

Ways of Perceiving: Curation Essay

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Entitled “Progress” I aim to curate an exhibition featuring five influential pieces of graphic design from 5 different designers, spanning from past to present. Focusing on Yi-fu Tuan’s theories of ‘Space and Place: the perspective of experience’ (Tuan, Y.-F., 1977) I intend to host my exhibition within the contextually dense walls of the Natural History Museum, London. Exploring themes of progression and its correlation to historic events. Through curation I propose five such articles of graphic design intended to take the viewer on a journey of experience through the use of ‘space and place’ (Tuan, Y.-F., 1977).

The exhibition itself will be situated within the ‘human origins’ room at the Natural History Museum. This room exists to exhibit the origins of man as a species and therefore contains context of progression, the very same subject I wish to evoke within my exhibition. The room itself will be divided into five equal sections created by removeable white walls, each containing a single piece of work surrounded by artefacts of the era it was created. These artefacts will range from furniture to fashion that are deemed to be typical of the time. The context of the era is significant as “it is the artist who creates a work, but a society that turns it into a work of art” (Orbist, 2008, p. 933) and therefore the context of the artefacts will fully explain its competence and importance. I therefore propose as ‘space is freedom’ (Tuan, Y.-F., 1977) a space containing a carefully selected array of such context will enable the viewer to freely experience and communicate with the proposed pieces just as viewers of the time.



Fig 1. (Exhibition map)

As depicted above my exhibition space is curated to be mentally challenging. A ‘cluttered’ approach aims to create a sensory overload in the hopes that the common conceptions the viewer has prior to their arrival towards context of certain artefacts, will have a profound effect in making them feel inline with the era. My aim therefore is to make the viewer feel the same as people did back when the piece was first conceived. This is for them to understand just how progressive and forward thinking these designs were as “the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people” (Debord, 1967). To further ensure every viewer engages with the exhibition in such a way the use of mobile phones or other technological devices will be prohibited ensuring all focus will be placed on their surroundings. In my opinion as a society we spend too much time on our phones and are becoming more and more detached from the things that surround us meaning the

quality of our experiences with something such as an exhibition are diminished as now “the spectacle is everywhere” (Debord, 1967, p.16). In creating just one spectacle I hope a full level of engagement will ensue.

The flow of the exhibition will be direct, with the series of rooms situated in front of one another. I have chosen to curate the exhibition in this format as the context of progress suggests moving forward – the same act each viewer will be performing as they move between rooms. Each room will be ten meters in width and six meters in length. I have chosen to do this as I aim to pack as much context as possible into each room and therefore will need a lot of room for the various artefacts as well as the design pieces themselves.

