through a similar evolution, some acquiring a finesse that contradicts the tradition of dissent. Americans have learned to shop wisely for the "well-designed" package, be it a supermarket staple or a candidate for public office. Cognizance of the values of graphic distinction, composition and high standards of production have increased significantly. Design in activism strengthens the power of appearances and the authority of the pressure group's voice. A radical message with mainstream

48
"Gay Men Protest Scouts' Ban," *The Washington Post,* February 25, 1992, C3.

49
"Gays: Protest in Sacramento Draws Thousands," *The Los Angeles Times,* October 12, 1991, A32.

50
"Mile-long rainbow flag to raise over $500,00 for AIDS," *Island Lifestyle,* May 1994, 21.

51
Interview conducted by the author with Jonathan Katz; April, 1994.

appeal is more likely to garner public respect. The replication of a visual system into a campaign of coordinated multiples creates a sense of cultural pervasiveness, mimicking the "timeless" quality of an established tradition. Typographic design simulates a history of belonging, a grain that Roland Barthes perceived in all mythologies: "A clarity which is not that of explanation but that of a statement of fact."[52]

It is with this same ethnogenesis that designers construct the identities of corporate America. Typographic expression has a remarkable range of discrete codes that can function as cultural "tokens," offering limitless potential for identification. The appeal for standardization in corporate design is the appeal to create both a difference and a tradition. When established businesses revise their visual images, they attempt to erase an "outdated" tradition and replace it with another, pervasive and complete, that seems to mesh better with the current historical drift. Graphic design is a process of creating cultural myths that index other visual histories.

Hurriedly digging during the early morning hours, a group of forty Crow, Arapaho, Cheyenne and Sioux nationals cemented a historical marker to a prominent patch of ground within the Custer Battlefield National Monument. Created in memory of the 112th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, the black steel plaque, approximately one square yard in size, read:

> *In honor of our Indian patriots who fought and defeated the U.S. calvary [sic]. In order to save our women and children from mass-murder. In doing so, preserving rights to our Homelands, Treaties, and Sovereignty. 6/25/1988.*[53]

The plaque was placed directly beside the official United States memorial to General George Armstrong Custer, a twelve-foot tall pillar inscribed with the names of the 200 cavalrymen who died as a result of the battle. AIM spokesman Russel Means reported that three previous park superintendents had promised to seriously consider Native American proposals to install a monument at the site, to no avail. Means observed that the soldiers whose deaths were commemorated

52
Barthes, Roland. 1972. *Mythologies.* New York: The Noonday Press, 143.

53
"Activists' Plaque at Little Bighorn Honors 'Patriots' Who Beat Custer," *The Los Angeles Times,* July 4, 1988, 24.

on the pillar "[c]ame to kill our women and children. Can you imagine a monument listing the names of the S.S., of Nazi officers, erected in Jerusalem?"[54] Park Superintendent Dennis Ditmanson offered: "The Park Service has no objection to a monument for the Indians who fought here, but it is incumbent on them to first design something that is appropriate."[55]

Appropriate in this case did not mean appropriation. The Native Americans who planted their history beside the "official" presentation recognized that political and social coding influences the public's perception of text. Idiomatic language marks its users with distinctive socioeconomic identities, the study of which is known as *sociolinguistics*.[56] The *visual* presentation of language is just as idiomatically conditioned, creating tones of voice that either "speak to" or do not "speak to" specific audiences. Typographic standards and methods of production, gauged by varying degrees of crudeness, economy or sophistication, accumulate values that mark the maker's or user's identity with cultural "status." One does not have to refer far back into the past to be reminded that an individual's ability to use visual language has always earned him or her some degree of political privilege. As Celia Lury has observed: "Writing is a specialized technique wholly dependent on specific training, for both producers and receivers. It is only in the last 150 years or so that people in any society have had access to this technique (of formal learning)."[57] The way in which a cultural group uses graphic design, a highly specialized form of the practice of writing, or whether they choose to use it at all reveals much about their knowledge of the cultural influence of visual language. Any group that has not yet established a place for itself within the popular design histories may nevertheless be somewhere out on the streets, shaping an identity.

54
"Activists' Plague...", 24.

55
"Activists' Plague...", 24.

56
See Hymes, Dell. 1974. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

57
Lury, Celia. 1993. *Cultural Rights: Technology, Legality and Personality.* London and New York: Routledge, 102.


DER SPIEGEL

Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller

Deconstruction and Graphic Design: History Meets Theory

"Deconstruction" is a mode of criticism described by the philosopher Jacques Derrida in his book *Of Grammatology*, translated into English in 1976. The term had a broad cultural impact in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s, spreading from departments of literature to the fields of architecture, graphic design and fashion. Our essay considers the relevance of deconstruction to the theory and practice of typography. The first section discusses deconstruction in relation to the recent history of design, showing how the term gained currency among graphic designers and eventually became the label for a new style. We then look at the place of typographic form within Derrida's own theory, finding that the link between graphic design and deconstruction is far from arbitrary, but constitutes a central issue in his work. We end the essay by proposing the compilation of a history of typography and writing informed by deconstruction; such a history, running counter to the narrative of modern rationalization, would reveal a range of structures that dramatize the intrusion of visual form into verbal content, the invasion of "ideas" by graphic marks, gaps and differences.

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Visible Language, 28:4
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Since the surfacing of the term "deconstruction" in design journalism in the mid-1980s, the word has served to label architecture, graphic design, products and fashion featuring chopped up, layered and fragmented forms imbued with ambiguous futuristic overtones. This essay looks at the reception and use of deconstruction in the recent history of graphic design, where it has become the tag for yet another period style. We then consider the place of graphics *within* the theory of deconstruction, initiated in the work of philosopher Jacques Derrida. We argue that deconstruction is not a style or "attitude" but rather a mode of questioning through and about the technologies, formal devices, social institutions and founding metaphors of representation. Deconstruction belongs to both history and theory. It is embedded in recent visual and academic culture, but it describes a strategy of critical form-making which is performed across a range of artifacts and practices, both historical and contemporary.

Jacques Derrida introduced the concept of "deconstruction" in his book *Of Grammatology*, published in France in 1967 and translated into English in 1976.[1] "Deconstruction" became a banner for the advance guard in American literary studies in the 1970s and 1980s, scandalizing departments of English, French and comparative literature. Deconstruction rejected the project of modern criticism: to uncover the meaning of a literary work by studying the way its form and content communicate essential humanistic messages. Deconstruction, like critical strategies based on Marxism, feminism, semiotics and anthropology, focuses not on the themes and imagery of its objects but rather on the linguistic and institutional systems that frame the production of texts.[2]

In Derrida's theory, deconstruction asks how representation inhabits reality. How does the *external image* of things get *inside* their internal essence? How does the *surface* get under the skin? Western culture since Plato, Derrida argues, has been governed by such oppositions as reality/representation, inside/outside, original/copy and mind/body. The intellectual achievements of the West — its science, art, philosophy, literature — have

1
Jacques Derrida introduced the theory of deconstruction in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 1976. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. See especially Chapter 2, "Linguistics and Grammatology," 27-73.

2
Jonathan Culler explores the impact of deconstruction on literary criticism in his book *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. 1982. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

valued one side of these pairs over the other, allying one side with truth and the other with falsehood. For example, the Judeo-Christian tradition has conceived the body as an external shell for the inner soul, elevating the mind as the sacred source of thought and spirit, while denigrating the body as mere mechanics. In the realm of aesthetics, the original work of art traditionally has carried an aura of authenticity that its copy lacks, and the telling of a story or the taking of a photograph is viewed as a passive record of events.

"Deconstruction" takes apart such oppositions by showing how the devalued, empty concept lives inside the valued, positive one. The outside inhabits the inside. Consider, for example, the opposition between nature and culture. The idea of "nature" depends on the idea of "culture," and yet culture is part of nature. It's a fantasy to conceive of the non-human environment as a pristine, innocent setting fenced off and protected from the products of human endeavor — cities, roads, farms, landfills. The fact that we have produced a concept of "nature" in opposition to "culture" is a symptom of our alienation from the ecological systems that civilization depletes and transforms.

A crucial opposition for deconstruction is speech/writing. The Western philosophical tradition has denigrated writing as an inferior copy of the spoken word. *Speech* draws on interior consciousness, but writing is dead and abstract. The written word loses its connection to the inner self. Language is set adrift, untethered from the speaking subject. In the process of embodying language, writing steals its soul. Deconstruction views writing as an active rather than passive form of representation. Writing is not merely a bad copy, a faulty transcription, of the spoken word; writing, in fact, invades thought and speech, transforming the sacred realms of memory, knowledge and spirit. Any memory system is a form of writing, since it records thought for the purpose of future transmissions.

The speech/writing opposition can be mapped onto a series of ideologically loaded pairs that are constitutive of modern Western culture:

Speech	Writing
natural	artificial
spontaneous	constructed
original	copy
interior to the mind	exterior to the mind
requires no equipment	requires equipment
intuitive	learned
present subject	absent subject

Derrida's critique of the speech/writing opposition locates the concerns of deconstruction in the field of graphic design. We will return to the speech/writing problem in more detail later. First, we will look at the life of deconstruction in recent design culture.

The design history of deconstruction

Deconstruction belongs to the broader critical field known as "post-structuralism," whose key figures include Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard and others. Each of these writers has looked at modes of representation — from literature and photography to the design of schools and prisons — as powerful technologies which build and remake the social world. Deconstruction's attack on the neutrality of signs is also at work in the consumer mythologies of Barthes, the institutional archaeologies of Foucault and the simulationist aesthetics of Baudrillard.[3]

The idea that cultural forms help to fabricate such seemingly "natural" categories as race, sexuality, poetic genius and aesthetic value had profound relevance to visual artists in the 1980s. Post-structuralism provided a critical avenue into "post-modernism," posing a left-leaning alternative to the period's nostalgic returns to figurative painting and neo-classical architecture. While Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman and Victor

3
Post-structuralist texts widely read by students of art and design include: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers. 1972. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. 1979. New York: Random House; and Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin. 1981. St. Louis: Telos Press.

