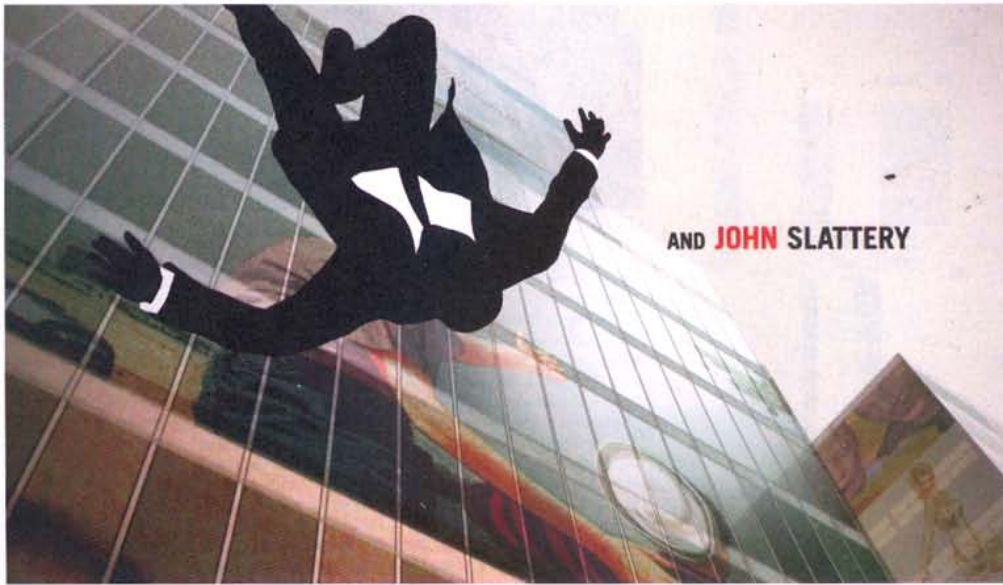


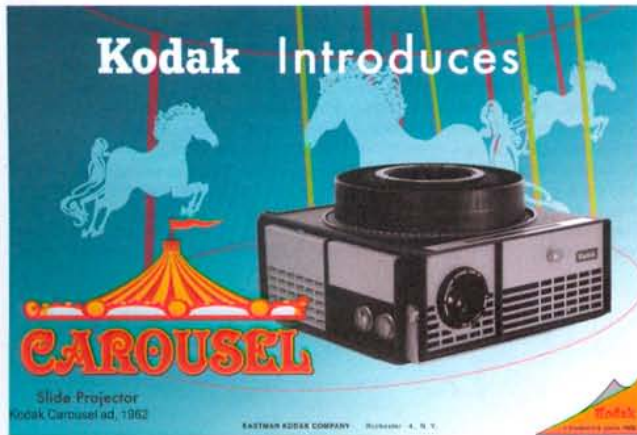
2011 Brand New Worlds Andrew Blauvelt



Mark Gardner and Steve Fuller (Imaginary Forces), *Mad Men*, 2007 Courtesy Lionsgate Television



Wolff Olins, Aol. logo, 2009

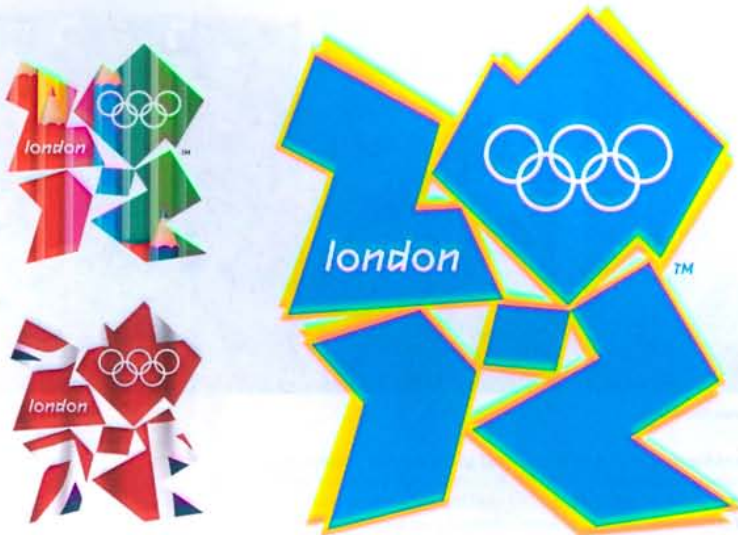


Kodak Carousel Projector

In 1961, Kodak introduced its Carousel projector, designed with a removable tray holding eighty 35mm color film transparencies, or "slides." Carousel slide shows became a dubious form of party entertainment, as well-meaning hosts lulled their guests into a post-alcoholic stupor with long presentations about family travel. The carousel projector also entered the repertoire of conceptual and photo-based art in the 1960s and '70s, when artists exploited the medium's low cost and portability as well as the public, cinematic experience it afforded. Carousel projectors ceased production in September 2004, forced into obsolescence by digital tools such as PowerPoint, whose interface has kept alive the analog metaphor of the "slide." —EL See Darsie Alexander, *SlideShow: Projected Images in Contemporary Art*, 2005



Paul Rand, Enron logo, 1997



Wolff Olins, 2012 London Olympics logo, 2007

The Crooked E

Unveiled in 1997, the logo for the Enron Corporation was among the last works of Paul Rand, who did more than any other American designer to create a serious professional image for graphic design. After Enron collapsed in disgrace in 2002, a group of light-up revolving sculptures of the logo were sold at auction. One of these astonishing relics of corporate kitsch was purchased by Houston ad man Lou Coneglio, who stated, "This was a unique opportunity to own a piece of pop culture during one of the most turbulent times in our city's history. The 'crooked E' became an instant symbol of corporate greed and corruption." Coneglio sold it in 2008—on the cusp of the Great Recession—to a collector from New York City. Every symbol has its price. —EL

"Products are made in the factory, but brands are made in the mind."

—Walter Landor

Don Draper, the lead television character of the acclaimed series *Mad Men*, makes an impressive pitch to two Kodak executives who are searching for a firm to market their new slide projector. Fixated on the machine's most distinguishing feature, they ask if he has found a way to sell the wheel-like mechanism—the oldest of technologies—as something new. "Nostalgia, it's delicate, but potent," Draper tells them, methodically clicking through slides documenting the happier moments of his otherwise troubled domestic life. "It's a twinge in your heart, far more powerful than memory alone. This device isn't a spaceship, it's a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called the wheel, it's called a carousel. It lets us travel the way a child travels, around and around, and back home again, to a place where we know we are loved." In typically masterful fashion, Draper schools the postwar business execs in the new ways of connecting consumers to the things they love. Product features and pricing are fine as rational appeals, newness has buzz, but the most direct and lasting route is emotional, an arrow straight to the heart. Welcome to the new world of branding: a place where you don't sell projectors, you sell memories.

In the 1990s, branding subsumed what graphic designers used to call corporate identity. During this time, it was not uncommon to attend a design lecture where the term would be raised only to be accompanied by a Wild West image of a cowboy wrestling a steer to the ground and the requisite (nervous) laughter from the assembled crowd. Although the word has its roots in this etymology, the point was largely missed. True, brands were markers of ownership, used to tell one cow from the other, just as brands in the marketplace must assert their own difference in the cattle call of daily consumption. However, the real impact to design was the devaluation of the mark itself, from a prized talisman to a requisite deliverable. Reduced to playing a bit part, the logo has been eclipsed by a cavalcade of brand expertise and its concepts: brand equity, brand loyalty, brand extensions, brand dilution, brand promise, brand audit, rebranding, brand management, brand experiences, etc. All of this brand activity is fairly self-perpetuating, instigated by brand managers eager to prove their worth to higher-ups with a constant

stream of refresh and renewal campaigns, not to mention the era of mergers and acquisitions and the turnstile CEO, who signals new leadership change the same way Buckingham Palace announces the arrival of the queen—by running it up the flagpole.

The concept of corporate identity, and the logo at the heart of it, sought to embody and reflect the organization—a mirror turned onto the corporate self. Such an approach parallels the evolving logic and expanding status of "corporate personhood," at least as it is understood in the United States. This personification of the corporation—giving it the same basic rights of assembly, movement, privacy, and speech as individual citizens—is in many ways the expansion of the personification of the brands those same companies sell. In contrast to corporate identity, branding is both a projection and reflection of the consumer. Distilled to an essence, even if it looked rather meaningless and abstract, the logo was an embodied marker. Corporate identity was the culmination of the rational, managerial, and bureaucratic functions of businesses that were becoming, in the postwar period, increasingly transnational in their reach. Aspiring to qualities such as efficiency, simplification, and consistency, the lynchpin of corporate identity was the logo or mark. Painstakingly crafted and monolithically imagined, the logo was the quintessential expression of graphic communication, the ultimate reduction of a complex entity to a simple and easily absorbed cipher.

