

The Politics of Design

A (Not So) Global Manual for
Visual Communication

Ruben Pater

LANGUAGE AND TYPOGRAPHY

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YOU ARE PRIVILEGED. Just reading this sentence makes you part of the 85% of the world population that is literate¹ and the 20% that understands English.² You've spent around €15 on this book, which is a price only 20% of people (those earning more than 10 dollars a day) can afford.³ If you are reading the electronic version, you are among the 40% who have access to the internet.⁴ If you bought this book, you probably have a higher education, which is only available to a privileged few.

As you can see, this book is not so global. The media are dominated by the world's urban regions in the Northern Hemisphere. Their reach, however, is worldwide, which is why they should become more inclusive and more aware of political responsibilities. This is why this book may still be useful in a 'not so global context' after all.

1. Adult and Youth literacy, *UNESCO Institute of Statistics Factsheet*, September 2015.
2. Crystal, David. 'Why English? The Historical Context', *English as a Global Language*, 69. 2nd Ed. Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
3. Chen, Shaohua, and Martin Ravallion. *National and International Poverty Lines*. Washington: World Bank Development Research group August 2008. 11.
4. *Internet Users (per 100 People)*. The World Bank. data.worldbank.org

This book is not about the design of propaganda or political parties. Rather it acknowledges that all design is political. Every design ‘either serves or subverts the status quo’, as Tony Fry argues.⁵

A design cannot be disconnected from the values and assumptions in which it was created, from the ideologies behind it. It can be difficult to see how visual communication and ideology are related because ideology is in everything around us, we perceive it as natural.⁶

Acknowledging that communication is not neutral puts everything in perspective. It is by realising that we are all culturally biased that we can understand why communication often fails. This book examines such realising using visual examples, accompanied by ideas from anthropology, psychology, communication science, and cultural studies, written for all readers with an interest in visual communication and visual culture.

5. Fry, Tony. ‘Book review: The Archeworks Papers’, *Design Issues: Volume 23, Number 3*, MIT Press, 2007. 88.

6. Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 21.

The impact of visual communication has increased exponentially. Only a few decades ago visual communication was largely contained within cities or countries. In today’s network society, messages ooze into each other, from Tumblr feeds onto Facebook walls. This allows people from across the planet to meet and socialise, but it can also lead to miscommunication and conflict. Something that was meant to be funny can incite violent protests the same day on the other side of the world.

Communication was and is a volatile process, wherein misinterpretations cannot be entirely avoided. At the root of miscommunication lies the assumption that people will understand us because we use ‘universal’ or ‘objective’ communication. Assumptions of objectivity and universality in design are closely tied to the modernist design principles as they are taught in Western design education. This book is about debunking these assumptions.

As an author, I am privileged. As a Dutch designer, I am from a country whose design culture is supported by the state. During my fifteen years as a designer, I worked in advertising, for governments, cultural institutions, and in political activism. I have learned that visual communication comes in many flavours, none of which are exempt from ideology.

Working in different countries, I have made many of the false assumptions which are shown in this book. A way to share these experiences is to examine them, trying to prevent others from making the same mistakes.

Being from Western Europe, my view on the world is not neutral. This is why I have asked others to help me with this book. To correct my blind spots as much as possible and ask the hard questions. This book is not without bias; at best it offers a multitude of perspectives on a wide range of topics. That is why I would welcome the input of the reader.

This book is organised according to the formal elements of graphic design: language and typography, colour and contrast, image and photography, symbols and icons, and information graphics. The collection of examples in this book is only the beginning. It is still limited in size, and not anywhere close enough to be representative of the challenges faced in visual communication.

For this I could use your help. If you have an example that should be included in this book, please share your ideas, texts, or images on the book's website www.thepoliticsofdesign.com.

This collection of examples will evolve into a growing online archive, accessible to all, to serve as a point of reference for designers and communication specialists as a reminder of the responsibilities we face today.

Ruben Pater,
Amsterdam, 2016

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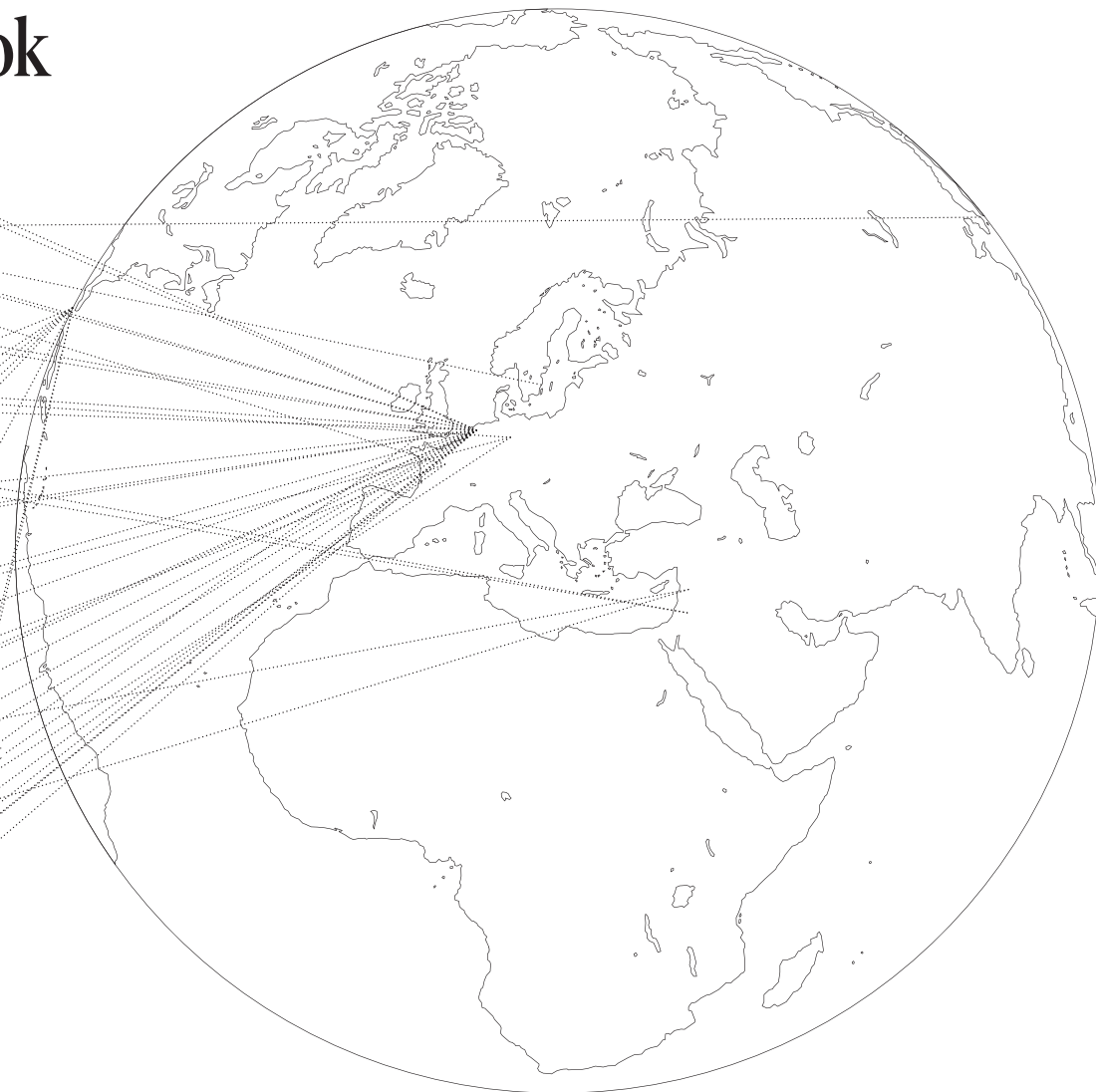
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Tales of the Scripts



Roughly seven thousand languages are spoken in the world today,¹ and communicating in multiple languages is becoming more and more common. In typography, using multiple languages requires handling different scripts from time to time. Learning how different scripts work, can give us some insight into how writing has developed.

In 1799 the French officer Pierre-François Bouchard found the slab of granodiorite that changed the study of ancient languages. Now known as the Rosetta stone, it featured the same text in three different scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphs, Demotic, and Greek. The discovery led to the deciphering of hieroglyphs twenty years later.

The Rosetta Stone is one of the best known multilingual artefacts, and it shows us that societies were always multilingual. In the Egypt of 196 B.C., hieroglyphs was the script for monuments, Demotic was the 'common' script, and Greek was used by the government. The stone was designed to inform all layers of the literate society.

Babylonian Confusion

The amount of scripts that is in use today is small compared to the variety of scripts that were once in use. Understanding how scripts have developed and how they are different is essential to understanding how contemporary typography works.

The first written languages appeared around 3200 B.C. in Egypt, Iraq, and India. In Africa, the Ge'ez script, the basis of Ethiopian script, was developed around 2000 B.C. The Chinese writing system dates back to at least 1200 B.C. In Mexico the first Mesoamerican scripts date from 600 B.C. Many older signs and symbols have not been deciphered yet, and the invention of writing is probably much older.

The first written languages did not use alphabets but graphic symbols that each represented a picture or an idea. These 'logographic' languages, like the Egyptian hieroglyphs, are the basis of all writing. As societies became more complex, it became impractical because of the large amounts of symbols that were needed. The sounds of words and symbols were added to the language in addition to their literal meaning. By using the rebus, more words could be created using combinations of symbols. Writing became more phonetic, symbols were made to represent syllables, and eventually symbols represented individual speech sounds with the creation of the first alphabets.

← *The Rosetta Stone*. 196 B.C. Granodiorite. Image: British Museum.

1. Rymer, Russ. 'Vanishing Languages'. *National Geographic*. July, 2012. ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/vanishing-languages/rymer-text.

The Difference Between a Writing System and a Script

A script is a particular style of characters, like Chinese, Cyrillic, or Latin. Within each script there are different writing systems. In the Latin script, for example, lies the French writing system and the Slovak writing system, etc. Within the Arabic script there are the Urdu, the Pashto, and the Persian writing systems and many more.

One Direction

There is no simple answer why languages are written from right-to-left or from left-to-right. Egyptian hieroglyphs could be written in both directions (bi-directional) with certain characters used to announce the start of a reading point. The Phoenician alphabet was written right-to-left and Aramaic inherited the tradition.

Arabic and Hebrew are written from right-to-left, and the reason for this may be that their predecessor Aramaic was inscribed in stone with chisel and hammer. A right-handed person would start work from right to left, with the stylus in the left and the mallet in the right.¹ The Greeks used clay tablets, which would have them prefer inscribing from left to right, in order not to smudge out words.² Latin, Coptic, and Cyrillic, which are the successors of the Greek alphabet, write left-to-right.

Switching Scripts

Transliteration is the writing of words in a different script. In countries that use multiple scripts, transliteration is a costly endeavour. Street signs, official documents, and books have to be transliterated and produced. The European Union has twenty-three official languages and spends €330 million a year on translation alone.

In Azerbaijan, politics have influenced language in a dramatic way. The Azerbaijani or Azeri alphabet changed scripts four times in history. The Islamic conquest in 667 introduced the Arabic script to unify the caliphate. In 1917 the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic introduced the Latin script until the Soviet government took over in 1920. The Cyrillic script was introduced in 1939, a transition so sudden that characters had to be changed several times. After the collapse of the Soviet Union a debate ensued whether to reinstate

1. Brodsky, Joseph. *On Grief and Reason: Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

2. Handelzalts, Michael. 'In the Beginning: The Origins of the Hebrew Alphabet'. *Haaretz*, August 4, 2013. www.haaretz.com/jewish/premium-1.539683.

3. Slavs and Tatars. *Kidnapping Mountains*, Book Works 2009. 47-50.

the Arabic or the Latin script. Neighbouring Iran starting promoting the Perso-Arabic script, and Turkey in turn began to promote the Latin-Turkish script. In 1990 the Turkish influence prevailed and the Latin script was chosen,³ although three characters were added to it which are specific to the Azeri language and not in the Latin-Turkish alphabet: the 'ə', the 'x', and the 'q'.



↑ Slavs and Tatars. *AaaaaahhhZERI!!!*, 2009. Screenprint. 85 x 70 cm. Slavs and Tatars is an artist collective devoted to the area between the former Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China.

PROTO-SINAITIC	PHOENICIAN	HEBREW	ARABIC	EARLY GREEK	LATIN
 ox					
 house					
 stick					
 hand					
 water					
 snake					
 eye					
 head					
 tooth					
 mark					

Alphabets and Abjads

The Latin alphabet is the most widely used script in the world today. It is an adaptation of the first Greek alphabet from 800 B.C. The letters from the Latin alphabet can be traced back to the three-thousand-year-old Egyptian hieroglyphs, as shown in the evolution of alphabets on the left. It is from the Egyptian writing from which the first true alphabet developed in Greece. ‘True alphabet’ is how alphabets are called in which both consonants and vowels are treated as equal letters. Not all alphabets do this. The Phoenician, Hebrew, and Arabic alphabets use mainly consonants as letters. Most vowels are spoken, not written, or marks are added to note vowels. This kind of alphabet is called ‘abjad’, after the first letters of the Arabic alphabet. ‘Abjads’ like Arabic and Hebrew do contain some vowels, like the letter ‘a’ which is a direct descendent from the Egyptian hieroglyph for ox, but most of the vowels are spoken, not written.

Characters and Letters

Alphabets and abjads have the advantage that they only need a small amount of letters, usually a set ranging between twenty to thirty-five, while logographies can have hundreds or even thousand of characters. Abjads have fewer vowels than true alphabets, but that does not make them smaller. The basic Arabic alphabet has twenty-eight letters, two more than the English Latin alphabet. Each alphabet has evolved to fit its linguistic needs, with its unique letters and diacritics (accents). Cyrillic alphabets tend to contain more letters because they add letters rather than using diacritics. The Kabardian and Abkhaz alphabets from the Caucasus are the largest in the world, with fifty-eight and fifty-six letters, respectively.

The following pages use the Arabic and Chinese scripts as examples to show how different scripts can influence design decisions and visual communication in general.

← Evolution of alphabets. Image by Ruben Pater.

↓ Apple Emoji. Designed by Apple, based on Japanese emoticons. Apple Computer.

↘ Egyptian Hieroglyphs from the Louvre. Photo: Echelon Force.

Pictographs and Ideographs

Chinese is the language with the most speakers in the world and it uses a logographic script, which is different from alphabets and abjads, in that each symbol represents a word instead of a sound. It is often wrongly assumed all Chinese characters are pictographs, just like hieroglyphs or emoji. Chinese characters are both used for their pictographic meaning as well as their phonetic pronunciation.

Pictographs

A pictograph is an iconic picture of the word it represents, like the ox's head in Egyptian hieroglyphs also stands for 'ox'. In Chinese the oldest and most basic characters are pictographs called *hanzi*, many of which are used in Japanese known as *kanji*.

人 human	大 big/great
日 sun	刀 knife
山 mountain	木 tree/wood

The basic pictographs can be combined to make new symbols, called aggregates. For example the symbol for tree (木) can be used to create the symbols for a small or a big forest.

木 tree 林 small forest 森 big forest

Chinese pictographs have a long history. Before the fifteenth century, Chinese was the language of the literate class in the region, which is why Chinese pictographs are still used in Japan. Pictographs allow a person who reads Japanese to understand some basics of a Chinese text, although they can not necessarily pronounce it.

Ideographs

Ideographs are symbols that represent an idea. For example, the Chinese characters for up and down, and for one, two, and three. Of all Chinese characters 4% are pictographs, 13% are aggregates, 1% are ideographs, and all others are phonetic complexes.

上 up 下 down

一 二 三 one, two, three

Complex Phonetics

Chinese characters can be used in two ways, for both their sound and their logographic meaning. Not knowing what meaning is intended can be impractical, so phonetic and pictographic characters are combined to make phonetic complexes. Phonetic complexes compose 82% of all Chinese characters. This example shows how the pictograph for rain (雨), can be combined with phonetics of the other characters to create phonetic complexes.

雨 rain + 云 (yun) = 雲 cloud (yun)

雨 rain + 辰 (chen) = 震 shake (zhen)

雨 rain + 相 (xiang) = 霜 frost (shuang)

Bi-directional

Japanese and traditional Chinese can be read and written in multiple directions. Because characters are composed of disconnected square units, typesetting in multiple directions becomes easier. Present-day simplified Chinese and Korean is written horizontally from left-to-right like the Latin script. Traditional Chinese and Japanese can be written in both directions, depending on the context. Typesetting traditional Chinese and Japanese in the vertical direction requires special software because the character order that is used vertically can be different.¹

1. Lunde, Ken. *CJKV Information Processing: Chinese, Japanese, Korean & Vietnamese Computing, 2nd Edition*. O'Reilly Media, 2008.

When brand names are translated into Chinese, it is done phonetically, which creates new meanings. In 1928, Coca-Cola translated its name as 驃馬口蠟, which could be read as 'bite the wax tadpole' or 'female horse stuffed with wax'.¹ Disappointing sales led translators to find a

new translation. They searched through the 200 combinations that would pronounce the name with a more appropriate meaning. Translators came up with 'happiness in the mouth' (可口可乐).

1. Ricks, David A. *Blunders in International Business*. Blackwell, 1993. 37-38.

*Female Horse
Stuffed with Wax*



love (traditional)

love (simplified)

Characters Without a Heart

Research by Yin Aiwen

A culture war is going on between traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and parts of the Chinese diaspora use traditional characters, while simplified Chinese is used in mainland China and Singapore.

Traditional Chinese has a long history, but it was institutionalised during the Qin dynasty in the third century B.C. These elaborate characters could only be read and written by the elite, and some traditional characters needed as much as eighteen strokes to be drawn.

The characters had been simplified for practical reasons in every day use, but they were not made official until Mao's cultural revolution in 1956. The communist regime wanted to standardise the language by introducing simplified Chinese throughout the whole country, which would strengthen the economy and help raise literacy rates.

The first version of simplification was rushed and had inconsistencies in symbol replacement, making it prone to errors. Over decades, rounds of character modifications were needed to correct the inconsistencies. Taiwan and Hong Kong kept traditional characters. They argued that the 'authentic' aesthetic of Chinese writing was lost in the process of simplification.

Proponents of traditional Chinese claim that those who write in simplified characters 'have no heart', because the traditional character for love (愛) has the symbol for heart (心) inside it, and by simplifying the character (爱) the heart was replaced by the character for friend (友). As a counterargument, proponents of simplified Chinese argue that those who use traditional Chinese 'have no friends'.¹

This is how the aesthetics of language have played an important role in the cultural tensions between the Chinese-speaking countries.

1. Huang, Yuqi. 'Simplified Chinese "Family can't see", "Love has no heart"? Mainlander: Why not "party without darkness", "Team has talent"', *SETN News Net*, 2014. www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=51705.

Celebrity Guide to Politics with Taylor Swift

Always in public and under scrutiny, celebrity life can be demanding. It is only natural that celebrities aren't always aware of the political context they are in, and occasionally make mistakes.

In July 2015, Taylor Swift announced her new album and world tour titled *T.S. 1989*. A marketing campaign and a webshop was launched with a spray-painted logo. Journalist Fergus Ryan first mentioned that *T.S. 1989* could also be interpreted as Tiananmen Square, 1989, the year of the student protests in Beijing and the massacre that followed. All mentions of this event are heavily censored in the Chinese media. By the time her tour arrived in China, the title *T.S. 1989* was abandoned, and the items from the webshop with the spray-painted *T.S. 1989* logo were not available to Chinese users.



@taylorswift13 is going to sell T-shirts with '1989' on them in China.
#awkward #tiananmen – @fryan, July 22, 2015

↑ Hooded sweater from Taylor Swift webshop www.taylorswiftstore.co.uk. © Taylor Swift 2015.



featuring Katy Perry

Katy Perry's 2015 performance in Taiwan surprised both her fans and the media. She was dressed in a sunflower outfit, donning the Taiwanese 'Republic of China' flag. She used the costume in all countries of the world tour, so she was probably not aware of highly sensitive relation between China and Taiwan, and the Taiwanese student sunflower movement protest against Chinese trade policies in 2014.

Her Taiwanese fans praised her support of the movement, but in China the response was less enthusiastic. Images of her performance were all deleted from Chinese social media sites the next day.

@KatyPerry put our national flag on herself during her speech tonight. #PrismaticWorldTour #PrismaticTaipei
– @theauragirl, April 28, 2015

–and Cameron Diaz

A shoulder bag with Mao's personal slogan became an issue during Cameron Diaz' visit of Peru in 2007. People were outraged by her bag. She apologised when she realised the conflict in the 1980s and 1990s with the 'Shining Path' Maoists had cost the lives of 69,000.

↑ Katy Perry in concert in Taipei, 2015. Photo: LuXChiara

ጠርጉ፣
ከባብ፣

ከፈለጋችሁት።

መልካም፡ገና፡ከሎጠንሱ፡እና፡ሎኮ።

War is Over in Africa

With Missla Libsekal and Michael Thorsby

‘War is over, if you want it.’ The famous words of peace by John Lennon have grown into an ongoing art project, currently with translations in over 100 languages. Missla Libsekal from Another Africa realised there was no version for Ethiopia and Eritrea, a region troubled by conflict. She decided to join hands with designer Michael Thorsby to make a version in Amharic and Tigrinya, the languages of the two countries. Both make use of the Ge’ez script, the oldest African writing system that dates back to the fifth century B.C.

The scarce availability of digital typefaces in the Ge’ez script led designer Michael Thorsby to create new characters based on its original calligraphy, to match the Franklin Gothic letters of the poster. Native speakers helped to check and correct the final outcome.

Missla Libsekal shares some advice for designers: ‘Having a native speaker participating is absolutely necessary to address issues such as readability, grammar, etc.’ Libsekal recognises that illiteracy of the designer can allow a fresh view on type design, but designers do have to take care that aesthetic choices do not result in miscommunication.



↑ Photo Missla Libsekal and Michael Thorsby, 2010.

← ‘War is Over, if you want it’ in Amharic. Missla Libsekal and Michael Thorsby, 2010.

African Alphabets

One quarter of the world's languages are spoken only on the African continent, somewhere between 1,250 and 2,100 languages. Islamic and European colonisation has influenced African alphabets dramatically.¹ One of the most spoken languages in West Africa is Hausa, spoken by 35 million, mostly in Nigeria. For centuries it was written in a version of the Arabic alphabet called Ajami, until the British colonial administration changed it to the Latin alphabet in the 1930s.

Before colonisation, different scripts were abundant on the continent: the Tifinagh script of the Tuareg, the N'Ko script of West Africa, Nsibidi of south-eastern Nigeria, and the Vah script of the Bassa people in Liberia, etc. The Colonizing powers imposed Western writing systems over local writing systems to control communication and influence the production of culture. The use of local scripts and languages declined, except in Ethiopia—one of the few independent African nations. Their Ge'ez script remains in use today. While colonisation has marginalised many African scripts, some have survived in small communities.

Reviving African Alphabets

Designer Saki Mafundikwa researched African scripts and collected them in his 2004 book, *Afrikan Alphabets*. He has noticed a revival of African alphabets in the last few decades. In Morocco, neo-Tifinagh is being used for teaching Berber languages, and the N'Ko script is being adopted for apps and social media use.² Saki Mafundikwa has opened a design school in Harare called 'Zimbabwe Institute of Vigital Art'. He explains the importance of reviving African alphabets: 'I am not calling for the Roman alphabet to "reflect Afrikan culture", rather in a situation where we have seen type design in the age of technology being mutilated and distorted in grotesque ways, I see Afrikan alphabets offering a breath of fresh air that can rescue the Roman alphabet from the vagaries of style and trends'.²

→ Nsibidi symbols used in Ukara cloth. Igbo. Cloth (Ukara), 20th century. Commercial cotton, indigo dye, 58 x 78 in. (147.3 x 198.1 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Purchased with funds given by Frieda and Milton F. Rosenthal, 1990.132.6. Photo: Brooklyn Museum.

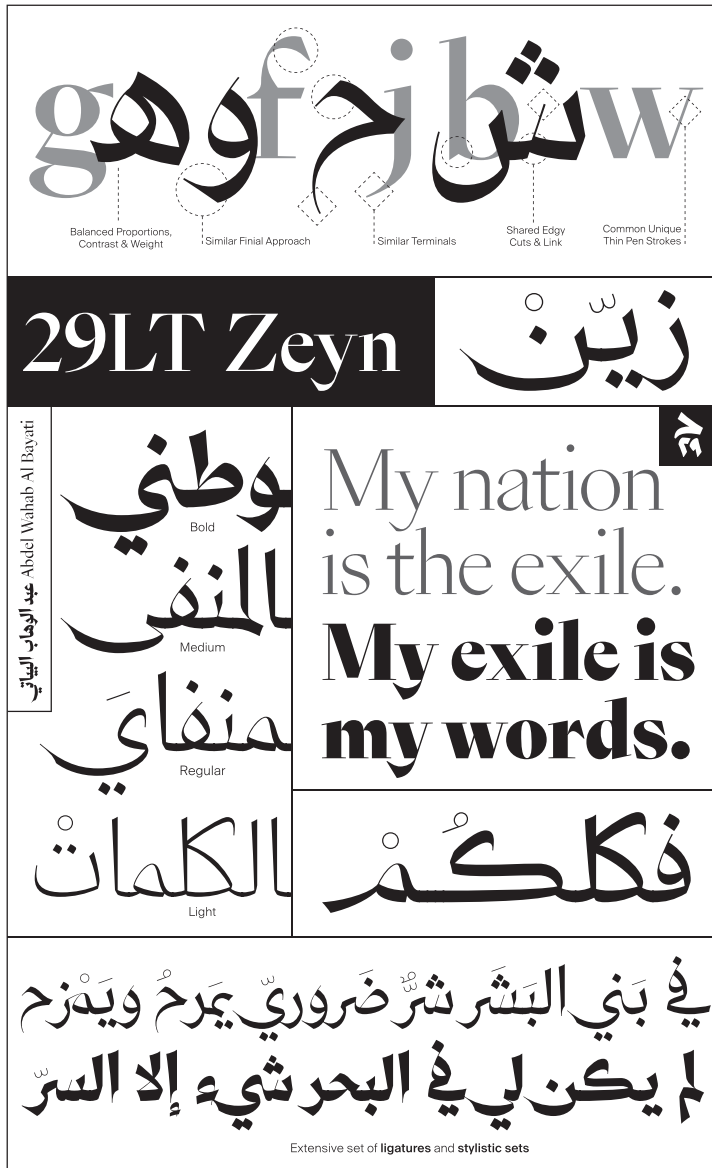
→ Nsibidi symbols. Image from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nsibidi.