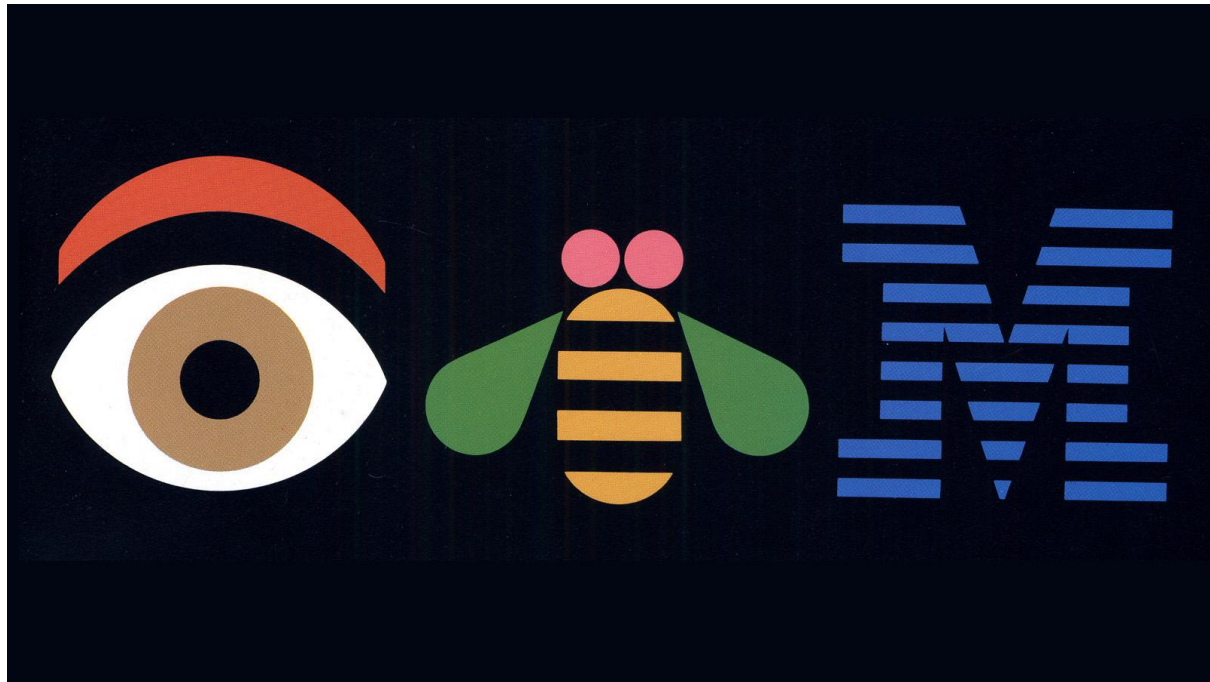


Fig 2. (Rand, Reimagining of the IBM logo)

The exhibition begins its journey from the 1950's. The 1950's were a design rich era where many design movements were formed. I have however decided to focus on one – modernism through Paul Rand's reimagining of the 'IBM logo' (Rand, 1956). I have chosen this piece of design as the 1950's was a time for boundary pushing within typography and typeface design and at its forefront was said piece. The distinctive geometric type influenced many typefaces that were created in the era and continues to do so. As stated before, in order for a viewer to fully engage and understand the piece context must be used, therefore on arrival the viewer will be greeted by artefacts of significance to the era. The intention of this is to give the viewer a point of reference as to why the design is so poignant and revolutionary for the era. This in turn also correlates back to the exhibitions theme of 'progress' as it is a clear example of change in design during the period. This

also gives the viewer a sense of what's to come throughout the exhibition. The piece itself will be printed 4 meters width by 2 meters height.

