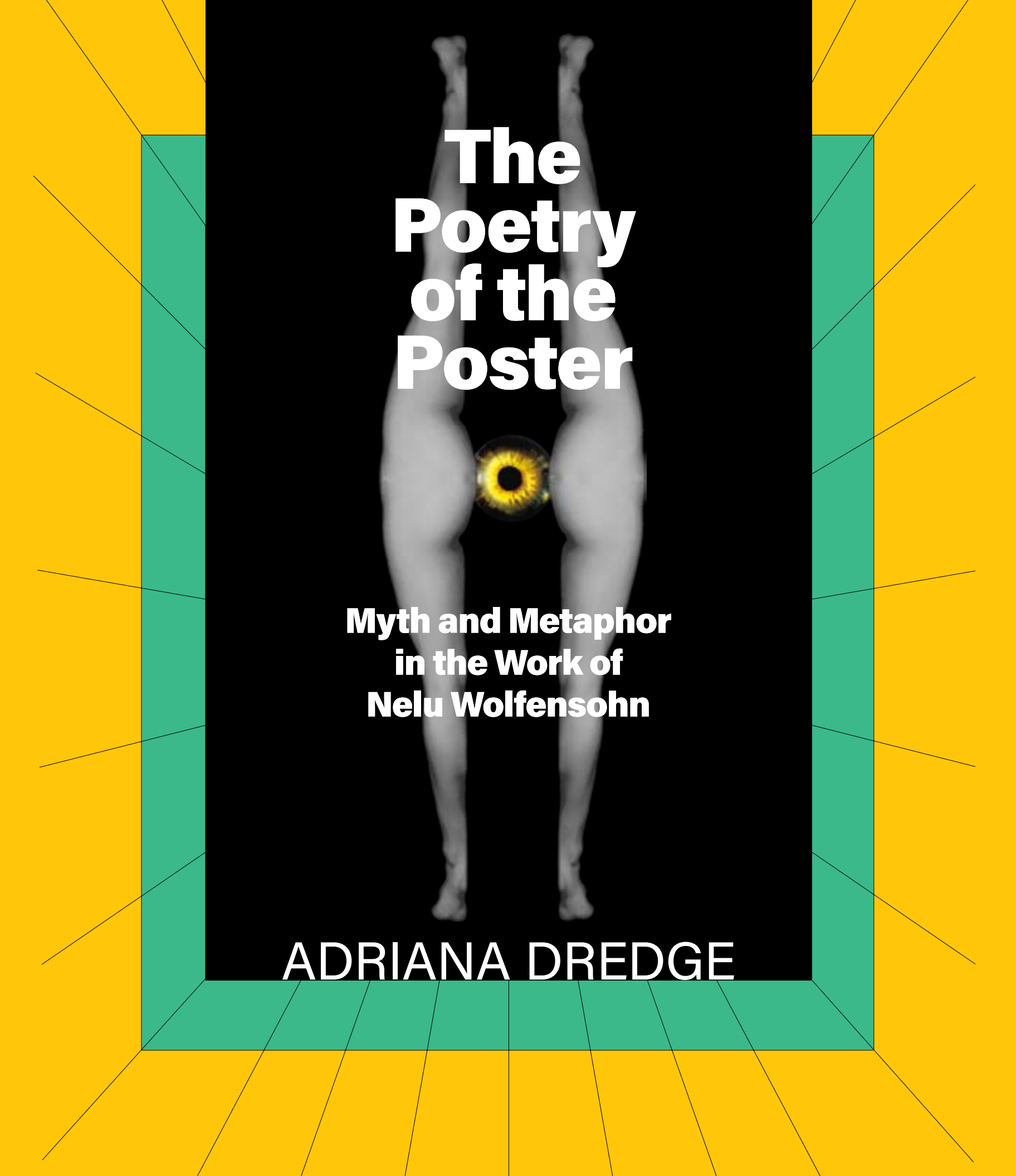




The Poetry of the Poster

**Myth and Metaphor
in the Work of
Nelu Wolfensohn**

ADRIANA DREDGE

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[ABOUT A POSTER / 7](#)
[BECOMING ART / 9](#)
[ADVOCACY AND PROPAGANDA / 10](#)
[KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON / 13](#)
[THE RHETORIC OF THE POSTER OR THE ART OF PERSUASION / 14](#)
[THE TRANSMISSION OF MEANING / 22](#)
[TRANSFER OF INFORMATION / 25](#)
[TRANSFER OF MEANING / 27](#)
[OF SIGNS AND CONCEPTS / 32](#)
[THE SPHERE, THE TRIANGLE / 37](#)
[IT STARTS WITH AN EGG / 44](#)
[THE TYPOGRAPHIC METAPHOR / 49](#)
[SOME SIGNS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS / 57](#)
[SMALL BUT MIGHTY! / 58](#)
[TO TELL A TALE OR THE TOOLS OF NARRATIVE / 62](#)
[THE MYTH OF DESIGN / 64](#)
[DESIGN IS CREATION / 66](#)
[THE MYTH OF THE UNKNOWN / 69](#)
[THE MYTH OF LOVE AND DEATH / 72](#)
[THE MYTH OF THE ARTIST'S EYE / 80](#)
[THE MYTH OF THE ARTIST'S HAND / 86](#)
[ALL THE WORLD'S A ZOO / 90](#)
[COCK A DOODLE-DOO / 93](#)
[THE LOVEABLE KITTEN, THE FIERCE DOG / 94](#)
[THE STORY OF WATER / 107](#)
[SOOTHING WATER, TROUBLED WATER / 109](#)
[A VALUABLE AND UNDERVALUED ELEMENT / 113](#)
[THE STORY OF FOOD / 116](#)
[THE TASTE OF COLOUR / 119](#)
[EATING – A POLITICAL ISSUE? / 120](#)
[THE ART OF CONSUMPTION / 123](#)
[THE STORY OF CONFLICT / 129](#)
[OLD TUNE, MODERN PLATFORM / 130](#)
[THE STORY OF JUSTICE / 134](#)
[THE EQUALITY ALGORITHM / 137](#)
[THE STORY OF MUSIC / 142](#)
[MODERN RHYTHMS / 145](#)
[ALL THAT JAZZ / 147](#)
[DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY / 148](#)
[PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST: MOZART MONDAY / 152](#)
[BEETHOVEN BLUES / 155](#)
[FIESTA AND FESTIVALS / 156](#)
[CELEBRATING DESIGN / 161](#)
[POSTAMBLE / 167](#)

ABOUT A POSTER

A picture is a poem without words
(Horace)

The poster is an art form so ubiquitous, it rarely attracts the attention of art historians and critics. It does, however, attract the attention of the passer-by.

During a very hot summer a few years ago, I came face to face with a poster for a soft drink. It featured the can with its well-known logo, drops of condensation sliding on its cylindrical side, indicating the coolness of the liquid inside it. A single word 'Thirsty' was followed by a question mark. 'Yes! Very thirsty', I replied to the poster in my mind – and made a beeline for the nearest kiosk to purchase a can identical to the one on the poster. I don't even like sweet drinks. But the poster made me aware of a need I didn't know I had. The ad man knew better.

As a familiar presence in the street or on public transport, the poster has ceased to receive the respect it deserves. Much of the teaching and writing about modern art bypasses the poster and even advertising literature features it scantily. Given its power of delivering messages quickly and effectively, it is hardly surprising that the advertising industry has adopted it as a favoured medium. When we consider the ability of a TV advertisement to inform, educate and reposition a product in 30 seconds, we are rightly impressed.

The poster can and does change attitudes and behaviour in the fraction of a second it

takes to glance at it. But it is possible that the poster's rise in importance in advertising has also contributed to its neglect as an art form.

As it stands there, glued to a wall (or a post), immobile, the poster works silently and effectively towards delivering the message. We know that an image is worth a thousand words, we recognise the power of words – but the combination of words and pictures provides an incredible synergy, a powerful way of communicating: it can create contrast, it could imply or include alliteration, it invites interpretation.

Wolfensohn defines himself as a designer; he has done a lot to explain design, and the fraught relationship between designer and consuming public. A series of posters for the School of Industrial Design invites the viewer to understand and appreciate the discipline. What has design ever done for us?

Let's speak design, are the words on this poster, repeated in several languages. Not 'talk about' design, as one would automatically read the sentence, but speak this language called design. The red tongue coming out of the mouth of the marble-like woman is a red Panton chair, a symbol of design. Created by designer Verner Panton, the chair that bears his name is an S-shaped moulded plastic piece of stackable furniture. It is aesthetically pleasing as well

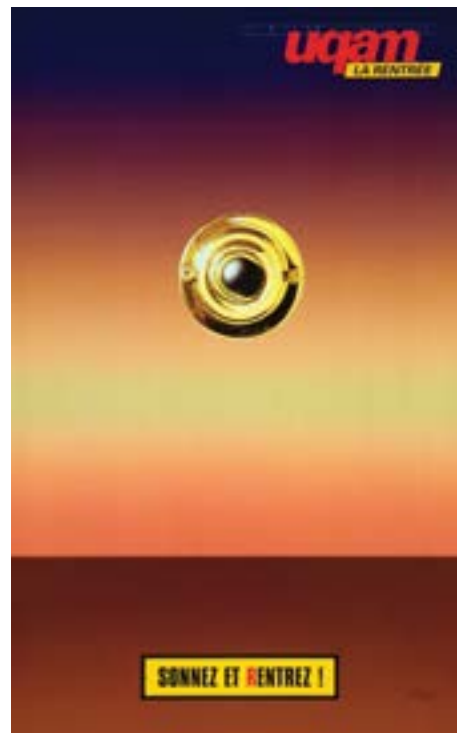
PARLONS
DESIGN!
LET'S
SPEAK
DESIGN!
HABLEMOS
DISEÑO!
2000

PARLONS DESIGN!
LET'S SPEAK DESIGN!
HABLEMOS DISEÑO!