→ Nsibidi type design on Nairaland forum by Crayola1. Image source: www.nairaland.com/973985/nsibiri-pre-colonial-writing-south-eastern.

1. Gregersen, Edgar, A. *Language in Africa: An Introductory Survey*. Routledge, 1977. 176.

2. Okon, Ima-Abasi. 'Sharing the Wealth of Contemporary Africana', *IDPure* 31, 2013.





Extensive set of ligatures and stylistic sets

Arabic-Latin Type Design

Contemporary visual communication requires typeface designs that include not just one, but several scripts in their character set. Like Arabic, Cyrillic, Hindi, Latin, etc.¹ Categories like ‘non-Latin’ are outdated and imply a hierarchy, and ignore the realities of a growing multilingual audience.

The economic growth in the Arab world has attracted many investors, and with it comes the need for new Arabic typefaces and visual identities.¹ However, many Arabic typeface designs are made to fit an existing Latin typeface. When a Latin script is used to dictate the form, the Arabic script becomes secondary, disregarding the visual and cultural heritage.²

Cross-Pollination of Typography

Pascal Zoghbi is a type designer who works together with other type designers to create typefaces that have both Arabic and Latin characters. The idea is to respect both scripts and not to deform either script for the sake of the other. The Arabic letters should not be created from copied and pasted components of the Latin letters, and vice-versa.³

One of the typefaces he designed is Zeyn, a contemporary Arabic and Latin typeface designed with Ian Party from Swiss Typefaces. Zeyn (زين) is an Arabic word meaning beautiful, graceful, and elegant. The Arabic and Latin letters were created simultaneously and without any sacrifice of one script on behalf of the other.⁴

What is striking about the result is that both writing systems keep their unique aesthetic and identity, but also start to influence each other's design of the letter forms. Instead of creating hierarchy of scripts, a multilingual type design like the Zeyn can allow mixing and cross-pollination of the world's typographies into new practices of type design.

← 29LT Zeyn by Ian Party and Pascal Zoghbi, 2014. Image: Pascal Zoghbi.

1. Baki, Randa Abdel, 'Bilingual Design Layout Systems: Cases from Beirut', *Visible Language* 47.1, 2013. 38-65.

2. Interview with Pascal Zoghbi by Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès on www.khnt.net.

3. Interview with Pascal Zoghbi by Lebanon Art Magazine on lebreCORD.com.

4. From 29LT website www.fonts.29lt.com/retail.150.

Arabic Adaptation for Latin Logotypes

With Pascal Zoghbi

The need for Arabic logotypes is growing. The governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have a bilingual policy that requires each international brand to appear both in Latin and Arabic. However, Arabic adaptations are too often done hastily or incorrectly.

A Short Tutorial

First, designers should realise that Arabic has a different origin than Latin. Arabic letters are based on calligraphy and not constructed like the Roman capitals. Latin styles like serif, sans-serif, humanist, or script are not applicable. Arabic has calligraphic styles like Kufi, Naskh, Thuluth, and Diwani. All of these have religious, cultural, and historic backgrounds that should be considered when choosing one.

Do not create an Arabic adaptation of a Latin logo by cutting up Latin letters and creating Arabic letters with disregard for the strokes, or proportionality of the letters. If the type is constructed and not based on any Arabic calligraphy style it will look like ‘Frankenstein Arabic’, and characters can be hard to read or even be misread because they look too much like other characters.

Start by analysing the typographic aspects of the Latin type, and choose the Arabic calligraphy style to ‘match’ the Latin. For example, geometric sans-serifs work best with Kufi, humanist sans-serifs with Naskh, serifs work best with Naskh, Thuluth, and Diwani. There is not one ‘Arabic’ but many languages and dialects that use versions of the Arabic script. Lastly, since there is no x-height in Arabic the height of characters, descenders and ascenders have to be determined in relation to the Latin.¹ Visual narrative elements in the logo have to be translated so they can be read from right-to-left.

These rules may be ignored for various reasons, as long as the designer is aware that these choices can have cultural consequences. Always test your designs with speakers of the intended language.

¹ Based on a tutorial by Pascal Zoghbi from 2009. blog.29lt.com/2009/01/25/arabic-logotypes-adaptations.



↑ ‘Frankenstein’ Arabic logos found in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Photos by Pascal Zoghbi.

↓ Latin logos and their Arabic translations. Copyright of Burger King, FedEx, Amazon, and Subway.



FedEx

amazon.com[®]

SUBWAY[®]



فِيدِكْس

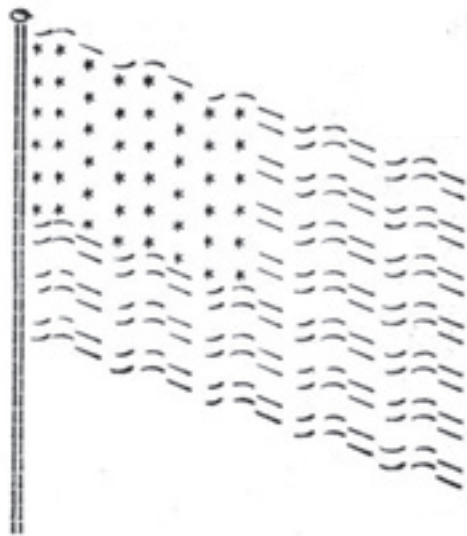
أمازون بالعربي

سبواي

Cold War Character Coding

Thanks to Pedro Oliveira

The languages we speak and write in are not necessarily available for digital communication. Early computers and e-mail services had very limited memory that only allowed a small character set. The first computers communicated with ASCII, short for American Standard Code for Information Interchange. It was limited to 128 characters which included the English alphabet, basic functions, and mathematical symbols. No French, German, Spanish, let alone other writing systems or scripts were available. The ASCII standard is how the English writing system became the standard language for computers and the internet.



↑ Pre-ASCII art. U.S. flag created with a typewriter by Menno Fast, *Popular Mechanics*, Oct. 1948.

Hacking ASCII

When SMS and internet use became more widespread, those with little knowledge of English were left behind. Internet users in Arabic countries came up with a clever way to communicate in their language without an Arabic keyboard. The Arabic chat alphabet or *Arabish*, is a language that uses ASCII numerals and other characters to replace Arabic letters; 3 is the Arabic letter *ayn* (ع), 5 is the Arabic letter *kh* (خ), and 9 the Arabic letter *saad* (ص). This track list of an album by Jerusalem in my Heart is an example of what the Arabic chat alphabet looks like:

Mo7it Al-Mo7it

01. Koll Lil-Mali7ati Fi Al-Khimar Al-Aswadi
02. 3andalib Al-Furat
03. Yudaghdegh El-ra3ey Walal-Ghanam
04. 3anzah Jarbanah
05. Dam3et El-3ein 3
06. Ko7l El-3ein, 3emian El-3ein
07. Amanem

Unicode

It wasn't until the 1990s that ASCII was replaced by a system that could include languages other than the English language: Unicode.¹

Unicode was invented in 1992 to accommodate over a million characters instead of a few hundred. Unicode has now become the new standard and is capable of including all languages of the world. It is the first international text character coding system that allows digital transliteration of different scripts and writing systems. Version 8.0 includes 129 scripts, including ancient scripts like hieroglyphs or cuneiform. New scripts are still added each year.

Unicode is coordinated by the Unicode consortium, a non-profit organisation that keeps expanding the system with new writing systems and character sets. On www.unicode.org you can find a list of scripts supported by Unicode, which includes roughly 120,000 characters. Unicode also includes many non-lingual character sets like mathematical characters, icons, graphics, and emoji.

¹ Track list in Arabic chat alphabet of the album *MO7it Al-Mo7it* by *Jerusalem in My Heart*, a music project by Radwan Ghazi Moumneh. Album released on Constellation Records, Montreal 2013.

1. Bringhurst, Robert. *Elements of Typographic Style*, Hartley & Marks 2004. 180-181.

The Story of the Broken Script

Fifty years after World War II, one typeface is still associated with Nazi Germany. The blackletter or *fraktur*, existed for many centuries in Europe, but the few years that it performed the role as the official typeface of the Third Reich has ruined its reputation forever.

Blackletter, called 'broken script' in German, first appeared in the twelfth century to keep up with the increasing demand for books. Its condensed design was space-saving and could be drawn faster than the round Carolingian script. It became a favourite typeface for manuscripts and bibles. Even the first printed book by Gutenberg was a bible typeset in blackletter to mimic the hand-drawn manuscripts.

The Renaissance saw a revival of Roman typography, also called 'white letter',¹ which gradually replaced blackletter in most of Europe, except for Germany where the blackletter remained in use well into the twentieth century, mostly for German literature and bibles, and was considered a symbol of German nationalism.

In the 1920s, the blackletter was considered outdated. The designers of the New Typography promoted sans-serifs as the new style.



= NATIONALISMUS

Filius iether: iephone et phaspha
 et ara. Filius autem olla: aree et au-
 hel et relia. Omnes hi filii aser:
 principes cognationum electi at-
 que fortissimi duces ducum. Nunc
 autem eorum etatis que apta esset ad
 bellum: viginti sex milia. **VII**

Beniamin autem genuit bale
 primogenitum suum: asbal se-
 cundum ahara tertium. noaha quar-
 tum: et rapha quintum. fueruntque
 filii bale addaor et gera. et abi-
 ud: abisue quoque et neman et
 ahoer sed et gera. et sephuphan
 et uram. Hi sunt filii ahod. prin-
 cipes cognationum habitaculum in
 gabaa: qui translati sunt in ma-
 nath. Moomā autem et achia et ge-
 ra ipse transtulit eos: et genuit

¹ Image from: Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. University of California Press, 1998. 74-75.
 → Johannes Gutenberg, The Gutenberg Bible, 1454-1455. Actual size.

Jan Tschichold criticised the nationalism of the blackletter in his book *The New Typography* in 1928: ‘The emphatically national, exclusivist character of fraktur—but also of the equivalent national scripts of other peoples, for example of the Russians or the Chinese—contradicts present-day transnational bonds between people and forces their inevitable elimination. To keep to these types is retrograde.’²

Hitler Did Not Like Blackletter

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they claimed the blackletter as part of German heritage and made it the official typeface. The New Typography and Bauhaus designers were branded as ‘degenerate’ and many designers were arrested or fled the country.

Apparently Hitler did not particularly like blackletter, ‘Hitler liked Futura’, as Judith Schalansky wrote. His 1932 election poster used a sans-serif similar to the Futura. The poster of the 1936 Olympics was set in a sans-serif/serif hybrid. The designer of the Futura, the German Paul Renner, was arrested in 1933 after criticizing the cultural policy of the Nazi’s.⁴

Eight years later the Nazi government abandoned the blackletter. It turned out to be too impractical and people in occupied countries had trouble reading it. The official reason said the blackletter was found to have a ‘Jewish origin’: ‘Regarding and calling the so called gothic typeface a German typeface is wrong. In fact, the gothic typeface consists of Jew-letters from Schwabach... The Antiqua typeface is to be called the normal typeface in future.’ according to the NSDAP decree from 1941.³

Fraktur Future

After World War II the use of blackletter in Western Germany was considered a taboo. As recently as 2005, blackletter typography in a worldwide Reebok campaign was replaced with a monospaced sans-serif only for the German market.⁴

Blackletter was used in Northern Europe for centuries. Newspaper headers and beer logos are a reminder that the long tradition of European hand-drawn lettering is more than a World War II stereotype.

← Friedrich Heinrichsen, Type Specimen Gotenburg Stempel, 1935.

1. Bigelow, Charles and Kris Holmes. *Typeface Design & Research*. July 1, 2015.

bigelowandholmes.typepad.com/bigelow-holmes/2015/07/.

2. Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. University of California Press, 1998. 74-75

3. NSDAP Newsletter, signed by Martin Bormann, München 1941.

4. Schalansky, Judith. ‘Hitler Mochte Futura’. *Freitag*, Kultur sec. June 1, 2007.

Gotenburg

Dieser gotische Schrift wurde nach Entwürfen von Friedrich Heinrichsen, Hannover, geschnitten und in drei Sorten

herausgegeben von der Schriftgießerei und Metallwaaren-fabrik D. Stempel, Aktien-Gesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main

Ethnic Typography

Sometimes typefaces seem to have a very distinct ethnic association. You can find these ‘stereotypes’ at restaurants that want to prove how authentically Greek, Chinese, Russian, or German they are.

Sometimes typography is not explicitly ethnic, but has grown to signify certain ethnicities through its historic use. Design writers Rob Giampietro¹ and Paul Shaw² have done excellent research on this. Despite their efforts, many designers still have the tendency to use ‘authentic typography’ when it comes to designing a certain ethnicity.

Chinatown Type

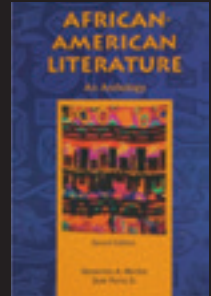
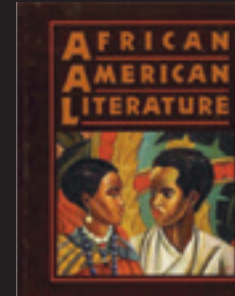
After the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, a Chinese neighbourhood was built to replace the old destroyed Chinatown. Shaw explains how a typeface called ‘Mandarin’ became synonymous with the neighbourhood.² It was designed by a U.S. designer in 1883, intended to look oriental, as it was constructed out of swashing pointy brushstrokes. An early use of the Mandarin typeface can be seen in the 1899 poster by the Beggarstaff brothers for the play ‘A Trip to Chinatown’, which



↑ A Trip To China Town, Beggarstaff brothers, 1899. © Estates of James Pryde and William Nicholson.
 ↗ Chinese Take out packaging. Image source: www.fold-pak.com

helped to popularise the typeface.² A whole range of these ‘oriental’ typefaces, nicknamed ‘chop suey’, spread around the world to attract customers for Chinese, Japanese, and other ‘Asian’ restaurants.

In 2002, clothing brand Abercrombie & Fitch designed a line of T-shirts with ‘chop suey’ typefaces featuring Asian caricatures with texts like ‘Two Wongs Can Make it White’. One response came from Lela Lee, a Los Angeles cartoonist: ‘the T-shirts depict century-old stereotypes of Asians as “kung-fu fighting, fortune-cookie-speaking, slanty-eyed, bucktooth servants.”’ The storm of complaints forced the company to pull the T-shirts from their stores.³



American Spirit

Neuland and Lithos are two typefaces that have been used as a typographic cliché for African American texts and publications. This typography has been used for African American literature, African anthropology, and exotic/adventurous marketing for movies like *Jurassic Park*, *Tarzan*, *Jumanji*, and *the Lion King*. How did this bold jugendstil typeface become synonymous for ‘exotic’ typography, and African and African-American culture?

↑ American Spirit package, Natural American Spirit, © Santa Fe Natural Tobacco.
 ↗ Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. *African-American Literature*, Holt McDougal, 1998.
 ↗ Worley, Demetrice A., Perry, Jessie. *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*, NTC Publishing Group, 1998

1. Giampietro, Rob. ‘New Black Face: Neuland and Lithos as Stereotypography’, *Letter-space*, fall/winter, 2004.
2. Shaw, Paul. ‘Stereo Types’. *Print Mag*. June 17, 2009. www.printmag.com/article/stereo_types.
3. Glionna, John M. and Abigail Goldman. ‘Answering Protests, Retailer to Pull Line of T-shirts That Mock Asians’. *LA Times*. 19 April, 2002. articles.latimes.com/2002/apr/19/local/me-shirt19.

Neuland was designed by Rudolf Koch in 1923 as a modern version of the blackletter, at that time used in Germany for bibles and literature. In the U.S., Neuland was marketed for advertising and categorised by designers as a woodblock style type. Gampietro⁴ explains how this style was used for 'lower class' products like tobacco and circus advertisements, the latter being full of associations of the exotic and adventurous. By both associations, Neuland became a stereotype in the design of products for the African-American market and representations of African-American culture until well into the 1990s.⁴

The African-American community itself did not follow the stereotyping with 'ethnic typography'. For example the African-American owned *Ebony* magazine and Blue Note records in the 1960s used modernist typefaces like Futura, Trade Gothic, and Clarendon.⁴



Totem Poles and Patterns

The *Afrika Museum* in the Netherlands is a museum that shows both historic and contemporary art from the African continent and the African Diaspora. In 2006 Dutch type designer René Knip was invited to design the new identity for the Museum. He designed an ornamental stencil typeface using African inspired patterns and shapes. The letterforms were cut out of metal and dispersed around the museum site as signage, like a kind of 'totem pole'.⁵

↑ Afrika Museum identity, Atelier René Knip, © 2006.

4. Gampietro.

5. Bruinsma, Max. 'René Knip de Letterbouwer', *Addmagazine*, March 2006.

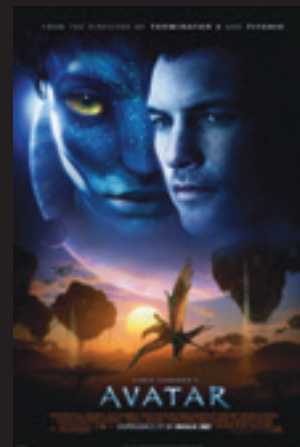
6. Knip, René. 'Wandering Through the 2.5 dimension', *TYPO San Francisco*, lecture 2014.

Design critic Max Bruinsma said about the typographic design, 'The letters radiate with an animist magic'.⁵ In a lecture in 2014, Knip clarified that his design was not intended to 'be serious' because mostly school children visit the museum.⁶ It is clear that the design is not based on what actual African culture or African typography has to offer, but reflects merely the designer's imagination of what 'African' looks like. This reduces the historic and contemporary art of an entire continent to a colonial stereotype.

Alien Exoticism

Ethnic typography transcends boundaries of time and space. The science fiction movie *Avatar* from 2011 follows a classic colonial storyline. Papyrus was the typeface chosen for the *Avatar* poster and merchandise, a typeface designed by U.S. designer Chris Costello in 1983. In an interview from 2007 he said the design was inspired by his image of the ancient Middle East. Papyrus is one of those typefaces which can be found on any design that needs an exotic, spiritual, ancient, or ethnic association.

Ethnic typography can lead to racist designs, but more importantly the use of ethnic stereotypes prevents the public from seeing representations of minorities treated with the same respect as those of the dominant cultures.



Papyrus

↑ Movie poster *Avatar*, © 20th Century Fox, 2009.

↗ The Original Founding Fathers. Image via www.papyruswatch.com.

Decapitating Language

'Why two alphabets, when one accomplishes the same? Why write large if we cannot speak large?' read the Bauhaus letterhead design in 1925. The designer of the letterhead, Herbert Bayer, was an advocate of the New Typography that proposed to drop the capitals and use just lower case instead. Bayer found 'Modern life was too fast and too exciting to waste time on using two alphabets', writes Alice Rawsthorn.¹

It is perhaps somewhat curious that only Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic alphabets use lower and upper case letters. The majority of scripts use just one letter case. The Roman alphabet consisted only of upper case letters, which were constructed using geometric forms. These were not very useful for handwriting, and the adaptations that emerged from everyday use were called Roman cursive. Over the centuries, Roman cursive gradually adopted different styles until they were formally incorporated in the alphabet in the Middle Ages by Charlemagne.

The modern Latin alphabet is a combination of the geometric Roman capitals and the lower case letters from the Middle Ages, brought together by Renaissance type cutters.

The Capital Class

Having two alphabets brought on the option to discriminate and create systems of hierarchy. This becomes clear in how words and names are capitalised. The power relations between ideas, positions of power, and human relations could be judged according to capitalisation.

In colonial times, 'White' as a race was capitalised, and 'black' was written in lower case.² Titles like King, Lord, President, Pope, and Emperor were all capitalised, while words like peasant, slave, or serf were written in lower case. These titles stem from the time when power was hereditary, passed to male offspring—typographic conventions that are often still applied today. We see the same typographic discrimination in official and academic titles where the power of the capital still reigns: bachelor and master degrees (B.A., M.A., M.Sc., M.C.A.), law degrees (L.L.M.), and doctorates (Ph.D.)

→ Wim Crowel, PTT Telefoongids 1977-78, the Netherlands, shown in actual size. Image: Museum voor Communicatie, Den Haag.

aalsmeer

(02977)

alarmnummers

2 44 44	brandweer bgg (020) 45 45 45	2 73 26	dir a p c van iperen dir d e c van kujuk (03461) 19 22
2 30 55	ongevallen	2 26 35	aertssen, n a p, constantynstr 10
2 30 55	politie	2 41 78	ago verzekeringen, geraniumstr 20, expert f j blommestijn
2 30 92	aalbers, p w a, hellendaalstr 3	2 02 27	agtersloot, j j, emmastr 5
2 21 63	aalbersberg, p, sportln 75, bloemist	2 38 55	agtersloot, h, oosteinderw 491
2 73 81	aalsmeer's grondstoombdr, aalsmeerderw 28, fa f vreeken & zn	2 75 98	agtersloot, j j, wilhelminastr 2
2 49 34	bgg	2 16 74	akker, r. vd, clusiusstr 12
2 10 06	aalsmeer's glorie export, legmeerdk 313/32e	2 22 81	akkerboom, t, locatellihof 25
2 44 54	aalsmeer boekhuis, zydstr 12	2 00 98	akse, a, hortensialn 79
2 41 17	fil ophelialn 102	2 38 11	aktiviteiten centrum lich gehandicapt, st, zwartewg al & valk bv, legmeerdk 313, veiling vba
2 43 40	aalsmeerder courant, de, zie randstad publicaties bv	2 67 46	alberda, j, julialn 189, ler hts
2 12 87	aalsmeers textielhuis fa g dekker, zydstr 67	2 46 68	albers, fa gebr, machinewg 133, betonb enz
2 03 15	aalsmeerse hengelsportvereniging vislust, clematisstr 6	2 11 09	albers, p g a, oosteinderw 250
2 33 12	aalst, mr w e. van, fuutin 42 kant, amsterd (020) 44 74 41	2 06 43	albers, h, rietgorstr 12
2 75 41	aalst, d j. van, hellendaalstr 31	2 19 82	albers, h j, uranusstr 10, dir
2 26 21	aalst, p c. van, waterhoenstr 3	2 69 38	albert heijn nv, raadhuispin 10
2 11 89	aalst, d a m. van, wilhelminastr 1	2 09 61	alderden, p c, aalsmeerderw 39, bloemist
2 62 14	aandewiel, j j, julialn 185	2 69 09	alderden, j, aalsmeerderw 41
2 17 15	aardappelhandel jac klein, ophelialn 124	2 34 49	alderden, h, aalsmeerderw 61
2 24 66	aardewijn, t, mozzartin 49	2 43 59	alderden, a, aalsmeerderw 78
2 78 24	aardweg, i w. vd, oosteinderw 579, bloemenkw (020) 45 81 09	2 61 73	alderden & zn, fa wed j, aalsmeerderw 80
2 54 76	aardweg, s th. vd, wilhelminastr 38	2 60 46	alderden, j, aalsmeerderw 92, bloemist
2 20 03	aarsen, g l, machinewg 302	2 58 50	alderden wzn & zn, fa d, aalsmeerderw 267
2 06 19	aarsen, d a, ophelialn 223	2 04 92	alderden, j, v cleeffld 7/a
2 06 19	aalj, dr c, karekietstr 6	2 50 52	alderden, m c, cyclamenstr 1/a
2 76 99	abbo, a w, lunaln 2	2 36 89	alderden, m w, mendelstr 39
2 21 96	abbo-tilstra, b, lunaln 2, internist	2 42 51	alderden jr & zn, fa m, oosteinderw 161, kwekers
2 75 74	abc computercentrum, hadleystr 1	2 61 28	alderden czn, w, oosteinderw 265
	abels, r, emmastr 4/c	2 63 81	alderden, c, oosteinderw 325, bloemist
	aberson bouwmat nv,	2 12 43	alderden p czn, w, ophelialn 235
		2 00 32	alderden, m, sportln 25
		2 47 00	alderden jzn, d, stationswg 22
		2 49 07	alderden, a, stationswg 24
		2 56 06	alderden, c m, stommeerkd 9
		2 56 06	alderden, h, stommeerkd 9
		2 71 21	alderden wzn & zn, fa p c, stommeerkd 58
		2 72 95	alderden, p c, stommeerkd 61, bloemist

Eliminating Capitals

In 1925, modernist designers wanted to rid the world of capitals. Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy argued capitals were associated with power, authority, and tradition.¹ For Bauhaus designers, lower case text used less space, so keyboards and typewriters could be designed more efficiently. Typographer Jan Tschichold wrote, 'Elimination of all capital letters; a form of writing and [type]setting that is recommended as a new script by all innovators'.³

The Bauhaus vision of a new and more efficient language inspired modernist designers from the 1950s to the 1980s to work only in lower case. Using all lower case became fashionable beyond its revolutionary origins. In the Netherlands, Wim Crouwel designed an all lower case phonebook for the Dutch state-owned phone company PTT. A radical choice, given that the phone book at that time was an often-used public record to find the names and addresses of all residents.

Lower Case Citizens

The popularity of lower case among graphic designers was about efficiency, aesthetics, and breaking with tradition. At the same time lower case also became a way for artists and writers to challenge the structure of text. One of the most prominent examples is bell hooks, an author, activist, and feminist from the U.S. who chose to take her grandmother's name, spelled only with lower case letters. Breaking with the patriarchal convention in language, she said that the 'substance of her books, not who I am'⁴ was what should be emphasised.

The ideals of the New Typography did not all come true. Capitals are still used and there is no indication we will get rid of them anytime soon. However, the cultural heritage of two alphabets remains visible everywhere. As Robert Bringhurst writes, 'In earlier days it was kings and deities whose agents demanded that their names be written in a larger size or set in a specially ornate typeface; now it is business firms and mass-market products demanding an extra helping of capitals, or a proprietary face, and poets pleading, by contrast, to be left entirely in the vernacular lower case.'⁵

→ Wim Crouwel, PTT Telefoongids 1977-78, the Netherlands, shown in actual size.
Image: Museum voor Communicatie.

