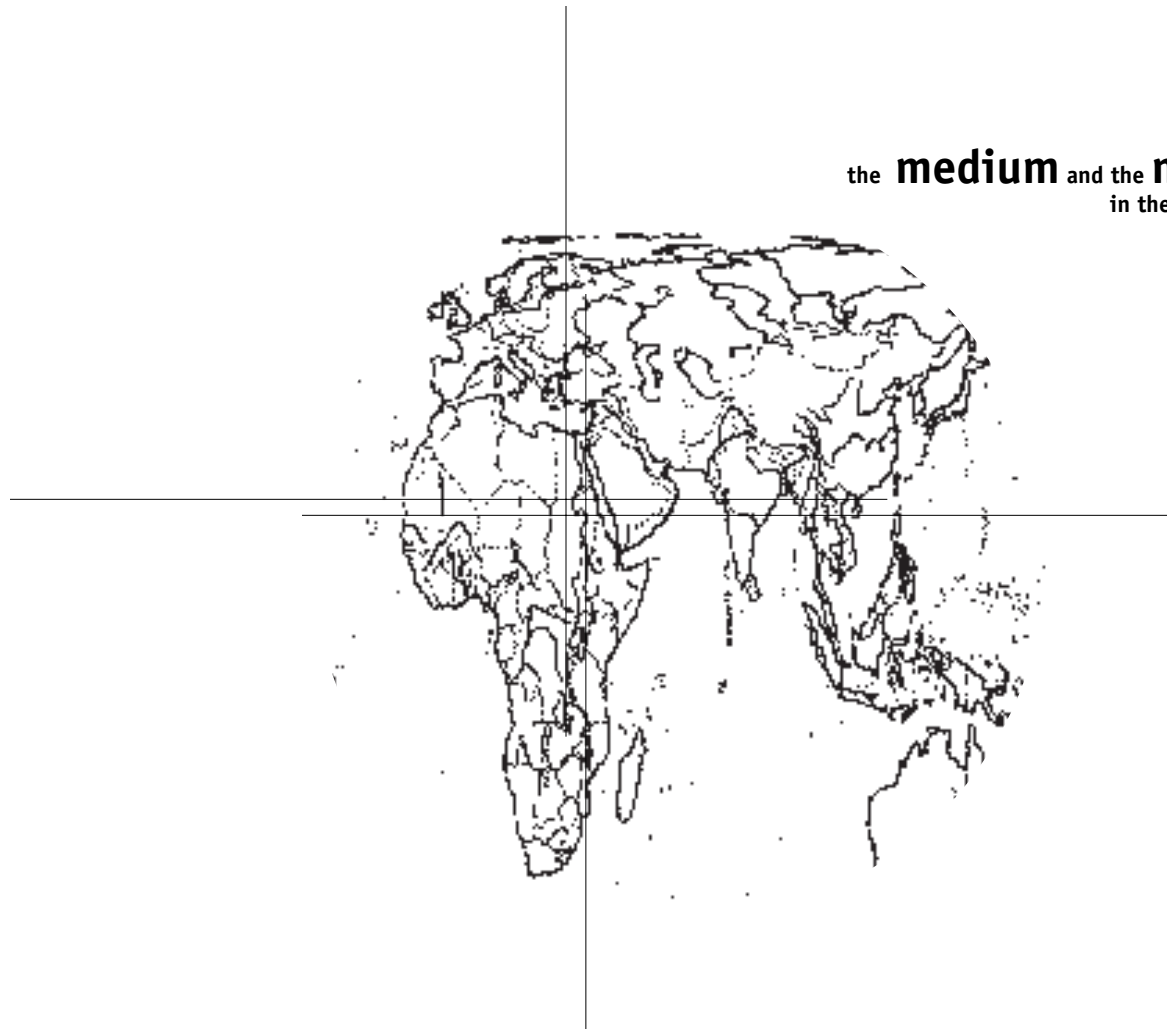


the **medium** and the **message**
in the public space as **vehicle for social change**

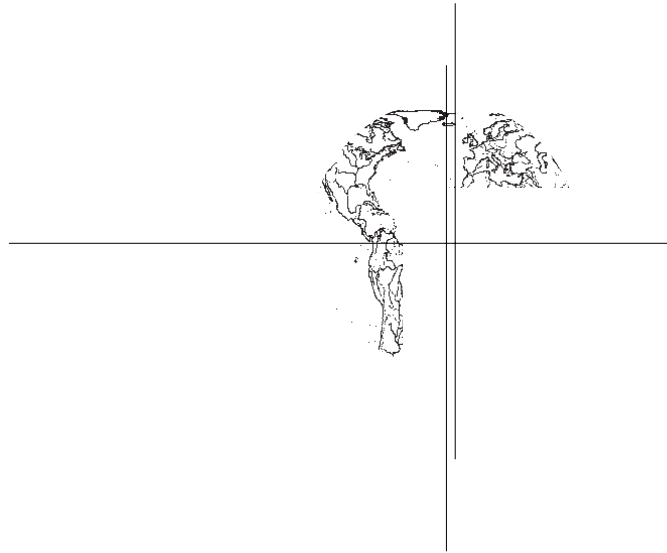


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degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communications

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Richmond, Virginia
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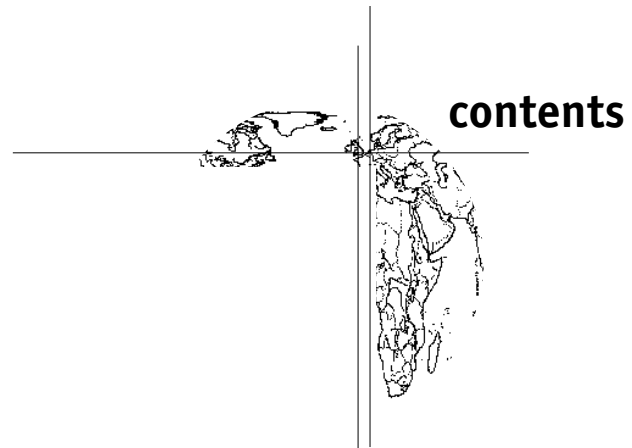
For their tremendous support and encouragement, I give my deepest thanks to my parents, Colleen and Mike Rogal.

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The intent of my creative project is to explore the relationship between the message and the medium in the public space and how they can be synthesized and employed to **inspire longstanding attitudinal change and promote civic action**. This creative project considers the potential of a non-linear narrative format to assign meaning to complex information. Formal considerations are explored through the synthesis of text and image in conjunction with selected vehicles for communication appropriate to the public arena.

abstract

The applied components of this study consist of two-parts:

Christian Children's Fund [Exhibition at the Shops at Willow Lawn, Richmond, Virginia]

The goal of this installation was to promote the concept of a world neighborhood. Featuring children's art work from CCF-sponsored children, the exhibit proposed the definition of neighbor as a fellow human being. Through the artwork of children, we are given a global view of daily life, sports, cultural activities and other traditions and rituals which we all share as members of the human race. The exhibition spaces [two vacant stores] functioned as vehicles for the communication of a social message, subverting the intention of a mall by "selling" the intangible, with the goals of educating the public and inspiring attitudinal and behavioral change.

Nike and Wonderbra Installation [Anderson Gallery, Richmond, Virginia]

I examined the relationship between the image of ourselves created by the mass media and its role in shaping personal identity, creating desires and altering society's perception of reality. Content centered on the Wonderbra, made by the Sara Lee Foundation, and Nike products. Using these products as a point of departure, I promoted a complex experience intended to prompt the viewer to question what shapes their personal identity and values, and how their purchases and actions affect others – a connection which is often obscured.



The power of communication is awesome. Possessing this ability, we have the potential to shape public perception and influence our own and future generations. This understanding is critical as we enter a new millennium and bear witness to a time of tremendous change in all aspects of our world, including the exchange of information. The developments in technology we have witnessed this century alone have irrevocably altered the way we as human beings communicate. We now live in a time when democratization of information has become a reality. Print and electronic mass media [including magazines, billboards, newspapers, television, video, and most recently the computer] provide immediate worldwide access to information. As never before in recorded history, information is easily accessible by the masses.

In this context of information exchange, the idiom “knowledge is power” applies directly to the positive implications that democratization of information has afforded us. It is with knowledge derived from information and experience that people are enlightened and empowered. It is my premise that, despite positive implications, it is precisely our increased ability to exchange information that has led to a current environment of visual inundation. We are now so overwhelmed with information that we have become bored and apathetic – metaphorical sponges which absorb but do not critically analyze or thoughtfully respond to the information we have received.

In the United States today, we are bombarded with images, not only of objects but of ourselves in relationship to these objects. Media images from television, magazine and film glorify the product and the glamorous lifestyle achieved with the possession of the product. These images create a dissatisfaction with ourselves and our lives as they are. Images of perfection are offered up to show the public what they can have and how an object can transform their lives. Because media possesses the power and ability to both create and place images in the public arena, it also has the power to shape our values as a society.

introduction

Everywhere we look, we see images – representing ourselves as we should be – staring back at us. Image-based messages are reinforced through text, as seen in editorials and advertisements. Catchy tag lines do not ask us to question what we are reading and editorials subtly but unequivocally dictate what we need or should have. Media not only creates and shapes our identity as individuals but perpetuates stereotypes which place limits on our growth as individuals. Through isolation and alienation, these images serve to hinder people from developing as whole, satisfied individuals within society.

In this creative project, I am looking for a way to break through this visual inundation to bring important socio-political issues to the public, in hopes that they will respond in a constructive manner.



justification This investigation will address visual communication in the public space and its role as an agent for social change. Specifically the study will be based on an exploration of media as a vehicle to communicate a socially and/or politically based message with the intentions of promoting attitudinal change. I will also explore how, as visual communicators, we can work within a continuously changing context to empower individuals to affect change.

Because of the current information explosion it has become difficult, if not impossible, to establish hierarchies when interpreting information. We are encouraged by the media to view all communication on the same level – as entertainment. Television news is a telling example of this, where occurrences such as famine, civil war, or the discovery of mass graves are delivered in the same sugar-coated manner as the weather or a county fair. Through neutral delivery, all are then placed on the same plane.

In essence, we see so much that we see nothing. Living in a message dense environment, the average American will see or hear more than 7 million advertisements in his/her lifetime.¹ The communicator must design a message that will appeal strongly enough to attract notice, while the recipient must expend mental energy to weed through the array of 30-second bytes of information to gain something of value. Through factors such as neutral presentation, visual inundation and alienation, we are neither motivated or feel empowered to confront issues or affect change. Instead, as a society, we are overwhelmed and alienated. To further develop as a society, people must actively participate in the issues which affect them both locally and globally. As Marshall McLuhan once stated, “in this age of information, we have become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other.”²

delimitations This will not be an in-depth history of art and design in the public space but will use examples to support this study.

This will not be a study of new technology, but will rely on opinions and information supplied by experts in the field.

While I will touch on graffiti briefly, this discussion will be limited because of its highly personal nature.

This will not be a study without concern for economy of materials and finances, of pragmatic concern to those working in the area of social and political activism.

I will not construct full-scale prototypes of communication vehicles, but will work with models and drawings.



antecedents + precedents

In this aspect, I am a product of my environment. My commitment to activism is a direct result of the injustice I have witnessed. This has fueled my desire to contribute to constructive change and to illuminate often obscured truths. To sincerely strive to contribute something, no matter how small, is an important first step toward positive change. This is my point of departure for expressing my own voice as a designer and citizen.

I have traveled to many countries and lived among many cultures. This has given me the opportunity to understand how diverse we are as human beings and yet see how often those differences converge into similarities. To experience the richness of a culture provides insight into the potential we possess as human beings. This insight corresponds to my realization that we are all connected and as individuals our actions contribute to the global condition.

My outlook stems primarily from living in lesser developed countries. This has prompted me to note and question many issues concerning the human condition – poverty, education, human rights and political struggles. I have witnessed indigenous cultures struggle to maintain their cultural values, western devaluation of these cultural traditions and patronizing and oppressive systems of government. This experience has shown me the disparity which exists between the “haves” and the “have nots” both in the 1st and the 3rd worlds – socially, economically and environmentally.

The fomentation of social/political messages has a long and rich historical foundation – from the dawn of communication, human beings used methods of persuasion. There are many individuals who have contributed to enriching my knowledge in this study, and I wish to cite those who have been particularly significant in informing me as an individual and influencing my work. As a whole, their work is provocative in both content and form, created for the public arena, and inspires the audience to question the status quo. These influences, who have had the most profound impact on my work, appear on the following five pages. In addition, I have included in the section entitled “historical observations” and also as running imagery throughout this document, other works which are relevant, to provide the viewer with a brief, but diverse, sampling of activist graphics.

