

## BARBICAN ART GALLERY

### **Communicate: Independent British Graphic Design since the Sixties**

16 September 2004 – 23 January 2005

Partnered by

**PlayStation®2**

**Communicate: Independent British Graphic Design since the Sixties** is the first major exhibition to explore recent developments in British graphic design. Focusing on the smaller independent studios and teams who have produced the most creative, innovative and highly regarded design work over the past four decades, the exhibition presents an authoritative overview of the best design work produced since the early 1960s, tracing how and why UK graphic design has developed in the way it has. It will explore the emergence of independent graphic design within the music, publishing and cultural industries, its role in the shaping of identity and the link between graphic design and the web. In addition, the exhibition will highlight the place of graphic design as a medium of protest in society, as well as the increasingly important area of self-initiated work undertaken by designers.

Concentrating on the most influential work produced in the UK, *Communicate* will bring together over 100 visual communicators, many with international reputations. Rare and classic early pieces by designers such as John Sewell, Robin Fior, Ken Garland, Robert Brownjohn, Michael English, Martin Sharp, Katy Hepburn and Barney Bubbles will be juxtaposed with work by established and emerging teams that is helping to set new directions for British graphic design today. These designers include Peter Saville, Neville Brody, Why Not Associates, The Designers Republic, Tomato, Fuel, Graphic Thought Facility, Kerr Noble, and Abake.

*Communicate* will argue that the pioneering work in British graphic design has been made possible by the decision many of these designers have taken to keep their studios small, maintain their independence and pursue their own paths.

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The exhibition is organised in the following sections:

### **Graphic design and publishing**

In the last four decades, book and magazine publishing has provided the vehicle for some of the most innovative British graphic design. Earlier examples will include pioneering book covers by Romek Marber, Keith Cunningham, Raymond Hawkey and Derek Birdsall, and Katy Hepburn's remarkable designs for the Monty Python books. More recent approaches to cover design are represented by Angus Hyland's projects for Canongate, Intro's for Penguin and William Webb's for Bloomsbury. Featured magazines will include *Town* (Tom Wolsey), *Nova* (Harri Peccinotti and David Hillman), *Oz* (Martin Sharp), *Time Out* (Pearce Marchbank), *City Limits* (David King), *i-D* (Terry Jones), *The Face* (Neville Brody) and *Sleazation* (Scott King). *The Guardian's* use of design in its newspaper, special supplements and website will be explored. Significant design magazines such as *Typographica*, *Ark*, *Design*, *Blueprint*, *Octavo* and *Eye* will also be shown.

### **Graphic design and the arts**

Many graphic designers draw inspiration from the arts and seek the chance to collaborate with artists, architects, film-makers, theatre companies and cultural institutions. *Communicate* will feature rare 1960s film, theatre and exhibition posters by George Mayhew, John Sewell and Robert Brownjohn; promotional posters and leaflets by Richard Hollis for Whitechapel Gallery; CDT's influential poster campaign for English National Opera; Why Not Associates' posters for the Royal Academy; State's promotional literature and moving-image work for the internationally successful Onedotzero film festival; inventive exhibition designs by Morag Myerscough and art catalogues by Dennis Bailey, Kate Stephens, Tony Arefin, Stephen Coates and North.

### **Graphic design and music**

The richness and diversity of the British music scene has consistently enabled designers to work independently of the constraints imposed by more mainstream clients. Spanning the range of movements and styles, from 1960s psychedelia to 1980s new wave and 1990s dance music, *Communicate* will include album covers, poster campaigns and pop videos by such influential figures as Robert Brownjohn, Michael English and Nigel Waymouth, Hipgnosis, Barney Bubbles, Jamie Reid, Malcolm Garrett, Peter Saville, Vaughan Oliver, 8vo, Mark Farrow, Tomato, Intro, Blue Source, and many others

### **Web design and reading room**

Here the focus will be on the relationship between graphic design as a now well-established practice and web design as an emerging discipline, with some aspects in common with graphic design, but some equally fundamental differences. Among the featured designers will be Hi-Res! renowned for their ground-breaking *Donnie Darko* and *Requiem for a Dream* film-related websites, and leading design teams such as Friendchip, The Designers Republic and Airside.