Burgin attacked media myths through their visual work, books such as Hal Foster's *The Anti-Aesthetic* and Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* delivered post-structuralist theory to students in an accessible form.[4]

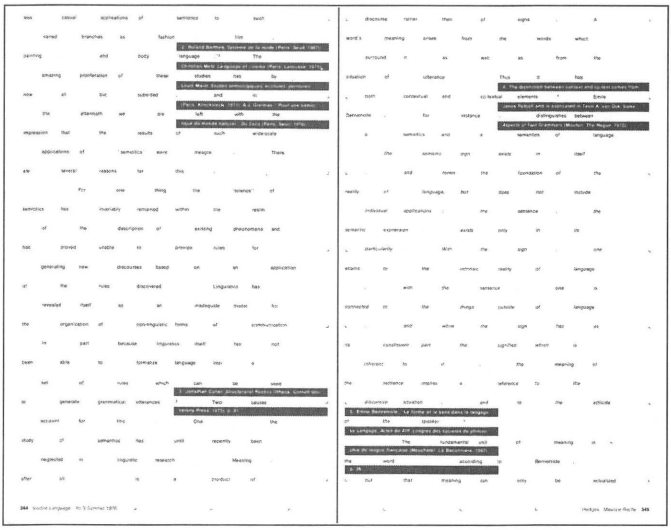


Figure 1

Graphic designers in many American art programs were exposed to critical theory through the fields of photography, performance and installation art during the early 1980s. The most widely publicized intersection of post-structuralism and graphic design occurred at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, under the leadership of co-chair Katherine McCoy.[5] Designers at Cranbrook had first confronted literary criticism when they designed a special issue of *Visible Language* on contemporary French literary aesthetics, published in the summer of 1978[6] *(figure 1)*. Daniel Libeskind, head of Cranbrook's architecture program at that time, provided the graphic designers with a seminar in literary theory, which prepared them to develop their strategy: to systematically disintegrate the series of essays by expanding the spaces between lines and words and pushing the footnotes into the space normally reserved for the main text. *French Currents of the Letter*, which outraged designers committed to the established ideologies of problem-solving and direct communication, remains a controversial landmark

4
Books which helped popularize post-structuralism in schools of art and design include Hal Foster, editor. 1983. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture.* Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press and Terry Eagleton. 1983. *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

5
Graphic design produced at Cranbrook between 1980 and 1989 is documented in *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse.* 1990. New York: Rizzoli, with essays by Katherine and Michael McCoy, Lorraine Wild and others. Wild discusses the ▶

in experimental graphic design. According to Katherine McCoy, post-structuralist texts entered more general discussions at Cranbrook around 1983. She has credited Jeffery Keedy, a student at the school from 1983-85, with introducing fellow course members to books by Barthes and others.[7] The classes of 1985/87 and 1986/88 also took an active interest in critical theory; students at this time included Andrew Blauvelt, Brad Collins, Edward Fella, David Frej and Allen Hori. Close interaction with the photography department, under the leadership of Carl Toth, further promoted dialogue about post-structuralism and visual practice.[8]

Post-structuralism did not serve as a unified methodology at the school, however, even in the period of its strongest currency, but was part of an eclectic gathering of ideas. According to Keedy, students at Cranbrook when he was there were looking at everything from alchemical mysticism to the "proportion voodoo" of the golden section.[9] McCoy recalled in a 1991 interview:

> *"Theory had become part of the intellectual culture in art and photography. We were never trying to apply specific texts — it was more of a general filtration process. The term 'deconstructivist' drives me crazy. Post-structuralism is an attitude, not a style."*[10]

But what is the difference between "style" and "attitude"? If "style" is a grammar of form-making associated with a particular historical and cultural situation, then perhaps "attitude" is the inarticulate, just out-of-focus background for the specificities of style.

The response to post-structuralism at Cranbrook was largely optimistic, side-stepping the profound pessimism and political critique that permeates post-structuralism's major works. McCoy used the architectural theory of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown as a "stepping stone" to post-structuralism, enabling her to merge the Pop aestheticization of the American commercial vernacular with post-structuralism's critique of "fixed meaning."[11] McCoy's preference for celebration over criticism is echoed in Keedy's comment: "It was the

French Currents of the Letter project in her essay. See also Katherine McCoy, "American Graphic Design Expression," in *The Evolution of American Typography*, Mildred Friedman, ed., *Design Quarterly* 148, 4-22.

6
French Currents of the Letter includes essays on the use of typography in the theory of deconstruction and in other post-structuralist writings. See Andrew J. McKenna, "Biblioclasm: Derrida and his Precursors," *Visible Language* 12:3, 289-304.

7
Kathy McCoy, interview with Ellen Lupton, February 1991.

8
Communication with Andrew Blauvelt, June 1994.

9
Jeffery Keedy, interview with Ellen Lupton, February 1991.

10
Interview with Ellen Lupton, February 1991.

11
Learning from Las Vegas, by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour. 1972. Cambridge: MIT Press, had been an important text at Cranbrook since the mid-1970s.

poetic aspect of Barthes which attracted me, not the Marxist analysis. After all, we're designers working in a consumer society, and while Marxism is interesting as an idea, I wouldn't want to put it into practice."[12]

Post-structuralism's emphasis on the openness of meaning has been incorporated by many designers into a romantic theory of self-expression: as the argument goes, because signification is not fixed in material forms, designers and readers share in the spontaneous creation of meaning. This approach represents a rather cheerful response to the post-structuralist theme of the "death of the author" and the assertion that the interior self is constructed by external technologies of representation. According to the writings of Barthes and Foucault, for example, the citizen/artist/producer is not the imperious master of systems of language, media, education, custom and so forth; instead, the individual operates within the limited grid of possibilities these codes make available. Rather than view meaning as a matter of private interpretation, post-structuralist theory tends to see the realm of the "personal" as structured by external signs. Invention and revolution come from tactical aggressions against this grid of possibilities.

"Deconstructivism" catapulted into the mainstream design press with MoMA's 1988 exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture*, curated by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley.[13] The curators used the term "deconstructivism" to link certain contemporary architectural practices to Russian constructivism, whose early years were marked by an imperfect vision of form and technology. The MoMA exhibition located a similarly skewed interpretation of modernism in the work of Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind, Peter Eisenman and others. Wigley wrote in his catalogue essay:

> *A deconstructive architect is...not one who dismantles buildings, but one who locates the inherent dilemmas within buildings. The deconstructive architect puts the pure forms of the architectural tradition on the couch and identifies the symptoms of a repressed impurity. The impurity is drawn to the surface by a combination of gentle coaxing and violent torture: the form is interrogated.*[(11)]

12
Interview with Ellen Lupton, February 1991; quoted in Ellen Lupton, "The Academy of Deconstructed Design," *Eye* 3, 44-52.

13
Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley brought deconstruction into the mainstream of design journalism with their exhibition and catalogue *Deconstructivist Architecture*. 1988. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

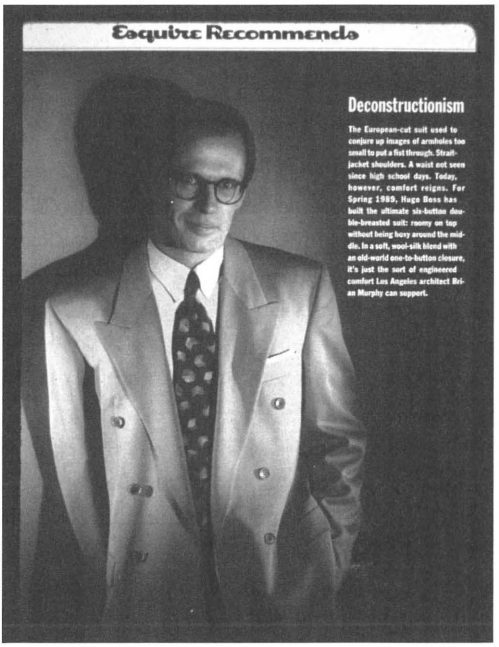


Figure 2

In Wigley's view, deconstruction in architecture asks questions about modernism by re-examining its own language, materials and processes.

By framing their exhibition around a new "ism," Wigley and Johnson helped to canonize the elements of a period style, marked by twisted geometries, centerless plans and shards of glass and metal. This cluster of stylistic features quickly emigrated from architecture to graphic design, just as the icons and colors of neo-classical post-modernism had traveled there shortly before. While a more critical approach to deconstruction had been routed to graphic designers through the fields of photography and the fine arts, architecture provided a ready-to-use formal vocabulary that could be broadly adopted. "Deconstruction," "deconstructivism" and just plain "decon" became design-world clichés, where they named existing tendencies and catalyzed new ones in the fields of furniture and fashion design *(figure 2)* as well as graphic design.[14]

14
Michael Collins and Andreas Papadakis include a chapter on "Deconstruction, Deconstructivism, and Late-Modernism" in their book *Post-Modern Design.* 1989 New York: Rizzoli, 179-95, a survey of furniture, jewelry, and other decorative arts.

In 1990 Philip Meggs published a how-to guide for would-be deconstructivists in the magazine *Step-by-Step Graphics*. His essay, which includes a journalistic account of how the term "deconstruction" entered the field of graphic design, focuses on style and works back to theory. Following the logic of the MoMA project, his story begins with constructivism and ends with its "deconstruction" in contemporary design; unlike Wigley, however, Meggs's story depicts early modernism as a purely rational enterprise.[15]

Chuck Byrne and Martha Witte's more analytical piece for *Print* (1990) describes deconstruction as a "zeitgeist," a philosophical germ circulating in contemporary culture that influences graphic designers even though they might not know it. Their view corresponds roughly to McCoy's sense of post-structuralism as a general "attitude" or "filtration process" responding to the "intellectual culture" of the time. Byrne and Witte's article identifies examples of deconstruction across the ideological map of contemporary design, ranging from the work of Paula Scher and Stephen Doyle to Lucille Tenazas and Lorraine Wild.