"If I collect documents, combine them and do that in a clever way, then the agitational-propagandistic effect on the masses will be immense. And that is the most important thing for us. That is the foundation of our work. Therefore, it is our task to influence the masses, as well, as strongly, as intensely as possible." John Heartfield

[German . 1891-1968] A member of the Berlin Dada movement, Heartfield's work evolved from his revolutionary political beliefs. An ardent communist, he was influenced by the agitational propaganda of the Soviet Union, specifically Productivism, which promoted the democratization of visual communication thru the medium of photomontage. He advocated the use of magazines and newspapers as resources because they were quick, cheap and readily available. Anyone and everyone could create a visually-based message from accessible materials. Using found imagery, his photomontages were urgent and a strong form of propaganda because they communicated instantly to his audience. In his attempt to raise social consciousness and political awareness in his native Germany, Heartfield targeted the Weimar Republic and the Nazi party with his photomontages. He eventually fled Germany because of the threat of political persecution.

john heartfield



1

While Heartfield's photomontages varied in their formal presentation, he relied consistently on breaking the audience's frame of reference through the unexpected juxtaposition of text and image to ultimately convey profound meaning. Through the subversion of the original materials, primarily found objects from newspapers and magazines, he exposed the viewer to an alternative point of view. After World War II, he returned to the former East Germany. Heartfield's early work was exhibited throughout Europe in the late 1960s/70s where it influenced many communicators who wanted to combine art and politics.³



2



3

1 *Fünf Finger hat die Hand. Mit fünf packst Du den Feind. Wählt Liste fünf kommunistische Partei!* [The hand has five fingers. With five you seize the enemy. Vote List five Communist Party!] 1928.
 2 Adolph – der Übermensch. Schluckt Gold und redet Blech [Adolph – the Superman. Swallows gold and spouts junk]. AIZ, volume XI, number 29, 1932.
 3 *Zur Gründung der deutschen Staatskirche* [On the foundation of the German state church, subtitle: The crucifix was not yet heavy enough]. AIZ, volume XII, number 23, 1933.



1

Staeck uses advertising techniques to provoke critical thinking



2

[German . b1938] Confronting society with its own image through the subversion of the visually commonplace, Staeck's work consists primarily of commentaries on market-driven advertising and the social and economic policies of the German government. Using original advertising images and slogans he exposes the viewer to the brutality of advertising and critically challenges the status quo.

klaus staeck

Staeck mimics advertising's techniques to convey his message and uses montage to combine dissonant texts. He builds on part to part and part to whole relationships, reveals subtle connections and exposes causal relationships to inform his audience and invite the viewer to see the truth. **As a medium, Staeck uses primarily the poster and postcard because they are inexpensive, relatively easy to circulate and reach the audience he intends to influence.** Aware of the radical potential of new media, especially video, he believes that, paradoxically, a saturation of moving images has created an increased desire for the static image.⁴



3

1 *Im Mittelpunkt. Im Mittelpunkt steht immer der Mensch* [Center: The individual is always at the center of things]. 1961.
2 *Direkte Werbung 1* [Direct Advertising 1]. 1970.
3 *Übergewicht. Jeder 2. Deutsche hat Übergewicht* [Overweight. One in two Germans is overweight]. 1977.

berlin dada

hannah höch + raoul hausmann

[Germany . 1918 - 1923] Formed as a direct protest to war, civil and international, Berlin dadaists held revolutionary political beliefs. Their activities broke the audiences' traditional frame of perception, revealing both visually and conceptually a new image of the chaos of war and revolution and questioned the blind faith to mechanization which was destroying the fabric of society. Photomontage began here as both a means to apply the principles of simultaneous and phonetic poetry to visual representation and to juxtapose disparate elements [found and created] to form a new unity in which a new image of the chaos of the age was revealed.

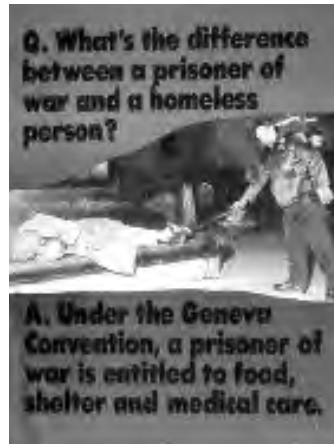


1



2

“Art in its execution and direction is dependent on the time in which it lives, and artists are creatures of their epoch. The highest art will be that which in its conscious content, presents the thousand-fold problems of the day, the art which has been visibly shattered by the explosions of last week, which is forever trying to collect its limbs after yesterday’s crash.” Raoul Hausmann



1

guerrilla girls

working together to fight racism and sexism in the art world



2



3

Dubbing themselves the “conscience of the art world” the Guerrilla Girls got their start in 1985 in New York City as an organization of anonymous feminist artists working together to fight racism and sexism in the art world. At various times their work has branched into social commentary on issues such as education and homelessness. Their activism has given rise to spin-offs in other cities in the United States and Europe. Their methods rely on formal advertising techniques [use of bold headlines and strong imagery], as well as mediums [billboards, busbacks, advertisements] to promote their cause. They rely heavily on well-researched statistics to reinforce their argument, but the primary impact of their work is derived from the juxtaposition of headline and image to provide a provocative and immediate impact. The anonymity of their work adds both an air of mystery and safeguards against any individually-based retaliation for their messages.

1 Poster on Homeless Rights. 1991.
2 Do Women Have to be Naked to Get into the Metropolitan Museum? Poster + billboard. 1989.
3 Women in America Earn... 1985.



1



2

[USA. b1945] Both as social and political commentary, Kruger's work relies on the relationship between image and text to create an aggressive, agitational message. **Her work is entirely public, created to question stereotypes and challenge culture with culture.** Drawing on what sometimes seems the cliché and stereotypical, she comments on complex social and political activities that make up "real" life and questions the construction and perpetuation of personal identity. Text and image, reduced to a minimum, play off of each other to make a statement that is often provocative in its ambiguity, confronting the public with bold graphics and powerful imagery. Her distinctive strategy is to "seduce, then intercept."⁵ Kruger uses the public space in conjunction with vehicles – billboards, t-shirts, matchbooks, posters and benches.

Kruger comments on complex social and political activities that make up "real" life and questions the construction and perpetuation of personal identity



3

barbara kruger

1. *Get Out.* Billboard in San Francisco aimed at fighting domestic violence against women. 1992
 2. *Your Body is a Battleground.* Poster for the Pro-Choice March on Washington. 1989
 3. *No Thought/No Doubt/No Goodness/No Pleasure/No Laughter.* Posters for Frankfurter Kunstverein and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany. 1989



1



2

john berger

[British. b1926] An art critic, film writer and novelist, John Berger is a profound storyteller concerned **not only with what art is, but more importantly, with what art does**. He is a Marxist, which is important to note, because his political philosophy is evident in his work. It was through the book *Ways of Seeing*, a combination of visual and verbal essays, that I was first introduced to Berger's work. A companion piece to the 1972 BBC television series, the book explores and questions the dominant traditions of Western art and image making, leaving us in the present with his essays on advertising. The messages created by traditional paintings, as forms of visual communication, are clear yet are rarely analyzed in terms of shaping identity and society. The way we look at men and women, in art and in life, is profoundly different – he simplifies this by stating “men act, women appear.”⁶ And it was these essays that have influenced my study. He makes profound connections between things – the way things are and why they are. These connections have prompted my own questioning on issues of objectification, identity and in making connections.

excerpts from Ways of Seeing...

on vanity The mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman. The moralizing, however, was mostly hypocritical. You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting “Vanity,” thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure. The real function of the mirror was otherwise, it was to make the woman treat herself as, first and foremost, a sight. [essay 3]

on advertising Publicity is the culture of the consumer society. It propagates, through images, that society's belief in itself. There are several reasons why these images use the language of oil painting. Oil painting, before it was anything else, was a celebration of private property. As an art form, it derived from the principle that you are what you have... All publicity works upon anxiety. The sum of everything is money, to get money is to overcome anxiety. Alternatively, the anxiety on which publicity plays is the idea that having nothing you will be nothing. Money is life. Not in the sense that without money you starve. Not in the sense that capital gives one class power over the entire lives of another class. But in the sense that money is the token of, and the key to, every human capacity. The power to spend money is the power to live. According to the legends of publicity, those who lack the power to spend money become literally faceless. Those who have the power become lovable. Publicity principally addressed to the working class tends to promise a personal transformation through the function of the particular product it is selling. [essay 7]

on looking It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. Soon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen. An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Yet, although every image involves a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing. [essay 1]

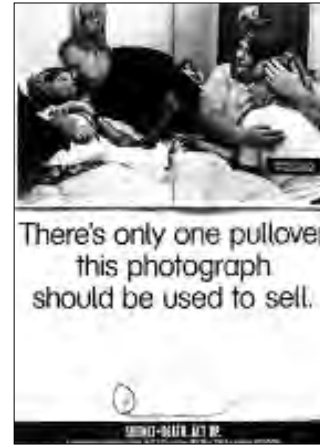
1 “Blondes Don't have more fun brunette.” Advertisement for Clairol Ultrass Haircolor, 1994.
2 Mirror, Friend or Foe? Advertisement for diet pills/fat burner, 1994.



1

Political correctness and social responsibility are often commodified commercially. This Benneton advertisement is an example of taking a private moment [featuring a man dying of AIDS sharing his last moments with his family] and using it to promote their product. Promotion of a cause for economic gain both confuses and diminishes the true nature and impact of the issue.

part 3 . problem statement



2

problem statement

This study is an exploration of the medium in the public space as a means of communicating a social or politically-based message. I will explore how, as visual communicators, we can work within a continuously changing context to empower individuals to affect change, both behavioral and attitudinal. It is my aim to investigate how we can overcome the barriers raised by the current context of visual inundation and create a long-lasting interest in an issue. In our society, media promoting social and political issues and demanding change are abundant. However, their impact is often undermined because they have become too common and expected.

This advertisement says "Buy from us, we have compassion. We understand the issues." Buying Benneton is buying an image.

In this exploration, I ask "how can visual communication be utilized to empower people to respond to issues which affect them?" In responding to this question, I focus on the medium as the vehicle and the message as content. I will analyze the components individually and their synthesized role as an aid in fomenting activism. It is my premise that, if manifested, attitudinal change will naturally lead to behavioral change. I will attempt to inspire both by drawing on various contemporary issues to increase public awareness. Ultimately, my intention is to cause people to question their beliefs and motivate them to actively respond to issues which affect them.

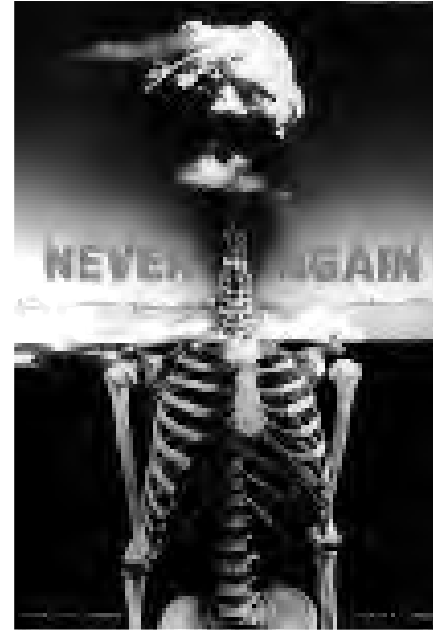
In this study, I have explored these questions...

- What are the formal aspects of design to be considered in relation to both the medium and the message?
- Historically, what is the relationship between the medium and the message in the public space [posters, billboards, etc.]? What has proven successful in the past?
- What are the concerns, cultural and other, which allow visual communication to reach a cross-section of the community?
- Can the medium and message be interchangeable, i.e. can an equation or formula be developed?

process My process throughout this study has been circular in nature. My research has influenced visual experimentation and vice versa, often both occurred simultaneously. My motivation to create emanates from a desire to explore and learn, both of which I did a great deal of during this creative project. In the beginning, I began by researching historical propaganda [a sampling of contemporary propaganda work follows] and gender issues. This research enhanced my creative process, spawning new ideas and focusing the direction of this study. A more detailed account of my process is described in the related components of this document.



