

George Yazbeck

Read & Respond 2: For February 2, 2015

After reading through both manifestos and Michael Bierut's response to them, I can confidently say that I agree more with the former because I really sympathize with the stance on how graphic design should be used as well as the concerns of how it was perceived. Especially regarding the stigma of advertising design seemingly being graphic design's only major overlapping field (I subtly sense this feeling today), I feel that both manifestos raise some good points (given their time periods of focus), in that society embraces consumerism and in turn, consumerism is embraced by advertising—which appeals to the masses to go out and spend.

With that said, it is rather odd that during the time of the first manifesto's publication (the Cold War) that Britain was more concerned with promoting its economy over political and social awareness—at least to what I can assume. After all, graphic designers during that period (among any other eras) would have been the best to utilize for propaganda and the media via banners, magazines, political cartoons, etc. Fast-forwarding to the turn of the millennium (the post-Cold War era) when the second manifesto was made to renew the message of the original one, the world at that point had changed in terms of accessing information. With the introduction and growth of the world wide web, there was a new medium for graphic designers to utilize to show and spread their work—their message. Even though this manifesto does not explicitly mention the world wide web as a tool for graphic design work to be supported by, the examples listed (social marketing, education, information design) are nonetheless furthered by them in being done online.

Looking at Bierut's lengthy response, I do not entirely disagree with some of his points; among them is the assertion that graphic design visualizes ideas in ways that written words do not. In the case of product advertising, Bierut claims that advertising design is necessary and important to maintain as a primary role of graphic design as it (and branding) psychologically

influences and brings people to want to buy a product or service. Due to this influential power, there is no other significant use of graphic design that could benefit other causes, right? Wrong. Graphic design to me is more than interpreting and giving life to an idea (especially in the form of “brainwashing” people into the negative aspects of consumerism). Graphic design embodies what thinkers and doers want their audiences to know and be aware of; it is the principle that allows for information and ideas to be interpreted in many different ways in almost whatever medium best effective. Perhaps most importantly, graphic design illustrates ideas and supplements story-telling and/or symbolic themes.

Overall, graphic design has many applications and does not have to be limited to the field of advertising and branding. Logos, which are largely designed by graphic designers, often falls into two categories, advertising and symbolism. With the former, logos are used in tandem with selling a company’s service or product to tie such to the brand they represent. With the latter, logos, I believe, are more significant as they represent social/sport organizations (the Olympic Rings), media networks/publications (the CBS “eye”), and even iconic landmarks (Disney World). In these cases, logos interpret the meaning behind what an organization/place stands for; some may argue, like myself, that logos become synonymous and defines something more than its slogan. This to me is what graphic design can accomplish and how powerful of a field it is to apply to anything outside of advertising design. To those who say that designers cannot do more than contribute to visual marketing, I say “Look at designers who are responsible for street signs, billboards, cultural centers, and even blueprints. Clearly, there is definite range for graphic design and a definite body of dedicated designers willing to express their work within such range.”