

Manifesto

What is a manifesto?

- Merriam-Webster:

‘A written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or views of its issuer’

- Britannica: ‘declarative document’

"It's the opposite of listening,
manifestos usually don't listen they
proclaim, and the 21st Century should be
more about listening..."

- **Manifesto**, a document publicly declaring the position or program of its issuer.
A manifesto advances a set of ideas, opinions, or views, but it can also lay out a plan of action.
- While it can address any topic, it most often concerns art, literature, or politics. Manifestos are generally written in the name of a group sharing a common perspective, ideology, or purpose rather than in the name of a single individual.

Manifesto

A public declaration, often political in nature, of a group or individual's principles, beliefs, and intended courses of action.

Related:

Meret Oppenheim. *Object*. Paris, 1936

MOMA



1936. Fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, Cup 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10.9 cm) in diameter; saucer 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (23.7 cm) in diameter; spoon 8" (20.2 cm) long, overall height 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (7.3 cm)

VAROOM ACTIVISM: MANIFESTO FOR ILLUSTRATORS

‘What use is illustration?
What good can it do?’

As a member of the Varoom Editorial Board Paul Bowman offered a valuable voice to the magazine and his deeply held view that illustration is a valuable a tool for commenting on the world, was one that carried through to this Manifesto:

Paul Bowman

- Helped establish Varoom magazine in 2006
- Paul worked across the mediums of print, animation and interactivity for international clients as both an artist and an illustrator.
- Paul wrote and published a manifesto in 2017 with the title **'Educate Agitate Abdicate'**

<https://theaoi.com/2018/12/07/varoom-activism-manifesto-for-illustrators/>



A MANIFESTO

THE ABDICATION OF A MORAL DUTY BY
THE ILLUSTRATION PROFESSIONAL CLASS.

EDUCATE AGITATE ABDICATE

ONE OF THE KEY PURPOSES OF THE ILLUSTRATOR IS TO BRIDGE THE GAPS BETWEEN: THE ELITIST, OPULENT, ACADEMIC CULTURE OF LARGE AREAS OF FINE ART PRACTICE; THE HISTORICALLY MANACLED, FETTERED PRACTICES OF SECTIONS WITHIN GRAPHIC DESIGN AND THE COMMERCIAL PLAGIARISM AND MORAL BANKRUPTCY OF A SWATH OF ADVERTISING.

THE ILLUSTRATOR ALONGSIDE THEIR COMMERCIAL VENTURES MUST PRODUCE COMMUNICATION THAT TRANSCENDS THE CLASS AND CULTURAL BARRIERS PROPPED UP BY THE OTHER CREATIVE DISCIPLINES AND THEIR PRACTITIONERS. WE MUST ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD AND INDEED, WHAT IS RIGHT.

A GENERATION OF 'PROFESSIONAL, COMPLACENT UK ILLUSTRATORS' AND ACADEMICS WHO HAVE BECOME SUCCESSFUL AND ESTABLISHED, WHO APPEAR AT ELITIST FORUMS, WHO PRONOUNCE 'A NEW ILLUSTRATION IS NEEDED', PERHAPS EXPECT YOUNG ILLUSTRATORS AND STUDENTS TO PICK UP A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BATON DROPPED BY THEM. THIS EXPECTATION ON THE YOUNGER ILLUSTRATOR HAS CREATED AN ABDICATION, AN ABANDONING OF A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONGST AN ELITE 'ILLUSTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL CLASS'. THE BATON MUST BE PICKED UP BY THIS 'CLASS'. IT MUST BE USED. THIS SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABDICATED.

IT IS NOT FOR STUDENTS OR YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ILLUSTRATORS, FOR THOSE WHO ARE STARTING THEIR CAREERS TO FEEL THE PRESSURE TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THE ILLS OF THE WORLD. GEOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL OR POLITICAL. THEY MUST BE ALLOWED: THEIR FIRST PAY CHEQUES, THEIR CHANCE TO BREATHE COMMERCIALITY, THEIR FREEDOM TO MAKE MISTAKES.

YOUNG ILLUSTRATORS AND STUDENTS IN THE UK MUST ASK THEIR OLDER PEERS, THEIR TUTORS, AND THEIR GOLDEN IDOLS: WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR CHANGE? HOW ARE YOU COMMUNICATING INJUSTICE? YOUNG ILLUSTRATORS MUST QUESTION, CONFRONT, DISSECT THE CAREERIST SOUND BITES FROM THE ESTABLISHED ILLUSTRATION COMMUNITY, DISMANTLE THE BLAND, SELF-SERVING STATEMENTS UTTERED AT ILLUSTRATION SYMPOSIUMS, ON-LINE FORUMS AND EDITORIALS.

'PROFESSIONAL WAGE-EARNING, ILLUSTRATORS' MUST START TO NOT CONSIDER WHAT SHALL I REPRESENT FOR THIS SUBJECT MATTER BUT IS THE SUBJECT MATTER WORTH BEING REPRESENTED. COMMERCIAL WORK CAN EXIST BESIDE WORK THAT EXPOSES INJUSTICE, QUESTIONS OUR LIVES, AND HELPS UNDERSTANDING. COMMERCIALISM AND COMMENTARY FOR CHANGE ARE NOT CREATIVELY IN OPPOSITION. TIME MUST BE ALLOCATED TO DEVELOP WORK AND COMMUNICATION QUESTIONING INJUSTICE. THERE IS STILL ENOUGH TIME IN A DAY, A WEEK, AND A YEAR TO BE COMMERCIALLY VIABLE. COMMERCIAL WORK AND POLITICALLY BASED WORK ARE NOT MUTUALLY OPPOSED. THEY ARE A CREATIVE LIFE AS A WHOLE. ILLUSTRATORS MUST CLIMB OUT OF HISTORY, PULL DOWN THEIR STATUES, CONSIDER THAT VISUAL VIRTUOSITY IS NOT ENOUGH, IT SAYS NOTHING. IT IS EMPTY, SOULLESS, IT IS WALLPAPER. BEAUTIFUL CRAFT MUST COMMUNICATE SOMETHING.