Today, in the mid-'90s, the term "deconstruction" is used casually to label any work that favors complexity over simplicity and dramatizes the formal possibilities of digital production — the term is commonly used to invoke a generic allegiance with "Cranbrook" or "CalArts," a gesture which reduces both schools to flat symbols by blanketing a variety of distinct practices. Our view of deconstruction in graphic design is at once narrower and broader in its scope than the view evolving from the current discourse. Rather than look at deconstruction as a historical style or period, we see deconstruction as a critical activity — an act of questioning. The visual resources of typography help demarcate Derrida's ideological map of the biases governing Western art and philosophy. Having looked at deconstruction's life in recent design culture, we will now locate design within the theory of deconstruction.

15
Essays on deconstruction and graphic design include Philip Meggs, "De-constructing Typography," *Step-by-Step Graphics* 6, 178-181; and Chuck Byrne and Martha Witte, "A Brave New World: Understanding Deconstruction," *Print* XLIV, 80-87.

Design in Deconstruction

Derrida's critique of the speech/writing opposition developed out of his reading of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, a foundational text for modern linguistics, semiotics and anthropology.[16] Saussure asserted that the meaning of signs does not reside in the signs themselves: there is no natural bond between the signifier, the sign's material aspect, and the signified, its referent, *(figure 3)*. Instead, the meaning of a sign comes only from its relationship to other signs in a system. This principle is the basis of structuralism, an approach to language which focuses on the patterns or structures that generate meaning rather than on the "content" of a given code or custom.

16
Ferdinand de Saussure founded structural linguistics with the lectures compiled in *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin. 1959. New York: McGraw-Hill. See especially "Graphic Representation of Language," 23-32; and "General Principles," 65-100. For a discussion of Saussure's relevance to structuralism and critical theory, see Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure* . 1976. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

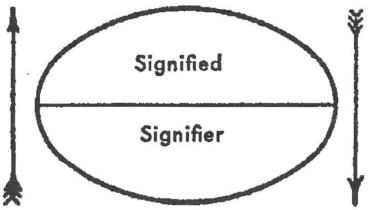
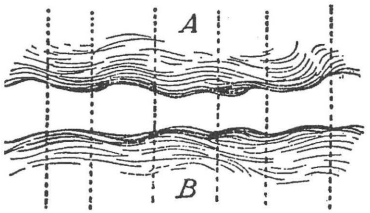


Figure 3

Figure 4



Saussure revealed that because the sign has no inherent meaning, it is, taken by itself, empty, void, absent. The sign has no life apart from the system or "structure" of language. Saussure revealed that language is not a transparent window onto pre-existing concepts, but that language actively forms the realm of ideas. The base, material body of the signifier is not a secondary copy of the elevated, lofty realm of concepts: *both* are formless masses before the articulating work of language

has sliced it into distinct pieces *(figure 4)*. Instead of thinking of language as a code for passively representing "thoughts," Saussure showed that "thoughts" take shape out of the material body of language.

Derrida's *Of Grammatology* points out that although Saussure was willing to reveal the emptiness at the heart of language, he became infuriated when he saw the same principle at work in *writing*, the system of signs created to represent speech. Saussure's text views writing as a copy of speech, an artificial technology for reproducing language. While the alphabet claims to be a phonetic transcription of spoken sounds, codes such as written English are full of irrational spellings: for example, words that sound the same but are spelled differently (*meet/meat*), and letter combinations with unexpected pronunciations (*th-, sh-, -ght*). The tone of Saussure's critique escalates from mild irritation at the beginning of his presentation to impassioned condemnation of the alphabet's violation of an innocent, natural speech: "writing obscures language; it is not a guise for language but a disguise." The "tyranny of writing" distorts its pristine referent through "orthographic monstrosities" and "phonic deformations" (30-2).

Saussure specifically concerned himself with phonetic writing, the paradigmatic medium of Western culture, which translates the diverse sounds of a language into a set of repeatable graphic marks. He explicitly excluded pictographic and ideographic scripts from his attack on writing; Chinese ideograms have fewer "annoying consequences" than the alphabet, because their users clearly understand their role as secondary signs for spoken words (26). The power (and seductiveness) of phonetic writing lies in its economy: a small number of characters can represent an ever-expanding quantity of words. Unlike pictographic or ideographic scripts, phonetic writing represents the *signifier* of language (its material sound) rather than the *signified* (its conceptual meaning or "idea"). Whereas an ideogram represents the concept of a word, phonetic characters merely represent its sounds. The alphabet thus embraces the arbitrariness of the sign by considering the signifier independently of its meaning.

As an intellectual technology, alphabetic writing can be compared to photography: it is an automatic record of the *surface* of language. The alphabet cleaved language into an inside and an outside: the destiny of phonetic writing is to occupy the outside, to be a mechanical copy of the signifier, leaving intact a sacred interior. The belief in the interiority, the fullness, of speech depends on the existence of an exterior, empty representation — the alphabet. Similarly, the notion of "nature," as an ideal realm separate from human production, emerged as "civilization" was despoiling the broader ecological systems in which culture participates. To "deconstruct" the relationship between speech and writing is to reverse the status of the two terms, but not just to replace one with the other, but rather to show that speech was always already characterized by the same failure to transparently reflect reality. There is no innocent speech.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida asserted that an intellectual culture (or *episteme*) built on the opposition between reality and representation has, in fact, depended on representations to construct itself:

> *External/internal, image/reality, representation/presence, such is the old grid to which is given the task of outlining the domain of a science. And of what science? Of a science that can no longer answer to the classical concept of the* episteme *because the originality of its field — an originality that it inaugurates — is that the opening of the 'image' within it appears as the condition of 'reality,' a relationship that can no longer be thought within the simple difference and the uncompromising exteriority of 'image' and 'reality,' of 'outside' and 'inside,' of 'appearance' and 'essence' (33).*

The fact that our culture developed a phonetic writing system, which represents the material *signifier* in isolation from the sacred *signified*, is indicative of our primary alienation from the spoken language. Phonetic writing, because it makes use of the gap between signifier and signified, is not simply a secondary reflection of language, but is a symptom of language's lack of presence, its lack of interior self-completeness.

Derrida's final attack on the notion of writing as a secondary copy of speech is to make the claim that "phonetic writing does not exist."(39) Not only does writing inhabit speech, transforming its grammar and sound, and not only does phonetic writing exist as language's "own other," an "outside" manufactured to affirm its own complete "insidedness," but this model of the "outside" continually fails to behave in the manner expected of it. Thus where Saussure had claimed that there are only two kinds of writing — phonetic and ideographic — Derrida found the frontiers between them to fluctuate.

Phonetic writing is full of non-phonetic elements and functions. Some signs used in conjunction with the alphabet are ideographic, including numbers and mathematical symbols. Other graphic marks cannot be called signs at all, because they do not represent distinct "signifieds" or concepts: for example, punctuation, flourishes, deletions and patterns of difference such as roman/italic and uppercase/lowercase. What "idea" does the space between two words or a dingbat at the end of a line represent? Key among these marks, which Derrida has called "graphemes," are various forms of spacing — negative gaps between the positive symbols of the alphabet. Spacing cannot be dismissed as a "simple accessory" of writing: "That a speech supposedly alive can lend itself to spacing in its own writing is what relates to its own death."(39) The alphabet has come to rely on silent graphic servants such as spacing and punctuation, which, like the frame of a picture, seem safely "outside" the proper content and internal structure of a work and yet are necessary conditions for making and reading.

Derrida's book *The Truth in Painting* unfolds the logic of framing as a crucial component of works of art.[17] In the Enlightenment aesthetics of Kant, which form the basis for modern art theory and criticism, the frame of a picture belongs to a class of elements called *parerga*, meaning "about the work," or outside/around the work. Kant's *parerga* include the columns on buildings, the draperies on statues and the frames on pictures. A frame is an ornamental appendix to a work of art, whose "quasi-detachment" serves not only to hide but also to reveal the emptiness at the core of the

17
Derrida presents a theory of the frame in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod. 1987. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

seemingly self-complete object of aesthetic pleasure. In Derrida's words:

> *...the* parergon *is a form that has, as its traditional determination, not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy. The frame is in no way a background...but neither is its thickness as margin a figure. Or at least it is a figure which comes away of its own accord.* [61]

Like the non-phonetic supplements to the alphabet, the borders around pictures or texts occupy an ambiguous place between figure and ground, positive element and negative gap.

Spacing and punctuation, borders and frames: these are the territory of graphic design and typography, those marginal arts which articulate the conditions that make texts and images readable. The substance of typography lies not in the alphabet *per se* — the generic forms of characters and their conventionalized uses — but rather in the visual framework and specific graphic forms which materialize the system of writing. Design and typography work at the *edges* of writing, determining the shape and style of letters, the spaces between them and their positions on the page. Typography, from its position in the margins of communication, has moved writing away from speech.

Design as deconstruction

The history of typography and writing could be written as the development of formal structures which have articulated and explored the border between the inside and the outside of the text. To compile a catalogue of the micro-mechanics of publishing — indexes and title pages, captions and colophons, folios and footnotes, leading and line lengths, margins and marginalia, spacing and punctuation — would contribute to the field which Derrida has called *grammatology*, or the study of writing as a distinctive mode of representation. This word, *grammatology*, serves to title the book whose more infamous legacy is deconstruction.

Such a history could position various typographic techniques in relation to the split between form and content, inside and outside. Some typographic conventions have served to rationalize the delivery of information by erecting transparent "crystal goblets" around a seemingly independent, neutral body of "content." Some structures or approaches invade the sacred interior so deeply as to turn the text inside out, while others deliberately ignore or contradict the internal organization of a text in response to external pressures imposed by technology, aesthetics, corporate interests, social propriety, production conveniences, etc.

