Graphisme en France — 2021

Graphic design and society

and society

How does graphic design contribute to a greater cohesion, understanding, and harmony of the society in which we live? How does it allow us to better circulate, better educate, better understand and better interact with others? How does it allow us to enhance the environment in which we live, making it richer, more respectful, more interesting?

In these turbulent times, it is necessary to consider the fundamental impact of graphic design on our society. Graphic design is more than ever concerned with public utility, and social design opens up possibilities of reaching broader organizations and audiences. Forms, images and signs compose and structure our everyday life, our imaginations, shaping our critical spirit.

Max Bruinsma, a Dutch art and design critic invites us to look back at a number of emblematic creations that embody their authors' commitment to design projects in the service of society.

Élodie Boyer, publisher and consultant, guides us according to the objects, signs and devices found in her daily surroundings that have forged her gaze and that attract her attention. She invites us at the same time to appreciate the interest of these forms that constitute our common visual culture.

Finally, Éloïsa Pérez, graphic designer, typographer and teacher, in parallel to her thesis on the uses of typography in handwriting, proposes a contribution that addresses the importance of considering the tools of graphic design and typography in schools and in all systems related to the transmission of knowledge and teaching.

Despite the global health crisis and the heavy restrictions that came with it, numerous events have been organized, in particular on-line, by distributers and practitioners of graphic design and typography.

Marion Caron and Camille Trimardeau, both graduates of the École supérieure d'art et design Le Havre-Rouen, created Studio Béton in 2021. They have designed this issue with all of the attention that they bring to the materiality of the book and its elements – paper, binding and printing. They composed the issue according to a modular grid adapted to the content contained within, and have chosen to use the typefaces *Boogy Brut* by Bureau Brut and Julien Priez (Bureau Brut), *Matter Medium* by Martin Vácha (Displaay) and *Immortel Vena G2* by Clément Le Tulle-Neyret. We would like to thank them for their wonderful work.

Béatrice Salmon,
Director of the Centre national des arts plastiques

Max Bruinsma

How design is social?

It is a received idea that all human activity is governed by a more or less conscious social organization – we don't just randomly move about and do whatever we want. Even in this most individualistic era in the history of humankind, we observe collective notions of dealing with each other, of acknowledging the other's existence, of shaping one's activity in relation to that of our fellows – in short: we are still social at the core.

Another common idea is that design serves "the social" by adapting its clients' messages to what the intended recipients can and are prepared to understand. Design bridges the gap between sender and receiver, so to speak. Design is thus a more or less neutral activity, dedicated to its commissioners' messages rather than to its own, much like translators are dedicated to the authors of the texts they are interpreting, rather than to their own intentions for these interpretations.

As so often with common ideas, they are not entirely false, but also not the whole truth. "The social" for instance, comprises a plethora of often contradictory phenomena. Take polarization, which can be considered a social manifestation of rather unsocial sentiments. And although design is by definition an applied art, it is by no means dispassionate. Designers are individual citizens too, and like every other participant of the social sphere – all of us – they too have sentiments, opinions and convictions.

When the recently deceased British graphic designer Ken Garland expressed his convictions in the *First Things First Manifesto* in 1963, his idea was not only to chastise designers devoting their talents to trivia like advertising cat food, but first of all to point them to the areas in which they could make a contribution for the benefit of society:

"signs for streets and buildings,
books and periodicals, catalogues,
instructional manuals, industrial photography,
educational aids, films,
television features, scientific
and industrial publications."

When this manifesto was re-issued almost forty years later, in 2000, it repeated the call for designers to shift their priorities toward "pursuits more worthy of our problem-solving skills." But there are remarkable differences in the wording of those pursuits:

"cultural interventions,
social marketing campaigns, books,
magazines, exhibitions, educational
tools, television programs, films,
charitable causes and other information
design projects."

Interestingly, in 1964 (the year the first manifesto was published) the industry was still seen as a potential ally for better serving society. In the second, any mention of the industry has vanished from the list of "worthy pursuits," while the public and non-profit sectors gained more prominence as areas, which "urgently require our expertise and help." Although equal in stating service to society as the main focus of design, the two versions of the First *Things First Manifesto* also show a shift in the social perception of where this service is most needed.

Fast-forward twenty years, and we can conclude that, although little has changed to make the First Things First Manifesto (in both editions, plus a few updates in recent years) less urgent, one can't say that it hasn't been "taken to heart," as the second Manifesto expressly wished.

Ethics and social responsibility have become standard items in the discourses of design, and the debates are less about whether design and advertising have a responsibility beyond their clients' interest at all, but more about how to practice this responsibility. The industry meanwhile, is increasingly seen once again as potential partner, rather than as the root cause of all evil in society, as it was in the 1970s, as a result of broadly shared anti-capitalist sentiments in progressive circles, and the 1990s, as a result of growing concerns around globalization and pollution. Although today anti-globalist and climate change concerns, among many others, are still – or again – widely felt, there is a growing consensus around the idea that, however reluctant or in denial they may be, governments, institutions and the industry are indispensable for solving the urgent problems and crises the world is faced with now. They need "nudging" rather than to be ostracized. In the meantime, a new discourse has developed within design, that of "social design." Since it's a rather new field and its definition is still not universally agreed upon, I'll use my own for the time being: social design aims to address social issues collaboratively with stakeholders, as design issues. In 1981 design theorist Giulio Carlo Argan already elegantly formulated the gist of what was only to become a new design discipline a few decades later: "Today, the problem of an everyday aesthetic does not focus on the design of single objects, but on the design of the social environment." [1]

In his introduction to the same book in which Argan developed his ideas on the "Aesthetics of Everyday," the Swiss design historian Lucius Burckhardt brilliantly explained how "design is invisible" by pointing out that, among other things, the night is not a natural phenomenon caused by the sun disappearing behind the horizon, but an entirely manmade institution "consisting of opening hours and closing hours, tariffs, public transportation schedules, habits, and also street lights." [2] The insight that the way we frame things essentially organizes the way we experience them leads Burckhardt to contemplate the idea of *sozio-design*, the kind of design that

"reasons solutions to problems in terms
of a mutually adapted change
in behavioral roles and objects."

In order to fathom what's at stake here, Burckhardt gives an example: in Germany, in the late 1970s, the Federal Mail conducted a rationalization program which demanded of each addressee to place a mailbox, designed and distributed by the Federal Mail, at the road side instead of in the front door. This way the mailman would save miles in delivering his payload, even if in cities the distance between street and doors was often a matter of mere meters. In rural parts of the country, however, where most houses have long driveways, this meant that the residents were cut off from one of their main sources of information. For there, handing over the mail at the doorstep, the mailman also used to deliver the messages and gossip he had picked up at previous doors of the scattered farms and houses. For the farmers, the design of the combination of mailbox and placement regulation meant that the quality of the service deteriorated instead of being improved. Burckhardt characterizes objects such as the road-side mailbox as *böse*, malign, because they disintegrate social fabrics – they sever connections between people. In graphic design, one could consider official forms, information brochures or instruction manuals designed only with the commissioner's perspective in mind as malign objects, which obstruct rather that facilitate communication. Website interfaces constructed mainly from a coder's point of view can amount to the same "malignancy" if only the coders understand how to navigate them. Malign objects, in other words, are things that unilaterally impose or restrict behavior, without critical consideration of the mostly invisible institutional and social frameworks that determine their use. Still, these frameworks direct design processes and thus their possible outcomes. The reverse, as we saw, is true too: via the behavior programmed into their design, objects direct the contexts within which they can be used – and how they cannot be used. Mostly, this behavioral program is derived from the commissioner's framework, as was the case with the mailbox that mirrored the institutional demands of the Federal Mail – not the communicative effects of its agent, the mailman.

A striking example of how dangerous such an approach to design can be – an approach that doesn't take into consideration the many contextual, environmental and social factors that influence the design's effectiveness – is the example of Düsseldorf Airport. After a major fire at the German airport in April 1996, with 17 dead and 150 injured, investigators concluded that the disaster was in part to blame on bad signage – it became clear that many people had not been able to quickly find the emergency exits. Not only were the emergency exit signs badly placed, but they also almost completely blended in with the surrounding signage. The chaotic mixture of visual messages, from commercial and decorative to informational and wayfinding, made the signs easy to overlook. MetaDesign reorganized the wayfinding and routing. The rounded-off forms of Erik Spiekermann's FF Info font were the reference for a new set of pictograms, which harks back to Ottl Aicher's famous Olympic pictograms. In this way, the icons and texts join together recognizably. But perhaps more importantly, the new wayfinding also reorganized its own environment, by establishing some invisible protocols with very visible results: within a specific distance of the exit signs, no other visual messages were allowed. And the color green was exclusively reserved for "emergency" pictograms.

In other words, the design corrected a "malign" approach, which treated commercial messages, wayfinding, routing and other visual-environmental factors as separate, unconnected issues. It proposed a new "action frame" as design theorist Victor Margolin formulated it in his seminal essay "Design for the Good Society." [3] Graphic design is social by nature. It is the catalyzing force of public communication. But, pursuing Ken Garland's approach, there is a choice to make: from which action frame do we consider the social potency of design? Do we use it to satisfy clients, to sedate consumers or to empower citizens? Roughly from the time that Garland published his Manifesto, socially engaged graphic designers have been at the forefront of the latter interpretation of design's communicative potential. In France, especially, the uprising of Paris art and design students together with striking workers in May 1968 spawned a new culture of graphic design for the public sector that has left an indelible mark on the profession at large.

The effect of this new culture was not only an aesthetic upgrade, but more importantly a change in mentality, based on the insight that a more open, playful and less "official," less authoritarian style of communication in the public domain greatly improved its quality – and effect. After the activist pioneers, commissioners from (local) governments and social organizations gradually came to understand this and started to engage the former graphic activists in the "Ateliers Populaires," of May '68. There, art and design students such as Pierre Bernard, Gérard Paris-Clavel and François Miehe collaborated on designing and producing a cornucopia of activist slogans and posters. Following the famous '68 slogan *"L'imagination au pouvoir!"*, a new graphic language was developed, which combined political astuteness, aesthetic ingenuity and street-wise humor. Graphic design thus played a pivotal role in the May '68 uprising, not only in getting the message across that things could (indeed should) be different, but most of all in making their target audience read it with a broad smile of amused recognition, which, as any marketeer will confirm, is the first stage of action. Take a famous '68 poster like "Retour à la normale...": a herd of rams – not sheep! – is marching together, to the left, horns forward. With minimal means the poster states an answer to the bourgeois forces that want to restore public life to

its previous sheepish normality: this is the new "normal" – get used to it!

From today's media perspective, one is tempted to see such combinations of slogans and simple but ambiguous images as an analogue pre-cursor of the current "meme" culture, in which similar blends of (found) imagery and short lines of text put the combined message in a different light. Such media savvy commentary, however, is today not so much disseminated through analogue media like printed posters, but rather as "viral" images through online social media. The shift had already become clear 15 years ago, when I visited Paris in March 2006, which at the time was once again a theatre of social uprising. Tens of thousands marched the streets and anybody over fifty experienced *déja vu*: May '68, the mythical moment when students and workers united against "*la France de papa*." Walking the streets of Paris, the day after one of the largest demonstrations, I looked for signs of printed protests. Nothing, *rien*. It was clear that the Paris municipality observed a zero-tolerance policy towards illegal bill posting, graffiti and any other visual expression that could be considered "environmental pollution." The poster medium had apparently become the sole domain of commercial and governmental messages. But even in the press coverage of the protests it was clear that designers were practically absent in styling the message; most of the banners consisted of hand painted slogans, artlessly scribbled with markers and spray cans.

It begged the question: where are the socially engaged designers in all of this? In a conversation I had at the time with Pierre Bernard, his answer was quite unequivocal: "They're working, but not as unpaid activists." He specified: "My students at the ENSAD don't want to work in advertising, but at the same time it's hard to instill some enthusiasm in them for designing for the public sector. Almost without exception, they aspire a more artistic trajectory… I'm worried about that." [4]

The visual expression of the counter movement, meanwhile, now seems to take place almost exclusively on the internet, in viral memes made by creative and media savvy "netizens," mostly without much background in graphic design. This "meme culture" is, however, interesting from the point of view of design, because, as I remarked above, it kind of mimics the approach of the "*68-ards*": to cause a small but engaging short-circuit in the mind of the beholder, triggering them to reflect on the incongruity of image and text. As with the pictogrammatic images of the Ateliers Populaires, here also simplicity is only a superficial first effect, which both screens and reinforces the referentiality, irony, and ultimately critical content of the message. But there seems to be a rift between current culturally engaged design – which is quite prominent and thriving in France – and a critical visual culture energized by amateurs who by now have appropriated the means and media which were formerly the almost exclusive domain of professional designers. It is as if the trade is waiting, or searching, for a new professional answer to a changed culture of communication. Since our social interactions are today largely shaped by online media, design has to re-calibrate its position vis-à-vis "the social," to formulate a new action frame which better takes account of the media conditions in which it operates.

After May '68, Bernard, Paris-Clavel and Miehe, for their part, sought to forge a new professional practice from their activist experience and political convictions in Grapus. They were soon joined by Alex Jordan and others, and went on to fundamentally change graphic design in France. Until then, French design for the public sector had either been following basically nineteenth-century recipes for solemnly representative communication, or adopted a Gallic version of the Swiss International Style, of which Jean Widmer and later Ruedi Baur were the main protagonists. In this context it is interesting to compare and contrast Widmer's and his former student Bernard's designs for the same commission, practically 20 years apart. In 1973, Widmer designed Europe's first touristic information system, commissioned by the Ministry of Transportation and Tourism. In his designs to mark places and regions of specific interest along 2.500 kilometers of French highways, Widmer combined lessons of Neurath's and Arntz's pictogram language ISOTYPE and Swiss typographic clarity in signs that summarized sites in rather abstract visual terms, with added denotative text. The apparent aim was to break the monotony of the highway and stir the chauffeur's attention, while acknowledging the fact that from the drivers' seat one can only manage a limited amount of extra information. Bernard, who won the competition for a local upgrade of the system, in the Rhône-Alpes region in 1991, seemed to stay close to Widmer's design (the use of brown and white and the same Frutiger typeface was mandatory), but infused a very different feeling – much more emotional, associative and evocative than Widmer's abstractions. In his monograph on the occasion of Bernard's 2006 Erasmus Prize (the highest cultural honor the Dutch government can award), design historian Hugues Boekraad remarks: "Widmer and Bernard apply two different principles of readability. Widmer grounds the legibility of his system in the application of an optical grammar that prescribes the image composition in terms of a limited set of rules. Bernard, to achieve readability, relies on the contrast between text and image and on the interaction of the images and image genres in the system as a whole." [5]

[3] Yassine and Toma Bletner, *MÉÉÉH 68* strip, in *Une approche décontractée de l'histoire du graphisme*, Paris, Le-Monte-en-l'air, 2017 — [4] Grapus, *Pour envoyer les gosses au soleil*, poster for the French Secours populaire, 1984

[5] Visuel Design (Nicole Sauvage, Jean Widmer), tourist signage for French motorways, 1972-2003
[6] Atelier de création graphique, signage, Autoroute des Alpes, 1991

This different kind of referentiality – more emotional than intellectual – is completely consistent with Bernard's '68 experience, which hinged on translating sometimes rather complex social and political issues into deceivingly simple, but deeply referential imagery, readable for an informed, visually literate audience. In my view, this shift in public address epitomizes a change in institutional communication from the late 1980s onward toward a more open, participatory and informal style, which in France can in many respects be accredited to the work of Grapus and its successors for the public sector.

In a sense, Grapus's work and that of its successors can also be seen as "social design" *avant-la-lettre*, not just because they exclusively worked for public clients like political organizations, municipalities and local societies, and assisted and initiated quite a few community projects by themselves, but also because of their self-identification as collective, as a group of graphic professionals working together with, rather than for, the communities that commissioned their work. Grapus and its successors indeed showed that social engagement was compatible with large institutional commissions, such as the design for the Secours populaire français, which started at Grapus (1981), was continued by Nous Travaillons Ensemble (NTE, the post-Grapus atelier of Alex Jordan and associates, 1990) and was taken up by ACG (Pierre Bernard's new "Atelier de Création Graphique") in 2000. The hand-drawn logo of a winged hand with matching congenial handwriting seems to both offer and applaud the contents of posters, brochures and other communications. The logo aesthetically underlines and embraces the broad range and great variety – mirrored by a remarkably broad spectrum of stylistic approaches – of subjects and causes supported by the Secours populaire. In a blog post on *Graphéine*, Tiphaine Guillermou remembers the logo as a vivid memory from her youth, and neatly sums up its qualities: "It's the whole promise of humanity and solidarity summed up in three strokes, the legacy of Cocteau and Picasso reunited, a slap in my little face as a future graphic designer. Thank you Grapus." [6]

Meanwhile, NTE remained more hands-on when it came to working together, literally, with museums, institutions, communities and audiences.