Today, of the many thousands of new logos produced each year, most are design disasters. Why? The reasons are undoubtedly varied, but here are a few that are likely. First, companies today turn to branding consultants, whose principal work is not the creation of a graphic mark but in better-paid and time-consuming adventures such as research, analysis, strategy, and positioning. Because of one-stop shopping, consultancies often create the visuals, too, and employ a range of choices so predictable that one brand guru, who shall remain nameless, refers to these bags of tricks as the "3D Swirlee," a reference to the rendering software effects used to puff up letterforms—replete with reflective surface highlights and shadows, the "look and feel" of Web 2.0. Second, many schools and programs don't teach logo design in the same way or in the same depth anymore. Hours of drawing and focus on issues such as gestalt, flow, and scalability have been replaced by the need to create things like mood boards and to simulate

the research process of consultancies. Third, the application context of marks today is ruled not by the limitations of one or two colors, which forced a kind of simplified rigor, but the glorious and often gaudy rainbow of ubiquitous full-color printing and the luminescent glow of RGB. Fourth, the shelf life of most corporate identities has diminished greatly during each of the past few decades. This constant churn reduces concern for any kind of longevity. Identity, like fashion, is updatable, replaceable, and consequently, disposable.

The criticism of logos, however, is not limited to the design critic anymore. The event-driven nature of the branding exercise means that statements of intent must be drafted by design firms and branding consultants and that the corporate press release must be crafted and circulated. Picking up on this activity is the website *Brand New*, operated by Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio, which is a leading forum for presenting and critiquing the brand makeover. Offering an impressive array of before and after comparisons, *Brand New* surveys a large field of activity, from cultural and corporate identity programs, sports teams, and mascots to branded tourism. Here, logo designs and redesigns are treated as a spectator sport, with armchair quarterbacking and color commentary from bloggers and behind-the-scenes reporting on the process and history of the marks by the hosts.

All of this activity, while earnest, seems almost tranquil compared to the rough, open waters of social media. The ability to provide instant feedback, particularly through ubiquitous social networking channels, means that brand redesigns have more potential for greater volatility. Take, for instance, the nearly universal and instant hatred of the proposed London 2012 Olympic Games logo created by Wolff Olins, a leading brand consultancy. Its retro '80s, new wave-style graphic sports the numerals 2012 in a chunky font on contrasting color palettes. Despite its numerical focus, the mark has been seen as anything from a Nazi SS emblem to a Rorschach test image of the cartoon character Lisa Simpson performing fellatio to spelling the words Zion, which precipitated a threatened boycott of the Games by Iran.¹ Faring no better was the recent redesign, recall, and reinstatement by Gap, the legendary clothing retailer, of its twenty-year-old logo. The proposed redesign included the word Gap in the ubiquitous typeface Helvetica overlapping a small, blue gradient square. This uninspired, inoffensive yet somehow offending design



Brand New

The popular website *Brand New* is edited by Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio. Founded in 2006, the site presents commentary on corporate and brand identities. *Brand New* began as a spin-off of *Speak Up*, one of the earliest and most influential graphic design blogs. While *Speak Up* no longer exists, this vital side conversation has become an important and inclusive voice on the state of contemporary branding. Before/after presentations invite visitors to vote on the concept and execution of new logos for existing brands and to post additional comments. With user-supplied critiques (see below) that range from constructive to inane, these comment threads provide a unique forum on a ubiquitous design genre. —EL

Nickelodeon Redesign: Eric Zim, 2009



Before

After

I dig it, it manages to modernize the early '90s looking logo while also bringing overall brand consistency. —awesomerobot

The old logo suddenly seems very dated, as if it had needed this for a long time, even though I never thought it did before. —Mog

Where's the kid in these shapes? Where's the drippy goo, the finger paint, the mud on the knees, the frog in the pocket? The redesign looks great, if what you want is something that looks like it's intended for stodgy adults with a desperate need for a colorectal polioectomy. But Nickelodeon is not intended for such adults. So why does the wordmark cater to them? —Warren

Starbucks Redesign: Starbucks Global Creative and Lippincott, 2011



Before

After

A bold move that worked out brilliantly. I for one love it! —Euan

I may be alone here, but I don't get "simple" from this new logo. It's a fairly complicated mark in comparison to Nike, Apple and Target. Reduction is going to take a sledgehammer to all those little intricate lines in print, and the saving grace of the previous logo was that it still said "Starbucks" when the mermaid became a glob of ink. —Greg Scrapper

The siren is a beautiful mark that deserves to emancipate herself. The fact that she is more intricate than most big brand logos is, to me, part of her allure. —Stephan

Comedy Central Redesign: thelab, 2010



Before

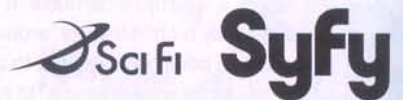
After

Several have argued that it's not "fun" enough, but CC's programming isn't all fun and games. There is a level of sophistication that permeates throughout the network that begs to be treated as a more mature genre. This new systems serves them well. —Evan Stremke

Smart, simple, clever, and exquisitely applied. Love it. —dglassdes

The new mark is too serious, too corporate, and not at all funny. It could have been more fun and whimsical. Instead, it appears that Comedy Central is starting to take itself too seriously. —Ryan

Syfy Redesign: Proud Creative, 2009



Before

After

So they take all the recognition and character of the old one, and trade it for ... a weird up-down-up-down-shaped four-letter nonsense word? Why go through the trouble of teaching their existing audience to recognize the new identity? And will the new logo and name pull in potential viewers, when it barely even hints at the subject matter? —Matt

In space, no one can hear you spell. —Jerry Kuyper

The change in the spelling actually gives them something they can own in a much more obvious way. As for comparison to the old logo, I'd say it's a huge improvement. A stylized Saturn mark is overused and easily forgotten. The new logo may feel a bit blank on the page, but on screen this logo is being used to good effect, and after all, that's the primary form of the logo. —Brian

Bausch+Lomb Redesign: Pentagram (Paula Scher, Partner), 2009



Before

After

The "+" is starting to grate on my nerves—it seems to have jumped from the professional services world (architecture firms, design firms) into the consumer world. I thought it was overused before—a gimmicky shortcut to say, "Hey, we're forward-thinking and cool." —Deshler

This is a promising step towards a future-oriented eye health company. Bausch+Lomb's new identity is appropriately fresh and medicinal. —Andrew Sabatier

They took from a very superficial retail look and created a more thoughtful, prestigious identity. Nice work. —Bill Dawson (XK9)

TCBY Redesign: Struck/Axiom, 2010



Before

After

Modern but not timeless, sure to date, got the over print features, and lowercase letterforms. I do like the "y" very much and its flexibility. —Richard Baird

The Y as a cup is a fine analogy I suppose, but the rest of the typography should support the custom Y in my opinion. —Ricky Salsbery

There's a certain point that new and trendy becomes old and tired, and I think (I hope!) this digital, angular look has reached that point. Of course, when it does, many companies will be burned because they got the trendy logo. —Isabelle

Library of Congress Redesign: Chermayeff & Geismar (Sagi Haviv, Partner), 2009



Before

After

The mark is almost perfect. I love the simplicity and dualities of its presentation. You don't see logos like this too much anymore. The flatness and simplicity is a trait of the school designers but I still love and appreciate it. Also, Trajan is such a horrid typeface, I can appreciate the craft and delicacy of the letters as individuals but when this deface forms words... it just makes me cringe. —col corcoran

Overwhelming, looks like it's paying homage to the postage stamp. —BlueEyedPeas

Does this look like a book being shredded to anyone else? —Alphon

YMCA Redesign: Siegel+Gale, 2010



Before

After

I really applaud the decision to embrace "the Y" as a mark, as it reinforces how people refer to it in casual conversation. Smart to own that. —Michael

The best part about this logo is the arrow, which to me is communicating forward movement, thinking and progress, which is what the Y is about. I really like the subtlety in how that's integrated into the mark. —Damian Madray

The form of the "Y" is nice, but the placement of the supporting elements looks accidental. First, it looks like it's going to tip over, like the leaning tower of Pisa. If "the" were higher, it would be better balanced. Second, the main motion is left to right, especially with the strong arrow shape, but the upward-moving "YMCA" stifles that movement. Pick one direction and stick with it. —Eric

GLAAD Redesign: Lippincott, 2010



Before

After

While the mark is gorgeous and I love the variations, it feels more electronics/audio to me. I suspect seeing it in use will build the proper association. —Chris Rugen

An improvement. The use of shape, overlap, curve, and color really lends itself to design versatility. The previous signature was falling far short of the mark. —Tyler Border

I'm not sure everyone is going to really "get" the logo upon first viewing (yes they might get the amplification thing but will they get why?) but it sure makes more sense than the dripping paint logo. —Adam K