1



2

methodology

- Analyze the formal qualities, message and context of propaganda.
- Collect visual materials and relevant historical data, evaluate significant trends.
- Explore media with the goal of transforming the passive object to active vehicle, the invisible to visible, and experiment with images and image placement not commonly associated with the vehicle.
- Experimentation will be made with consideration of formal design issues [example: color, imagery, repetition, size, layout, typography].

“The death of a single Russian soldier is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic” Joseph Stalin



1

research findings

propaganda [noun]

ˈthe systematic propagation of a given doctrine. ˚ideas, information, or other material disseminated to win people over to a given doctrine.

American Heritage Dictionary



1

Persuasion and propaganda have existed since human beings began to communicate. The term itself stems from the root “propagate” and evolved into its present-day meaning from the Catholic Church’s quest to propagate the faith in the 17th century. During the 20th century it has been used to describe persuasion tactics used during wartime and by totalitarian regimes, from which it has earned negative connotations. Propaganda is the communication of an idea with the ultimate goal of having the audience “voluntarily” accept a position as if it were his/her own. In the context of this study, I view persuasion and propaganda as synonymous, referring to persuasion on a conceptual level and propaganda as a tangible product.⁷

1. *Women Against Apartheid. Support the struggle of the women of the liberation movements ANC and Suvopo. Poster by Wild Pakken for the AABN. Holland. 1984.*

In my research I have explored propaganda materials in an historical context and their role in fostering political and social activism. Focusing on movements where propaganda has played a major role, my intent was to find out what worked and why. My understanding of propaganda techniques began when I attended a seminar class on visual propaganda at VCU, taught by Professor Robert Meganck. This information provided me with insight into the techniques and strategies specific to propaganda and persuasive communication, which was followed up with additional research in this area. This information, outlined on these two pages, focuses on messages and their delivery, categories and techniques.

categories of propaganda + persuasion

Persuasive communication can be broken down into six subcategories which are defined by their primary purpose.⁸

ideological	the selling of a system or philosophy [politics or religion].
political	an individual or group trying to achieve power [related to ideological].
antagonistic	demoralizing an enemy [war propaganda/political campaigns].
protagonistic	[diplomatic] to promote a civil relationship with an ally or potential ally.
didactic	intended to instruct and educate the public [combating illiteracy or promoting pre-natal care].
economic	intended for economic gain [selling goods and services].

message + delivery The manner in which a message is presented is integral to its success. This includes the synthesis of image and text used to convey the message.⁹

repetition	creates its own truths – in communication that relies on repetition, the audience does not have to think deeply about the information they are consuming. Consumed repeatedly, it eventually gains credibility and is believed to be true.
location	a message must reach the audience for which it is intended.
packaging	how the subliminal messages sent are packaged [formal qualities].
presentation	what is aesthetically appealing is more likely to draw and hold attention – the vulgar will repulse, the unappealing will not attract attention.

techniques How propaganda is presented is primary to its success. The following are ways in which information is presented to influence opinions.¹⁰

good guy [representations of heroes and martyrs]

testimonial consists of celebrity and authority endorsements.

bandwagoning support something because everyone else is [to jump on the bandwagon].

common people not elitist, just like everyone else. Get things down to basics and it will be wholesome.

flag waving promoting the concept that we are all in this together.

bad guy [representations of villains and tyrants]

name calling the use of visual metaphors, parody and satire to degrade the opposition.

stereotyping to project certain qualities on a group based on myth, not fact [this is the general basis for racism, sexism and other types of discrimination].

conflict / reward and punishment

fear of not doing something right or well, usually tied to one's value system.

analogy, association + transfer

To give [in]credibility to something because of cultural connotations [example – a spokesperson is portrayed as a doctor therefore credibility/knowledge in medicine is implied].

escapism

Circumventing the issue through lies, half-truths and deception or complete censorship [example – fighting wars abroad to move the population's focus away from domestic problems].

visual/verbal rhetoric [the art of language]

vivid appeal makes a strong argument even more persuasive by using bold statements.

generalizing making broad, unjustified statements such as "the best", "new and improved", etc.

double speak to obscure the truth through wording [example – Orwell's 1984].

bald appeal to do something for no apparent reason other than just doing it.

syllogism a form of reasoning whereas a minor detail shapes the entire image, the pathway from premise to conclusion is not a logical one.

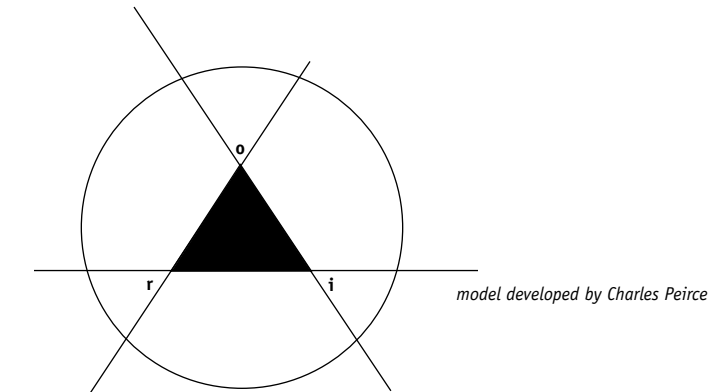
Consider the Marlboro Man. What does this cowboy teach us?

“The repetition of simple messages, images, and slogans can create our knowledge of the world, defining what is truth and specifying how we should live our lives. Consider the Marlboro Man. What does this cowboy teach us? First that smoking is for the rugged, self-confident individual [as opposed to being a health hazard]. Second, that American men should be macho [as opposed to, say, caring and sensitive]. And finally, that you can be rugged and macho simply by smoking Marlboro’s – it is that easy.”¹¹

semiotic theory I reviewed semiotic theory as an aid in the creation and evaluation of my work. Semiotics is the science of signs founded by French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Applied to visual communication, it is a useful tool because it aids in understanding the way people assign meaning and respond to a sign. Successful communication relies on the comprehension of sign systems, both in their production and interpretation. We assign meaning to signs based on cultural connotations and personal experience.

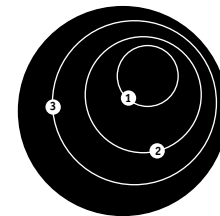
- icon** a sign which has features in common with the object and characterizes, pictures or imitates the object.
- index** a pointing sign which has a direct, causal or real relation to its object.
- symbol** a sign which does not depend on likeness, correspondence, or real connection with its object.

Signs are always grounded in culture, for without culture and a language system they cannot exist. The sign has two components – the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the physical entity which expresses the sign and the signified is the concept or emotion conveyed by the sign. A sign stands for something not physically present; it is the physical embodiment of thoughts, objects, or events to be transmitted for the purpose of clearer understanding. In everyday language, a sign is understood to have a physical quality, but in semiotic terms, it is an abstract concept.¹²



model developed by Charles Peirce

- object** is the physical thing [for example, a tree].
- representamen** is how we refer to it, a symbol in either written or visual language.
- interpretant** is the receiver, the audience.



- syntax** formal aspects [1]
- semantics** meaning, object to interpretant relationship [2]
- pragmatics** sign in relationship to the user and context [3]

model developed by Charles Morris

“Oppositional posters – those that strengthen the right to dissent, advance individual empowerment and express solidarity – are no longer peripheral, disposable resources. Increasingly, they are compelling works of art and popular, cost-effective tools for advancing the social activist agenda.

A poster can go places no other medium can and remain there indefinitely. Unlike television and newspapers, posters have visual impact and longevity. Their messages, brief and outspoken, are absorbed instantaneously and continuously. They are uncensorable, opening up a direct channel of communication between social activism and the public – one that is immune to the distortions and biases often associated with establishment press coverage of progressive movements.

the value of oppositional posters

Society is besieged by commercialism – slick advertising, television, magazines, billboards and movie posters. To assert their message in a culture dominated by corporate graphics, social activists can tap the phenomenal international pool of politically conscious talent for art that resonates both graphically and politically.

Always stay within the experience of the people with whom you are trying to communicate. Every culture has its own political and graphic idiom. Posters that are antagonistic, jargon-filled or gratuitously sophisticated won’t connect as well as those that are culturally sensitive and uplifting.”¹³

Excerpted from “Oppositional Poster Publishing: A Guide for Social Activists” © 1988 Liberation Graphics/Dan Walsh.

“The rank and file are usually much more primitive than we imagine. **Propaganda must always therefore be essentially simple and repetitious.** In the long run only he will achieve basic results in influencing public opinion who is able to reduce problems to the simplest terms and who has the courage to keep forever repeating them in this simplified form despite the objections of intellectuals.” Joseph Goebbels

There is perhaps no comparison in modern history to the incredible power of propaganda on which the Nazi party built and solidified their control of Germany. Even today we ask how the planned genocide of the Jewish people could have been put into action? One reason is due to the success of the propaganda war waged against the Jews and for a strong Aryan nation. As Hitler's **Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels based his ideological campaign on the observation that what the masses term truth is that information which is most familiar, ie repetition.**

In a time of economic depression, Nazi propaganda planted and then reinforced the message that the Jewish people were responsible for Germany's ills. Documentary style films such as the *Eternal Jew* show Jewish people as greedy, despicable, inferior and as a threat to the German people. Jews were alienated from German society. In contrast to the propaganda war against the Jews, the Third Reich supported traditional German values and produced images of a united teutonic people. These images promoted pride for the homeland and gave hope to a depressed nation. They also worked to unite Germany under Hitler.

part 4 . historical observations



1

Nazi propaganda used easily learned slogans and powerful images to inspire confidence and instill hate. Vehicles of propaganda varied and appeared literally everywhere. They included the use of historic symbols and monuments in an attempt to signify that Nazi Germany was heir to the great ancient cultures of Greece and Rome. Under the direction of Albert Speer, large-scale public structures were designed and executed in the classical style to reinforce this relationship. Posters were designed in the style of Albrecht Dürer to reinforce the greatness of Germany's historical roots, while the colors red and black were used to provide immediate association with the Nazi Party. The propaganda campaign put forth by the Nazi party was invaluable in its rise to power. Once power was attained, there was no room for dissent and all opposition was quashed. Without opposition, their ideology became synonymous with the truth.¹⁴

In cultures that can little afford waste for lack of resources, it is essential that visual communication be vested with multiple functions, such as this calendar to support Mozambique's refugees or an educational poster.



1

It is essential to know your audience. In many lesser developed nations, communicators must take into account audiences who are illiterate or semi-literate. Verbal components must be simple and clear for the semi-literate to read, but the crux of the message resides in its ability to be communicated through image, for those unable to read. The repetitive use of icons and symbols plays a role in communicating message based on cultural norms and principles of repetitive learning.



2

lesser developed countries



3



4

Use of iconic symbolism is evident in this work. The crushing of Superman represents the quashing of US intervention in Nicaragua, during a period when US military presence in the region was strong.

- 1 Pages from a Solidarity Calendar to support displaced Mozambiquens. Designed by Chaz Maviyane Davies with various photographers. 1988.
- 2 Poster promoting the book *A for Africa*, written by Ife Ore. The Poster Collective. Britain. Mid-1970s.
- 3 Congress of South Africa Trade Unions [COSATU]. South Africa. 1989.
- 4 *No to the intervention in Central America. Victorious Nicaragua will neither sell out nor surrender!* c. 1985.

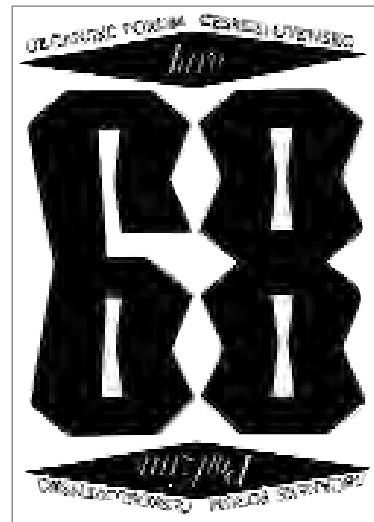
part 4 . historical observations

eastern europe

Economic and social reforms have altered the course of everyday life and freedoms we often take for granted in the West – freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion – were restored to citizens. Democracy brought the rise of a free-market economy, including the privatization of business and industry and the influx of foreign investments. During the long period of Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe, citizens voiced dissent through posters of protest. The messages were hidden beneath the surface because printed work had to pass before the eyes of official censors. The underground movement flourished, and printed materials, including posters, played an important role not only in promoting activism, but in maintaining the voice of dissent in an oppressive environment.