They developed a long line of collaborative projects, publications and workshops, in France and abroad with youngsters and adults, whom they facilitated in experimenting with – and experiencing – the graphic language of activism and the power of speaking out. At the same time, NTE kept producing strong images for social and political causes. Their dead-pan take on the economic, cultural and migratory rifts between the Northern and Southern parts of the world – read: between rich and poor countries – is still an icon of visual political activism.

Gerard Paris-Clavel and Vincent Perrottet (who joined Grapus in 1983), went their own way as Graphistes Associés, teaming up with younger designers such as Jean-Marc Ballée. Although the group self-defined as "studio for the conception of public images for social use", Paris-Clavel left in 1992, to devote his time and effort to the public cause in an even more direct way, in the activist non-profit organization Ne Pas Plier (NPP). His aim was to radically continue what he considered the essence of Grapus: creative conflict. The traditional hierarchy of commissioner–designer, even when mitigated by shared objectives and ideologies, produced in Paris-Clavel's eyes unsurmountable obstacles for an independent artistic practice in the service of public dialogue: "Public and cultural institutions
        don't do enough to encourage people to meet.
                        To produce hierarchies is good
        for their symbolic and financial power.
They're afraid of conflict – and the exchange
        of ideas is mostly one of conflict. They consider
                disagreement as bad
        and eliminate it from their activity.
                        I think, on the contrary, that conflict
        is constructive. A citizen is someone
who participates in conflict, not someone
        passive. I consider artists to be those citizens
                who are deeply involved in social struggles." [7]
Giving a voice to people and communities, helping them to express themselves and clarify their particular points of view, to take responsibility and develop agency in their own living environment, are central concerns of social design, as it developed as a discourse, or *dispositif*, over the past decades. But there are a few challenges from the point of view of design as a profession.

[7] Nous travaillons ensemble / Grapus, Nord-Sud poster published on the occasion of an exhibition of photos taken by the Bar Floréal on the border between Mexico and the United States that took place during the Rencontres internationales de la photographie d'Arles in 1991 — [8] Nous travaillons ensemble, cover of a special issue (designed based on a workshop by photographer Laetitia Tura of the Bar Floréal with prisoners) of the newspaper *Le Poissard*, from the Maison Centrale de Poissy, 2013

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a culture that wants to celebrate individual talent: that however communal the design process, the outcome often wants to be authored. One may try to explain this paradox away by emphasizing the importance of craft, of professional experience and creative talent that the designer or artist infuses into the collective process, where others contribute their knowledge and experience of other, likewise important ingredients of the design problem: expertise of local conditions for instance, intimate familiarity with the subject or problem to be addressed, a personal stake in the outcome… But the question remains how designers can become "invisible," without risking a loss of visual and structural clarity – another bedrock of design ethics.

Many projects that are categorized as "social design" today testify to a new interpretation of Warde's "crystal goblet," and of Burckhardt's idea that "design is invisible." Here, the designer acts mainly as facilitator of "cultural interventions," as the second First Things First Manifesto phrased it, whose ultimate role is to vanish from the process, by teaching or coaching their non-professional partners to do it themselves. There are by now quite a few artists, designers and collectives in France and internationally that practice this *dispositif*, of which NTE and NPP were pioneers, in workshops, temporary ateliers and at public events. Sometimes they quite literally refer back to the example of May '68. The collective Ne Rougissez Pas, for instance, took prints of Ateliers Populaires posters as basic material for their 2019 project *La beauté est dans la rue*, to be cut and rearranged by women in Ivry-sur-Seine, as a critique of the way in which gender is depicted in public space. Meant as "an invitation to the participants to re-appropriate public space in a sensitive and social manner," [9] the project also aimed at empowering the women who participated to express themselves by graphic means. In another project, the collective Fabrication Maison answered a problem that arose in the context of a meeting of freshly accepted French citizens: "We have no words to say what we want to say." [10] A collaboration between writers, designers and a group of women who participated in literacy classes, resulted in a series of posters that added hand-written commentary to Louis Aragon's famous 1943 dithyramb "Je vous salue

In his 1998 Eye interview, Paris-Clavel unwittingly pointed to one such challenge to the role of designers as participants in "social struggles": that creatives often see themselves as artists, with all the claims to autonomy implicit in that term. One may ask, for instance, how much genuine collaboration on a creative level is involved in the images that NPP makes available for free in their online *Épicerie d'art frais* – many, if not most, of these are designs by Paris-Clavel and associates, and even if he states that "only when carried by individuals or groups does it come alive, generating meaning in return," [8] the images' initial authorship is often clearly that of the artist.

The history of design as "authorless" discipline harks back to the anonymous craftsmen and printers that have shaped the trade since the invention of book printing, via Beatrice Warde's famous dictum that typography should be as invisible a container of contents as a "crystal goblet," to the shared authorship of collectives such as the Ateliers Populaires and Grapus. But such collectives are hardly made up of anonymous craftsmen anymore – their members are well-known, if not famous, designers now. It's the paradox of creative collaboration in

[9] Gérard Paris-Clavel for Ne Pas Plier, *Rêve générale*, co-production Ne pas plier, *L'Élu d'aujourd'hui*, city of Ivry-sur-Seine, of Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and of Stains, French Communist Party, the association Je ne veux plus rentrer chez moi, fédération syndicale Solidaires, éditions Raisons d'agir, *Plan B*, association Apeis, 2006 — [10] Gérard Paris-Clavel for Ne pas Plier, *Je lutte des classes*, demonstration in opposition to government pension reform, Paris, 2010

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[11] Gérard Paris-Clavel for Ne pas plier, *Voir le voir*, co-production Ne pas plier, Syria sérigraphie, city of Fontenay-sous-Bois, the Maison de la Villette, the Louis Daquin cinema in Blanc-Mesnil, 1993 — [12] Gérard Paris-Clavel for Ne Pas Plier, *Qui a peur d'une femme?*, for the rally Algérie que faire? Paris, 1997

ma France." Together, the themed interpretations and annotations summarize a story of struggles and hopes that are both echoed and denied by the text, or by nationalist associations connected to it. In such projects, however small and local, the social role designers can play, as craft experts of public communication, is apparent – they provide citizens with an independent means of agency. In a sense, this design ethics transcends the trade itself. As art critic Willem van Weelden put it in his review of the five installments of the Utrecht Biennale for Social Design between 2005 and 2015:

"They not only questioned
                    the world of design,
                            but put into question
        the design of the world." [11]

Grand as this may sound, many if not most social design projects are small-scale and local endeavors to engage the audience as equal participants in "the design of the social environment," as Argan called it, in changing the design of the world at grass-root level. An international pioneer in this field is Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk, who's main work is to act as "catalyst" for social processes, mostly in urban neighborhoods, "in order to assist communities to take control of their own futures."

Since the mid-1990s, she has been helping communities to tackle urgent local questions from fighting environmental pollution to connecting local businesses. An early project was "De Strip," a strip of vacant stores at the base of a residential block in a typical 1960s modernist housing project in Vlaardingen, near Rotterdam in the Netherlands.[12]
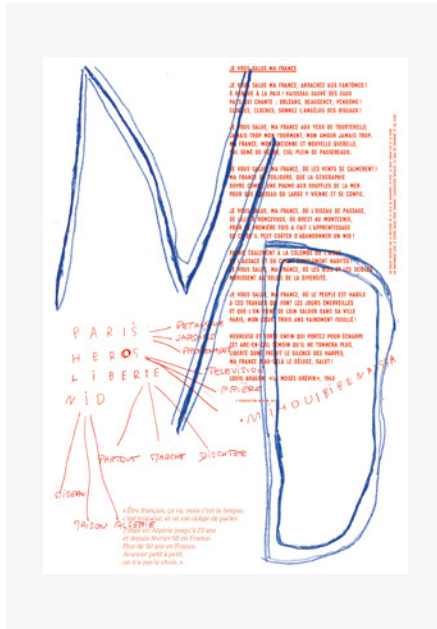
Instead of temporarily using the 3,500 square meters of empty retail space "as an isolated enclave for the arts," she proposed to develop the area as "a hub of activities for local residents and others."

In the two years the project lasted the strip of derelict shops, now painted in bright red, housed artists spaces, a museum annex, a café, community spaces, a library and a video presentation and production place. Van Heeswijk has continued to organize and stage such projects world-wide, but their fate is that of many artistic interventions in public space: they are temporary and, beyond archival documentation,

rarely leave lasting traces. A rare exception is the outcome of a project by Dutch graphic designer Annelys de Vet, who also considers her professional praxis from a social and editorial perspective. Since 2003, when she invited Estonian design students to map the EU from their viewpoint, De Vet has produced an ongoing series of "subjective atlases" in which the participants present an image of their country or region based on their own experience. The Subjective Atlas of Palestine,[13] made during a workshop at the International Academy of Art in Ramallah, with artists from Gaza participating through Internet and e-mail, not only resulted in a publication, but also provided the inspiration for an ongoing enterprise: Disarming Design from Palestine.[14]

The Dutch jury who granted the publication a "best book design design" award, praised the "modest little book whose design is itself almost invisible." Which brings me back to Burckhardt's analysis: the design of such publications is less concerned with its formal outcome (although of course there are graphic design standards to meet), as with its invisible but very real social effects. The design of the workshop that lead to a book also lead to a persistent platform for local design and production, with a global reach.

Such platforms can connect designers, activists, commissioners, entrepreneurs, consumers – in short: citizens – to shape and take advantage of networks of expertise and information. In France, for instance, the Platform Socialdesign lists many projects that aim to "act locally" to empower citizens in taking care and changing their own social environment. In Fabrication Maison's words: "as close as possible to inhabitants and habitats." [15]

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The Platform Socialdesign was initiated in 2015 by designers Malte Martin, Ruedi Baur and others to "integrate contextual creatives
         as full-fledged participants of reflection
                  and the organization of society,
faced with today's urgent need to think
         and construct the conditions
                  for living together.[16]
Interdisciplinary as it is, bringing together architects, graphic and product designers, and other cultural agents, the platform's "Manifesto" echoes *First Things First's* list of "worthy pursuits" in focusing on design for "urban development, public health, social and solidary economy and any other domain related to the public good and living together." [17] At the same time, the network attempts to go further than just reminding designers of what their priorities should be, by both listing a growing collection of inspirational projects and calling on commissioners to join forces with designers and other cultural agents on "a platform for discussions,
         interactions and research
                  for the various conceptual
         disciplines, for professionals
and political officials
         who wish to better understand
                  the role of designers in public
         action and who want to become
more sensitive to a different way
         of managing projects." [18]
The platform's intentions seem to have been taken up by a design convention (Assises du Design) organized by the French Ministries of Economy & Finance, and Culture in 2019, which

"postulates that there is an inextricable
         link between design and innovation,
                  and considers design as tool
         for solving the major economic
and social challenges of our era." [19]

The ambition of this convention is to lay "the foundations of what is intended to be a structured French design ecosystem, based on the network dynamic." [20] Remarkably, neither the term "social design" nor the *Platform* are mentioned in the document that resulted from the convention, which in a sense underlines the remark that is made in the chapter on "Making design a durable part of public policy": "Many fields of application remain
         to be explored, but there is no overarching
                  vision, no real reflection
         on the right uses of design applied
to the development of public policies.
         A critical review still remains to be done
                  if we want design to continue producing
"other imagined possibilities"
         for the public action of tomorrow." [21]

[19]

Meanwhile, such "other imagined possibilities" do not have to focus exclusively on solving or addressing social problems – they can also introduce some poetic license into the urban space. In what can be seen as an ironic combination of both the serious and nonsensical aspects of social design, Malte Martin invaded the city of Chaumont – for decades the scene of a yearly graphic design festival – in 2002 with unanswered questions, ranging from the existential to the absurd. In a variety of workshops and calls, his Agrafmobile team collected around 600 questions from inhabitants, a generous selection of

which were redistributed throughout the town by any means available: from place mats to wrappings, from billboards to street signs, from whispers to dances. This "Theatre of questions," [22] in my view, was *ex-absurdum* proof that graphic design can have a great impact on a city and its inhabitants, if it engages them in playfully participating. Even when everybody knew that their questions would never be answered, the mere fact that they could publicly pose them, and read the ones of their fellow citizens, brought a smile to their faces.

[20]

In another Chaumont project, in 2005, David Poullard placed a seemingly random series of signs in the center of the city, with common phrases, instilling a feeling of "ehm, you know…" in the public environment – literally an incitement to stop and pause for a moment…

[21]

And although I'd be the first to emphasize the importance of clarity in public signage, every once in a while one enjoys being confronted by enigmatic signs like the ones Pierre di Sciullo placed in the Breton Recouvrance district in Brest, in 2011. On 33 poles along a tram route through Recouvrance, Di Sciullo placed 131 plates with (partial) anagrams of the quarter's name, sometimes with explanations of newly found expressions: "cœur en vrac" / "chagrin d'amour" – poetic intrusions in public space.

Probably, Pierre Bernard did not have such projects in mind when he begrudged his students' tendency to aspire artistic trajectories rather than a career as designer of public services. I wonder how he would see the work of the young collectives which I describe above. I can imagine he'd be pleased, but still, he'd probably repeat his remark from fifteen years ago: "There is still a lot of important work to do in the less glamorous fields of design for public utility – the graphic design of institutional information, of forms and documents, of educational publications, of public information systems…" From this point of view, which I share to a large extent, another slightly disquieting aspect of even highly successful participatory social design projects on local scales is that they hardly ever lead to changing communication strategies and policies on a more permanent and encompassing institutional scale. They stay local and temporary. They empower individuals in a social setting – but they don't fundamentally affect how institutions communicate. The firewall that seems to exist between incidental "artistic" projects and institutional information that clings to a formulaic and

[18] Homepage of the platform Socialdesign, 2021 — [19] Trafik, double page from the report of the *Assises du design*, 2019

[20] Agrafmobile, Malte Martin, "théâtre des questions", Chaumont, 2002 — [21] David Poullard, *À ce qu'on dit*, Chaumont, 2005

boring "neutrality" is in my view damaging for both sides – it marginalizes the first and prevents the second from adopting a richer, more culturally relevant approach to public communication. It is up to designers to show that a bit of Grapus panache, or an injection of poetry can greatly enhance graphic communication in general. And it's up to commissioners – from all fields: public as well as commercial – "to better understand the role of designers in public action and […] to become more sensitive to a different way of managing projects," as the Platform Socialdesign worded its appeal.

[22]

There lies the challenge and promise of such networks: to connect the passion and expertise of socially engaged individual designers, the enticing poetics of a Pierre di Sciullo or David Poullard and the experience with complex large-scale commissions of established studios to the grass-roots experience of collectives like NPP, NTE, NPR and MF. But for that we need more than designers and artists. We need informed commissioners in institutions and the industry to become partners in "scaling up" the knowledge acquired in local, temporary experiments.

[22] Pierre di Sciullo, signage, Recouvrance district, Brest, 2013

1 Giulio Carlo Argan, "Ästetik im Alltag," in: Helmuth Gsöllpointner (ed): *Design ist unsichtbar*. Löcker, Vienna 1981, p.193

2 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

3 Victor Margolin, «Social Design: from Utopia to the Good Society», *in* Max Bruinsma (ed), *Design for the Good Society*, NAI010 Publishers, 2015, p. 27-42.

4 Pierre Bernard, conversation with Max Bruinsma, 2006, quoted in *Items*, n° 4, July/August 2006.

5 Hugues Boekraad, *My work is not my work—Pierre Bernard, design for the public domain*, Zurich, Lars Müller Publishers, 2007, p. 272.

6 grapheine.com/histoire-du-graphisme/pierre-bernard-grapus-graphiste-utilite-publique

7 Gérard Paris-Clavel in *Eye*, n° 27, Spring 1998, p. 14.

8 Paris-Clavel, «Everything is Possible», *in* Jan van Toorn (dir.), *Design beyond Design. Critical Reflection and the Practice of Communication*, Maastricht, Jan van Eyck Akademie Editions, 1998, p. 102.