1. Rawsthorn, Alice. 'A Symbol Is Born', *The New York Times*, June 3, 2012.
2. Widdershoven, Thomas. 'Crouwel en onderkast', *Opening overzichtstentoonstelling Wim Crouwel, Stedelijk Museum*, September 9, 2011.
3. Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. University of California Press, 1998. 74-75.
4. Williams, Heather. 'bell hooks Speaks Up'. *The Sandspur*, October 2, 2006.
5. Bringhurst, Robert. *Elements of Typographic Style*, Hartley & Marks 2004. 49.

2 77 34	andersen, j p m, hortensialn 88	2 09 29	baarda, c, marsstr 15
2 72 77	androtex, beethovenln 88, won text		radio veronique winkel (070) 63 00 02
2 23 06	mag, bennebroekerw 19 rijzenhout	2 54 49	baardse, p d, aalsmeerderw 55
2 73 50	anema, h, begoniastr 87	2 04 03	baardse, k d, v cleeffkd 9
2 58 10	anema, a, hortensialn 30	2 05 51	baardse mzn & zn's handelskw nv, j, legmeerdk 313/b 8, vba
2 27 34	anema, h, zwartewg 7		
2 76 71	angeneent, a j l, locatellihof 9	2 42 34	kwekerij, uiterw 188
2 65 29	anker, oosteinderw 273/a, geb kerk centr	2 46 31	woonh j baardse
		2 58 43	baardse, d, oosteinderw 159, bloemist
2 44 68	bgg	2 45 19	baardse dzn, fa d, scarlattin 16, bloemist
2 73 15	ansemis, j m m, rameauln 16		
2 52 26	antal, ir m, handelstr 46	2 49 88	baardse, p, sportin 46
2 44 76	apotheeek groen, v cleeffkd 2	2 28 87	baardse, j, h de vriesstr 64
2 60 51	architecten en ingenieursbur berghoef, zwartewg 3, hondius & lamers	2 71 92	baars-klip, w, anjerln 23
		2 07 35	baars, g j, hadleystr 23
2 50 28	architectenbureau de heer, legmeerdk 313	2 26 24	baars, p th, sportin 50
		2 38 37	baars, p b, h de vriesstr 96
2 41 95	architectenbureau j tromp, linnaeusln 76	2 53 20	baarse, a a, aalsmeerderw 81
		2 55 48	baarse, gebr a m, aalsmeerderw 83
2 26 89	idem		
2 19 54	bgg	2 42 49	baarse, fa m d, oosteinderw 111, kwekerij
	architectenbureau a g dekker, oosteinderw 568 (020) 45 14 57 woonh (020) 41 88 05	2 23 86	baarse, a a, oosteinderw 276
		2 43 80	baarse garagebedrijf, pontw 3
2 06 42	arend bv, technisch bureau vd, f a wentstr 9	2 56 98	bgg
		2 54 28	baarse, d, vivaldihof 27, assur ag
2 37 46	pieterse h j, serv mont		
2 60 83	arendse, ald, aalsmeerderw 128	2 45 62	baarsen, k, helling 12, slijt en lim fabr
2 51 95	arendse, h, aalsmeerderw 132		
2 60 73	arendse, adr, aalsmeerderw 134	2 57 78	bgg
2 62 10	arendse, a, aalsmeerderw 138	2 76 35	baarsen, f, kerkw 25/a
2 55 11	arendse, e, aalsmeerderw 140, telef distr a dam	2 47 78	baarsen dzn bv, joh, machinewg 288, bloemenhdl
		2 47 78	idem b baarsen
	arendse, k, legmeerdk 220/a, bloemist kwekerij (020) 45 01 06	2 56 74	baarsen, joh, oosteinderw 109, multi flora
2 00 97	arian mode, v cleeffkd 13		
	ariëns, a j, oosteinderw 563 (020) 45 81 57	2 59 98	baarsen, j p, oosteinderw 121/d
		2 52 40	baarsen, k, ophelialn 178/a
2 43 21	arkesteijn, j s, dorpsstr 15, dir	2 57 78	baarsen, k, rozenstr 2
		2 43 62	baarsen jr, joh, j p thysseIn 23, bloemengroothdl
2 41 13	arnold bik, dr ir r, j p thysseIn 29		
2 78 03	aranson, h l n, rameauln 24	2 13 08	idem legmeerdk 313
2 64 74	art floral, oosteinderw 452, j atema	2 62 83	baartman, h, azaleastr 10
		2 72 35	baas, j, wilhelminastr 42, chauff
2 46 18	aseptafabriek delft, oosteinderw 259 bgg (020) 47 07 18	2 08 82	baby speciaalzaak welcome, oosteinderw 249
2 38 45	aslander, i, freesiaIn 6	2 24 83	woonh b broeren bgg (020) 72 74 64
2 43 28	asperen-eveleens, mw m. van, uiterw 399	2 72 59	bader, c v m, ophelialn 126, groent hdl
2 52 93	assink, h p, fuutIn 32		
2 65 23	assurantie- en admin kant p w	2 20 44	bader, n g, rietgorstr 33

Modernist Men

A typeface about which books have been written and even a movie is made, Helvetica is the most famous typeface in the world—a typeface so ubiquitous we can hardly imagine the world without it.

Helvetica was designed in 1956, but its roots lie in the principles of the 1920s' New Typography. Jan Tschichold wrote in 1928, 'A typeface expressive of our own age, free from all personal characteristics'. Of all the available typefaces, he wrote, sans-serif 'is the only one in spiritual accordance with our time.'¹ Sans-serifs had existed since the 1880s, but they only started to become the preferred style of typography from the 1930s onward.

The Beginning of a New Face

The rise of international business after World War II demanded clear and structured forms of communication. The International Typographic Style applied the modernist design principles to the world of international business. Massimo Vignelli, with his office Unimark, and later Vignelli Associates in the U.S., performed a leading role. Michael Bierut, who worked for Vignelli for four years said, 'I had no doubt whatsoever that the purpose of graphic design was to improve the life of every person on earth beyond measure by exposing him or her to Helvetica on a three-column grid. That was certainty, and it made design into a crusade'.²

Designer Katherine McCoy had a different experience during her time at Unimark in 1968: 'During that year, the designers I worked with, save one notable exception, were all remarkably disinterested in the social and political upheavals taking place around us. Vietnam was escalating with body counts touted on every evening newscast; the New Left rioted before the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated; and Detroit was still smoking from its riots just down the street from our office. Yet hardly a word was spoken on these subjects. We were encouraged to wear white lab coats, perhaps so the messy external environment would not contaminate our surgically clean detachment'.³

→ Image by Ruben Pater. Based on an original design by Experimental Jetset, © 2001.

1. Mendelson, Edward. 'The Human Face of Type', *The New York Review of Books*, 2011.

2. Bierut, Michael. *Seventy-nine Short Essays on Design*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. 64.

3. McCoy, Katherine. 'Good Citizenship'. In: *Citizen Design*, 25-28. Allworth Press, 2003. 3.





Myths and Ideologies

Helvetica became the symbol of progressive design with a flavour of objectivity, which is how it became the default choice for business and corporate culture. Even more than fifty years after its design, Helvetica's popularity has not declined amongst designers. A movie was dedicated to it in 2007, and designers like Experimental Jetset have given the typeface a more contemporary image. Not many regard it as neutral anymore as Helvetica has such strong connotations with 1960s design and corporate culture. 'We fully realise that no typeface is neutral, and that the objectivity of Helvetica is a myth.' said Experimental Jetset in an interview in *Emigré* in 2003.⁴

Jan Tschichold changed his mind about his New Typography after he was arrested by the Nazis in 1933 for communist sympathies. Over the following years he revisited his modernist ideas: 'To my astonishment I detected most shocking parallels between the teachings of Die neue Typographie and National Socialism and fascism.'¹

New Standards

The sans-serif aesthetic of Helvetica is still regarded by many designers as the most neutral and universally pleasing form of typography, even though its dominance is relatively recent, and happened mostly in Western Europe and North America. The fact that it is regarded by some as a default 'universal' typeface has more to do with the influence of West European modernism design, the branding of multinationals, and the success of these multinationals in dominating world markets.

The glorious *Mad Men* days of design, with design icons like Wim Crowel, Paul Rand, and Massimo Vignelli have taken on mythical proportions for new generations of designers. In 2014 two designers raised money to reprint a limited edition of the original identity standards manual of the 1970 New York subway, designed by Unimark. It contains 352 pages of measurements, numbers, and instructions printed in full colour and nine Pantone® spot colours.⁴ It immediately sold out, but copies can be obtained second-hand for between \$350 to \$950. A technical manual that was used to instruct low-skilled workers to implement design rules has become a design fetish object today.

← Images by Ruben Pater. Based on an original design by Vignelli & Associates, © 1972.

Top photo: Brad Clinesmith, www.flickr.com/photos/macgodbrad/4911532101

Bottom photo: Otto Yamamoto, www.flickr.com/photos/otto-yamamoto/B288634103

4. 'If We're Standing on the Shoulders of Giants...', *Emigre* issue 65. Princeton Architectural Press, 2003.

5. NYCTA Manual reprint by Jesse Reed and Hamish Smyth, www.standardsmanual.com.

‘It looks like
 Greek,
 Chinese,
 Hebrew,
 Turkish,
 Arabic,
 ☒☒☒☒☒☒,
 mumbo jumbo,
 jabberwocky,
 gobbledygook,
 to me’

Greek It Till You Make It

‘Graphic designers don’t read’ is a widespread cliché. Whether true or not, you can often find meaningless text in a graphic design sketch with some fake Latin words or repeated nonsensical text.

‘Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet’ are the first words of the dummy text used by the typesetting and printing industry since the 1500s. Originally a Latin text by Cicero from the first century B.C., the text was adapted to mimic the appearance of European languages. The letters K,W, and Z were added (which are not used in Latin), and words were changed to appear more random. Dummy text can be useful when designs have to be judged without actual content available, and clients want to see the form and structure of typography without being distracted by readable unrelated text. This is somewhat peculiar since typography is used to give context and structure to a text so it can be read better.

Language of the Barbarians

The typographic term for using dummy text is ‘greeking’—just like saying ‘this is Greek to me’ is an expression to describe incomprehensible writing or speech. Many languages have a similar saying, like ‘this looks like Chinese’, ‘this is mumbo jumbo’, or ‘it looks like Turkish to me’. Innocent sounding fantasy words like ‘gobbledygook’ and ‘jabberwocky’ are made up to describe these strange words and symbols we cannot decipher. This goes back to the ancient idea that everything revolves around your own kind, and we are weary of the strangers who we cannot understand and who mumble unintelligible words.

The Greeks were the ones who first used the word ‘barbarian’ when they encountered people they could not understand. The Greek origin of barbarian is ‘barbaros’, literally the babbling of a person speaking a non-Greek language.

Whenever you come across unknown writing, and you want to say ‘it looks like Greek to me’, think about how the Greeks would probably call you a barbarian.



WHORE

The Mazda Laputa was introduced in 1999 as a clone of the Suzuki Kei. Its name is derived from the novel, *Gulliver's Travels*, by Jonathan Swift from 1726. However, in Spanish it also means 'the whore'. Unsurprisingly, the car did not sell well in Spanish speaking countries and it was discontinued in 2006.

↑ Mazda logo copyright Mazda.



WANKER

The Mitsubitshi Pajero was build in 1982 and is still sold today. Its name is a slang word that means 'masturbator', or 'wanker', in Spanish. When the company found out, the name was changed to Montero in Spain, India, and the Americas. In other countries the original name is still being used.

↑ Mitsubitshi logo copyright Mitsubitshi.

Nike Allah

Nike Air Bakin', *Nike Air Grill*, and *Nike Air B-Que* were the names of the hot new shoes that would hit the stores in the summer of 1997. Unfortunately, the flaming Nike Air logo design was very similar to the word Allah in Arabic script (الله), causing a storm of complaints from the Muslim community. Nike agreed to a sales ban and recalled 800,000 shoes. The company issued an apology and introduced a review panel to prevent similar problems in the future.¹

A spokesperson from Nike said, 'We have, through this process, developed a deeper understanding of Islamic concerns and Islamic issues... As our brand continues to expand, we have to deepen our awareness of other world communities.'²

1. Temporal, Paul. *Islamic Branding and Marketing: Creating A Global Islamic Business*. Wiley 2011.

2. Jury, Louise, 'Nike to trash trainers that offended Islam', *The Independent*, 25 June, 1997. www.independent.co.uk/news/nike-to-trash-trainers-that-offended-islam-1257776.html.



What's in a Domain?

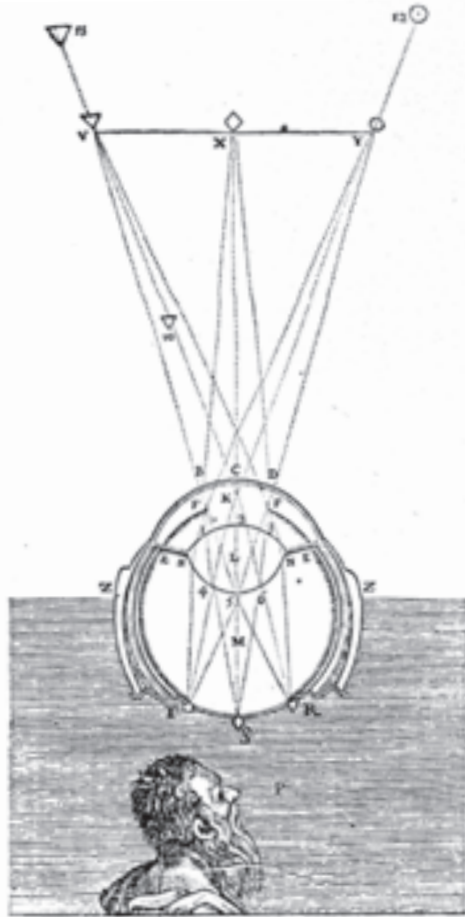
WWW.BUDGET.CO.CK
 WWW.TEACHERSTALKING.COM
 WWW.CHILDRENSWEAR.CO.UK
 WWW.KIDSEXCHANGE.COM
 WWW.PENISLAND.NET
 WWW.POWERGENITALIA.COM
 WWW.ANALEMMA.ORG
 WWW.THERAPISTFINDER.COM
 WWW.SWISSBIT.CH
 WWW.MASTERBAITONLINE.COM
 WWW.CHOOSESPAIN.COM

You have a company and you need a domain. Brand names which have been carefully crafted can suddenly have unexpected associations as a domain name, often as a result of not writing domain names without capitalisation. Guess the names of the existing companies that purchased the domain names above.

COLOUR AND CONTRAST

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Colours in the Eye of the Beholder



↑ Illustration of the theory of the retinal image. In Descartes, René. *La Dioptrique*. Leiden, 1637.

The colours we can see are actually receptors in our eye receiving different wavelengths of light. The brain interprets the different wavelengths as hues of colour. We have three different receptors for colour called cones: the short wavelength cone is called a blue cone; the medium wavelength is called the green cone; and the long wavelength is called red cone. These receptors are responsible for all the names and categories of colour that are found in history.

The human eye can theoretically distinguish between 7.5 and 10 million hues.¹ About 8 percent of men and 0.5 percent of women have some type of colour blindness. The two major types of colour blindness are those unable to distinguish red and green (Deuteranopia and Protanopia), and those unable to distinguish green and blue (Tritanopia). Colour blindness is nearly a hundred times more likely amongst men than women because it is inherited through the X-chromosome. Colour blindness is much more common than often assumed, so make sure designs do not rely on colour discrimination alone.

RED
ORANGE
YELLOW
GREEN
BLUE
PURPLE

Deuteranopia
6.1% of men
0.36% of women

RED
ORANGE
YELLOW
GREEN
BLUE
PURPLE

Protanopia
2.45% of men
0.04% of women

RED
ORANGE
YELLOW
GREEN
BLUE
PURPLE

Tritanopia
0.011% of men
0.04% of women

The wavelengths of light human beings can sense is about 380nm to 720nm.² How colours in nature are perceived all depend on the viewer. Humans have three colour receptors, but some animals have four or even six colour receptors, and can see colours that cannot be seen by humans. Some animals, like bees, have an extra UV receptor that is sensitive to ultraviolet light.

1. Novin, Guity. 'A History of Color, Color Wheel, and Psychological Impact of Color'. *A History of Graphic Design*. June, 2014. guity-novin.blogspot.nl/2014/07/chapter-70-history-of-color-color-wheel.html.

2. Holtzschue, Linda. *Understanding Color*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

Colour Systems

Sir Isaac Newton was the first who used a triangular prism in 1676 to break white sunlight into different colours of light. He proved that colour is part of light itself, something that had been debated for years. Newton first used the word 'spectrum' for the array of colours that the prism produced. From Aristotle in 550 B.C. to the present-day, scientists and artists have tried to describe and organise the colour spectrum that is visible to humans into some kind of system of harmony. Although we have many practical uses in the industry for colour systems like CMYK and RGB, discriminating between different colours and creating categories of colour are in fact very culturally dependent.



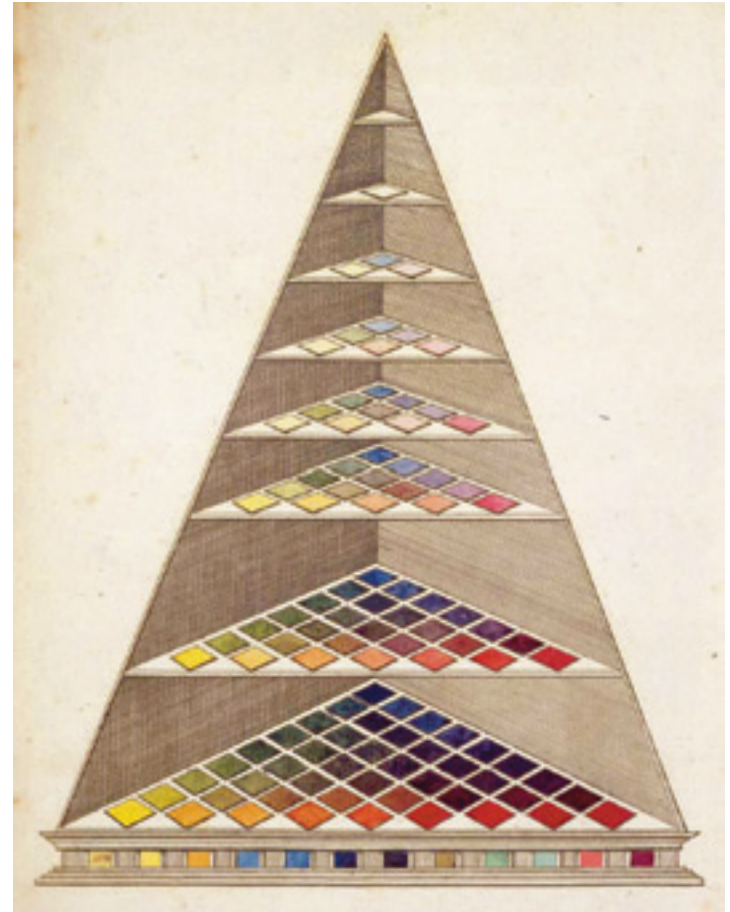
The Mayans and Incas of Mesoamerica had colour categories which were unknown in the rest of the world. The Mayans had a name for a specific colour in between green-blue and green, which was used to name objects incrustated with a mosaic of jade and turquoise.¹

The Inca language *Quechua* had a colour name for the combination of black and white, which suggest a relation with the many black and white checkerboard patterns found in Inca textiles.¹

↑ Newton's colour wheel, in: Newton, Isaac. *Opticks*. 1704, from Book I, Part II, Proposition VI, 1704.
 ↗ Goethe's colour wheel, in: Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Zur Farbenlehre*, 1810.

1. Gage, John. *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*. University of California Press, 1999. 106-107.

2. Gage, 30.



The steadfastness of some Europeans who tried to find universal truth in colour systems led to some unexpected encounters. In 1971 two Danish anthropologists arrived on Bellona island in Polynesia armed with a book of colour swatches, when they were told by an islander, 'We don't talk about colour here'.² The belief that there are universal systems of colour shared by all cultures, is a romantic idea that originated in nineteenth century Western Europe.

↑ Lambert, J.H. *Beschreibung einer mit dem Calauschen Wachse ausgemalten Farbenpyramide*. Haude und Spener, 1772.



For centuries, the standards of beauty were the pale marble and bronze sculptures of ancient Greece. It turns out the quintessence of aesthetics for Western sculpture was based on a misconception.

↑ 'Caligula' (37-41 CE), marble, h: 28 cm, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Denmark. inv.no. IN 2687.



In the 2000s, scientists proved Greek sculptures were actually painted in bright colours, by scanning them using infrared, X-Rays, and UV light. Read more about this research at www.trackingcolour.com.

↑ 'Caligula' (reconstruction), 37-41 CE (2011), marble, h: 28 cm, Archäologischen Institut der Universität Göttingen and Stiftung Archäologie, Munich. inv.no. IN 2687.

The Cost of Colour



Before the mid-nineteenth century colour pigments were made from minerals, animals, and plants. Making natural dyes was a costly and time-consuming task. The brightest pigments, like ultramarine, gold, and vermillion, were only available to the richest patrons.

Gold paint was made from real gold that was ground up into a powder and mixed with arabic gum. Goldleaf was made by beating a piece of gold into an ultrathin layer of less than a half a millimetre. Ultramarine was one of the most expensive and desired colours. This bright blue pigment was made from the hard lapis lazuli stone, which at the time could only be mined in present-day Afghanistan. Owning paintings in these colours was a sign of tremendous wealth.

↑ *Virgin Mary*, painted by Giovanni Battista Salvi Di Sassoferrato between 1640-1650 with ultramarine. National Gallery, London.

In pre-Columbian Mexico, the Aztecs and Mayans produced a very special red dye called *cochineal*. It was made by collecting insects from the nopal cactus, which was a time-consuming process. The Aztecs and Mayans used it to paint their temples bright red. When the Spanish invaded, they started exporting the pigment to Europe. Soon after, cochineal became Spain's second-most valued export from Mexico after silver. In the late nineteenth century, the invention of synthetic dyes significantly lowered the cost of pigments. Cochineal is still used today as a natural dye for food and cosmetics

Though they might not have the allure of gold paint or ultramarine, some colours are still more costly than others. Fluorescent or glow-in-the-dark inks require a higher pigmentation. Gold and silver inks contain metallic particles, making those inks more opaque than standard transparent printing inks. The brightest inks are still the most expensive.



↑ The Aztec god Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent). Coloured with cochineal, Codex Magliabechiano, mid-sixteenth century, Mexico.

Drop Food, Not Bombs

They are both yellow, but one contains a 2000 calorie meal and the other is capable of killing anyone within a 50-meter radius. In 2001 the U.S. dropped cluster bombs on Afghanistan in its war against the Taliban. One in ten cluster bomb units failed to explode, posing a renewed threat to those on the ground. At the same time, food rations were dropped over Afghanistan, in packaging of the same colour and the same typography as the bomb units. In November 2001 the U.S. government realised the mishap, and changed the colour of the rations to pink. Leaflets were made to explain the difference. More than a million food rations had been dropped by then.¹



↑ Humanitarian Daily Ration (HDR). Photo: Bill Dugan.
 ↗ BLU-97/B cluster bomb unit. Photo: Adam Newsome.



↑ Leaflets warning how to tell the difference between bombs and food package. Image: CNN.
 1. 'U.S. Changes Color of Food Aid.' *CNN*. November 1, 2001. edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/01/ret.afghan.fooddrops.

Stop for Yellow

In 1924, before stops sign were red, a yellow version was used in the U.S. This was before reflective red paints were available, and yellow had a better visibility than red, especially at night. In 1954 the stop signs in the U.S. were all painted in a reflective red.



Colour Psychology

How people respond to colour is of great interest to those who work in marketing. Colour psychology research is often focused on how the colouring of a logo or a product will yield higher sales, and what colour preferences can be found in certain age groups and cultures.

The study of the psychological effects of colour have coincided with colour theory in general. Goethe focused on the experience of colour in his *Zur Farbenlehre* from 1810,¹ in opposition to Sir Isaac Newton's rational approach. Goethe and Schiller coupled colours to character traits: red for beautiful, yellow for good, green for useful, and blue for common. Gestalt psychology in the early 1900s also attributed universal emotions to colours, a theory that was taught to students at the Bauhaus by Wassily Kandinsky.

The best known colour psychology test was conducted by Max Lüscher in the 1940s, when he tested the responses of people to a series of coloured cards. A psychologist could interpret the person's character based on the test results. The interpretation of this research in colour psychology is disputed, since it is not clear whether people respond to the colours or the cultural concept of the colour. It is more likely that the cultural context, our upbringing, and personal preferences influence our interpretation of colour more than anything else.²

Some colour psychology findings have been proven to work. 'Cooler' colours can have a calming influence on people, which is why hospitals and prison walls are often painted in a soft greenish colour. Another research shows that the colour of placebo pills influences their effectiveness. Blue coloured pills work better as depressants, and red colour pills better as stimulants.³

1. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Zur Farbenlehre*, 1810.

2. Gage, John. *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. 31.

3. Cohen, Tessa Fiorini. 'The Power of Drug Color.' *The Atlantic*. October 13, 2014. www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/10/the-power-of-drug-color/381156.

4. Holtzschue, Linda. *Understanding Color*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002.

Colour and Culture

Research shows that ninety-eight languages have words for the same eleven basic colours;⁴ however, the meaning a colour may have can be very different. There are conflicting theories on whether the cultural meanings of colours can be categorised. Meanings can change over time and depend on the context. Black may be the colour of mourning in many countries, though a black book cover or a black poster is not always associated with death. Another example is that brides in China traditionally wear red, but many brides have started to wear white in recent decades.⁴ The cultural meaning of colours is not set but always changing. The next few pages list some of the meanings of colours in different cultures.

Black

was the colour of mourning during the Roman empire, and in Judaism and Christianity it is associated with death and evil. During the Middle Ages, black clothing became popular, and during the Renaissance it was worn by the wealthy and nobility in all parts of Europe. In the nineteenth century, the black army was the nickname of the Russian anarchists. In the twentieth century, black became the colour of Italian and German fascism, who were called blackshirts. In Shia Islam black is a very devout colour. The black standard is one of the flags of Muhammad in Islam. The black standard has been appropriated as a symbol by jihadism since the late 1990s.