The Polish Solidarity Movement rose out of the worker's revolt in the Polish shipyards of Gdansk. The movement became synonymous with the struggle for freedom and liberty in Eastern Europe against oppressive Soviet domination long before it was conceivable that the cold war would end.



2



3

Symbolic and resonant, the internationally recognized "Adieu" bids a fond farewell to military rule.

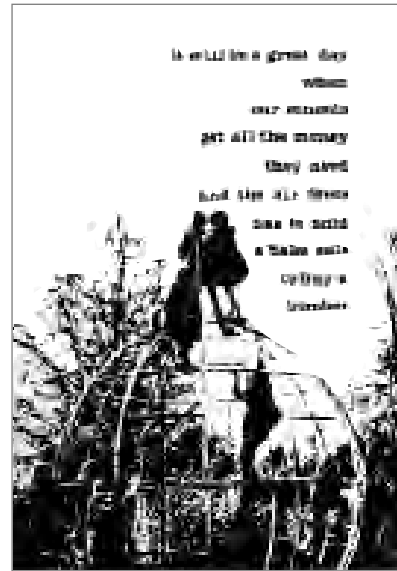
This poster reads in two directions. Posted in 1989, the "68" reminds Czechs of the Soviet invasion during the progressive period of reform in 1968 referred to as the "Prague Spring," prompting opposition to Soviet domination.

1. Solidarity Logo. Jerzy Janiszewski, Poland. 1980
 2. 68/69. Aleš Najbrt. 1989.
 3. Adieu. Romanian Poster. 1989.



1

A British animal rights organization, Lynx is known for their militant and often radical tactics designed to bring attention to the issue of needless animal suffering in factory farming, animal testing in industry and in medical experiments. Their representations, which rely on shock value, expose the truth in the issue, an example is their “40 dumb animals” campaign.



2

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom fought for a ban on nuclear weapons in the USA. In a period when nuclear proliferation and the threat of nuclear war was strong, their message promoted education instead of arms.

social movements

Indigenous groups everywhere have long had to fight for rights equal to those of other European immigrants. In Australia, Aborigines only gained Australian citizenship in 1944, even though they are native Australians. This poster protests this indignity, calling their citizenship papers “dog tags.”



3

- 1 Billboard and poster for Lynx by Yellowhammer, commissioned by Greenpeace in 1985.
- 2 Poster produced by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, USA, 1980s.
- 3 Sally Morgan, Citizenship Poster – Australia, 1987.

exploration + experimentation + applied

"The power of publicity lies in that it offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be. Advertisements promise us happiness and glamour – judged from the outside by others. The purpose of advertising is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his own within it. It suggests that if he buys what it is offering, his life will become better. It offers him an improved alternative to what he is. All publicity works upon anxiety. The sum of everything is money, to get money is to overcome anxiety. Alternatively the anxiety on which publicity plays is the fear that having nothing you will be nothing. Money is life. The power to spend money is the power to live. Those who lack the power to spend money become literally faceless. Those who have the power become lovable."¹⁵

John Berger



1

This advertisement for cognac, asks "what do the car, woman and bottle have in common?" Are they objects to be acquired? Desired? The rewards of a successful life?

Written in 1972, this passage, from Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, speaks to me today when I critically analyze the images I see in mass media. As I looked through magazines, the common theme of perfection emerged. The association and transfer methodology was pervasive, encouraging the viewer to imagine him or herself as the model in the ad. When we see the individual objectified do we then view ourself as objects? As the sum of the parts?



"The seduction of eloquence – images seduce us with visions of perfection." Neil Postman

Influenced by John Berger's commentaries on media's role in shaping personal identity, cultural expectations and value systems, I chose to begin my visual experiments by directly confronting the images and messages created by mass media. While these are present in many mediums, it is magazines that are saturated with images and messages that reinforce an imaginary lifestyle. I selected *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Details* magazines, for their nationwide readership and popularity, to use as primary resources, and drew supplementary information from various other magazines.

My point in choosing the advertisements was to challenge their messages. It is my conviction that advertising attempts to promote dissatisfaction with ourselves through the promotion of perfection. They create illusory relationships between men and women and between people and objects. These depictions affect us because what we see impacts our perception of reality. And when we receive these images over and over, presented in different ways, we come to accept them as true. When we receive information in 30-second bytes, we rarely stop to analyze or assess their impact.

Clearly, advertising is the lifeblood of lifestyle-oriented magazines. This dependence is evident through editorials which subliminally support the advertiser's product. In each issue, a percentage of the editorials are devoted to promoting the products which are advertised – because publishers have to be sure the product sells through their magazine. To support this, we are barraged with these messages whose repetition in ad form is reinforced in the editorial, functioning to lend credibility to the advertiser's claims. Truly, what lipstick, shoe or shirt is going to make someone a new and improved person? But this is what we are encouraged to believe.

This is also where mass media in a consumer culture attempts to define our value system. We must suspend belief and buy into the suggestion of perfection, a perfection that is elusive but desirable. Perfection that is defined, not in a spiritual sense, but in a physical one and linked directly to the purchase of a product[s].

Vogue

Harper's Bazaar

Marie Claire

Gentleman's Quarterly

Cosmopolitan

Details

Young Miss

Seventeen

Bikini

Ray Gun

People

Us

Mirabella

Woman's Day

Ladies Home Journal

Self

McCall's

part 5 . exploration + experimentation + applied [creative project]



1



2

In these advertisements, there is no mistaking the message. Characteristics such as self esteem and self confidence are directly linked to the possession of fur. The model exudes sex appeal in her pose. The purpose of self confidence is ambiguous because of the sexual undertones. She appears to be in the process of taking off the fur. The question is "self confidence and self esteem to what end? The visual responses on the right question the premise of these advertisements.

1. *Self Confidence* Canadian Fur Campaign. 1995.
2. *Self Esteem* Canadian Fur Campaign. 1995.



1

Dominance and violence at work.

This ad raises many questions and issues. Captive women in furs vying for the attention of dominant men? Men having their choice of women as if they were objects to be bought and sold? Sold on the basis of what? This ad is reminiscent of slavery and human bondage.



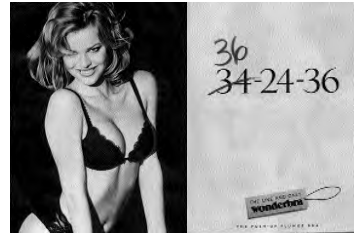
2



3

- 1 Diesel Jeans and Workwear. 1994.
- 2 Visual response to diesel ad. Process experiment.
- 3 Visual response to diesel ad. Process experiment.

part 5 . exploration + experimentation + applied [creative project]



1



3

“Women’s bodies are often dismembered and presented as separate parts, perpetuating the concept that a woman’s body is not connected to her mind and emotions. The message is: if a woman has great legs who cares who she is?”¹⁶



2

This message is evident in the Wonderbra advertisements, where women’s bodies are conceptually dismembered. One needs to merely substitute great legs for great breasts. According to these advertisements, large breasts are desirable on a woman, sending the message that the value of the woman is the sum total of her breasts. Evident in the “Hello Boys” advertisement, the message is “men will like you if you have large, round breasts.” These are objects to be displayed, not hidden. But what are the consequences when the value of the individual is reduced to outward appearances?



4



5

- 1 Wonderbra advertisement. Sara Lee Foundation. 1994.
- 2 Wonderbra advertisement. Sara Lee Foundation. 1994.
- 3 Visual response to Wonderbra ads. Process experiment.
- 4 Visual response to Wonderbra ads. Process experiment.
- 5 Visual response to Wonderbra ads. Process experiment.

analysis / evaluation of **experimentation**

The visual experiments addressed flagrant violations of the value of the individual found in certain advertisements. To even begin to respond to the issues in question the original advertisements must be shown to the reader. Only in the identification of their origin [i.e., the magazine] could the commentary be effective. With the isolation of the advertisement and referencing it out of context, the message became more pronounced. There was no opportunity to turn to the next page, the static image and response were handed to the viewer without the rest of the magazine to read through. The advertisement and response became more resonant in meaning through this change in context.

The visual responses were direct and formally linked to advertisements. All responses were produced primarily as black and white images, providing a feeling of urgency, as if the images were copied out of a magazine. The typography could benefit from the same sense of urgency – with a loosening of the organizational structure, and changes in typeface and scale. To be more effective, color could be utilized to highlight parts of the image and build relationships between parts [image and word].

The visual responses were not developed to be transferred to a vehicle. The responses centered on singular themes and questioned the message of the advertisements. While effective in isolating these incidents of the objectification of women in the media, they did not speak to a larger issue or propose action.

overview + process

"Christian Children's Fund [CCF] is the largest charity headquartered in the Commonwealth of Virginia. CCF is a nonsectarian humanitarian organization providing help to 2.5 million needy children around the world regardless of race or religion. The Fund is dedicated to the survival and protection of children and also to improving the quality of lives they will lead. The Fund currently assists children in more than 40 countries including the United States with several programs assisting children in Virginia."¹⁷

Featuring children's art work from CCF-sponsored children, the exhibit proposes the concept of neighbor from a global perspective. Through the artwork of children, we are given a global view of daily life, sports, cultural activities and other traditions and rituals which we all share as members of the human race. Relating to my work, the store functions as a vehicle for the communication of a social message, subverting the intention of a mall by "selling" the intangible, with the goals of educating the public and inspiring attitudinal and behavioral change.

The collaboration with Christian Children's Fund [CCF] began when they contacted VCU in need of input on signage for an exhibit. The Shops at Willow Lawn, a shopping center in Richmond, donated two stores and one storefront for a temporary display of sponsored children's artwork. During the course of this project, I worked with Associate Professor Mary McLaughlin, of the Communication Arts and Design Department and Kindra Calhoun, a 4th year student in the Department, to conceptualize and design the exhibit for these spaces.



Christian Children's Fund **1.800.766.6767**

Shortly after initiating this project, it was clear we were starting from ground zero. Provided with the space, children's artwork, photographs and text as resources, and with limited financial resources, the project provided ample opportunity for creative realization. The limitations dictated the importance of developing a strong concept and direction. We took into consideration the probability that the only prior exposure people had to CCF was from their late-night television commercials with actress Sally Struthers speaking about poor children. Our goal therefore was to break their expectations on who CCF was and the role they played in the lives of impoverished children and their families. The goals for the exhibit were defined based on the results the client wanted, which were economic and didactic in nature – 1] make the Richmond community more aware of poverty in lesser developed countries and of CCF's work in combatting this, and 2] increase sponsorship and donations for their organization.

Formally, the spaces would be competing with the bold graphics and sophisticated environments of retail spaces. The first problem was to draw the audience into the space. What would draw people in? The children's art and the diverse cultures, not the possibility of being asked to donate money. The techniques we considered were guilt, empathy, association, and reward. Given the context and the subject, guilt was ruled out almost immediately. The audience should walk away from this feeling uplifted and empowered. This is not a depressing issue. Yes, these people are impoverished, lacking in adequate health care, living conditions and education, but they are working to make their lives better. There is also such an incredible message of hope that emanates from the artwork. To negate this we felt would do a disservice to the children.

Therefore, we agreed to communicate these issues through empathy and association. Empathy functions to create an identification with and an understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives. Association works in a similar manner and involves the creation of conceptual connections. Using these two techniques in tandem we attempted to have the Richmond audience identify with the needs and expectations of those being assisted through CCF. From initial surveys, it was evident that people felt good about helping children in particular.

part 5 . christian children's fund exhibition

To build on the association technique, an interactive environment was proposed. One possibility was to set up tables in each space so that children could stop in with their parent/guardian and draw a picture based on a question such as "What is your favorite sport?" or "What do you do after school?" They would then be able to compare and contrast their work to the work that children from other countries had created. The purpose of this would be so that children, and adults, could build an understanding that children are the same the world over. We hoped to educate children on world poverty so they would walk away with the feeling that they could contribute to change and identify with people living in poverty. Other ideas which surfaced were to start a pen pal relationship between children and have a class sponsor a child. We hoped for community involvement, formal or informal.

A natural concept emerged from our ideation. Through the artwork, it was evident that children all over the world were very similar in nature – they all played games, did chores, went to school and had similar dreams, hopes and ambitions, and we needed to communicate this commonality. In the ideation phase, we had talked so often about the idea of neighbors and how small the world is, that the focus became on building a global community – a world neighborhood. This evolved into rethinking the concept of neighbor. We are all neighbors to each other simply by the fact that we inhabit this planet. The definition of neighbor is expanded beyond that of only the person who lives next door to one of people everywhere. Hence, the title for the exhibit *Picturing Our World Neighborhood*. The promotion of CCF could best be accomplished by communicating their *Ten Steps to the Year 2000* program, the steps provided a thorough overview of CCF's mission.