9 nerougissezpas.fr

10 fabricationmaison.fr

11 Willem van Weelden, «Design and Legitimacy», in: Max Bruinsma (ed), *Design for the Good Society*, NAI010 Publishers, 2015, p.61

12 Jeanne van Heeswijk, *De Strip*, Westwijk Vlaardingen, 2002: jeanneworks.net/projects/de_strip

13 Annelys de Vet (dir.), *Subjective Atlas of Palestine*, 2007: subjectiveeditions.org/mapping/subjective-mapping-of-palestine

14 disarmingdesign.com

15 Manifeste: fabricationmaison.fr

16 plateforme-socialdesign.net/fr/manifeste

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

19 Cahiers –Assises du design 2019, p. 5: assisesdudesign.com/fr/home

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

22 agrafmobile.net/espaces-publics/theatre-des-questions

Élodie Boyer

I love mayonnaise

April 2021. I had planed to drive all the way to Helsinki, in order
to bring the last Non Standard book to its author, Aino-Maija Metsola,
and thus get to meet her for real, after having published her paintings.
I would have used the opportunity to keep a wordless and illustrated
diary, which would have run across France, Belgium, the Netherlands,
Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. I wanted to photograph
insignificant and essential graphic signs, I wanted to show how signs
can speak, beyond language, how necessary they are to social life.
Then I would have visited old acquaintances in their flats, or discovered
inconspicuous talents in their workshops, we would have talked.
But all my plans were crushed. Stuck at home, locked down, overdosed
on Zoom, Teams, Skype, and the like, I dig into my memories and
my impressions, I look at the things around me and write differently [1]
on what graphic design is about. I hope to amuse you. I'm not a graphic
designer, but I love graphic design. I was born in 1972, I unintentionally
grew up among color patches, big forms and all sorts of fonts.
Since then, I need them to feel good. So I create brands to earn
my living and I make books to spend it.

I LOVE MAYONNAISE Good graphic designers have this incredible
power of knowing how to whip up a mayonnaise. It's amazing how they
manage to transform matter. Have you ever experienced it? You see
them handling bits and pieces and snatches, intentions, doubts, some-
times unfinished texts, often a handful of poor pictures. You submit
a problem, you entrust your dreams to them, you explain what
you would like, what you don't want, you ask for help, you contradict
yourself, you say one thing and the opposite, you don't know how
to handle it. You lay down your weapons helter-skelter.

[1]

Sometimes the designers ask questions, sometimes they don't seem to
get you right, they look without looking, they listen without listening,
they seem distracted. A few weeks later, whether we have talked in the
meantime or not, the same designers are back. This time, they go all out:
they start by showing a couple of pictures, just to give you a glimpse
of how they looked around. Then comes the idea which will destabilize,
surprise, disquiet, baffle you. The idea, now, is twice as effective,
the designers have sorted things out, they've made choices and sacrifices.
You wanted to say everything (i. e. nothing), they come back with
the essential, the speed climbs like mad. All of a sudden, everything
clears up, lightens up, you're in front of the unquestionable. This, by the
way, isn't always pleasant for us, the authors backstage, we could feel
jealous, but it really was the graphic designer who solved the problem,
with his specific strength and power. One had spent hours floundering,
wandering from one picture to the other, not knowing what one wanted
any more. Now the designer has created the synthesis, he's gone to
the heart of the matter. Of course, there would have been other ways,
but this here is the idea you want to hang on to, you can't get your mind
off it, impatience has swept doubt away, a new engine has been started,

[1] Identity of the cycling team Ag2r Citroën, 2021,
graphic design: Rejane Dal Bello

this is what you want, at any price. Good graphic creations are born from this ability to federate, they assert themselves: be it immediately or at length. *Graphic design has insolent power.*

I LOVE MAKING THE BEST HAPPEN This is really my job: to make sure that graphic designers find and that clients validate the best project. It's always easier to explain how extraordinary a creation is, when it's not your doing, and that's part of my role. There are two key stages, two exhilarating moments in the life of a graphic design process, and of its designers.

[2]

The first is reached when they find a graphic solution which brings the right answers to the given problem, an accurate and efficient solution, unlike anything already existing (it gets a little more difficult every day). The second comes right after that: a creation may seem relevant and desirable, specially if it has grown close to your heart, but you still have to get it across. The ordering purchaser must approve the creation you're so sure about: this is a new mountain to climb. From this moment, you enter the zone of outmost fragility. The designer is on pins and needles. The most unfair outcome, for him, would be to see a project adopted as a "compromise", when so much more meaningful propositions were waiting on the table. *Graphic design multiplies.*

I LOVE SPACE I have worked with designers from different countries: French, English, American, Japanese, German, Swiss, Polish, Brazilian, Greek, Dutch. Dutch designers fascinate me by their ability to create a space which doesn't exist. As if they remained, even in the graphical space, the masters of the polder.[2] In a way, a good graphic designer must show a sort of mild insolence, he mustn't let himself be crushed by contradictory and sometimes untenable demands, nor be asphyxiated by prohibitions. He has to find a way to clear the obstacle, to change the deal, to escape by the top, to bring fresh air.

[2] Identity of the Normandie impressionniste festival, 2020, graphic design: ABM Studio

[3]

Designers who too meekly comply can't achieve anything valuable, because they are burdened by desiderata and contradictions, you can't go on squaring circles forever. By their choices and hierarchies, good designers increase the available space.
"Beauty, legibility, and to a certain extent,

banality, are very closely

linked notions." — ADRIAN FRUTIGER

I LOVE THE MOMENT OF FULGURATION I gave lessons at the Celsa[3] between 2002 and 2012. Amongst other tasks, I was in charge of a module "Create your own brand" for graduate students engaged in a business development project.

[4]

The projects showed various stages of advancement. The choice of a name was the decisive step. There was a before and after. While the name remained uncertain, the students were groping in the dark, full of doubt and hesitation. Conversely, those who had named their project were propelled into action. They had a plan, a thousand things to settle. They had found the "subject" to conjugate their verbs. This precise moment when one invents a name is a joyful experience. It sometimes occurs as a fulguration, often only after going through all the unfitting options. Creating a name and finding the right graphic design are catalysts, they allow you to project yourself, to raise your ambition. They give speed. *Graphic design helps to exist.*
"What is well thought out presents itself with clarity,

and the words to express it come out easily." — NICOLAS BOILEAU

[3] Temporary identity and signage Stedelijk Museum CS (SMCS) Amsterdam, 2004, graphic design: Experimental Jetset — [4] Identity and packaging of cement bags, Vracs de l'Estuaire, Le Havre, 2017, graphic design: Danny Kreeft

I LOVE CHILDREN'S BOOKS *Petit-Bleu et Petit-Jaune* by Leo Lionni was my first favorite book. I remember everything, the moving story, the pictures, the pleasure of looking at the forms and the colors. Until today, I love dressing up as Mimi Cracra[4]: mid-length red plastic boots, flared dresses, straightforward prints. Forms and colors already forecasted the best logos.

Les Aventures d'une petite bulle rouge, by Iela Mari, for instance, reminds me of the big red circles of Elf Aquitaine. I'm convinced children's literature trains the eye through the variety of its illustrative styles, its typographical choices, the ever changing layout of text and pictures.[5] For reading a children's book conveys the rare pleasure of shared reading. This shows how great a responsibility lies on the authors, on the publishers of youth literature (and of school books in general).[6] They create imperishable memories and attachments. This includes printers, because the scope of possibilities offered by four-color printing (cyan-magenta-yellow-black, CMYK) often only blurs the double pages, and has fostered laziness in terms of content differentiation, layout, hierarchy and color rendering. Beyond the mere awareness of forms and colors, the taste for reading also awakens at the age of the first children's albums. That is to say how decisive they are. *Graphic design trains the eye.*

I LOVE GAS STATIONS As a child, going to "fuel up" was a joy, nearly a ritual. I was sitting in the back of my parents' Renault 4, I pushed the window open to catch the smell of petrol, which I loved, I watched the white numbers scrolling swiftly on the black background and stop all of a sudden, I was hoping for a round figure. I remember I ranked the stations in order of preference. Elf was my favorite, because of its forms and colors, it was to me the kindest station, but I also liked Agip very much, because of the dog full of legs and its radical colors, yellow-black-white-red. I didn't really like Esso and Mobil, they had too much white, the stations were too empty, too clean, too impersonal. There weren't so many Antar stations, but I liked them too, even if the space between the black stripes annoyed me, I couldn't have said why. One day Karel Martens[7] told me: "The first time I went to the States, I was very disappointed: I expected to see the same gas stations as in Edward Hopper's paintings."

[5] Iela Mari, *Les Aventures d'une petite bulle rouge*, Paris, École des Loisirs, 1968
[6] Leo Lionni, *Petit-Bleu et Petit-Jaune*, Paris, École des Loisirs, 1970

It was extraordinary to share this gas station fantasy, and to hear that the main disappointment of Karel Martens in the United States had been to discover that these mythical places don't exist… You can see on old pictures how much each gas station was by itself a small temple of the brand, erected to the glory of gasoline… and of the prosperous post-war decades. How could one not be nostalgic? *Graphic design thrills me.*

[7] *Olt*, published on the occasion of the exhibition of Olivier Mosset and Jean-Baptiste Sauvage, Mouans-Sartoux, Espace de l'art concret, Centre d'art contemporain, 2017, Paris and Mouans-Sartoux, Catalogue Général and Espace de l'art concret, 2018, graphic design: Jean-Marie Courant and Malou Messien — [8] Elf gas station in Peyrus, Drôme, shot by Patrick Galais on a cycling tour, 2016

I LOVE INVISIBILITY Even when there's nothing, there's always something. Some people tell me: "In the meanwhile, use a neutral typography", but neutral doesn't exist, everything is message. Would neutral be Helvetica? Of course not, Helvetica conveys so much: thoroughness and reliability, Swiss quality, simplicity, robustness. And even Helvetica varies according to its weight, its color, its implementation. And yet, in some creations loaded with graphic design, it's hardly to be seen, the design seems to disappear. I like that. In other cases, on the contrary, it's all you see. It all really depends on the designers, and on the subjects too. In signage design, for instance, extreme and invisible presence is nearly a holy grail[8].

[9] Signage, résidence Bellevue, 159, rue Félix-Faure, Le Havre, designer unknown, date unknown — [10] Catalog of the exhibition "Bonnard/Vuillard", Paris, Musée d'Orsay and Flammarion, 2016, graphic design: Michelines (Line Célo and Clémence Michon)

I LOVE GAMES I often played Monopoly when I was a child. The orange were my favorite, Avenue Mozart, Boulevard Saint-Michel, Place Pigalle. But I also liked the purple and the light blue.

My big brother had eyes only for the green and the dark blue: Avenue des Champs-Elysées and Rue de la Paix (the most charismatic). And he bought railway stations. I remember the lack of contrast between the colors of certain banknotes, so that we mixed up the different values, specially the 5,000 with the 100. I remember the thrill of falling on "Go" or "Free Parking". I also remember having the feeling of a combination of different styles: the cards Chance and Community Chest were slightly out of tone. Certain illustrations (Jail, Water Works, Electric Company) stood out, but as a whole the game had a very endearing character. I also loved Mille Bornes. Oh the safeties! My favorite by far was the puncture-proof tire, and also the swallow flying at 200 km per hour. The Red light, the Green light, Roger Excoffon's typography (Choc and Antique Olive) in action… No less than children's books, these games have trained my eye. I often think that graphic design could have stopped at this stage. Everything was so perfect: of course, there were blunders, but they brought charm and humanity to the design. When I see black typography thus overprinted on even the darkest background, most likely in pantone colors, I feel nostalgic for that time. The time of monochrome, the time of bichrome. I wonder how the designer was able to get such an accurate and audacious project validated. Was it thanks to production cost constraints: one single application of black on all card backgrounds? I clearly envy that time, when the CMYK, the 3-D effects and the shadows hadn't submerged, smoothed out, softened, smeared everything, and made us lazy.

[11] Monopoly, published by: Parker, designer unknown

The comeback of *flat design*[9] reminds us today how effective and time-less simplicity is. Graphic design brings structure.
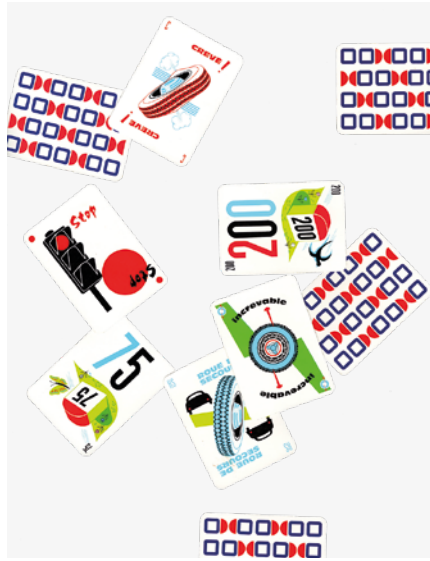
I LOVE SARDINE TINS I collect sardine tins, after having eaten the sardines. It's just impossible for me to throw them away. They're so beautiful: the tin boxes, with their vivid colors, their marvelous illustrations, their rich sceneries, they're bound to take you on a journey. As if the several layers had added up since the origin, as a seal, a guar-antee of quality and antiquity. I wish one day to have the opportunity to design sardine tins. Yet I don't know if they would look right. Each designer has his speciality. When you create a logotype, you prune away, you simplify, you only keep the essential. Whereas the charm of mythical packagings often stems from the conjunction of numerous elements. Often, but not always. Graphic design makes you want to buy.

[12] Mille Bornes, published by: Dujardin, graphic design: Joseph Le Callennec
[13] Boneless sardines in virgin olive oil and lemon, cannery La belle-iloise, bought in 2017, designer unknown, date unknown — [14] Portuguese sardines in olive oil, Marks and Spencer, bought in 2019, designer unknown, date unknown

I LOVE GRIDS What I love in grids is that you feel them without seeing them. A good grid allows infinite richness and orderly fantasy. As a firmly established rule that offers a tremendous liberty. A good grid (and a good designer using it) opens up, instead of closing down. Thorough graphic design inspires follies.
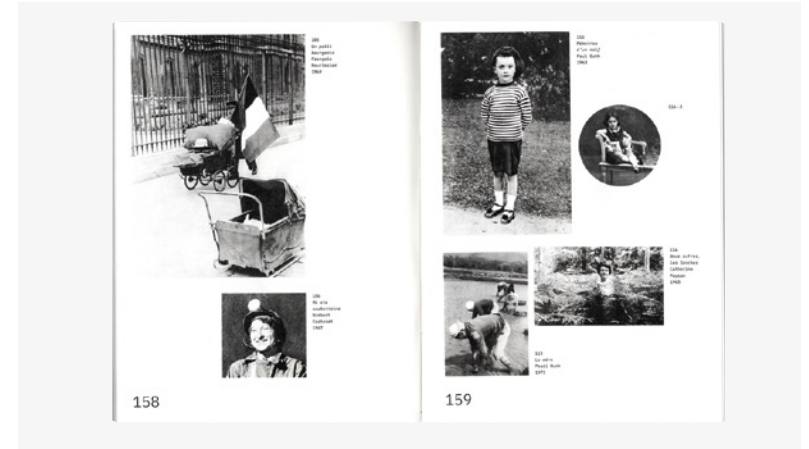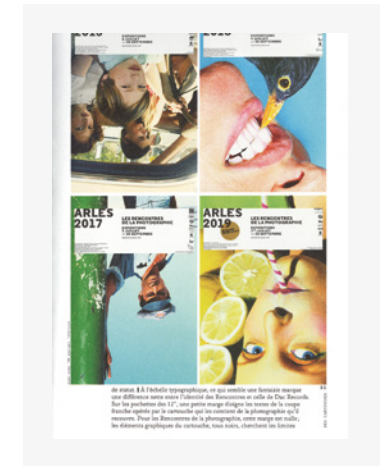
[15] *Bienvenue au(x) Club(s)*, dissertation for the DNSEP (with honors), Pau, Ésad Pyrénées, 2020, five copies printed, author and graphic designer: Arthur Épineau
[16] *Jure-moi de jouer*, Paris, Galerie Chantal Crousel and Is—Land Édition, 2020, graphic design: Dune Lunel Studio — [17] *ABM Studio. Une direction graphique*, Paris, Art Book Magazine, 2020, graphic design: Huz & Bosshard

[18] A small part of my personal library. How to classify the books is a great topic of conversation

I LOVE ROAD SIGNS. I LOVE SYSTEMS Immensely sophisticated are the graphical codes invented to guide cars on the road, although users aren't aware of this. You only notice the codes when they go slightly off track with an inappropriate typography, weight, or an approximative letter spacing. Or when you change countries.

