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Programme of Study: BA Graphic Design

Module: Research in Context ADAD5003

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Question 2: Can Graphic Design really save your life?

Explore the association of wellbeing and personal growth in design. In your discussion focus on a maximum of three specific areas.

‘Graphic design is all around us, all the time, in both positive and frustrating ways but we don’t recognize the role that it plays.’ (Hena Ali Taylor and Francis Online) it has the ability to inform, persuade and educate a wide range of people regardless of their level of understanding, age, language or culture. Graphic designers have the responsibility to ensure that society is receiving reliable information in both an informative yet also engaging through design elements. Graphic design can play an immense part within the understanding of the importance of the information which is being received. Three key areas which will be highlighted are signage used throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the harms of smoking and the use of tobacco and how the design has affected the overall image of smoking. And finally, women liberation and equality. All three areas will be looking at different time periods and how that affected the design choices and elements used to promote or impact their audience of the time.

Signage within the Covid-19 Pandemic

‘In the fight to contain the virus, graphic design might seem an unexpected weapon. But graphic design has a long history of helping identify, fight and stop the spread of disease, dating back as far as 1854’ (Unsw Sydney Dr Rebecca Green) Throughout the covid-19 pandemic many graphics in many forms were mass produced globally based on each government and their guidelines that they wanted their country to follow. As well as each county setting out their own guidelines that they wished their local community would follow. By having this large-scale pandemic this created a substantial level of designs which had possibility of creating confusion, being misleading or creating hesitation on society based on the sheer scale of information

that was being feed to the public. The graphics and designs produced from many designers and within different sectors came in forms of posters, distance markings, social media pop up posts and many more, all with the main aim to deliver important messages in the most impactful way. Graphic design became a hugely influential factor during this specific time in encouraging the world what they should do and which safety precautions they should take. In order for graphic design to be affective during this specific time it had be understandable and consistent to be able to build the message that the government wanted to communicate to us as their audience. As specifically the United Kingdom has many cultures, languages and demographics that they had to inform, from a design element the information and symbolism needed to be clear and consistent. As figure 1 shows not only is there text to inform the public what they should do for example, 'stay home if you are sick' but there is use of symbols. By adding the symbols, it creates inclusivity to those that may not understand what the poster is saying. Whether it's from a language barrier to younger children who don't understand wording as such or simply from a quick glance everyone is able to understand what is meant by most symbols. The use or lack of colour is also a big part that affected design during the start of this pandemic. Majority of designs had very little colour incorporated into designs and the few colours used were reds or yellows. As together these colours suggest danger or warning which indicated to the audience that this is important or something that they should be fearful of.



Figure 1: The clear, coordinated visuals of the New Zealand Government's Unite Against Covid-19 campaign, The guardian, 14th June 2020, Rowan Moore

However, as the pandemic went on over time the designs became more audience specific, and more data directed. As shown in figure 2. This specific poster was designed to encourage a younger audience to wash their hands. And although this isn't saying what the problem is, it is showing a solution to the younger audience. The use of brighter colours is more appealing, the character used suggest that they are a 'superhero' for handwashing.

The style of the poster is engaging and eye-catching for this specific audience. Other design elements also changed colours which were used to become more positive for example, green was being used instead of red, suggesting that there was a more positive outlook on the pandemic.



Figure 2: St Mary's Collage of Maryland, 20th October 2020, Shana Meyer

Smoking and the use of tobacco and design choices

There is no hiding from the fact that smoking is a harmful yet an addictive act, often described as 'smoking is slow-motion suicide' Biman Mullick with 'Tobacco killing more than 8 million people each year, including an estimated 1.3 million non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke' (World Health Organization)

Graphic design had and continues to have a big impact within this sector. Originally the power of graphics design was used to encourage and promote smoking in a positive aspect between the 1930's and 1950's with brands such as Marlboro and Pall Mall, using bright and eye-catching designs which now have become iconic over time. Ironically brands such as WD and HO Wills started to include cigarette cards which were originally an extra form of advertisement, 'it might seem odd to give significance to advertisements included inside an already-purchased product' (North Lanarkshire Council) although they started to become a novelty and people started to collect them. After discovering that this was a useful way to advertise information, they started to become health warning cards. This became a helpful yet fun way to educate their audience what to do in certain situations. For example, as figure 3 below shows 'Do not read while walking' was one design created, this enabled these

customers to gain knowledge which wasn't necessarily readily available during this time period.



Figure 3: Cigarette Cards: Addicting the Masses, North Lanarkshire Council

However, now that the health impacts have become more known and the effect in which it has on our health 'tobacco kills up to half of its users who don't quit' (World Health Organization) graphic design has taken a turn from the eye-catching and bold designs. In fact, graphic designers have taken to a more harsh and blunt approach on promoting smoking and its harmful affects it has on its customers health. World Health Organization in particular uses emotion and images to truly show the impact that smoking and tobacco has on our health. This is a unique yet powerful way to catch a wide range of audiences whether they are smokers or non-smokers. The aim of the World Health Organization is to discourage and educate which is shown in figure 4. Not only has graphic design affect how smoking and tobacco has been perceived over the decades but the way in which the packaging has changed. Over recent years packaging of cigarettes has been standardised with 'plain cigarette

cartons featuring large, graphic health warnings could persuade 300,000 people in the UK to quit smoking' (Sarah Boseley, the Guardian) With designs of the cigarette packets becoming basic and less appealing to buy. The use of colour which has used are dark and dirty like colours which suggests that this product isn't something you would want buy. The images used on these packaging isn't nice and promoting, they are hard hitting and disgusting, visually showing what the customer who is buying this product what is likely to happen should they buy and use this product.