Reading matter in this section will help to illuminate *Communicate's* key themes.

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### **Graphic design, politics and society**

For some designers issues of social responsibility and political engagement are paramount. This section will include classic 1960s nuclear disarmament posters by Robin Fior and Ken Garland, hard-hitting anti-racist posters by David King, and Richard Hollis' posters for the ANC. Garland's provocative First Things First manifesto of 1964 will be shown as well as its recent update. More ambiguous contemporary forms of protest will be explored in projects by Jonathan Barnbrook. Socially conscious design initiatives will be represented by Lucienne Roberts' literature for Breakthrough Breast Cancer and Johnson Banks' posters and leaflets for Angel Drug Services.

### **Graphic design and identity**

A strong visual identity is essential for any company or enterprise that wishes to communicate its presence and message to the public. This section will explore a range of approaches to identity design, showing examples that have sometimes achieved an iconic presence in British life. Among the projects featured will be Fletcher/Forbes/Gill's work for Pirelli; Ken Garland's designs for Galt Toys; John McConnell's landmark store identity for Biba; Why Not Associates' directories for Next; Siobhan Keaney's identity for The Mill and Graphic Thought Facility's identity for Habitat; North's acclaimed redesign for the RAC; and Alan Aboud's long-lasting collaboration with fashion designer Paul Smith. Examples of TV identities will include Channel 4 and BBC2 (Lambie-Nairn), Five (Spin), Big Brother (Foundation 33) and the Sci Fi Channel (Fuel).

### **Graphic design and self-initiated projects**

Graphic designers have always produced projects of their own, alongside their client work, and in recent years this tendency has been increasingly apparent. Many visual communicators now consider their work as a form of 'graphic authorship'. This section will concentrate on self-initiated projects such as John Sewell's 1960 film *Everybody's Nobody*, David King's visual histories, Alan Kitching's letterpress-printed *Broadsides*, and Neville Brody's long-running *Fuse* typeface project. It will include calendars by Trickett & Webb, publishing projects by Tomato and Scott King, posters by The Designers Republic, products by Graphic Thought Facility, and digital films by Fuel.

### **Exhibition Organisation**

The exhibition is organised by Barbican Art Gallery and the guest curator is Rick Poynor. Poynor was founding editor of *Eye* (1990), the international review of graphic communication. He has written for numerous publications including *Blueprint*, *Frieze*, *Domus*, *Print*, *I.D.*, *Adbusters*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*, and is the author of many books including *Nigel Coates: The City in Motion* (1989), *Design Without Boundaries* (1998), *Typographica* (2001), *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World* (2001) and *No More Rules* (2003), a critical study of graphic design and postmodernism. Poynor lectures widely about design matters in Europe, the United States and Australia. From 1994 to 1999, he was a visiting professor in the School of Communication at the Royal College of Art, London.

An international tour is planned for the exhibition.

### **Catalogue**

A comprehensive full-colour illustrated book (256 pages) edited by guest curator, Rick Poynor, including essays by Rick Poynor, David Crowley, John O'Reilly and Nico MacDonald and interviews with leading figures in the design world. Published by Laurence King Publishers, price £28.

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**Web site**

As part of the exhibition, Barbican Art Gallery, with the generous support of the Arts Council, has commissioned Hi-Res! to develop and realise a web project that responds to the brief of 'communication'. The website will have both an online and offline component, the aim of which is to examine the relationship between the real and the virtual.

**Associated Events**

A series of Wednesday evening talks and events will be programmed throughout the duration of the exhibition.

PlayStation 2 and the Barbican's Education department have collaborated to bring to the public a series of gallery workshops and an e-learning site for 14-18 year old art and design students. The workshops will feature talks from games course directors and, following the thread of the exhibition, the programme will explore the history of British Graphics and examine iconic figures and the role graphic design plays in music, publishing, and politics. Graphic design in Video Games will also be explored. This initiative will raise young people's understanding of graphic design and its impact on society.

**Art Gallery opening times:**

**Daily 11am-8pm**

**Tuesday & Thursday 11am-6pm**

**Admission: Tickets: £8; £6 concessions (also admits to Space of Encounter: The Architecture of Daniel Libeskind )**

Public Information/advance tickets: 0845 1207550

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