[19]
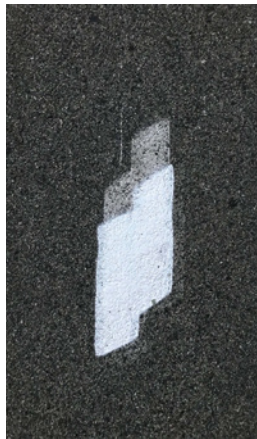
[20]

[21]

[19] Milestone near Château de Figeac, a wine estate located on the municipality of Saint-Émilion, Gironde, 2019 — [20] Close-up of the broken line designed for narrow country roads, 2020 — [21] Michelin signpost, 2021

Green road signs in Switzerland lead to the highway. I admire these codes set up by an unidentified institution[10], which hardly change over time. I'm most fascinated by our ability to memorize them, we detect the slightest discrepancy. We have these codes "in the eye", we have assimilated them without ever learning them (or hardly, when training for our license). We know their color, their size, their layout, the stuff they're made of. We're able to distinguish the "real" ones from the "wrong". The real ones are reassuring, we trust them, we follow them. Inadequate signs make us doubt. How sensitive and sharp our eyes can be! You just have to train them, slowly but surely. *Graphic design sorts out and dates.*

I LOVE DIALS Simplicity is the strength of the great. This taste for the essential, for ergonomy, this magnificent and magnified minimalism seem to be typically German. Dieter Rams, the inventor of the motto "as little design as possible" is a model.

[22]

I think of him each time I see a thermostatic valve on a heater spoiled by mannered typography. And I remember a quotation from the German artist Hans Hofmann, which fits graphic design so well: "The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak".[11] This is a reflex graphic designers have mastered to a supreme degree. *Graphic design illuminates.*

I LOVE STRIPES AND LADDERS *Graphic design regulates. Graphic design measures.*

[23]

[22] Vinyl album, limited edition, by Dick Voodoo, Records Ruin the Landscape[12], 2016. Record player SK 6 belonging to a range of products developed for Braun, 1960, design: Dieter Rams and Hans Gugelot — [23] Signage on posts in Amsterdam, 2012

I LOVE IDEAS You can do great things, or striking things, with little money. But you can't do without a good idea. This is precisely where the difference lies between decoration and design. *Graphic design induces cheerfulness.*

[24]

I LOVE MOVEMENT In the last twenty years, we have daily witnessed the rise of motion graphic design on screen.[13] Some projects nowadays are so sensitive, so clever, so playful, that they create new sensations.

[25]

Motion design doesn't replace paper, it complements it. The first time I was immensely moved by motion design, was in 2008, when I saw the animation of Studio Dumbar for the Netherlands Kamerkoor.[14] I realized that motion design on screen could be as sublime as printed design on paper. You just have to see big and not let yourself get trapped in conventions. You just have to imagine tailored creations. *Graphic design moves forward.*

I LOVE BEING GRASPED Little mention is made of the hyper-sensuality of graphic design. Yet it dispenses caresses, embraces, slaps you in the face and makes you cry. It gives goose bumps, it grasps, it withholds, it strokes. That's probably what most fascinates me, and ties me. That a simple combination of signs should induce such intense sensations drives me mad. The emotions conveyed by graphic design stun me. Just like a beautiful landscape. *Graphic design tears you away.*

[24] Temporary identity, *The New Institute*, Rotterdam, 2013, graphic design: Karel Martens — [25] Demo Festival, Amsterdam, 2019, curator: Studio Dumbar

[26] Poster with Isabelle Huppert for the festival Filmpodium, Zurich, 1999, graphic design: Ralph Schraivogel

Rainer Werner

Fassbinder

Die Anarchie der Phantasie

[27] Poster for the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Month, Cinema Xenix, Zurich, 2012, graphic design: Prill Vieceli Cremers

I LOVE CONSTRAINTS Graphic design is a thankful celebration.

[28]

I LOVE FANTASY Graphic design makes people smile.

[29]

I LOVE LOGOS This sentence of Masashi Uehara was a revelation, it made me understand what fascinates me so: "A logotype is the point where two forces meet: the force of meaning and the force of image. Both must be in perfect balance. Too much meaning prevents you from expanding the territory of image. Conversely, giving free rein to the image prevents you from memorizing the logotype. When I create a logotype, my main task is to find this balance." [15] It's very difficult to say why and how a logotype becomes iconic, however, the secret probably remains in this balance between image and meaning. We get bored by strenuous logotypes, which spread out to tell us the whole story. As for too abstract logos, without solid anchoring, they don't last. The logotype is the essence, the soul. That's why it's so difficult to create a great logotype, and why it takes time to do it (at least a little time). A great logo can change the life of a company.

[28] Illuminated letter from the cruise liner *France*, picture from the exhibition "Paquebot France", Le Havre, MuMa – musée d'art moderne André-Malraux, June 9th – September 23rd, 2012 — [29] Le *Générateur de Recouvrance*, Brest, 2013, graphic design: Pierre di Sciullo, 131 boards and 33 posts, 200 anagrams

Would Michelin be Michelin without the Bibendum? Of course not, we would not have this intimate and warm relationship with the brand without the little man. This tremendous power of design is almost unfair. It prompts us to believe and to dream, it spurs the imagination. It could even make us lie. One of my friends who worked for Total, in the Sustainable Development Department, got so mad because people were convinced that Total was a much bigger polluter than BP (the oil producer with the green-yellow-white logo, hence seemingly cleaner), while he had evidence of the contrary.

Phenomenal is the power of the logo: it's a dream enhancer. It can considerably change people's behavior: for the employees who work for the brand, for the public who sets its eyes on it. *Graphic design strikes.*
"Mistrust first impressions,

they are nearly always good." — TALLEYRAND

I LOVE SWITZERLAND Driving through Geneva for only a couple of hours in February 2021, I was thrilled to see these posters, one more beautiful than the other. They were neat, interesting, skillfully crafted,

elaborate, as if high quality graphic design was the standard, the default option for the Swiss. Even when it's not extraordinary, it has this underlying minimum quality: a typographic quality, a quality of hierarchy, an impeccable layout, revealing the evident presence of a grid, it has impact, plot, staging. As if the Swiss had long enjoyed the benefits of a silent education, and that cheap design, embarrassing, disappointing, shaming design, had no place in the country. *Graphic design is uplifting.*

I LOVE TO LAUGH My first job was located in a beige building in Le Kremlin-Bicêtre, where I worked for a small pharmaceutical company. I remember everything was ugly: the beige metal wardrobe, the desk, my electric blue chair covered with synthetic fabric, the window pane, the door. The lined up desks looked all the same, directors were entitled to mahogany wood, ugly in a different way. Then I had to choose a subject for my dissertation [16]. My mentor, Nicholas Ind, worked for a design agency in London. He received me in the offices of the Jenkins Group, and showed me the visual identity guidelines just printed for De La Rue —a big green binder I still keep with me. Then he introduced me to Chris Ludlow, of Henrion, Ludlow & Schmidt, and Wally Olins, of Wolff Olins. Everything here was beautiful, the reception desks, the offices, the lunchroom, the meeting rooms, the signage, the people, their clothes, their whole attitude. I was so keen to belong to this world. When I first had to deal as a customer with a design agency, I remember the team which came to present the project had obviously worked hard, all were really concerned by what they were recommending— but they laughed a lot.

I wanted to laugh with them. Today, I work with designers. We work hard, and we laugh a lot too. I love that. *Graphic design is a state of mind.*
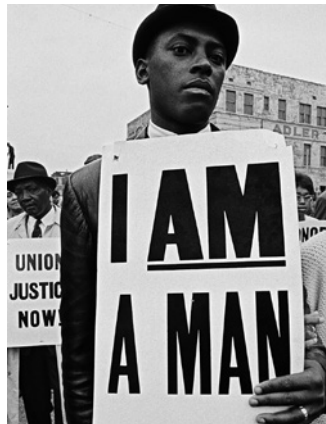

[33]

I LOVE OPTIMIZATION *Graphic design can kill two birds with one stone.*

[34]

I LOVE POWER *Graphic design is overwhelming.*

[35]

I LOVE SHIPS In Le Havre, I watch the ships go by: tugs, dredgers, pilot boats, Ro-Ros, chemical tankers, barges, cruise liners (hardly any since 2020) and container ships, of course. I look at the container ships and at the marking on the hull. I incidentally heard in a conversation (not with him) that Etienne Robial loves trucks. Ships are my thing. Probably for the same reasons. I know them all.

[36]

Sometimes — seldom—I discover one I don't know. I love the gigantic logos on the containers. And what fascinates me even more is their perfect readability, unimpaired by the grooved iron sheet they're applied on. I often wondered if there is a special version of the logo for application on containers, but I never solved the riddle. Maybe I prefer keeping the mystery whole. *Graphic design is a signature.*

I LOVE HONESTY *Graphic design can sometimes repair an injustice.* It happens that wonderful companies have an aging visual identity, a dusty image made of bits and pieces, quite unworthy of the quality of their products or services. Such an identity doesn't foster trust, doesn't allow to apply fair prices, it isn't equal to the task. In such cases, it's truly a pleasure to help out, to do justice, to make sure the graphical signs are in line with the quality. For the graphic designer creates the clothes that make the man. Which by the way is a huge responsibility.

[37]

It's very easy to lie with *Illustrator* [18]. Behind your screen, you can create a discrete and elegant identity, in a refined black and white layout with the right kerning, or you can build up a promotional identity in red, yellow and orange. A graphic designer can make all the promises he wants with his signs. He jumps from one layout to the other in no time with his mouse. It's essential to try to serve, to be honest, to choose one's causes. For graphic design can arm the whole world.

"Form is the essence

brought to the surface." — VICTOR HUGO

I LOVE COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE Such is my love for commercial signs that I have written a book about them.[19] I don't love them all, naturally, I'm often disappointed, or even highly irritated, but some signs are really splendid. One day I was talking with designer Bernd Hilpert,[20] I was telling him I understood architects fighting against commercial signage, how painful it must be for them to have to accept this wart, this foreign body. Bernd answered immediately and firmly that he always preferred buildings with commercial signs.

[38]

So I thought about it and I changed my mind. A commercial sign, indeed, is an invitation to dialogue, to exchange, it's an address. It's also a cultural and historical marker, a time signature. Very instructive experiences have been led in cities from which all commercial signage had been removed.[21] The city suddenly seems speechless. *Graphic design addresses.*

[38] Schwimmbad ("swimming pool"), Basel: an example of perfect sign, according to Bernd Hilpert

[39]

[40]

I LOVE THE SEA Sometimes when I'm tired of spending my life behind a computer, I wish to become a house painter. I would like to paint red rectangles and green triangles on lighthouses and beacons.[22]

[41]

[39] Advertising sign for the Centre national de la danse, Pantin, Seine-Saint-Denis, 2004, graphic design: Pierre di Sciullo
[40] Illuminated signs on the Grands Magasins du Louvre, Paris, 1924, photo: agence Rol — [41] The south dike of Le Havre harbor, 2018

I LOVE DETAILS This project "Blanche ou l'oubli" fascinates me, I wish I would have published it. Some say: "God is in the details", others say: "the devil is in the details". One thing is sure: good design is always a matter of details. You spend ages quibbling, dithering, hesitating, balancing, counterbalancing, deciding, doubting, being delighted or sorry… Sometimes you insist unnecessarily, you get stupidly obsessed. But excellency springs precisely from this crazy attention to details. For the eyes, the hands, they feel everything, they see everything. The most extraordinary aspect of the project of Jean-Marie Courant and John Morgan, is how they outline the "Same same, but different[23]." "La Blanche" is a mythical collection of Gallimard, a perfect collection which intimidates all the other publishers. Indeed: what is there left to do, after this? "La Blanche", once considered unique, actually is terribly multiple. Everything changes from one book to the other: the format, the paper, the font (size, color, weight, case, leading, design), the layout. I don't know of any other project that will demonstrate to the same degree that all the flavor lies in the details. It also shows how seductive diversity can be, and should be a lesson for authors of graphic charts and for Brand Managers.

[42]

I LOVE PAPERS Choosing the paper for a book is a decisive step. The paper tells who the book is. *Graphic design caresses.*

[43]

[42] Project "Blanche ou l'oubli", a view of the exhibition "Typojanchi" (Seoul International Typography Biennial), 2013, project: Alex Balgiu, Jean-Marie Courant, Catherine Guiral et John Morgan — [43] Exhibition "Making Books Together", éditions Non Standard, Une saison graphique, Carré du THV, Le Havre, 2020, scenography: Bernd Hilpert, graphic design: Rejane Dal Bello

I ALSO LOVE CLUMSINESS This color chart of Le Havre yellows delights me each time I see it. I often go out of my way to stroll along this beautiful building and enjoy the symphony of yellow blinds, raised, lowered, half way. I'm sure the managing agency gave out some instruction, probably a RAL reference, one specific yellow to harmonize the blinds and create a chromatic uniformity. That was well intended, graphic guidelines are based on the same principle. Then life takes over, and leads to this stunning cameo of yellows, to this perfect imperfection. It would never have worked so well, if one had tried to produce a similar effect. This fascinating beauty makes me reflect upon the benefits of perfection and the brilliant potential of imperfection.

[44]

More and more, I think we should welcome imperfection and sometimes even embrace it. I discover imperfection too can produce beautiful things, reveal unsuspected charms, create surprises and be full of humanity, as children's drawings maybe.

I LOVE COLORS Color is the wealth of the unwealthy. A beach cabin in Le Havre is like a secondary residence. The inhabitants of the city feel blessed by the colors painted on their cabins since 2017, they hope this joy will never be taken from them. *Graphic design makes people happy.*

[45]

[44] André Lenoble, architect, block V61, boulevard François-Ier, Le Havre, 1963
[45] *Couleurs sur la plage*, A summer in Le Havre (2017-2021), graphic design: Karel Martens; the white cabins have been customized with stripes in ten different colors and six different width values[24]
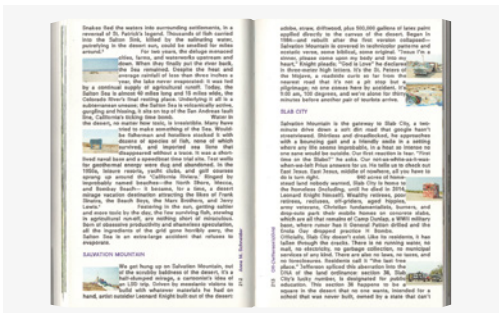
I LOVE TYPOGRAPHIES IN SPACE

[46]

I LOVE TRACES And sometimes traces are fatal.

[47]

I LOVE INFLUENCES Yes! Paper also can be responsive.

[48]

[46] Letters on Landscape, self-produced, non-commissioned project, Porto, Portugal, 2005, graphic design: R2 Design — [47] Amazon and other cardboard boxes, rue Félix-Faure, Le Havre, 2021 — [48] Rem Koolhaas / AMO, *Countryside. A Report*, Cologne, Guggenheim and Taschen, 2020, graphic design: Irma Boom

I LOVE MAPS

[49]

ONCE IN MY LIFE THE STENDHAL SYNDROME It was in 1999, I was in New York for the first time, I didn't know much about the town, I was alone, I went to the Museum of Modern Art at a very early hour, I wandered from one discovery, from one room, to the other, I was intimidated. Full of curiosity, I walked into the room dedicated to Ellsworth Kelly, without knowing anything about the artist. A vast and empty room, with this very high ceiling, there was no one there, no one in this room flooded with soft light, and then: supreme beauty, mouth agape, daze, fascination, revelation. I was magnetized by these forms and these colors, so simple and so solid. I felt almost ridiculous experiencing this absolute emotion in front of the indefinable. How could I explain such bewilderment, caused by seemingly so little? Alone and tiny in front of this extreme beauty of forms and colors. A couple of minutes alone face to face with the master, and forever overwhelmed.

"We like design to be visually powerful,

intellectually elegant,

and above all timeless." — MASSIMO VIGNELLI
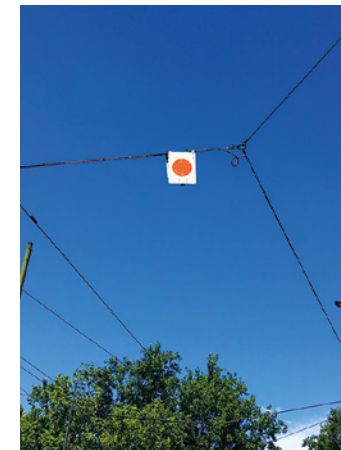
[50]

[49] Europe, ground relief, by P. Vidal de La Blache, Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, date unknown — [50] Milan, July 1st, 2021. First time traveling for quite some time. Red dot along the tramway line. Take it as a wink to Iela Mari, Elf, Ellsworth Kelly and Marion Bataille. Invited to Fedrigoni Top Award: No One Can Fail, UPO 3 by the éditions Non Standard is "1st Prize". A clown's nose: joy is back

1 "I love mayonnaise" came up by accident as a small yellow note on my phone. Having no paper, no pen, I hastily made a couple of notes on the beach of Le Havre when the structure of this article first took form, or rather, when Frédéric Lambert (author of *Je sais bien, mais quand même. Essai pour une sémiotique des images et de la croyance*, éditions Non Standard, 2013) suggested the idea to me during the lockdown. It was the first item on my list. But it was my phone that displayed it in large and bold characters, as a title. We underestimate the role interface design plays in our perceptions of and interactions with the world. Had this layout not been displayed, never would I have seen, never would I have thought, never would I have dared.