Pfizer Redesign: Siegel+Gale, 2009



Before

After

I like the update (minus the gradient. I prefer the solid versions) but I really like that there's more consistency in the type. —Erin

I like everything about this redesign except for the gradient. When will the unnecessary gradients and 3D logos stop!? —Slicecom

The old logo suffered from it too, but I'm not crazy about the figure. It looks too much like an "h" to me (Phzer). Perhaps the ligature line should be thinner? —ChrisM70

Popeyes Redesign: Pentagram (DJ Stout, Partner), 2008



Before

After

This update makes it feel more like a restaurant like Chili's or Friday's and less fast food. —JonSel

I appreciate the attempt to maintain brand equity, but once you take the cartoonish lettering and set it on a standard baseline, the mechanical sameness of the two 'P's and 'e's becomes glaringly obvious. Couldn't the client afford to draw alternates of the repeated letters? —Jose Nieto

This new look feels more sophisticated and a bit more "down home" than the overly-excited identity they previously used. Kudos on a job well done. It actually makes me want some fried chicken. —Roby Fitzhenry

AOL Redesign: Wolff Olins, 2009



Before

After

I liked AOL because it read just like that—A-O-L. But this new logo feels like it's supposed to be read as a word, like "ay-ol." It's not just a new way of looking at the logo, but a new way of understanding it and reading it altogether. —Catherine

Although there is no doubt that they needed to reinvent themselves with a new brand, I think what they really needed was a modern, simple logo that emphasized AOL as a kinder, gentler overarching content owner (which is really what they have become). With so many sub-properties, what would have been a better approach was a common thread, not a disparate "do what you want" branding solution that leads to visual cacophony. —drewdraws2

I hated it at first, but now I like it. I don't think it would work as well if the wordmark was more complex—it needs to be super simple and chunky, since most of the time we're only seeing part of it and have to complete the rest of it mentally. —Mog

New York Public Library Redesign: Marc Blaustein (New York Public Library in-house design studio), 2009



The New York Public Library
www.nypl.org

Before



New York
Public
Library

After

I think it's a great example of an elegant and successful logo redesign. It keeps the original elements, but simply updates and refines them. —David McGillivray

Anything that helps reinforce the New York Public Library as a cultural icon is a noble and worthy endeavor. I only wish they had represented the lower vantage point that most people have when looking at the lions. For instance making the eyes appear less rounded. There's a power to the lion (or knowledge) as an icon that is above your line of sight—something that calls you upward—rather than being eye-to-eye on the same level. —Carlo

I don't like the new lion. It's not the most well drawn and it's a bit too abstract, which makes it feel similar to the MGM lion. The old lion had more of a regal feel and a seal/crestlike quality to it, which is exactly the kind of feeling I want when I see an icon of a lion. —PG

generated enough negative commentary on Twitter to cause the company to take to its Facebook site to proclaim, "We know this logo created a lot of buzz and we're thrilled to see passionate debates unfolding! So much so we're asking you to share your designs. We love our version, but we'd like to see other ideas. Stay tuned for details in the next few days on this crowd sourcing [sic] project."² Apparently, the committee formed to create this design wasn't large enough! Or as Alissa Walker put it in her own mock commentary on Gagate: "This is what dumb dumbs in our marketing department call a pivot."³ While London stayed calm and carried on as if nothing had happened, the Gap thankfully capitulated to the angry mob and eventually fired the firm that created the mark and the executive in charge of the project (although that was most likely for lackluster sales results).

In the wake of the diminished logo and its replacement by a glut of bloated glyphs, we have a nearly nostalgic view of what could be called "the golden age of logos." These are the classic marks of a bygone era: Jan Tschichold's redesign of Penguin books (1948); William Golden's CBS "eye" (1951); Paul Rand's striped IBM (1956); Lester Beall's International Paper "tree" (1960); Chermayeff & Geismar Associates' Chase Manhattan Bank (1960); Saul Bass' Bell telephone (1969); Nike's "swoosh" (1971); Siegal and Gale's 3M (1978); Saul Bass' AT&T "globe" (1984); Steff Geissbuhler's "eye/ear" for Time Warner (1990); and Landor Associates' FedEx "arrow" (1994). Taking a page from the historic preservationist movement in architecture, we have the first signs of attempting to document the cultural history of these designs.

The Stone Twins, Declan and Garech, were among the first to document and publish their project, *Logo R.I.P.* (2003). This little black book dutifully notes the history and fate of major icons of the twentieth century, while its companion website serves as an electronic repository of condolences. This graveyard of commerce is a fascinating study in the types of changes that can befall a corporate behemoth or one of the titans of logo design. Witness the scandalous collapse of Enron—its logo dubbed the "crooked E" and designed by Paul Rand (1997)—or the sad fate of Rand's UPS "package" logo (1961), replaced by what was derisively dubbed "the golden comb-over," (FutureBrand, 2003). In reaction, designer Scott Stowell penned "The First Report of the (Unofficial) Graphic Design Landmarks Preservation

Commission,"⁴ advocating for the preservation of logos such as Bell, CBS, and UPS, which like great buildings have become an integral part of the landscape and our lives and thus deserve to be maintained, even if freed from their former service. As Rob Giampietro has noted, this proposal taps into our affection for those things that come to form our everyday experience. He writes: "We are the nodes on these companies' networks, so invariably we feel a sense of ownership over their identities. In allowing them to move through us, we have, even temporarily, made their identities our own, witnessing television signals, phone calls, and packages as they spread from one person to the next, all over the globe."⁵ Paradoxically, could the desire we feel to preserve these icons be the result of the same love engendered through the mechanisms of branding, which in turn feeds the destruction of these logos in the first place? In a different yet similar vein, designer Ji Lee has been documenting the vestiges of New York's Twin Towers, whose iconic forms on the skyline made them an indispensable component of so many of the city's logos and graphics. In a reversal of fortune in this case, the architecture cannot be preserved, so what remains is its ghostly presence and absence, the memory of what was once there.

In the aftermath of its golden age, corporate identity became, well, corporate: rigid, cold, sterile, and imperious. How to make a proper corporate logo became increasingly formulaic, built on the back of whatever was successful before. Formal solutions could be easily categorized as a taxonomy of visual effects: vertical striping, globes, stars, arrows, ligatures, optical illusions, and so on. On August 1, 1981, at 12:01 am, our understanding of the potential of identity to express its uncorporate side debuted on a few thousand television sets in northern New Jersey. MTV was born. Its identity—a bold, blocklike "M" with the sprayed-painted letters "TV" on top—was created by a trio of graphic designers working as Manhattan Design. Their early sketches for the mark "seemed too normal-looking. Frank [Olinsky] suggested that the logo needed to be less corporate somehow, de-faced or graffitied."⁶ Eschewing the typically fixed corporate color palette, the most important effect of this mark was its ever-changing set of patterns, images, and colors that filled the blocky mass of its "M." The age of dynamic identity was born.

Today this feature has migrated to more traditional bastions of corporate culture, as witnessed by the recent redesign of AOL

as "Aol." (Wolff Olins, 2009), which offers seemingly endless possibilities of background image choices. Perhaps the most familiar dynamic identity today is that of Google, whose ever-changing logos, called Doodles, are viewed by many millions of users each day. The complexity of these offerings has varied, from the first modified Google logo (a stick figure behind one of the "o"s, an homage to the Burning Man symbol) designed in the late '90s to more complicated interactive offerings, such as the guitar-shaped, playable, and recordable Doodle created to celebrate Les Paul's ninety-sixth birthday (2011).

Today, innovations in the world of identity programs are happening not so much in the corporate world but rather in the cultural arena. Sure, the stakes aren't as high so the ground is more fertile for exploration, and much of the more adventurous work is for the most visually attuned institutions, but we should remember that the prevailing atmosphere in such places is fundamentally conservative, as in the conservation of objects, reputations, and endowments, and tying to history as much as possible. As James Twitchell notes in his book *Branded Nation*, the museum became a site of intense focus around issues of branding just as the number of museums and like destinations and their audiences grew dramatically, particularly in the museum boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s. It was no longer enough to book the latest blockbuster shows, stock its gift shops with the newest offerings, or create destination restaurants as part of its experience: the museum's projection of its own personality must now follow suit. Twitchell's thesis is simple: where there's a surplus of anything, we find branding.⁷ The art world is not immune to the same laws of supply and demand and competition.

