DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 072 IR 016 993

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TITLE Exploring the Scope of Design Expression: A Visual Introduction.

PUB DATE [95]

NOTE 11p.; In: Imagery and Visual Literacy: Selected Readings from the Annual Conference of the International Visual Literacy Association (26th, Tempe, Arizona, October 12-16, 1994); see IR 016 977.

PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Architecture; Building Design; *Commercial Art; Course Descriptions; *Graphic Arts; Higher Education; Interior Design; *Journalism Education; *Mass Media Use; Scripts; *Visual Arts; Visual Learning; Visual Literacy

IDENTIFIERS *Visual Communication Education; Visual Design

ABSTRACT

This document presents a definition and brief background of graphic design and visual education. It outlines a journalism and mass media course lecture which introduces students to the commercial scope of visual communications and the potentials of design. The script along with appropriate slide titles and descriptions, are provided to recreate the course lecture. First, the use of visual symbols and graphic expression at the time of the birth of the Confederate States of America--bank notes, confederate and union uniforms, and the stars and stripes--is examined in order to provide an historical context. Second, significant branded products utilized throughout history are discussed, including Kellogg, Quaker, Jim Beam, Camel, Ball, Campbell, and Arm & Hammer. Fourth, examples of architecture and environmental design that have contributed to the creation of a corporate identity such as Harrod's Department Store, the Citadel, Fallingwater, and Johnson Wax are described. Finally, some corporations' (Coca-Cola, BMW, and General Motors) communication-driven identities are explained. (Contains 16 references.) (MAS)

Exploring the Scope of Design Expression: A Visual Introduction

Robert C. Sitz

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, journalism and mass communication programs are like the new kid on the block. The use of the term "communications" in textbooks really wasn't seen until about 1964, and at that time the curriculum focus was confined to the medium of newspapers. Television was still in its beginning years and very little attention was paid to the design of alternative media such as magazines. Graphics was also a relatively new term thirty years ago, but now of course the idea of computer graphics has made "graphics" a mainstream topic.

Changes in technology have made it possible today to produce journalism textbooks on Macintosh computers in-house, as well as to make it convenient to exchange information and ideas in rapid fire fashion verbally and visually. Television and photography are entering the digital era, and research and development can only continue to improve the scope of our capabilities from design through printing. Today, journalism and mass communication departments address a wide range of topics and the term "visual communication" is used to describe course offerings as well as the organization of teachers interested in the topics of typography, photography, design, communication technology, and graphic arts. Graphic arts usually mean all of the components of visual communication, from historical letter forms to electronic, digitized photography. They include all of the printed media that provide information, opinion, and entertainment (Baird, et al., 1993).

Graphic design is often defined as the preparation, production, and retention of symbols on a permanent surface. However, television and computers have extended the idea of graphics, and provided new challenges. In some respects, the way designers create visual communication in both still and moving media is beginning to overlap. As a result, the visual communication environment is expanding rapidly. At the present time, the graphic arts industry, which includes printing, publishing, and print advertising, is the second largest industry in the United States. Consequently, the need for visual communicators and people who

understand graphics and design is continuously expanding (Denton,1992).

In addition, the importance of both television and film have grown. The aesthetic image elements -- light, space, time-motion, and sound -- and how they are used, have become a complex matter. A thorough understanding of the principles of media aesthetics and their wise use is no longer a matter of choice for the up-and-coming producer of television and film communication. It is imperative that knowledge and skill in the selection and application of aesthetic elements be learned so that ideas are translated successfully into effective messages (Zettl, 1990).

At the same time, the consumer of images is becoming increasingly sophisticated about visual communication. Much teaching has been dedicated to the elucidation of principles by which visual media may be used to misinform, distort, and manipulate. People are not as easily persuaded by elementary forms of visual deception. Viewers appear to be more resistant to the manipulations attempted by T.V. commercials, magazine advertising, political campaigns, and so on (Messaris, 1994). This means that the expectations of the consuming public are on the rise. It is therefore incumbent upon educators to continue to strive to improve the state of understanding in regard to media literacy. Thus, literacy is now also defined as the ability to appreciate, analyze and question media messages such as television commercials, printed articles and advertisements, music, and new technologies like virtual reality (Downs, 1994).