The space was donated on a temporary basis and alteration to the site was prohibited. Each store had one window on each side of the entrance, these windows measured 6'-5" wide. No nails, no paint and no modification to the lighting was permitted. Subsequently, Willow Lawn would provide 8' x 4' boards on which to mount the artwork.

In order to minimize both the cost and our labor time, a modular system was developed. The modular signage system stemmed from the dimensions of these boards. To compensate for the large space and the small-scale of the artwork [most pieces were under 18" x 24"], the signage would be large in scale to communicate the overall message instantly, and serve to visually reduce the vastness of the spaces in which we were working. Signage was developed to communicate the *Ten Steps*, using this content in partnership with the children's artwork as a means to draw the audience into the exhibit. The *Ten Steps* highlight the empowering approach CCF takes to community development.

Three zones of information were established in the signage to provide for a first and second level reading. The first zone communicated the key elements of content while the second and third zones provided additional information pertaining to their mission. I included the Peter's Projection Map in the signage component, this world map is unique in that it presents the relationship and size of land masses as they really exist.

The signage was vertical in orientation [2' x 4'] to create visual rhythm and contrast with the horizontal orientation of the large boards we used to display the artwork. We added large photographs of children and adults in their environment as additional visual components. The subject matter of these photographs – education, health, etc. – reinforced the message and also provided a means of association on an individual level. The children's artwork was displayed on the 8' x 4' boards along with information about the artist and a small photograph. Signage and the large photographs were hung at different levels to create a visual rhythm and movement throughout the space. The typography, even in the back of the space, could be read from outside of the spaces. The two stores we occupied were located at opposite ends of the mall. If a person did not traverse the mall and only entered one of the stores, they would still be able to get the whole experience. To do this, both locations would be treated in the same manner.

The installation of the exhibition took 3-1/2 days. In addition to the exhibit signage, we developed collateral materials – table tents, posters and placemats which were printed by the Willow Lawn management office and distributed throughout the mall. The exhibit *Picturing Our World Neighborhood* was housed in 2 stores in the Shops at Willow Lawn and was open to the public during the month of March and part of April, 1995.

3 zones of information were established

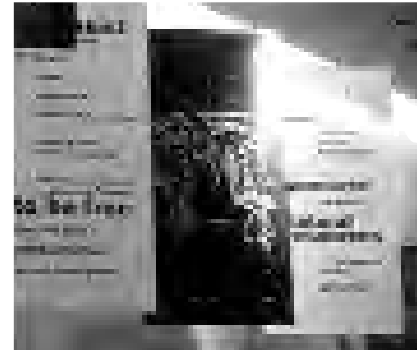


evaluation

On occasion, I would go to the mall and observe public interaction with the exhibits. Many visitors would stop at the windows or look in while passing but would not enter the spaces. Those who did enter usually walked around and looked at all of the artwork and read the signage. One question I have asked myself is "was the apparent lack of interest due to the fact that there was nothing tangible to sell?" I have no answer for that, but the possibility seems likely. Often people shop for something specific – their purpose is not to be educated but to purchase. It was evident from looking in the window that there was nothing tangible to sell in the spaces. Those who did stop seemed to be people who had some free time.

It is clear that there was a missing element to lure people into the spaces. I cannot discount the fact that people often have a fear of the unknown and did not know what to expect. Overall, the spaces were lifeless, without any activity or human interaction. What could change this? Tables for activities, music [other than the mall muzak] or a video display. Some sort of action or potential for interactivity seemed to be needed to draw in an audience.

With the realization of the exhibit, many of the initial ideas we developed could not be realized due to constraints placed on us by the Willow Lawn management. The drawing tables could not be set out because there was no personnel [from CCF or Willow Lawn] to monitor their use or the spaces overall. We did not have any video or sound equipment at our disposal. Ultimately, this was successful in utilizing the mall as a public space. The information and artwork reached a diverse audience, and educated and inspired some who may not have considered the issue of poverty on a global level or had knowledge of the work of the Christian Children's Fund. [See visitor comments.]



technical information . 2' x 4' modular signage

typeface – Franklin Gothic
 produced in QuarkXpress
 output on b+w 600 dpi tektronix 11" x 17" laser printer
 printed on 100% cotton rag vellum and tiled together
 2 blackline copies made of each panel reinforced with
 foamcore strips [top and bottom]
 small holes drilled in foamcore [1 each end]
 signage attached to ceiling with monofilament
 total cost under \$200

mobility The signage was designed for maximum flexibility for future use in other environments. Its primary purpose was to draw people into the exhibit [with content and scale], therefore it was imperative that the signage function independent of location-specific elements. Because the work was designed for mobility and continued usage, the modular panels provided a system to work together, independent of environmental limitations. There was no hierarchy in the signage components [ie. from one panel to the next] therefore they could be easily arranged. The signage was constructed from paper with foamcore ends for stability, this allowed for easy rolling for mailing and storage.

spatial organization The spatial organization of the exhibition components was tied directly to the layout of the particular space. We presented the work to allow the viewer to see the work as they passed by, so there would be no surprises when they walked into the spaces. There were also specific considerations for each room, for instance, one space was fitted with permanent tile pedestals rising 12" off the ground and had electrical outlets in the floors. The space was organized so the natural pathways would avoid these areas. Artwork was hung at eye level and information of the sponsored children was placed approximately 3' off the floor so young children could read the information. Large scale panels and photographs were hung at different levels, some reaching down to the floor to create a visual rhythm and to allow the viewer to view the images and panels up close.

visitor comments

the shops at willow lawn . march + april 1995

Keep up the good work!!! This should go nation wide – malls, theater, etc. Anonymous

This is great art...this is a wonderful idea. More, more! Bravo! Larry Brown

Beautiful display Wonderful art! Thank you! The Mitchells

Great Display. Thank you. Teresa Jefferson

We loved your pretty pictures! Astrid and Damien

This is a very good exhibit. Jerry Gunter, Jr.

The exhibition looks great. Very inspiring artwork from the kids. One in particular I really enjoyed and when I read the stats on the child he had my birthday. Strange! Good job! Debbie Shmerler

Love the elephant races. Keep up the good work and never give up drawing. Michael

Wonderful idea! Love the art. Steven Jurentkaff

Art and love will carry us all though life with much more happiness. Teri Barnett

You guys did a wonderful job on the artwork. Keep up the good work it makes the mall look great! Hope to see it around sometime in the future! Good luck. LaReesha and Tina

Beautiful, beautiful artwork! I loved "meeting" the kids as well. Keep up your good work. I hope we see more of this in the future. Kat

Time well spent – wish I could express my appreciation as well as the kids express themselves through their art. Elia

I hope your wonderful display encourages more people to be sponsors. There is no greater satisfaction than receiving a letter – sometimes with a small drawing, such as this art – of appreciation from your sponsored child. I know because I have been a sponsor for 2 children for more than 18 years. EGP

I currently sponsor a girl in Sri Lanka through PLAN International. I'm glad that there are several organizations doing similar work. Thanks for the beautiful display. T. Doherty

"As you do unto the least of them, so you do unto me." It is not what you have, but what you give that makes you who you are. Anonymous

I love the art! Laverne King

Nice work! I enjoyed taking the time to look at the art work. You are all very talented! Tammy Harris

Thanks for sharing this art with us. Bill Groux

The display was great. Keep up the good work. Hope it can reach out and send a message to everyone. M. Jones

Exhibit gives great insights to culture. Choices of colors exciting! Most enjoyable – would like to take some home. Pam B.

I really enjoyed this exhibit. In a diverse and wonderful world it is important to embrace all of humanity and learn from each other. I say that the human race is great and to have this exhibit reminds us that well need to bend down and help each other, especially our children. Nick

The Christian Children's Art exhibit is wonderful. I hope you'll have it again next year. Sue T. Morgan

We very much enjoyed the pictures in this store. Me and my Dad can't wait until next month and the other months too. This is great. Meghan and Linwood Henson

A beautiful and inspiring exhibition. David Burton

But we still need help here in the USA. We have poor people who have nothing too. Tammy

Who is to answer questions and where are your guards? E. Palmer

This is very special and such a great outlet for kids. Please do more of this. Thanks. Gloria P. Harris

It's wonderful to see that children all over the world have the same feelings that can be expressed thru their art. Bernice Lee

part 5 . christian children's fund exhibition



1 Entrance to one of two exhibit spaces at Willow Lawn.

we shall **assist**
every child within
our means

orphans
street children
refugee or displaced children

children of socially
disadvantaged families

those exposed to the perils
of war, radiation, chemicals

to be free
from the risks
constraining their
normal development

we shall affirm and
support the
role of the family

as the primary care
giver and protector
of the child

in order that
every child may know

what it means
to **belong to**
others
whether they be natural
or adoptive parents

protect
the rights
of the child

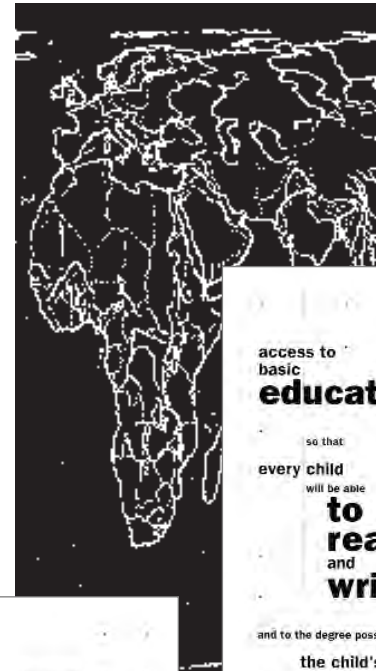
as they apply to labor
education, religion
and one's own

dignity
as a member
of
the
**human
race**

immunization
against
childhood
diseases,

including malaria and
hepatitis where
appropriate

and access to
primary **health**
and dental
care



access to
basic
education

so that
every child
will be able
to
read
and
write

and to the degree possible,
the child's
parents as well

These nine panels reflect the contents of CCF's *Ten Steps to the Year 2000*.



access to
safe drinking
water

and provided with the
nutritional
conditions

necessary **for**
growth

and appropriate
family instruction
so that

malnutrition
will be
eradicated

support

environmentally
appropriate
development

to

conserve
the world's
**natural
resources**

for present and
future
generations

and will be taught the
means **to**

**alleviate
poverty**

and its consequences

through
Income-generation
programs
and vocational
training

neighbor

acquaintance
nearby resident
friend

a fellow
**human
being**

neighborhood

environs
closeness
community

our
**world
neighbor
hood**



1

issue responses

Mass media and advertising shapes our perception of reality and creates our desires, obscuring the line between fantasy and reality. Perpetuating a consumer-based culture, mass media and advertising creates an image of perfection and then exposes our imperfections to encourage unhappiness with ourselves and our lives. Images shape our identity, both on a subconscious and conscious level. They create a reality which is not possible and promote anxiety and unhappiness.

My interest in pursuing a consumer-based ideology as a direction for the message component was reignited while I was working on the CCF exhibit at Willow Lawn. Drawing from Berger's *Ways of Seeing* as an initial resource and point of departure, I began to work on a message which spoke to a larger issue – consumerism.

Transforming the tenets of Berge's 7th essay [on advertising and consumer culture] required the reduction of the verbal elements which would communicate the essence of the work. I worked to move the concepts [listed below] to a vehicle, in this case matchbooks, shopping bags and benches.

Shopping is a substitute for political choice.

Purchase the life of your dreams.

Having nothing you will be nothing.

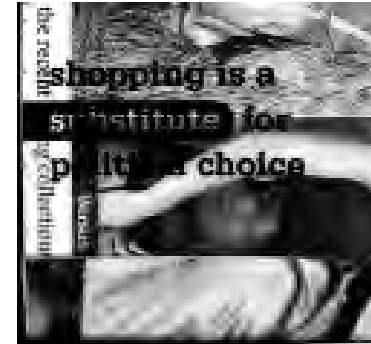
Do you really need it?

There's a world of difference between a need and a want.

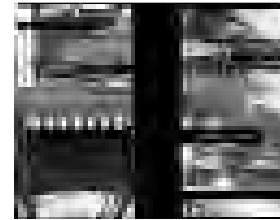
You are offered up the promise to be transformed by the product.

Cinderella also had glamorous daydreams.

Before you buy, ask yourself do I need it or do I just want it?