The Walker Art Center, where I work, was among the very first museums to enter into this terrain of mutable identities when design director Laurie Haycock Makela commissioned legendary typographer Matthew Carter to create an innovative font called, appropriately, Walker (1994–1995). This font allowed designers to add and subtract serifs and to add underlines and overlines to a bold, uppercase base tiling face. Carter's prescient solution was a piece of software, a tool to create design. It worked insofar as the Walker's in-house design studio is staffed by typographically trained designers and produces all of its own materials. Walker Expanded is an identity developed for the institution following its building expansion in 2005. Like its predecessor, it is a piece of software. It

Web 2.0: Slippery When Wet

Ever since the introduction of Apple's OS X Aqua interface in 2002, a dizzying array of dimensional effects has entered the collective graphic toolbox: cast or drop shadows; rounded corners and beveled edges; soft, bulbous typefaces; reflective, waterlike surfaces; shiny highlights; gradients; and candy color palettes. These effects have come to signify Web 2.0, the participatory and collaborative culture of user-generated content facilitated by social media—the kind of experience promised with Web 1.0. This slick, glossy aesthetic became so pervasive that it was easier for many websites to adopt the look and feel of Web 2.0 graphics than to incorporate any substantive changes to its interaction and engagement with users. These special effects quickly migrated to the world of branding, prompting blog posts and tutorials on how to makeover your old logo. Like so many styles, this trend is subsiding, something Elliot Jay Stocks argued in his presentation "Destroy the Web 2.0 Look," at the 2007 Future of Web Design conference in New York. —AB



Steff Geissbuhler, TimeWarner logo, 1990



Paul Rand, UPS logo, 1960



Lester Beall, International Paper logo drawing, 1960



Saul Bass, Bell Telephone logo, 1968



Sol Sender, Obama '08 logo, 2006



Favicon
With the release of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5 web browser in 1999, users were able to see a graphic icon associated with the website's address or name when it appeared in the address bar or, if the website was bookmarked, in the list of the user's favorites, hence "Favicon." Limited to the diminutive size of 16-by-16 pixels, Favicons must serve as minimalist variants of logos, challenging designers to distill their essence to the lowest common denominator of visual representation. As the examples here show, some logos are instantly recognizable, while others don't fare too well at such small scale. —Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio



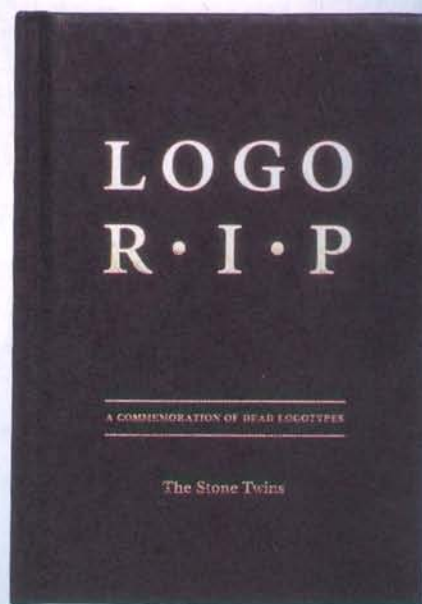
Michael P. Pierce, Favicon Collage, 2004. Courtesy MPP Favicon Gallery



Declan Stone and Garech Stone, Logo R.I.P., 2003. Courtesy BIS Publishers

Lost Logos

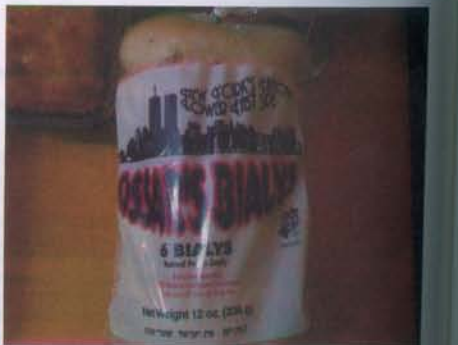
Scott Stowell penned the essay, "The First Report of the (Unofficial) Graphic Design Landmarks Preservation Commission," which applies the rationale used in the historic preservation of buildings to the world of visual communication. Stowell asks: "The choices made in creating a piece of graphic design are as much a representation of a particular time as those made in creating architecture. So why don't we care when a logo we've been living with for decades is renovated—or an elegant signage system is defaced by unsympathetic additions?" (*Metropolis* magazine, May 2004). In 2003, Declan and Garech Stone published the book and website *Logo R.I.P.* They write: "Logo R.I.P.' is a commemoration of logos withdrawn from the ocular landscape. Many are considered icons of their time or international design classics, whilst others cost millions only to be replaced within a year or two. These logos disappeared, yet in contrast to the ceremony and pomp that greeted their arrival, they often suffered an ignoble death. Now deemed defunct, they are consigned to the logo graveyard, no longer able to signify." —AB



Declan Stone and Garech Stone, Logo R.I.P., 2003. Courtesy BIS Publishers



World Trade Center Preservation Project
 Shortly after 9/11, graphic designer Ji Lee began photographing awnings, trucks, fliers, and other commercial artifacts emblazoned with images of the World Trade Center. Thousands of such images can still be found around the city; most are connected with small businesses, which are likely to disappear in the not-so-distant future, taking with them these popular signifiers of a lost local identity. Lee uploads his images to a Flickr photosharing group called the WTC Logo Preservation Project. More than thirty members have contributed content at WTCLogo.com. —EL



Ji Lee, WTC Logo Preservation Project, 2001— Courtesy the artist



BB-TYPE

SPECIMEN

B+B=B



Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

Armond Mevis and Linda van Deursen have been leading voices in the Dutch graphic design scene since the early 1990s. Their 2001 system for the city of Rotterdam pioneered the idea of a visual identity as a "toolbox of graphic shapes, to be assembled in different configurations for different things." The bright, neon-inspired identity system they created for the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen takes cues from the museum's history: "We liked the idea that the building had grown over the years, with new buildings added to older buildings, like a growing architectural collection in itself. And we were into the idea of the museum originally being a combination of two different art collections by former collectors, Mr. Boijmans and Mr. van Beuningen. A double collection." The identity expresses these concepts of doubling and growth through its multi-line typeface, custom-made by Radim Pesko. The linear elements of the typeface nest inside each other to create letterforms that vary in weight and complexity, from a slim single-line construction to densely striped variants. The mix of candy-store colors heightens the eclectic, pop-culture sensibility. Signs for temporary exhibitions break with the overall identity, as each exhibition acquires its own typographic voice. Emphasizing the disjunction, the signs are printed on panels that lean against the wall, clustering together at the museum's main entry point and then appearing again at the start of each gallery. —EL See Linda van Deursen and Armond Mevis, *Recollected Work*, 2005

Radim Pesko, *Boijmans typeface*, 2003. Courtesy Mevis & Van Deursen



Mevis & Van Deursen, *Museum Boijmans van Beuningen identity system*, 2003. Courtesy the artists



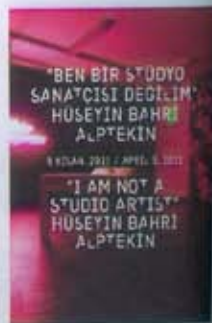
Timo Geessner, *Kraliça typeface for SALT identity system*, 2011. Courtesy Project Projects

SALT

The graphic identity for SALT, a cultural institution in Istanbul, avoids the idea of a logo altogether. The design team at Project Projects commissioned a custom typeface whose letters S, A, L, and T have a distinctively elliptical form. The typeface, *Kraliça* (designed by Timo Geessner), appears across SALT's communications materials, from signage to catalogues, insinuating its identity everywhere. Project Projects invites designers and typographers to create new alterations to *Kraliça*. —EL

SALT EXPLORES CRITICAL AND TIMELY ISSUES IN VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE, AND CULTIVATES INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS FOR RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTAL THINKING.

Project Projects, *SALT identity system*, 2011. Courtesy the artists

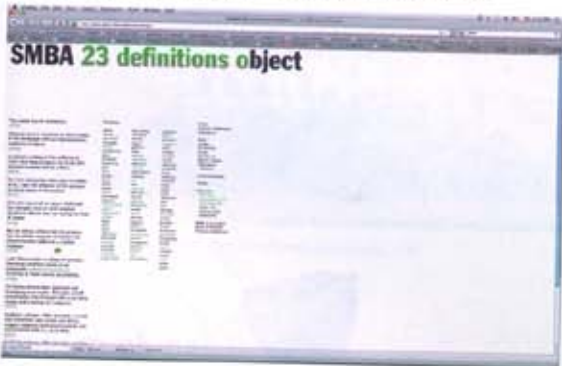
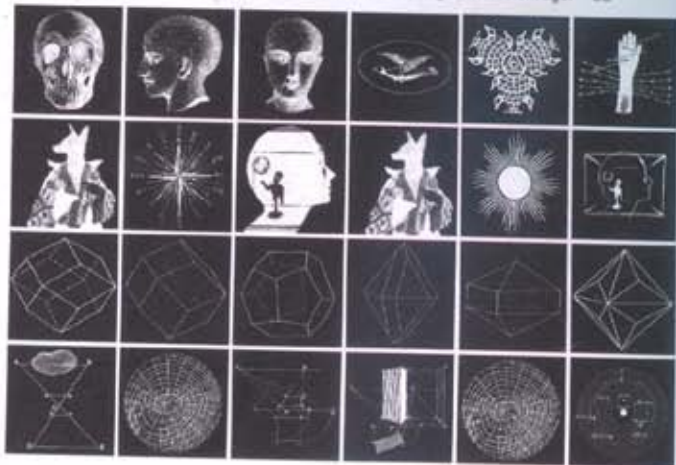




Above and right: Jonathan Barnbrook, 17th Biennale of Sydney, 2010. Courtesy the artist.