Robin Kinross's *Modern Typography* (1992) charts the progressive rationalization of the forms and uses of letters across several centuries of European history. Kinross's book characterizes printing as a prototypically "modern" process, that from its inception mobilized techniques of mass production and precipitated the mature arts and sciences. The seeds of modernization were present in Gutenberg's first proofs; their fruits are born in the self-conscious methodologies, professionalized practices and standardized visual forms of printers and typographers, which, beginning in the late seventeenth century, replaced an older notion of printing as a hermetic art of "black magic," its methods jealously guarded by a caste of craftsmen.[18]

If Kinross's history of modern typography spans five centuries, so too might another history of deconstruction, running alongside and beneath the erection of transparent formal structures and coherent bodies of professional knowledge. Derrida's own writing has drawn on forms of page layout from outside the accepted conventions of university publishing. His book *Glas*, designed with Richard Eckersley at the University of Nebraska Press, consists of parallel texts set in different typefaces and written in heterogeneous voices. *Glas* makes the scholarly annotations of medieval manuscripts and the accidental juxtapositions of modern newspapers part of a deliberate authorial strategy.[19]

A study of typography and writing informed by deconstruction would reveal a range of structures which dramatize the intrusion

18
Robin Kinross presents a theory of modernism in his book *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History.* 1992. London: Hyphen Press.

19
Derrida has experimented with typography in his own writing. See *Glas,* trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand. 1986. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. See also "Tympan," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass. 1982. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, x-xxix.

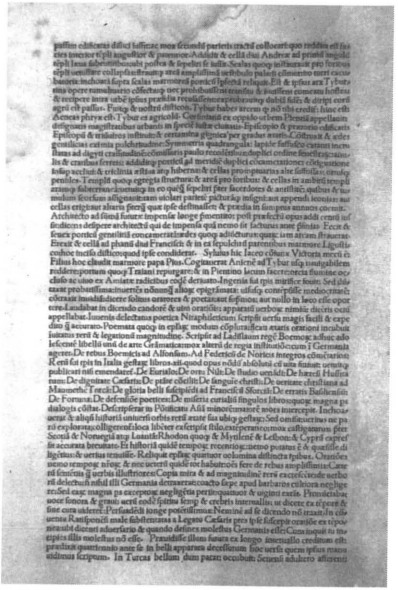


Figure 5

Figure 6

of visual form into verbal content, the invasion of "ideas" by graphic marks, gaps and differences. Figures 5 and 6, pages of late fifteenth-century book typography, represent two different attitudes towards framing the text. In the first, the margins are a transparent border for the solid block dominating the page. The lines of classical roman characters are minimally interrupted — paragraph breaks are indicated only by a wider gap within the line, preserving the text as a continuously flowing field of letters *(figure 5)*. The second example draws on the tradition of scribal marginalia and biblical commentary *(figure 6)*. Here, typography is an interpretive medium; the text is open rather than closed. The first example suggests that the frontiers between interior and exterior, figure and ground, reader and writer, are securely defined, while the second example dramatizes such divides by engulfing the center with the edge.

Another comparison comes from the history of the newspaper, which emerged as an elite literary medium in the seventeenth century. Early English newspapers based their structure on the classical book, whose consistently formatted text block was designed to be read from beginning to end. As the newspaper became a popular medium in nineteenth-century Europe and America, it expanded from a book-scaled signature to a broadsheet incorporating diverse elements, from reports of war and crime to announcements of ship departures and ads for goods and services. The modern illustrated newspaper of the twentieth century is a patchwork of competing elements, whose juxtaposition responds not to rational hierarchies of content but to the struggle between editorial, advertising and production interests.[20] While the structure of the classical news journal aspired to the status of a coherent, complete object, the appearance of the popular paper results from frantic compromises and arbitrary conditions; typographic design serves to distract and seduce as well as to clarify and explain.

Dictionaries of page design featuring schematic diagrams of typical layouts have been a common theme in twentieth-century design. Such visual enactments of theory include Jan Tschichold's 1934 manifesto "The Placing of Type in a

20
On the history of the newspaper, see Allen Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper: Typographic Trends in Britain and America, 1622-1972*. 1973. London: Gordon Fraser.

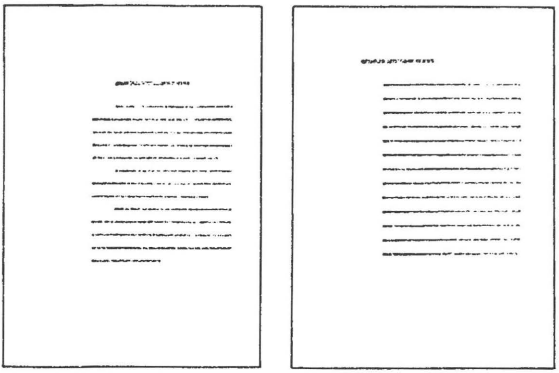


Figure 7

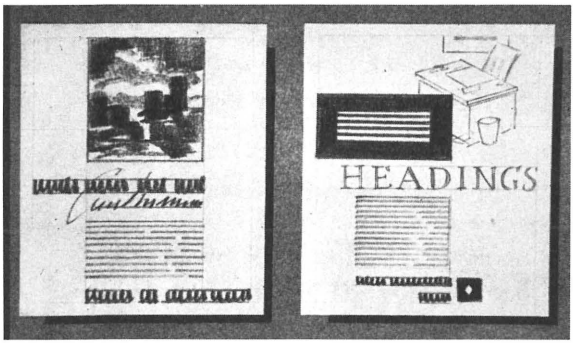


Figure 8

Given Space," *(figure 7)* which charts a range of subtle variations in the placement of headings and body copy, and Don May's 1942 manual *101 Roughs*, which catalogues various types of commercial page design.[21] While Tschichold charted minor differences between clearly ordered elements, May accommodated the diverse media and competing messages found in advertising. Both theorists presented a series of formal containers for abstract, unspecified bodies of "content," but with a difference: Tschichold's structures are neutral frames for dominant textual figures, while May's patterns are active grounds which ignore conventional hierarchies in favor of such arbitrary rules as "Four point: The layout touches all four sides of the space once and only once" *(figure 8)*, or "Center axis: The heading copy, illustration, and logotype flush on alternate sides of axis."

If one pursued the study of grammatology proposed by Derrida, the resulting catalogue of forms might include the

21 Taxonomies of the page include Jan Tschichold, "The Placing of Type in a Given Space," in *Jan Tschichold, typographer*, Ruari McClean, editor. 1975. Boston: D. R. Godine; and Don May, 1942. *101 Roughs*. Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Co.

graphic conditions outlined above. In each case, we have juxtaposed a coherent, seemingly self-complete literary artifact with a situation where external forces aggressively interfere with the sacred interior of content. A history of typography informed by deconstruction would show how graphic design has revealed, challenged or transformed the accepted rules of communication. Such interventions can represent either deliberate confrontations or haphazard encounters with the social, technological and aesthetic pressures that shape the making of texts.

In a 1994 interview in *The New York Times Magazine*, Derrida was asked about the purported "death" of deconstruction on North American campuses; he answered, "I think there is some element in deconstruction that belongs to the structure of history or events. It started before the academic phenomenon of deconstruction, and it will continue with other names."[22] In the spirit of this statement, we are interested in de-periodizing the relevance of deconstruction: instead of viewing it as an "ism" of the late-'80s and early-'90s, we see it as part of the ongoing development of design and typography as distinctive modes of representation. But deconstruction also belongs to culture: it is an operation that has taken a name and has spun a web of influence in particular social contexts. Deconstruction has lived in a variety of institutional worlds, from university literature departments to schools of art and design to the discourse of popular journalism, where it has functioned both as a critical activity and as a banner for a range of styles and attitudes. We will close our essay with two examples of graphic design that actively engage the language of contemporary media: the first confronts the politics of representation, while the second remakes design's internal language.

Vincent Gagliostro's cover for *NYQ (figure 9)*, a gay and lesbian news magazine, was designed in November of 1991, in response to Magic Johnson's announcement that he is HIV+. Gagliostro imposed *NYQ*'s own logo and headline over a *Newsweek* cover featuring Magic Johnson proclaiming "Even me," his upheld arms invoking saintly sacrifice and athletic vigor. "He is not *our* hero," wrote *NYQ* over the

22
Mitchell Stevens, "Jacques Derrida," *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, January 23, 1994, 22-5.

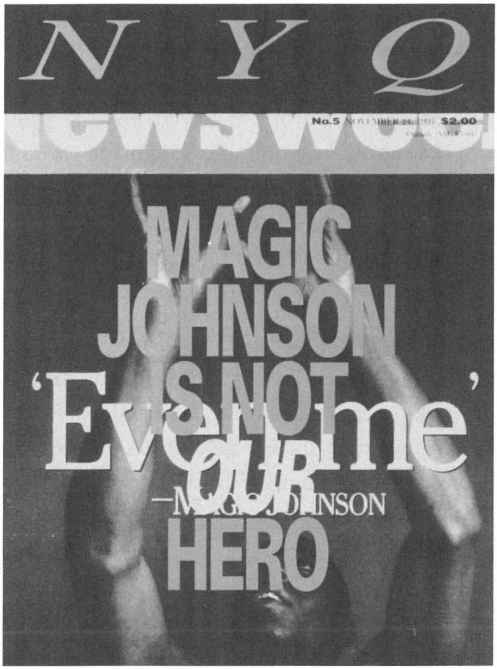


Figure 9

existing cover. While Gagliostro's layering and splicing of type and image are shared with more aestheticized, individualized gestures found elsewhere in contemporary design, this cover does not aim to trigger an infinite variety of "personal" interpretations but instead explicitly manipulates an ideologically loaded artifact. Gagliostro's act of cultural rewriting is a powerful response to the ubiquity of normative sign systems, showing that the structures of mass media can be reshuffled and reinhabited. The *NYQ* cover reveals and exploits the function of framing as a transformative process that refuses to remain outside the editorial content it encloses.