2



1



3

- 1 Matchbook s, front, back and inside cover . *Shopping is a substitute for political choice + purchase the life of your dreams.*
- 2 Matchbook , front cover . *Shopping is a substitute for political choice.*
- 3 Matchbook , front and back cover . *Shopping is a substitute for political choice + purchase the life of your dreams.*



1



2



3



4

- 1 Bench experiment . Shopping is a substitute for political choice .
- 2 Bench experiment . Shopping is a substitute for political choice + purchase the life of your dreams .
- 3 Bench experiment . Shopping is a substitute for political choice + purchase the life of your dreams .
- 4 Shopping bag experiment . Purchase the life of your dreams .



1

message to vehicle I began the transfer of message to vehicle with matchbooks and benches because they are in the public space and are interactive vehicles. Matchbooks are not limited to use by smokers but are ephemera that is collected and shared. Benches are located on city sidewalks, at bus stops and in parks where people wait or pass. The potential for public recognition and reaction is increased because these vehicles have unexpected content. Other potential vehicles considered were sugar packets, napkins and t-shirts. Qualities such as scale and placement become immensely important when dealing with this work. Along with contextual considerations, they act to pull the viewer into the work.

In preliminary review of the work – matchbooks and benches – it became obvious that the messages did not provoke a critical response that inspired contemplation or action. They did not provide further direction for the viewer nor were they grounded in an understandable context. I believe the major component that was missing was the ability to create a resonant message from a highly complex subject.

As I continued my research, I began to make connections between things. My previous interest in the Wonderbra advertisements re-emerged at this stage, caused by my reaction to how women were represented as objects. I was shocked at how blatant these advertisements were in portraying women as objects, as if the sum of her breasts indicated her self worth. To understand these issues, I purchased a Wonderbra and researched the product further. I discovered the product is made by the Sara Lee Foundation in México, and found it ironic that a dessert company manufactures bras. This relationship immediately created verbal/visual connections – such as “what is dessert?” and the use of the word “cheesecake” in popular culture. The pads contained in the bra are named “cookies” and both Sara Lee, as the parent company, and the Wonderbra promote images of wholesomeness. The same adjectives can be used to describe dessert products and breasts, and it was my goal to bring forth the connection between the two. It was also important to note that these glamorous products are removed from the unglamorous situations in which they are created – maquiladores in México in the case of the Wonderbra. At the same time I was researching the Wonderbra, the March/April 1995 issue of *Ms.* magazine contained an article on Nike’s labor practices in lesser developed countries. This opened up the parameters for connection building and allowed for the presentation of a bigger picture. This study developed into one that was narrative in scope, provocative in image and content, and didactic in nature.

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

process Parts of advertisements and product labels were used to create responses to the original ads and issues surrounding Nike and the Wonderbra.

These issues were...

- Nike's campaign of empowerment
- Use of an underpaid, predominately female Third World labor force
- The high profit margin stemming from low wage + high price disparity
- Selling of personal improvement through the product [physical and emotional power]
- Connections between the Wonderbra and the parent Sara Lee Foundation [famous for cheesecake and wholesomeness]
- Promotion of rounder and larger breasts as a validation of the self
- Identity of women = sum of her parts [physical]
- Wonderbra parts = cookies
- Advertisements support larger breasts and male approval ["hello boys" advertisement]

In my earlier visual experiments, I relied on traditional formal solutions, using strong image and direct text. The resulting synthesis was neither formally nor conceptually complex. In referencing my influences, I turned to collage as a medium which would be conducive to formally isolating signs while still indicating the original source of the information to which I was responding.

Text and image elements were selected from packages and advertisements [related to Sara Lee, the Wonderbra and Nike] to demystify obscured issues. The materials themselves reference their origin and function, which is integral in creating meaning. The method required the juxtaposition of components. Process work began with the generation of small [3-1/2" x 5"] collages created from found objects, it was at this point that the connections between parts was manifested in a visual form. The juxtaposition of dichotomous elements gave potency to the responses. The relationships were obvious and simply depicted. Each collage panel was restricted to the promotion of two concepts, when combined created a third. Drawing on the vivid appeal, the collages were formally bold and alluring, benefitting from aesthetically pleasing and often sensual images to draw the viewer into the work.

nike + wonderbra installation . panel summary				
quantity	type of panel	dimensions	description	
9	large scale collage	24" x 35"	colorized grayscale	
10	large scale text	24" x 48"	grayscale	
45	small-scale text	3.5" x 5"	black and white	
12	process collages	3.5" x 5"	mixed medium	

technical information . small collage panels

[3-1/2" x 5"]
 mixed medium on chipboard
 color photocopies
 magazine clippings
 found objects
 aluminum flashing
 acrylic paint
 glassine
 rubber cement and sobo

technical information . large collage panels

scans of small collages [grayscale]
 applications – QuarkXPress + Photoshop
 output on 11" x 17" 600 dpi b + w laser printer
 dimensions 24" x 35" [all panels tiled]
 mounted on single ply foamcore
 colored with liquid acrylic paint

During the course of this study, I have constantly asked myself if one can communicate an issue with a single image and/or with a single headline? The answer is both “yes” and “no.” I have found that the issues I have chosen to convey are not singular in themselves but rather build on the relationships and connections between things, events and people. It is my intention to show the audience the bigger picture and build on the part to part relationships to convey the whole issue. The visuals I have created can stand alone to provoke thought, but their message becomes so much stronger when the parts are viewed in relation to each other and the whole picture is conveyed. The viewer is given the opportunity to critically analyze issues based on their own personal experiences.

realization. anderson gallery

My intent in this component was to examine the relationship between the image of ourselves created by the mass media and its role in shaping personal identity, creating desires and defining a value system. The message component is centered on two corporations and their products: the Wonderbra made by the Sara Lee Foundation and Nike shoes and accessories. With these products as a point of departure, my intent was to prompt the viewer to question what shapes their personal identity, how their values are formed and how their purchases/actions affect others. Without foregrounding, these connections are obscured. Foregrounding brings the element[s] to the attention of the viewer through visual and/or verbal cues. By using imagery from advertisements, I subvert their meaning and convey what I believe to be the truth. In exposing what is often obscured, it was my intent to prompt the viewer to question his or her own reality and ultimately promote attitudinal and behavioral change.

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]



1

A pair of Nike's are literally placed on a pedestal. This \$90 pair of basketball shoes was encased both for protection from theft and to elevate their "value" in the context of this study.

The work was hung to face many directions so the viewer would see at least a portion of the two dimensional panels from all areas of the room, not only the entrance. These multiple vantage points were intended to assist the viewer in maneuvering through the space and in obtaining information from all points.



2

Structured along a continuous angle, the smaller type and image panels forced the viewer to move physically to read them. This reinforced the sense of imbalance and interactivity created by the large panels.

All panels were hung at an angle to create a sense of imbalance and precariousness as one entered the space. One could literally move through the space, in and out of the panels to become part of the space. The visual inundation was intentional to prompt the viewer to interact with the work, whether this be the turning of a head or walking between panels.

the non-linear narrative format Traditional propaganda involves the use of strong, compelling imagery with easily absorbed and convincing messages. In consideration of the message component, and the direction that I ultimately felt the need to move in, this traditional solution was not appropriate. With the theme of connections and goal of illuminating the bigger picture, there was quite clearly too much information and too many factors involved to reduce the communication to one individual piece and still maintain the integrity, impact and continued resonance of the message. Something on a smaller scale may communicate, but the question I asked myself was “would that have a long-term impact on the audience?” In contemplating this during my preliminary studies with the benches, matchbooks and bags, I felt that the answer was a clear “no.” Early audience evaluation was meaningful in gauging impact and future direction.

Preliminary feedback played a large part in clarifying my direction and content. It was evident that the audience was looking for something more than a quick fix or snappy statement. This topic contains substance that has the potential to be lost. The chances of communicating the whole picture would be reduced with the reduction of elements. It was important to give the audience the information they needed to see through the obscuring myths.

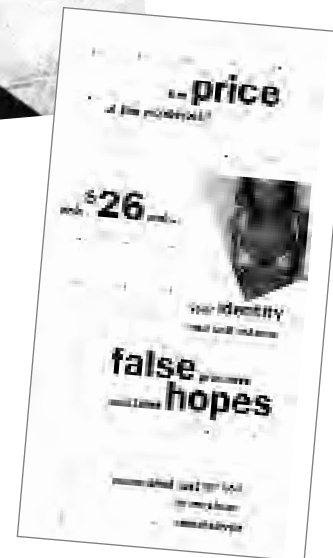
visualizing connections In this exploration, I was concerned with visualizing the connections between things that are often not made because certain relationships are obscured. These connections cannot be separated physically but often are mentally. We are removed from the origins of resources we consume. A packaged product in a store is far removed from its origins and the work required to bring it there. What is obscured is the work involved in the production and manufacturing, among other things the effect of labor on the worker, the worker on the economy and what transport of the product to the commercial center involves. This distance removes us from connections between things, disconnects us from each other, other life on this planet and our relationship with the planet itself. We live in a world where the cause and effect relationships are not evident.

To borrow on the phrase “fight fire with fire, “ I attempted to do just that in the controlled environment of the Anderson Gallery. I challenged the visual inundation we experience with visual inundation. By stimulating the viewer on many levels, I provide a large quantity of information to absorb. This information is provided in small doses to facilitate comprehension and the small parts form a cohesive whole and are intended to support the total concept. It is not my intent to overwhelm the audience in a negative, disordered manner but rather provide them with information to absorb at their own pace.

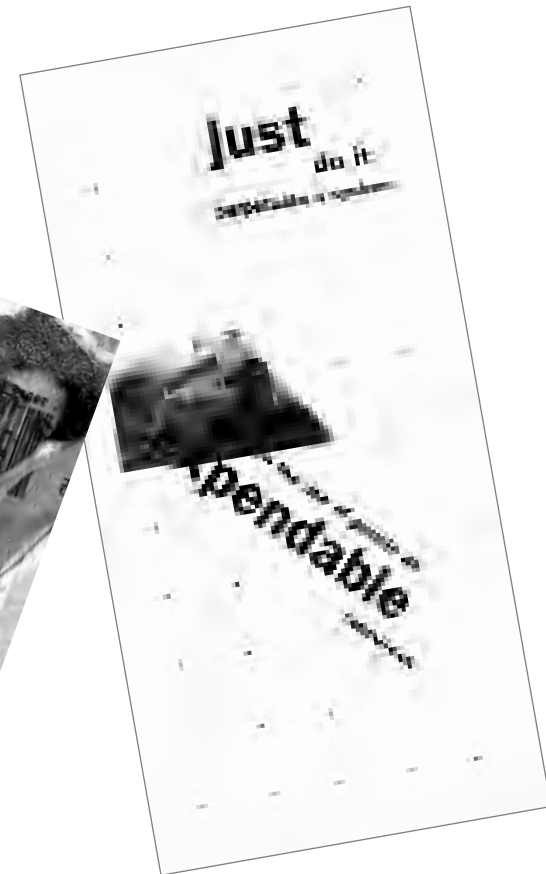
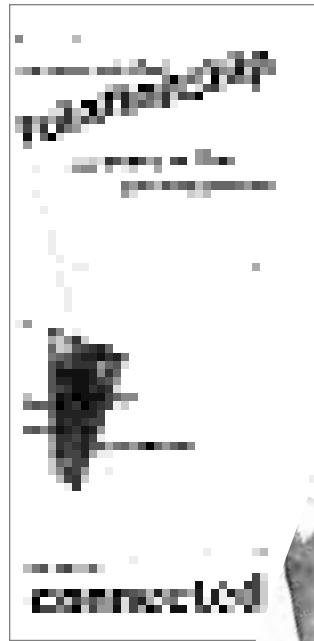
There is no starting or finishing point to the structure of the information or the installation. Each piece is intended to play off each other. The more one reads, the more insight into the bigger picture one is able to gain. Each panel contributes to strengthen the whole message. With the spectrum that runs between Nike and the Wonderbra, I attempted to cover all ground. The danger of focusing on one product is in alienating the portion of the audience that does not identify with the product. Originally, it was my intention to explore aspects of the Wonderbra – identity, dissatisfaction with the self, woman as object – but I felt this was not all inclusive in regards to the audience. Not everyone would be able to relate to the issues surrounding this product. This led to my decision to expand my process to include Nike, in the hopes of appealing to a broader audience, irregardless of economic class. The connections between Nike’s empowerment campaigns and their use of image and celebrity to sell their product are in direct opposition to their employment practices in foreign countries. I exposed the information that is normally obscured. Both Nike and the Wonderbra sell us images of ourselves as we want to be, albeit on different ends of the spectrum.

installation + spatial organization I worked with the Anderson Gallery space allocated to me and the visual work for this component was presented to use the space in the best available manner. The contrast between the large and small panels was not intended as a comparison, but to create a more intimate environment with the smaller panels that allow the viewer to get closer to the work and absorb the information. The smaller collage panels were also very textural and reinforced the messages on the wall. The large text and image panels were more removed from audience interaction and were larger than life in scale. I considered the wayfinding aspects of the installation to be particularly important because there are two entrances to the space. This became conducive to devising a sense of circularity with the content. No matter where the audience entered or started reading, they would have access to the total message. At each entrance, an introductory statement was placed to orient the viewer, reflecting the point of departure.