17th Biennale of Sydney

Jonathan Barnbrook's visual identity for the 17th Biennale of Sydney in 2010 employs a mix of elements to create brands and sub-brands for a diverse series of cultural events. The modular design engenders consistency and efficiency, while the cacophony of elements makes each outcome unique. Designed to appear jumbled together, the elements range from Victorian-age medical illustrations and diagrams of crystal structures to abstract assemblies of geometric shapes. The multiple typefaces were drawn by Barnbrook himself, who sees letterforms as the visual embodiment of contemporary speech and an essential piece in the "jigsaw" of a design project. According to Barnbrook, who has worked in the UK as a designer since the early 1990s, sources for the type range from lettering painted on the side of the plane that bombed Hiroshima to commercial signage from Barnbrook's London neighborhood. With its underlying rhythm and constrained palette of black, red, and white, this flexible identity remains recognizable across a broad range of applications. The system is simple, but the results are complex, yielding a cabinet of curiosities that comments on a ragtag civilization surviving in a turbulent age. —EL



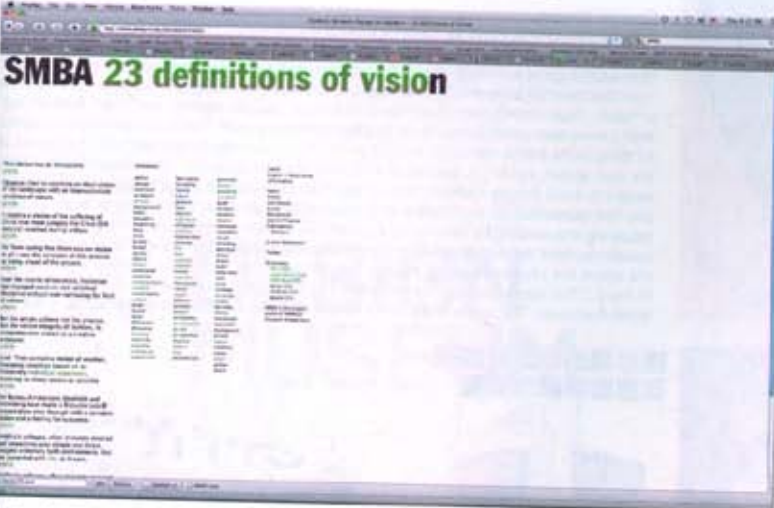
Mature street trees / 能夠 沈思與放鬆 / Having at least 600 square foot to myself /

Accoglienti aree pedonali a misura d'uomo con posti a sedere / 在舒適的步行區內設有座位 / การจราจรที่คล่องตัว / 能夠自由地在街道中行走 / Being able to wander the streets, regardless of whether it's

Japanese sake / Savoir dans quelle direction marcher sans lire les panneaux / 친한 친구들과 스스름 없이 어울릴 수 있는 것 / Seubare Strassen / I find comfort in just being busy and being in a city where there is always things happening /

平日徒步到熟練店家的水果攤、熟食店、以及乾洗店 / ګوښتونې مېرمن و شوق ساتنه / buurt, een deel van de sociale omgeving / ni ayika ogbon ati oye / Knowing I can escape / Qo-dered chaos / Està sempre movimentada / Sushi lunchbox special / Empty seat on the subway /

Suki & Min, Identity for the first cycle of BMW Guggenheim Lab, 2010–2011. Courtesy the artists.



Jonathan Puckey, SMBA Dictionary, 2006. Courtesy the artist.

Jonathan Puckey on SMBA Dictionary

In 2006 the SMBA [Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam] approached me to design and program their new website. The SMBA is a project space of the Stedelijk Museum and presents contemporary art from an Amsterdam context in their art space on the Rozenstraat. I was interested in using data input into the website as ingredients to distill some kind of new meaning. I created a dictionary system: the SMBA enters words in their personal dictionary, the definitions of these words are defined by the sentences that they appear in. These definitions both define the words and define the way SMBA uses them. Every time one of these words appears in the text, it is linked to the definition page. The colors of the words vary from black (no definitions) to bright green (many definitions). The titles at the top of the page are built up using the words in the SMBA dictionary with the same kind of auto complete function that is used in mobile phones for SMS. Using the custom content management I designed and implemented, the people at the SMBA can easily maintain their website by themselves. —Jonathan Puckey, jonathanpuckey.com

BMW GUGGENHEIM LAB

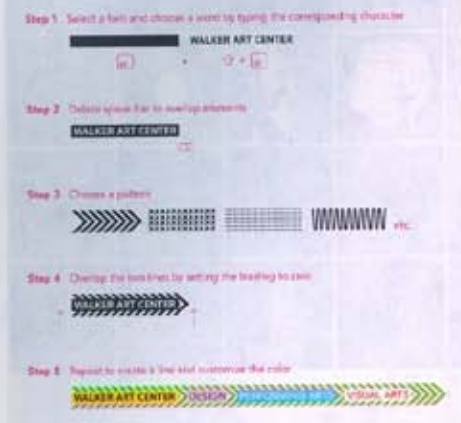
Suki & Min, BMW Guggenheim Lab Identity system, 2011. Courtesy the artists.

BMW Guggenheim Lab
The experimental project—part education, part architecture—travels around the world in three iterations over the course of six years, addressing issues of the contemporary urban environment through public programs and discourse. Suki & Min were selected to create the overall identity for the project as well as the mark for its first cycle. For the initial series, Suki & Min's dynamic mark uses the word "lab" as a structural framework, which is then filled with ever-changing content. More specifically, the project website, which was created by the Bureau for Visual Affairs, uses a pool-coded response within the letterforms. The simple but ingenious solution here bare the parallelism of the project, while playing with the relationship between sentences, words, and letterforms. —AB



Walker Expanded

While Herzog & de Meuron's architecture was at the heart of the Walker Art Center's expansion in 2005, its institutional identity was also expanded and updated to mark the new era. Building on an existing identity that revolved around a type family, aptly named Walker and designed in 1995 by Matthew Carter, the Walker's design director Andrew Blauvelt and designer Chad Kloepper created Walker Expanded, a flexible system of vertical stripes using different words, patterns, motifs, and colors that encase the institution's messaging. To aid in the deployment of this complex system, Eric Olson of Process Type Foundry was hired to create a digital font that would contain all the different elements, allowing for both efficiency and consistency across applications. The result is an ever-changing identity system that maintains a common visual language. —Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio



Eric Olson (Process Type Foundry), Walker Expanded utility, 2005



Ram Koolhaas/OMA, Casa da Música building, Porto, Portugal, 2007
Courtesy the artist



Andrew Blauvelt and Chad Kloepper, Walker Expanded Identity system, 2005. Courtesy Walker Art Center



Stefan Sagmeister with Matthias Ernstberger and Quentin Walsh, Casa da Música identity system featuring Logo Generator by Ralph Ammer, 2007. Courtesy the artists



casa da música

Casa da Música

A music hall in Porto, Portugal, Casa da Música was designed in 2005 by Ram Koolhaas' OMA (Office of Metropolitan Architecture). The building's unusual geometry makes its profile vary from each angle of approach. Stefan Sagmeister used this shifting silhouette to create a brand mark that takes six different shapes. Together, the six views break down into seventeen planes or facets. Sagmeister's team (Matthias Ernstberger, Quentin Walsh, and Ralph Ammer) created a seventeen-point color-picking tool that samples a given image and generates a palette for filling in the facets with color. Images and textures can also be mapped onto the planes of the logo object, yielding a graphic identity with endless potential. While Sagmeister initially sought to avoid directly depicting the architecture, he realized that the building is itself a logo, one that demanded an imaginative and unexpected treatment: "We did try to avoid another rendering of a building by developing a system where this recognizable, unique, modern form transforms itself like a chameleon on application to application, changes from media to media where the physical building itself is the ultimate (very high-res) rendering in a long line of logos." The logo's multiple renditions are intended to reflect the range of music performed inside the house. The logo is like a dice with distinct faces and distinct personalities. —EL



operates and loads like a font but instead of individual characters it contains words and customizable patterns that can be merged together on the same line. The tool approach to identity creation can be seen in Stefan Sagmeister's identity for Casa da Música (2007). His software, called Color Picker, isolates, identifies, and creates a color palette based on a selected image, which is used to fill the sides of the logo, its shape derived from a rotating view of the music house's unusually shaped building. Jonathan Puckey, working with an identity created by Mevis & Van Deursen for the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), designed the museum's website, which includes a dynamic "dictionary" of terms parsed from staff entries to the site's content management system.