40^E ANNIVERSAIRE
THÉÂTRE DU RIDEAU VERT
1989

as practical, and it became a symbol of what is best in design. The woman in the poster appears to be chiselled in white marble, her features and expression reminiscent of Renaissance sculptures. Not incidentally, the classical figure is female; not incidentally, she is beautiful. Design is born of such beauty, of centuries of practice. The figure is modern too: her features, lit from above, are quite contemporary, like a fashion dummy in a city centre window, and the pale turquoise background is soft and surprising. ‘Let’s speak design’ the poster invites us. It’s a language, suggests Wolfensohn, with its symbols, its metaphors, its codes.

UQAM
SONNEZ ET
RENTREZ!
1999



BECOMING ART

The idea of posting a written notice on a wall, or a tree, for the attention of the passing public goes back to antiquity and increased in the 1600s in the wake of the printing press. As technology advanced the poster evolved to include images and more attractive lettering, but it was not until the 19th century that the turning point occurred.

During a highly charged intellectual and artistic scene in Paris, Jules Chéret produced the first colour lithograph poster. In 1884 he organised the first posters exhibition and two years later, in 1886, he published the first book on poster art. The poster was not just acknowledged, but celebrated as fine art – a position that has been consolidated since.

Around the same time, Paris became more and more obsessed with the performing arts, which were, indeed, experiencing a golden age. Shows, concerts, concert-spectacles, plays, opera, cabaret – the night life of Paris was promoted in full, bold colour by Chéret (Casino de Paris) Mucha (Sarah Bernhardt) and most significantly, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec who designed a series of stunning posters.

The role of the poster as bearer of happy news, telling us about something fun and pleasant about to happen, continues into the 21st century. Some of Wolfensohn’s works are devoted to information on theatre, festivals, conferences and concerts. The style varies from the bold lines, bold colours of the Matisse-like 40th Anniversary of the Théâtre du Rideau Vert to the strong graphics on the Monguzzi conference and the direct but friendly invite to *Sonnez et Rentrez* (Ring and Return, a play on the usual “ring and enter”).

The sinuous curves and flowery, ornate style of Art Nouveau was counteracted by the minimalist starkness of the German Plakatstil: the use of symbolism and simple shapes, the notion of negative space, heralded the beginning of modern design. The move was also a conceptual one: pretty things sell, so while the colourful, florid and fancy style was suitable for advertising Dubonnet aperitif or Pears soap, the poster was turning towards using its powers to promote ideas, to influence change in society. The poster was growing up.

ADVOCACY AND PROPAGANDA

In the sense of disseminating a message of a biased nature, designed to promote a specific point of view – all art is propaganda and each artist projects his point of view, by whatever means he considers to be more effective.

The propaganda posters of Lord Kitchener pointing out to YOU, Uncle Sam wanting YOU for the US Army three years later and Dimitri Moor's poster for the Soviet army addressing YOU, although quite different in graphic style, bear more than a passing resemblance. They illustrate eloquently the explosive power of the image combined with the word, the ability of this juxtaposition to attract and engage the viewer.

Soviet propaganda posters used bold blocks of colour, mainly bright red and black, and strong lines. They created a form of street art which decorated the walls of the cities. Themes like the empowerment of women, education for all and cooperation of workers were depicted with limited but effective artistic and technical resources. The style and technique of these posters continue to inspire our designers. Today's society is still struggling with inequality, homelessness, overconsumption and disease – topics that increasingly preoccupy Wolfensohn, as reflected in his recent work.

It is clear that a rectilinear chronological analysis of the role of the poster is not possible. Nor is it useful to separate into categories such as advertising or ideas posters, since all posters are based on an idea, and the artists are committed to advertising this idea.

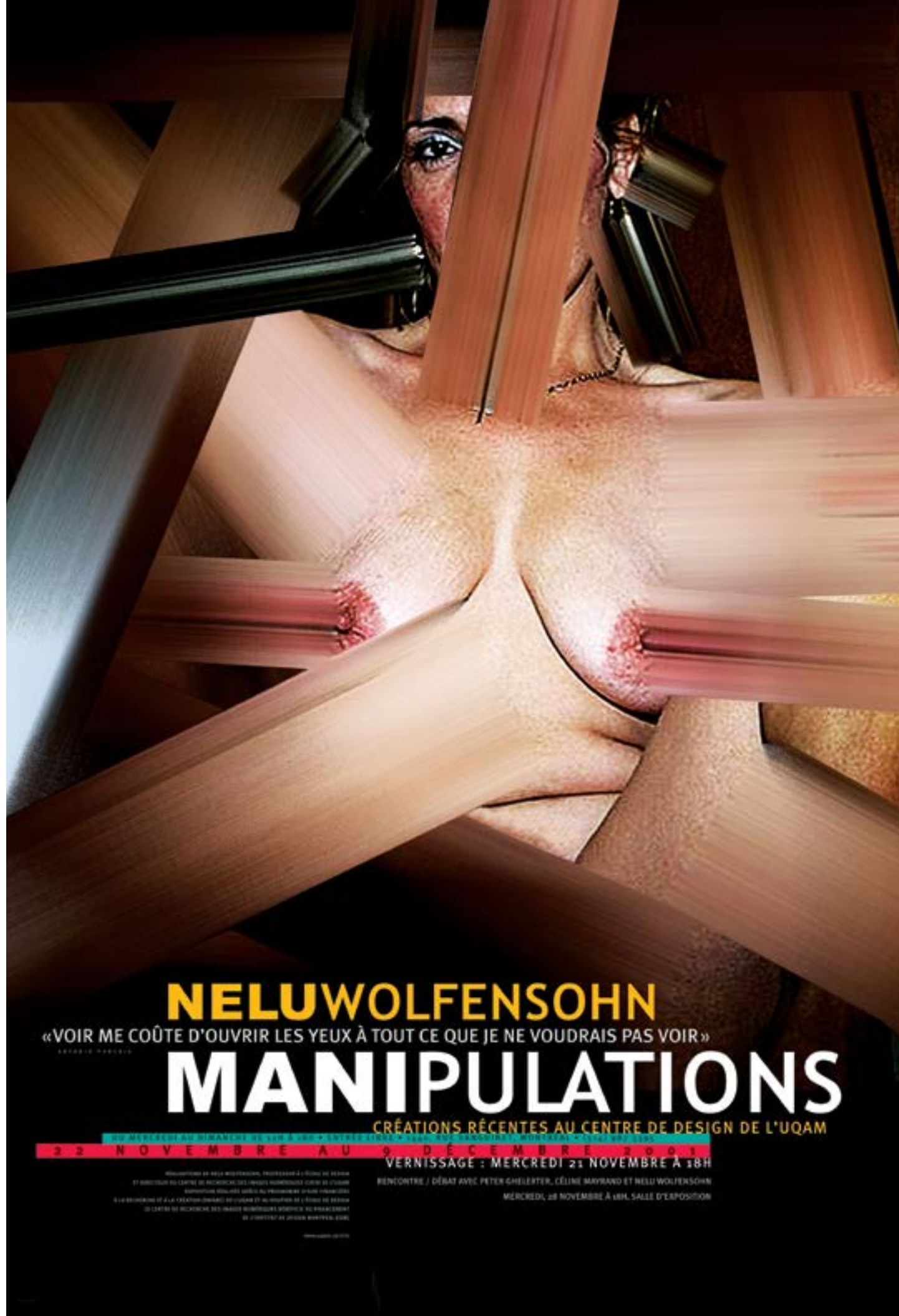
One artist likened the poster to a short circuit, a dramatic connection between idea and image, with explosive results. Attracting attention, informing the viewer, engaging the viewer – it all needs to happen immediately, or it doesn't happen at all. All works of art have limitations; the poster is limited in time, it is the art of the present tense. Like a good joke, the poster has to get to the punch line quickly, or it is no longer amusing.

The message of the poster has an immediate meaning – at a particular time in a specific culture. The primary effect must be direct and immediate, although it can contain layers of meaning – and there is always room for misinterpretation, even for unintended offence. Increasingly, in the current environment, the poster takes its role of conveying a message seriously. Because today's message is serious. It has to do with the failures of our society, it aims to promote equality, food and education for all, combat racism, reduce consumption and save the planet. All in a day's work for the humble poster.



Talented designers make the most of the symbiosis between image and word, stark shapes and bold colours (red is still a favourite) to create a conversation with the

viewer. The element of surprise, sometimes the juxtaposition of contradictory concepts, often the originality of the message, attracts attention, holds it, makes the viewer curious.



KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

The familiar slogan, the white sans serif font on a red background, with the crown above it is one of the most recognisable modern icons, and an interesting moment in the history of the poster. Sometimes society or cultural groups fall in love with a certain style, or a certain medium. Our relationship with the poster endures: we didn't actually fall in love with the genre, and we are not going to divorce it either. Over the last hundred years, the poster had to adapt to many changes of style, preferences and fashion. In the 21st century it continues to morph and adapt – the poster carries on.

As we spend more time looking at our tablets and phones than at the city walls, the poster has migrated to the tablet. The internet has enabled – indeed has forced – a paradigm shift in the creation and production of posters. The manipulation of images, fabulous colours and an infinity of shades, graphic design programs and super-size printers have been used to create very impressive posters. It may be safe to predict that the poster will no longer have to elbow its way into the history of art, as a bona fide art form. It may be safe to predict that generations of talented designers, with brilliant ideas and using modern techniques will continue to produce posters that will stand proudly alongside the best works of art.

MANIPULATIONS
2001

THE RHETORIC OF THE POSTER OR THE ART OF PERSUASION

Creativity takes courage
(Henri Matisse)

What are the conceptual possibilities – and limitations – of design? We would not dare ask this question in relation to art (its possibilities are limitless) but design is functional, it has a job to do. It is its functionality that, according to the artist, and of his choice, banishes the poster from the (supposedly) elevated realm of art and places it firmly in the real world of design. Here, where it defines the art of design, it meets the emotional and functional needs of the viewer.

