

Research project

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The graphic designer has to intrigue or reveal, encode or decode ?

In front of media hype and the intrusive marketing, how can the graphic designer take place? Does he have to intrigue, put riddles? By this research work in design I shall try to propose playful processes which put the communication as the treasure hunt which asks to the public to get involved actively in the process of reception of the graphic design in contrario of the advertising which imposes upon us.

The graphic design is a discipline which consists in creating, in choosing and in using graphic elements (drawings, typographic characters, photos, colors, etc.) to develop an object of communication and/or culture. It is a way of representing. Each of the elements is symbolic and significant in the conception of the project, according to axes defined possibly with other participants of the domain of the communication, with the aim of promoting, informing or educating. According to Annick Lantenois, « the graphic design can be defined as the formal treatment of the information and the knowledges. The graphic designer is then a mediator who acts on conditions of reception and appropriation of the information and the knowledges which he shapes. « According to his fields of intervention (illustration, poster, corporate communication, press, edition, packaging, advertising, Web design, signalling system, visual identity, etc.), he is a part of the graphic chain bound to the printing office or to other media.

The graphic designer is often called to decipher, to make readable, to explain a set of information to a public. So he creates narratives and mythologies of the everyday life.

The receiver is also an actor of the process of deciphering and allows the creation of interactions and sharing via the graphic design. The role of mediator of the graphic designer is relevant with the transmission of the digital tools today, he can decant a technical and hermetic middle towards the layman as a tool of opening and sharing. This technological popularization is a democratic stake in the sharing of the knowledges. Objects of design such as the tactile posters, the augmented reality, the tracking can establish bridges between domains, can fill the cleavages, the prejudices, facing the democratic illusion of the graphic clarity we are tempted to look for a sharing via the riddle.

A particular case, the font Helvetica, drawn by Max Miedinger in 1957 is symptomatic of a split in the contemporary graphic design, conceived in full modernist movement it proposed a real modernity of the typographic forms in a universalist and unifying moose it is the Modernism itself. Celebrated as one of the ultimate fonts for its discretion and its clarity it is considered as one of the essential for the designers schedules novice and confirmed but by the years it was openly criticized for its role of banner of the international style and its claimed responsibility in the development of the ultra-liberalism for the seductive image which it was able to give to the big commercial companies. A documentary on this font allows to more understand the point of view of numerous contemporary graphic designers on this controversial typography and what it can represent.

The documentary Helvetica, a documentary film, directed by Gary Hustwit in 2007 propose an overview of the western graphic scene on the ambivalent relationship which the designers have with Helvetica drawn by Max Miedinger in 1957 and symbolic of the Swiss or international style in graphic design.

The documentary states that Helvetica is everywhere around us, by consulting the upholders of the graphic modernism we have tracks of reflection on the reasons of this success, according to Massimo Vignelli « a font have to not at all be meaning », historically Rick Poynor explains it by « a real feeling of idealism on behalf of the designers after the Second World War, they wanted to reconstruct, to recreate and to return things more opened for a more democratic world. There was the real social responsibility among the designers.» For Wim Crouwel « the typographic rules help to create order », to rationalize and to codify the graphic design, Helvetica « gets rid of manual details of the typographic plan » it is the archetypal abstract, rational and mechanical typography, for him the sense of the communication « has to be in the contents and not in the typography. » The launch of Helvetica generated a big passion at the designers, it corresponded exactly to what they looked for. According to Michael Beirut it had « the effect of a breath of pure air in the swollen communication of the beginning of 1960s. » For Leslie Saven « the governments and the corporations like Helvetica because it makes them look neutral and effective, the sweetness of the characters of Helvetica makes them almost human while in reality they are authoritarian and bureaucratic they give themselves an image of transparency and accessibility.» According to Lars Müller Helvetica is not as we can blame it for a capitalist font in the service of an ultra-liberal world but « a socialist police which is everywhere, available for all and allows each to make some visual quality creation rather easily.»