2 A polder is an artificial stretch of land which has been reclaimed from the sea by means of dykes and dams, under sea level. The total area of the Netherlands is of 41,526 km², including 7,150 km² of polders, representing 17% of the national territory. Each square meter of land has a significant value for a Dutchman.

3 École des hautes études en sciences de l'information et de la communication, Sorbonne Université, Paris.

4 Mimi Cracra, a very likable and clumsy little girl, full of mischief. The character was invented by Agnès Rosenstiehl.

5 *L'École des loisirs*, is an excellent youth publishing company (home to such authors as Tomi Ungerer, Kitty Crowther, Catharina Valckx, Nadja, etc.), possibly the best in France. While the use of fonts in their books could be notably improved, the magnificent illustrations, the carefully dosed text-picture alchemy are always a great joy. This joy I experienced again while reading so many books to my own children.

6 One could extend the list to all creators of children's stories, since my eternal heroes include television cartoon figures such as Casimir,

Chapi Chapo, and naturally ... the Barbapapa of Annette Tison and Talus Taylor. For each of these, I remember the precise moment I discovered their colors.

7 Karel Martens was born in the Netherlands in 1939. He is one of the most renowned and respected graphic designers in the world, to the point that his style has become part of the Dutch identity. Through his simple and pure graphic constructions, his work on typography, on the gestural quality of words, on geometrical forms, color overlay and optical effects, he belongs to the lineage of the modernists of the 1920's. He displays a remarkable sense of synthesis. He is a master in the art of conceiving living and random graphic systems, in which control and chance are carefully balanced.

8 The ideal signage is expected to be invisible, in order not to obstruct the space, while the signs should nonetheless be immediately seen as soon as we seek information, or wonder which way to go. This balance between visibility and invisibility is hard to find, all the more as the different agents (architect, purchasers, users, designer, manufacturers...) may have diverging and sometimes contradictory demands.

9 *Flat design* is made of simple, minimal and necessarily flat forms, mostly in one or two colors. It notably contrasts with the sophisticated shadows, color gradations, 3-D effects which were trendy in visual identities and communication between 2005 and 2015. Flat design is easy to duplicate on any media, at any scale, and through any printing or on-screen display technique. It offers the possibility of more consistently implementing a visual identity. Consistent implementation is a major factor of success for a brand, since experience and studies have shown that the more you know, the more you like ("To like something, you must have seen or heard it for a long time, you bunch of idiots", Francis Picabia).

10 Today, in France, the Ministry for Ecological Transition is in charge of road signage. This includes signs, road markings and lights. It informs users about applicable regulations and guides them in their travels. When well conceived and carried out, it facilitates traffic and reduces the causes of accidents.

11 This is probably the link with the minimalist school.

12 Label created by Pierre-Yves Cachard and François Troquet. Pierre-Yves is my graphic accomplice in Le Havre. With other partners, he also set up the festival Une saison graphique. Together we initiated the project "Colours on the beach" carried out by Karel Martens. Aside from his passion for graphic design, Pierre-Yves Cachard is general inspector for education, sport and research.

13 Animated graphic design existed before Internet: everyone remembers the James Bond credits sequence and the revolutionary change in the graphic presentation of television stations. Designer Etienne Robial and his remarkable work for Canal + are the best example in the French context.

14 *Nederlands Kamerkoor* animation of the graphic identity, to be seen here: https://vimeo.com/15662558

15 Admirable Design, April 4th, 2005.

16 Dissertation for a Master of Art in marketing degree: "The role of corporate identity in the success of cross-border strategic alliances", Kingston University, London, 1996.

17 Rejane Dal Bello is the author of the book *Citizen first. Designer second*, published by Counter-Print Books (2020). The chapter "Beauty is Honesty" (p. 278) inspired me.

18 *Illustrator* is the Adobe software used to draw logotypes in vector format, which is the condition to reproduce it in whatever size.

19 Élodie Boyer and Jean Segui, *Lettres du Havre. Identités réelles et missives imaginaires*, Le Havre, éditions Non Standard, 2012.

20 Bernd Hilbert, graduated from the École nationale supérieure de création industrielle (Ensci), is a volume designer specializing in commercial signs. He set up the agency unit-design in Francfort-on-the-Main, and works for numerous brands (Roche, Lufthansa, DB, Goethe Institut, the European Central Bank, amongst others). He created for Studio Dumbar the signage of Ag2r La Mondiale and staged the exhibition Non Standard in Le Havre (October 2020).

21 Nicolas Moulin (photography) and Norman Spinrad (text), *Vider Paris*, Paris, Isthme, 2005. See also the project "DELETE! Delettering the public space" imagined by Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber. In 2005, all signs, boards and pictograms in the 7th district of Vienna (Austria) had been wrapped up in yellow during two weeks.

22 As for road traffic, there exists lanes and codes at sea. Maritime signalization allows navigators to steer clear of the main shoals in busy areas and to spot access channels into the ports. It is provided by maritime signaling posts (Établissements de Signalisation maritime, ESM) installed either on stationary (lighthouses, turrets, spars) or floating (buoys) structures. The height and mass of the structures define the daytime range of the posts; their height and lighting power define the nighttime range of the so-called "active" ESMs. The leading lights can stay lit in the daytime. (Information provided by the French Ministry of the Sea).

23 This expression is often heard in Asia, in the mouth of street vendors. It means their items are as good as the neighbor's.

24 For further information, see *Colours on the beach*, Le Havre, éditions Non Standard, 2017.

[1] The historical partner of this cycling team was Ag2r La Mondiale. Citroën joined the team in 2021 as second official sponsor. An oblique typographical identity combining both images raises the team spirit and gracefully gives both sponsors optimal visibility. Although they are equally treated, each one can feel he occupies 75 % of the space. And the team keeps its specific style, faithful to the cycling tradition, while displaying its limitless audacity.

[2] The ordering purchaser is the GIP Normandie impressionniste, based in Rouen, mainly funded by the Normandy Region and the Departments. The museums housing the exhibitions are invited to implement the new identity. They naturally are also implied in the process of selecting the agency and the visual identity. ABM Studio stood out in this consultation by proposing a federating identity able to promote classical as well as contemporary art works. The festival considerably increased its visibility as it moved from the status of partner logo (in 2016) to "host organization", with a remarkably developed graphic style (in 2020).

[3] To underline the provisional nature of the identity (due to temporary redesigning of the museum during the works), the whole visual identity was composed in A4 sheets and slipped into sheet protectors. This solution proved highly efficient, simple to implement and very attractive. "It allowed to cover the walls, to display a strong signal at low price, to stay autonomous in producing, installing and adapting the signage." Experimental Jetset expanded the available space.

[4] Naming these cement bags "Le 42.5" played a decisive triggering role in the project and in the choice of values: simplicity, efficiency, to the point. The 42.5 dosage is situated between 32.5 (standard) and 52.5 (high-end cement, more expensive because it hardens faster): this affordable intermediate dosage alone embodies the market positioning and the main asset of Vracs de l'Estuaire.

[8] This gas station gave birth to a magical artistic project, from which the publisher Catalogue Général made a book, *Olt*, issued on the occasion of the exhibition of Olivier Mosset and Jean-Baptiste Sauvage in the Espace de l'art concret, Centre d'art contemporain (Mouans-Sartoux), from April 1st to November 5th, 2017. A perfect book, unfortunately out of print. One should always buy books before it's too late.

[20] New marking for small country roads, too narrow to allow two cars to cross each other safely. This hesitatingly doubled dashed line seems to recommend a considerate attitude toward other road users.

[21] For further information concerning the first road signs, see Marina Duhamel, *Un demi-siècle de signalisation routière. Naissance et évolution du panneau de signalisation routière en France de 1894 à 1946*, Presses de l'École nationale des ponts et chaussées, Paris, 1994.

[22] Dieter Rams was chief designer for the Braun company from 1961 to 1995, he had close links with the functionalist school of industrial design. He defined as follows the ten basic principles of what he considered good design: "Good design is innovative. Good design makes a product useful. Good design has aesthetic quality. Good design makes a product comprehensible. Good design is unobtrusive. Good design is honest. Good design lasts. Good design is precise in the slightest detail. Good design respects the environment. Good design is as little design as possible."

[24] The New Institute results of the merging of three entities: The Netherlands Architecture Institute [NAI] / Premsela, The Netherlands Institute for Design and Fashion / Virtueel Platform, the e-culture knowledge institute. Karel Martens superimposed patches of color on the three existing visual identities (on paper or digital media), in order to bring them together while preserving traces of the previous identities, by means of three circular "windows". Zero waste, urgency addressed, fine style, extreme conciseness, perfect meaningfulness, supreme intelligence.

[25] Design in Motion Festival (Demo) organized by Studio Dumbar on November 7th, 2019. For 24 hours, the 80 advertising screens of the Amsterdam Central Station showed motion design. Nothing was on sale. "Demo" can be seen at the National Center for Graphic Design, Le Signe, in Chaumont, from May 27th to November 21st, 2021 (http://www centrenationaldugraphisme.fr/en/biennale/2021/program/demo-festival).

[27] The few words and the absence of logos on the poster largely contribute to the sensation of pure impact.

[28] The technical constraint induced by the monumental size of the sign seems to have dictated its form (and the joints): that's precisely the reason why the design of each letter is extraordinary, remarkable and moving.

[29] With the 11 letters forming the name of the district "Recouvrance", Pierre di Sciullo composed complete or partial anagrams and installed them as signage along the tramway line between the stations "Recouvrance" and "Capucins". He uses the font Sonia, which he created to honor Sonia Delaunay.

[31] The KLM logo was created in 1961 by F. H. K. Henrion, British designer born in Germany, and slightly transformed in 1991, by Chris Ludlow, of Henrion, Ludlow & Schmidt.

[34] Beyond the highly recognizable identity of these gentlemen, often imitated but never equaled, the design of the cars serves as a movable barrier (visible day and night, thanks to the fluorescent tapes). This sense of synthesis is highly effective. The French police should pull itself together.

[35] The poster "I Am A Man" was initially created for the strike of the Memphis Sanitation Workers. It was used for the Poor People's Campaign in Washington D. C. during the summer of 1968.

[40] One has no idea how numerous and monumental the signs were at that time. Admittedly, this B L A N C is supremely elegant, but imagine its size! What would the ABF's* say?

*The "Architectes des Bâtiments de France" (ABF) are consulted and apply protection norms whenever brand signs are to be set up within a radius of 500 meters around listed or registered historical monuments. When will we have DBF's? (Designers des Bâtiments de France)? Certain signs definitively belong to the French patrimony, and yet nobody protects them. When we realize what we have here, it will be too late. This is a plea.

[42] Exhibition (Typojanchi, Seoul, South Korea, 2013) and book (currently prepared by the publisher Catalogue Général) devoted to the cover of the "collection Blanche" of the editions Gallimard. This project documents the history of the graphic designing of the collection and how this object has marked our collective imagination, from the moment it became an archetype, an emblem, a sign.

[47] Have you noticed how many Amazon cardboard boxes stick out of our garbage cans? Each time I cross one, I think of the independent bookstores, I think of the book supply chain and of the local stores. We have the power to change the look of dying city centers, to transform the ground floor France, if we stay vigilant, if we are consistent, if we make the effort to take care of our environment. "Yellow smile" is the title of a photography project I'm starting.

[48] The layout of this book evokes responsive Internet sites, where the images and the texts resize themselves cascade-like according to the format of the window, on the basis of a certain constant proportion and non-alignment of the elements. In this book, the white spaces are (intentionally) clumsy and terribly charming. To jump like this from the printed layout to the Internet layout, and then to move forward by inventing a book layout inspired by Internet – this is an admirable idea.

Éloïsa Pérez

The discourse of forms: materials and issues in the transmission of knowledge in school

Graphic design and teaching*: a public service relationship?

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GRAPHIC FORMS
Graphic design suffers from a paradox: it is everywhere and yet most people continue to misunderstand what it actually is or what it actually does. Though it benefits from multiple concrete applications in everyday life, its forms, along with the processes that have allowed their design, remain abstract. For the wider public "visual communication" covers a vast domain where it is difficult to tell the difference between the work of a typographer, a graphic designer and an artistic director, and even more difficult to grasp the nuance between a *graphiste* and a graphic designer.[1] Without going into too much detail about these terms, one can note that art historian Annick Lantenois defines graphic design as being
"one of the tools with which Western
                     societies have equipped themselves since the end of the 19th century to visually process
                     information, knowledge and fictions."[2]
By qualifying it as a tool, this definition evokes the resulting practices and productions. As a practice graphic design emphasizes the role of doing and making in the material development of content. It possesses an active dimension that values experimentation as part of the design process. As a tool graphic design allows the organization of visual elements such as shapes, colors and signs within compositions that convey information, that guide the eye, that organize a content and provoke a use. The transitive nature of these verbs suggests that their activity can be applied to outside objects, thus describing graphic design as a tool for mediation. Part of a process of representation, it deploys a symbolic thinking and relies on basic attributes in order to grasp the complexity of the world. Graphic design restitutes this latter in an intelligible manner while taking the constraints of each context into account. In other words, graphic design transforms an initial situation into a fundamentally educational impetus. The design of forms emerges from an intellectual gesture and a desire to share. It displays a material

solution provided as a response to an identified problem, whether it be the composition of a text or circulation within a space. This is why, though the term "graphic design" never explicitly appears in school programs, its omnipresence within the visual landscape and in the numerous situations that lead to the individual or collective manipulation of graphic materials, both inside and outside of school, is enough to justify an interest in making teachers and students aware of its practices. Though the functions of graphic design support the role of forms in the transmission of knowledge, it is indeed appropriate to question their impact in the education of students as citizens. What effect does an understanding of the systematic thinking spread and transmitted by graphic design have on teaching?

TEACHING THROUGH DESIGN The manifesto of the interdisciplinary platform Socialdesign describes its activity in these terms:
"Social design provides impetus for social,
                     ecological and cultural transformation.
Designers implement initiatives that enable residents
                     to take part in shaping their city, society
and direct environment."[3]
Naturally, social design has a number of applications in an educational context. They are based on the notion of a pedagogical materiality whose effect on the practices of students and teachers can be measured. This materiality includes objects used in class as well as the conditions of organization of the classroom. The way that these systems and mechanisms guide and influence behaviors calls for the introduction of a visual education in schools from an early age. Questioning the role of graphic design in teaching is a relatively new posture within this field. It is an issue of public service that makes complete sense today with regard to history.

A hypothesis can be formulated that suggests that the growing importance of social networks and the speed at which information is generated and spread requires individuals to make a fresh effort of analysis and synthesis in order to understand the content being offered. This effort is not a conscious one and requires an educational effort that is essential to the development of a critical mind and the cultivation of independent thinkers. This work addresses a knowledge of graphic design and the identification

of forms through which it is exhibited. They all respond to intellectual, educational and societal issues, and considering them within an educational and pedagogical context allows them to be articulated. An interest for the transmission of knowledge can also be based on the meaning that graphic designers give to their work, on a desire to root their activity in a practice of public utility. Whatever the case may be, it is the responsibility of school and education to initiate this learning of graphic forms that surround us and to provide tools for understanding them and for grasping the societal changes that they provoke.

TRAINING THE EYE WITH EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS Within an educational environment, graphic design can be observed through numerous material devices that are activated during teaching sessions. Their forms provide a material reading of the educational system and of the role that graphic materials play in the education of individuals. Because educating the eye relies both on forms and the practice of said forms, the study of graphic design in a learning environment involves studying both its mechanisms and how they are used. Both aspects are necessary to determine to what extent materiality contributes to the transmission of knowledge. Choosing the educational context to explore this issue amounts to establishing the school's role in educating the eye. The materiality of educational mediums shows the place that graphic design occupies in the development of critical thinking, given the fact that this field defines the very basis of visual culture. Forms carry meaning. They provide information on the content and the uses that are engaged.

Graphic design can be observed in schools through the aesthetic dimension of teaching materials. This is particularly expressed in early learning materials, in textbooks and in class displays. Though it is a determining factor in the education of the eye, it can not avoid a practical aspect. In effect, active experience is required to understand how graphic design functions and the processes of developing forms. This aspect is naturally exercised in schools and can be included in classes through participative workshops initiated by graphic designers and other external contributors. The didactical materials for creation that are employed focus on reconsidering

uses and making them available, on building a common thought process, on collaborating. They facilitate access to resources and serve to reappropriate knowledge, having a direct impact on the nature of teaching and the role of the protagonists involved. By relying on a material analysis of objects, the aim is to reveal pedagogical problems linked to the uses of graphic materials and to transform the spaces that they entail, and also to explain how these materials fit within the educational context of school. In other words, to question the role of graphic design in our society beginning with an educational framework and the development of a critical mind with regard to the visual forms that make up our everyday surroundings.