The place is of consequence only in the sense of reaching an audience. The work can be placed anywhere and is designed for mobility. The modular components can be easily integrated and arranged in most any space. Drawing on the experience gained from the CCF exhibit at Willow Lawn, the modular system worked to give structure and consistency to the communication of information.



large scale text + image panels



large scale text + image panels



large scale text + image panels



large scale text + image panels

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

are you transformed by the product you purchase?



do you buy before you think or think before you buy?

is it what you want or what you need?

what do you need?

money talks

it is with your purchasing power that you can make changes in the world

be a responsible consumer

it's not what's on the inside that counts
appearance is everything

you are what you eat
you are what you wear
you are what you own

you are the value of your possessions



part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

does a product have the power to transform your identity?
shape who you are?
tell you who you are supposed to be?



it is through seeing that you establish your
place in the world

you will never look at just
one thing

you will always look at the relationships
between objects and yourself

who are you?

what shapes your identity?

what shapes your actions?

your thoughts?

what is the price you pay
for the product?

your love of yourself

get rid of what you have
and buy something new



magical promises are offered
in every purchase

small scale text + image panels

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

the purpose

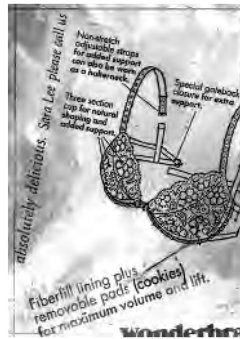
to make you marginally dissatisfied with your present way of life

if you buy what is being offered, your life will become better

- newer
- younger
- bigger
- better
- improved
- faster
- smoother
- creamier

the message

you can transform your life by buying something more



false promises and

false hopes...

change your breast size and change your life

what is the price of the wonderbra?

\$26.00

and...

your self-esteem tied to dissatisfaction with your breasts

identity tied to a body part

false promises and false hopes only 1 in 40,000 women meet a model's shape and size

advertising steals your love of yourself and sells it back to you for the price of the product



small scale text + image panels

objectified constantly by others, a woman
learns to objectify herself

only 1 in 40,000 women meet the require-
ments of a model's size and shape

who told you to dislike the body
you have?

who told you to that you weren't
good enough?

who told you that you were the
value of your possessions?



society places importance
on image, on celebrity,
on appearance

appearance becomes everything and sub-
stance nothing

don't look below the surface

more than \$1 million is spent every hour on cosmetics –
a \$20 billion industry worldwide

every year 150,000 women die of
anorexia in the united states

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

you are alienated from yourself with images of perfection that are unattainable

reality is lost in fantasy

media offers us images of perfection

images of fantasy to be confused with reality

what is the image you are trying to project?

- the size and shape of your body
- the color and cut of your hair
- the car you drive
- the place you live
- the clothes you wear

if you cannot buy it you will become less lovable

you are offered an image of yourself made glamorous [famous/perfect] by the product being sold

you are offered the promise of happiness

a happiness that is judged from the outside by others

and this happiness of being envied is called glamour



what is the real cheesecake that sara lee sells?

images of wholesomeness...
wholesome foods and wholesome breasts

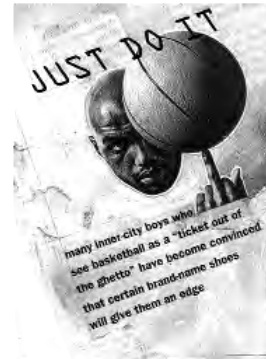
with sara lee and the wonderbra you can
have your cheesecake and eat it too!

sumptuous images shape
our notion of both reality
and identity

you are seduced with visions
of perfection

the unattainable can now
be attained through the purchase of a
product

you live in a world mired in the contradic-
tion between fantasy and reality



with every purchase you have the power to
change your life

it is with the ownership of the product you
become desirable

for only \$XX.XX you too can
have the life of your dreams

part 5 . nike + wonderbra [anderson gallery]

where does it come from?
who is the faceless worker that makes
your \$100 shoes?

a woman in indonesia working 12 hours a
day for 10¢ an hour

just do it
perpetuate a system based on the use of
people as expendable resources

the cause and effect relationship

every action you take, every purchase you make
has an effect

on someone somewhere

by buying a product you support the actions
of the corporation



the sense of having has obliterated
all other senses

how many people have been mugged for their shoes?



what is the price of the pair of nikes?
 and...
 false promises, the magical power of the product

\$70.00

support of oppressive labor practices in 3rd world countries

why do you buy what you do?

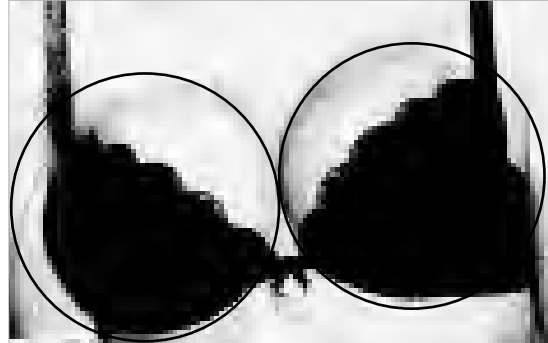
do you need it?
 or
 do you want it?

greed versus need
 think about it



defy convention
 make your own rules

The juxtaposition of the Wonderbra label with a Sara Lee cheesecake package is intended to bring out the connection between the product cheesecake and how it has been used in American vernacular. What exactly is the cheesecake Sara Lee is selling?



Breasts as round as these [almost perfect circles] do not occur in nature. This pair, used in Wonderbra advertisements, is obvious in their alteration. Yet, the message is that these are attractive and desirable. What does this say to women and men? To young girls and boys?

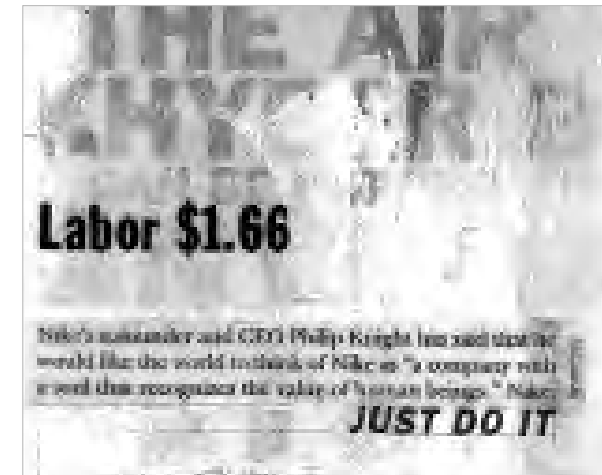


The barcode symbolizes the reduction of things and of ourselves to numbers. It is intended to represent the alienation of the self.



image components

Images of glamour juxtaposed with the product label from the Wonderbra. "Assembled in México" is brought up in scale to give significance to this information.



By shifting layers, a new meaning is created. Reference to Nike is maintained through the advertisement, but tangible economic information is foregrounded to focus on the exploitation of workers in overseas factories.

The individual is baited with images of perfection and promises of magical transformations in character and physical appearance which occur only with the purchase of a product. Happiness is achieved through the purchase of an object, the ownership of a product. If the individual is directly confronted with the dichotomy between fantasy and reality what is the result? The selection of Nike and the Wonderbra, both as corporation and product, was designed to demonstrate the commodification of the individual via the product. Their messages are simple and direct – through the ownership of their product you will be better, you will be happier, your life will be perfect. What we are not shown are the connections. We do not see the relationships between what we buy and what we support.

Ultimately, with this exhibition my intention was to cause people to question their beliefs and motivate them to actively respond to issues which affect them. If attitudinal change can be manifested, it will naturally lead to behavioral change. To further develop as a society, people must actively participate in the issues which affect them both locally and globally because, as Marshall McLuhan stated “in this age of information, we have become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other.”

evaluation of Nike + Wonderbra installation

audience My purpose in utilizing the space in the Anderson Gallery was, as a public space, to prompt viewer response. In this installation, I considered the potential of a non-linear narrative format to assign meaning to this complex information. Formal considerations have been explored through the synthesis of text and image. The content of this work specifically lends itself to a public environment where it would reach a broader audience than at the Anderson Gallery.

The audience included individuals from the university community [faculty, staff, students], and others concerned with the arts and/or education. I would gauge the economic background at middle or upper-middle class, with the educational level placed at college/university level. The exception to this being the high school students who toured the gallery during that week as an organized school group.

The objective of the installation was to prompt viewer response, with consideration paid to the potential of a non-linear narrative format to assign meaning to complex information. The message – which communicated a part to whole relationship – incited a reaction in many individuals who had the opportunity to view the installation [see visitor comments]. It was this non-linear narrative format that aided in creating a message with impact. The collages, in which the elements were drawn from advertisements, labels and other found objects, built on cultural relationships and provided a clear message and enhanced the meaning.

Using cultural icons, such as Charles Barkley, helped the audience identify not only with the message that I was putting forth but also with the message created by Nike in their advertising campaigns. The placement of the \$90 pair of Nike basketball shoes in proximity with the images of third world laborers brought out the dichotomy that exists in Nike's message and their actions to the foreground. The Wonderbra panels accentuated breasts, and treated the women as objects to reinforce the message that a woman is the sum total of her body parts, as communicated in their advertisements. The placement of a Wonderbra on a mannequin bust in the site, as with the pair of Nike's under glass, brought the relationship between the product and the individual full circle. One could see the value that we as a culture place on products, yet it was also evident that they yielded no magical power. It was the juxtaposition of image, text and product that, in this non-linear narrative structure, strengthened the message.

evaluating impact I have found that the effect of propaganda is difficult to evaluate. In the context of this study, it is almost impossible to derive an accurate assessment of the impact of the work. The foremost problem is that in an exploration of this scope, there is not a predefined control group to allow for the evaluation of “before” and “after” responses. There is also no feasible manner in which to track the effect of this work after audience departure from the space. The logistical constraints therefore render a methodical evaluation impossible.

The most conclusive method of evaluation then is through audience feedback. This was accomplished through a comment book, available to the audience for the duration of the installation at the Anderson Gallery. The drawback to the comment book is that those who are moved in some way or another to respond will do so, but there was no allowance made to take into consideration those who did not comment. Both numbers are obscure, and their meaningfulness is not clear. I have therefore relied on comments, made in the book and verbally, to evaluate this component.

visitor comments

anderson gallery . april + may 1995

It's wonderful – you are really expressing something important. It is not evident in anything else in the show. Good luck! Sylvia

I think you raise a lot of serious questions about our consumer-based society – I ponder these issues on a daily basis and hope that I don't fall prey to advertiser's claims – but I'm sure I do at least some of the time. What is the answer? The images that depict the wages paid to footwear workers are powerful – my only critique is that money is relative to a large degree – I'd like to see some information on how far \$.10 goes in China versus the USA. But again, very powerful messages, especially the more graphic black and white pieces. Andy F.

If only men agreed about the falsifications! Susan P.

Hey – this stuff is great! It, above all else in the show, made me think. You may not value the opinion of a high school senior who just wandered through on a field trip, but I was amazed. It made me wonder about my Levi's I have on, and if some poor family was paid \$2.00 to make this shirt. Thanks, Jonathan Coleman

Thank you. I'm not sure how else to put my feelings into words. You brought many emotions to life for me – and made me think. Your art is about awareness and it is wonderfully successful. I'll never buy Nike again. I'm ashamed to say that I own a Wonderbra. Thanks so very much for making me think and look at me. Sincerest gratitude, Heather McCafferty

Time based, time based, time based – I like it. Henry B. Lee

Thank you. You have put my feelings into a visual image. It can be recognized now for what it is. Perhaps others who have never realized they themselves are beautiful without the "image boosters" can finally bring themselves to realize they don't need to be what society want them to be. Then again, maybe not. Leslie

Fantastic! Great subject matter + very well presented. Marie O'Kleasky

I found this to be a very strong show – can relate to it well. Marjorie

Very astute commentary and mind-building installation. Didn't know that Sara Lee made the Wonderbra! Not surprised though. Anonymous

No need to alter, improve or disguise this presentation – it's great! Anonymous

I am impressed by your courage in putting your convictions up for public display. Very well done. Gloria Sitzman

I've really enjoyed your work. The point really hits home. I hope that this display will make some folks change their minds on what is real. [Real inside.] DH

Very important statements. Lots of food for thought. Very beautifully and thoughtfully presented. Genie B.