Tobias Frere-jones designer of the police Gotham, inspired of the Helvetica thinks that it invites in an open interpretation, it answered a need but «because of the succession of PC/MAC at the private individuals there is a populist use of the Helvetica, the cliché, the myth of the ultimate typography, it is the trap which closes the visual creation.» It was conceived so that all the letters seem to have the same size as the army, but in the civil frame people are very different, it does not contribute to the individuation, a typography must be singular to be interesting. In answer to Wim Crowel, Erik Spikermann considers that « the typography needs a rhythm and contrasts which come from the handwritting and Helvetica possesses nothing of it.» According to Neville Brody every typography and in particular Helvetica « is a weapon in the display of a communication is because it influences the look. « In the 1970s the designers feel a tiredness to the modernist system, there is a kickback and a real need for change. Paula Scher tells that at that time in the schools of design there were two visions « the corporatist and commercial first one that used Helvetica to create convincing pictures although a little bit fascist, the second is the one of the underground and the counterculture, a typography can and has to have so much personality as a drawing, the postmodernism tries to bring out clean, clear and smoother things.

For Stefan Sagmeister the modernism states « Especially do not read to me, you go to be bored ! », to choose a typography in a reference catalog bores him excessively. « The Swiss design is too synthetic and binding, there is not pleasure anymore in the creation. The postmodernism is a subjective and subversive tool it was seen by the upholders of the design of the period as if the barbarians were near the city.» David Carson formed in self-taught thinks that the modernist designers spent a lot of time to organize things, to set up a system and that with his ignorance he contributed « to throw this system through the window. » « You should not confuse legibility and communication, it is not because something is readable, that means that communicates.» In it Vignelli answers « that with the grunge graphic design the incompetent became fashionable «, in the face of this insoluble conflict Erwin Brinkers declares that « the avant-gardes are more subversive while the modernism is above all concerned by the feature, in Holland and in particular in Rotterdam all the public and private graphics standards were designed in Helvetica by Wim Crowwel, it is a major part of the city, the environment, it is in our blood. « Finally for Manuel Krebs and Dimitri Bruni « Helvetica contains a system, a program, its own codes, with the social networks the individuals began to care about their graphic image in terms of pictures, about typography and about layout as about their own appearance, it is one visual expression of the identity and Helvetica has a role to be played it.»

By this panorama of the important actors of the graphic design this documentary shows the symbolic role of Helvetica in the tension between modernists and postmodernists which is on the agenda always today and in experience a new place with the integration of the digital technology in the graphic design and the way a typography designed in a rational and utopian run-up to create a system of pacifist communication because neutral then became the emblem of a totalitarian ultraliberalism then a safe investment in a world in loss of marks and disorientated..

Indeed at the end of the Second World War, having reached that we thought of being a summit of horror and destruction the designers considered the graphic nationalisms partially responsible for this massacre, the big totalitarianisms of the XXth century indeed have in common to have annihilated the researches for the avant-gardes as the Bauhaus or the Constructivism considered too subversive to promote their propaganda by a vernacular and violent visual identity which called up to the worst faults for the glory of the homeland. Further to it there was a strong desire to think of a universal and pacifist graphic system.

The former members of the Bauhaus exiled in Switzerland or in the United States such as Herbert Bayer, László Moholy-Nagy or Jan Tschichold influenced a new idea of the graphic design, in connection with the architectural modernism of Mies Van Der Rohe and of Le Corbusier, clear and geometrical layout, railings of construction, typographies purified such are their rules for a universal communication. Josef Müller-Brockmann, Adrian Frutiger, Max Miedinger, Paul Rand and Massimo Vignelli among others adapted these principles to the communication of the 1950s and gave birth to inescapable fonts such as Helvetica and Univers and in visual identities still used today. But this period is also the Post-war economic boom, the western world had expanded the service society, the standard of living increases significantly, the equipment of the households is more and more complete, the consumption is glorified, the big commercial groups are almighty and the international style was and continues to constitute its visual identity, Paul Rand designed the graphics standards of IBM, ABC and Ford such as they are still used today more than fifty years after their conception, it's the same for Massimo Vignelli for American Airlines.