Perhaps the most extreme example of such variable and flexible identities is one for Marres, a contemporary cultural center in Maastricht, the Netherlands. Created by Maureen Mooren, the identity is essentially an uppercase "M" but of seemingly any font, its full name rendered in multiple typefaces. It is an identity built from every other identity. Project Projects' recent identity program for SALT, a contemporary cultural center in Istanbul, offers a custom-designed typeface, *Kraliçe* (Timo Gaessner, 2011), as its core identity. However, there is no fixed logo configuration; rather, the letterforms "S," "A," "L," and "T" are specially treated like alternate characters in the font and make their appearance in the various messages issued by the institution. In a new twist, this distributed identity program, like the organization itself, becomes the site of a changing program of activity as Project Projects invites a new typographer to reimagine its quattro ensemble of letterforms every four months.

Branding arose to inject a little personality into the abstraction of corporate identity. After all, a logo is just a name, while a brand is an experience. Branding today is a narrative-driven enterprise. A logo was a mark of ownership, while a brand is a story, which is the most compelling form of communication and the most personal. Corporate identity sought to make a name recognizable and memorable, while branding is about bonding consumers to companies with ties so strong that in the words of Saatchi & Saatchi, there is "loyalty beyond reason."⁸ To say we live in a branded world is to state the obvious. The concept of branding moved relatively quickly and intensely from the confines of the corporate boardroom to the assembly halls of cities and national governments.

London of the 1990s and the early days of Tony Blair's New Labour government saw the emergence of "Cool Britannia," an attempt to capture the allure of a happening urban scene to rebrand an entire country. Shortly into the new millennium, architect Rem Koolhaas was tasked with imagining a logo for the new European Union flag. His firm's solution of thin vertical stripes representing the colors of each participating country's flag was a novel concept that allowed for infinite expansion (or subtraction). The resulting multicolor design was the seemingly perfect expression of neoliberal inclusive democratic principles ("everyone is equal") under the ubiquitous sign of late-capitalist consumption, the barcode.

One of the more interesting explorations of branding the nation-state was the research project undertaken by Metahaven at the Jan van Eyck Academie, a post-graduate school for art, design, and theory located in Maastricht, the site where the treaty creating the European Union was drafted. Metahaven did not take the EU as its subject but rather the obscure micronation, the Principality of Sealand. Not an island in the traditional sense, it is a World War II-era military fortress just off the coast of England in the North Sea. Occupied since 1967 by British Major Paddy Roy Bates and his family and associates, this elevated concrete platform has asserted its sovereignty ever since, although no sovereign states recognize its existence. Sealand's principle activities have evolved from hosting a data haven (HavenCo, 2000–2008), a safe harbor from the regulation and restriction of information, to current attempts to establish online gambling operations. In this rare instance, a single structure represents an entire country: the map is the territory. Perhaps not surprisingly, the resulting designs replicate the Sealand platform: two verticals and a horizontal on top. With this simplified system and formal gestalt, a wide variety of marks are possible. I prefer an image of two Dixie cups and, appropriately, a paperback copy of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's *Empire*, the now-classic text on the new political order of globalization.

For this exhibition, Metahaven tackles the emerging dominance of social media empire Facebook (and others like it). With more than 750 million users, Facebook would be the third largest country behind only China and India. Appropriately named *Facestate*, this project examines the two sides of this Janus-faced world of centrally owned, privately held information. Social media platforms such as Facebook allow individuals to plug into an

existing system, and in contrast to its failed predecessor, Myspace, offers only a limited ability to customize one's look and feel. As Metahaven notes, Facebook represents a new type of organizational entity, one formed in, by, and through networks and driven by standards, templates, and protocols, not brand promises (Mark "privacy is no longer a 'social norm'" Zuckerberg).⁹ More powerful than its logo, Facebook's "like" function permeates the web, and its automated sign-in protocol on other sites makes nearly all such occurrences already a cobranded experience. Social networks are harbingers of the evolution of the value of capital in our society, from the direct product of labor in the days of Karl Marx to the effects of education and knowledge, dubbed cultural capital, and finally to an era of social capital, where affiliations, relations, communities, and networks of mutual recognition operate.

The impulse to identify oneself to others is particularly powerful, a nearly ancient impulse. Among the earliest forms of branding, heraldry began to flourish in Europe in the twelfth century. Concerned with granting, creating, recording, and displaying various coats of arms and badges, heraldry is a graphic language used to identify groups of people such as states, armies, or families. The system of heraldry is described in textual terms as a blazon, a set of instructions or descriptions for the creation of a particular mark. To *emblazon* is to create a mark, which requires some degree of interpretation. Dexter Sinister, which took its name from heraldic terminology for right and left, created a heraldic mark for a proposed experimental art school project as part of Manifesta 6, a biennial of contemporary art. Their blazon reads "(party) per bend sinister." The shield is divided with a line ("(party)") that begins in the upper corner (the viewer's right but since the orientation in heraldry is from the user's position, this would be the left, or "sinister") and bisects the field diagonally ("bend").¹⁰ The resulting form is independent of any material and thus can be embodied in many different ways. For example, Dexter Sinister has rendered its blazon as a lapel pin or a neon sign.

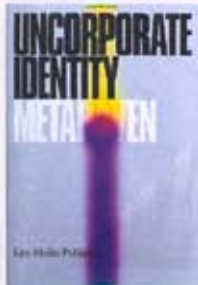
Given heraldry's roots in the identification of army units since at least the Middle Ages, we should not be surprised to learn that the Pentagon maintains an Institute of Heraldry. Its responsibilities include "the coordination and approval of coats of arms and other insignia for Army organizations." An offshoot of the Heraldic Program Office



Above and left: Metahaven, Facestate, 2011



HM Fort Roughs, Principality of Sealand, shown after a fire, 2006



Metahaven, *Uncorporate Identity*, 2010 Photo: Sally Foster Courtesy Lars Müller Publishers

Uncorporate Identity

Few collectives have achieved more notoriety than the Amsterdam-based partnership Metahaven. This "studio for design and research" creates books, articles, exhibitions, lectures, and visual projects that display equal confidence with academic writing and graphic form-making. Metahaven's 2010 book *Uncorporate Identity* (edited by Metahaven and Marina Vishmidt) compiles texts and visual projects critiquing the state of design and the design of states in the postmillennial global economy. Visually, *Uncorporate Identity* demonstrates the reorientation of experimental design since the 1990s. Back in the day, progressive designers sought to interpret content, using typography to amplify and emphasize words and phrases and draw out nuances of meaning. In contrast, Metahaven's work is brutally systematic, using stripes, gradients, geometric shapes, and typographic watermarks that roll like military tanks across pages of scholarly text, laying down a regime of indiscriminate effects adapted from mass media. —EL