VISUAL EDUCATION

Although it has been generally stated that today's student is more visually aware because of the explosion in the popularity of television, video games, computers, and magazines, it has also been suggested by some scholars that the typical student is visually illiterate. In the preface to the book, *Seeing is Believing*, Berger (1989) states that

> "It is possible, and quite likely often the case, that our students graduate without knowing very much (if anything at all) about how images communicate and how people find meaning in them, about typefaces and graphic design, or about the difference between the film image and the television image . . . ironically, a significant number of our students hope to work in fields such as advertising, public relations -- television, or journalism -- fields where they will be involved, either directly or indirectly, with visual communication."

If what Berger and others suggest is true, it appears that one challenge is to begin to narrow the distance between student "awareness" of visuals and their appreciation for visuals. Once the students' critical/appreciative skills have been cultivated, the foundation will be laid for understanding why specific visual techniques are chosen; how they work; and perhaps how to use these techniques. The purpose of this introductory segment in a Journalism and Mass Communication Course called *Media Graphics Design* is to introduce students with modest graphics experience to the

commercial scope of visual communications; to open their eyes to the potentials of design.

Specifically examined is the use of visual symbols and graphic expression at the time of the birth of the Confederate States of America in order to provide a potent historical context. Next, significant branded products utilized throughout history are discussed. The lecture series concludes with examples of architecture and environmental design that contribute to the creation of a corporate identity.

What follows is a pilot lecture series. The notes, script, and slides that accompany the script are in an on-going state of modification. The format of each class period is dictated by the sequence of slides presented herein a classroom, but the pacing of each presentation is highly dependent upon the quality of student participation and discussion.

Due to technical and space limitations, most of the visuals that accompany the script have not been included in this paper. Most of the script can be easily visualized by the experienced consumer!

SCRIPT

The Invention of Tradition

South Carolina formally announced its secession from the United States of America in December 1860. Then Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas followed. These seceding states decided to unite, or as they put it, to confederate. The Confederacy soon produced a constitution, a flag, even a Declaration of Independence, modeled after the original one. Within months, a new nation complete with an array of national symbolism was born.

Throughout history, it has been shown that *rituals, symbols*, and *visual imagery* have been *invented* by nations in order to create new loyalties, obliterate old ones, mark territories, reinforce ideas, and initiate new ways of doing things. The creation of the Confederacy called for just such action. The *symbolism* they created was so powerful and attractive that much still exists. It is all memorialized and highly romanticized. Many industries have latched onto that monumental tragedy, the American Civil War (Olins, 1989).

Slide, Bank Notes: Everything the Confederacy produced emulated its admired model, the USA. CSA banknotes were about the same size, shape, and general design as those of the U.S.

Slide, Dark Blue Union - Confederate Grey: Confederate military uniforms were similar to those of the Union Army. The difference was in the coat: Union - dark blue, Confederate - grey.

Slide, Stars and Stripes: Stars and Stripes, the traditional American Flag was retained by the Union. It had profound emotional content. It was also unique in design and therefore difficult to imitate -- but the Confederacy tried more than once.

Slide, The National Flag, introduced March 1860 and The Battle Flag, introduced about the same time: Two

attempts were made by the CSA to create flags to rival the stars and stripes:

The Battle Flag eventually became the prime symbol of the Confederacy. Called the Stars and Bars, it remains a popular piece of symbolism today. The "Blue and Gray," the "Stars and Bars," the tune "Dixie," all were "invented" between late 1860 and early 1861 when the war began (Olins, 1989).

Development of Branded Identity

In 1884, William Lever, the commercial genius who founded the Lever part of the Unilever Empire, had the foresight to recognize the importance of building identity. Soap was normally sold in anonymous grey colored bars. Quality varied between production batches. Lever's idea was to make the quality consistent and to make the soap distinctive. He experimented with quality then packaged it in imitation parchment. Then, he had to convince the working class housewife that soap was not a luxury but a necessity for the home.