Because of modern politics speak, the meaning of the word rhetoric has changed to signify the unscrupulous use of language in order to achieve self-serving aims. Not only people are opposed to persuasion attempts, they also doubt the sincerity of the message and its originator.

We will use the term here in its original Aristotelian meaning – ‘the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion’. Persuasion requires knowledge and understanding of the message receiver, knowledge and the ability to maximise the use of techniques available and the mastering of the skills that enable the artist to use the tools in the most effective way. The art of rhetoric has been controversial in the past and it is no less so today: people question the motivation of the artist and try to resist persuasion.

Revived in the middle of the 20th century, new rhetoric goes beyond speech and it is seen as a technique used to reach audiences through various media. Technological advancements facilitated the mass production and distribution of visual messages and the growth and acceptance of advertising as an industry meant better visual techniques, aimed at persuading ever-increasing audiences.

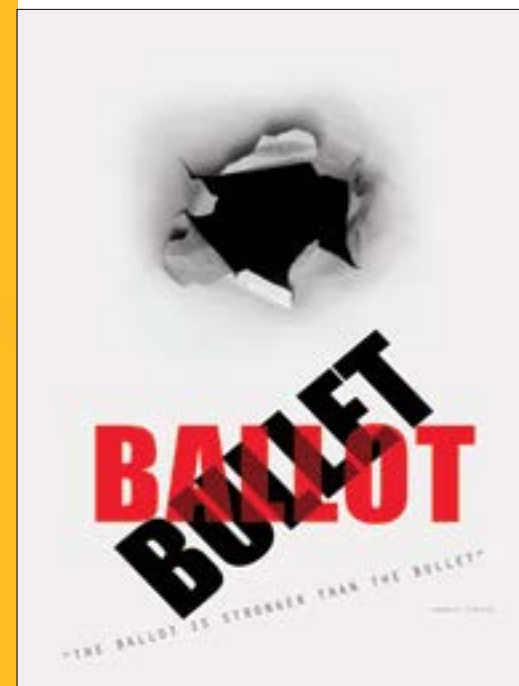
If, originally, the art of rhetoric referred to the spoken language, visual rhetoric is about persuasion achieved with the right choice of shapes, line, colour and composition. Images are sensory expressions and the perception of shapes and colours in a personal, social and cultural context, together, create meaning. Visual rhetoric was first mentioned in 1977, but existed long before that date. Roland Barthes was analysing the images in advertisements – in terms of the denotations and connotations of graphics, colour and composition – in the mid-1960s, while Magritte’s *La trahison des images* was painted in 1929.

As it stands stuck to the wall (or the post), the poster uses the tools of rhetoric to fulfil its multifaceted role: to inform, invite, persuade, challenge, motivate, mobilise. It does that, without sound or movement, in the second it takes the viewer to interrupt his erstwhile train of thought and give his attention to the poster.



WOOF! MEOW!
IN TRUE DIALOGUE
BOTH SIDES ARE WILLING
TO CHANGE
2012

THE BALLOT IS STRONGER
THAN THE BULLET
2015





LIVE LEARN
AND ACHIEVE
2011

CHERNOBYL -
FUKUSHIMA
35-10
2021



CHERNOBYL (1986) - FUKUSHIMA (2011) : 35-10

In the work of Wolfensohn, the initial shot, the first fraction of a second, is crucial and he displays a plethora of artifices to successfully arrest the viewer: a striking colour, an unexpected juxtaposition (the fly on the cheek of Mozart, the triangle suggestive of a woman's hidden genitalia as a flying kite, the mouth of a baguette-crocodile ready to swallow an eye, a cucumber revealed by peeling a banana), the stating of the obvious in a non-obvious way.

The first of five canons of rhetoric is 'inventio': the good idea, the invention. This is not often a thunderbolt, but more likely a process of brainstorming, sketching, erasing, redrawing, until the right image emerges.

'Dispositio': arrangement. The images, the text, the colours, the way they will be positioned on the page in the most effective manner, to make the message as clear and persuasive as possible.

There are infinite ways of arranging images, letters and colour on a canvas, as there is an unlimited number of sequences of words, generating sentences and ordering them on a page – but only one way of getting it right, of creating a story that stimulates, provokes, incites.

The third canon is 'elocutio', or style – the choices the artist makes to impact the viewer, to arouse her emotions. This is the fun part of design, or speech, the introduction of pathos – the tropes that brings tears and/or laughter.

'Memoria' and 'pronuntiatio' are aspects of rhetoric that refer to knowledge – of the topic, of the audience – and the delivery of the message: the small but all important finishing touches. Formulating and sending a message is not sufficient to achieve communication; the message has to be received, decoded, understood and acted upon. As the etymology of the word implies, for communication to take place there has to be commonality – of language, culture, interests – between the sender and receiver. It is the task of the message creator to ensure that he has profound understanding of the audience, so that the message is produced and delivered effectively.

If rhetoric is the control of events for an audience, Wolfensohn's posters present the speaker/artist's version of events within a given situation, in order to affect the audience's decision-making. This requires understanding of the situation, of the audience and of the audience's attitude to the situation. What is the audience's position as regards consumption? Gender equality? Education? The artist is not afraid to tackle any subject head on, however controversial or sensitive - from music to homelessness, from industrial design to the environment.

If we accept that design is a form of rhetoric, with its own communication model, with its own logos (rational) ethos (ethical) and pathos (emotional) appeal strategy, the objective is to simply guide us on how to live our lives: what to believe, what to do, how to do it. The language of design, like the language of art, is the visual generator of emotion: line, colour, composition.

This aim is established and declared from the start: a fundamental characteristic of rhetoric is a transparent objective. The intention of the poster is to invite, amuse, educate, arouse emotion, call to action – or any combination of those. At this point I come to agree with Wolfensohn that the poster is more design than art: the poster is judged by its effectiveness in achieving its objective.

But beware! At first sight it appears that the purpose of the artist is to amuse: Mozart with full make-up, including the fly, a grain de beauté on his rouged cheeks, the French baguette cut halfway like the mouth of an alligator ready to swallow rather than be swallowed, the gold fish in an otherwise empty head, the hen with a question mark egg floating above its head... all rather droll. Of course humour is not the end, but a means to an end. A way of arresting the viewer, holding his attention for the time it takes to deliver the entire message.

Humour is more than that: it is part of the ethos in rhetoric strategy, the means by which the communicator establishes his credibility. It helps to put the audience at ease first, before taking it onto the persuasion path. Laughter, or just a fleeting smile, makes the public relaxed and more inclined to accept whatever message is delivered by the person with the joke. Mozart sticking out his tongue is ready to attract a much wider audience than the serious version of the composer; it also indicates that the event is going to be entertaining, relaxing, inclusive.



Paraprosdokian – the unexpected shift in meaning – is often used in Wolfensohn’s work, sometimes to comic effect, more often to expand or divert the real message. The *Ode a la Joie* (1990) is sung by a choir of nine Beethovens (because it is the 9th symphony) nearly identical except for the centre figure, who is apparently listening. A banana is peeled to reveal a perfectly formed cucumber, Mozart sticks his tongue out, a kitten plays with a small ball that is recognisable as our planet.

The linearity of time gives the orator an advantage over the visual rhetoric: he can use a paraprosdokian trope and take his audience by surprise. Even an amateur Cicero would pose for effect before delivering the humorous words. The visual artist has to display his tropes all at once; the viewer needs a number of tools himself, a cultural context, in order to decode the elements of the message and get the joke.

This type of expectation-defying twist is often used in comedy, and the visual version in film (Spielberg is a master of the paraprosdokian ending).

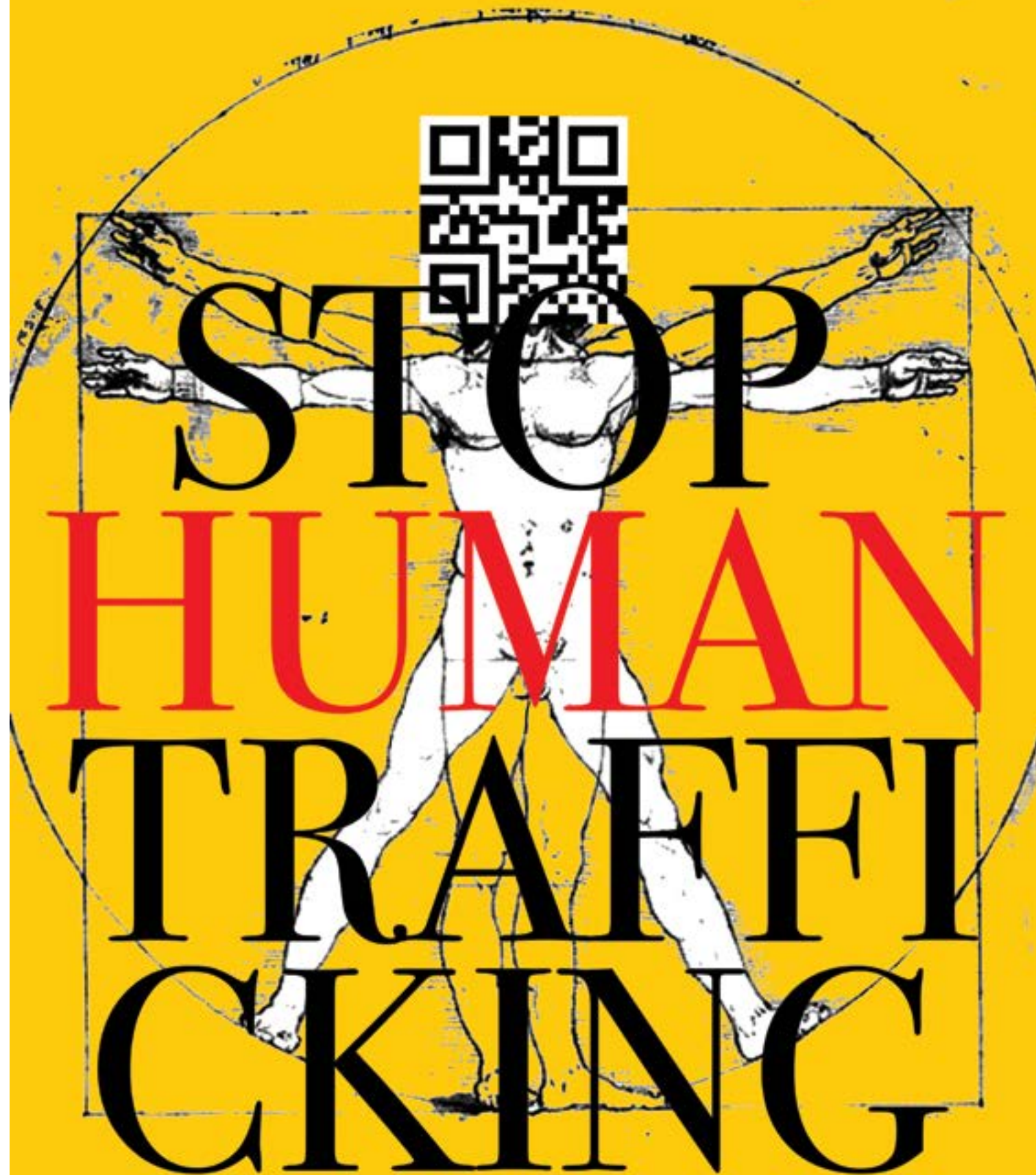
The use of homophones (like ‘buy’ and ‘bye’), birds, animals and vegetables in various roles are there to amuse before delivering some authoritative instruction.