Barcode for Graphic Design: Now in Production, 2011



Reni Kozhass/AMO, proposal for a European Union flag, 2002



QR code for Walker Art Center Design blog

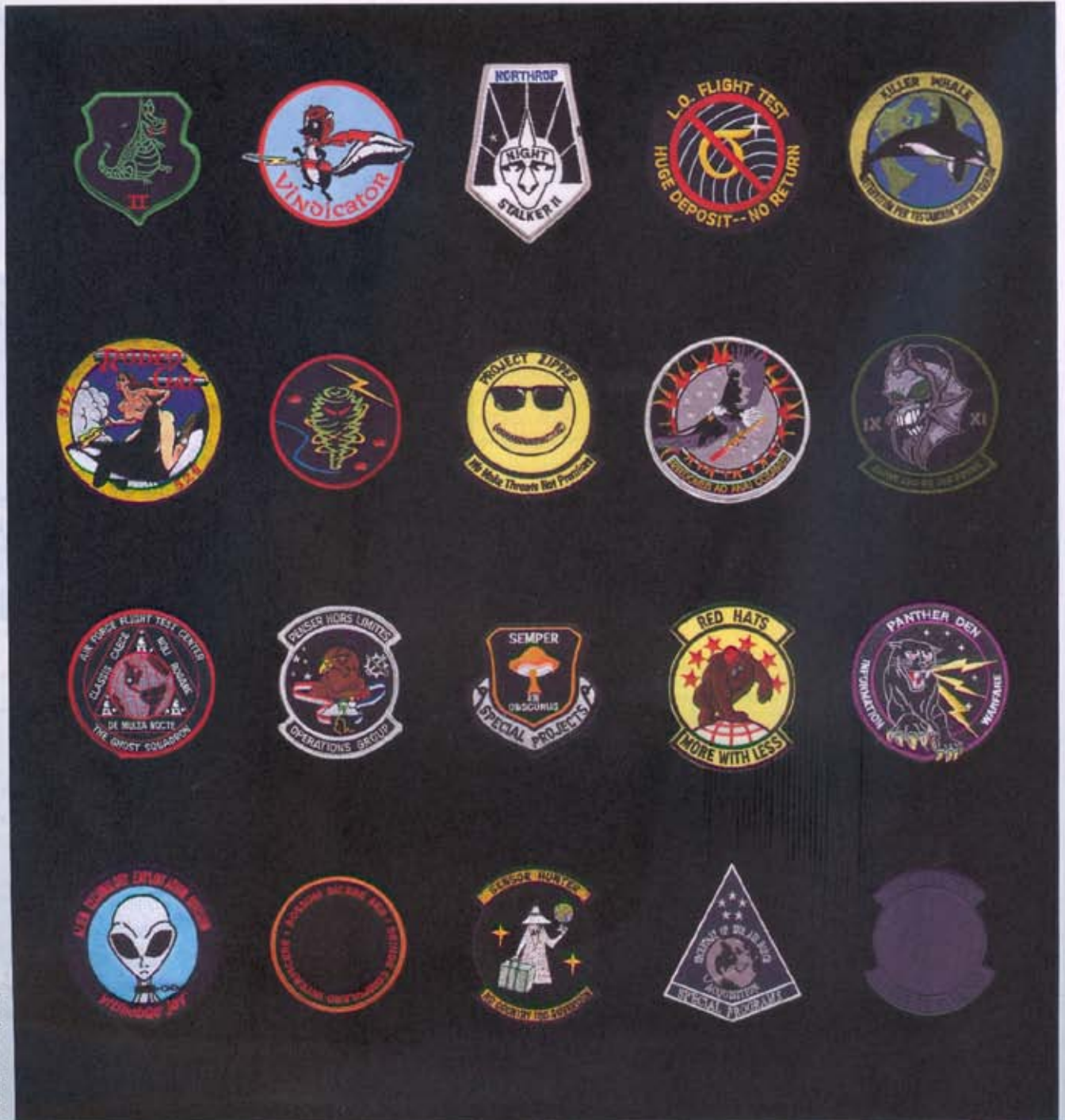
Barcode and QR Code

Bar codes use a series of stripes of varying width to turn alphanumeric content into scannable data. The first Universal Product Code (UPC) was applied to a pack of Wrigley chewing gum in 1974. Barcodes have been ubiquitous ever since, linking physical things with digital networks. Barcodes now compete with other technologies, such as radio frequency identification (RFID), used to track the movement of packages, livestock, and even people, and Quick Response (QR) codes, which employ a matrix of squares to convey short pieces of information, such as a phone number or web address, that can be scanned with a mobile phone or other device. While such coding technologies were created primarily to track business transactions, they are now aimed at consumers and have become a powerful marketing mechanism. —EL



Above: Metahaven, Sealand Identity Project, 2003-2004 Courtesy the artists

Symbology: Trevor Paglen is an artist who employs the investigative tools of journalism and social science. To create his 2006 project *Symbology* (Volume 1), Paglen collected embroidered patches from the "black world" of classified military and intelligence units. Although the activities and even the existence of such programs are closely guarded secrets, members of this covert world nonetheless seek to express their group identities. Their underworld patches emulate the established language of the military, where symbols and insignia have long expressed a warrior's rank, achievements, and affiliations. An ominous sense of humor pervades these unofficial insignia, which include anything from a satin-stitched alien head to the warning "Don't ask! NOYFB." Paglen is the author of several books about the culture of national security, including *I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed* by Mike Emblen from the Pentagon's *Black World* (2008). —EL



Trevor Paglen, *Symbology* Vol. 1, 2006. Courtesy the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery. Collection Mike Wilkins & Sheila Dugrain.

United States Army Institute of Heraldry

Located at Fort Belvoir, a military installation in Washington, DC, the United States Army Institute of Heraldry provides heraldic services to branches of the armed forces and other governmental entities. The Institute undertakes various activities, such as research, design, development, standardization, presentation, and recording of official symbolic iconography, including flags, medals, badges, insignia, decorations, and seals. Although the US military has been using and issuing insignia and other forms of heraldry since the American Revolution, the roots of official governance can be traced to 1919 when a special office within the Department of War was formed to handle such issues. Public Law 85-263 in 1957 further delineated the authority of the Secretary of the Army to provide heraldic services to the military and other federal entities. —AB

(We Would Like to Share)

Some Thoughts on a Possible School Badge

"The oblique stroke appears at first sight to be the signal that the binary opposition between categories (speech/writing or love/hate) won't hold — that neither of the words in opposition to each other is good for the fight. The stroke, like an over-vigilant referee, must keep them apart and yet still oversee the match."
—Steve Rushton

Heraldry is a graphic language evolved from around 1130 AD to identify families, states and other social groups. Specific visual forms yield specific meanings, and these forms may be combined in an intricate syntax of meaning and representation. Any heraldic device is described by both a written description and its corresponding graphic form. The set of a priori written instructions is called a Blazon — to give it form is to Emblazon. ¶ In order to ensure that the pictures drawn from the descriptions are accurate and reasonably alike, Blazons follow a strict set of rules and share a unique vocabulary. Objects, such as animals and shapes, are called Charges; colors are renamed, such as Argent for Silver or Or for Gold; and divisions are described in terms such as Dexter ("right" in Latin) and Sinister ("left"). ¶ A given heraldic form may be drawn in many alternative ways, all considered equivalent, just as the letter "A" may be printed in a variety of fonts. The shape of a badge, for example, is immaterial and different artists may depict the same Blazon in slightly different ways. ¶ The Blazon is a fixed, abstract literary translation of the open, representational graphic symbol (and vice versa.) Using a limited but precise vocabulary, full descriptions of shields range in complexity, from the relatively simple:

Azure, a bend Or to the relatively complex:

(Party) per fess, Vert and Gules, a boar's head erased Argent, langued Gules, holding in his mouth the shankbone of a deer proper, in chief: and in base two wings conjoined in lure reversed Argent. Above the shield is placed an Helm befitting his degree with a Mantling Vert doubled Argent, and on a Wreath of the Livery is set for Crest a hand proper holding a Celtic cross paleways, Or, and in an Escrol over the same the motto "Audace".

Today, schools, companies and other institutions may obtain officially recognized forms from heraldic authorities, which have the force of a registered trademark. ¹ Heraldry might equally be considered part of a personal or institutional heritage, as well as a manifestation of civic and/or national pride. However, many users of modern heraldic designs do not register with the proper authorities, and some designers do not follow the rules of heraldic design at all. ¶ Bastards. ² ¶ In proposing a badge for a (possibly) temporary art school, we are interested in following, yet superseding, heraldic conventions. ³ Just as *Manifesta 6* is founded on a new, informed reading of art schools, so its logo can be founded on a new, informed reading of heraldry. Both referring to, and departing from, tradition. ¶ Our Blazon:

(party) per bend sinister

translated to English means:
a blank shield with a single diagonal line running from the bottom left edge to the top right hand corner. The badge we would like to wear is two-faced — both founded on, and breaking from, established guidelines. Stripped to its fundamentals, and described in heraldic vocabulary, it is UNCHARGED. It is a schizophrenic frame, a paradox, a forward slash making a temporary alliance between categories, simultaneously generic and/or specific. —Dexter Sinister

Notes

1. In fact, Scotland's chief heraldic authority, Lord Lyon, retains far-reaching powers equal to a high-court judge.
2. It is worth noting that, on reading an early draft of this text, heraldic expert David Phillips commented, "People who use arms without authority are cads, not bastards."
3. Contrary to Josef Albers' notes on Black Mountain College logo from the March 1935 newsletter: "We are not enamored of astrological, zoological, heraldic, or cabalistic fashions. We have hunted neither the phoenix nor the unicorn, we have dug up no helmet and plume, nor have we tacked on learned mottoes. And for 'sapientia' or 'virtus' we are still too young. ¶ Instead, as a symbol of union, we have chosen simply a simple ring. It is an emphasized ring to emphasize coming together. Or, it is one circle within another: color and white, light and shadow, in balance. And that no one may puzzle."



**(party)
per
bend
sinister**



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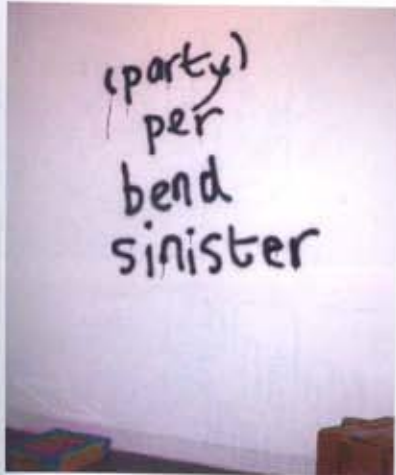
PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOVE

PLEASE VERIFY THE LAYOUT FOR
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 • TYPESTYLE
 • COLOR SEPARATION.