White

is the colour of death and mourning in China, Vietnam, and Korea. In India, people wear white after the death of a family member. Jewish, Christian and Hindu religions use the colour white in rituals to indicate purity, chastity, virginity, and peace. White is the traditional colour of bridal dresses in Western cultures. In Europe, white was historically associated with absolute monarchy. It became synonymous in the twentieth century with anti-communist and counter-revolutionary movements in Russia. A white dove is an international sign of peace, and a white flag is the international sign of surrender.

Yellow

is the most visible colour from a distance, so it is often used for objects that need high visibility, such as ambulances, road maintenance equipment, and taxis. In East Asia, yellow is considered sacred and imperial. In China it is the colour for royalty, and during the Qing Dynasty, only members of the imperial household were permitted to wear yellow. In China it is still seen as the colour of happiness, glory, wisdom, harmony, and culture. Yellow is used to symbolise gold as one of the colours of the Catholic church and the Vatican. Yellow in Italian is *giallo* and a nickname for crime stories. The demonstrations in the Philippines in 1986 were also known as the yellow revolution.

Orange

comes from the Sanskrit word for orange tree. In Asia it is known as saffron, named after the spice. In Hinduism, the divinity Krishna is portrayed dressed in saffron. In Buddhism, saffron is the colour of illumination, the highest state of perfection, and the colour of robes worn by monks. Orange ribbons are used to promote awareness and prevention of self-injury. In Northern Ireland the protestant order is called the Orangemen, who wear orange during annual marches. Orange is the colour of the Dutch monarchy, and in South Africa, orange was the colour of the ruling party during Apartheid. Prisoners are often dressed in orange to make them distinctive in case of escape.

Red

comes from the Sanskrit word for blood. In Greek mythology it was the colour for the planet Mars and the god of war. Red is the most important colour in China and means good luck and happiness. Red promotes long life, and it is used in Chinese new year celebrations. Red is the traditional colour for brides in India and Nepal. In Japan, a red kimono symbolises happiness and good luck. In Japan's Shinto religion, red is the symbol of life. The Russian word for red has the same root in Old Russian as the word 'beautiful'. The oldest symbol of socialism is the red flag, and red is still associated with socialist and communist parties. The red shirts, or the red movement, was the name of those who opposed the 2006 military coup in Thailand.

Green

is the colour of nature in many cultures. Early rituals centred on the hope of a good harvest with green vegetables. Green is the traditional colour of Islam, the colour of the prophet Muhammed, which is why many flags in the Islamic world use the colour green. Since the 1980s, green has become the colour of environmental parties and organisations. Green parties in Europe have programmes based on ecology and environment. The word greenwashing is used to describe the advertising of companies that use positive environmental practices to cover up environmentally unfriendly activities. A 'green room' is used in television and theatre to quiet nervous performers.

Blue

is tested as the colour that is best liked by all cultures, which is how it became the colour for international business. The United Nations chose blue as a colour in 1946, but the colour has no special significance. Bluewashing is a term for companies that join the United Nations 'Global Impact Initiative' only for PR reasons. 'Blue collar worker' refers to the shirts worn by people working manual labour jobs. The Tuareg of North Africa wear blue turbans, dyed with indigo. Azure blue is the national colour of Italy, the national soccer team is called the *Azzurri*. Several languages, like Japanese, Thai, Korean, and Lakota Sioux, use the same word to describe blue and green.

Purple

was the most expensive dye in Roman times, and was worn by Roman magistrates, Byzantine emperors, and the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire. During the reign of Elizabeth I, only royalty was allowed to wear purple in England. Roman Catholic bishops still wear purple as a colour of royalty. In Japan, the colour is traditionally associated with the emperor and aristocracy. In Thailand, widows in mourning wear purple. In Western politics the colour purple is neutral, and used for a coalition between a left-wing and a right-wing party. The Women's Suffrage movement used purple, and the colour was adopted in the 1970s by the women's liberation movement. Purple and pink are both associated with the LGBT community.



21:54, 28 September 2005 by Zscout370



08:00, 5 February 2006 by Denelson83



21:33, 12 February 2006 by Vz83



13:36, 23 September 2008 by Flad



01:45, 27 September 2008 by MaggotMaster



23:46, 27 September 2008 by Flad



22:01, 9 October 2008 by Avala



19:02, 10 October 2008 by Flad



21:43, 10 October 2008 by Reisio



21:08, 26 September 2011 by Zscout370

National Colours

With Yuri Veerman

The flag has been the most prominent symbol of national identity since the nineteenth century. A new national flag often marks a revolution or a political change. Flags have a military origin, and were used to identify military units from one another in the Roman legions.

Different national flags often use similar colours, sometimes even with the same meaning. Thirty-eight percent of the world's national flags use red as a colour, which symbolises the blood spilt for independence, or on the battlefield. One of the most used colour combinations is red, white, and blue (Chile, Panama, Russia, Samoa, United Kingdom, Thailand, etc.) where blue often symbolises the domination over sky or sea.¹

Many African countries use red, black, and green in their flags. This stems from the Pan-African flag from 1920.² The red symbolises the blood spilled for liberation, black is for the African people, and green for the continent's natural wealth.

There have been a few monochrome flags. Morocco had a deep red flag for over two hundred years. Afghanistan had an all black flag at the end of the nineteenth century. And during the reign of the Taliban in 1996, Afghanistan had an all white flag. The last remaining monochrome flag in the world was the Libyan flag, a plain green field without markings or insignia.

The green flag was a personal choice of Muammar Gaddafi whose manifesto was called the 'Green Book'. Artist Yuri Veerman collected the different digital versions of the Libyan flag that were discussed on the English Wikipedia page, 'Flag of Libya'. Between 2005 and 2011 the chromatic representation of Libya was revised fifteen times, each with different shade of green. After a six-year fight over the right shade of 'Gaddafi green', a fifteenth revision was made, marking the fall of the Libyan regime and the last monochrome flag.

← Yuri Veerman, 'Libya in Transition', 2012.

1. Byrne, Marie. 'Culture & Communications: Similarities of Color Meanings Among Diverse Cultures' *The Journal of Global Issues & Solutions*. BWW Society, 2003.
2. 'UNIA Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World', New York, August 13, 1920. Reprinted in Robert Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Papers*, vol. 2, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983.

Colour and Gender

Why is pink the colour for girls and blue the colour for boys? In the nineteenth century, girls and boys were both dressed in white because it was easier to clean. After World War I, department stores in the U.S. realised they could make more money if baby products would be gender specific. Pastels were in fashion, and it was decided that pink would be the colour for boys, and blue for girls.

In the 1940s, market research in the U.S. suggested the colours should be the other way around, and the 'baby boom' generation was the first where the girls were dressed in pink and the boys in blue.'



Children are not gender aware until age 6 or 7.² Exposing them to visual stereotypes at an early age creates an artificial view of gender. Now that parents can know the child's gender before birth, gender specific baby items have increased in popularity. Parents stock up on baby merchandise even before the baby is born. Jeongmee Yoon wrote her thesis on colour and gender, and since then has photographed children around the world with their pink and blue things.

✓ Sehyun and Her Pink Things, 2007. ↓ Jake and His Blue Things, 2006. Jeongmee Yoon, *The Pink Project*, 2005-ongoing.

1. Maglaty, Jeanne. 'When Did Girls Start Wearing Pink?' *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 7, 2011. www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/when-did-girls-start-wearing-pink-1370097.
2. Halim, May Ling and Diane Ruble. 'Gender Identity and Stereotyping in Early and Middle Childhood' in: *Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology*, 495-525. Springer 2010.





The History of Colour in Black and White

‘Look in your dictionaries and see the synonyms of the word Black. It’s always something degrading and low and sinister. Look at the word White, it’s always something pure, high and clean.’—Martin Luther King Jr., 1968.¹

In colour theory, white is the colour that includes all colours, while black indicates the absence of light. White is a standard background colour, a blank sheet of paper. In printing white is without colour, while black is the darkest possible colour. Black absorbs all light, equalling darkness and shadow. This opposition can be found throughout the history of colour symbolism.

In Christian and Jewish religions, white is synonymous with cleanliness, light, safety, and the good. White is used in opposition to black, both symbolically and literally. Black is dirty, and signifies danger and darkness. Angels are depicted as white, demons are black.

How does this relate to racism? There is not one person who actually has a white or a black skin. Skin tones are variations of brown and pink hues. Europeans started calling themselves white around the same time that Africans were being sold as slaves.² Categorizing Africans as black and Europeans as white, established the racial hierarchy that was needed to legitimise exploitation and slavery.

Today we can find the same symbolic opposition occurring in visual culture. Cinderella has light hair, and her sisters and stepmother have dark hair. In Star Wars, Luke Skywalker is the light-haired hero with the white skin, while his evil opponent Darth Vader wears black.² Although this might happen unconsciously, good and evil as a binary opposition between black and white still inhabits every corner of our visual language. Affirming these stereotypes in visual communication would be a continuation of colonialist ideas of race relations.

← Image: i.imgur.com. Meme based on *Family Guy*. Created by Seth MacFarlane. 20th Century Fox Television.

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Speech on April 3, 1968.

2. Dyer, Richard. *White*. Routledge, 1997.

3. Hanssen, Eirik Frisvold. *Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema*, Stockholm Cinema Studies, Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm, 2006.

4. Ambrose, Stephanie. *Black: The Color of Language*. Massachusetts Daily Collegian. March 27, 2012. dailycollegian.com/2012/03/27/black-the-color-of-language.

‘Research—into books, museums, the press, advertising, films, television, software—repeatedly shows that in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard.’

— Richard Dyer
in *White*, 1997.



To Colour or Not to Colour



Is there such a thing as being afraid of colour? The movie industry certainly had its moment of fear. Colour had been available since 1915, but was not widely adopted until the 1960s, after television had first switched to colour. Using colour film was enormously expensive, but more importantly, it was not regarded as being of the same artistic value as black and white. It was believed colour would distract people from the story, and colour film would not be able to show the same colours on screen as people saw in nature.¹

In photography and advertising, colour correction is routinely used to intensify colours, making images more striking. Colour correction can also challenge the legitimacy of the image. We still hold the belief that colours should be shown as naturally as possible.

Palestinian architect and photographer Yazan Al-Khalili uses colour correction to change the perception of Palestine in the media. On the left is his image of refugee camp Al-Amari close to Ramallah city. Palestinian refugee camps in the media are always depicted as landscapes of colourless damaged concrete.

Al-Khalili: 'Changing the refugee camp's colours is a symbolic act to fill the loss—like a child filling a colouring book—and produce the possibility of hope. Here I'm attempting to appropriate an urban landscape that reminds us of the tragedy—of their existence and our disappearance—in order to subvert memory into a desired future.'²

The act of colouring can also play on social conventions and perception. Ryan Hunter and Taige Jensen from New York make colouring books for grown-ups. Hunter and Jensen: 'Colouring for Grown-ups prepares you for the grim realities of adulthood in all the ways that the activity books of your youth irresponsibly did not. Proving that in a world that is too often black and white, or red and blue, sometimes you just need to add a few extra colours to your palette.'³

←Yazan Al-Khalili. *Colour Correction II - Camp Series*, 2007 - 2010.

1. Elfassy Bitoun, Rachel. 'A History of Colour: The Difficult Transition from Black and White Cinematography.' *The Artifice*. April 21, 2015. the-artifice.com/history-of-colour-film.

2. Artist text from yazankhalili.com/index.php/project/colour-correction---camp-series.

3. Hunter, Ryan, and Taige Jensen. 'Coloring For Grown-Ups.' *The Huffington Post*. December 7, 2012. www.huffingtonpost.com/ryan-hunter/coloring-grown-ups_b_2251177.html.

CELEBRATE CHINESE NEW YEAR BY COLOURING THE CHINESE PERSON



**(Remember, there are Koreans, Japanese,
Filipinos, and other Asian races on this page!)
Only colour the Chinese person!**

HIPSTER or HOMELESS?

**USE MAGIC MARKERS TO MAKE THE MAN ON
THE RIGHT INVISIBLE TO SOCIETY!**



**SECRET HINT: While both hipsters and hobos share a mutual
appreciation for beards, old clothing, and dirt, most hipsters give them-
selves away via their unwavering commitment to colour-coordination**

Shirley and the China Girls

It is not clear what happened to Shirley. What we do know is that she worked at Kodak in the 1950s and she was the first model to pose for a Kodak test card. These cards were used as a standard to calibrate film colours with skin tones and colour bars. After Shirley, other women took her place and the cards became known as 'Shirley cards'.¹ The women needed to have a light skin, 'as smooth as "china"', hence the name 'china girls' for the women who worked in the movie industry and appeared on test cards for movies.

The Kodak films used in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s were calibrated for people with a white skin, and unsuitable to depict different races together. If you wanted to have a black person and a white person together on the same image, one of them would be either too light or too dark.² French director Jean-Luc Godard refused to use Kodak film in 1977 when he was commissioned to make a movie in Mozambique, because according to him the film was 'racist'.²

In 2012, photographers Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin wanted to examine the 'the radical notion that prejudice might be inherent in the medium of photography itself' in their project *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light*.³

Test images are designed to represent a default, a set of standards for optimal image analysis. But tools are never completely neutral, and their settings reflect the cultural bias of the technicians who calibrate them. In their work, Broomberg and Chanarin show how the tools that are used for image production are not without built-in prejudices.

By the 1980s, Kodak films were configured to depict darker tones more appropriately. Not because of complaints of racism, but because clients had complained that chocolate and dark horses appeared too dark in the photos.²

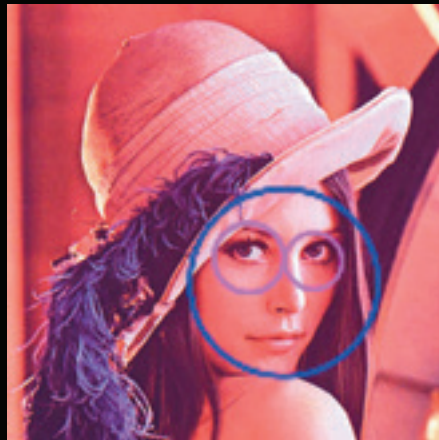
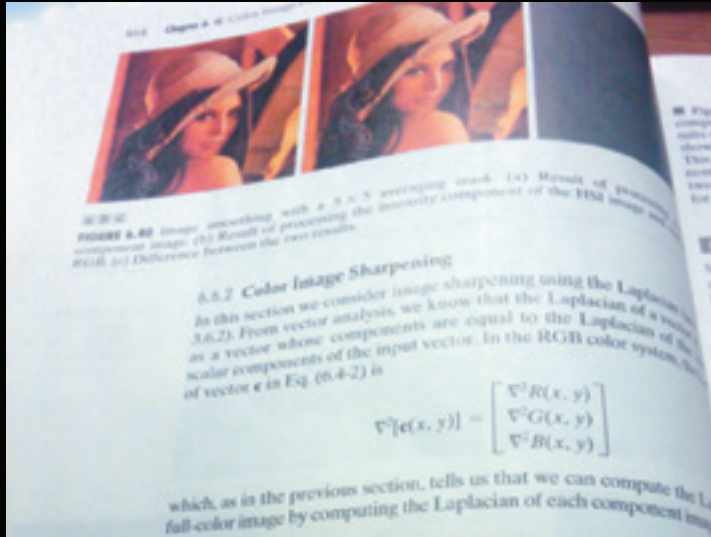
1. Del Barco, Mandalit. 'How Kodak's Shirley Cards Set Photography's Skin-Tone Standard.' *NPR*. November 13, 2014. www.npr.org/2014/11/13/363517842/for-decades-kodak-s-shirley-cards-set-photography-s-skin-tone-standard.

2. Smith, David. 'Racism' of Early Colour Photography Explored in Art Exhibition.' *The Guardian*. January 25, 2013. www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/25/racism-colour-photography-exhibition.

3. O'Toole, Sean. *Yes, But (Some Thoughts on Broomberg and Chanarin's New Work)*. Toronto: Gallery TPW, 2013. gallerytpw.ca/rd/yes-but/



↑ *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light (Shirley 1)*, Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, 2012. Courtesy of the Artists and Lisson Gallery, London.



↑ Photo of textbook *Digital Image Processing Second Edition*.

↑ Image: Ana Huamán. *Cascade Classifier*. Division of Natural Sciences and Engineering Swarthmore college, 2014.

1. Gonzalez, Rafael C. and Richard E. Woods. *Digital Image Processing Second Edition*. Prentice-Hall, 2002.

2. Merchant, Brian. 'Lenna, The First Lady of The Internet.' *Motherboard*. August 20, 2012. motherboard.vice.com/read/meet-lenna-the-first-lady-of-the-internet-2.

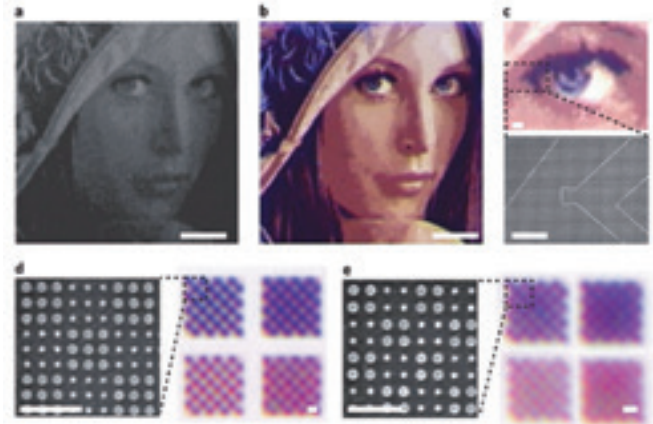
The Face of Image Technology

She is in her 60s, but for image technicians she will be forever 21. 'Lenna', as she is known on the internet, is a legend in the world of image technology. Her image was first used at the University of Southern California at the Signal and Image Processing Institute (SIPI) in 1973. The image technicians were tired of the usual test images. When someone walked in with a magazine, they scanned her image and used it.

This is how Lenna became a favourite amongst image technicians. She is considered a standard for image testing software and online imaging tools, and she even appears in textbooks for technical studies.¹

What is often overlooked is that the portrait is a crop from a 1972 Playboy centrefold of Lena Söderborg, playmate of the month, November. Despite the image's popularity, the use of a soft-erotic image as a technical standard is often cited as an example of sexism in a male dominated computer science world.

On their fiftieth anniversary, the Society for Imaging Science and Technology gave Lenna the title 'First lady of the internet'.²



↑ Image from: Karthik Kumar, Huigao Duan, Ravi S. Hegde, Samuel C. W. Koh, Jennifer N. Wei. 'Print Colour at the Optical Diffraction Limit'. *Nature Nanotechnology* 7, 557-661. August, 2012.

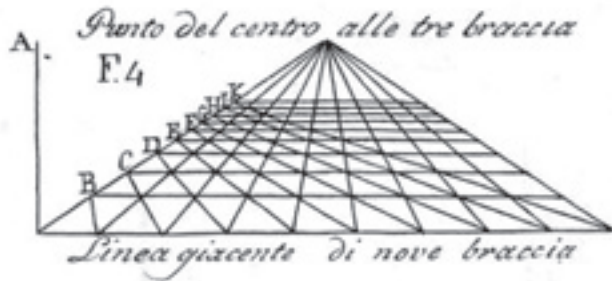
IMAGE AND PHOTOGRAPHY

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Matters of Perspective

Simulation of depth by drawing perspective was developed in Italy in the thirteenth century. For the first time one person was able to be the centre of the world by looking at an image. This dramatically influenced the concept of man in the cosmos. Through the development of perspective, it was no longer a divine being that was the measure of things, which is why the new perspective was initially refused by many.

Children instinctively draw pictures from multiple viewpoints simultaneously. Creating depth on a flat surface through the drawing of perspective is not universal, but a cultural skill that is taught.¹



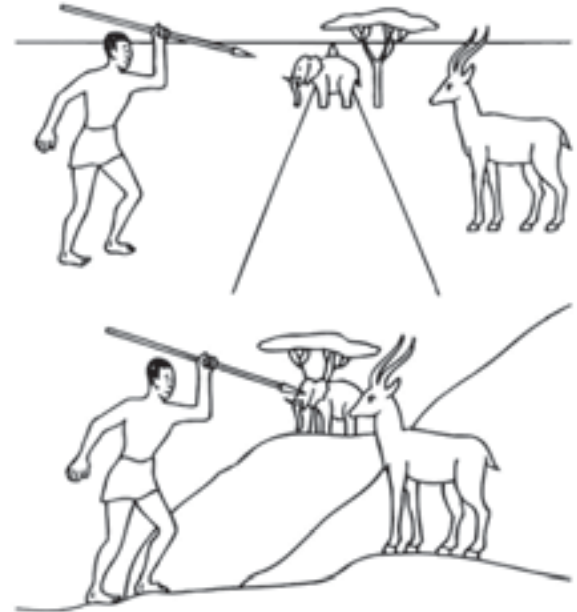
This does not mean that images with different forms of perspective are less sophisticated in an artistic or a technical sense. Japanese Art developed unique forms of drawing depth very different from the Western conventions of perspective. In *Visual and Visuality*, Norman Bryson analyses the perspective in Japanese flung-ink Ch'an painting: 'In the case of the flung-ink painting, Ch'an's solution is to disfigure the image, the bipolar view, by opening on to the whole force of randomness.' And, 'When the painter or calligrapher throws the ink, there is renunciation of all claim to act as universal centre.'²

¹ Hudson, W. 'Pictorial Depth Perception in Sub-Cultural Groups in Africa.' *Journal of Social Psychology*, 52, 1960.

² Alberti, Leon Battista. *Della architettura, della pittura e della statua*. Istituto delle Scienze, 1782.

1. Edgerton, Samuel. 'Perspective', *Encyclopedia.com*. The Gale Group, 2005.
www.encyclopedia.com/topic/perspective.aspx.

The ability to see depth in an image has to do with the viewer's visual experience. The fewer images you are exposed to, the less equipped you are to read them. In the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologists discovered that some people living in remote areas were not able to see depth in images. In an often cited test by Hudson from 1960,³ a group of illiterate workers in South Africa were shown drawings, and asked what the man in the picture was doing. 91% 'misinterpreted' the depth in the image and answered the man was spearing the elephant, showing that this perspective is a Western convention that cannot be universally applied. It should be noted that this particular example is from the 1960s and the research is no longer valid in the context of South Africa, it is only included to demonstrate the relativity of perspective.



2. Bryson, Norman. 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field'. In: *Vision and Visuality*, 103. Bay Press, 1988.

3. Hudson, W. 'Pictorial Depth Perception in Sub-Cultural Groups in Africa'. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 52, 1960. 183-208.



Painting History

After the Mexican civil war in 1920, a new government was elected that strived for a more egalitarian society. Years of dictatorship had ignored the thousands of years of indigenous history. The population of which two-thirds was illiterate,¹ was largely unaware of the country's history. Mexican painter Diego Rivera was commissioned to paint the history of Mexico in a series of murals in the *Palacio Nacional* in Mexico City. By using murals as a form of public education, Mexico's history became accessible to all citizens, literate or not.

¹ Diego Rivera, Murals at Palacio Nacional, Mexico City (1929-1935). Photo: Ruben Pater.
1. *Literacy for Life: EFA Global Monitoring Report*, UNESCO publishing, 2005. 192.

Cultural Differences

How do you communicate across cultures and avoid miscommunication? Psychologists, communication scientists, and anthropologists have tried for decades to come up with an answer, but none has been found. Cultures are so complex that categorising them into regions, countries, races, or religions only affirms stereotypes and prevents a broader understanding.¹ At the same time, societies are becoming more and more culturally diverse, and designers can no longer assume that their audience shares the same visual language and values.

Visual communication across cultures deals with visual literacy, the ability to read and understand images. Visual literacy, like verbal literacy, needs to be learned. It is influenced by our experience, by how many images we have seen, but most of all by our cultural background. Each culture reads images in very different ways. Differences in visual literacy can lead to misunderstandings in communication. This can happen between cultures that are thousands of kilometres apart, but also between two neighbours in the same street.

One example is the perception of portraits. In the history of Western European Art, the portrait is a prominent theme, and it has grown to become a photographic convention in advertising, magazines, and posters. However, in cultures that are less focused on the individual, one's self-image cannot be disconnected from the community one belongs to. In such cultural circumstances, individual portraits can be associated with loneliness and isolation, rather than individual empowerment.²

Another example is the convention that an image and a text are meant to work together to create the message. Readers who are not familiar with such a convention could misinterpret the message, because reading only the image or only the text is not sufficient. Both have to be read and combined to understand the message. It is important to realise that visual literacy develops differently in each cultural context. In the examples that are discussed and deconstructed in this chapter, we can see how visual literacy influences visual communication.

1. Ono, Kent A. 'Reflections on Problematising "Nation" in Intercultural Communication Research'. In: *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication*, 90. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

2. Hofstede, Geert H. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill, 1991. 411.

Integration Campaign in Amsterdam

The municipality of Amsterdam launched a campaign in 2007 to inform ten thousand residents of Amsterdam, with limited knowledge of Dutch language and culture, about a mandatory integration course.³

Design agency Koeweiden Postma and communication agency Mex-IT created a campaign with the tagline, '*Inburgeren. Een ander woord voor meedoen*' (Integration. Another word for participation). The word '*mee*' (with/along) was affixed to every day activities *meespelen* (play along) *meewerken* (working along), etc.

During the design workshop 'Multiplicity' from 2008,⁵ a participant had researched the campaign and interviewed different parties. He noticed the campaign website had received little to no response.⁶ In the workshop, we deconstructed the campaign to see why it had failed.

First of all, the posters are in Dutch. If the target group has no, or limited, knowledge of Dutch, how would they understand the information in the first place?

Second, the campaign's main platform is the internet. There is no phone number or address on the poster, just a website. This assumes the reader has access to an internet connection.

Third, the image and text work together to create the campaign's main message. Reading them separately does not convey the same message. This is a visual convention that requires a specific type of visual literacy and experience which is not universal.

The designers had to use the corporate identity of the municipality of Amsterdam. The style is informal, without symbols of authority like heraldry or flags. Dutch people will recognise this as official communication, but newcomers might mistake it for marketing.