The manipulation of existing media imagery is one activity in contemporary design that can be described as deconstruction; another is the exploration of the visual grammar of communication, from print to the electronic interface. Designers working in hypermedia are developing new ways to generate, distribute and use information — they are reinventing the language of graphic design today, just as typographers reacted

to the changing technologies and social functions of printed media in the past. A leading pioneer of this research was Muriel Cooper, who founded the Visible Language Workshop at MIT in 1976. In the wake of her death in the spring of 1994, her students are continuing to build a concrete grammar of three-dimensional, dynamic typography. Cooper called the basic elements of this language "geometric primitives," defined by relationships of size, brightness, color, transparency and location in three-dimensional space, variables which can shift in response to the user's position in a document. Cooper and her students have worked to restructure the internal language of typography in four dimensions.

Spacing, framing, punctuation, type style, layout and other nonphonetic marks of difference constitute the material interface of writing. Traditional literary and linguistic research overlook such graphic structures, focusing instead on the Word as the center of communication. According to Derrida, the functions of repetition, quotation and fragmentation that characterize writing are conditions endemic to all human expression — even the seemingly spontaneous, self-present utterances of speech or the smooth, naturalistic surfaces of painting and photography.[23] Design can critically engage the mechanics of representation, exposing and revising its ideological biases; design also can remake the grammar of communication by discovering structures and patterns within the material media of visual and verbal writing.

23
Several recent writers have extended Derrida's theory of writing by addressing the technological conditions of texts. Friedrich Kittler has studied modern and romantic literature in terms of "discourse networks," defined by the systemic conditions of writing, from methods of pedagogy to the technologies of printing and the typewriter. See *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Meteer with Chris Cullens. 1990. Stanford: Stanford University Press. George Landow's book *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology.* 1992. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, describes electronic media as an embodiment of post-structuralist literary theory.

Martha Scotford

Messy History vs. Neat History: Toward an Expanded View of Women in Graphic Design

For the contributions of women in graphic design to be discovered and understood, their different experiences and roles within the patriarchal and capitalist framework they share with men, and their choices and experiences within a female framework, must be acknowledged and explored. Neat history is conventional history: a focus on the mainstream activities and work of individual, usually male, designers. Messy history seeks to discover, study and include the variety of alternative approaches and activities that are often part of women designers' professional lives.To start the expansion, a typology of roles played by women in graphic design is proposed for further research.

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In contemporary graphic design practice, women and men designers participate in the same business and institutional structures; previously they have been part of the same educational systems. However, the experiences for each group within these structures has been different, in large part due to gender and the way it has been socially constructed through identity, roles and expectations. In the past, such gendered experiences were even more divergent, as these began earlier in life and were more tradition-bound and pervasive in professional life. For the study of women and men in graphic design, remaining cognizant of the double truth that women and men in graphic design are the same and that women and men in graphic design are different will result in a more inclusive understanding of past and contemporary graphic design production.

The focus of this paper is on women graphic designers. I do not forget the other axes of race and class by which to study historical players. The problematic areas discussed will often be shared by designers of color and other marginalized designers of both genders; however, attempting to avoid the extremes of essentialism, may I suggest that the problems will more frequently be those of women in graphic design. The historiographical methods used to recover their participation and accomplishments will be beneficial to all previously unacknowledged designers.[1]

Cheryl Buckley has brought feminist theory and feminist history to design history, though she does not discuss graphic design history specifically.[2] Buckley allows that women have filled a variety of roles in design (practitioner, theorist, consumer, historian, object of representation), but asserts that each of these is circumscribed by patriarchy. Buckley discusses patriarchy within the capitalist economic system of industrialized societies. Her working definition of patriarchy comes from Griselda Pollock: "patriarchy does not refer to the static, oppressive domination of one sex over another, but a web of psycho-social relationships which institute a socially significant difference on the axis of sex, which is so deeply located in our very sense of lived, sexual identity that it appears to us as

1
Lasky, Julie. 1994. "The Search for Georg Olden." *Print*, XLVIII:2, 21-29, 126-129. See this, finally, for information about an African-American pioneer.

2
Buckley, Cheryl. 1986. "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design." *Design Issues*, 3:2, 3-14. This is one of the best feminist analyses so far of the problems of design history. Buckley is writing from the context of British design history which is more fully developed than in this country, and that uses a broader definition of design, which includes the decorative arts and crafts.

natural and unalterable."[3] This paper is an attempt to extend some of Buckley's ideas into graphic design history.

Buckley posits that the silence of history about women designers is a "direct consequence of specific historiographical methods. These methods, which involve the selection, classification and prioritization of types of design, categories of designers, distinct styles and movements, and different modes of production, are inherently biased against women and, in effect, serve to exclude them from history."[4] In her review of design literature she discovers that when women do make it into the literature they are too often limited by their association with products for women or by their association with male designers who are family members. In many ways, the case of women in design history parallels the discussion of Linda Nochlin on women artists in her article, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"[5]

Graphic design history has proceeded, for the most part, along well-established art historical lines. Canons of designers and design works have been established and accepted through publication and exhibition. The prevailing approach has concentrated on individuals and individual effort, institutions and business, the active client/reactive designer relationship, the synchronic analysis establishing stylistic "periods," and the diachronic presentation of innovation and influence. This approach is problematic for reasons of exclusion. While it purports to be the responsible application of established standards, it turns out to be arbitrary as well as unfair.[6]

The conventional graphic design history literature of the past decade has had a difficult time with women designers. Take, for example, the most widely distributed book, Philip Meggs' *A History of Graphic Design*, used as the textbook in most college courses.[7] First published in 1983 and substantially revised in 1992, the author still finds the inclusion of women graphic designers problematic. The first edition mentioned fifteen women and reproduced the work of nine; the second edition mentions thirty-one women designers, photographers and illustrators and reproduces the work of twenty-three, to

3
Buckley. "Made in Patriarchy." Quoted from Pollock, Griselda. 1982. "Vision, Voice and Power: Feminist Art History and Marxism," *Block*, 6.

4
Buckley, "Made in Patriarchy,"3.

5
Nochlin, Linda.1971. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Art and Sexual Politics*, Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker, editors. New York: Collier Books.

6
Lange, Martha Scotford. 1991. "Is There a Canon of Graphic Design?" *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, 9:2, 3-5, 13.

7
Meggs, Philip B. 1992 (2nd, Revised edition). *A History of Graphic Design*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

be compared with the discussion and work of hundreds of male designers. Meggs never addresses the issue of women designers (or designers of color) directly. In the index, the entry "women" directs the reader to four very brief discussions of women as representational subject matter. In his preface to the new edition, Meggs states the intent of the book is "to identify and document innovation in semantic and syntactic aspects of visual communications. The graphic designs of each period discussed have been investigated and assessed in an attempt to distinguish works and their creators that influenced the ongoing evolution of the discipline."[8] Meggs goes on to obliquely counteract criticism by preferring the bias of "pivotal individuals" to the bias of a more collective approach, though he claims to attempt to credit all collaborators when appropriate. In the end, "a line of descendancy toward contemporary graphic design in post-industrial culture was a primary determinant."[9] He also points out that reproduction criteria include practical limits of quality and availability. The pluralism of content and voice found in contemporary graphic design is not sufficiently described or assessed by this method. When, to be included in this history, work must "come from somewhere in history," the chances for inclusion of wholly new ideas and new players are few. And are the margins forever fixed? Even "pivotal" social changes like the women's movement are barely mentioned; there is no discussion of new imagery or of the influx of new "voices"of women designers into the profession.[10]

Feminist historians have argued against the primacy of individual agency in creativity. While the study of individual creativity is occasionally required and useful (there are pivotal women in design), and the loss of individual women to history is an example of patriarchy at work, much design is a collaborative and collective effort. It is this process, the dynamics and sets of relationships within and among design groups and between designer and client that needs to be more fully understood. Research on women in design has been focused on women as objects of representation[11] and on women as audience or consumers (in the broadest sense) of graphic

8
Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, ix.

9
Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, x.

10
The absence of women in the historical record has been addressed in the three most recent "Modernism and Eclecticism" symposia on graphic design history. Directed by Steven Heller and sponsored by The School of Visual Arts in New York, the symposia have been an annual event since 1988. Karrie Jacobs discussed "lost" women designers and Teal Triggs presented new information on Beatrice Warde. Oral history was served when Estelle Ellis discussed creating magazines for teen-age girls. There have been a few publications: McQuiston, Liz. 1988. *Women in Design*. New York: Rizzoli; Supon Design Group. 1993. *International Women in Design*. Washington, DC: SDG, International Book Division; and an exercise in "self-publishing" following the example of several male designers: Greiman, April. 1990. *Hybrid Imagery: The Fusion of Technology and Graphic Design*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications. In fairness, Meggs's second edition has increased the exposure of women designers' work by 250 percent.

▶

design artifacts;[12] to this should be added the breadth of the design activities in which women engage.

Neat history (conventional history) involves the simple packaging of one designer, explicit organizational context, one client, simple statements of intent, one design solution, a clearly defined audience, expected response (in other words, the old Shannon and Weaver communication model of sender, message, channel, receiver, no noise). For a long time such a model involved a white, male, middle-class designer working for a design studio or advertising agency with a client in government or private business requiring a visual message to be sent through one of several discrete and traditional (printed) formats to communicate with a mass audience assumed to resemble, or aspire to resemble, the designer and client. It was easy to answer the questions: Who? What? Why? From whom? For whom? This simplistic history has served the establishment (white, male, business, design and academic worlds) well.