Humour helps the artist to establish a level link, the illusion of a relationship of equals with his audience. Laughter unites public and rhetor, establishing the latter as trustworthy, his message both desirable and useful.

THINK POSITIVE!
2010

SCIENCES ET VALEURS
HUMAINES
2010





Although more successful than oration, visual persuasion cannot be taken for granted; it has become naturalised, pervasive, an everyday event; mere visual muzak that we no longer perceive. To our detriment, because in our blindness and deafness we lose the freedom to choose; the public's liberty to actively form the public sphere is diminished. The role of the orator, or visual persuader, is an act of civil participation, a civic duty.

The public is so accustomed to images competing to persuade that we no longer see them, the same as we blank out and don't hear muzak. To cure this blindness, the poster has to use images that are 'new' in some way. The beauty of Wolfensohn's posters is that his images are new and often unexpected; and although complex, not cryptic.

The logos – the rational and intelligent structure of the argument – is that the product (the poster) is capable of doing the work that it has been designed to do. The poster image is frank, its intention transparent: the intention of effectiveness – be it an invitation to pleasure or leisure, generating awareness of social issues or to win a design competition – is honest and unambiguous.

STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING
2021

'The advertising image is frank, or at least emphatic' (Barthes). Poster images are both frank and emphatic. Stated clearly and loudly, the message insinuates itself into the conscience of the public by appealing to their emotions and social circumstances. Yes, the choices made by the artist – form, colour, composition – are those most likely to help achieve a change – in perception, attitude or behaviour. The use of metaphors and myth emphasises the commonality of language and culture with the viewer, invites the spectator to join the club, get on the same page, in order to be more persuasive.

From the artist's consciousness to our own, from objective to perceived reality the images of an ideal, desired world fluctuate according to age, religion and wealth but are always ruled by universal human values. From food to philosophy, from climate change to consumerism, the issues that Wolfensohn deals with are important to him, and he engages the viewer so that they become important to us too.

THE TRANSMISSION OF MEANING

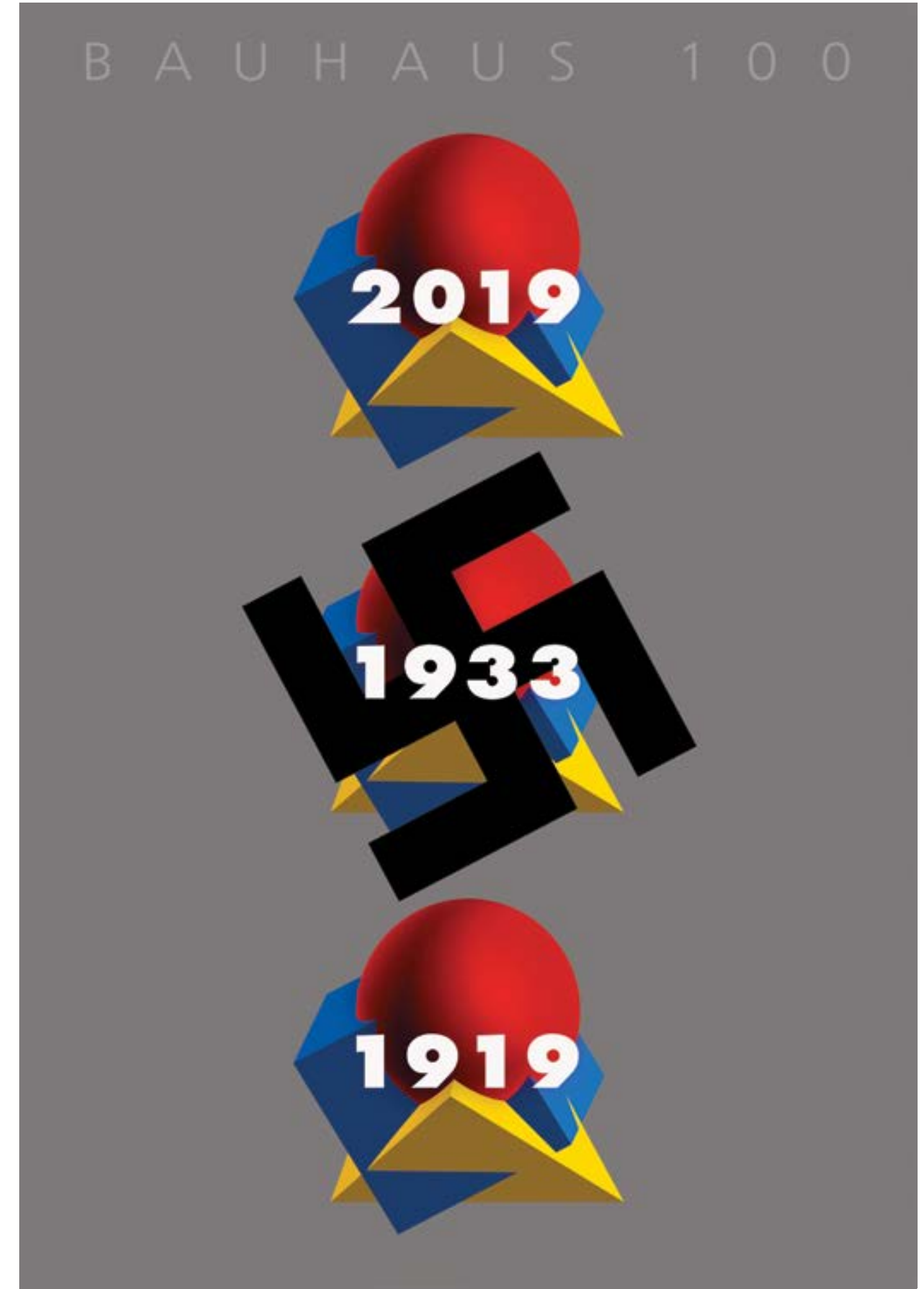
*The single biggest problem in communication
is the illusion that it has taken place*
(George Bernard Shaw)

Placed precariously between art and craft, between artistic expression and utilitarian artefact, the power of the poster – as much as its weakness – lies in its immediate impact. Power, because everyone is in such a hurry, always. If one has something to say, it better be said quickly, and clearly – and if possible amusingly – otherwise nobody's stopping to listen. The poster often achieves this rapid and concise communication. Weakness, because there is a limited array of tools in this two-dimensional, static medium and the messages conveyed are often very complex.

The immediacy, both visual and cognitive, of the poster makes its function as a medium almost disappear. The poster is no longer a medium, an element between the sender and the receiver of the message: it is a reality in which the viewer submerges willingly, immediately. The ephemeral nature of the poster – both form and content – adds to its aesthetic value. The poster becomes poetry.

Choosing the poster, for an artist, is an act of courage. But in the same way that falling in love is an act of courage: is there really a choice? It is obvious that Wolfensohn likes a challenge: He chose the poster (or did the poster choose him?) to encapsulate some of the most significant aspects of our 21st century. His posters tell our story.