If we look beyond the explicit message that is communicated, the campaign also has a very implicit political message. The photography makes it clear that the word 'integration' refers to the ethnically non-European: blacks, Muslims, Asians. This campaign reaffirms a stereotypical image of the 'non-integrated' citizen.

Jij wilt toch ook meebeslissen?

Gemeente Amsterdam

Inburgeren.
Een ander woord voor **meedoen.**

www.inburgeren.amsterdam.nl

Jij wilt toch ook meespelen?

Gemeente Amsterdam

Inburgeren.
Een ander woord voor **meedoen.**

www.inburgeren.amsterdam.nl

Jij wilt toch ook meewerken?

Gemeente Amsterdam

Inburgeren.
Een ander woord voor **meedoen.**

www.inburgeren.amsterdam.nl

3. 'Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling afdeling communicatie', Gemeente Amsterdam, *Inburgeringscampagne bureaustandaard*, Amsterdam, 2007.

4. In the Netherlands the concept of *inburgeren* in itself is controversial. It is a government programme presented as a liberal form of civil obedience, but functions as forced cultural assimilation. As such it creates class divisions between citizens.

5. From the workshop *Multiplicity*, organised by BNO & Design2context, led by Felix Janssen and Evert Ypma, Amsterdam 2008. Made possible by Lava Design, Amsterdam.

6. Van der Molen, Bouwe. *Multiplicity: An Approach Through Visual Communication*. Amsterdam, Unpublished, 2008. 20-36.

↑ *Integration campaign for the municipality of Amsterdam, 2007. Design by Koeweiden Postma. Translation top: 'You want to decide along as well? Integration. Another word for participation.'*
Bottom left: 'You want to play along as well? Integration. Another word for participation.'
Bottom right: 'You want to work along as well? Integration. Another word for participation.'



Basic Health in Mexico

This campaign by the Mexican government was meant to inform indigenous communities about a basic health package. Anne Bush describes this example in her essay *Beyond Pro Bono* from 2003.⁶ Her student Erica Wong analysed the campaign during a seminar and found out why it was received poorly in the indigenous communities.

The poster shows a black and white image of a smiling indigenous boy with the words 'Basic health package'. Anne Bush: 'Wong discovered through interviews with the local communities that many people misunderstood the intention entirely.'

First of all, the boy is portrayed by himself. In rural communities people's self-image is often associated with the group; an isolated person looks sad and abandoned. Bush: 'The people in the village couldn't understand why he had been left alone.'

Second, black-and-white is a visual cliché of how indigenous communities are depicted by outsiders—as romantic and nostalgic. The community did not associate itself at all with this style of imagery. Bush: 'Many said that they initially overlooked the poster, because they thought it was an advertisement for tourism.' She notes, 'It [the image] differs greatly from the sense of colour and activity that is a part of everyday reality in rural Mexican communities.'

⁶ Image from discussed book, *Citizen Design*, by Steven Heller and Véronique Vienne.
⁶ Bush, Anne. 'Beyond Pro Bono'. In: *Citizen Design*, 25-28. Allworth Press, 2003.



Learning About Living

In 2006, design studio Butterfly Works and OneWorld UK developed an e-Learning platform about sexual health in Nigeria called 'Learning about Living'. It was developed for high school students in northern Nigeria in cooperation with the Nigerian Ministry of Education, parents, teachers, and students.

On the right, you can see the first design of the female character, which was based on photographs taken on location. When it was tested it turned out the way she wore the hijab indicated she was married. The left version was then made, which depicted an unmarried woman.⁷

Design studio Butterfly Works does projects in many different cultures and they have learned not to design without research and testing. They prefer to work with local design studios, while they organise the process. To create the designs, many iterations are made, each tested per region and adapted until they work.

⁷ Image: Butterfly Works, 2006. Learning About Living, Butterfly Works and OneWorld UK.
⁷ Interview with Merel van der Woude, Butterfly Works. Amsterdam, September 25, 2015.

Death by Photoshop

In George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the protagonist is a government employee in a totalitarian state. His job is to delete references from the media of people that have been arrested or killed, by rewriting news articles and altering photographs.

Orwell's dystopia became a reality in the Soviet Union in the 1940s, wherein deleting people from images and official records happened on a regular basis to enemies of the state.

Retouching photographs to remove people has not only been done by totalitarian regimes, but what makes these cases poignant is that the deleted persons in these examples had personal relations with the leaders that ordered to have them erased from history.



The Gang's Not There

After Mao's death in 1976, a memorial ceremony at Tiananmen square was held. In the official photography four Chinese Communist Part officials were removed, known as the Gang of Four, one of whom was Mao's wife. They were arrested one month after Mao's death when a power struggle erupted in the communist party.¹

↑ Image source: grancanariamaimenes.blogspot.nl/2014/03/mentiras-en-la-historia.html
 1. Farid, Hany. *Digital Image Forensics*. Dartmouth College, 2012.



The Deleter is Deleted

The left photo was taken in 1937 by the Moscow canal featuring Stalin in the centre and Nikolai Yezhov on the right. As head of the communist party internal affairs, Yezhov oversaw arrests and executions through falsifying evidence. When Yezhov himself fell out of Stalin's favour in 1940, he was executed and removed from archives.



Kim's Uncle

The second most powerful man in North Korea, Jang Song-Thaek, was found guilty of treason in 2013. Not only was he one of Kim Jong-un's closest advisors, he was also his uncle. He was abruptly accused of counter-revolutionary activities and executed.

The images are stills from the state documentary 'The Great Comrade'. The right images aired after his execution, and Jang Song-Thaek (circled in red) vanished by cropping and retouching.

↑ Image source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Yezhov.
 ↑ Image source: www.theguardian.com/global/gallery/2013/dec/09/kim-jong-uns-uncle-vanishes-from-documentary-footage-in-pictures.



↑ Time Magazine cover censored in Iran. From 'Censorship In the Republic', Harpers Magazine, August 29, 2013. Image by Anonymous. harpers.org/blog/2013/08/censorship-in-the-republic.

Body Blackout



It started with a fig leaf. Since then, censoring nudity has become more and more elaborate. In Iran and Saudi Arabia, strict Islamic laws prohibit the display of female nudity, including bare neck, arms, and legs. The religious police censor all media by using markers and tape to cover parts with such intimacy and nudity. Sometimes pages are just ripped right out.

Covering female nudity for reasons of chastity also happened at Wasatch High School in Utah in the United States. Female high school students whose yearbook photos were showing too much bare skin were censored. Similar to the practices of the religious police in Saudi Arabia and Iran, the pictures were edited manually.

Digitally censoring images of women is the new rage, as demonstrated by IKEA in 2010. The IKEA catalogue for Saudi Arabia was the same as in other countries, except that all women were digitally removed. After newspaper Metro exposed the news, the company apologised and said the actions did not 'reflect IKEA's values'.¹

↑ Student photo in yearbook at Wasatch High School, Utah. Image: KTSU Fox 13 Now.

→ Next page: screenshots www.ikea.com, top Swedish website, bottom Saudi Arabian website 2010.

1. Quinn, Ben. 'Ikea apologises over removal of women from Saudi Arabia catalogue.' *The Guardian*. October 2, 2012. www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/02/ikea-apologises-removing-women-saudi-arabia-catalogue.

vår nya designkollektion.

Du kan se hela kollektionen på ditt
IKEA varuhus eller på IKEA.se/PS



إيكيا® بي إس ٢٠١٢،
تشكيلتنا الجديدة من التصاميم.

للإطلاع على المجموعة كاملة،
لنظراً، زيارة معرض إيكيا أو الموقع IKEA.com.sa

Smooth Criminals



Once you start the rejuvenation process of a public figure, there is no going back. This coloured photograph of Mao is one of his most famous portraits. With the soft skin and the dark brown hair it is hard to believe he was 71 when the original was taken. But how much of it is real? The Metropolitan Museum of Art explains the photo was 'painstakingly retouched to project an image of flawless benevolence.'¹

1. Metropolitan Museum of Art Online Collection, Accession Number: 2011.368. [metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/296344](https://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/296344)



It is not just celebrities who take great care in displaying an image of physical perfection to the world. Once the face of the nation starts aging, all the stops are pulled out to revive the youthful appearance. This photo of Syrian president Assad from 2012 is airbrushed to give the forty-six-year-old leader a 'boyish' charm. The overzealous image technician even helped him get rid of his Adam's apple.

↑ Photo released by the Syrian official news agency SANA/AP.



↑ Advertisement for the Amsterdam store opening, 2012. Image copyright American Apparel.
 ➤ Félix Trutat, Reclining Bacchante, 1895.

It's a Man's World



We might assume that sexist stereotypes in advertising are something from the days of *Mad Men*, but in the male-dominated advertising industry, many brands still perpetuate sexist stereotypes, depicting women in degrading and sexualised roles. Men are often depicted as active and powerful, while women are passive, appearing as objects of desire. The way images of women are seen is rooted in the history of the nude painting, as John Berger explains in *Ways of Seeing*.¹

Until recently, the only ones who could collect and own oil paintings were men. Female nudes were painted for the enjoyment of male viewers. The criteria by which women were painted are similar to those used in advertising today. Women are shown as passive and sexually available, with the woman's body turned towards the viewer, her beauty offered to be consumed by him. Just imagine in the images on these pages how different they would look if it was a nude man instead of a nude woman taking the same pose.

As Berger explained, this tradition of nudes is not universal. In many art traditions, for instance in Indian art, Persian art, and African art, nakedness is not just to display a female body, but both men and women are depicted sexually, absorbed in each other.¹

1. Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, 1972. 39-41, 47.

Body Image

The beauty standards by which women are held in fashion and advertising are unattainable in real life, and can only exist by using digital manipulation. The body image that is being presented discourages the acceptance of realistic standards of beauty. A study from 2007 showed that only two percent of women around the world would describe themselves as beautiful.²

Digitally transforming bodies of women is the norm rather than the exception in fashion photography. In 2011, H&M used computer generated bodies with the heads of real models. 'It's not about ideals or to show off a perfect body, we are doing this to show off the garments', said a spokesperson from H&M.³

Companies that sell cosmetics, diet products, plastic surgery, and fitness programs profit from these unrealistic beauty standards. Advertising that is meant to make women, and increasingly also men, feel unhappy about their bodies, implying their image could be improved by using beauty products.⁴

'Real' Beauty

It was a cosmetic brand that introduced a more realistic image of beauty in 2007. Dove launched the 'campaign for real beauty', which featured women being comfortable with their not-so-anorexic bodies. The campaign was praised but also criticised at the same time. The image of beauty which Dove presented was certainly different from the dominant image in the cosmetic industry. However, the women featured in the ad still do not represent the average woman either, and are obviously selected for their beauty. Second, it still holds the assumption that beauty is the most important quality of women. Third, some pointed out the hypocrisy of Dove's parent company Unilever, whose other cosmetic brands sell Slimfast diet products, skin-whitening cream, and cellulite-firming cream.

Nonetheless, the Dove campaign provided an important contribution to the discussion on beauty standards. Jean Kilbourne, who does research on advertising said, 'Dove was—and still is—one of the only mainstream advertisers talking about how we define female beauty.'²

2. Bahadur, Nina. 'Dove "Real Beauty" Campaign Turns 10', *Huffington Post*, Jan. 21, 2014. www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/21/dove-real-beauty-campaign-turns-10_n_4575940.html
3. Considine, Austin. 'Invasion of the Head Snatchers', *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 2011. www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/fashion/hm-puts-real-heads-on-digital-bodies.html.
4. Reyes, Douglas. 'Media and Advertisement: the Power of Persuasion'. *Rutgers University Arts, Culture & Media blog*, 2014. imageryandculturespring2014.wordpress.com/2014/03/13/media-and-advertisement-the-power-of-persuasion.



↑ H&M website screenshots www.hm.com, 2011. Image copyright H&M.



↑ Ogilvy & Mather, 'Dove Campaign for Real Beauty', 2007. Image copyright Dove.

Responsible Images

Designers, advertisers, and photographers have to realise they have responsibilities when they depict men and women. Sexual stereotypes and unrealistic beauty standards cause harm to women and men, and are accomplice to plastic surgery, low self-esteem, and eating disorders. Men grow accustomed to a distorted image of female beauty and sexuality. The excuse 'sex sells' has been debunked by a study at Ohio State University from 2015. It was shown that consumers are less likely to buy a product if an ad has sexual content.⁵

Some brands show initiative in questioning beauty conventions and create new role models. The Dutch retail chain HEMA advertised a push-up bra shown by transgender model Andrej Pejic in 2011.



↑ Doom & Dickson, 'Andrej Pejic for HEMA'. Photo: Wendelien Daan, 2011. Campaign © HEMA.
 5. Lull, Robert B. and Brad J. Bushman. 'Do Sex and Violence Sell?' *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 141(6), Sep 2015, 1022-1048.

The New Maasai



If you are travelling in Kenya or Tanzania, you will probably visit a Maasai village and take photographs. Artist Jan Hoek noticed how the Maasai are always photographed the same: jumping in nature while wearing bright red traditional outfits and jewellery.

It is an 'authentic' image of Africa that photographers embrace. With no trace of modernity, frozen in pre-modern times. Jan Hoek recognises that many of the Maasai living in urban areas find the stereotypes less flattering. Instead of photographing Maasai in a different way, he talked with seven Maasai and asked them how they would like to see their own representation.

Whether a member of the Maasai community chooses to adopt a rural lifestyle, an urban lifestyle, or a mixture of both, Jan Hoek's project acknowledges that people represent themselves in a very different way than they are seen through the eyes of outsiders.

↑ Christopher Michel, 'Masai Mara', 2013. www.flickr.com/photos/cmichel/67/9906214614.

Maria (33 years) animal keeper



↑ 1st choice
Likes: silver and to be photographed happy and smiling
Doesn't like: sad photos
← 2nd choice



↑ 3rd choice

Mike
40 years
(business man)

likes: Masais photographed in a modern way
doesn't like: photos of legs masai

← 1st choice
2nd choice →



← 3rd choice



↑ Mike, Jan Hoek, 'New Ways of Photographing The New Masai, 2014.
← Maria, Jan Hoek, 'New Ways of Photographing The New Masai, 2014.

Fake Diversity

'Diversity is at the very core of our ability to serve our clients well and to maximise return for our shareholders', says Goldman Sachs on its website.¹ These sorts of statements can be found on the websites of almost all multinationals, usually accompanied by images of a smiling, multi-racial workforce. Three out of four of the largest companies in the U.S. had launched diversity programs by the end of the 1990s.² Nowadays, diversity of the workforce is considered a valuable asset that increases the net worth of a company.



- ↑ Northrop Grumman website, 2015. www.northropgrumman.com/CorporateResponsibility/Diversity.
 ↑ Central Ohio Diversity website, 2015. www.centralohiodiversity.org.
 ↗ Brochure University of Wisconsin-Madison 2001. Left: original photo, right: brochure cover.

How diverse are these companies really? It turns out many companies use the same photography with a calculated mix of races and genders, like they were picked from a spreadsheet. When we reverse search these photos it turns out they are stock photos that appear on many other websites. The image from the Lockheed Grumman website is also used for the Central Ohio Diversity Consortium, a British consulting firm, a South African recruiting office, and a French National Teacher training.



A Touch of Diversity

If stock photos are too generic for your taste, you can always create diversity with photoshop. In 2001, the University of Wisconsin-Madison photoshopped the face of a black student into a photograph of an all-white student crowd. Nancy Leong, a Law Professor at Denver University calls this 'racial capitalism': companies profiting on the image of minorities, while neglecting the hard work of building a more diverse company in the long run.³

A more diverse representation of society through images would be a welcoming step towards a more balanced visual communication, but diversity cannot be created by only using images.

1. Text from www.goldmansachs.com/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion/index.html
 2. McCormick, Kate. 'The Evolution of Workplace Diversity,' *State Bar of Texas*, 2007.
 3. Leong, Nancy. 'Fake Diversity and Racial Capitalism,' *Medium.com*, Nov.24, 2014 medium.com/@nancyleong/racial-photoshop-and-faking-diversity-b880e7bc5e7a#7z9pirjv



Some Cultures are Bigger than Others

Culture naturally moves across borders, but not all in equal measure. From the 1600s until the 1900s it was the Western European culture that declared itself superior, while other cultures were classified as being in earlier or less developed stages. Culture was seen as evolutionary, with the Western European culture at the top.

Anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) questioned this evolutionary idea of culture. He argued that culture develops through the interaction of people and ideas, and there is no process towards a 'higher' stage of culture. He argued that other cultures cannot be objectively judged, since we see them through the lens of our own culture.

Ideas of the evolution of culture have largely been abandoned, but centuries of cultural dominance and colonisation have left their trace, making white culture the reference point for art, ideas, science, and language, as argued by Robert Young in *Postcolonialism*.¹

In the cold war the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. used media to 'invade' countries—not with weapons but with culture, hoping that citizens would succumb to their politics. Some cultural critics have argued that even Disney characters like Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse have been used in Latin America for political purposes. The idea was that innocent cultural characters, such as those in cartoons, could subconsciously assimilate people to U.S. political ideas.²

Cross-cultural communication itself became a tool of cold war politics. In 1965, a U.S. Foreign Affairs committee spoke about the importance of anthropological research: 'The role of the behavioral sciences—what they can tell us about human attitudes and motivations, and how this knowledge can be applied to governmental undertakings designed to carry out the foreign policy of the United States—has been of keen interest to our subcommittee.'³

← Karl Grandin, 'Popular Revolution', 2009.

1. Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism*. Oxford University Press, 2003. 2-3.

2. Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 322.

3. Osgood, C.E., May, et al. *Cross-cultural Universals of Affective Meaning*. University of Illinois Press, 1975. 8.

The Family of Man



In the years after World War II, both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were using every means imaginable to convince other countries of their ideological superiority, even art exhibitions. One of these exhibitions was *The Family of Man*, a photography exhibition that became one of the first blockbusters, with over nine million visitors in eight years.

The exhibition was an idea by Edward Steichen, head of the photography department of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. He wanted to create a testament of unity, equality, and freedom for all people on earth. 503 photographs were selected from 69 countries, covering categories like birth, love, work, disease, and death.

The exhibition was new in its kind because it showed photography not as art, but as documentation. Steichen believed that photography could convey information as a universal language that all cultures could understand. The photographs were shown without any context—only the name of the photographer and the location was mentioned.

1. Hartmann, Celia. 'Edward Steichen Archive: The 55th Anniversary of The Family of Man', November 17, 2010. www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/11/17/edward-steichen-archive-the-55th-anniversary-of-the-family-of-man.

2. Sekula, Allan. 'The Traffic in Photographs'. *Art Journal* Vol. 41, No. 1, 1981. 20-21.

3. Cockcroft, Eva. 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War'. In: *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*. Harper & Row, 1985. 125.

The selection was anything but objective. Sixty percent of the photographers were from the U.S. and twenty-six percent from Europe. The photographs did not show any same-sex or interracial couples, emphasising the importance of the traditional family. The two photos on the left both depict families. The African family on the left is depicted in a rural setting, outside, while the family from the U.S. is depicted indoors with family photos on the wall. They are both a 'family of man', but one is obviously 'developed' and one is not.

The World Tour

After its opening in 1955, the *The Family of Man* went on a world tour with the MoMA international programme. For eight years the exhibition visited eighty-eight venues in thirty-seven countries on six continents.¹ Many locations were developing countries where the U.S. had vested interests.² Art, politics, and corporate interests went hand-in-hand during the tour. The entrance of the Johannesburg exhibition featured a large globe surrounded by Coca-Cola bottles.³ In Guatemala, the exhibition was shown only fourteen months after a U.S. backed coup had overthrown the democratically-elected government. A junta was put in charge that protected U.S. corporate interests.

This Exhibition Was Brought to You by the CIA

The foreign showings of the exhibition were organised by the MoMA international programme and the United States Information Agency (USIA), a government agency that spread U.S. political ideas using culture. The MoMA international programme had ties to the CIA, and had been involved before in using culture as propaganda, demonstrated by Eva Cockcroft in *Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War*.³

The Family of Man promoted the values of the West by showing that freedom and the inclusion of all cultures and religions was an alternative to the closed and strict ideology offered by the Soviets. The USIA felt that audiences were more receptive to the message if they did not recognise it as propaganda. The millions that visited the *The Family of Man* exhibition were under the impression this was a normal photography exhibition about the universal values of humanity.

The Family of Man was one of the most popular exhibitions ever staged, and in 2003 it was awarded a UNESCO status in recognition of its historic value. It is on permanent display in Luxembourg.

κ Catalogue of the exhibition. Mason, Jerry. 'The Family of Man', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955. Photo: Ruben Pater. Photographs on spread, left: Nat Farman (U.S.), right: Nina Leen (U.S.).

Cultural Thievery

While plagiarism is widely discussed amongst graphic designers, cultural appropriation is hardly mentioned. The term is commonly used to describe the appropriation of cultural elements without permission, usually elements from a marginalised culture that are appropriated by a dominant culture.

A well-known example is the brand Urban Outfitters, which in 2009 designed a 'Navajo' range of items, using patterns 'inspired' by Navajo textiles.¹ The Navajo are a Native American tribe in the U.S., and the company did not consult with the tribe beforehand, ask for permission, or share the profits that were made with the products.

Jaclyn Roessel grew up learning to weave on a Navajo reservation said, 'I wonder whether they understand that Navajo is even... a living culture... and that there are women today who wear outfits with these designs on them because they mean something.'²

Initially the brand refused to change the name or its products, but after increased pressure from social media in 2011, Urban Outfitters pulled its 'Navajo' products from the shelves.

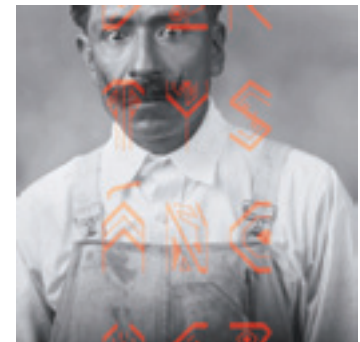
Cultural appropriation can also be found in type design. Type designer Johannes König published the *Mestizo* typeface in 2012. *Mestizo* means half-blood, and is a racial term used for someone of combined European and American Indian descent. König says the typeface 'is based on a strict grid system—but combines it with ethnic symbolism.'³ The design of the typeface is not related to Mestizo culture, and invented by the designer. The name and the photographs are merely a 'racial' backdrop, adding value to the design. This creates a false cultural image, since people might wrongfully assume the design is an expression of actual Mestizo culture in Latin America.

Cultural appropriation is criticised because elements from marginalised cultures are often not respected or celebrated in their original context. It is only when a dominant culture steals it, repackages it, and sells it, that it suddenly becomes widely accepted.

1. Keene, Adrienne. 'Urban Outfitters is Obsessed with Navajos.' *Native Appropriations*. September 23, 2011. nativeappropriations.com/2011/09/urban-outfitters-is-obsessed-with-navajos.

2. Rose, Jaimee. 'Neo-Navajo Fashion: Trend or Tradition?' *The Arizona Republic*. September 25, 2011. archive.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/2011/09/25/20110925neo-navajo-trend-or-tradition0925.html#ixzz3x7kQks2G. urban-outfitters-is-obsessed-with-navajos.html.

3. Text by Johannes König from www.behance.net/gallery/4661685/Mestizo-Volcano-Type.



↑ Left column: Urban Outfitters webshop, 2009. www.urbanoutfitters.com © Urban Outfitters.

↗ Right column: Mestizo typeface. Published by Volcano Type, 2012. © Design by Johannes König.

SYMBOLS AND ICONS

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Words Divide, Pictures Unite

Research by Asja Keeman

In the early 1920s, the Viennese philosopher Otto Neurath created a picture language called The International System of Typographic Pictures (ISOTYPE). It used graphic symbols to communicate information to a multilingual audience. 'Pictures whose details are clear for everybody, are free from the limits of language: they are international', according to Neurath.¹ The design of the ISOTYPE icons was achieved by techniques that became a standard in the design of icons in the following decades, the use of silhouettes and the elimination of detail. One of the principles of ISOTYPE was that its simplified form would allow all layers of society to understand the information.



Neurath believed that ISOTYPE communicated in a neutral and objective manner. This neutrality however, only existed in the formal execution of the symbols. Information was reduced for optimal visual reading, using selection and categorisation. Symbols were arranged horizontally and vertically, which suggest the notion that all symbols were of equal value, ignoring differences in race, gender, and culture.

We should remember that ISOTYPE was a European invention during the time of European colonialism. Only then it becomes clear

¹ Signs for the Five groups of men (detail), Gerd Arntz, 1928-1936. Image: Gerd Arntz archive.

1. Neurath, Otto. *International Picture Language: The First Rules of Isotype*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1936.

that the rhetoric of ISOTYPE as 'objective' and 'neutral' simply meant they represented European colonial standards. In the visual examples non-European countries are grouped and categorised as 'other'. Races are reduced to five, with the white race first, and the non-white races as secondary, depicted as dark, shirtless, and with traditional attire.

Evidently ISOTYPE was not neutral or objective, but the technical quality and the consistency had a strong influence on both icon design and information design during the following decades.



¹ Symbol Dictionary compiled between 1928 and 1940, Otto Neurath, 1939.

Appropriating Peace

Research by Asja Keeman

Why are some symbols popular and others not? Type designer Adrian Frutiger argued this had more to do with strong graphic effect than its historic references.¹ Famous examples are the swastika and the skull, symbols whose meaning has changed significantly over time.

The peace symbol was designed by British textile designer Gerald Holtom in 1958 for the British anti-nuclear movement. Its design was based on the flag signals for the letters N and D (from nuclear disarmament), and it also symbolised a person in despair.¹ Through its use in the anti-Vietnam and 'ban the bomb' protests in the 1960s and 1970s it grew to be one of the most popular symbols ever created.²

The downward fork shape has a striking simplicity, and Holtom was not the first one to use it. In the Runic alphabet the symbol means death. During World War II the Runes were revived by Nazi Germany and used to, among other things, signify army units. This is how decades before the peace symbol was designed, it was found on tanks in German tank divisions for anything but peaceful purposes.

In the 1960s when the peace symbol became popular in Europe, its history came back to bite it. Some people objected to its use because of its Nazi history, but by then it had become too popular.³ Again in 1973 the peace symbol caused controversy in South Africa when it was used during anti-Apartheid protests, and was subsequently banned as a symbol by the Apartheid regime.