Slide, Lever Handbook: This was accomplished through a handbook that was issued with the soap, "Sunlight Soap and How to Use It." "Sunlight" was Lever's first branded product. It is over 100 years old and is still sold in some markets.

Slide, Full Page UK Sunday Press for Lever, 1988.: Lever's second major brand was Lifeboy. Lifeboy was promoted as a disinfectant soap, the enemy of epidemics and microbes. Lux Flakes were introduced in 1899 (Olins, 1889).

Tradition in Branding

Branding became successful when technology combined with literacy and rising standards of living to create the first mass market. The thinking behind branding was simple, but very original. It was to take a household product no different, fundamentally, from any other product and endow it with special characteristics through imaginative use of name, packaging and advertising.

An obvious advantage of branding is that you can separate the idea of the company from the products it makes. Therefore each product can be aimed at a specific group of people. Once the idea of separate target audiences came about, the permutations were endless. Today, with niche marketing, the opportunities are even greater. If the brand is created carefully to appeal to a particular group, it can be imbued with highly charged symbolism for that audience (Olins, 1989). Examples of branded products that have great traditions include:

Slide, Kellogg 1956 and 1989: Note how Kellogg used to "sign" the package.

Slide, Quaker 1900: Quaker began using the branded system in 1877 when the Quaker Man became America's first registered trademark for a breakfast cereal. The Quaker Man looked much different then. He was robust and carried a scroll in his left hand bearing the word "pure".

Slide, Quaker Today: The current Quaker Man appeared in 1957.

Slide, Jim Beam: Jim Beam began making bourbon in 1795. This whiskey is distilled from corn instead of grain so it is a sweeter, lighter bodied whiskey compared to those produced from rye. In 1964, Congress declared bourbon -- named after Bourbon County, Kentucky -- a distinctive American product. It has an even more distinctive label!

Slide, Camel: Camel cigarettes were at or near the top of American cigarette sales for forty years. Introduced in 1913, the intended name was Kaiser Wilhelm cigarettes. R. J. Reynolds himself vetoed the idea and said, "I don't think we should name a product after a living man. You never can tell what the damn fool will do."

Slide, Ball: Generations of Americans are familiar with mason jars. There is no Mason Jar Company, however; the Mason name refers to the design of the jar. The jar bears the name of John L. Mason, an American glassblower who introduced it in 1858. It features a screw-on cap that made the home canning process simpler by eliminating the need to seal containers with paraffin or cork (Sexton, 1987).

Slide, Campbell: Campbell soup has been around since 1897. The red and white soup can is an icon. The Campbell Kids came along in 1904 -- a creation of Philadelphia artist Grace Grebbie Drayton. The red and white color of the label is based on Cornell College's football uniforms. The fact that the package design has been around since 1898 is a testament to its quality.

Slide, Arm & Hammer: The "Arm and Hammer" logo was originally used by Vulcan Spice Mills on spice and mustard products around the time of the American Civil War. The symbol represented the Roman god, Vulcan. The logo first appeared in 1867 on baking soda boxes (Sexton, 1987). If the product has a lot of character, it helps if the product's identity is symbolized and ritualized with a name, graphic symbol, and other elements.

All of the preceding examples were examples of brand-driven identities, but in other types of businesses -- like retailing and leisure -- the environment dominates.

Environmental Driven Identities

Slide, Harrods Department Store: Harrods Department Store and Bloomingdales in New York have vast ranges of products but there isn't anything you can't get somewhere else -- probably cheaper. It is the atmosphere that creates their identity. Look at the lavish displays!

Slide, Banks in older days: Banks in the past had very unique identities established by their architecture...

Slide, Banks without well-established identities: Without a clearly defined identity, a bank was difficult to distinguish from its neighbors.

Slide, The Citadel: Pictured is a retail development on the site of what once was the largest tire factory on the West Coast. Built in 1929, the Administration Building is a well-known landmark to passing motorists. The Citadel is a 35-acre collision of low-tech industrial

businesses and Hollywood fantasy.

Slide, Architectural Graphics: What should be noted is the excellent architectural graphics (Communication Arts Design Annual 1991).