BAUHAUS 100
2019

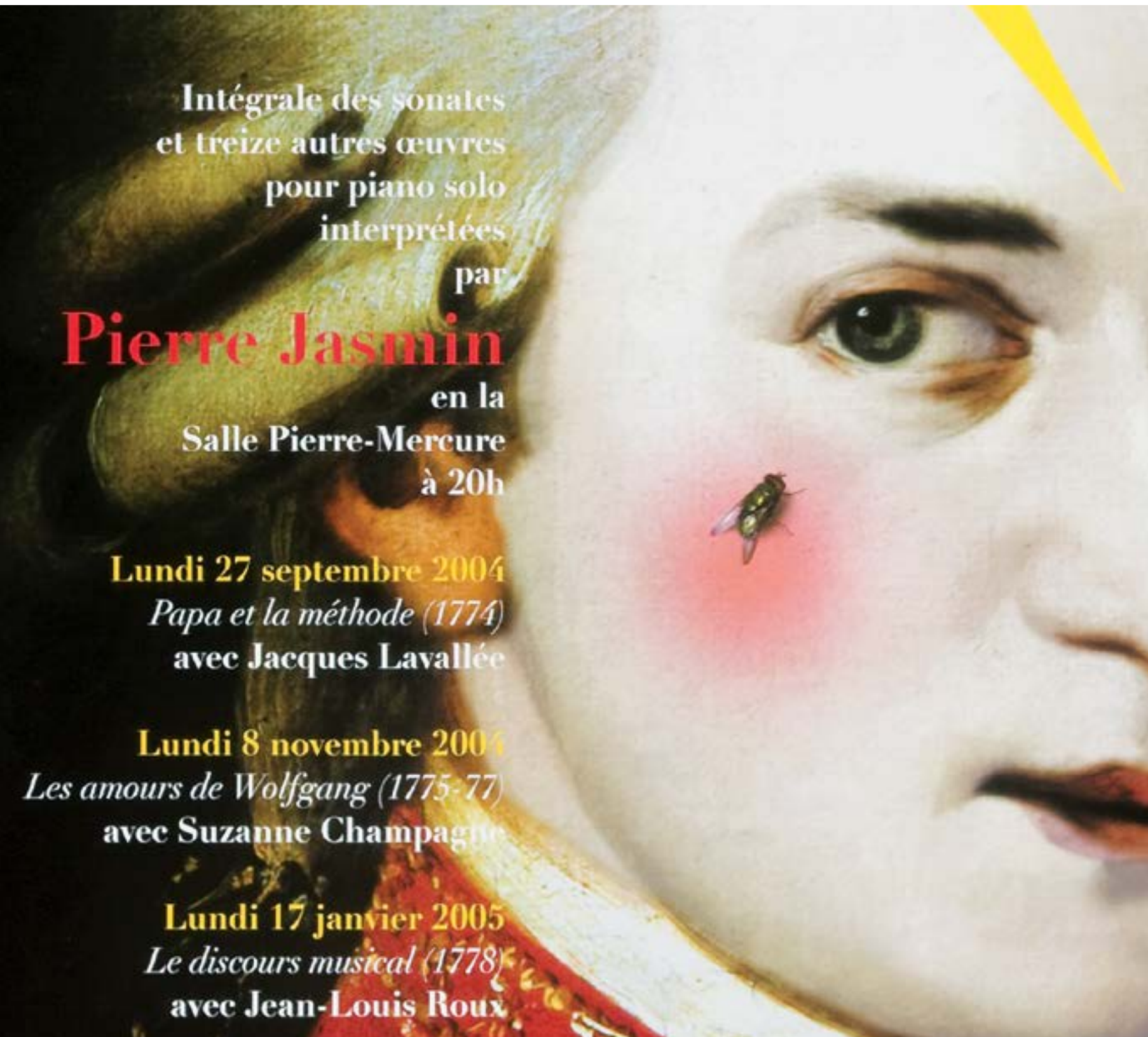


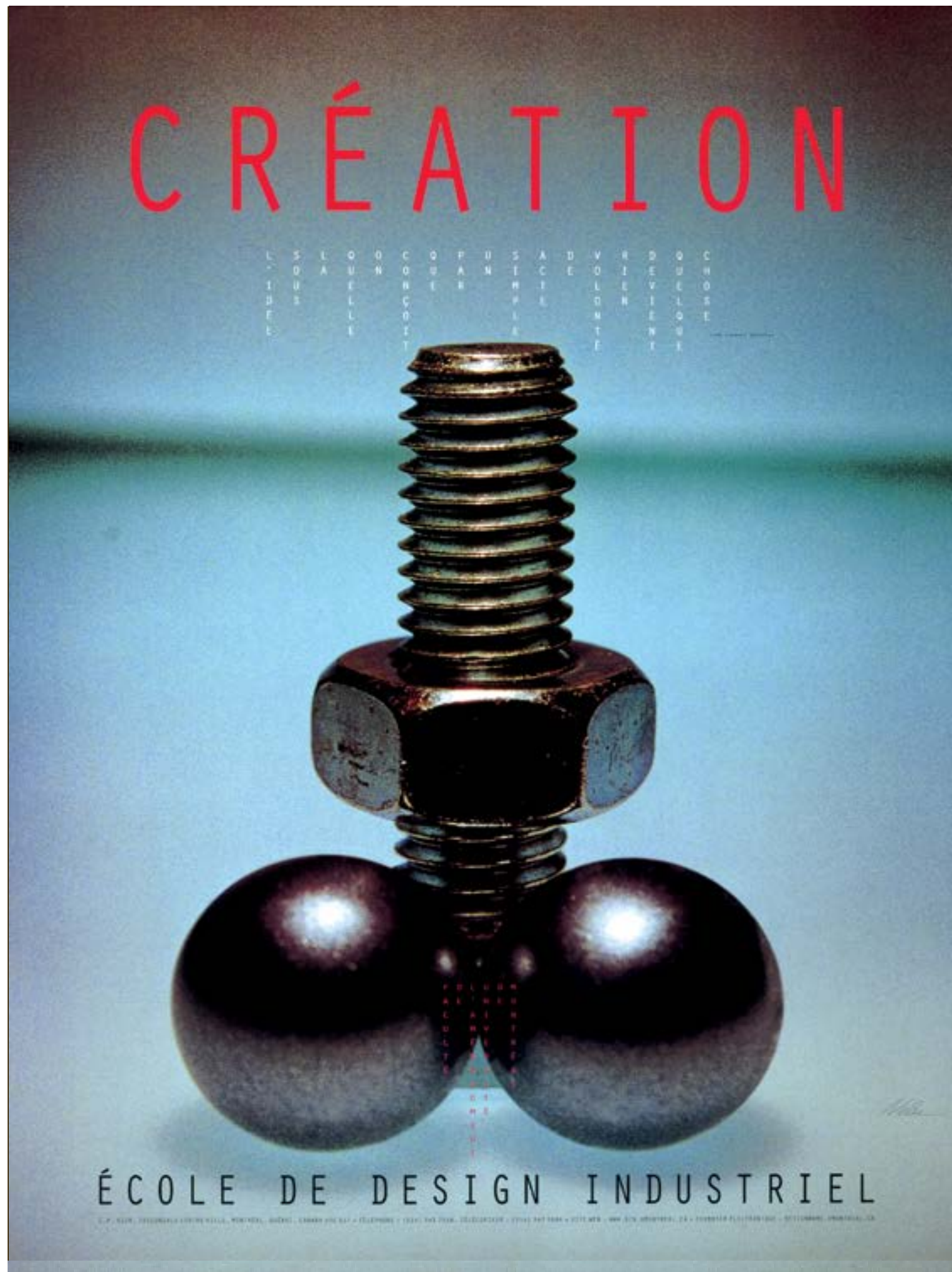
TRANSFER OF INFORMATION

An imperfect yet effective communication tool, the poster is created by an active force wanting to convey a parcel of information, to an audience with limited opportunity for feedback.

Since its origin, the poster has had a significant role in transmitting information. In order to fulfil this role, the creators use intense colour, clever choice of typefaces and combination of words and images to attract and hold the attention. The fly on Mozart's cheek, so real we want to shoo it away, is even more effective than the bright yellow speech bubble that states *À Lundi* (See you Monday). Information such as dates, times, location, names of the performers are present in relatively small print, white reverse out of colour. But the reader's attention is captive, still trying to imagine Mozart in his red and gold attire, ready to impress the Austrian court with his exceptional talent. He gazes back at us with insolence, as if daring us to challenge the idea of a beauty spot below his eye. Is it really a fly? And as we look again, we take in more small white print information.

À LUNDI
2004





TRANSFER OF MEANING

As an imperfect act of communication, the poster has also been the victim of many attempts to explain it, by simplifying this complex process and squeezing it into the tight formula of a model. I find it difficult to place the poster in one single box of, say, Shannon and Weaver's rectilinear model (information source – encoder – channel – decoder – destination). However, the transmission model is still an appropriate way of analysing mass media messages. The transport of goods or individual messages (an epistle, an order) may fit into this model. Although widely discredited by communication theorists, Shannon and Weaver's transmission model and Laswell's version of it (Who Says What, in Which channel, To whom, With what effect?) were useful in creating an understanding and a platform, however simplified and mechanistic, for the academic study of other forms of communication. The advertising industry in particular benefited from a framework which helped to identify the message and the audiences, and provide some tools for measuring effectiveness.

The disruptive element, noise, is one that the poster suffers most in its natural environment: posted on a wall (on a post), in the street, surrounded by a multitude of other messages, competing for attention. So an arresting word, or a striking picture, or both, would cut through the deafening noise. A controversial image usually works by attracting and holding the

attention, and none more controversial than a phallic image, captured in the act of mating, represented by screw, nut and ball bearings: mating in an industrial, mechanical world.

With the title *Création* the artist is transferring the universal biological process of creation – in which male and female elements are involved – to the philosophical concept of creation, the action of bringing something into existence. This is the meaning that Wolfensohn wants us to extract from this poster. In reality, meaning is not extracted, but constructed. How the audience construct the meaning of this particular message depends on their gender, education, faith, experiences, intelligence, social context and many other factors.

The name of the sponsor at the base of the poster further clarifies the type of creation we are contemplating: not the religious, or the biological concept, but 'creation' in the sense of innovation, invention and works of art – industrial design.

In linear, one-way models, the creator of the message is an active force, while the receiver is passively absorbing the information. But in Wolfensohn's posters the receiver cannot remain passive: he is invited to participate by decoding the message, solving puzzles, constructing meaning.