GRENFELL, BREXIT, BIRTH, LIFE, DEATH, NHS PROTECTION, WAGE INEQUALITY, EQUALITY IN EDUCATION, GENDER LABELLING, RACE, DIGNITY FOR THE ELDERLY, DIGITAL GIANTS LOBBYING, STUDENT FEES, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ARMS SALES, SAUDI ARABIA, CHARLOTTESVILLE, SYRIA, YEMEN.

THE TIME TO FORM POSITIONS, TO PRODUCE COMMUNICATION THAT MATTERS, TO INVOLVE COMMUNITIES VIA THE WORK WE PRODUCE, TO CONNECT WITH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE IN THE UK, IS NOW. THE TIME FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE ACHIEVED A NUMBER OF COMMISSIONS, WHO EARN WELL ABOVE THE MINIMUM WAGE, WHO HAVE STEADY INCOMES TO LOOK OUTWARDS, IS NOW. THE GRATUITOUS, SELF-CONGRATULATORY OBSESSION WITH OUR WORLD OF ILLUSTRATION MUST BE REPLACED BY A DESIRE TO ALSO COMMENT ON THE WORLD AROUND US. THE ISSUE IS NOT: WHAT IS ILLUSTRATION? IT IS: WHAT USE IS IT? WHAT GOOD CAN IT DO? ULTIMATELY: WHAT USE ARE WE?

PAUL BOWMAN 03/2017
(9 YEARS ON FROM EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANISE, VARIOUM 08/2008)

His text accused a comfortable 'elite illustrative professional class' of abandoning a moral responsibility to address political and social issues

Paul Bowman



Educate Agitate Abdiccate

- **The abdication of a moral duty by the illustration professional class.**
- 'One of the key purposes of the illustrator is to bridge the gaps between: The elitist, opulent, academic culture of large areas of fine art practice: the historically manacled, fetishistic practices of sections within graphic design and the commercial plagiarism and moral bankruptcy of a swathe of advertising.'

Educate Agitate Abdicate

- The illustrator alongside their commercial ventures must produce communication that transcends the class and cultural barriers propped up by the other creative disciplines and their practitioners. We must attempt to communicate what is wrong with the world and indeed, what is right.

Educate Agitate Abdicade

- Young illustrators and students in the UK must ask their older peers, their tutors, and their golden idols what are you doing for change? How are you communicating injustice? Young illustrators must question, confront, dissect the careerist sound bites from the established illustration community, dismantle the bland, self-service statements uttered at illustration symposiums, on-line forums and editorials.

Educate Agitate Abdicate

- ‘Professional, wage-earning illustrators’ must start to not consider what shall I represent for this subject matter but is the subject matter worth being represented. Commercial work can exist beside work that exposes injustice, questions our lives, and helps understanding.’

Educate Agitate Abdicate

- Commercialism and commentary for change are not creatively in opposition. Time must be allocated to develop work and communication questioning injustice. There is still enough time in a day, a week, and a year to be commercially viable. Commercial work and politically based work are not mutually opposed. They are a creative life as a whole

Educate Agitate Abdiccate

- Illustrators must climb out of history, pull down their statues, consider that visual virtuosity is not enough. It says nothing. It is empty, soulless. It is wallpaper, beautiful craft must communicate something.

Educate Agitate Abdiccate

- Grenfell. Brexit. Birth. Life. Death. NHS protection. Wage inequality. Equality in education. Gender labelling. Race. Dignity for the elderly. Digital giants lobbying. Student fees. Affordable housing. Arms sales. Saudi Arabia. Charlottesville. Syria. Yemen.

Educate Agitate Abdicate

- The time to form positions, to produce communication that matters, to involve communities via the work we produce. To connect with the widest possible audience in the UK, is now. The time for those of us who have achieved a number of commissions, who earn well above the minimum wage, who have steady incomes to look outwards, is now.

Educate Agitate Abdicate

- The gratuitous, self-congratulatory obsession with our world of illustration must be replaced by a desire to also comment on the world around us. The issue is not: What is illustration? It is: What use is it? What good can it do? Ultimately: What use are we?

Some ideas for writing your manifesto:

- What do you value?
- What inspires you?
- How would you describe your attitude or approach to creativity?
- What changes would you like to see in the world?
- What do you believe in?
- What kind of Illustrator would you like to be?
- What kind of illustration do you like?
- What kind of art inspires you?

Some ideas for writing your manifesto:

You may wish to start your statement with an action

I am...

I believe...

I hope...

I wish to change...

I will...

I will not...

Or you may wish to explore how others have stated their manifesto

‘We the undersigned....’

Look back at the presentations

‘I wished you to be persuaded, that success in your art depends almost entirely on your own industry; but the industry which I principally recommend, is not the industry of the hands, but of the mind’

Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA (1769), *Discourses VII*,



Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA, (c.1780)*Self-portrait (detail)*

Some research

Harriet Baker (2015) *10 game-changing art manifestos*

<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/ten-game-changing-manifestos>

BBC series: Manifesto:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b090fwds>