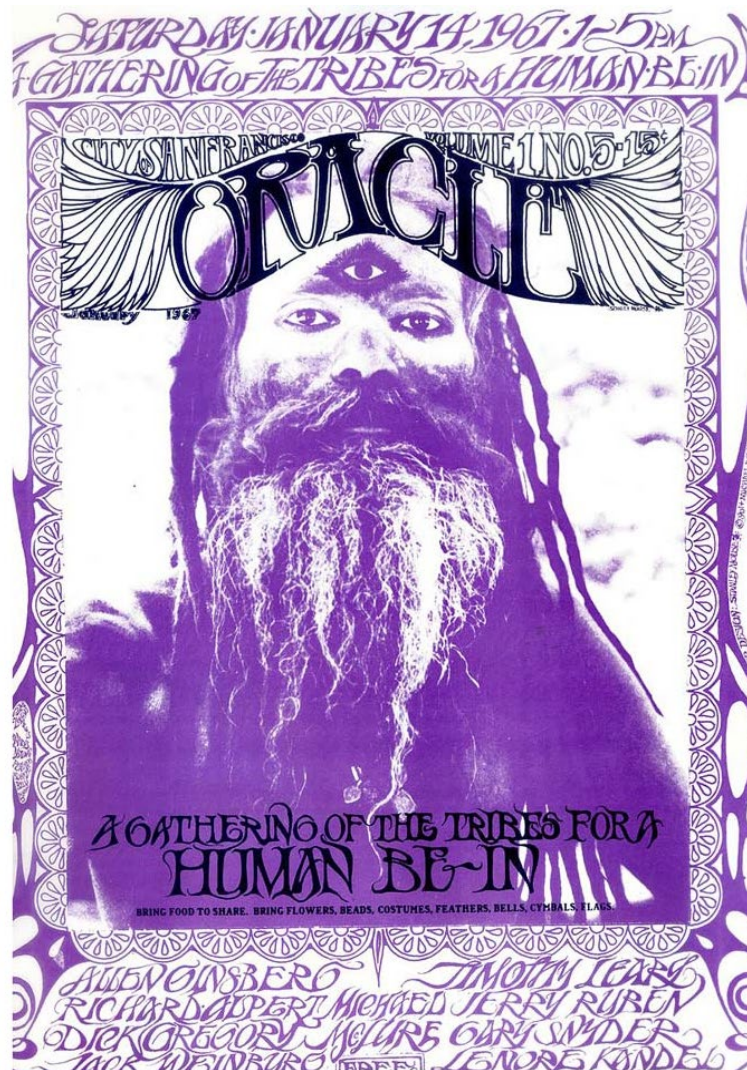


Fig 3. (San Francisco Oracle, 1967)

Following the modernistic 'IBM logo' (Rand, 1956) comes the experimentation of the art nouveau movement within the sixties. Just like figure 1 the room begins by placing the era, in this case the 1960's as we look at a prime example of the reaction some designers had towards the confining of modern minimalist design seen during the fifties. This cover of the 'San Francisco Oracle' (Jan, 1967) follows the vision my exhibition is founded on of 'space' being 'freedom' (Tuan, Y.-F., 1977). Freedom breeds experimentation the likes of which can be seen within the piece. Fluid lines and patterns, accentuated by psychedelic bold colours, take the place of ordered layouts and grid structures which were prominent within the 1950's modernist movement. The piece will be presented at 3.2 meters height and 1.8 meters width.

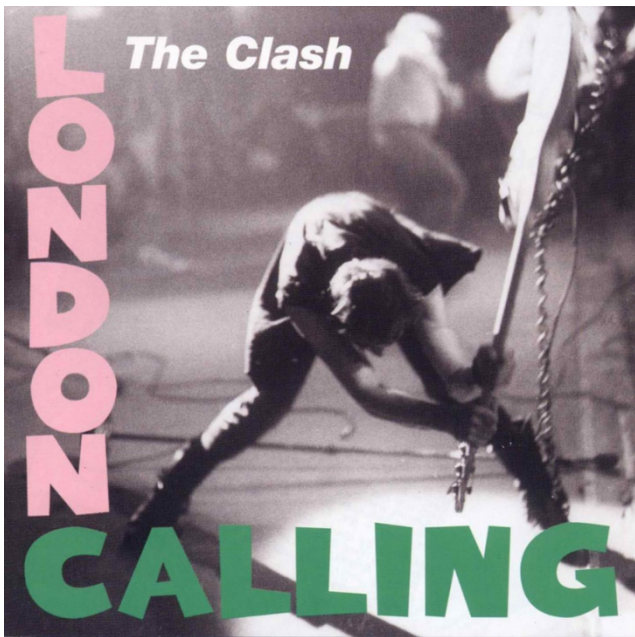


Fig 4. (London Calling, 1980)



Fig 5. (Buzzard, Facebook logo , 2004)

The third room of the exhibition aims to transport the viewer to the 1980's. Following the theme of 'progress' the next instalment of the exhibition (Fig.4) shows how the eighties saw designs following on from the brash elements of what many call 'Disco typography' of the seventies (loud, fluorescent coloured type), exaggerating them with dark, moody photography. I have chosen 'London Calling' (the clash, 1980) album cover designed by Ray Lowry as it is a prime example of such design. The bold contrasting colours of the playful san serif fonts really do stand-out when paired with the dark, moody photography of this 'punk' period. The piece will be printed 2 meters by 2 meters.