Despite of the economic prosperity the situation is not ideal, the disparities grew bigger between the west and the Third World, the cold war continues, the Vietnam War sinks and tires the opinion which has it enough to send its youth to the death at the end of the world, protest movements multiply and question «American Way of Life». A wind of rejection blows on the western values in the turning point of the 1970s and will reach its peak at the time of the oil crisis which marks the end of the dream of perpetual growth and the unlimited resources, visually this state of mind takes the shape of a negation of the modernist principles, we return to the experiments, we abandon the railings of construction considered too restrictive, the poster designers turn to the cultural and militant sectors to mark their break with the consumerism and the marketing who are left with the big advertising agencies which acquire a considerable influence. Typographers such as Ed Fella or David Carson look for senses of identity, play on the limit between legibility and illegibility, this crumbling of the practices corresponds to a dislocation of the ideologies, a generalized disillusionment. The modernism which aimed to be universal and unifying is perceived from now on as an instrument of an ultra-liberalist and imperialist ideology.

According to Annick Lantenois in *Le Vertige du Funambule*. The transformation of the design graphic in vector visual packaging of capital gain seems to date the implementation of a capitalism which mobilizes the communication to obtain the approval of the masses (in wartime as in peacetime) and appealed to the graphic designer to coordinate the visual shape with the underlying speech: it is very then a question of acting on the desires (Edward Bernays: Propaganda) and to direct them according to the market and in said objectives of marketing. With the end of the happy duet of the 1960s between company and graphic designer, arrives a neoliberalism which breaks the relationship of trust between speeches and forms: the graphic designers refusing to be the skillful hand of a propaganda in the devastating social effects invent the author graphic design and get loose from their former employer, the business world.

A split in the graphic creation builds up itself then, the big advertising agencies as RSCG, Publicis or Saatchi and Saatchi takes a monopoly on the commercial creation and exemplify in agencies of more modest size and the graphic designers-authors flee the com orders of companies with a certain shape of contempt to work for the cultural and public sectors judged more to understand the noble stakes in the graphic design and leave a margin of creativity more important for the graphic designers who work for them.

With the appearance of home computers, ink printers and software of graphic creation such as Adobe creative suite there was a real democratization of the technical means to create some graphic design and a whole generation was formed in this way in the graphic design between the end of 1990s and today and shape a large part of the graphic designers in service, there have been never so many graphic designers in France as today and for many conscripts there are few elected in the cultural projects. De facto the situation of the graphic designer made casual these last years between the idea of a superfluous spending on behalf of the clients who ignore partially the ins and outs of the discipline and the young graduates who multiply the alienating internships in advertising agencies of which they go out embittered and weakened. There is a paradox between what the apprentices graphic designers learn and experiment in school of design and the reality of the business. We are tempted to look in the digital technology, the logics of Fab-Lab and contributory creations some tips to be able to regain control a noble graphic design, to be able to create interactive devices to gather the graphic designer and his public in experiments which involve paper and screen.

Conclusions

It is obvious that the skepticism even the distrust to a system of graphic communication established in the fifties in the service of big commercial groups and the European capitalism is a symptom of the collective disappointment to the social western project, the precariousness and the disappointment for a system weaknesses of which seem to us in daylight. Facing it the graphic designers-authors made a headlong rush towards the cultural sector in a denial and a contempt of the realities of the marketing and the «basic» customers but the offer becomes scarce there are more and more graphic designers for a cultural and artistic sector which is neglected in our economies in crisis and the security fear brings other priorities. Considering this pessimist I want, as novice graphic designer try to create devices which bring of the sharing, the implication and the subjectivity in the fact of creating some graphic design and of sharing it to a public, the logics of the creation in collaboration, the cultural mediation and the work with associations are tracks which I wish to explore to propose some social, open and democratic graphic design so that the receivers can appropriate their experiences of the graphic communication and go out of the passivity of reception in the commercial graphic design without creating a graphic design of niche, esoteric and addressing a public who already possesses keys of deciphering of a dark message.

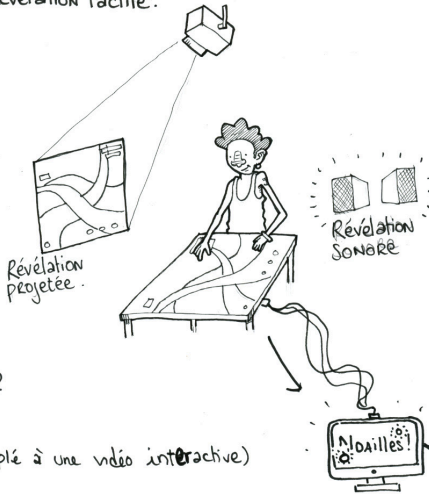
Video games, interactivity and the relationship paper / screen are so many assets as I plan to implement to propose playful projects where make even the fact to receive graphic design and to read it has to make sense and be a pleasure.