Slide, Power House Murals: Another example of architectural graphics is the Power House Murals in the lobby of Power House Place, a new office building on the edge of the railroad yard, south of the St. Louis Union Station (Communication Arts Magazine Design Annual 1990).

Slide, Fallingwater: One of the most widely reproduced houses designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright is Fallingwater, built near Bear Run, Pennsylvania. It is an example of the brilliant exploitation of technology. The cantilever construction was allowed by the inherent strengths of steel-and-concrete construction to permit the massive overhanging slabs which complement the rugged natural setting with rectangular precision. Notice the shapes and form.

Slide, Robie House: Pictured is the Robie House built in Chicago in 1909.

Slide, Interior of Johnson Wax: Wright developed "mushroom" pillars in the Johnson Wax Building interior in 1938. These pillars served structural as well as decorative purposes. Over a period of time, certain architectural characteristics are repeated over and over and a unique style becomes attributable to the designer or a period of time. The Johnson Wax Building represents Frank Lloyd Wright and is a corporate symbol of success (Feldman, 1992).

Slide, Exterior of Johnson Wax: Every organization has a unique personality. Everything that the company does, makes, sells, builds, writes, or displays should build up the corporate spirit and celebrate what it stands for. Explicitly controlled corporate identity can be the single most powerful influence on the corporate culture and its various publics. Identity development should begin with its products. The product should project the corporation's standards and values.

Slide, Andy Warhol "Brillo Boxes" 1964 17x17x14: If there was ever any argument about *art* and *commerce* mixing, these Brillo Boxes should put an end to the dispute. Artists and designers like to use repetitive rhythm and create themes. Andy Warhol was a pop artist who made *repetitiveness* the main theme of his work. The Brillo boxes that are pictured are actually wood blocks that were silkscreened by Warhol (Feldman, 1992).

Exhibits

One dimension of graphics that you may not have thought about is all of the designed environments for exhibitions and trade shows. Exhibits are very important events. Trade exhibits help to sell billions of dollars worth of products annually. Exhibition design is actually one of the most complex areas of practice in which graphic designers participate. This particular type of design can involve the use of virtually every kind of communication technique. Exhibits can appeal to all of the senses. Designers involved in this activity must be adept at manipulating photography, graphics, and typography. They must also be aware of architecture, interior and exterior space, traffic planning,

crowd control, furnishings, lighting and acoustics, all types of audio-visual presentation and computer technology, as well as materials, construction, and installation methods.

Slide, Head Ski Company Booth: In the Head Ski Company booth, a commercial scaffolding product is adapted. Canvas in-fill panels were pulled taut with velcro applied to fabric and the structure.

Slide, Mother Earth News Booth: Some of the systems are "off-the-rack," so to speak. In other words, they are manufactured for general use (Klein, 1986). All of these are examples of environmentally driven identities.

COMMUNICATION DRIVEN IDENTITIES

Slide, Shell Oil Logos and Shell Advertisement: Products like gasoline have very little difference of their own, no real character. Ninety percent of Shell's business bears the Shell name. The reputation of Shell is symbolized by its name and visual imagery. Shell has altered the shape of its symbol to keep it up-to-date, and modified its typography and color -- but the basic idea was invented over 100 years ago. Shell has a great tradition.

Slide, Coca-Cola: This antebellum residence in Atlanta is the birthplace of Coca-Cola in 1886. At the top of the slide is the first outdoor advertisement for Coca-Cola. It's an oilcloth sign hung from the awning of Jacob's Pharmacy in Atlanta.
On the top right is a metal serving tray. From 1903-1905 opera star Lillian Nordicz was pictured. The clock shown was the first prize awarded to dealers for making their sales quotas.

On the lower right is the annual Coca-Cola calendar. The calendars depicted fashionable women enjoying a moment of refreshment.

Slide, Coke Serving Tray Artist: Early Coke advertising always depicted fashionable people enjoying life.Note the 1910 metal serving tray. These were used by the soda fountain operators for serving. This one has artwork that was painted by famous magazine illustrator Hamilton King.