CRÉATION
1999

To paraphrase Michael Reddy (The Conduit Metaphor, 1979) the poster is the container in which words and images are placed and sent along to a receiver, who takes them out of the container. Even with the proviso that sender and receivers share a common language (to read and understand the words) and culture, the meaning doesn't jump out of the containers. The viewer has to be an active participant, to use the words and images wisely, in order to construct a meaning that makes sense to him. There may be varying degrees of discrepancy between the meaning intended and the one manufactured by the audience: successful communication means a minimum of divergence between the two.

A yellow star on a red background may have more than one connotation. Here, we need the words to eliminate some of them: it's the *Mois du design Montréal, mai 2001* (Design Month Montreal 2003). The title of this poster could well be its subhead *Le design est matière faite esprit* (Design is matter turned into spirit) for the way to achieve this miracle is through the burning power of creativity. This is my meaning-making; yours could be different while the artist's intention was to invite us into the process.

One flaw of the transmission model is that it considers 'decoding' as the reverse of 'encoding', but this can only occur if the two minds – sender and receiver – are identical, which is, of course, unlikely to occur.

The transmission model also fails to mention the importance of context. Meaning – intended



or created – cannot be divorced from the social, geographical, cultural political, historical context. It is a key influence on the artist's choice of form, style and content. The heritage of other artists – from Leonardo to Brancusi – makes itself noticed in several of Wolfensohn posters, as does the artist's own background, family, loves and travels.

The *umwelt*, the world as it is experienced by a particular being, the self-centred world, is a key influence on what is perceived as appropriate form, content and style, both by the creator and by the receiver of the artistic message.



VKHUTEMAS 100
2020
ITERATION

MOIS
DU DESIGN
MONTRÉAL
2001

COVID
19, 20, 21
22, 23, 24
2020

NEARLY ONE YEAR

*When autumn sobs its autumn tears
leaf after yellow leaf fall on my face
like yellow fears
her tears hit lips and eyes and heart
sweet inoffensive tears.
Not like the tears of spring
the tears of change
not warm like summer tears
foaming in cascades of laughter.
The salted cold tears
we cry with the autumn.
When the spring cries
her tears are drops of joy
and we foolishly expect better times.
When winter sleeps its winter dreams
I swim in its sea I fly in its sky
like so many flakes
like so many forgotten lovers
trying to swim into my dream.
My winter sleep.*

OF SIGNS AND CONCEPTS

Or take a black pebble
(Roland Barthes)

Our world is ruled by signs. Signs tell us where to go, what to do, when and where the bus will stop. It helps us to communicate facts, intentions and feelings with a certain degree of success.

A sign is everything that stands for something else: words, certainly, but also gestures, objects, images, sounds, smells. And images of objects, gestures and so on. The signs relate to each other to form – and convey – meaning, in a complex and fascinating system. Signs consist of two inseparable elements: the material (word, sound, colour) the ‘signifier’, and the reality it represents – the ‘signified’.

Our language – one of the most complex systems of signs – our mother’s tongue, the language we were born into, is not really ours. We cannot make the rules, we just have to obey the existing ones. Words have denotations – a designated, primary meaning. A cat cannot be anything else but a small, domesticated feline, despite its name being used for other meanings (catty, catcall, fat cat, sex kitten and so on). The relationship between the small feline and the sound /kat/ or the letters c a t is entirely arbitrary. In Saussurian semiotics, the word ‘cat’ is the signifier, and it stands for something else, the signified, the real thing. The two (signifier and signified) cannot be without each other and together they make a sign.

With unlimited talent for refined communication, we take it further: ‘umbrella’ means ‘a circular canopy of cloth on a folding metal frame supported by a central rod, used as protection against rain’. An image of a stylised umbrella on a weather forecast obviously means ‘rain’ (take an umbrella today), an umbrella protects you from rain water, but the related concept of ‘protection’ is more widespread. Insurance companies show a gigantic umbrella protecting your home or car, smaller organisations act ‘under the umbrella’ of a larger, more powerful one, etc. We refer to these second level meanings as connotations.

Cats and umbrella can be signified in words as well as images, as denotations or connotations. Other signifieds – vanity, revolution, abstract, peace – while relatively straightforward denoted in words, require other methods, and a different ‘language’ when communicated through images.

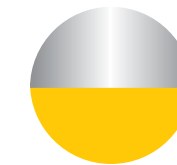
Signs were obviously developed for the purpose of communication. A sign is a sign only if it is being interpreted as such (by the receiver), in the same way we acknowledge that communication has only taken place when the message has been received and understood.

DISINFORMATION
2019





DISINFORMATION



DISINFORMATION
2019 ITERATION

For that, we need to speak the same language, literally or figuratively, we need to use the same codes. The direction of traffic will be followed by people belonging to a culture that understands bows and arrows. The colour red will suggest danger in Western culture, joy and prosperity elsewhere.

As we move into connotations (ideas or feelings evoked by a sign, dependent on a person's experience, education or culture) and myth (a symbolic narrative with a strong role in a specific society) the importance of linguistic and cultural codes becomes more significant.

Making and interpreting signs is a full-time human occupation. Semiotics – the study of signs – is one of the most useful methods to start the study of art, poetry or cinematography.

The act of standing in for something else, which defines it, makes the sign both vulnerable and powerful, depending on how, when and where it is used. Between the signifier – the symbol – and the signified, there is a space in which the artist invites us to participate, to create connections.

Unlike words, no denotation has been assigned to line and colour: the artist can use the tools to express whatever he believes appropriate, what he needs to create his message.

The image sign is often so stylised as to become non-mimetic – an element of our culture as remote from reality as the sound of a word that bears no relation to its meaning.

Signs are vehicles for the conception of objects – in other words they help us to think, to understand.

Wolfensohn takes one such element and presents it to us in a shape and pose that is recognisable yet unfamiliar. The canopy that is supposed to protect us from drops of rain is turned upside down; it is no longer sheltering us from the rain, it is now protecting the water from the potential hazard that we, the viewer, could be. The concept is still that of protection, but not just of a person, in a moment, but of all of us, for ever.

Renaissance and Pre-Renaissance paintings contain a number of symbols that invite the viewer to read and interpret – like a puzzle or a riddle. In addition to their decorative value, pictures had a message to convey, often as moralistic as religious, to discuss and interpret. Painters and art lovers engage in an exercise of communication using the code of visual language.



THE 2006
INSTITUTE
OF DESIGN
MONTRÉAL
AWARDS DETAIL

BAUHAUS 100
2019 DETAIL

THE SPHERE, THE TRIANGLE

Car le parfait consiste en choses rondes
(Pierre de Ronsard)

Like its two-dimensional sibling the circle, the sphere is a symbol of completeness, continuity, eternity, perfection. From the atoms to the celestial sphere, our bodies and our world is made up of spheres of matter in a variety of sizes. We live on a sphere that circles around a big sphere of fire. Of all the images we experience, the geometrical and symmetrical are most easily perceived and retained. The use of images that can be identified, controlled and manipulated by the mind is an obvious – if not imperative – methodology.

As an experienced graphic designer, Wolfensohn is well au fait with the meaning and the grammar of shapes, how they combine with each other and with colour to make us feel what he intends for us to feel. In his poster for the 2006 awards

of the Institute of Design Montreal, Wolfensohn gives away the secret: the building blocks of design are the shapes (the sphere, the cube, the pyramid) and the primary colours (red, blue, yellow). The architect, the landscape designer, the fashion designer, is invited to use the shapes and colours to create something unique, beautiful and useful. Until they do so, the raw materials of design are entwined on the poster into a nondescript shape, floating in cosmic darkness.

The geometric image and its connotations return in 2019 in a series of posters created for the 100th anniversary of Bauhaus. The exploded three dimensional intertwined forms are the recurring theme in all four posters, celebrating the vision and the innovative spirit of the movement. An artistic as well as ethical and philosophical school, the story of Bauhaus is told through these three colours, three forms, in a three-dimensional embrace.

Earlier, for the Design Month 2002, Wolfensohn was using the red sphere, the perfection surrounded by dark blue spheres in a 3x4 parallelogram pattern. On a two-dimensional medium, he wanted to make sure that these are balls, not circles, and that, although the same size, one sphere (the 5th – as the Design Month was May) will shine distinct from its siblings.