Contrast this with messy history: designers who do not work alone but in changing collaborations; design works which are not produced for national or large institutions but for small enterprises or local causes; design works which are not produced in great numbers and may even be at the scale of a "cottage industry;" design works that may use cultural codes not part of mainstream culture; design work for small and specialized audiences; design work in forms more personal and expressive; design practices organized around family life and personal issues; design that turns its back on mainstream design, etc. I do not mean to suggest that this wholly or exclusively describes womens' design activity (much of which is mainstream), only that it describes alternative conditions, many of which are more true of women's practice and conditions than men's.

As one way to conceptualize the inclusion and significance of women in graphic design, I propose a typology of women's involvement. I will define some of these types, give some concrete examples and suggest some questions about them to encourage further study and discussion. Looking at women in

11
The scholarly work on the representation of women (primarily in advertising, some in general mass media) has been by authors with a variety of approaches. Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, uses a Marxist approach. Williamson, Judith. 1984. *Decoding Advertisements.* New York: Marion Boyars Publishers Inc., uses semiotics and post-structuralist theory. Goffman, Erving. 1976. *Gender Advertisements.* New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, employs a sociological approach to create a typology of position and gesture in images. Wald, Carol. 1975. *Myth America.* New York: Pantheon, studies the construction of feminine myths. Stein, Sally. 1989. "The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women's Magazine 1919-1939," in *The Contest of Meaning,* Richard Bolton, editor. Cambridge: MIT Press, analyzes and diagrams the structure of women's magazines in a longitudinal study. There are several useful methodologies here; and the books are historical documents themselves representing specific periods of design criticism.

12
The effects of design products (more industrial than graphic) on women in the domestic and professional ▶

graphic design by this method is one example of the effect of women's inclusion on graphic design history; the roles, in their diversity, reveal a more complex interaction with design activity on the part of women than was thought to exist when the (male) focus was on men designers. While there are roles that women and men both play, there are some that seem solely available to women. It must be noted that examples from past and contemporary practice are used to make these types more concrete, but do not in any way exhaust the pool of possible examples. I have chosen examples among better known designers, mostly American, mostly women. The examples range among historical periods; comparisons over time, studying the contextual variables that explain differences will be valuable. Whereas study of broad historiographical methods has prompted much of what I propose, often a specific individual and her particular place in American design history has suggested questions. Current practice and examples also raise issues. While it is a mistake of "presentism" to use the present to interpret the past, the present is a useful model for comparison with the past; through comparison the differences and similarities are discovered and questions raised.[13]

A Typology of Women in Graphic Design

The reconceptualization of historical study through the different and shifting alignments of groups of people has been of primary importance to the study of women in history. For women in design this suggests that while it is important to add individual names and achievements to the historical record, it is also critical to look at group characteristics and group dynamics. Because men, in their public/professional spheres, have defined most of the "roles" of graphic designer, it is necessary to study how women graphic designers have accepted, adapted or rejected these roles, and under what conditions. The study of women designers' experience shows that "design experience," as described by design literature and assumed to be universal, has actually been the male experience. Study of women shows that there is more than one experience. In studying women designers, it is important to

spheres has been studied, written about and exhibited by Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller (Lupton, Ellen and J. Abbott Miller. 1992. *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste.* Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center; and Lupton, Ellen. 1993. *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office.* New York: Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design).

13
Throughout all of this discussion, it is important to keep in mind that design is more than the physical presence of artifacts or the connection of people to those artifacts through making. Design is what comes before the artifact and what happens after the artifact is part of the cultural and social world. Design history must be where it is explained how and why each artifact exists and what difference the existence makes. Design history is also about design ideas that have no material presence; it is about design education; it is about audience and societal values. Historians have depended on physical evidence: artifacts from which to read, literally and figuratively, the texts that provide facts and allow understanding and interpretation. Especially privileged have been verbal/written texts and through them the cultures, groups and individuals they helped to explain.

▶

compare their experience with male designers' experience of the same period, as well as to understand the private and public roles available to women at each particular time.

Women Practitioners

Beliefs in women's capabilities have changed over time. The primary vocational route of graphic designers in the earlier days was from typesetting and printing, both highly skilled and mechanical trades. Other, lesser, routes were through sign painting (often itinerant) and the fine arts. Typesetting and printing skills were acquired by hard work through the ranks from apprencticeship. The patriarchal construction of roles for women did not allow them business or vocational training. Even more recently when women have had access to practical training (as well as formal education), they were kept out of the typesetting and printing trades because these are mechanical, dirty and physically strenuous and, therefore, "not suitable."[14] With desktop publishing making typesetting electronic and functionally opaque, and as clean and as easy as typing, women (as former typists) are filling the ranks. Are the skills once valued in male typographers equally valued in female computer typesetters? It may be significant that the professional title of "typographer" is no longer used and the general activity less respected because "anyone (read women) can do it."

Design and pre-press production have been partly reunited in the current practice but the distinction between them blurred. Design and pre-press production have experienced a changing relationship since Gutenberg. As design/production configurations change, are women more likely to be involved in roles of technical ("hand-skills") or conceptual ("head-skills") aspects of design? Study cannot continue to concentrate on only the dominant sites of production (i.e., those of the designers' idea-generation), but must investigate the full range of interrelated processes and services. The whole topic could be studied from Johannes and Frau Gutenberg to the husband and wife team at *Emigré*, Rudy VanderLans and Zuzana Licko.[15]

The methodology of collecting and validating historical evidence through oral history has developed, permitting the inclusion of peoples without traditions based in print, or of people not comfortable with written communication. People such as designers? Designers tend to be more visual than verbal; if verbal, more oral than written (though this is changing for the better). As a nod toward future historical work attempting to capture our past, we should be collecting and preserving oral histories about all aspects of designers and design activity, on video and audio tapes. Some exist in archives such as the Graphic Design Archive at Rochester Institute of Technology, while Anne Ghory-Goodman has been making video tapes of design educators. In a field of enlarging media, all resources should be employed for the archiving of information and materials. It would be refreshing, as well, if graphic design history could be based on more egalitarian records and types of distribution than those which currently must depend on publication (and, therefore, on markets and patriarchal power).

14
The past aside, even today one of the most frequently reported problems for women in graphic design is demeaning treatment by men representing the necessary technical support services.

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Earlier in the century, most graphic designers emerged from a background of fine art or training in the trades. Within the fine art route, men studied to become artists, while many women studied to be come "accomplished." Study would discover if these two routes coincide with different class origins. If the trades (except some forms of "commercial art" such as illustration) were not open to women, what were the routes into design for women? And what difference did class make for them?

15
Perhaps it is time to discover "Judith Gutenberg." You will remember the "sister" conceit, "Judith Shakespeare," in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own.*

Hierarchy, and its corollary of ghettoizing, exists among design sectors (publishing, advertising, corporate design, non-profits, government, institutions, etc.). Within the sectors women designers have been represented in changing proportions. Where were the "velvet ghettos" of the '30s, '40s, '50s? What is the meaning of the preponderence of women in publishing: books, magazines especially, fewer in newspapers? Research on the organizational structures of any of these sectors would discover where women were most likely to be found, during what historical time periods. What was their significance for design in these sectors? For example, there were many women who worked with Dr. Agha at Condé Nast. Cipe Pineles went on to art direct several influential magazines; what happened to the other women?

Ghettoizing in design can also be within the practice of design itself. Most design offices, of whatever size, have tended toward the corporate organizational model of pyramidal hierarchy, with power (ideas and money) concentrated at the narrow top. When women are owners or partners, has this been conceived differently? Recently there have been increasing reports of women-derived alternatives that are less structured, non-hierarchical and more collaborative. In business, some examples have described more open and cooperative production groups in factories. In design, female principles are less supervisory and more collaborative, giving equal credit to associates for design projects. As interaction with staff can be alternatively defined, so can that with clients. Reports from both sides of the interaction indicate that women designers are more likely to work with clients toward a solution, rather

than decreeing a solution as their male counterparts do. This distinction shows up in studies of other design disciplines, such as architecture and industrial design.

Questions about the organization of the workplace and the division of labor in graphic design must be more probing. In addition to studying the presence of women in mainstream design practice, and understanding their roles as influenced by patriarchy's sexual division of labor, where else are women active? Women, or any marginalized group, will fill in the empty spaces in a labor market. For example, "artists books" sit in an overlapping area between graphic design and fine art. This is an area of varied production methods and approaches, largely dismissed by professional graphic design. It is also a marginal area inhabited by many women, including Frances Butler and Judy Anderson. Is "marginal" work a strategic choice or a default position? As a choice it may be interpreted as a mode of resistance to the demands and definitions of mainstream graphic design practice. To include these book arts in graphic design, the definition must be enlarged since acceptable methods of reproduction cannot be solely those of mass production. Access to mass production is another limitation imposed by patriarchy.

For graphic design, professional organizations developed out of trade organizations. Have women benefitted from the support of professional organizations? For a long time women were not welcome in the trades nor were they acknowledged by the organizations. The New York Art Directors Club only admitted its first woman member, Cipe Pineles, to its Hall of Fame in 1975. Leadership positions in these organizations were held by men until recently; jurors for competitions were all male, and professional awards of merit were seldom bestowed upon women. What has been the impact on professional organizations of the increasing presence of women in graphic design? Slowly, in the last decade, women are becoming officers, jurors and award winners. They are writing increasingly for professional publications. Less often they are speakers for and to the profession.[16]

16
See reports on AIGA Miami 1993 conference that complained of sexist behavior and presentations, as well as very few presentations by women. For example: Scher, Paula. 1994. "The Devaluation of Design by the Design Community." *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design.* 11:4, 4-5; Resnick, Elizabeth. 1994. "Fighting for Recognition." *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design.* 11:4,12; Lasky, Julie and Tod Lippy. 1994. "AigABC's," *Print,* XLVIII:1,112; and Holland, D.K. 1994 "Nero Fiddles While Rome Burns," *Communication Arts,* 36:1, 14-18.