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 Proof not approved. Additional proof needed.

CHANGES:

File # 201215101 SIGNATURE DATE 9/1/05
 DAVID REINFURT



Christophe Szpajdel Agarthus, Cryptoford, Desecrator, Macabrum, Seditisk, Discretion, 6 Black Coffins, Wicked Gifts. These are only seven of the more than 7,000 black or death metal bands that Christophe Szpajdel has created logos for in the past twenty years. A Belgian currently living in Exeter, Devon, in the UK, Szpajdel works in forestry engineering as well as being a retail assistant at the Cooperative Food Stores and in his free time creates—by hand—intensely intricate, detailed, and energetic logos for the obscure (literally and figuratively) market of death metal. Known as the Lord of Logos, he works fast and furiously, just like the music, and in return all he asks for, although he doesn't always get it, is copies of the CDs with his work printed on them. Despite the niche market and apparent visual sameness of death metal aesthetics, Szpajdel has a remarkable range of approaches that are inspired by Art Deco, Art Nouveau, and nature. The 240-page book *Lord of the Logos*, catalogues his impressive output to date. —Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio



created by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919, the institute's purview was expanded in 1957 by Public Law 85-263 to furnish services to essentially all branches of the federal government, covering all manner of objects: flags, streamers, coats of arms, emblems, seals, and badges. Trevor Paglen, an artist, writer, and experimental geographer, has been collecting numerous examples of "black world" military badges. These emblems identify various entities engaged in secret military and covert intelligence operations. Pointing to the inherent paradox of these badges, Paglen asks: "If the symbols and patches contained in this book refer to classified military programs, the existence of which is often a state secret, why do these patches exist in the first place? Why jeopardize the secrecy of these projects by attaching images to them at all—no matter how obscure or indirect those images might be?"¹¹ By way of explanation, Paglen suggests that esprit de corps plays a key role: "Insignias became a way to show the rest of the world who one was affiliated with—something similar to a sports fan wearing the colors of their home team. To wear insignia is to tell the world that one is part of something much larger than oneself."¹² Indeed, forms of identity are most powerful among those who share it. The code is best or only understood within the community it is intended to serve. The scale and scope of black world insignia is unknowable, although one could easily speculate that it has increased, just as the budgets for such operations have grown since the events of September 11, 2001.

The realm of the subcultural—just like the black world of the government—exists separate from yet part of the larger culture—its codes, styles, and argot serve as markers of distinction from mainstream culture and its social norms. The world of black metal provides one such segment of subcultural identity that has remained largely resistant to the kind of commodification and absorption into the mainstream that befell other movements such as punk and hardcore. Christophe Szpajdel has created more than 7,000 logos for mostly black metal bands since the mid-1990s, although he has been drawing since childhood. The spiky letterforms and intricate visual complexity of these marks are often unreadable to outsiders but nevertheless provide a powerful attraction and resonance within their community. In these instances, illegibility becomes a hallmark trait, an inscrutable communicative act specifically designed to resist outsider interpretation. The black world of the military and the world of black metal music,

besides sharing an affinity for the symbolic absence of light, converged at Gitmo when so-called Satanic strains of such music were played at deafening volumes as an instrument of torture used by interrogators on their pious Muslim captives.¹³

The classic analysis of the concept of subcultures arose from the work of cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, who in his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) focused on the British punk scene of the 1970s. This youth culture movement, the remnants of which can still be found today, provided fertile ground upon which to observe the recontextualization of ordinary objects such as safety pins or the subversion of mainstream signifiers such as a school uniform or the Union Jack. The fluidity and flexibility of meaning that such strategies laid bare provided plenty of evidence of what semiologists refer to as a floating signifier. Glen Cummings and Adam Michaels in their book *X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X* (2009) explore this iconic letterform of varied meanings across various cultural landscapes, particularly in punk and hardcore music scenes, but also in pornography, the military, and corporate trade names, among many others. As the authors note, the "X" signifies presence ("X marks the spot"), unknown absence ("brand X"), and potency ("XXX rated"). In the naming of new products and services, X reigns supreme: Xerox, Kleenex, Memorex, X-ray, X-Factor, X-Files, X-Box, X-Men, X Games, Timex, Playtex, FedEx, Exxon, Xanax. These fanciful constructions are the lingua franca of the branded world. Their names elide their artificiality, a linguistic vessel or placeholder waiting to be filled with new meanings, associations, promises, and experiences. Cummings and Michaels relate the appeal of the "X" to that of the "O," finding the former more useful in naming circumstances. Undoubtedly, the formal symmetry of each letterform is appealing. While the "X" suggests the intersection or crossing of two things, the "O" connotes continuity and wholeness: no beginning and no end. Like the Kodak Carousel, and branding itself, its action is perpetual. Such is the power of the floating signifier. All that remains is a story to anchor its meaning. ☒

Notes

1. The saga of the proposed 2012 London Olympic Games mark can be read on the relevant Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Summer_Olympics#Logo.
2. The Gaggate episode is chronicled on the website *Brand New*, http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/follow-up_gaggate.php.
3. Alissa Walker, "An Exclusive Interview with the New Gap Logo," *Fastcodesign.com*, October 7, 2010.

<http://www.fastcodesign.com/1662453/an-exclusive-interview-with-the-new-gap-logo>.

4. Scott Stowell, "The First Report of the (Unofficial) Graphic Design Landmarks Preservation Commission," *Metropolis* magazine (May 2004): 104–107.
5. Rob Giampietro, from his blog *Lined and Unlined*, <http://blog.linedandunlined.com/post/404917364/form-giving>.
6. Frank Olin, "The MTV Logo Story," accessed July 13, 2011, <http://www.frankolinsky.com/mtvstory1.html>.
7. James B. Twitchell, *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College, Inc., and Museumworld* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004).
8. Saatchi & Saatchi promote the neologism "lovenark" to talk about the most profound sense of brand loyalty, <http://www.adcentricity.com/services/creative-agency-profiles/saatchi-and-saatchi/>.
9. Metahaven, *Uncorporate Identity* (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010), 8.
10. David Reinfort discusses the creation of the mark as part of his lecture at the Walker Art Center on March 17, 2009, <http://channel.walkerart.org/play/david-reinfort/>.
11. Trevor Paglen, *I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed by Me: Emblems from the Pentagon's Black World*. (Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing, 2008), 10.
12. *Ibid.*, 11.
13. Suzanne G. Cusick, "Music as Torture. Music as Weapon," *Cageprisoners* blog, accessed July 13, 2011, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=19404>.



Above and right: Adam Michaels (Project Projects) and Glen Cummings (MTWTF), 2009. Courtesy the artists.



Adam Michaels (Project Projects) and Glen Cummings (MTWTF), installation views of X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X, W—Project Space, New York, 2009. Courtesy the artists.



Ouroboros

The Ouroboros (or Uroborus) is an ancient symbol depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail. It comes from the Greek words *oura* meaning "tail" and *boros* meaning "eating", thus "he who eats the tail". ¶ The Ouroboros often represents self-reflexivity or cyclicity, especially in the sense of something constantly re-creating itself, the eternal return, and other things perceived as cycles that begin anew as soon as they end (the mythical phoenix has a similar symbolism). It can also represent the idea of primordial unity related to something existing in or persisting before any beginning with such force or qualities it cannot be extinguished. The ouroboros has been important in religious and mythological symbolism, but has also been frequently used in alchemical illustrations, where it symbolizes the circular nature of the alchemist's opus. It is also often associated with Gnosticism, and Hermeticism. ¶ Carl Jung interpreted the Ouroboros as having an archetypal significance to the human psyche. The Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann writes of it as a representation of the pre-ego "dawn state", depicting the undifferentiated infancy experience of both mankind and the individual child. —Wikipedia



Walker Art Center Design Studio, D-Crit Identity system, 2008. Courtesy Emmet Byrne.

D-Crit

"X" is the intersection, the crossroads; it marks the spot, like crosshairs or crossed swords. A constantly rotating stable of found images of design—a humble ice cream cone, the exotic Mars Rover, the playful Linux penguin, or the iconic OMA's CCTV tower—will find itself at the center for observation, study, and critique. This very visual identity was for the School of Visual Arts Master of Fine Arts in Design Criticism program, founded by Alice Twemlow and Steven Heller in 2008. The visual identity program was created by the Walker Art Center design studio, which also provided its truncated moniker, or DJ name, D-Crit. —AB