Project n°1: tactile Poster

Here the purpose is to associate a voluntarily little readable interactive tactile poster with a screen so that the receiver can test multiple combinations of layout and then appropriate his via a printer. The graphic designer is there to put a rules, decide on a visual atmosphere but leave an open device which allows an active and necessary implication of the receiver to be relevant.

Scénario n°2 : Révélation tactile.

L'USAGER doit TOUCHER des points de CONTACT pour OBTENIR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS.



Quel contexte ?

- JPo
- Dinosaart
- Noailles (couplé à une vidéo interactive)

- Ressources
- Groupe Gaité Makey·
 - Tuto monome instructa
 - UNE Affiche SONORE et interactive Etapes.co
 - Des Affiches sonores inte La boite verte.com

- SANDERS - faire
- FLASH / PROCESSING
- MAKEY MAKEY
- SERIGRAPHIE CONDUCTRI

JPO + imprim
affiche
On part avec le visuel qu'on a conçu

Research project

What technique?

The tactile poster will be designed with a Makey Makey which a micro-card which transforms the objects of the everyday life into tactile elements connected with a computer. Every element linked with a Makey-Makey to the poster becomes a touch of keyboard and thus can execute a program. To make the poster conductive there are two solutions: the conductive paint applied via screenprinting or adhesive copper circuit behind the poster. Here, I plan to favor the copper what will allow me more liberties in designing the poster.

Project n°2: Kinect

There the idea is to create a reading of the graphic design by the gesture, the Microsoft's Kinect device allows a recognition of the movement through the space and is programmable via processing, the user can influence the result via the movement.

Scénario n°1: Decryptage gestuel.

• Via la Kinect
l'utilisateur doit
effectuer une
chorégraphie pour
avoir accès à
l'information.



Quel contexte ?

- JPo.
- Dinosart.
- Noailles ?



• Ressources

- Groupe Gaité-Kinect-Multitouch
ToneKeBab.wiki.
- Tuto Kinect: TONER KEBAB wiki
- Tuto DEPTIMAGE-kinect
Lessons Julien Brochon.

• Savoirs-faire:

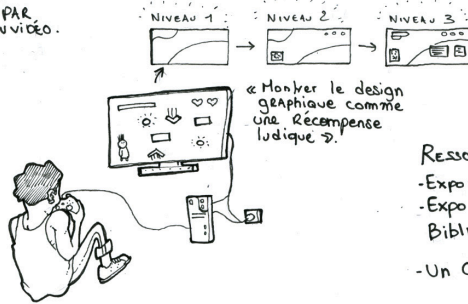
Kinect + PROCESSING.

Project n°3: video game

Finally the point here is to sequence the discovery of a graphic document in stages via the video game, in a playful way the receiver gets involved for receive a copy of picture every time he manages to finish a level of the game so the graphic designer can create story-telling in connection with the process of reception of the graphic design itself.

SCÉNARIO N°3 : LE MESSAGE PAR LE JEU

- LE VISUEL DE COMMUNICATION SE RÉVÈLE PROGRESSIVEMENT PAR L'AVANCÉE DANS UN PETIT JEU VIDÉO.



QUEL Contexte?

- JPO
- DINOSART?

SAVOIRS-FAIRE

- FLASH AS2 (PRI JE
- ANIMATION / F
- ILLUSTRATION.

What technique?

The Adobe Flash software allows to import pictures in .PNG, to to lead them and to program them to make them be elements of a video game. The Gdevelop software and the game engine Unity also allows to create prototypes of video games.

Noailles tous ici

Now I could make my project go real via Noailles Tous Ici, it's an event made by four associations to create ballads which value the district of Noailles, we are three of the class, Marine Laurent, Morgane Guillaume and myself to be asked for our graphic designer's skills.

The idea was to create a Noailles' typography and wooden signs with pictogrammes to make the signalling system of ballads and to leave them to the inhabitants if they wish to re-use them.

I wanted to make an interactive map of the district which plays videos when touched.

Our work was exhibited on March 11th at Destination Familles, an association of Noailles and on March 12th in the Transistor, a digital arts workplace at La Friche la Belle de Mai.