Independent designers and owners

Women practice alone as independent designers or as free-lance designers; they practice as owner/designers of small design businesses. Currently, women are more likely to be free-lance designers (and, therefore, part-time designers) than men. In a 1992 survey of AIGA members 33 percent of the women respondents were owners/designers, as compared to 42 percent of the men, with the women tending to have smaller staffs.[17] In the distant past, independent business operation was not an option for women, except for those who came to it through widowhood. A common route to printing and publishing for women was helping their husbands in the shop and taking over at their death. (Not a felicitous career path, nor one to actively pursue.)[18]

Design employees and workers

Women are more likely found as employees of design studios, agencies, publishing houses, corporate design offices and other organizations and institutions. We could see them as cultural workers in the trenches. They may be at all levels of these organizations: art and creative directors, staff designers, production managers and freelance artists. How are women involved in the decisions made about design: the concepts, images, audiences? This is the largest group of women practicing; how have technical developments in design changed women's roles and design work? As an antidote to the conventional focus on "heroes," an important addition to our knowledge of women in design would be attention to the not-so-famous, the non-name designers, their conditions, their experience, their impact on their clients and communities if not on the "design world."

Designer' partners, spouses and significant others

One of the primary points of feminist theory has been the intersection of private roles and public roles for women. Working women (especially those with families) have been

17
Scotford, Martha. 1992. Survey of membership of American Institute of Graphic Arts, part of research on women in graphic design supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

18
Higgins, Janet. 1988. "And the Wife Helped Also." *Southeastern College Art Conference Review*, XI:3, 201-206.

unwilling and unable to keep their domestic and professional lives as separate as working men have sought to do. Mary Catherine Bateson[19] and Carolyn Heilbrun[20] have provided examples of famous and/or public women "composing" and creating their productive lives around private necessity. They have discovered that many women do not follow the (male) linear career path, and do not consider women's accretion model aberrant but responsive to different experience. Study incorporating the stages of women's lives, their physical and psychological development, the expectations of society, with women's professional design practice, choice of professional roles and achievement will show differences with male paradigms for achievement. This connection of private and public affects all the decisions they make and, for many women designers, impacts the work they do, how they do it and what it means. There are generational differences in this area as well; the pure increase in the number of women designers in the last twenty years is the result of changes in women's roles and affects the practice of design as well. Study should be made of the impact in many areas of the influx of women into design.[21]

Women raise interesting questions for biography or any writing about them beyond the strictest focus on design artifacts. In any historical period, society has constructed roles for women which include a set of constraints and expectations. In the past there was a clear distinction between the public or male sphere and the private or female sphere. Increasingly the line has become less clear.

In writing about women designers historically, it is obvious that they must and do interact with male designers and other men in business; this communication, cooperation and collaboration and changes within these relationships are worth study. There is a twist on these professional relationships that has not been researched: those professional relationships that are also intimate ones. (Gasp; even I have labeled this "tacky biography" to myself.) Why this response? The response is as interesting as the question. Men and women have been involved in design together for a long time; when the research focus is

19
Bateson, Mary Catherine. 1989. *Composing A Life.* New York: The Atlantic Monthy Press.

20
Heilbrun, Carolyn G. 1988. *Writing a Woman's Life.* New York: Ballantine Books.

21
deForest, Ann. 1988. "Women in Graphic Design: Building a Velvet Ghetto?" *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design,* 6:3, 1,14. Cullen, Moira. 1993. "Beyond Politics and Gender - The Hillary Factor," *Communication Arts,* 35:3, 24-30. Streyer, Stephanie. 1992. "Designer Moms." *Communication Arts,* 34:2, 28-30.

male the model is "unique, independent, creative genius" and all others involved, especially women and especially in private life, are assumed to have no effect on the designer, the production or the work. Sometimes this is so. When the focus changes to women designers, with their intertwined lives, other people are often involved. So questions need to be asked; they needed to be asked of the male designers too, now perhaps they will be. Part of the reticence on this topic undoubtedly relates to a possible double standard; it is acceptable for men to engage in a variety of personal relationships; this has not been considered true for women. Standards change; there have always been exceptions. Another problem is that the imputation of influence has previously been harmful to women, though not to men. Does influence go only one way? The issue of "significant others" has recently been addressed, in the fine arts, in an eponymous book.[22] Critics considered the results mixed and some too close to gossip, but the door is opened on what is, theoretically, a useful area.

The original spouse/partners in design business were the women (and children) who helped out in the shops and learned the businesses: punch-cutting, typesetting, printing, publishing. More recently, Bertha Goudy and Edna Beilenson helped their husbands with typesetting and presswork. Beilenson was also part of a women printers' organization, The Distaff Side.[23] Ray Eames was an equal partner in name and credit, though the exact nature of her contributions is unclear.[24] In our well-intentioned eagerness to have "women designers in history," Ray Eames may have been swept up and set up in a role she did not play. She was important to the work of the office, but most likely not as designer. History needs to record her actual role. Katherine McCoy is a partner with Michael McCoy in both design practice and design education. The partnerships are often between designers in different disciplines: Nancy Skolos (graphic design) and Tom Wedell (photography); Lela Vignelli (industrial design) and Massimo Vignelli (graphic design); and Deborah Sussman (graphic design) and Paul Prezja (architecture).

22
Chadwick, Whitney and Isabelle de Courtivon, editors. 1993. *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership.* London and New York: Thames and Hudson.

23
Higgins, Janet. "And the Wife Helped Also." 201.

24
Neuhart, Marilyn and John, and Ray Eames. 1989. *Eames Design.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Women in design have also been business partners or collaborators with male and female significant others. Early in this century, Beatrice Warde separated from her husband and spent many years working with Stanley Morison, both scholars promoting fine and practical typography. Over her career April Greiman has collaborated with her then husband and other male designers, at each stage marking a significant change in her work. And there are examples of female design couples in practice together.

For all of the business partnerships that include private relationships, questions about roles, organization, work choices intersect with personal dynamics in ways different from those of romantically uninvolved partners. What is the nature of lives so completely involved with design? The benefits are apparent in the fine work of many designing couples, but there will be deficits of these public/private combinations as well. If design couples part, the female designer may be more at risk for professional fallout. The point is not irrelevant or prurient interest but rather to understand when and how important such intimate relationships can be to development and to work.

Independent designers and spouses or significant others in design

Another example of sharing lives in design is that of women designers who practice independently, but who have or had spouses or significant others also involved in design. As with partnerships, the shared information, networks, interests can be critically important to the work. Cipe Pineles had a career in magazines independent from her two designer husbands, Bill Golden and Will Burtin. However, Pineles and Golden are both noted for their use of fine artists as illustrators, she in women's magazines and he for CBS promotions. Same idea, different venues; it makes more sense if you know they were married. Paula Scher and Seymour Chwast use historical reference as an important part of their work, and were among the first revivalists. Louise Fili and Steven Heller share an interest in graphic design history; she resurrects old typefaces for her book jackets, he writes and organizes conferences, and they have

recently collaborated on two design history books (on Dutch Moderne and Italian Art Deco). Lorraine Louie and Daniel Pelavin are both noted book jacket designers. When studying the work and its conceptual and stylistic provenance, it is useful to know where a designer studied, with whom, where a designer has worked, with whom and who might be at home.

25
Brooks, Valerie. 1975. "The Wives of the Artists." *Print*, 29:2, 44-49, 86.

Female and female working collaborations

A separate category is women designers who are professional partners. Ruth Ansel and Bea Feitler collaborated for several years on *Harpers Bazaar*. Muriel Cooper and Jacqueline Casey spent almost whole careers designing for MIT, much of the time in the same office. Are there special benefits from this interaction? Interactions might differ from female/male ones. Work place organization and working styles may be different. Female collaborators may be able to confront larger institutions more effectively together. Mentoring relationships may be more important for women and different between them. Lorraine Wild and her partners at ReVerb would be a contemporary example for study.

Women designers who leave design

The focus has been on successful designers, their partnerships and how these intersect with personal relationships. What about those design careers that are abandoned because of such conflicts? Women may leave design for many reasons, but one is competition with a spouse in the same or a related field. There were some cases written about in the mid-'70s where women's careers were overshadowed by men's careers.[25] Has there ever been an article titled "Husbands of Artists"? What happens to shared design practices when parenthood is chosen, but one is designated to have the baby?

Defining "design" as mainstream design, leaving design may be a conscious strategic move. There are different kinds of leaving. Designers leave the corporate design world for the freedom of independent practice or for a change of scale in

problem-solving. There are recent reports that many African-American designers find the corporate world useful for training but not comfortable for the long haul; they are creating their own businesses, businesses that may be out of the mainstream. Another way to move to the margins is to find or invent new territory within the borders of graphic design that is distant from dominant structures. Some current examples are new technical areas and cultural areas. Women and African-Americans are entering the field at the margin through video production and music promotion.[26]

The study of conditions for failure (or leaving) are as important as conditions for success. Nochlin, in discovering the answer to her question, was able to describe the path to success for women artists.[27] What is the route to success for women designers at different periods in graphic design history?

26
For discussion of contemporary African-American graphic design practice see: Miller, Cheryl D. 1987. "Black Designers: Missing in Action, "*Print*, XLI:5, 58-65, 138 and Locke, Tonya. 1994. "In the Voices of My Sisters: African-American Women in Graphic Design." Unpublished master's thesis. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.

27
Nochlin, Linda. "Why Are There No Great Women Artists," 30-37.

Women in Design Business

Women who run husbands' design businesses

The professional design world is supported by legions of staff who, while they do not directly put pen to paper or mouse to pad, are closely connected with design work and design decisions. The first employee beyond design assistant that any owner/designer hires is a bookkeeper or financial manager. This person is most often female, may ease into this position unsalaried, may be the wife of the designer, and may even be educated as a designer herself. Linda Hinrichs ran Hinrichs et al. through several permutations; Valerie Richardson runs Richardson or Richardson; Dixie Manwaring is the business manager for her husband; Sonia Tscherny runs George's practice. Perhaps this is the more accurate category for Ray Eames. What is the nature of the influence that such women exercise in such positions? There are many historical antecedents; study should be made of how this role has changed; when and how it is acknowledged, in credits, in name, and/or in salary.