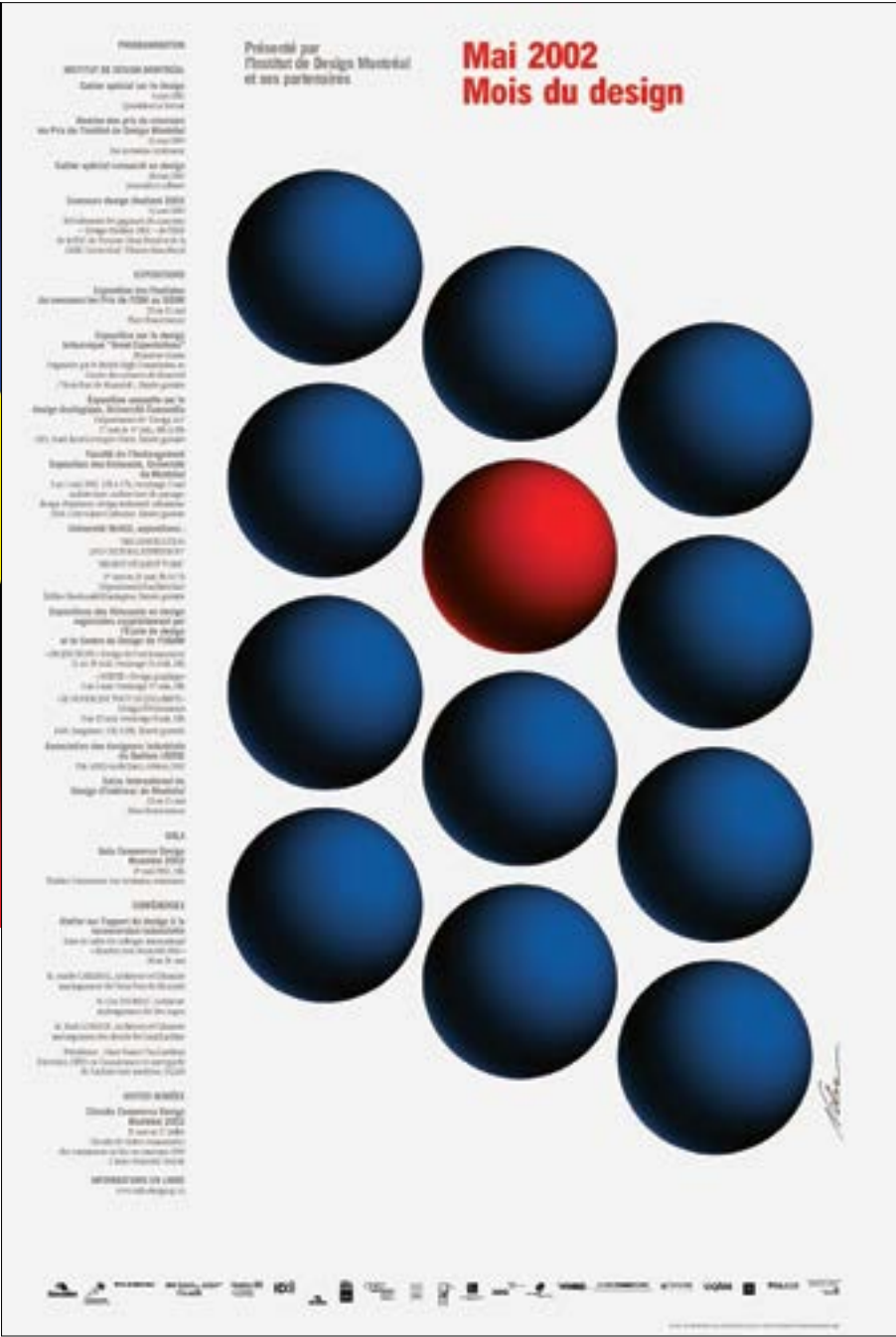




PLEINS FEUX
SUR LA
ROUMANIE
2001

MAI 2002
MOIS DU DESIGN

ROMANIAN
CULTURAL INSTITUTE
2004



Born in Bucharest, Romania, Wolfensohn would have grown up familiar with the three main primary colours of the country's flag. According to a well-loved Romanian patriotic song about the three colours of the flag, red is the fire of courage, the sacrifice for the freedom of the people; yellow is the gold of the fields, the fruit of the fertile land; blue the skies above – so sang thousands of red-scarfed schoolchildren. In his poster for Romanian Presences in Quebec, the artist uses a historic version of the Romanian flag – same colours, but with horizontal stripes and the blue stripe at the top. The flag first adopted in June 1848 had the horizontal stripes with blue at the top. This version was short-lived and was followed, in July of the same year by a decree establishing the flag as having vertical stripes, with the blue near the wood and 'the red flattering', similar to the French flag. A few years later, in 1862, a new version of the tricolour was introduced by the then ruler, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, as the official civil flag. It had horizontal stripes, with red at the top, and it was used for a number of years. The next version – vertical stripes again – lasted until 1948, when the socialist coat of arms was added in the centre of the yellow, to be removed by the revolution of 1989.



PLEINS FEUX
SUR LA ROUMANIE
2001 DETAIL

In Wolfensohn's poster, the three spheres feature on the flag – the same tricolour, but with the blue on the right. Rotate the entire composition anticlockwise and we get the flag the right way, 'red flattering', the balls in the order of the original flag. So is this exercise in spheres and stripes a vehicle for a brief history of the Romanian people through its flags? Are the three perfectly formed spheres a symbol of the triumph of perfection, completeness, continuity over the prevarications of history and politics? Even if not intentionally, the poster reflects Wolfensohn's knowledge and understanding of the country's history.

Spheres are also at the base of *Création*, a poster for the School of Industrial Design. Circles and spheres are graceful, feminine, warm. Outside the strong sexual connotation, the contrast between the coldness of black metal and the softness of the two spheres, lit from above, the mechanical alignment of the objects comes together to create something symmetrical, balanced.

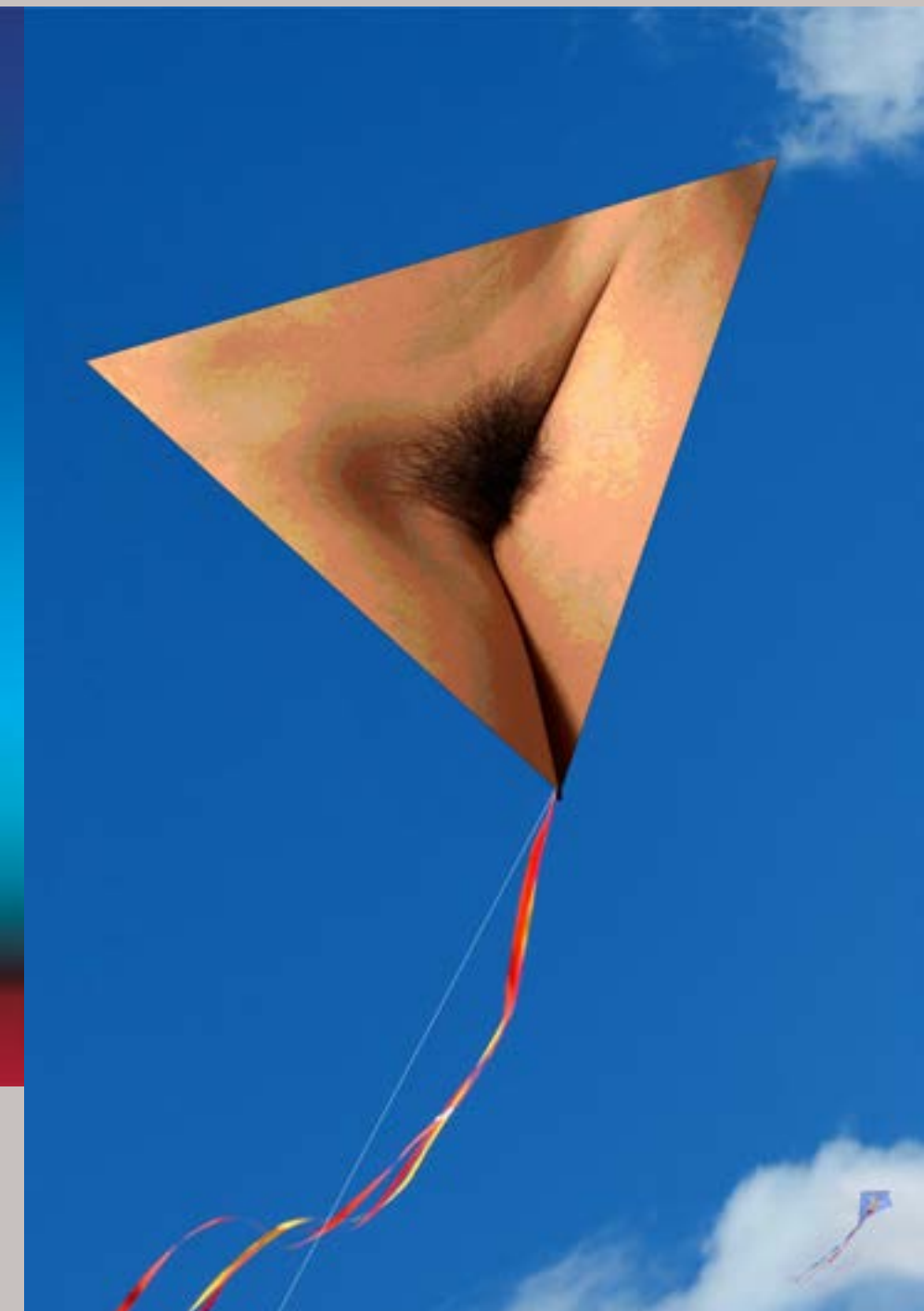
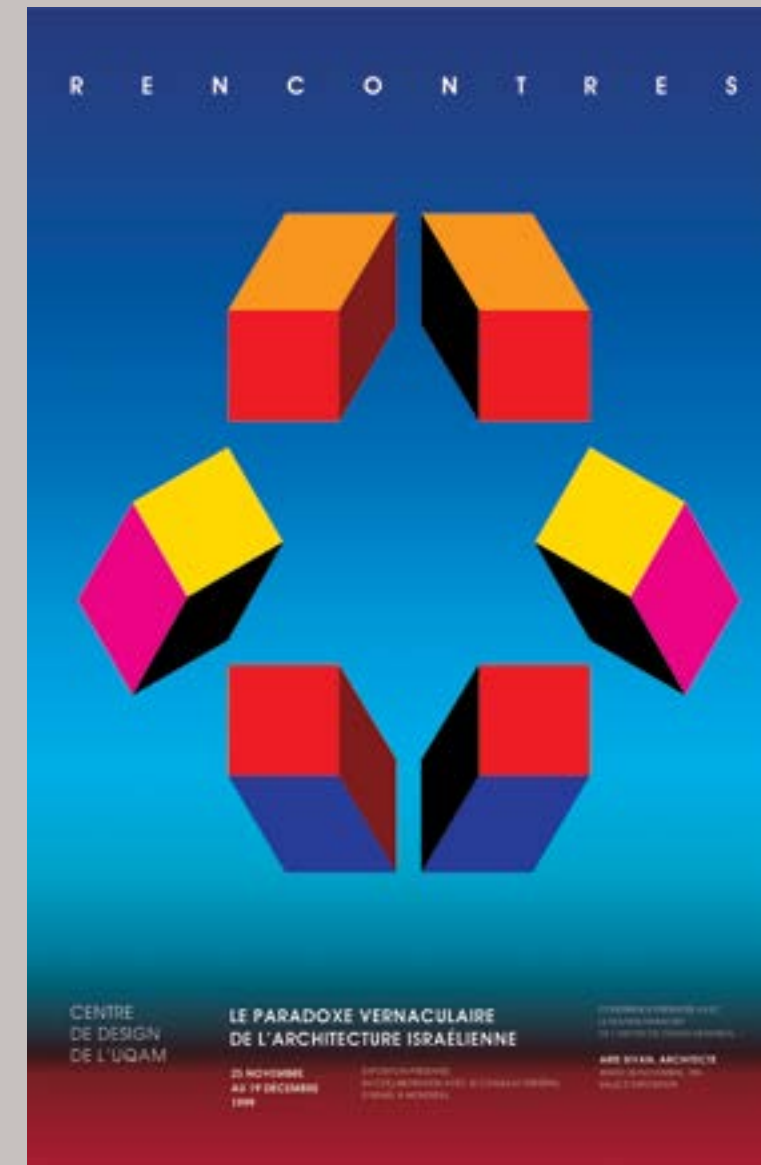
Often thought of as the counterpart of the sphere, the cube is the squaring of the circle: solid, permanent, immobile. In general, Wolfensohn avoids the cube, where all facets are identical, opting instead for the rectangular cuboid. In any case, the facets are not the same, each of the