More recently in 2006 in the United States, two inhabitants of Denver were forced to remove a peace symbol because neighbours found it anti-Christian. They interpreted the downward fork as a downward cross, a symbol of satanism. No matter how simple and strong a symbol, its adaptation, resemblance, or appropriation can completely change its meaning.

← Ban the bomb protest in Toronto, 1961. Photograph: Frank Grant for Toronto Telegram. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC08191.

1. Frutiger, Adrian. *Signs and Symbols: Their Design and Meaning*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989. 223.
2. Westcott, Kathryn. 'World's Best-known Protest Symbol Turns 50.' *BBC News*. March 20, 2008. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7292252.stm
3. Heller, Steven. 'The Magic of the Peace Symbol.' *The Design Observer*. March 24, 2008. designobserver.com/feature/the-magic-of-the-peace-symbol/6707.



Logotypes and Archetypes

If you live in an urban environment you can probably recognise more logotypes than bird species. Many logo designs are based on elementary shapes like the circle, the triangle, the arrow, the cross, and the square. These same shapes can be traced back as far as the stone age and are found in caves all around the world.

The circle was used to symbolise the sun, the moon, and the cycles and seasons in nature.¹ The square symbolises an enclosed space. It is also an old Chinese symbol for the outer points of the earth.¹ The arrow comes from hunter and gatherer cultures. The aiming of the arrow made it the international symbol for direction.² The cross was used by the Egyptians as the hieroglyph of life or living before it was adopted as a Christian symbol.

Symbols may have similar origins, but the way they are perceived is very culturally dependent. In *Design Writing Research*, Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller mention the research by Russian psychologist Luria from 1931. Luria took drawings of a circle, a triangle, and a square and showed it to inhabitants of remote villages in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The literate villagers would identify the abstract shapes as a circle, square, or triangle. But the illiterate villagers identified the shapes as specific objects. A circle was a plate, a bucket, or the moon, a square was a door, a mirror, or a house. This suggests visual literacy is related to script literacy.³

In *About Understanding* Andreas Fugelsang confirms that reading images is a skill that has to be taught. He says, 'This is not recognised because education in reading pictures is an informal process.' In societies where people are confronted with a large variety of images every day, this learning happens automatically. When there are very little or no images, the ability to read images could be less.⁴

1. Frutiger, Adrian. *Signs and Symbols: Their Design and Meaning*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989. 43, 46, 120

2. Finkel, Robert J. 'History of the Arrow.' *American Printing History Association*. April 1, 2015. printinghistory.org/arrow.

3. Lupton, Ellen, and J. Abbott Miller. *Design, Writing, Research: Writing on Graphic Design*. Phaidon Press, 1999.

4. Fugelsang, Andreas. *About Understanding*. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1982.



↑ Top row: cave symbols. Logos: The World Bank, National Geographic, Delta Air Lines, Elektra, Red Cross, Korean Airlines, MS Windows, Caterpillar, Citroën, Chevrolet, AT&T, Panamatics, Toblerone, Dutch Railways, German Air Force, BMW, Deutsche Bank, Mitsubishi, British Rail, Swiss Air, Pepsi, NeXT, Qantas, Kodak, Blue Cross, Accelrys, DTPS Framework, Palace Skateboards, Chevron, Patek Philippe, Konica Minolta, HDFC Bank, Avery Dennison, Geveke, Bayer.

Artist Jan Rothuizen takes a close look at the UNHCR logo.

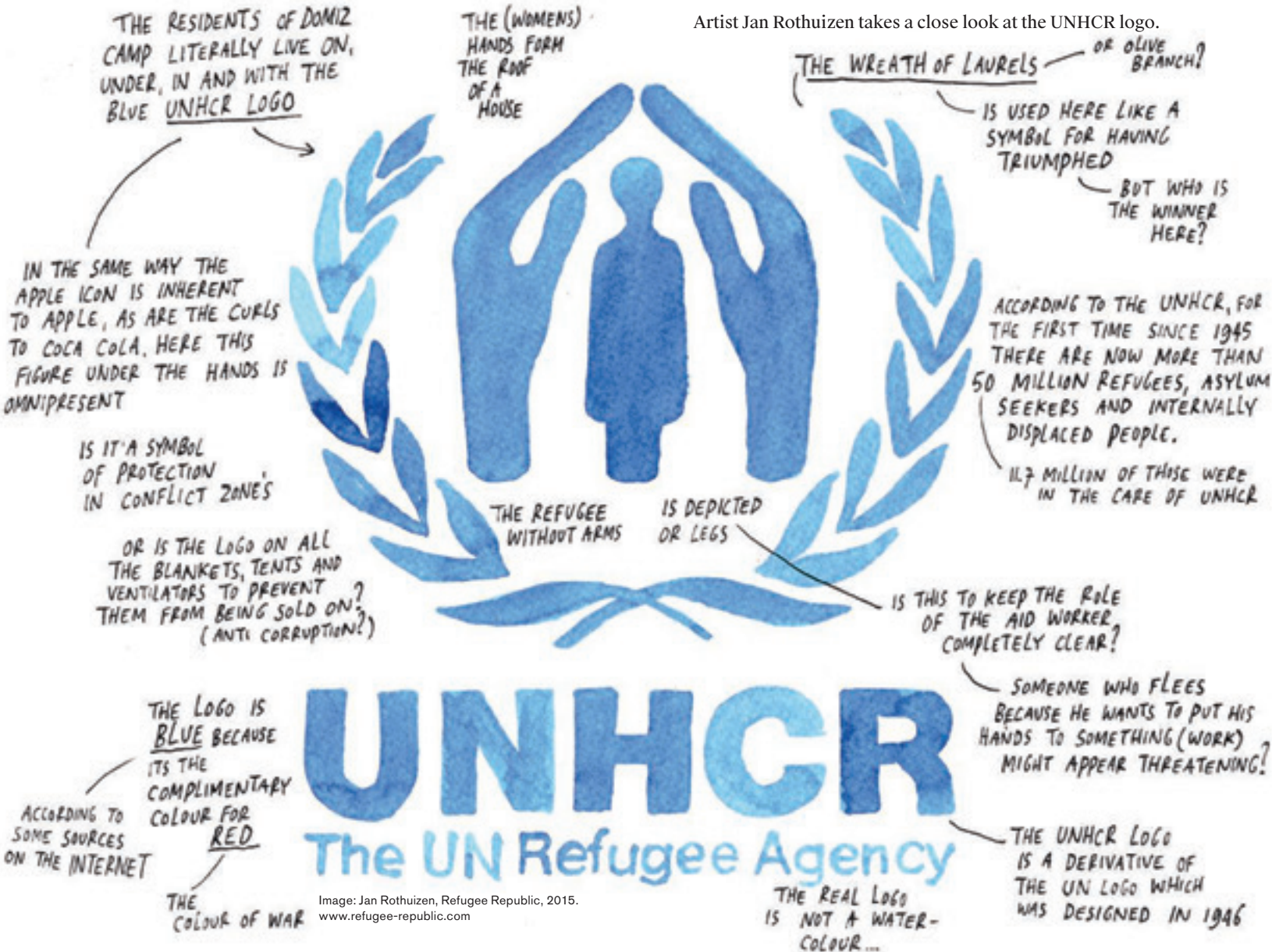


Image: Jan Rothuizen, Refugee Republic, 2015. www.refugee-republic.com

Able or Disabled



The wheelchair symbol is usually associated with disabled parking spaces, but in fact less than 1% of all disabled people use a wheelchair.¹ This is unfortunate for the majority of disabled people without wheelchairs, who are frowned upon when parking in the disabled zone. Disability is much more common than you would expect: 15.3% of the world population has a moderate or severe disability.²

The design of the international symbol of disability was developed during a design contest held in 1968. The winner was designer Susanne Koefoed, and her design is the basis for the icon which is used today. It was not immediately introduced since it still needed a head. Karl Montan optimised the symbol in 1969 and it was adopted as an ISO international standard.

Various organisations have criticised the wheelchair icon as a stereotype which does not reflect the different forms of disability. Furthermore, it is a misunderstanding that disability is a permanent condition, as if the world can be divided into the abled and disabled. In reality, disability happens to many of us at some point in our lives, and is often a temporary or dynamic state.²

Designers Sara Hendren and Brian Glenney created an alternative to the icon in 2013 with the *Accessible Icon Project*.³ The person drives her/himself instead of the more passive original. Despite their efforts, the logo from 1969 remains the international standard. And even though their icon is a huge improvement, it is still a wheelchair.

↑ Icon evolution: 1968 Susanne Koefoed, 1969 Karl Montan, 2013 Sara Hendren & Brian Glenney.

1. World Health Organisation, *Fact Sheet 532*, December 2015.

2. Ellis, Katie, and Gerard Goggin. *Disability and the Media*. Palgrave, 2015. 5-7.

3. More at www.accessibleicon.org.

Icons of Inequality

In the world of signing it is always 1974, the year when the symbols were designed for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The symbols became a worldwide standard after adoption by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).¹ The U.S. design association, AIGA, says the icons 'are an example of how public-minded designers can address a universal communication need.'

The icons known as ISO 7001, have been implemented in signing around the world, but they are by no means 'universal'. The icon for restaurant is a knife and fork, hardly a standard in every country. The parking symbol uses the Latin alphabet 'P' of an English word.²



Men are Doctors, Women are Nurses

In the world of ISO 7001, men are the rule and women the exception. The male icon is used for both a male and a gender neutral person, while the female icon is only used to specify the female gender. The most prominent example of signage sexism is the tickets symbol which shows a man buying a ticket from a woman at a service desk.

In 2005 the University of Aveira in Portugal surveyed 49 signage systems to find out to what extent the female gender was underrepresented. Of the 722 icons, 360 were male and 87 were female. Female symbols only outnumbered male ones when the person was accompanying a child. Icons that depicted professions affirmed stereotypes: the doctors would be male and the nurses female.¹

↑ Symbol Signs, U.S. department of Transportation, 1974. Design: Roger Cook and Don Shanosky

1. Bessa, Pedro. 'Skittish Skirts and Scanty Silhouettes. The Tribulations of Gender in Modern Signage' *Visible Languages 42*, no. 2 (2008): 119-42.

2. Trueheart, Charles. 'Sign Language: At Their Best, Pictograms Tell Us Clearly Where to Go and What to Do; At Their Worst, Things Can Get Interesting.' *American Scholar 77*, no. 1 (2008): 18.

Towards Gender-Neutral Symbols

In 2007 the city of Vienna launched the campaign *Wien sieht's anders* (Vienna sees it differently), that aimed to reverse gender stereotypes in the city's signage. A nappy changing facility showed a father and a child, instead of a mother and child. Icons where the male figure is a default, like the emergency exit and road work, became a female figure. Although some argue by over-emphasizing female features the road work sign becomes a female caricature in itself.



What about the icons of our new 'public' spaces? When designer Caitlin Winner started her job at Facebook, she noticed the icons were gender biased. The friends icon featured a man in the front with a man and woman behind him. She says, 'The woman was quite literally in the shadow of the man, she was not in a position to lean in.'³ She decided to take it upon herself to design a set of gender neutral icons. She did not only look at the hierarchy between male and female, she also designed silhouettes that could apply to various gender types. They are now adopted as the new standard icons.



↑ Vienna signage, 2007, Werbung zum Otttarif, by order of the City of Vienna. Design: Chrigel Ott

↑ Old and new Facebook group icon. Image: Caitlin Winner © Facebook.

3. Winner, Caitlin. 'How We Changed the Facebook Friends Icon—Facebook Design.' *Medium*. July 7, 2015. medium.com/facebook-design/how-we-changed-the-facebook-friends-icon-dc8526ea9ea8.

From Aliens to Ancestors

Can symbols communicate to alien civilisations? NASA tried it in 1972, when an engraved aluminium plaque was placed on the Pioneer spacecraft. Astronomer Carl Sagan designed a series of diagrams of the earth's location, the spacecraft's itinerary, a hydrogen atom, and a drawing of a naked woman and man.

Carl Sagan was invited again by NASA in 1977 to create a message for the Voyager spacecraft. His team came up with a golden record that contained 116 images and a variety of sounds. A diagram on the front explained the earth's location and instructions on how to play the record.

The diagrams, which are featured on the next page, could probably not even be deciphered by most humans today, and young people would not know how to use a record player. However, the idea was that alien civilizations could study it for decades, even centuries, before deciphering the message.

Warning Posthumans

Can symbols be used to warn future humans? Nuclear waste will remain radioactive for the next 24,000 years. In 1990, a group of scientists was put together to design warning signs for a nuclear waste facility in the New Mexico desert. Carl Sagan suggested to mark the site with a skull and bones. However, the meaning of the skull has changed significantly over centuries. The earliest skull and bones was a symbol of rebirth, and later it was a symbol for piracy.¹

Using only language was initially rejected for the same reason. The English language is around 1200 years old, but the English that was used then is incomprehensible to English speakers today.² The team's advice was to use pictograms and warning messages in multiple languages. It was decided to build an information centre with eight-metre-high granite slabs inscribed in seven languages, with room left to add future languages.²

↓ Symbols on the golden record on the spacecraft Voyager I and II, 1977.

↘ Symbols found in the caves of Lascaux, 18,000 BC. Delluc, Brigitte, and Gilles Delluc. *Discovering Lascaux*. Sud Ouest, 2006.

Learning from Cave Paintings

Trying to communicate to aliens and future humans pushes the limits of our cognitive abilities. Artist Trevor Paglen makes a comparison with our attempts to understand the cave paintings in Lascaux in France: 'Cave paintings, or even things like pyramids or the Moai of Easter Island, are deeply strange artefacts to us—so strange, in fact, that some of the most popular shows on TV are about trying to "uncover their mysteries."¹

In fact, new mysteries are still being found in cave paintings. In 2010, paleoanthropologist Genevieve von Petzinger discovered reoccurring symbols that could indicate some sort of symbolic language. Similar basic symbols have been found in other caves, as far away as South Africa.

New Horizons

The newest project to communicate to aliens is already under way. Jon Lomberg, who worked on the golden record in 1977, proposed a version 2.0 for the New Horizons spacecraft, which was launched in 2006. People from around the world can send in messages, images, sounds, and video, which will be streamed digitally from the spacecraft once it passes Pluto. This crowdsourced stream of communication from earth will be edited by Lomberg and NASA to ensure no inappropriate messages make the selection.

In the meantime, Voyager I and II have left our solar system, and the golden record is the manmade object farthest-away from Earth. The records will not be out of service anytime soon since they are made to last a billion years.

Trevor Paglen sums up what this all means: 'To design a message for the figure of the alien-alien is by definition impossible; doing so would mean being able to think radically unhuman thoughts, and to imagine beyond the limits of human imagination.'⁴

1. 'Designing a Nuclear Warning Symbol That Will Still Make Sense in 10,000 Years.' *Slate* May 14, 2014. www.slate.com/blogs/the_eye/2014/05/14/_99_percent_invisible_by_roman_mars_designing_warning_symbols_for_the_nation.html.
2. Wagner, Steve. 'Introduction to WIPP Passive Institutional Controls', Presentation. *Sandia National Laboratories*, February 27, 2012.
3. Thompson, Nato. 'The Last Pictures: Interview with Trevor Paglen.' *e-flux*, 2012. www.e-flux.com/journal/the-last-pictures-interview-with-trevor-paglen.
4. Paglen, Trevor. 'Friends of Space, How Are You All? Have You Eaten Yet?' Or, Why Talk to Aliens Even If We Can't." *Afterall Journal*, Issue 32, 2013. www.afterall.org/journal/issue.32/friends-of-space-how-are-you-all-have-you-eaten-yet-or-why-talk-to-aliens-even-if-we-can-t.

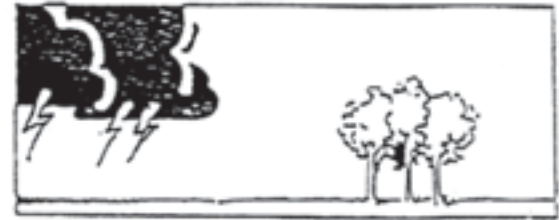
Reading Images

How does one learn about cultural differences through images? This test was made to explain visual cultural differences to volunteers in the Netherlands that give language lessons to newcomers.

Which facial expression fits the expression 'the shadow side of life' best?



Describe the development you see here in a short sentence, using the words trees and thunder.



In the first image people from colder climates might be inclined to choose the right expression, as shadow is considered cold and less pleasant. People from hot climates would perhaps choose the left one, since shadow is seen as something that is cooling and positive.

In the second example, a person that reads from left-to-right would say 'the thunder is coming towards the trees', but someone who reads from right-to-left would say 'the thunder is moving away from the trees'. These examples show how culture influences not just the reading of text, but also the reading of symbols.

[↑] Image and text from: *Introductiecurcus voor vrijwilligsters van het Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact*. Amsterdam, January 2015.

Voting for a Clock or an Airplane

In today's society, it might be hard to realise that illiteracy is still widespread. In Afghanistan, only one in three people can read and write, and in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, half of the population is illiterate. UNESCO believes literacy can be eradicated by 2030, but until that time, we should keep in mind that 757 million people worldwide are ignored by the majority of visual communication.¹

In India 25% of the population is illiterate, which makes the design of an election ballot a challenge. Parties in India have designed symbols to which people can cast their vote. The Election Commission has hundreds of symbols from which parties can choose, but they may propose a symbol as well. Examples are an umbrella, a hand, a lotus, or a car, but also the hammer and sickle.

Some African countries with high illiteracy rates use portraits,² but elections in India can have eighteen candidates or more, which invites confusion over who is who. In the 1990s, Brazil used numbers for voting, but illiterate people have trouble with numbers larger than one digit.² Symbols work because they can be communicated on TV; they are distinct, simple, and easy to remember.

Voters in Afghanistan also vote using symbols. In the 2013 election, parties could pick their symbol, which led to some interesting choices. Qutbuddin Helal, whose jihadist political faction has been charged with many human-rights abuses, chose the scales of justice as a symbol for his political party.³

Symbols do not necessarily simplify the election process. They are used in addition to the candidate name, number, and portrait. India has twenty-two official languages, so even if illiteracy is eradicated, the symbols provide an invaluable visual aid to ballot design.

← India ballot form, 2014. Image: Election Commission of India, March 2015.

1. Adult and Youth literacy, *UNESCO Institute of Statistics*. Fact Sheet No. 32, September, 2015.
2. 'Making Their Mark.' *The Economist*. April 5, 2014. www.economist.com/news/international/21600162-teaching-those-who-cannot-read-how-vote-makes-cleaner-fairer-elections-making-their.
3. Bezhani, Frud. 'Will The Next Afghan President Be A Pen, Radio, Or Bulldozer?' *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*. October 23, 2013. www.rferl.org/content/afghan-voting-symbols/25146119.html.

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9- Krishnagiri-P.C.2014-Genl.

அணுகல் - I

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| 1. | அசோக்குமார், கே.
அசீக் குமார், தே.
அதலேசு குமார், சீ. |  |  |
| 2. | சான்பாஷா, எம்.
சான்ஹாஷா, எம்.
சான்ஹாஷா, எம். |  |  |
| 3. | சிண்ண பில்லப்பா, பி.
சிந்நிபில்லப்பா, பி.
சிந்நிபில்லப்பா, பி. |  |  |
| 4. | செல்லக்குமார், டாக்டர். அ.
செல்லக்குமார், டாக்டர். அ.
செல்லக்குமார், டாக்டர். அ. |  |  |
| 5. | செட்டி, என்.எஸ்.எம்.
செட்டி, என்.எஸ்.எம்.
செட்டி, என்.எஸ்.எம். |  |  |
| 6. | சுந்தரம், எஸ்.
சுந்தரம், எஸ்.
சுந்தரம், எஸ். |  |  |
| 7. | மணி, ஜி.கே.
மணி, ஜி.கே.
மணி, ஜி.கே. |  |  |
| 8. | முனிராஜ், தே.
முனிராஜ், தே.
முனிராஜ், தே. |  |  |
| 9. | அசோக்குமார், எ.
அசீக் குமார், எ.
அதலேசு குமார், எ. |  |  |

16. மேற்காணும் நபர்களில்
எவருயில்லை
பின் கீழ்க்கண்ட விவரங்கள்
படித்துக் கொள்ளுங்கள்.

NOTA

Offensive Athletics

Team names and their mascots play an important role in sports, and fans feel deeply connected to them. When organisations ask for a change to a team name or mascot because it is offensive, it is received with a heated response. Washington Redskins owner Daniel Snyder said in 2013, 'We'll never change the name, it is that simple'.

No other ethnic group in U.S. sports is portrayed in such a stereotypical manner as Native Americans. The cultural appropriation of Native American names and mascots started in the first half of the twentieth century when racism was institutionalised by law. In 1932, the federal 'Civilisation Regulations' was still in effect, confining Native Americans to reservations, banning all Native dances and ceremonies, confiscating Native cultural property, and outlawing much of what was traditional in Native life.¹

During this time of institutional racism, sports teams with Native American names and mascots were very popular. None of them did have any Native Americans on their roster, and the logos that depicted Native Americans as savages or heathens were designed with little knowledge or appreciation for tribal customs or reality.²

Many of these 1930s stereotypes were kept in place well into the 1990s when pressure from Native American organisations led the first teams to change names and mascots. Still more than 2,129 sports teams use Native American names and imagery today, most of which are educational institutes like high schools and universities that have educational responsibilities within their communities.³

Ethnic stereotypes are harmful because they prevent a wider audience to understand the history and cultural reality of the represented group. As a rule, designers should avoid the caricaturisation or stereotyping of a culture, race, or nationality other than their own.

1. Tracy, Marc. 'The Most Offensive Team Names in Sports: A Definitive Ranking', *The New Republic*, October 9, 2013. newrepublic.com/article/115106/ranking-racist-sports-team-mascots-names-and-logos.

2. King, C. Richard. *The Native American Mascot Controversy*. Bowman & Littlefield. 2010. 9

3. Munguia, Hayley. 'The 2,128 Native American Mascots People Aren't Talking About.' *FiveThirtyEight*. September 5, 2014. fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-2128-native-american-mascots-people-arent-talking-about.

← Images top left to bottom right: Washington Redskins, NFL team logo, 1972-present. Atlanta Braves, MLB mascot Chief Noc-A-Homa, 1950's-1986. Coachello Valley Arabs, high school team logo, 1910-2014. Frölunda Indians, hockey team logo, Göteborg, Sweden, 1970's—present. Cleveland Indians, MLB mascot Chief Wahoo, 1951-present. Chicago Blackhawks, NHL team logo, 1937-1955, and 1991-present. St.John's Redmen, college basketball mascot Chief Blackjack, 1928-1994.



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Colonialism and Cartography



In November 2014, the Russian invasion of the Ukrainian peninsula, Crimea, became a virtual battlefield on Google maps. Initially Google maps displayed Crimea as a disputed area with a dotted border. After pressure from the Russian government, Google was forced to change it, so people in Russia now see it as Russian territory on Google maps. Outside Russia it is still marked as a disputed area.

The notion that maps provide an objective or scientific depiction of the world is a common myth. The graphic nature of maps simplifies reality, giving makers and users a sense of power without social and ecological responsibilities. Details like the colouring of areas or the different sizes in typography can have great political consequences. For example, when names of towns are omitted from map, it can imply

↑ World map with the British Empire highlighted in red, Mercator projection. Author: Colomb, J. C. R. Publisher: MacClure & Co. Date: 1886. Location: Great Britain. Image: commons.wikimedia.org.

that the area is not of interest, while adding names, details, and other information suggests it is an area of importance.

Mapmaking is a very old trade, but modern cartography originated in the age of European colonialism. Maps were indispensable for ships to navigate the oceans, and they legitimised the conquest of territories. Sometimes just mapping a newly found territory was enough to conquer it, without having to step ashore or have any knowledge of the indigenous population and history.

Even the fact that we put north on the top of the map is a result of the economic dominance of Western Europe after 1500. A map does not have a privileged direction in space. After all, the earth has no up or down, and no geographical centre.¹

The best way to depict the world is by showing a globe, but since a sphere can never show the entire world, translations to a flat surface are needed. The ways in which a sphere can be translated to a flat surface is called a projection. There is no such thing as the best or most accurate projection, since no curved surface can be projected without distortion.² In the next pages we will look at the best known examples.

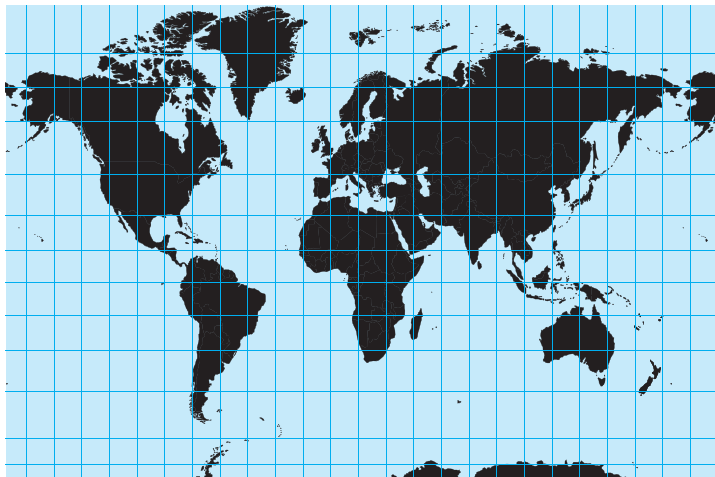


↑ Chinese world map with China in the centre. Source: hongkong-expat.over-blog.com.

1. Turnbull, David, and Helen Watson. *Maps Are Territories: Science Is an Atlas*. University of Chicago Press, 1993. 6.

2. Turnbull and Watson, 8.

The Colonialist World Map



Having been labelled 'colonial', 'evil', and 'false', the Mercator map is a monstrosity that just won't go away. It was probably used in your geography class, and it is the standard projection for Google maps, Bing maps, and Apple maps. The Mercator map was drawn in 1569 by the cartographer Gerardus Mercator for nautical purposes, using compass directions as straight lines. This stretches the northern and southern poles upward, making Africa and South America appear too small. Australia looks smaller than Greenland but is actually more than three times as large.³ The Mercator map gives us a sixteenth century world view because it shows Europe larger, and the colonised countries smaller. Arno Peters criticised it in 1973 by saying, 'it over-values the white man and distorts the picture of the world to the advantage of the colonial masters of the time.' You should not use the Mercator map unless you have no other choice.