Notes on pedagogical materiality

ESTABLISHING SENSITIVE LEARNING THROUGH OBJECTS Pedagogical materiality describes the group of mediums and artifacts involved in educational activities, whether or not they are used in the context of school. It includes a plurality of objects designed to transmit knowledge or that are invested with a pedagogical dimension through their own materiality. In order to guarantee an enrichment of teaching methods pedagogical materiality is based on a double barreled approach: decrypting the mediations of graphic design and identifying school situations where this tool for visualization is able to provide its own specific solutions. As part of a social approach and a policy of accessibility of knowledge, this approach of raising awareness implies explaining the mechanisms of the discipline and how they contribute to the school's teaching goals. It concerns all of the creative fields and of course stretches well beyond French borders. Also, one can read in the letter accompanying the pedagogical dossier that was distributed in May 2021 by The Cultural Institute of Architecture Wallonia-Brussels (ICA) Brussels that

"architectural education as imagined

by the ICA is considered as a lever for social emancipation and integration that favors

a reduction in inequalities and provides equal access to architecture for all young people"[4],

a statement that echoes the ambition displayed a few years earlier concerning the educational kits co-published by the Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap) and the Canopé network.[5] Intended for school audiences they introduce teachers and students to graphic design, taking pedagogical situations as a starting point. Their design was carried out by a committee of experts along with a graphic designer whose mission was to consider materiality in accordance with the practices associated with each school level. The first kit that was proposed to middle-schools distinguishes the visual layers that compose a graphic message (page layout, typography, iconography, forms, colors, etc.) in a series of explanatory posters adapted for classrooms.[6] The second kit, for elementary schools, came in the form of a playful box that contained material to be handled like a matrix of graphic elements for composing visual messages.[7]

Each kit is rounded out by a booklet that collects texts of reference about graphic design and a lexicon of dedicated notions. In an extension of these initiatives in March 2021 the Cnap launched a Mooc[8] on graphic design[9] in order to extend the activity that had been carried out with the first two

teaching kits, and included printed copies that were available on demand that quickly sold out, though digital versions continue to be available for download on the website of the Cnap. Whether they seek to raise awareness of architecture or of graphic design, these materials trigger a certain awareness of the object. Let us note that in the examples I have cited[10] graphic design does not always play the same role. In the ICA's teaching file it serves to make the issues of contemporary architecture legible through its page layout. Typographic composition and the format of the file serve to render a previously established content legible. In the Cnap's kits, materiality contributes directly to the process of raising awareness of graphic design. It adapts itself to existing uses and generates new ones. Because of the specific nature of graphic design, both in its practice and in its form, any restitution involves investing the object completely. This observation demonstrates that graphic design acts as its own mediator.

This is even more true in the school environment, where it is illustrated through the numerous objects that accompany teaching, including those that emerge from a vernacular practice in classes.

[1] *Le Ludographe. Connaître et pratiquer le design graphique à l'école élémentaire (The Ludograph. Learning and practicing graphic design in elementary school),* Paris, Cnap, 2019, graphic design: Paul Cox
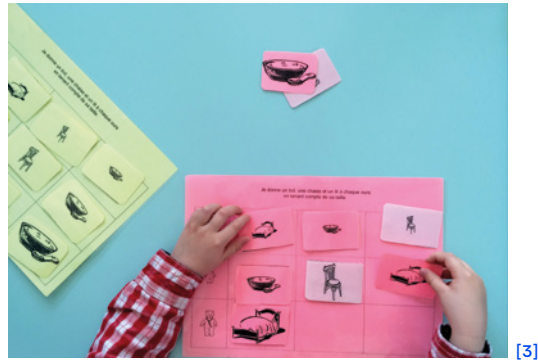
GRAPHIC MATERIALS EMPLOYED IN CLASSES
Whereas institutional systems intentionally aim to raise awareness of the practice of graphic design among school-goers, others are activated in parallel by putting the educational dimension contained within each form into practice. The many missions carried out by the school makes it a place quite charged with issues of learning, as is evidenced by the examples of graphic design found there. In effect, graphic design can be seen in classrooms, in the hallways that lead to them, in recreational spaces, carried by a variety of mediums (maps, manuals, toys, notebooks, charts, files, binders, posters, games, textbooks, tablets…). Both on the scale of the space and the object, graphic design reveals its activity and displays the signs of a pedagogical thinking in development. Though the material and its characteristics provide information on the economy that supports them (for example, when one observes the photocopied pages that are used to make up a small workbook for each student or the choice of a black and white iconography compatible with the photocopiers available in schools), the form illustrates the position and the activity of the teachers with regard to the tools and their design. In classes in French public schools, the material used testifies to a vernacular practice of graphic design, supplemented by commercial materials. Textbooks distributed by the main educational publishers[11] rub shoulders with materials produced on site, put together by teachers and students with the material means available in schools (photocopiers, home printers, office equipment, etc.). This material and its profusion vary depending on the level of studies, the subjects being taught, and the budgets that vary greatly from one establishment to another, from one city to another, from one region to another. It adapts itself to different uses as much as it conditions said uses. If elementary school is marked by a panoply[12] of materials employed in the many workshops proposed to children or made freely available during recess periods, it can be seen that middle and high-school classes favor the use of a single medium, the school textbook, to accompany and structure classes. Taking into account these differences that are the result of pedagogical and institutional issues at every step of a school career, the multiplicity of objects involved in teaching can be divided into

three categories: sensorial objects, textbooks, and classroom displays. Depending on the level and nature of the content to be transmitted, its inclusion in textbooks is more or less affirmed, combining commercial materials and materials made in class in varying proportions. Though these three categories can be combined, their distinction contributes to a desire to identify the graphic characteristics of teaching materials required to understand the gestures of appropriation that they engage with children and students during learning activities and the acquisition of knowledge.This resolutely materialistic analytical approach tends to specify the role of forms in pedagogical situations conditioned by graphic materials along with their operativeness within a context of transmission.

[2] Photocopied sheet, Pierre-et-Marie-Curie nursery school, Saint-Max, 2014
[3] Educational tool, Pierre-et-Marie-Curie nursery school, Saint-Max, 2014

Sensorial
objects

AN INTRODUCTION TO MATERIALITY The term sensorial objects is usually used to designate teaching materials that stimulate the senses and favor a methodology of active discovery where the tangible aspect of things is placed in the service of learning. Because of this particularity sensorial objects are aimed at children who have not yet mastered linguistic codes. They learn through play, using corporeal means such as touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. The first three senses are the ones most often solicited by teaching materials used in classes as they allow children to develop skills essential to the acquisition of language such as fine and gross motor skills, visual discrimination of shapes and distinguishing sounds. Furthermore, the objects add a spatial dimension to teaching and learning. As they combine volume with visual systems, they include graphic design within a context that is deployed in three dimensions. By associating volume and space, sensorial objects favor a concrete understanding of knowledge that allows abstract concepts to be understood. Their materiality guides their use, generating gestures of appropriation adapted to the development of intellectual and motor skills.

The history of education reveals an ideological trend based on a desire to understand the child, following on from the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Édouard Claparède, accompanying their natural development through the use of objects that satisfy their desire for play. It accounts for the appearance of numerous devices and systems that allow the senses to be exercised and that engage the whole body. Thus the "gifts" imagined by Friedrich Froebel, the initiatory materials created by Édouard Séguin and Jean Itard, the games of Ovide Decroly, the interlocking materials of Boyer-Bessart, Cunéo's tactile cubes, Herbinière-Lebert's cards for a sensory imitation to arithmetic and Cuisenaire's rulers, along with many others, employ materiality in their pedagogical approach and are part of a pedagogy, considered to be "new" at the time, based on self-education. Whether they are used to transmit specific knowledge or a set of transversal skills, the objects imagined by these authors place their shapes, volumes and colors squarely in the service of learning.
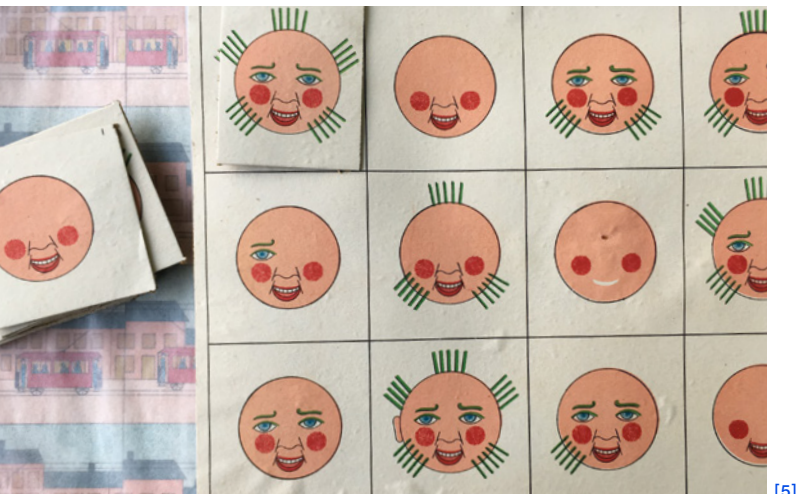
Within this landscape one set of materials stands out from the all of others for its willingness to engage with sensoriality for the purposes of accompanying the natural development of children. It was initially designed by Maria Montessori, Italian doctor and teacher, for teaching young children with learning difficulties. This sensorial material encourages an autonomous use, replacing the constant presence of an adult and placing the child at the heart of their own learning. It has and continues to receive great acclaim,[13] following in the wake of studies that warn against a premature use of screens, recalling the motor needs of smaller children. The active role that these materials provide to the child has a direct impact of the act of learning and places pedagogical materiality at the heart of the process. The attention paid to form in Montessori materials makes them a representative example of the contribution of a graphic design approach when associated with the objectives of a teaching within a school environment. This material raises and provides solutions to issues of design and graphic design as it combines both object and volume with an identity built upon a vocabulary of graphic forms and a visual language.

[4] *Méthode Decroly. Nouveau matériel éducatif et sensoriel du Dr Decroly et de Mlle Monchamp. Boîte n°2*
(The Decroly Method, New educational and sensorial material by Dr. Decroly and Ms. Monchamp. Box n°2),
Paris and Brussels, Fernand Nathan, 1928

[5]

[6]

[5] *Méthode Decroly. Nouveau matériel éducatif et sensoriel du Dr Decroly et de Mlle Monchamp. Boîte n°2*
(The Decroly Method, New educational and sensorial material by Dr. Decroly and Ms. Monchamp. Box n°2),
Paris and Brussels, Fernand Nathan, 1928 — [6] Sensorial motricity materials, Pierre-et-Marie-Curie
nursery school, Saint-Max, 2015

A PLAYGROUND FOR DESIGN Sensorial objects are frequently employed in the field of teaching but are in no way limited to it. They have also been employed by artists, designers and engineers in the area of play, with notable examples such as Meccano and Lego having become incredibly popular thanks to how suited they are to children's needs, and thanks to very elaborate marketing campaigns that have refreshed and updated them. By emphasizing their combinatory, modular and constructive dimension, these playful devices develop inventiveness and creative abilities. This is also the case with the system of "bricks" imagined by Kurt Naef, the *House of Cards* designed by Charles & Ray Eames, and the numerous alphabetical games intended to encourage the material construction of letters, words and phrases.[14] They all share tangible characteristics such as adapted materials (solid wood to facilitate handling, washable plastics and non-deformable metal), colors (ranges based on primary colors) and shapes (geometrical forms with variations across several formats). What's more, the use of a radical elementary and non-figurative language ensures that these materials stand out from others, facilitating their identification within the immediate environment of the child.

While these materials are not designed specifically for teaching purposes, the creative potential that they possess makes them suitable for use in schools. As they encourage a practice of combination and construction, these playful systems develop transversal skills that can then be employed in different leaning situations. This aspect is reinforced by the use of geometric abstraction rather than the visual metaphors ordinarily employed by teaching methods. In any case, the object creates a tangible connection with the world. This particularity makes it a tool of choice within an educational context for guiding the child's attention and for anchoring the child in concepts that they wouldn't otherwise be able to grasp. This is why sensorial objects designed for learning should be thought through to accompany the expected uses as closely as possible. They function like an "object-instruction" whose form can be easily understood by the child.[15]

Books
for learning

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN At the junction of the sensorial object and the book, the children's book sector stands out for its varying degrees of inventiveness depending on the publisher.[16] Picture-books, primers... children's books have long attracted the attention of artists who have used them to distribute works on a much greater scale and to raise awareness of artistic creation among younger audiences. In France from 1988 to 2018, the activities of the association Les Trois Ourses, founded by Odile Belkeddar, Élisabeth Lortic and Annie Mirabel, whose main goal was the "artistic education of children 'centered around the book'" allowed the abundance of creators of the 20th century[17] to be promoted and has enabled audiences to discover contemporary authors such as Ianna Andréadis, Marion Bataille, Paul Cox, Miloš Cvach, Dominique Darbois, Coline Irwin, Joachim Jirou-Najou, Katsumi Komagata, Julien Magnani, Fanette Mellier, Fanny Millard, and Anne-Émilie Philippe.

Similarly, the Éditions du livre[18] extend the legacy of Bruno Munari and Enzo Mari in collaboration with Fanette Mellier and Antonio Ladrillo. Located halfway between book and toy, the book-objects that they publish are always proof of a certain audacity and technical innovation. From the playful catalogue of the Strasbourg based publisher, the book *Hello tomato*[19] comes in the form of a small book-object that serves to help children discover fruits and vegetables. A surprising "pocket-garden" that benefits from a graphic design that emphasizes the shape of the illustrations and the mechanics of the medium. The object is a fold-out concertina book printed on both sides in a gradation of colors, and includes twenty-five white cards with pre-cut-out shapes. It was necessary to adapt the design of the pictograms to the cut-outs to make the card stencils effective, so the child can play at matching the form of the vegetable or fruit and the background color of the pages, and also invent other fruits and vegetables by not matching them with their real color.

[7] Marion Caron and Camille Trimardeau, *Hello tomato*, book-game, Strasbourg, Éditions du livre, 2016

The ease of use of this editorial object ensures its efficiency and provides an example of the intelligence of the children's book that traditional textbooks could take example from. This book argues in favor of the use of graphic design employed in the transmission of basic knowledge, allowing the creation of teaching materials adapted for use by very young children.

In terms of photography the collection "Enfants du monde", the result of a fertile collaboration between French photojournalist Dominique Darbois and educational publisher Fernand Nathan between 1952 and 1978, has left its mark on the children's book genre and on image-based education. Easily recognizable through its use of photomontages accompanied by vibrant and colorful blocks of color and dynamic graphic motifs, the books in this collection met with great success thanks to the modernity of their page layout and design. The choice of photos and the creation of the template was the work of Pierre Pothier, whose contribution was such that he is listed on the title page as graphic designer. This collection shows the utility of a highly skilled graphic design in the context of learning and education.

SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS One of the concrete uses of graphic design that can be observed in schools is its application in school textbooks. These books, imposed on teachers in French public establishments in a decree dating from January 29th, 1890, characterize teaching in primary and secondary education. Though they accompany curricula starting in elementary school, becoming the favored educational tool from middle-school onwards, their materiality has never been sufficiently studied. [20] Taking into consideration the inherent responsibility of this symbol of the school institution it is appropriate to dwell on the functioning of a medium that has passed through every student's hands and that is in fact the guarantor of knowledge to be transmitted. The role of the textbook extends beyond the division of educational materials to educate the eye, or failing that, that contribute to its deformation through a lack of balance and harmony between the elements presented. In this sense, the practical guide *The Design and Production of Textbooks*, written by François Richaudeau and published in 1979 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization emphasizes that:
"it is [not] a bad thing to instill principles
of good taste in the young readers,
even indirectly, by good taste in typography." [21]
Firstly it should be remembered that the design of textbooks is carried out by traditional educational publishers who have a dominant position in this market. Although everyone has free access to the educational programs published online by the ministère de l'Éducation nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports (French Ministry of National Education, Youth affairs and Sport) (MENJS) in their official bulletin, the economic means necessary to create and distribute these books on a large scale is a barrier to the entry of smaller structures into an already overcrowded sector. [22] It is true that the arrival of digital technology in educational publishing offers new prospects in the area, making it possible for those involved to free themselves from the costs incurred by the distribution of copies to establishments, however iconographies and the cost of reproduction rights require significant investment, that educational publishers absorb by reusing documents from their own image databases. It is not uncommon to find the same image in different textbooks from the same publishing house, published in different periods, visible in the different techniques used to print them. On an organizational and pedagogical level, each publisher proposes collections of books whose design is done by an art direction team backed by authors, proofreaders, illustrators, graphic designers and mock up artists who are tasked with defining the editorial line of each collection.