Moving on the fourth room of the exhibition aims to portray the 2000's as design began to properly go digital. Like every other instalment the room begins by showcasing artefacts of the era leading to what I think to be one of the most prominent pieces of the period (Fig 5.). Although the 1990's was perhaps the first venture for many into digital design the 2000's made it a must as now designs must work just as well on computer screens or mobile devices as they do on paper. Branding became increasingly important as many businesses began to understand the importance of a good logo – to quote IBM "Good design is good business". Therefore, I have chosen the 'Facebook' logo (Buzzard, 2004) as the focal point of room four. the piece will be 4 meters width by 0.8 meters height.

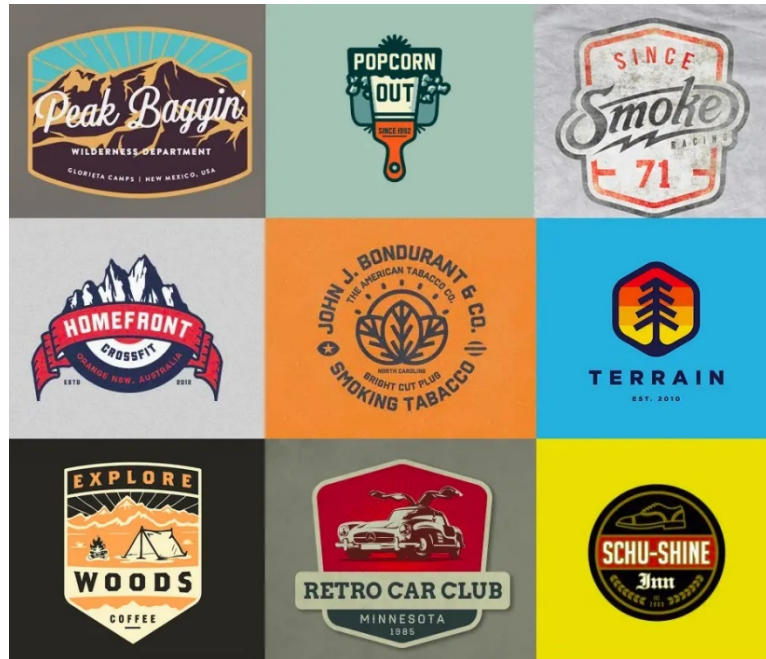


Fig 6. (collection of logo designs)

The fifth and final room of the exhibition sees the design trends of the 2010's brought to life. This is a fitting end to the exhibition as this is a representation of the present. There are various design trends that come to mind when thinking of the 2010's but the one I have decided to highlight is what many dub 'vintage mania' (Fussel, n.d.). I have chosen this as it is a fitting end to the exhibition as old meets new a fitting homage to designs of the past. It is also a design trend I personally enjoy working with within my practice. The intention of this final piece then is to show progress first-hand as the now norm computer aided design improves on past techniques. Figure five therefore has a clear connection to figure one highlighting how far design has progressed over the decades.

Design and illustration offer many insights into social and cultural trends and It is this context I have based my exhibition on. After visiting the exhibition, it is my hope that the viewer will have experienced and understood just how far design has developed and progressed over the years and just how important context created by society is in its success.

Figures :

Fig One : Evans, R. (2020) *Exhibition map* [Digital Generated image]

Fig two : Rand, P. (1956) *Reimagining of the IBM logo* [Digital image]

Fig three : San Francisco Oracle . (Jan, 1967) [Digital image]

Fig Four : The Clash (1980) *London calling* [Digital image]

Fig five : Buzzard, M. (2004) *The Facebook Logo* [Digital image]

Fig Six : Miller, A. (n.d.) *Peak Bagging badge*, Brassai, S. (n.d.) *Popcorn out*, Arant, J. (n.d.) *Smoke Badge Tee*, Avouni, E (n.d.) *Homefront crossfit*, Kemal, S (n.d.) *John J. Bondurant*, Warren, J. (n.d.) *Terrain*, Berkemeyer, A. (n.d.) *Explore Badge*, Canturk, G. (n.d.) *Retro car logo*, Heisler, S. (n.d.) *Schu-schine Inn* . [online image]. Available at: <https://design.tutsplus.com/articles/10-decades-of-design--cms-29370> [Accessed 15 April 2020]

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