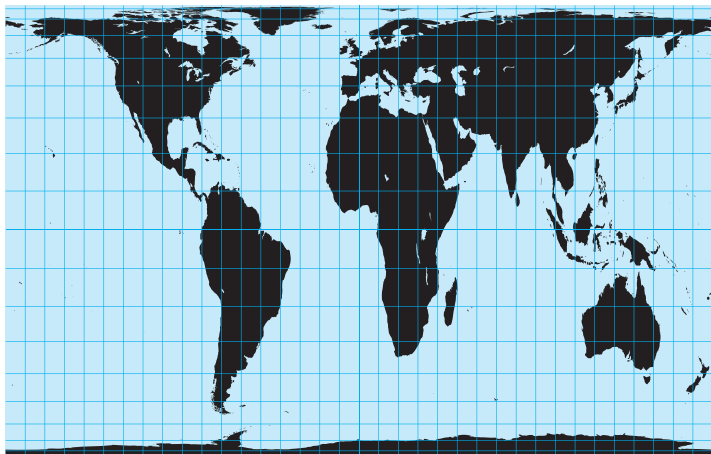
3. Turnbull and Watson, 5.

The Safest Choice World Map



A world map is a projection of a three-dimensional space on a flat plane. These either distort the distance, direction, or area size, and mapmakers have to choose which they find the most important. Some maps are better for compass direction, and some show a more accurate area size. The Winkel Tripel is a world map created in 1921 by the German cartographer Oswald Winkel, who tried to minimise the distortion of all three properties, hence the name Winkel Tripel (or Winkel III). It was fairly obscure until 1998, when the National Geographic Society announced that the Winkel Tripel was to be the preferred projection. Since then many schoolbooks and educational institutes have followed suit. The Winkel Tripel still has some distortion on the North and South poles, but it does a better job than many others. For an accurate depiction of the world, the Winkel Tripel projection is a safe choice.

The Politically Correct World Map



When the German filmmaker Arno Peters criticised the Mercator map in 1973 for being colonial, he also presented a more equal alternative. His solution was an equal representation of areas, so it could be used to compare the size of continents and countries. It turned out James Gall had done the same in 1855, and the map became known as the Gall-Peters map. Each area on the map represents an equal area of land. It might look strange to those who are used to the Mercator map, where Africa and South America are always depicted too small. The Gall-Peters map is considered one of the best world maps, and it is promoted by the United Nations as a standard and it is used in British schools. Its only flaw is that it distorts the shape of continents to make the areas equal. The arctic appears too flat, and the equator too tall. If you want a map that represents equal area size, this map is the politically correct choice.

The Best Designed World Map



Why do world maps always face north? Why do they need a certain continent in the centre? These are choices that are subject to cultural bias, and they are an unfortunate consequence of the mapmaking profession. That is why in 1943 the designer and inventor Buckminster Fuller designed a world map without top or bottom, left or right: The Dymaxion map. By dividing the map into twenty triangles it could be folded into a sphere-like icosahedron. This way the map could be viewed in a way preferable to the user, not just the way the mapmaker envisioned. Its only flaw is that Fuller was not a cartographer. By using a different longitude and latitude on each triangle the directions are seriously flawed, and areas over multiple triangles are distorted. The Dymaxion map might not be very useful for serious cartography, it does show all continents interconnected and offers a vision for a post-nationalist world. The 'one island earth', as Fuller called it.⁴

4. 'R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion World', *LIFE magazine*, March 1, 1943.

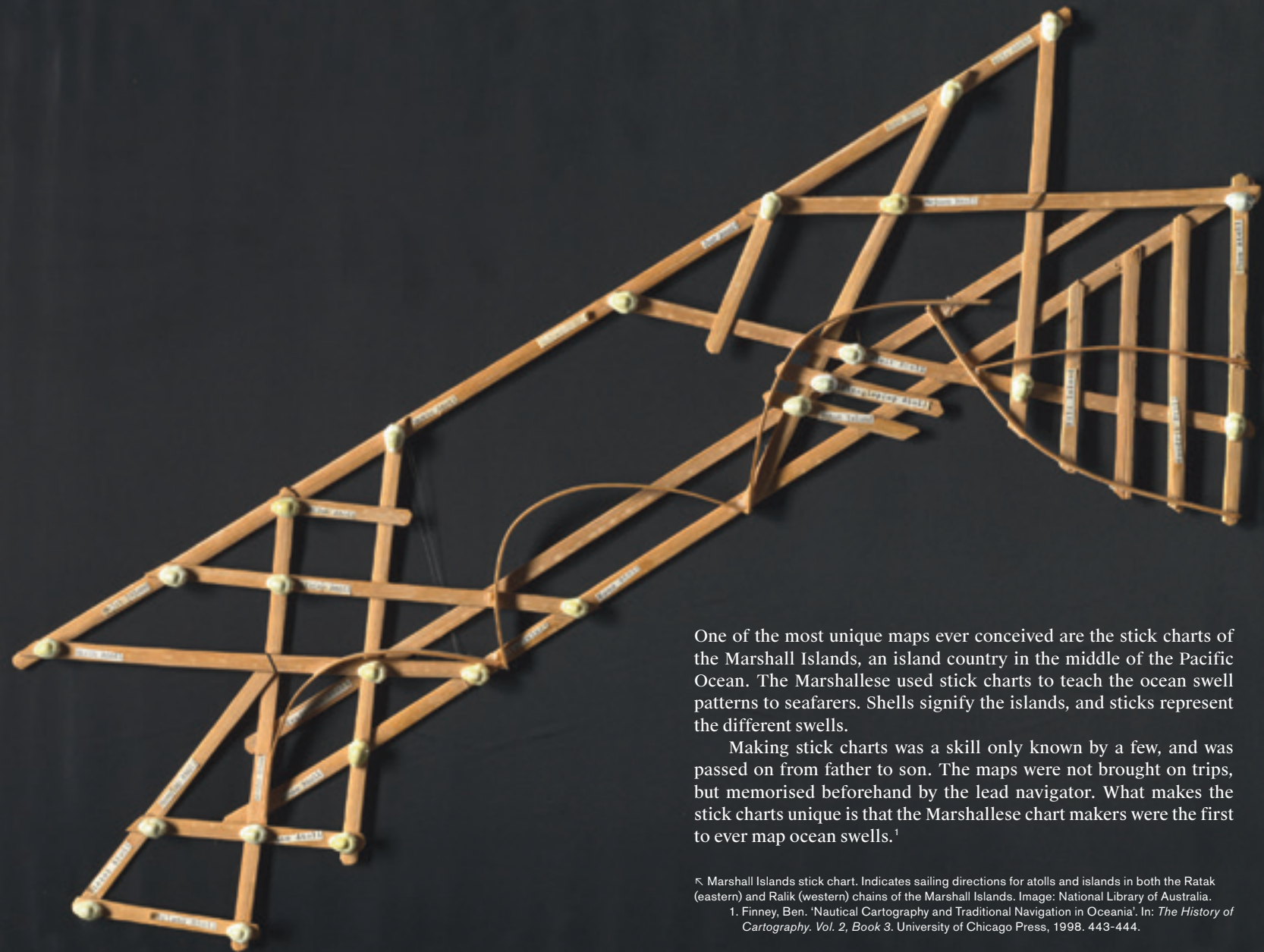
Maps and Legends

The indigenous peoples of the arctic are well-known for their design ingenuity. For many years the Ammasalik Inuit on the east coast of Greenland made wooden maps of coastlines that were not designed to be read, but to be felt. Using a size that could fit in your hand, and made of a material that would stay afloat, they were ideal for navigating the arctic darkness in a kayak. A practical and clever design that shows how maps can have many different forms and functions.¹



↑ Top map: Treecut mainland coastline map of the Greenlandic east coast from the peninsula between Sermiligak and Kangerdluarsikajik. Bottom map: Treecut island map of the Greenlandic east coast from Kangerdluarsikajik to Sieralik, 1885. Image: Greenland National Museum & Archives.

1. Woodward, David and G. Malcolm Lewis, *The History of Cartography. Vol. 2, Book 3*, University of Chicago Press, 1998. 168-169.



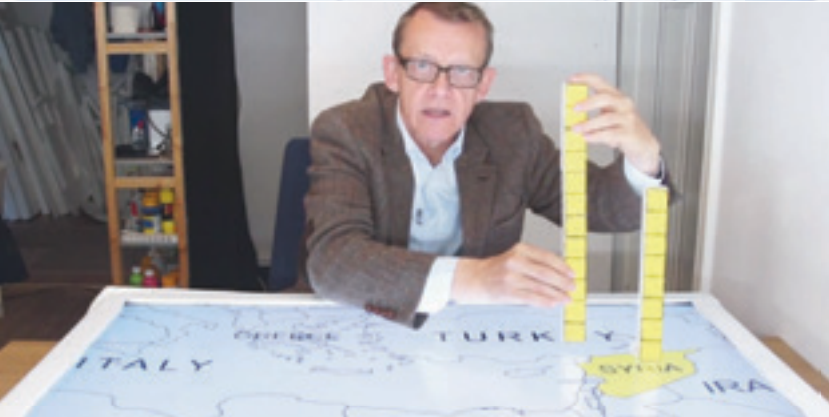
One of the most unique maps ever conceived are the stick charts of the Marshall Islands, an island country in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The Marshallese used stick charts to teach the ocean swell patterns to seafarers. Shells signify the islands, and sticks represent the different swells.

Making stick charts was a skill only known by a few, and was passed on from father to son. The maps were not brought on trips, but memorised beforehand by the lead navigator. What makes the stick charts unique is that the Marshallese chart makers were the first to ever map ocean swells.¹

↵ Marshall Islands stick chart. Indicates sailing directions for atolls and islands in both the Ratak (eastern) and Ralik (western) chains of the Marshall Islands. Image: National Library of Australia.

1. Finney, Ben. 'Nautical Cartography and Traditional Navigation in Oceania'. In: *The History of Cartography. Vol. 2, Book 3*. University of Chicago Press, 1998. 443-444.

Mapping Migration



In 2015, during the Syrian civil war, millions of Syrians fled to neighbouring countries and Europe. The sheltering of refugees led to debate and political turmoil in Europe. These are two attempts to explain the flow of refugees using information graphics.

On this page you can see the interactive map made by Lucify that shows the flow of refugees to Europe. Each dot represents 20 to 25 refugees, based on UNHCR data. On the scale of the map, the size of the dots and their traces make the numbers seem overwhelmingly large in relation to the size of Europe. Also the map leaves out refugees that were given asylum in the Middle East, which suggests that all of the refugees came to Europe.

In reality the refugees that are sheltered in the Middle East is 48 times higher those in Europe, which is shown on the left in a video by Gapminder. Wooden blocks are used to show the number of refugees in Europe compared to those in the Middle East. These examples show you can tell two completely different stories with the same data.

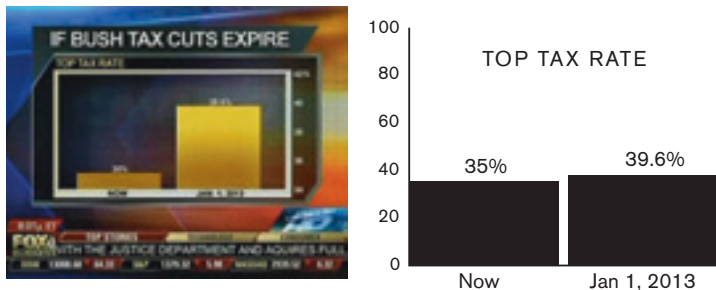
↑ Lucify, 'The Flow Towards Europe', 2015. Source: www.lucify.com.

← Gapminder, 'Where are the Syrian Refugees?', 2015. Source: youtu.be/0_QrlapiNOw.

Misinformation Graphics

Thanks to Vincent Meertens

A graph can be very effective to make a visual argument. Even without falsifying data, there are many ways to manipulate or influence the interpretation of the viewer. Lying by using information graphics can be done purposefully to deceive or manipulate an opinion, but every so often it is a consequence of the designer who is too focused on the design and less on the content. Designer Edward R. Tufte, the authority on information graphics, wrote extensively about the integrity of data visualisation.



Shortening the Axis

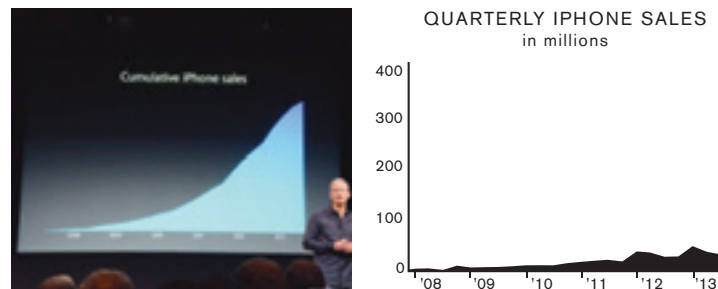
The simplest way of influencing data visualisation is to mess with the scales. By leaving out the bottom part of the graph, the effects of growth or decline are increased dramatically. The left graph was shown on Fox Business in 2012, which shows a sharp increase in the top tax rate from 35% to 39.6%. A closer look shows the bottom 34% and the top 60% of the scale are left out to increase the contrast. The right graph is the same but includes the bottom percentages starting at zero and goes up to 100. Using different scales, each graph shows a radically different picture of the same 4.6% difference.

↑ Fox Business, 2012. ↗ The same graph remade. Image by Ruben Pater

1. Yanofsky, David. 'The Chart Tim Cook Doesn't Want You to See'. *Quartz*. September 10, 2013. www.qz.com/122921/the-chart-tim-cook-doesnt-want-you-to-see/.

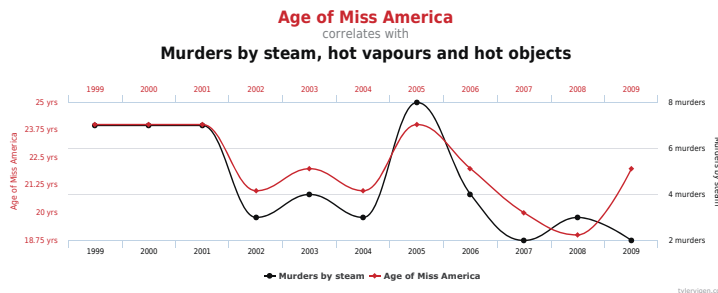
Cumulative Graphs

When the sale of iPhones was presented in 2013, the graph showed extraordinary growth in sales. The graph was cumulative, adding the sales of each year onto the previous year. The left graph is from the Apple presentation, the right made by David Yanofsky¹ based on Apple's own quarterly reports, showing sales have been dropping the last three quarters. The cumulative graph is a useful tool if you want to hide disappointing results, because it always shows an upward trend.



Correlation not Causality

Juxtaposing two unrelated data sets in a graph can create the illusion of causality. Tyler Vigen creates graphs that combine completely unrelated data sets with a remarkable similarity. For example the age of Miss America seems very related to murders by steam, hot vapours, and hot objects. His humorous approach shows how surprisingly easy it is to imply causality with graphs.



↑ Apple presentation, 2013. Image: The Verge. ↗ The same graph remade. Image by Ruben Pater
↑ Image: Tyler Vigen. www.tylervigen.com.



Colour Coded Maps

Data maps are often used in information graphics, but they can have some basic defects we should be aware of. This map from a Dutch newspaper shows the projected growth of non-Western first and second generation immigrant households in the Netherlands. It seems straightforward at first, but there are three problems with this graphic.

First of all, the map division is in municipalities, but measurements are done in towns and cities. Parts of the 2025 map that are marked black are in fact nature reserves or scarcely populated areas that influence the visual interpretation of the map.

Second, the map is coloured with tints between white and black, which present the highest possible contrast. Except the black represents only 12.5 % or more of the population, and white less than 5 %, making the contrast between the highest and lowest numbers appear larger than in reality. Third, the topic concerns non-Western immigrants. By choosing the high contrast, the graph becomes visually related to skin colour. The graph could be interpreted as, ‘the Netherlands is becoming more “black”’. These design choices are probably not intentional, but do influence its interpretation.

↑ NRC Handelsblad from June 14, 2007. © NRC. Translation, Title: ‘Non-Western immigrants also moving outside the large cities’; Inside title: ‘Percentage of non-Western immigrants per municipality. Situation 2005, Situation 2025 (prognosis)’.

Choosing a Graph Format

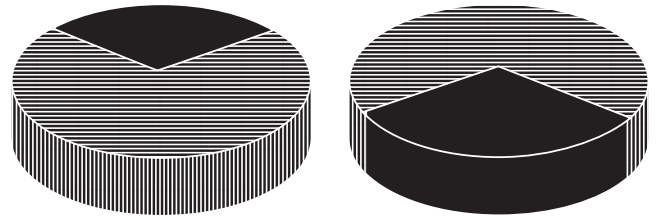
The type of graph also influences the interpretation of the viewer. For example, the same data will appear very different in a pie chart, a bar chart, or a line of icons. The bottom graphs show that the same information can tell a very different story in each format.



↑ 40% visualised in different graphs. Source: InfoNewt, LLC. 2016. Image: Ruben Pater.

Another Dimension

Depth can be added to graphs to make them more appealing, but this can influence the viewers’ interpretation. One trick to distort a graphic is by adding perspective without actually using it as a form of information. Like these pie charts, which both display the same division of 25%, but in the right graph the black area appears larger because of the perspective.

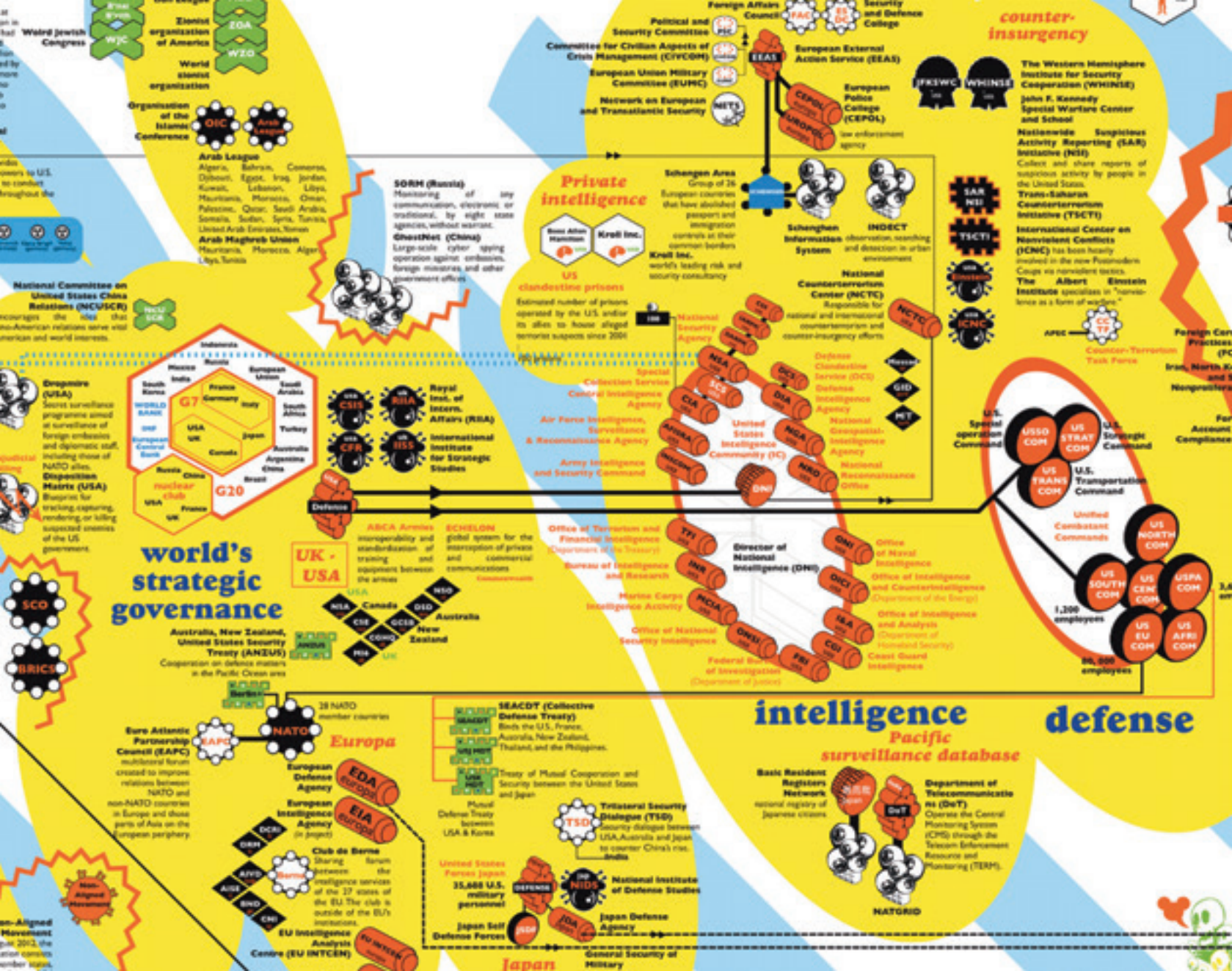


The Power of Data Visualisation

In today’s information society, good data visualisation has the possibility to translate global processes to a wide audience. The French research and design group Bureau d’Études creates maps that visualise the complex relations of global power and politics in information graphics. They say their aim is to ‘reveal what normally remains invisible’. The maps can be downloaded for free on their website in different languages, and are intended to inform a broad audience. For the entire map visit www.bureaudetudes.org.

↑ Two pie charts, both show 25%. Image: Ruben Pater.

↓ Bureau d’Études. *World Governments, English version*. 2013.



World Jewish Congress (WJC)
Elemental organization of America (EOA)
World Zionist organization (WZO)
Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)
Arab League
 Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
Arab Maghreb Union
 Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia

National Committee on United States China Relations (NCUSCR)
 encourages the idea that US-American relations serve vital American and world interests.

Dragonfire (NSA)
 Secret surveillance programs aimed at surveillance of foreign embassies and diplomatic staff, including those of NATO allies.

Disposition Masters (NSA)
 Program for tracking, capturing, rendering or killing suspected enemies of the US government.

World's Strategic Governance

G7
 France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA

G20
 South Africa, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, USA, UK

BRICS
 Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

SCO
 Shanghai Cooperation Organization

UK - USA

ABCA Arrangements
 interoperability and standardization of training and equipment between the armies

ECHELON
 global system for the interception of private and commercial communications

Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (Department of the Treasury)
 Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

Office of National Security Intelligence

Federal Bureau of Investigation (Department of Justice)

Europa

28 NATO member countries

Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)
 multilateral forum created to improve relations between NATO and non-NATO countries in Europe and those parts of Asia on the European periphery

European Defense Agency (EDA)

European Intelligence Agency (in project)

Club de Berne
 Sharing intelligence services of the 17 states of the EU. The club is outside of the EU's institutions

EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INTCEN)

Non-Aligned Movement
 since 2012, the center contains member states.

Private intelligence

US clandestine prisons
 Estimated number of prisons operated by the US and/or its allies to house alleged terrorist suspects since 2001

SORM (Russia)
 Monitoring of city communication, electronic or traditional, by eight state agencies, without warrant.

GhostNet (China)
 Large-scale cyber spying operation against embassies, foreign ministries and other government offices

Special Collection Service Central Intelligence Agency

Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance Agency

Army Intelligence and Security Command

Director of National Intelligence (DNI)

Office of Naval Intelligence

Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence (Department of the Energy)

Office of Intelligence and Analysis (Department of Homeland Security)

Chief Guard Intelligence

SEACDT (Collective Defense Treaty)
 Binds the US, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan

Mutual Defense Treaty between USA & Korea

Trilateral Security Strategy (TSS)
 security dialogue between USA, Australia and Japan to counter China's rise in Asia

United States Forces Japan
 35,868 U.S. military personnel

Japan Self Defense Forces

General Security of Military

Japan

NATO

Basic Resident Registers
 national registry of Japanese citizens

Department of Telecommunications (DoT)
 Operate the Central Monitoring System (CMS) through the Telecom Enforcement Resource and Monitoring (TERM).

Foreign Affairs Council

Political and Security Committee

Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM)

European Union Military Committee (EUMC)

Network on European and Transatlantic Security

European External Action Service (EEAS)

European External Action Service (EEAS)

European Police College (CEPOL)
 law enforcement agency

Schengen Area
 Group of 26 European countries that have abolished passport and immigration controls at their common borders

Kroll Inc.
 world's leading risk and security consultancy

Schengen Information System

INDOCT
 observation, monitoring and detection in urban environment

National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC)
 Responsible for national and international counterterrorism and counter-insurgency efforts

United States Intelligence Community (IC)

NSA
 National Security Agency

NSA/CSS
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center

NSA/CSS/ISS
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security

NSA/CSS/ISOP
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Operations

NSA/CSS/INT
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence

NSA/CSS/IR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Research

NSA/CSS/ITD
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Development

NSA/CSS/ITR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Research

NSA/CSS/ITR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Research

intelligence Pacific surveillance database

Director of National Intelligence (DNI)

Office of Naval Intelligence

Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence (Department of the Energy)

Office of Intelligence and Analysis (Department of Homeland Security)

Chief Guard Intelligence

intelligence Pacific surveillance database

Basic Resident Registers
 national registry of Japanese citizens

Department of Telecommunications (DoT)
 Operate the Central Monitoring System (CMS) through the Telecom Enforcement Resource and Monitoring (TERM).

counter-insurgency

The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)
 John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School

Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (NSAR) Initiative (NSI)
 Collect and share reports of suspicious activity by people in the United States.

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI)
 International Center on Nonviolent Conflicts (ICNC) has been heavily involved in the new Freedom House via nonviolent tactics. The Albert Einstein Institute specializes in "nonviolence as a form of warfare."