Unacknowledged partners and supporters

Some illustrations of the phrase "behind every man (designer) is a woman" are available. These are women who worked along side men and are unsung but crucial to the creative work. Dorothy Abbe was devoted to helping W.A. Dwiggins; Carla Binder assisted Joseph. Dorothy Beall aided Lester playing the common and traditional role for women of the period, hostess to professional clients. However, given the location of Beall's practice in rural Connecticut and the corporate nature of his clients, this was more than occasional dinner parties. She was a partner in the business enterprise, if not in the design.[28] Roles, even if traditional, cannot be dismissed on those grounds, and are important to design success. If conventional history acknowledged male business partners of designers, how would that history and our understanding have been different? We might also be looking for a man managing a woman designer's practice and what this means.

28
Roger Remington. 1992. Conversation with author, based on his research on Lester and Dorothy Beall, manuscript pending publication.

Women in Education

Though the institutions and structures are the same for women and men, their experiences within them are frequently at odds, and their responses different. Among AIGA members, women designers have tended to have more formal education than men. This response could be due to the lack of opportunity through the "trade route" and/or a response to other conditions, such as the perception that a woman has to be "better" to be considered equal. The last decade witnessed the huge increase in the number of women students in design schools; the number of women faculty increased, and at the same time many graphic design programs were and are headed by women (Cranbrook, co-chair Katherine McCoy; CalArts, April Greiman and then Lorraine Wild; Otis-Parsons and Yale, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville; Northeastern, Mary Anne Frye; North Carolina State University, Meredith Davis). General "demographics" may explain some of this; more importantly it is the result of the women's movement and changing roles for women and professional women.

Educational institutions provide a valuable route for women's success. Universities and schools are a platform for women's research and ideas, and may offer opportunities much earlier than less egalitarian private industry.

Women as teachers

It is only in the last ten years that women have significantly joined the ranks of graphic design teaching; there were some earlier pioneers, such as Cipe Pineles at Parsons from 1963 to 1987. Like their male counterparts, women graphic designers have often combined teaching with practice. Teaching careers have been useful for professional women needing flexible time for private responsibilities. With a growing community of female program heads as well as female teachers, more exchange and support occurs. There is greater likelihood that courses will include the work and experiences of women designers.

Are women different as teachers? As design teaching commonly includes more collaborative work than is found in traditional educational paradigms, the presence of women in the classroom may make less difference in graphic design education. However, the conduct of critiques and juries can be a place where differences could be found. It could be expected that given their design experiences, women faculty will prepare students (especially women) differently for the marketplace.[29] The study of AIGA members showed that very few designers currently practicing had been taught by a woman in design school.

As mentors, what have women faculty offered? Mentorships are expected in education. Later, in the professional world, such relationships will encompass broader issues. In what ways have women in design helped younger designers of either gender? Patterns of sponsorship may have developed. When the paths for success for women designers are better known, mentoring will have more solid ground.

29
Comparative studies would be useful. See the different conditions in architecture discussed in: Ahrentzen, Sherry and Linda N. Groat. 1992. "Rethinking Architectural Educations: Patriarchal Conventions and Alternative Visions from the Perspectives of Women Faculty," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 9:2, 95-111. Kingsley, Karen. 1988. "Gender Issues in Teaching Architectural History." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 41:2, 21-25.

Women as students

The recent influx of women to design schools and then into practice and education will do the most to change the profession. Female students come to design with different expectations, different interests, different strengths and weaknesses. Has this been acknowledged in the past and in the present? How does graphic design education respond to any differences among students, by gender or by race? Based on observation and reading, women students in more technical and mechanical design fields than graphic design (architecture and industrial design) have greater problems: fewer women teachers, more conventional attitudes and prejudices still in place, more hierarchical educational practices in use.[30]

Women as Critics, Historians and Theoreticians

Are communication ideas gendered? In the 1970s, having read feminist and literary theory, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville developed a strategy she called "feminist design" that was also an implicit critique of the hegemony of modernist (male) design. Based on the principles of "bringing more of the human attributes associated with women... into the public and professional sphere," she described four design methods: the inclusion of several perspectives on a subject; the posing of questions without providing answers; the use of evocative rather than explicit views of subject matter; and the provision of a contradictory gap between word and image. Such a strategy was to encourage an exchange of ideas rather than a purely objective transmission of information.[31] Why was there so little response to these ideas?

Interestingly, at about the same time, other American designers were also reading French literary criticism and applying linguistic and semiotic research and analysis to design. There evolved design strategies based on the same philosophies and bearing visual similarities to "feminist design," but without the association with feminism. Cranbrook Academy of Art, where much of this activity took place, and its 1980s graduates, became influential in design and design education.[32] Was

30
Ahrentzen, Sherry and Kathryn H. Anthony. 1993. "Sex. Stars and Studios: A Look at Gendered Educational Practices in Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education,* 47:1, 11-29. Fredrickson, Mark Paul. 1993. "Gender and Racial Bias in Design Juries." *Journal of Architectural Education,* 47:1. 38-48.

31
A general critical discussion and early expression of her ideas is found in: de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant. 1974. "A Reexamination of Some Aspects of the Design Arts from the Perspective of a Woman Designer." *Arts in Society,* 11:1,115-123. The strategy is outlined in: de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant. 1983. "Feminist Design." *Space and Society*, 6:22, 98-103.

32
Wild, Lorraine. 1990. "Graphic Design." *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse.* New York: Rizzoli.

de Bretteville's label limiting or damaging? Was it important that a woman was co-head of design at Cranbrook? The answer to this latter question is "no." The theory and criticism studied was largely by male philosophers and the students, coming from art and film criticism, art history and literature were mostly male as well. What may be more significant is the multidisciplinary, research-oriented atmosphere of the graduate program that welcomed the broad synthesis of ideas; an atmosphere created by the co-chairs, Katherine and Michael McCoy. Perhaps it was more important for their dissemination that these ideas had the validation of an educational institution. Of added significance is that these same ideas are now a very useful component of multicultural design.

The critic of today is the historian of tomorrow. Women have operated as writers, critics and theoreticians since the early modern era of graphic design. Beatrice Warde was commenting on typefaces and contemporary typography in the '20s, when she also put forth her theory of typographic form in "The Crystal Goblet." De Bretteville's writing, design and teaching have acted as criticism, and "feminist design" was theory as strategy. The curatorial work of Ellen Lupton (often with her husband J. Abbott Miller) for Cooper Union and now the Cooper-Hewitt Museum has been directed by critical theory. Frances Butler, always on the margins and usually between design disciplines, has written frequently in all these areas with great erudition.[33] Lorraine Wild was among the first graphic design historians of modernism in America and has written extensively about design practice and education. Karrie Jacobs, writing for *Metropolis*, is one of the few women in design journalism and has maintained a high profile. She is joined by Chee Perlman of *I.D.*, and Carol Stevens and Julie Lasky of *Print*. Maud Lavin has been an independent scholar and curator, producing an exhibition on montage and recently an excellent critical study of Hannah Höch.[34] Artist and critic, Barbara Kruger qualifies as a woman designer who has "left" the field of design for the fine arts, contributing extensively to cultural criticism.[35] Educators have been responsible for much early writing and publishing. All of these women have been

33
Butler, Frances. 1985. *Light and Heavy Light: Contemporary Shadow Use in the Visual Arts*. Berkeley: Poltroon Press. This is one example; there are others, including "The New Demotics" in this volume.

34
Lavin, Maud. 1993. *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

35
Kruger, Barbara. 1993. *Remote Control: Power, Culture and the World of Appearances*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

important contributors to the discourse of graphic design history and criticism, and most have brought a distinctly different perspective.

As stated, the focus of this paper has been on women graphic designers, with "designer" defined broadly. Closely related, but not possible to discuss here for reasons of space, are several categories of "women in design" that would also benefit from further research. With the growing presence of women in leadership positions in business and institutions, they will increasingly become design clients. How they approach a project, the selection of a designer, the client/designer relationship, are worthy of study. Closely related to making is consuming. Women have been targeted as consumers through the reception of images and visual messages. The impact has been well-documented.[36] Beyond this, more can be discovered about female audiences. What has been the history of critical response on the part of women, especially on women of different classes and races? Perhaps the most obvious category missing is the one most extensively explored, but hardly exhausted, women as representational subject. There appears to be an unending supply of representations to discuss, connections to be made with other image-making disciplines and new theories to supply the discourse. Work in feminist theory, feminist art history, film criticism, reception theory and literary theory have all affected positively the critical climate.[37]

So, where is the design, the artifact? Design is a social, economic and cultural activity. The proposal here is to study design activity, to study design roles, to study response to design, rather than to concentrate on individual designers and their artifacts and use these as the sole filter for graphic design history. By using a typology such as the one suggested here, graphic design history can be enlarged by the inclusion of women and their particular experiences. Historians must discover the conditions under which design and designers flourish, and the reasons either may wither. This is the social history of graphic design, a perspective that demands the inclusion of a broad range of activities, people and objects,

36
Forty, Adrian. 1986. *Objects of Desire.* New York: Pantheon Books, also, Wald, Carol. *Myth America,* and others, including Lupton and Miller, previously cited.

37
To name only a few: Attfield, Judy and Pat Kirkham, editors. 1989. *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design.* London: The Women's Press. Broude, Norma and Mary D. Garrard, editors. 1982. *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers. Mulvey, Laura. 1989. *Visual and Other Pleasures.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Pollock, Griselda. 1988. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art.* London: Routledge. Suleiman, Susan Rubin. 1990. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

and the application of ideas and methods from many areas of historical and cultural study. It is complex, it is undefined, it is messy, but the rewards will be great.

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