Moreover, a publisher may propose a number of books with varying levels of supplementary materials for the same program, with teachers in a position to purchase them or not after consulting the copies sent to them. Though a large range of human and economic resources are mobilized for the design of these books, the current state of textbooks exhibits a graphic design which is often dense and illegible. This situation is not a recent one and is not even specific to France. Already as far back as 1966, the report by the jury of the Graphica Belfica [23] award, having that year selected textbooks for their technical and aesthetic qualities, deplored a lack of typographic refinement in the works being reviewed despite the laudable efforts made in the binding of the books and their material execution. Later, in France, the report by the Inspection générale de l'Éducation nationale (General Inspection of National Education) (Igen) on the textbook made by Dominique Borne in 1998 regretted that these books were "not reference books and not even books to simply be read" [24] for students.

Paradoxically, the marketing restrictions that accompany the creation of textbooks drive the pedagogical aspect of these books into the background. Their materiality, form and design are planned ahead of time without ever taking into account the specific nature of the content and with no concern for how accessible they are to pupils.

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[8] Éloïsa Pérez, visual analysis of a textbook, iconography, Ensad, Paris, 2013
[9] Éloïsa Pérez, visual analysis of a textbook, colors and shapes, Ensad, Paris, 2013

One characteristic consists of filling up the pages with purely decorative elements to eliminate any white spaces so that the books might appear richer in content, possibly improving their sales.

Legibility thus sacrificed in favor of an over-crowded medium. This is why a double-page spread might contain more than ten different typefaces that sit side-by-side with an extended typology of iconographic elements, numerous graphic enhancements and a palette of loud colors that add a layer of complexity to an already busy whole. Without taking away from the energy of the editorial teams and the work required in the creation of these page layouts, the result is questionable at the very least as it contradicts a functional process of transmission of knowledge. The tool is difficult to use, to such an extent that teachers often compose their own versions, photocopying and assembling pages using elements taken from specimens that they have been sent. This common practice displays a willingness to appropriate the contents as an abundance of resources, which remains palpable in a textbook that demands a clear and legible structure to function correctly.

It is true that the typographic composition of textbooks has to adapt to the multiple functions that are assigned to it. In terms of content the object condenses the school program from a particular year, while at the same time proposing sequences of work in addition to resources for students, in such a way that they can be used both at home and in class. In terms of materials, they have to be easy to transport, solid enough to resist a lot of handling as well as offering a clear structure for the typology of resources so as to be easily identifiable by pupils.

This constraint linked to functionality, being specific to the tool, should take precedence over any commercial stakes and over the profit margins of publishers so that school textbooks can fulfill their mission of accompanying teaching sessions while at the same time educating the eyes of both teachers and students. Greater risk-taking on the part of publishers would make it possible to leave behind the haphazard visual approach that has characterized schoolbooks for quite some time now, and open up a path towards a graphic and editorial design that avoids presenting knowledge solely as a set of goods to be consumed. Similarly, a renewed interest on the part of graphic designers

for this sector could open up the path to new ways of of designing the only books that students are obliged to acquire and consult during their studies. [25]

Classroom
displays

ELEMENTS OF THE SPATIALIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE Schoolbooks and textbooks accompany teaching right from elementary school. Yet in these mediums graphic design serves to fill up the space of the double page spread and compose the volume that the child holds in their hands, and it must be noted that once the physical space of the class has been emptied, diminishing the posters and objects dedicated to teaching, the textbook takes a central place in teaching. This realization emerges from observation. [26] In effect, between the first and third years of preschool pupils don't use schoolbooks at all, instead sensorial objects and other materials are made available to them. Textbooks are restricted to the teachers' personal libraries and help them to prepare teaching sessions. Time in preschool is governed solely by the space of the classroom, with each teacher being responsible for its organization and "decoration". This greatly resembles a medium for graphic forms, a whole that is the result of of addition of the materials mobilized for the sessions and the graphic materials developed in class. The space is dense, richly covered with various displays (the work of children, visual references, materials to guide in time and space, instructions…), like the pages of textbooks whose surplus of content was highlighted earlier. In middle and high-school the dynamic is reversed. The rooms are empty and divided by subject. Their organization is a responsibility shared among a number of teachers from the same establishment who teach the same subject. In parallel to this textbooks become increasingly commonplace, featuring on lists of materials that each student must acquire before the start of the school year. The visual complexity of the classroom and of the textbook stems from the plurality of uses to which they are put.

Starting with the observation that classroom displays are not the same across preschool, elementary school, middle and high-school, and that that

they don't play the same role in teaching, it is appropriate to ask how graphic design can be deployed in these displays and what their material characteristics are? What are their inherent issues as compared to objects that can be manipulated?

A BACKGROUND PEDAGOGY In preschool, displays contribute to a background pedagogy that the child benefits from thanks to daily visual contact. They integrate the spatial aspect of the class, structuring the space and thus allowing it to be defined. They come from methods that are commercialized by educational publishers or developed in classes, thus reflecting the work of children. When the elements displayed are produced in class they illustrate the application of an amateur graphic design through which a recognizable "school form" emerges. Materially this is built up from mediums and materials that come from the world of the office, with a prolific use of standardized A4 and A3 format sheets. Pictorial materials such as gouache accompany observable materials, and the use of cut out shapes is also very common. The displays show resources whose

constancy varies greatly over the course of the year. Some of them are perennial, like alphabets and words of vocabulary, other more ephemeral, for example the childlike productions associated with certain dates (Mother's day, Father's day, Christmas, Easter…). They follow the evolution of the calendar and the associated activities that are proposed in class. In this sense they function like a snapshot, allowing one to capture the a particular state of school life and to restitute it. And so the room appears like an interface, accumulating information to be transmitted on its walls. Most of the time, materially, these displays are composed with the same typefaces that are used in notebooks and activity sheets. Though they create a direct link between materials, the formats are not always sufficiently adapted. To the extent that they are mainly developed in class, it is not uncommon to find the same materials on tables and posted on the walls, making them difficult to read as their compositions don't always take the constraints of legibility into account. In other words the graphic and typographic treatment of materials is not always considered in terms of the conditions in which they are used.

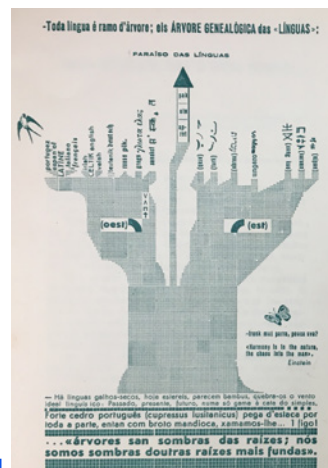[10] Classroom, Pierre-et-Marie-Curie nursery school, Saint-Max, 2014

[11] Classroom, nursery school, Brin-sur-Seille, 2016

In elementary school, children gradually began to discover the individualized teaching that they will practice until the end of high-school. The disappearance of group tables and workshops materially shapes the classroom space. It decreases the amount sof dedicated materials, although areas for reading and drawing activities can be set up by the teacher. Desks are lined up in rows facing one or more blackboards and there are less materials on the wall. The display of childlike creations are replaced by more general themes, connected to history, science, models of writing, multiplication tables, etc. They foreshadow the approach taken by middle-school posters, more perennial as they are divided by subject and associated with the teaching dispensed in each classroom. At this level the only elements that appear on classroom walls are connected to a subject, almost to the point of disappearing completely, leaving the space void of any sign of appropriation. Only subjects that require specific materials are exempt from this rule as rooms are organized to respond to the needs of the activities proposed. This is the case with science, physics and chemistry, the visual arts, music and technology and computer education.

A VERNACULAR GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE SERVICE OF THE SCHOOL FORM When they are produced in schools, by the teacher when preparing the workshops or by the children during activities, the materials displayed depict a vernacular graphic design. This evokes the figure of the "tinkerer" teacher who uses the means made available to them to build their pedagogy materially. Means such as printers and photocopiers that they have access to in schools, the wealth of online teaching resources, and books that are employed as the basis for sessions. The use of the same tools results in the emergence of a school form, simultaneously specific to each school and yet shared by all. Thus it is common to find the same graphic elements employed in a number of course materials. The approach of active and personal design resonates with the work done by Paulo de Cantos,[27] a surprising Portuguese scholar who wore the hats of amateur typographer, teacher, publisher and bibliophile. Professor and high-school principal, from 1920 to 1960 he distinguished himself in Portuguese artistic modernity for the design of a system of experimental

[12]

teaching materials (textbooks, manuals, dictionaries), backed by a mastery of typography and a material exploration of the object. As evoked by his work, graphic design and typography function as systematic tools in the service of educational issues. They allow for the design of coherent mediums and signs throughout the student's school career and integrate the sign, the object and the space. The rich nature of his creations extend well beyond the framework of a purely educational functionality, to reach the level of an effervescent and inventive artistic apparatus. This emphasizes the active part of learning, supported by doing and its application.

[12] Elements from the exhibition "Tête-bêche, portrait bibliographique de Paulo de Cantos (1892-1979)" (Head-to-toe, bibliographic portrait of Paulo de Cantos (1892-1979)), Paris, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 2017

Designing
systems

FACILITATING LEARNING The activity of graphic design in schools is revealed through material devices and their uses. In addition to the materials present in schools coming from commerce or developed in classes, the projects established by graphic designers consist of the design of materials whose educational issues are multiple. The variety of the initiatives engaged invite one to question what distinguishes historically recognized systems such as Montessori's sensorial material. What do they bring to a field that already benefits from a wide range of tools dedicated to learning? Observation shows that certain projects facilitate learning, notably when it comes to elementary skills such as reading and writing, or more complex skills such as computer programming and coding. Others increase awareness of a theme or component of graphic design such as type design and page layout, drawing and illustration, photography and narration. In these cases mastery of graphic design lends itself to the design of prototypes. It allows one to either reconsider the form of existing tools, adapting them even further to the needs of pupils, or to imagine other ways of learning by designing tools that differ from those that are already present in schools. For the materiality of these devices to acquire educational value with students, their design requires a solid knowledge of class practices and the information to be transmitted. The didactics of forms thus takes on all of its meaning by adapting the object to the specific nature of the content.

The emergence of material designed by graphic designers outside of the fields that they ordinarily work in can be explained by the growing interest for transmission and a palpable willingness to raise the awareness of audiences that sit on the margins of cultural propositions. These issues increasingly concern graphic designers who willingly make room in their practice and who solicit partners in a position to accompany them. By creating more room, and more spaces, for interaction between schools and graphic designers, cultural structures allow these projects to exist. They facilitate the creation of relationships between protagonists and offers material financing to develop projects. The graphic designer becomes

involved in cultural mediation and in the construction of activities that extend from the commission zand the brief to the setting up of workshops. They join forces to imagine systems of mediation, didactical and educational materials, they master tools, they shape and create.

CREATING TOGETHER Other systems focus on demystifying the practice of graphic design by offering ways of discovering tools, of creating and collaborating together. Let us recall that the forms and mediums that accompany learning and teaching in school, including sensorial objects, schoolbooks and class displays, are tangible applications of graphic design in the field of education. Their material observation reveals how form guides use. Use is based on the practice and result of a design process that escapes the user. The latter's understanding is nevertheless essential to teaching visual culture in classes. In effect, an awareness of graphic design also involves a practical dimension upon which other initiatives are based, established by graphic designers, and aimed towards schools. They aim to make accessible and to demystify, by encouraging children to discover by doing, to learn by making. They simultaneously approach a re-appropriation of design tools and a co-creation through which access to knowledge is facilitated. The systems proposed integrate a spatial dimension in their intervention, notably allowing for experimentation on the scale of the hand and the body, and more tangibly on the scale of the letter and its place of inscription. The constraints of legibility raised by protocols of creation serve to help the graphic designer to understand their work and the means available to them to accomplish it. By showing how the tools are made these initiatives explain the profession of graphic designer, the practices that accompany it and the process that underpins the creation of forms.

AUTHORS AND PROTAGONISTS OF LEARNING
Though the use of graphic design has revealed itself to be more or less advanced depending on the materials, the forms produced contribute to the education of individuals. They reveal the contents, and understanding them impacts the development of critical thinking among pupils. In fact, the use of graphic design and graphic materials for educational purposes has political and social stakes, to the extent that it shapes the individuals of tomorrow. Do forms help people to see better? If yes, what are the effects of this in everyday life? The use of experimentation demonstrates the need to appropriate the tools and exercise critical thinking in situations of co-creation and co-construction of knowledge.

to propose tools to a school audience that help them become participants in their own learning in their turn. In this way they guarantee a re-appropriation of knowledge through practice and through doing, thus favoring an understanding of the issues at the heart of contemporary education. This form of learning is part of a desire to rehabilitate artisanal practices that have been relegated to the background by the university. It is a question of associating them and benefiting from the intelligence of the hand. The hand guides the gesture, the gesture builds the use. The recourse to use for understanding the practice of graphic design and how it relates to contemporary pedagogy is one of the questions of public utility that these two disciplines are well placed to address.

[14]
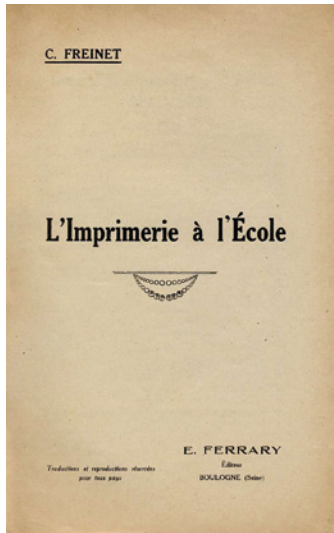
[13]

Historically the *L'Imprimerie à l'école* model as proposed by Célestin Freinet[28] in France relies on the principle of learning through doing, all while freeing the child from the grip of the textbook, described as a pre-established and standardizing tool. Pupils discovered the functions of writing by implementing them in a school newspaper distributed to other schools and through which they communicated. The entire editorial process was done in class from the creation of texts to their material production on printing presses, followed by their distribution. Based on this the systems designed by graphic designers aim

[15]

[13] Célestin Freinet, cover of the publication *L'Imprimerie à l'École (The Printing Press in School)*, Boulogne, published by E. Ferrary, 1927

[14] Invited by Papier Machine to participate in Une kermesse graphique (A Graphic Fair) at the Havre, as part of the 2018 edition of the festival Une saison graphique (A Graphic Season), the graphic designers from Atelier Majuka imagined a participatory workshop "Affiches-toi" (Show yourself) that allowed children and adults to create a poster using a playful system in the form of aluminum plates and colorful magnetic modules — [15] Le Signe Musical is an academic residency run by Tanguy Wermelinger and Louise Duneton (g.u.i. collective) as part of the Grandes Heures de Cluny music festival, with the goal of generating the graphic materials required for the promotion of the festival
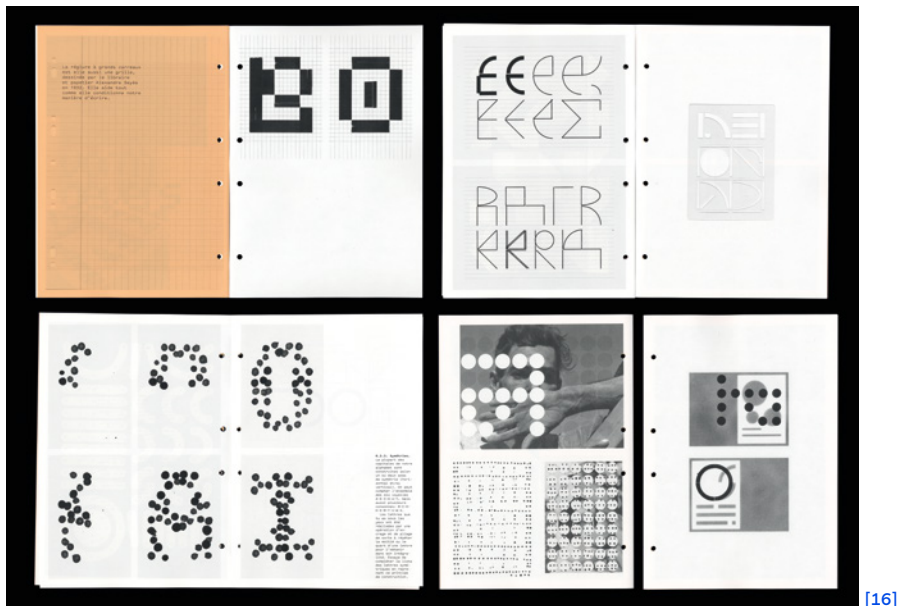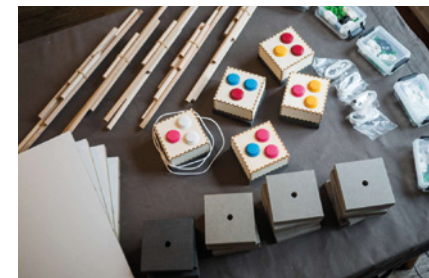
[16]
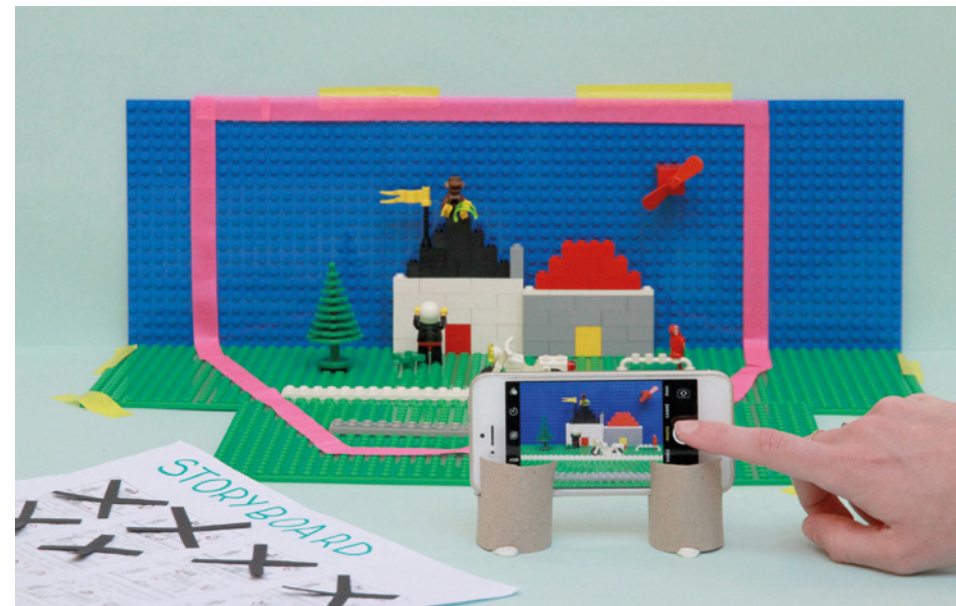
[18]