You add your own words to the images that, as you put it, make the viewer alienated from herself. I truly relate to the words you put beside the pictures, I mean the words that come out and state your true message and feelings regarding the major trick of everyday consumer life that we all play on ourselves. I long so desperately for the purity [something humans fundamentally long for from time to time especially after so much time spent in life] of self that would come from being completely certain of myself to the point that ads would not affect me at all. You put the words I relate to next to the pictures I feel I can't relate to. Amazing juxtaposition. Thank you. Anonymous

We really like your work – your ideas and the marvelous way you've expressed them. Advertising was a lot of fun back in the 50s and 60s. Agreed we embellished a bit from time to time. But we did for the most part describe the product and especially its promotable differences. The Smiths

I'm sorry but these works look pornographic. The message is unclear without your text. But they look good. Paul

Being in fashion, I am around these ideas that you have raised questions about everyday. I like the whole concept. David Alexander

This show can be disturbing as I stand here in my \$100 Nikes!?! Anonymous

ownership As with all design problems, the results depend upon the degree of control one has over the message and the environment. This is evident in the differences between the results of the CCF exhibit and the Nike and Wonderbra installation. The impact can be diminished when the client has content, budget, or installation limitations, but there is also a challenge to overcome these limitations with creative solutions. When client and designer are one, the constraints are minimal because other party approval/consent is not necessary. In the case of CCF, if we had additional equipment, staff or money the scope of the project could have expanded to include more interaction between individuals and mediums used. Welcome to the real world! In the case of CCF, total organizational support was not behind this project and I do not believe that they realized the full potential of developing a travelling exhibit, something that could be easily incorporated into their promotional strategy.

the non-linear narrative format Audiences now have the ability to absorb complex information. The strength of my work in this study lies in the communication of complex information in a non-linear narrative format. Through audience interaction with the work, and from the comments from the Nike and Wonderbra installation, I concluded that the presentation of the information met the communication goals established. What I have discovered in this study is that people are looking for issues to identify with, and they need some way to relate to an issue for it to make an impact on them. People tend to react most when something affects them directly – hence, the “not in my backyard” approach to issues. However, in light of this study, I have found that it is possible to motivate people to think [increasing the possibility of action] about an issue by educating them. It is then dependent upon the individual to act to make change, either behavioral or attitudinal. But it is the education and empowerment process that will inspire this motivation and potentially cause change.

Ultimately, this study focuses on the use of a non-linear narrative to structure an environment and communicate a socio-political message. Many issues and causes can benefit from this method of communication, which is didactic in nature. Critical thinking is encouraged by requiring the viewer to draw from his or her own experience and knowledge when interpreting the information and if this can make an impact, it has the potential to foment action.

formal and conceptual considerations To persuade, work should be aesthetically pleasing and vivid in its appeal in order to attract the viewer. Because “vivid images attract attention, it helps communication stand out in the message-dense environment. Vividness can make the information more concrete and personal and ultimately more memorable. This is especially important if we do not reach an immediate conclusion but base our later judgements on information that comes readily to mind.”¹⁸ Formal concerns such as visual organization, legibility, scale relationships, hierarchy and color, when working with text and image must be taken into consideration based on the vivid appeal. The applied work must also be based in a cultural context. This is necessary to allow the viewer to identify with the message and reach his/her own conclusions. No “formula” can or should be developed to do this, but the relationship between form and content must be strong and unified to communicate a meaningful message.

The medium of collage was ideal because it connotes immediacy and is very tactile, with textures and seams becoming apparent. In responding to the issues – dealing with consumerism, identity and the 3rd world, the visual responses were a formal antithesis of their origins – slick advertisements. The collages were visually rough, not smooth and refined, but still appealing and inferred immediacy of response. The process was exposed – pencil lines were apparent as were peeling INT letters, and the materials used were those found in our environment. Because the collages communicated a minimum of information with the potential for maximum impact, the composition of elements was of primary importance. Scale relationships created a hierarchy between elements which set the tone for each piece. Every element had meaning, semantically and/or syntactically.

In moving from small to large scale, I scanned the small collages [3-1/2” x 5”] and output them at 1000%. This change in scale created new relationships between parts, through hierarchy and improved visual organization. While the small collages were visually complex, the intrinsic visual hierarchy was not apparent until they were enlarged. Created from original advertising materials and photocopies, the contrast between elements that was so apparent in the large collages was diminished in the small scale because of scale and color differences. The value of the small collages was in that they directly and unequivocally referenced their origins in mass media and were grounded in our culture.

In the large collages, attention was paid specifically to the impact of color, which were hand painted to place emphasis on areas requiring more visual definition. Used minimally in each panel, the color palette was comprised of five colors – white, aqua blue, olive green, red and flesh. Red was used as an accent color – to define lips and bring out text, white to mute parts, and flesh to bring out the form of the figure. Background images and texture were minimized to reduce formal confusion. The text panels were designed to communicate information in small and manageable quantities, appealing to the viewer to read the information and not turn away.

The collage and text panels were effective in communicating the content, particularly the large collages which instantly communicated to the audience. As a whole, the large and small scale panels reinforced the overall message and played off of each other in content and form. The large scale panels worked on many levels – to define space in the installation, illuminate obscure yet relevant elements such as package parts, and in creating a relationship of scale with the viewer. The large panels corresponded to how these issues impact our lives and are dominant in our culture yet remain, for the most part, in the background. The small scale panels reinforced these messages on a more intimate and personal level.

conclusions

part 7 . further directions

Throughout my graduate experience, I challenged myself to develop my voice as a visual communicator, creating a synthesis between my interests, life experience and education. This synthesis is evident in the direction I plan to pursue – in the utilization of design as a social and cultural tool, to educate and enrich the lives of others.

further directions

This creative project work has been my first “real” experience in working to influence people with visual communication in a public environment. Audience response from the CCF exhibit and especially the Nike/Wonderbra installation gave me tremendous food for thought. During the opening at the Anderson Gallery the energy in the space was indicative of the provocative nature of the work. The choice of a communication topic and vehicle must be appropriate to the cultural context. Because of the nature of this study, it is logical that the work is placed in the public realm, and this work lends itself to being placed in the new public space of the World Wide Web, which will transmit image and text globally in a matter of minutes. Ultimately I want to explore this area to test out the flexibility of the work and am looking at additional vehicles for this work. The work will be included in a show at Northern Kentucky University in February and March, 1996 and I am currently looking for other venues. Ultimately, I want to show this work in public spaces – libraries, schools and outdoors – where it will reach a broad audience. In addition, I plan to test out the flexibility of the formal experimentations and the non-linear narrative format on other socio-political issues.

I want to continue in this direction, and work with groups who promote community development. I am more and more concerned with civic responsibility and social action [and the lack of it] and want to work to promote issues for the public good.

notes

- 1 Age of Propaganda, pages 3 - 4
- 2 Marshall McLuhan
- 3 *Photomontage: A Political Weapon*, page 11
- 4 *Photomontage: A Political Weapon*, page 23 - 24
- 5 Kruger, *Love For Sale*, page 29
- 6 Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, page 47
- 7 *Age of Propaganda*, page 133
- 8 *Age of Propaganda*, page 133 - 137
- 9 *Age of Propaganda*, page 133 - 137
- 10 *Age of Propaganda*, page 133 - 137
- 11 *Age of Propaganda*, page 136
- 12 Visible Language, pages 358 - 378
- 13 *Oppositional Poster Publishing: A Guide for Social Activists* © 1988 Liberation Graphics
- 14 *Age of Propaganda*, pages 253-254
- 15 Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pages 129 - 154
- 14 *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, page 123
- 15 *Christian Children's Fund Annual Report*, 1993
- 16 *Age of Propaganda*, pages 118 - 129

Activism. a practice based on action to achieve a social or political end.

Agitate. to arouse, or try to arouse, public interest; to upset, disturb.

Attitude. a mental position with regard to a fact or state; a feeling or emotion towards a fact or state.

Attitudinal. relating to, based on or expressive of personal attitudes.

Behavioral. requiring action.

Code. system into which signs are organized, expressing rules agreed by a community [either explicitly or implicitly].

Concept. the structuring of a relationship among forms and messages to achieve a specific expression within a given context.

Consciousness. the state of being aware of an external object; awareness: concern for a political or social cause.

Content. the underlying thought that provides the criterion and stimulus for a form.

Context. the environment, cultural or physical, in which a message or form is perceived and by which it is conditioned.

Convention. codes [rules of behavior and systems of signs] which are obviously arbitrary, governed by a choice of a community rather than by a necessary connection with reality.

Culture. the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought created by a people or group at a particular time.

Cultural activism. the use of cultural means to try to affect social change.

Empower. to enable or permit.

Ethics. the study of standards of conduct and moral judgement; the system or code of morals of a particular person, group, religion or profession.

Form. the characteristics that distinguish one visual mark from another, including shape, size, color and texture.

Icon. a sign which has features in common with the object and characterizes, pictures or imitates the object.

Index. a pointing sign which has direct, causal or real relation to its object.

Meaning. the interpretation of a message by the receiver. the effectiveness of the message depends on the context in which it is received; and the values, attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of the receiver.

Media. plural of medium [McLuhan].

Medium. vehicle of artistic expression or communication; a means of affecting or conveying a message [McLuhan].

Message. the thing one intends to convey or signify through language; something meant or intended.

terminology

Modular. a standardized component having a defined function within a system or environment.

Morals. subjectively defined standards of goodness or correctness arising from conscience.

Myth. a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone, embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of a society; an unfounded or false notion.

Narrative . a specific kind of text or discourse in which a story of some form is related.

Non-linear narrative. being part of a chain or sequence in which the presence of one part does not displace the previous one; there is no hierarchy or preference to order.

Non-traditional medium. vehicle which conveys a message in a manner which is unexpected and therefore raising the likelihood of provoking reaction [example: public bench as communicator with a photographic image and message].

Object. material or physical reality that can be perceived by the senses.

Objective. uninfluenced by emotions, involving or arising from sense perceptions, existing independent of individual thought and perception.

Political. involving or concerned with acts against a government, political or other system of authority.

Public. [noun] the community or the people as a whole; [adj] of concerning or affecting the community or the people.

Public space. area to which general public has access.

Reality. the condition or quality of being real or true.

Semantic. signs and their relationship to the objects for which they stand.

Social. interaction of the individual and the group.

Stereotype. portrayal of a person or group in oversimplified and unquestioning terms.

Structure. the basis of formal relationships. when defined structurally, a form can be described and analyzed. The fundamental terms of a structure are difference and identity. Identity [similarity] is the unifying principle; difference [contrast] is the means for conveying meaning.

Symbol. a sign which does not depend on likeness, correspondence, or real connection with its object.

Syntax. signs and their formal relationship to other signs.

Traditional medium. vehicle which conveys a message in a manner which is expected because of societal predisposition [example: posters and billboards].

Values. something held to be worthwhile; ideals.

Vehicle. a medium through which something is expressed, achieved or displayed; an agent of transmission.

Vivid appeal. makes a strong argument even more persuasive by using bold statements.

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typography **text.** Myriad MM 400 Rg/600 No, 7/11
subheads. Myriad MM 565 Sb/600 No,12/11
heads. Myriad MM 400 Rg/600 No, 12 and 18/11
quotes. Myriad MM 400 Rg/600 No, 9/11
image captions. Myriad MM 400 Rg/600 No, 6/7

paper Hammermill 20lb bond, acid free, 8-1/2" x 14"

applications QuarkXPress, Photoshop + Freehand

equipment Power Macintosh 7100/80
printed on a 600 dpi 16/600 Laserwriter

design Maria Rogal

editing Robert Meganck
Richard Carlyon
John DeMao
John Malinoski

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Jeff Gaither
Linda Johnson
Peyton Rowe Melita
Kiky Wang

colophon

at the Anderson Gallery