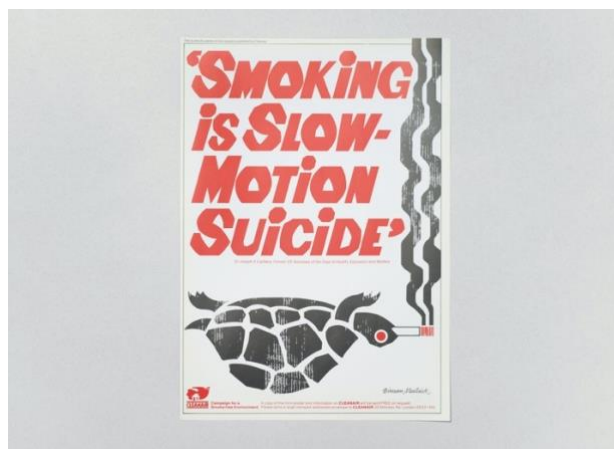


Figure 3: Creative Review, Rachael Steven, 21st August 2017



Figure 4: 'Creative ads about the harms of smoking' World Health Organization, October 2021



Figure 5: The Guardian, Nicola Davis, 14th August 2023

Women liberation/Equality

In the world of today the fight for democracy is all around us, whether it be through the wars in Israel and Ukraine where countries are fighting for their independence or if we look at countries like Japan and China where these countries are dictatorships, and the people have no right to challenge or question their countries leadership. In the UK we are very privileged to live in a democracy where we are able to have our view and opinions, question leadership and to simply have our right to freedom. However, this has not always been the case within the UK and equality has had to be fought for. Whether it's been gender, disability, race or age. Gender equality specifically was a long and continuous fight dating back to 1903. Women in particular during this time were only seen and not heard, they were not seen as equals to men and nor were they able to do the same jobs or roles as men. Graphic design started to become a positive impact within many protests and gatherings within these groups of women who fought for their rights to become equal to men and for their ability to vote. This created an image for a particular group of women which enabled their cause to be seen and the aim was clear what they wanted through poster design as well as badges and newspaper clippings. As time went on women became a topical point within design as it became an artistic approach to voicing opinions but “design was seen as ‘something appropriate’ for women to do.” (Sarah Dawood Design

Week) As the years came on there became a higher number of designs which featured women and statements which made the audience either question the intention or inspire. For example, figure 6 is a poster specifically targeting women and implying that their body is a 'battleground' suggesting that they should fight for themselves and their body. This is a powerful design as it doesn't typically appeal to a women based audience with the colours used or the technique or style produced. However, with the time that this piece was produced this style is a lot more impactful as it's suggesting that it's okay to use your body as a weapon even if you are female. Figure 7 also has a similar impact however, it is a more inspiring design poster as it became a more socially acceptable poster which encouraged women to help with 'male' specific jobs as they would be away fighting in the war.

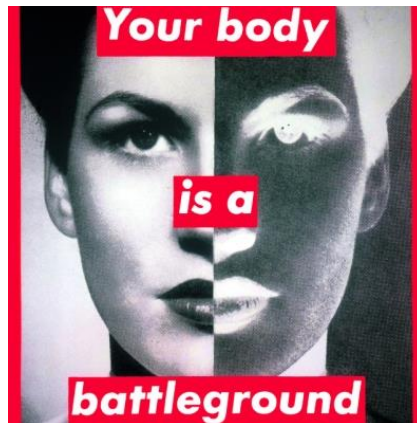


Figure 6: Artnet News, Sarah Cascone 10th May 2022



Figure 7: War History Online, David Herold 8th March 2018

To conclude, graphic design has the ability to influence anyone has the ability to form an understanding from what they are seeing, whether it is through the design created itself, or whether it is through the shapes, symbols, icons or words which might have been used within the final design. Graphic design has the amazing ability to communicate to a large audience regardless of their age, gender, culture or understanding. Through the three key areas which have been highlighted in this essay; signage used throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the harms of smoking and the use of tobacco and how the design has affected the overall image of smoking. And women liberation and equality. There have been several different examples where graphic design has played a large influence on society and within different time periods throughout history. As well as impacting history linking to major events that occurred shaping design as we know of it now.

The Covid-19 Pandemic and the mass-produced designs were made to inform and encourage large audience to follow set specific guidelines made by government based on data. The harms of smoking and the use of tobacco showed the importance of knowing the impact of a product and how that can affect the consumer

has a huge impact on the design elements. Questioning whether if something is bad or dangerous should have the same level of design and detail. And finally, women liberation and equality, which shows how impactful design has on voicing opinions during a time period which could have been deemed as dangerous and inappropriate.

All three elements and sections of this essay shows how graphic design can play a large role in saving and impacting lives, whether that is one person in a small community or large group of people globally. Graphic design has the ability to connect, inform and inspire.

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