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[19]

[16] In the context of the structure Création en cours (Ongoing Creation), launched by the Ateliers Médicis in 2016, the Des formes et des lettres (Shapes and Letters) residency run by Théo Miller at the primary school Saint-Pourçain- sur-Besbre in 2019-2021, allowed the typographer to reconsider our relationship with drawing letters by hand, as opposed to the use of computers — [17] Sketches for the pictograms of l'Infini, a typeface created by Sandrine Nugue in 2014-2015 as part of a public commission by the Centre national des arts plastiques

[18] Workbooks, creative workshops to do at home made available by Fotokino in April 2020 for both children and adults. The notebooks, in interactive and printable versions, are available for download on the Fotokino website — [19] L'atelier des chercheurs creates free and modular tools to transform the way we learn. The do•doc workshop on the scale of a school has been designed to allow the students of the Lacordaire elementary school in Paris to document and share their practices

[20]

[21]

[22]

[20] Participatory exhibition "Mon tout est un livre" (My all is a book), designed by the Éditions du livre for the fourth edition of the children's tour Les Petits Spécimens du Signe (The Small Specimens of the Signe), allows the book to be discovered in its various forms in a playful and ludic manner

[21] Tout est dans tout, Les Petits Spécimens – Opus 1 (Everything is in everything, The Small Specimens – Opus 1) a tour of experimental graphic design for children, Lucile Bataille and Catherine di Sciullo, along with DDMW (scenography) and the mediation team of the Signe centre national du graphisme, Chaumont, 2017 — [22] En Chemin (On the Way), a participatory workshop to design signs in public space, imagined by Terrains Vagues in 2019

* This consideration of the discourse of forms is structured in relation to the framework of national education and the teaching that it provides. Its development is based on numerous observations carried out in classes of nursery schools, elementary schools, middle and high-schools. It should also be remembered that the material disparities that exist between public establishments and the autonomy granted to teachers have a direct impact on the pedagogical choices and, by extension, on the graphic mediums used.

1 The work of the *graphiste* focuses more on the visual aspect of the productions, whereas the graphic designer's work impacts the construction of the project in its entirety.

2 Annick Lantenois, *Le Vertige du funambule. Le design graphique, entre économie et morale (The Vertigo of the tightrope walker. Graphic design, between economy and morality)*, Paris, B42, 2010, p. 11.

3 plateforme-socialdesign.net, retrieved 9/08/2021.

4 Audrey Contesse, Letter accompanying the educational dossier for schools designed by The Cultural Institute of Architecture Wallonia-Brussels (ICA), May 2021.

5 The first kit, Série Graphique. *Connaître et pratiquer le design graphique au collège (The Ludograph. Learning and practicing graphic design in middle-school)*, published in 2015 is intended for middle-schools whereas the second kit, *Le Ludographe. Connaître et pratiquer le design graphique à l'école élémentaire (The Ludograph. Learning and practicing graphic design in elementary school)*, distributed in 2019, is aimed towards elementary schools.

6 Fanette Mellier, responsible for the graphic design, has invested in material exploration by diversifying the papers and printing techniques used.

7 Paul Cox, responsible for

the graphic design, accentuated the sensory dimension of the object by proposing a language of forms conducive to exploration.

8 *Massive Online Open Course.*

9 The Mooc is entitled *Le Design graphique au collège. Découvrir pour transmettre (Graphic design in middle-school. Discover and transmit)*. It was designed in collaboration with authors and practitioners.

10 Other pedagogical dossiers and kits of this kind were created by leading actors of the French graphic arts scene. Between 1989 and 1996, a collaboration between the Atelier des enfants and the educational department of the Centre Pompidou produced the collection "L'Art en jeu" ("Art in Play"), imagined by Sophie Curtil in the form of a series of books that encourage children to enjoy art and help them to discover the works of 20th century artists. More recently, in the field of graphic design, the Centre national du graphisme, renamed in October 2016 as Le Signe, has published several educational booklets for schoolchildren. The editorial design of each issue was entrusted to a graphic designer or studio to provide them with a certain visual quality.

11 Belin, Bordas, Hachette, Hatier, Magnard, Nathan...

12 Pierre Mœglin, *Outils et médias éducatifs. Une approche communicationnelle communicationnelle (Educational tools and media. A communication based approach)*, Grenoble, PUG, 2005, p. 58-60.

13 The work conducted by Céline Alvarez has contributed to the spread of Montessori materials and their use among teachers.

14 On this subject see Éloïsa Pérez, *The material discovery of the alphabet*, Francfort-sur-le-Main, Poem, 2021. This essay addresses sensorial objects dedicated to the material acquisition of the latin alphabet.

15 The pedagogical object operates inversely to the scenic objects developed by Guy de Cointet, whose use does not derive from the form but rather from the protocol of activation conceived by the conceptual artist, despite the very marked graphic and typographic language that characterizes them.

16 The intention of this text is not to make an inventory of children's books and their innovations. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to distinguish the uses of graphic design for educational purposes among the plurality of mediums in which it is practiced, including children's books.

17 Charles & Ray Eames, El Lissitzky, Ronald King, Warja Lavater, Enzo Mari, Bruno Munari, Alexandre Rodtchenko, Serge Tretiakov, Kurt Schwitters, Fredun Shapur, Luigi Veronesi...

18 The Éditions du livre is an independent publishing house founded in Strasbourg in 2011 by Alexandre Chaize to publish artist's books for children.

19 The book *Hello Tomato* was published in 2016 and reissued in 2021. It was designed by graphic designers Marion Caron and Camille Trimardeau in collaboration with Fanette Mellier, following a workshop on children's books led by Alexandre Chaize and Yann Owens at the École supérieure d'art et de design of La Havre (EsadHar).

20 On this subject, see Éloïsa Pérez, "Le manuel scolaire, symbole d'une industrie en mutation" ("The textbook, symbol of a changing industry"), *Strabic*, 2015. This essay considers the graphic design of textbooks and their role in the pedagogy of middle-school.

21 François Richaudeau, *Design and Production of Textbooks: A Practical Guide*, London, Gower Publishing Ltd, 1980, p. 40.

22 Small publishers, not subjected to the same economic constraints as the historical school publishers,

could take more graphic risks and propose more audacious forms.

23 Coline Sunier et Charles Mazé, *Dossier Fernand Baudin*, "Le livre scolaire" ("The textbook"), Bruxelles, Prix Fernand Baudin, 2013, p. 45-53.

24 Dominique Borne, *Le Manuel scolaire (The schoolbook)*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1998, p. 31.

25 Fortunately, while we deplore the poor graphic design used in school textbooks, works from other publishing sectors stand out for their material qualities and their boldness on a typographical level. Among these works, in the current publishing landscape, one could quote Gallimard's, a bastion of French publishing, historical "Blanche" collection, along with the "Clubs" which contributed to the graphic education of a public of initiates and non-initiates in the 1960s, under the impulse of artists of the book such as Jacques Daniel, Jacques Darche, Pierre Faucheux, Jeanine Fricker and Robert Massin, and also the "Petite collection Maspero", a collection of poche format books published between 1967 and 1982, as well as the collections "Rouge-Gorge" and "Cosaques" designed by Philippe Millot for Editions Cent Pages. Although they fall outside of the school framework, these books educate the eye through their material qualities. They contribute to forging an accessible visual culture which is deployed through works of common circulation such as paperbacks. This dynamic is reminiscent of peddler's literature or chapbooks, mobilized for literacy in the nineteenth century. The children's literature sector also illustrates itself in terms of publishing innovations, as we have seen with the example of Éditions du livre.

26 On this topic, see Eloisa Pérez, "Écrire l'espace: sur la spatialisation des savoirs dans la salle de classe et le manuel scolaire" ("Writing space: on the spatialization of knowledge in the classroom

and the textbook") <o>future<o>, 2017. This essay compares the material organization of the preschool classroom and the textbook used in middle-school, using the metaphor of the blank page. It is based on observations carried out in several public schools between January 2014 and January 2017.

27 Barbara Says studio's research on Paulo de Cantos contributed to the discovery of this figure who marked Portuguese pedagogy between 1920 and 1970. From September 19th to October 20th, 2017, the documentary exhibition "Tête-bêche. Portrait bibliographique de Paulo de Cantos (1892-1979)" (Head-to-toe, bibliographic portrait of Paulo de Cantos (1892-1979)) presented for the first time outside of Portugal, in Paris, at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the biblio-graphic and iconographic work of an author little known in France. From November 9th to December 2nd, 2017, it was extended by the exhibition "O mestre birostro. Portrait tête-bêche de Paulo de Cantos", at the Institut supérieur des arts de Toulouse (isdaT), where numerous books, manuals, didactic and typographic materials designed by De Cantos were shown.

28 Célestin Freinet was a French teacher and committed activist, whose techniques penetrated the educa-tional institution and left their mark on pedagogy as early as the 1920s. First as an assistant teacher and then a teacher in an elementary school in Bar-sur-Loup, he became involved in the New Education movement, inspired in particular by the work of John Dewey, Roger Cousinet, Adolphe Ferrière and Dr. Ovide Decroly's workshop-school. He practiced education based on experimentation and doing, articu-lating three aspects of his approach: the use of printing, inter-school correspondence, and the school cooperative. In this way he defended a concrete application of knowledge and the empowerment of students, quite unlike traditional textbooks, while also providing them with the means to design their own tools and systems of organization in the classroom.

Authors' biography

ÉLODIE BOYER

Élodie Boyer has been running a small brand factory (elodieboyer.com) since 2002. She has been working in Paris since 1994 and living in Le Havre since 2010, following a determining period in Amsterdam (2007-2010). She is not a graphic designer, but rather a consultant and creative director, or strategist as the Anglo-Saxons say. With a team specifically chosen for each project, she works for numerous clients such as Ag2r La Mondiale, Ag2r Citroën Team, RATP Dev, Eiffage, Thello… She manages visual identity projects, name creation, brand architecture, signage and publishing. Sometimes she partners with particular agencies for a specific project (for example, Studio Dumbar between 2008 and 2012). She can also intervene as an Assistant to the Contracting Authority (ACA) and can organize calls for tenders for clients (école Estienne, Autoroutes APRR, Normandie Impressioniste).

Élodie Boyer founded éditions Non Standard (editions-non-standard.com) in 2011 in order to carry out projects without having to submit them to any outside authority. Her home in Le Havre is a playground, a wasteland, a place for research without a safety net, a consolation. To date, éditions Non Standard has published seventeen books and received numerous awards. The sensuality of books is a secret obsession, designed to make reading irresistible. And so graphic design has become a predominant passion. It could even be that éditions Non Standard exists first and foremost to explore its power, its utility, its scope, its richness, its presence, its absence, its essence.

MAX BRUINSMA

Max Bruinsma studied Art, Architecture and Design History in Groningen and Amsterdam in the Netherlands. An art and design critic since 1984, he has published in major international professional magazines. He was Editor-in-Chief of graphic design magazine *Eye* (London) and design magazine *Items* (Netherlands), and Supervising Editor of *Iridescent*, the online peer-reviewed journal of design research. He has worked internationally as an editor, curator and teacher, including for the ExperimentaDesign biennial in Lisbon and the Utrecht Manifest biennial on social design in the Netherlands.

Among Bruinsma's many publications on design, art, new media and visual culture are his books *Deep Sites*, on early webdesign (2003), and *Design for the Good Society*, on social design (2015). In 2005 he received the prestigious Dutch Pierre Bayle Prize for design criticism.

ÉLOÏSA PÉREZ

Éloïsa Pérez is a graphic designer and typographer who graduated from the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs (Ensad) in Paris. A teacher at Ensad Nancy and the École supérieure d'arts et de design (Esad) in Reims, she specializes in editorial design and works as a freelancer in the fields of contemporary publishing. With a master's degree in research, she has been preparing a PhD in information and communication sciences at the École des hautes études en sciences de l'information et de la communication (Celsa, Sorbonne University) and in typography at the Atelier national de recherche typographique (Ensad Nancy) since October 2016. Her thesis deals with the use of typography in the teaching of handwriting in kindergarten and is based on the development of the typographic device «Prélettres», aimed at developing the graphic gestures of young children. This work has benefited from partnerships with several nursery schools in Nancy which allowed it to be tested in classes, within the framework of teaching workshops. Author of theoretical essays and articles, her research focuses on the role of graphic design in the transmission of knowledge, studied through the materiality of the teaching materials that accompany the practices.

The Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap) is one of the principal administrators of the French Ministry of Culture's policies within the realm of the contemporary visual arts. It continually enriches the National Contemporary Art Collection, which it conserves and also promotes via loans and consignments to both French and foreign institutions. Boasting nearly 105,000 works acquired from living artists over the past two centuries, this extensive collection well illustrates the wonderful variety of artistic movements and styles. An essential cultural entity, the Cnap encourages the arts in all their diversity, accompanying both artists and art-world professionals via various support services. Furthermore, it showcases its supported projects through different dissemination actions and events, notably publications, conferences and exhibitions.
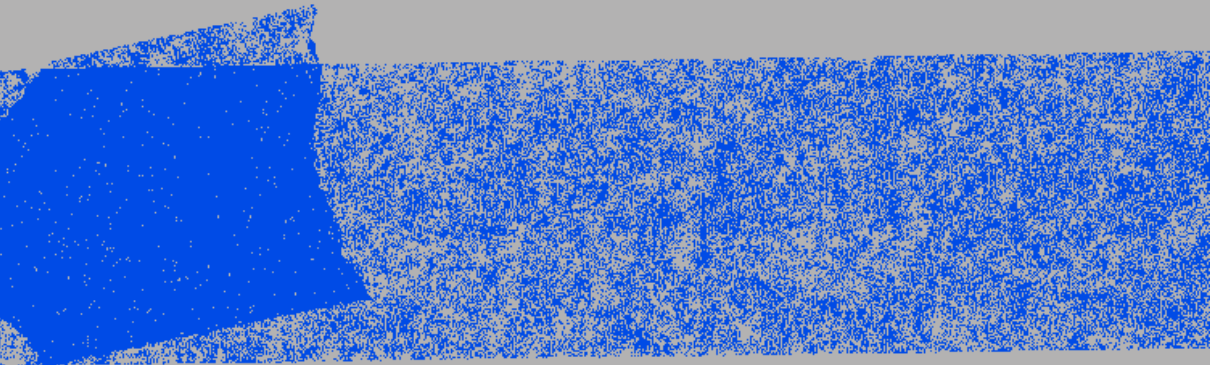
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