Slide, Original Coca-Cola: The 6.5 ounce returnable Coca Cola bottle is a package that has attained iconographic status. Note how its elegant shape complements the universally recognized script logo. The bottle design is about 1915 and it was designed by Alex Samuelson and T. Clyde Edwards. Raymond Loewy later redesigned the bottle, making it more slender. The script logo changed from embossed lettering to white paint.

Slide, Coke Slide - Festoon's: The top item on this slide is a fan festoon, produced in 1926. These festoons adorned the back bars of soda fountains. Over 50,000 festoons in this design were distributed free of charge.

On the bottom is a large cardboard cutout. These dominated the front windows of drugstores. The displays would be changed several times per year to reflect seasonal themes.

Slide, Coke Slide - International: At the outbreak of WW II, Coca-Cola was bottled in forty-four countries. Robert

Woodruff, owner of Coke, ordered "that every man in uniform get a bottle of Coca-Cola for 5 cents, wherever he is and whatever it costs the company." (The Chronicle of Coca-Cola Since 1886).

Slide, Coke Slide - Illustrator Haddon Sundblom: As styles and slogans changed over the years, the message like the trademark, remained the same.

The famous character at the bottom is an illustration by Haddon Sundblom. This was a signature advertisement for Coca-Cola around the world ("The Chronicle of Coca-Cola Since 1886.)

Slide, Coke Imagery: Coca-Cola is a brown liquid of little intrinsic value. It is not much different from thousands of other drinks. Although 99 percent of the ingredients are known, the mystery ingredient referred to as Merchandise 7X, has defied analysis by chemists and competitors for over eighty years. But the imagery of Coke is simply huge. Its global success is a tribute to ingenuity and immense sums of money devoted to communication.
Because of its promotional skill, Coke has become synonymous with the good things in life; with fun (e.g. young, physically perfect families cavorting by the sea). Coca-Cola is the world's number one most recognized brand and it is the information techniques that have created its identity.

The Concept of Corporate Identity

In the 1950's and 1960's, the idea of corporate identity gained a foothold. Building a corporate identity requires risk and imagination.

Slide, BMW: BMW cars and motorcycles have created a unique identity. They are classy, expensive, well-made, reliable, and somewhat sporting in their overall feel. What's the difference between BMW and Mercedes?

In reality, not much. But, in terms of image there is a wide gulf. "Within Germany, BMW is perceived to be Bavarian, while Mercedes is perceived to be German!" Effectively, this means that technical shortcomings can be overlooked in BMW, but not forgiven in Mercedes. In the world as a whole, BMW is perceived to be lighter, less Teutonic, more exciting, younger, faster, and more fashionable.

Slide, BMW-Munich (Head Office, Museum) and BMW Catalogue: BMW has deliberately set out to cultivate this idea of itself. Of all the world's car producers it may be that BMW is the most image-conscious. Everything it does projects the BMW idea, from its head offices and museum in Munich, its advertising, its dealer showrooms, catalogues and manuals -- all are sleek, prosperous, clean-cut, and in good trim (Olins, 1989).

Some businesses deliberately set out to give their name such a special aura that they can sell practically anything under it. The idea of endorsed identity (a type of corporate identity) is that the individual parts of an organization can be readily identified, but each part is also seen as a part of a larger whole.

Slide, General Motors, 1950s: Historically, each Division of General Motors has retained its own elaborate visual symbolism, endorsed by the corporation. All of these cars of the

1950's had much in common, but each retained its own individuality. Engines and components were frequently shared across divisions (Olins, 1989). Despite individual identity for a particular model, these cars are generally recognized as GM automobiles.

Slide, Auto Grills: During the 1950's, American automobile designers embarked on a front-end binge that was soon followed by a tailfin "orgy." According to Feldman (1992), this was "a true example of American Baroque, the phenomenon had an industrial father and a psychological mother: the manufacturers' need for salable packages mated with the stylist's need to express his sculptural impulses."

CONCLUSION

What corporate identity means is that everything the organization does must affirm its most positive attributes. The products or services that a company sells must convey its standards and values. Through the architecture of their buildings, the engineering design of products, and the design of advertising and graphic marks -- modern organizations work hard in a composite of design decisions to unify communications. Much of what is done to create identity is visual and the effects of visual communication planning and design decisions can be powerful.

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