Foreign Corrupt Practices (FCP)
 Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela

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 Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela

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 Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela

United States Intelligence Community (IC)

NSA
 National Security Agency

NSA/CSS
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center

NSA/CSS/ISS
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security

NSA/CSS/ISOP
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Operations

NSA/CSS/INT
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence

NSA/CSS/IR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Research

NSA/CSS/ITD
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Development

NSA/CSS/ITR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Research

United States Intelligence Community (IC)

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 National Security Agency

NSA/CSS
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center

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 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security

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NSA/CSS/IR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Research

NSA/CSS/ITD
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Development

NSA/CSS/ITR
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NSA/CSS/IR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Research

NSA/CSS/ITD
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Development

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NSA/CSS/INT
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NSA/CSS/IR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Research

NSA/CSS/ITD
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Development

NSA/CSS/ITR
 National Security Agency/Cyber Security Center/Information Systems Security Intelligence Technical Research

Architecture of Choice

Uncheck this box if you don't not want to receive spam from us

Whether we apply for a visa or fill out a tax form, we obey the questions asked on the form because of its design. If the form used colour photographs and the comic sans font, we would doubt its authenticity. The design of forms is based on authority. Form designers are not just looking at legibility and functionality, they select colours, graphic elements, and typefaces that create the appropriate identity of authority. Forms are a very direct visualization of a power structure.

Form designers become choice architects. A choice architect carefully selects the choices that are presented to the reader, and organises them in a way that makes the reader come to her/his choice. People are sensitive to the authority of the form, which makes choice architecture prone to manipulation. A good choice architect can design the form in a way that favours certain outcomes. For example, the design of a donation form for a charity. If the donation options are € 20, €50, or €75, the average donation will be higher than if the form would suggest €5, €10, or €20, or just one option of €20.

A choice architect nudges people into making decisions that benefit the receiver of the information. For example many forms have a compulsory choice whether the applicant is male or female. This question is rarely legally required, but it is always included because this information can be stored and used later for gender specific product marketing. Since any question that is put on a form looks legitimate and relevant, the applicant is likely to answer them.

↑ Examples from www.darkpatterns.org. Image: Ruben Pater.

Dark Patterns

In the world of choice architecture, 'dark patterns' are methods to manipulate the user into making a choice against their will. We find these types of tactics especially in user experience design. For example, when you order a tablet in an online shop, the website adds a protective case to your basket, or when you book a flight online, the airline automatically adds flight insurance to your order. In both cases the reader has to perform an extra task to undo the purchase she or he never asked for. Choice architects know very well that most people scan-read text on their screen, and they use this to their advantage.

Supermarkets use choice architecture to push you into buying certain products. For example, there are two bags of organic apples, one is €2 for a 700 gram bag, and the other is €2.50 for a bag of 1 kg. People would be inclined to choose the €2 option, while the €2.50 bag in fact has a lower price per gram.

Designers who are aware of choice architecture can use it to make us aware of its powers. Designer Martijn Engelbregt uses the authority of the form as a tactic of civil resistance. His 'counterscript' is a form anyone can use when a telemarketer calls with a prepared script. He reverses the power hierarchy by directing the questions back to the telemarketer. Print out your own counterscript at his website www.egbg.home.xs4all.nl/counterscript.html.

Organic Apples **2.00**
700 g

Organic Apples **2.50**
1 kg

↑ Examples from www.darkpatterns.org. Image: Ruben Pater.



impression	+	+/-	-	+	+/-	-
accent				tempo		
word choice				volume		

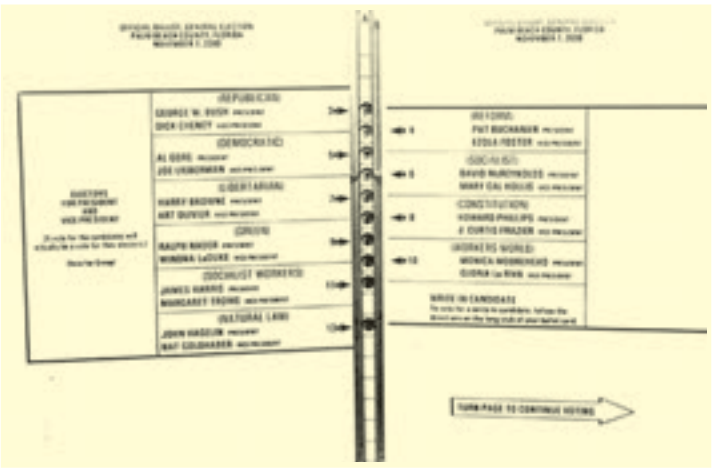
after finishing the conversation, cross-check these blanks to give an overall impression of your

hang up the phone

Form Fail

The consequence of bad form design is best illustrated by the famous election debacle in the United States in 2000. In this very close election, badly designed voting forms attributed to a large amount of voter errors, influencing national election results. The famous Palm Beach county punch card ballot listed the democrats as second but voters had to punch the third hole in the ballot. Punching the second hole would cast a vote for the Reform party. Voting results showed the Reform candidate did extremely well in this county.

In the United States, there is no centralised system for elections and many different designs are used. Ballot designs often use confusing language, small type sizes, or confusing graphics. That is why AIGA, the U.S. design association, researched the effects of election design and set up guidelines for improvement, which were sent to all voter officials. On the following page are AIGA's ten guidelines to better election design, reproduced in a shortened version. More information at www.designfordemocracy.org.



↑ Official ballot, general election November 7, 2000. Palm Beach county, Florida, U.S.
 ← Martijn Engelbregt, Counterscript. ©1994-2005 EGBG.

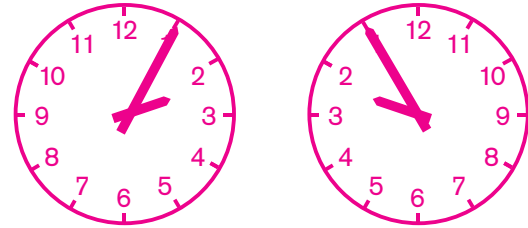
Ten Guidelines for Better Election Design

Text by the AIGA

01. Use lowercase letters. Lowercase letters are more legible than ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
02. Avoid centered type. Left-aligned type is more legible than centred type, which forces the eye to stop reading.
03. Use big enough type. 'Fine print' is hard to read and may intimidate or alienate voters. Use minimum type sizes: 12-point for optical scan; 25-point for touchscreens.
04. Pick one sans-serif font. Avoid introducing new fonts, which require the eye to stop reading and adjust. For dual-language materials, use bold text for the primary language, regular text for the secondary language.
05. Support process and navigation. For optical-scan ballots, offer comprehensive instructions and page numbering.
06. Use clear, simple language. State instructions and options as simply as possible.
07. Use accurate instructional illustrations. Visual instructions help low-literacy and general-population voters. Photo images are not recommended.
08. Use informational icons (only). Avoid political party icons. Icons that call attention to key information and support navigation are recommended in limited use.
09. Use contrast and colour functionally. Use colour and shading consistently: on optical scan ballots, to differentiate instructions from contents and contests from each other. Colour cannot be relied on as the only way to communicate important information.
10. Decide what's most important. Page and screen layout and text sizes should support information hierarchy. For instance, the ballot title should be more prominent than any one contest, a contest header should be more prominent than its candidates' names and a candidate's name should be bolder than his/her party affiliation.

Source: www.designfordemocracy.org.

Time Bandits



Before the invention of clocks, people used the sun to tell the time. This meant that each village had their own time. When railroads and telegraphs were built in the nineteenth century, this became impractical, and in 1884 it was agreed to divide the world into 24 time zones of 15° longitude each. Britain was the dominant world power then, which is why the time zones start in Greenwich, U.K.

Many adjacent countries share time zones for practical reasons, but a country is allowed to choose its own time, which makes time zones subject to political power. China used to have five time zones, but in 1949 Mao Zedong declared China should have a single time zone. For a country that big this is far from ideal, and in the far western regions of the country in winter the sun does not rise until noon.

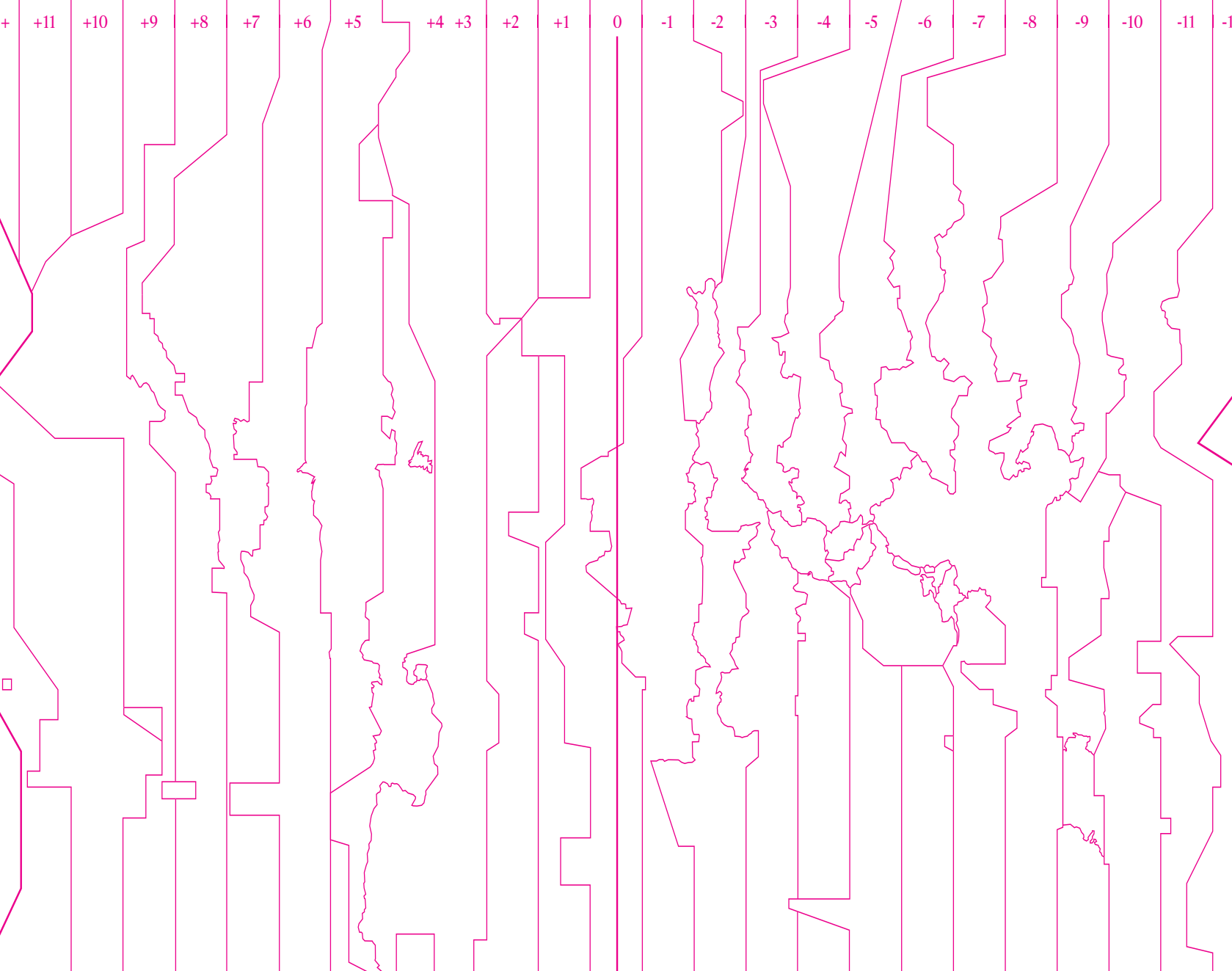
Resetting a time zone can become a symbolic statement against historic enemies. In 2015 North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reset the national time zone to the time before the Japanese occupation. Bolivia even went so far in 2014 to declare the clock direction as colonial. Government clocks would now run anti-clockwise. Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca called it the 'clock of the South'.

Even when time zones are not subject to nationalism, they still reflect certain ideologies. Most time zones are set three hours later than sun time to accommodate the 7-5 working day.

The map on the next two pages shows the world's time zones. Even without national borders it is clear which countries chose to deviate from the 1884 division.

↑ Left: colonial clock. Right: clock of the South, Bolivia. Image: Ruben Pater.

↓ World time zones in Mercator projection. Image: Ruben Pater.



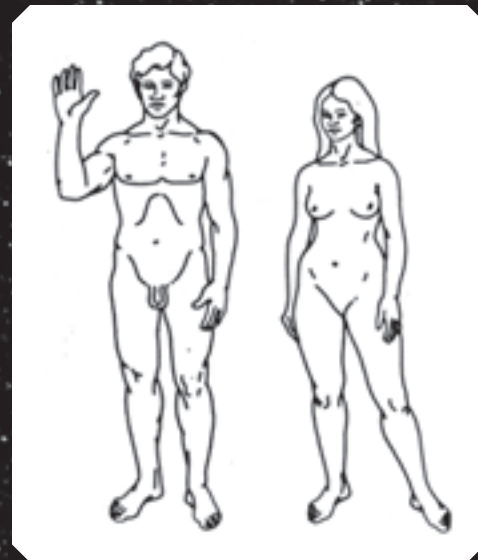
Time Traveling

'What year is it?' is not a question you usually hear outside a science fiction movie. But the answer will be different depending on where you are. The international calendar has been the Gregorian calendar by default. Dozens of different calendars are in use, and each employs a different counting and notation of the date. Iran and Afghanistan use the Persian calendar, Ethiopia uses the Ethiopian calendar, Saudi Arabia uses the Islamic calendar, Bangladesh uses the Bangla calendar, India uses the Indian national calendar, and Israel uses the Hebrew calendar. So according to where you are, the answer could be a few thousand years off.

What year is it? It is
 1394 in Teheran,
 1422 in Dhaka,
 1437 in Riyadh,
 1937 in New Delhi,
 2008 in Addis Ababa,
 2015 in Hill Valley,
 5776 in Tel Aviv.

Space Species

What do humans look like according to NASA? In 1972, U.S. astronomer Carl Sagan designed a plaque for the Pioneer 10 spacecraft as a message from mankind for possible encounters with extraterrestrial life. It shows a man waving, and a woman in a 'submissive' pose, with her left foot further out. The male figure is taller than the woman, establishing hierarchy. Sagan was aiming for a pan-racial image of humanity, but both figures clearly have Caucasian hair and body types. As a universal representation of humanity, it was criticized for having both a sexual and racial bias. In 2015, a group of scientists met in Leeds to talk about SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). They agreed the Pioneer plaque was biased, and a new message had to represent a more equal image of humanity. Pioneer 10 is currently on its way out of the solar system.



↑ Pioneer Plaque (detail). Designed by Carl Sagan and Frank Drake; artwork by Linda Salzman-Sagan. © NASA, 1972.

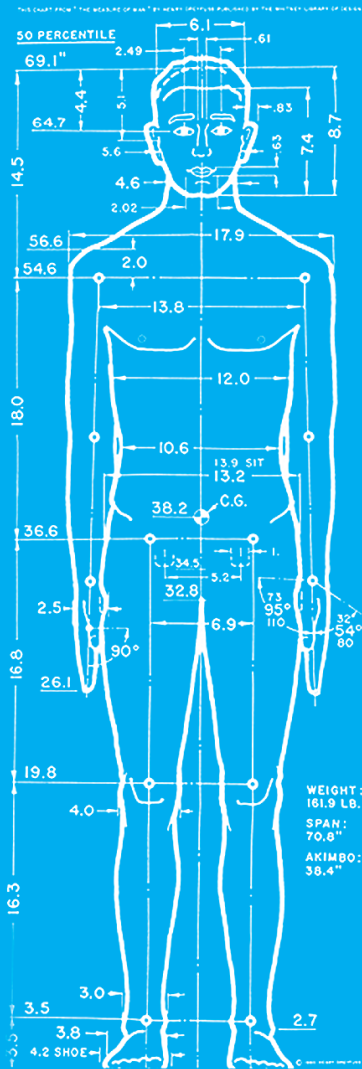


Image from: Dreyfuss, Henry. *The Measure of Man*. Whitney Library of Design, 1959. Copyright 1993 Henry Dreyfuss Associates.

Standards and Deviants

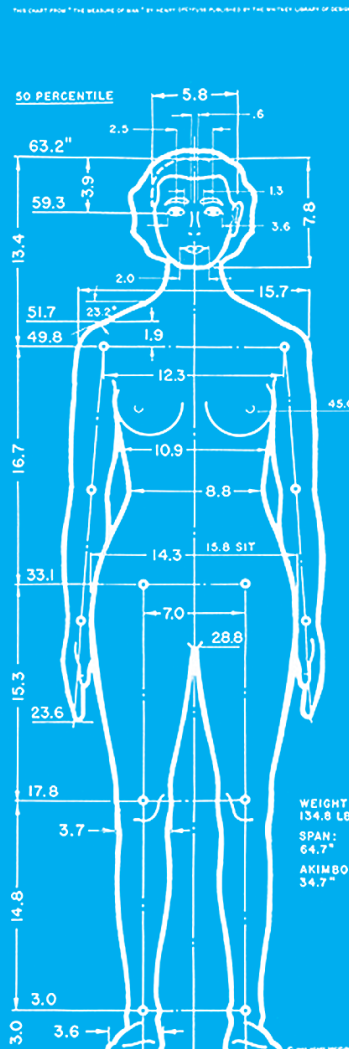
The average woman stands 160.5 cm tall and weighs 62.5 kg. The average man is 175.5 cm and weighs 78.4 kg. If these standards do not apply to you, you are not normal by design standards.

The drawings on the left are from *The Measure of Man* from 1959, written by designer Henry Dreyfuss. He implemented body measurements in product design on a large scale, and thanks to him we are less likely to hurt ourselves by designed objects. Dreyfuss and his team drew all sorts of measurements for seating, standing, and driving, which have become international standards ever since. His book has been reprinted as *The Measure of Man and Woman* and is still used as a textbook at design schools and universities.

Standards are useful for mass production, but they also create a false sense of truth. The image on the left from his book is in many ways problematic. It projects a binary view of gender, ignoring the variety of gender types which make up our society. In 2014, Facebook introduced 58 choices for gender, among which: androgyne, cisgender, genderqueer, bigender, mither, pangender, and transgender.²

The measurements of men in Dreyfuss' book are based on data from the U.S. military, which means that bodies that are outside of the military norm are simply not included. By using measurements of young military men, Dreyfuss states that the ideal body type of a man is a young and physically fit body of West European descent. Not everyone in the world shares these body standards, and Dreyfuss' design standards that are based on that (idealized) body type are hardly universal. For instance, the average female in Bolivia is 142.2 cm and the average male in the Dinaric Alps is 185.6 cm.

Dreyfuss explained his flawed standards as such: 'It is not customary to design for everyone. The few at either end of the normal curve may be so extreme that an encompassing design could become too large or expensive to produce.'¹



1. Tilley, Alvin R. *The Measure of Man and Woman*. Whitney Library of Design, 1993. 10.
2. Goldman, Russell. 'Here's a List of 58 Gender Options for Facebook Users.' *ABC News*. February 13, 2014. abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2014/02/heres-a-list-of-58-gender-options-for-facebook-users.

The Tyranny of Normalcy

What is normal? Normalcy is a concept that did not really exist prior to the nineteenth century in Western society, says Lennard J. Davis in *Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability, and Representation*.¹ With the rise of the first nation states, documenting and photographing the national population was a way to construct an image of the ideal citizen, from what was actually a patchwork of cultures. Citizens were counted, measured, and photographed to see who belonged to the 'national' culture and who didn't.

The new medium of photography played an important role to categorise groups within society and to define the visual difference of unwanted elements. Photography was used by institutions to regulate social behaviour, in medicine for the study of disease, and as mugshots and fingerprints as evidence of criminality.²

Criminologists like Cesare Lombroso used photography in an attempt to prove that criminality was inherited, and was noticeable in physical characteristics. On the right are photos that were used to prove his theory. Pseudo-sciences like eugenics and phrenology used measurements and physical characteristics as a basis for the oppression of cultures other than the dominant one.

Scientific racism was widespread in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The results of these experiments were used to justify the European superiority over other races, and by politicians to legitimise colonialism. After the horrors that scientific racism had led to in World War II, mainstream science rejected its theories and practices.

There are still systems in place that make us conform to an idea of normalcy. Surveillance cameras, social media, schools, work places, and the beauty standards in the media are all part of a structure that shapes our behaviour.² Through the images we see everyday we know exactly what is meant by a good citizen, a beautiful body, and a trusting face. We conform ourselves to invisible forces of normalcy.



1



2



3



4



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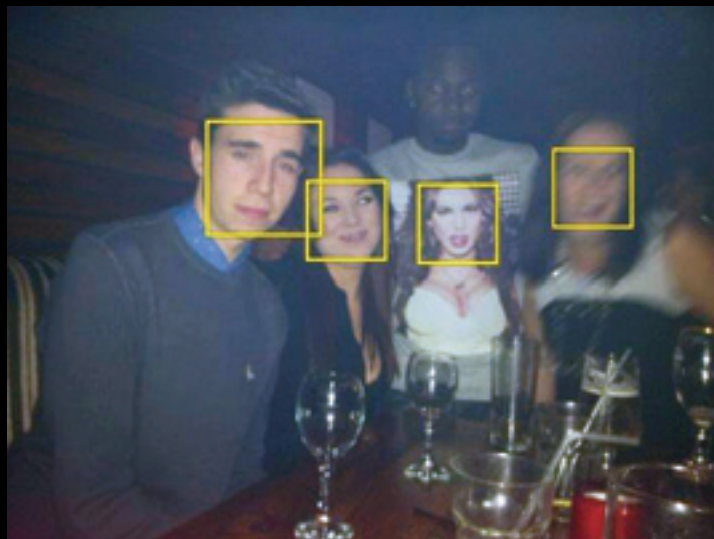
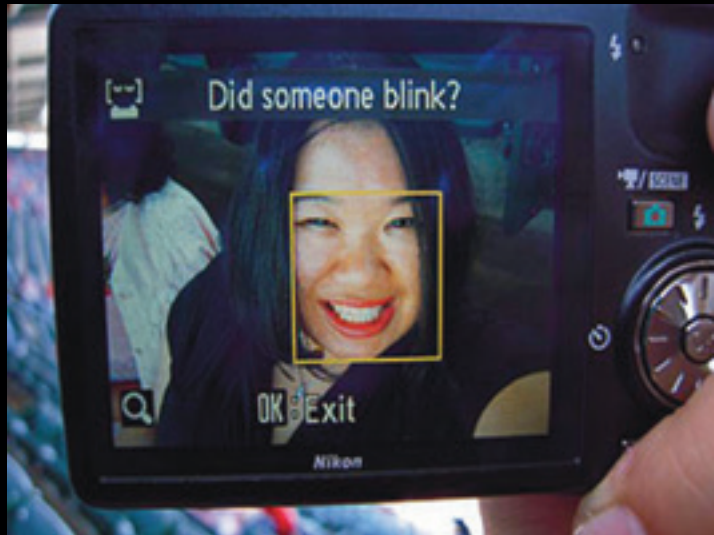
8



9

1. Davis, Lennard J. 'Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability, and Representation'. In: *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*. Modern Language Association of America, 2002. 100.
2. Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 95-98.

↑ Image from: Lombroso, Cesare. *L'uomo delinquente in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alla psichiatria*. Fratelli Bocca, 1897. 5 ed. Source: Fondo Antiguo de la Universidad de Sevilla. www.flickr.com/photos/fdctsevilla.



↑ Nikon Coolpix S630 digital camera Blink Warning. Image: © Joz Wang, 2010.

↑ Face recognition. Source @josh_popple.

The Data Face

Image technology has been very successful in documenting and surveilling citizens. Your face, fingerprint, retina, and even your gait can be used for biometric identification. Portraits are made by strict regulations and standardised for official passport photos.

In the future your passport might not even matter anymore. Face recognition can reveal much more about a person than a passport; it can recognize a person's age, gender, and even if someone is nervous, excited, angry, or happy. The recognized face can be instantly connected to social media accounts and online databases, giving authorities access to friends, family, credit ratings, medical history, and personal history. Your face will not be able to hide anything.

Social media websites and consumer cameras employ face recognition to identify people in photographs and link their identities together. But image analysis software is written by humans, and subject to the same cultural bias and assumptions as everything else. This became clear when Hewlett Packard webcams recognized faces of white people, but did not recognize the faces of black people. In another instance, Nikon's consumer cameras showed a 'blink warning' when Asian people were being photographed.

Artist Adam Harvey makes work that allows people to evade automatic face recognition and privacy-invading technologies. *CV Dazzle* uses fashion to camouflage faces from automatic face detection. Hair-styling and makeup designs break up key facial features, confusing face recognition algorithms. Harvey does not follow the technologies' tendency in further militarizing public space, but instead appropriates the implications of security technology for fashion styling. He takes digital camouflage to the streets as a fashion statement.

In the future, our lives are more likely to be limited by our data than by our physical appearance. Our credit rating, medical history, political viewpoints, and our criminal history already influence our chances of getting a job, getting affordable healthcare or a loan, or the ability to buy a house. Not the prejudice of people, but the discrimination of our data is the new challenge for equality in design.

↓ *CV Dazzle*. Look N° 2 and Look N° 3. Adam Harvey, for *DIS Magazine* (2010) Creative direction by Lauren Boyle and Marco Roso. Models: Irina and Jude. Hair: Pia Vivas.



Further Reading

Many authors have written in much more depth on topics of design, gender studies, postcolonialism, visual communication, and cultural studies than I have. These books, articles, and journals have inspired me and I highly recommend them for further reading.

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The Politics of Design explores the cultural and political context of the typography, colours, photography, symbols, and information graphics that we use every day.

Designers, communication specialists, and image-makers possess the power to shape visual communication, and with that power comes great responsibility. Are we as creative professionals really aware of the political meaning and impact of our work in today's network society?

This book examines cultural contexts and stereotypes with visual examples from around the world. It demonstrates that communication tools are never neutral, and encourages its users to rethink global cultural understanding. Additional works by contemporary artists and designers show that political awareness does not limit creativity, but opens up new explorations for a critical visual culture.

ISBN 978-90-6369-422-7



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'Power and its politics and hierarchies exist everywhere: in every conversation we have, in every deal we make, in every face we kiss.'

Barbara Kruger

'It is the designer who must attempt to re-evaluate his role in the nightmare he has helped to conceive.'

Superstudio

'Superiority? Inferiority? Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?'

Frantz Fanon

'For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.'

Virginia Woolf

'I detected most shocking parallels between the teachings of The New Typography and National Socialism and fascism.'

Jan Tschichold

'All art is propaganda... On the other hand, not all propaganda is art.'

George Orwell

'An enemy is someone whose story you have not heard.'

Slavoj Žižek

'I want people to see the truth... regardless of who they are.'

Chelsea Manning

'We are sorry for the inconvenience, but this is a revolution.'

subcommandante Marcos