three visible ones being of a different colour. In *Rencontres*, a poster for the exhibition of Israeli architecture at the Design Centre of UQAM, the colourful blocks float against a beautiful azure background, to form a hexagram. The six-point star, or David's star, is a symbol that relates to Judaism rather than Israel; it is, however, present on the Israeli flag and in this context it stands for Israeli culture. The tones of yellow, red, orange and magenta defy the angularity of the forms to create a feeling of lightness, happiness alongside the order and solidity of the shapes.

In a more recent poster (2016) entitled simply *Shape*, the shape we see flying above the clouds is a triangle. The symbolism of the triangle is strongly linked to the Eye – as the Eye of Providence, usually surrounded by rays of light, is enclosed in a triangle pointing upwards. In Christianity, the triangle is a symbol of spiritual hierarchy, each point a significant element of the Trinity. An upwards-pointing triangle – like the one featuring the Eye of Providence – represents ascension towards a higher spiritual realm as well as a solid base, a strong foundation and stability. Triangles, especially equilateral ones, are strong shapes.

RENCONTRES
1999

SHAPE
2016





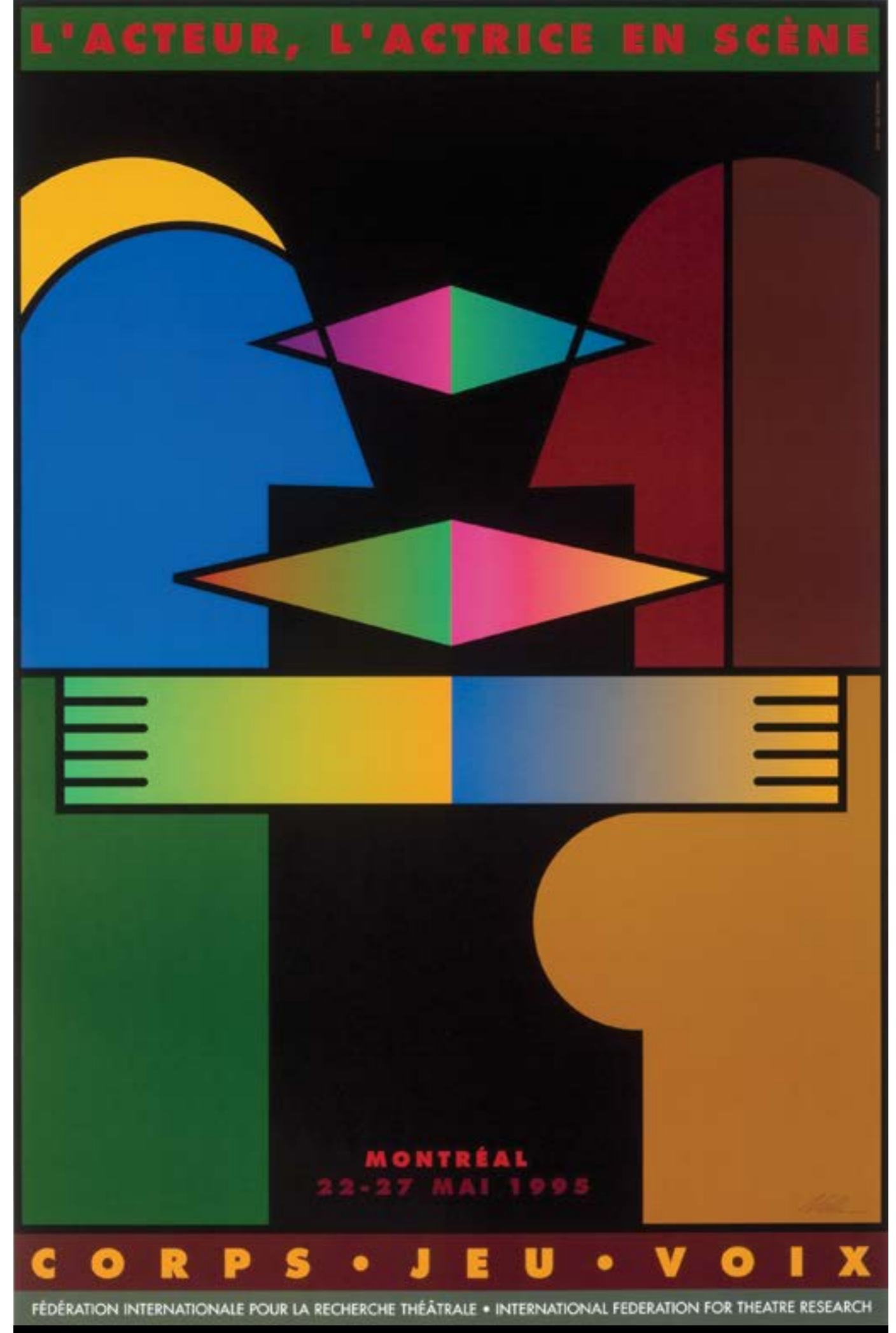
L'ACTEUR L'ACTRICE
EN SCÈNE
1995 DETAIL

25 ANS
CINÉMATHEQUE
QUÉBÉCOISE
1989

Wolfensohn's kite in the shape of a triangle is also an equilateral one. It floats against a bright blue sky at an angle, one corner pointing towards the fluffy cloud in the right-hand corner as if on its way to exit the poster. The picture enclosed in it is that of a women's pubic area.

In *25 Ans. Cinemateque Quebecoise*, a series of double and triple triangles, in rapid movement like arrows, pierce the black background giving a real sense of being in a cinema. The fragments of triangle lead to the antenna at the top and the Eye – the logo of the Cinemateque. The eyes are triangles in *L'acteur, l'actrice en scène*, in which the small triangle on the angular profile of the man on the left extends to become a larger triangle that unites with that extending from the profile of the woman on the right – or vice-versa. The mouth – the speech – is represented in the same way by triangles that come together. At the base of the (triangular) composition, the arms come together in an embrace that gives a solid base of harmony and cooperation to create the magic that actors achieve on stage.

Like Renaissance painters who developed the technique, Wolfensohn often adopts a solid triangular composition, with the base on the ground – the lower part of the poster – and the top pointing to the centre of the title: 'Creation'.



One of these, used by Wolfensohn on a poster for Design Month 2003 is 'Columbus' Egg'. Out of darkness, a large white egg, lit from the top right of the picture, is approaching. In front of it, a smaller, diaphanous egg, made of colourful lines ending in tiny upwards arrows, takes centre stage. *Le design. Simple comme l'œuf de Colomb* (Design. Simple, like Columbus' egg). The tagline refers to the apocryphal story, immortalised in painting over the centuries, of Christopher Columbus confronting his critics who mocked him for not finding the Indies and claimed that discovering America was no big deal. He challenges them to make an egg stand on the surface of the table without any support. As none of them has a solution, Columbus cracks the base of the egg and thus it stands unaided. The story has been used countless times to illustrate that discovery, or invention – in other words creative ideas – are simple, if one can see the possibilities and think outside the box.

Philosophy (love of wisdom) studies many issues related to existence, life and reason. To identify one issue would be to ignore others, just as important, so for the *La nuit de la philosophie* (Night of Philosophy) poster (2009), Wolfensohn chose humour. More specifically, he chose to illustrate the causality dilemma with the image of a chicken and egg.

MONTRÉAL MAI 2003
MOIS DU DESIGN
DETAIL

Response	Percentage
U.S. should take action	95%
U.S. should not take action	5%

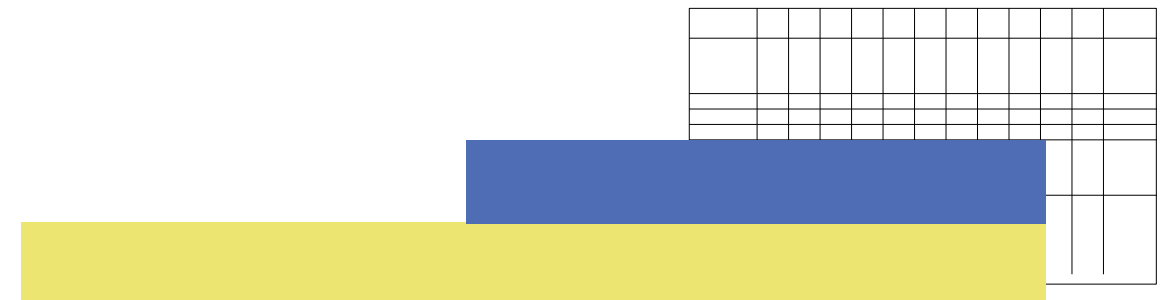
U.S. should take action (95%)

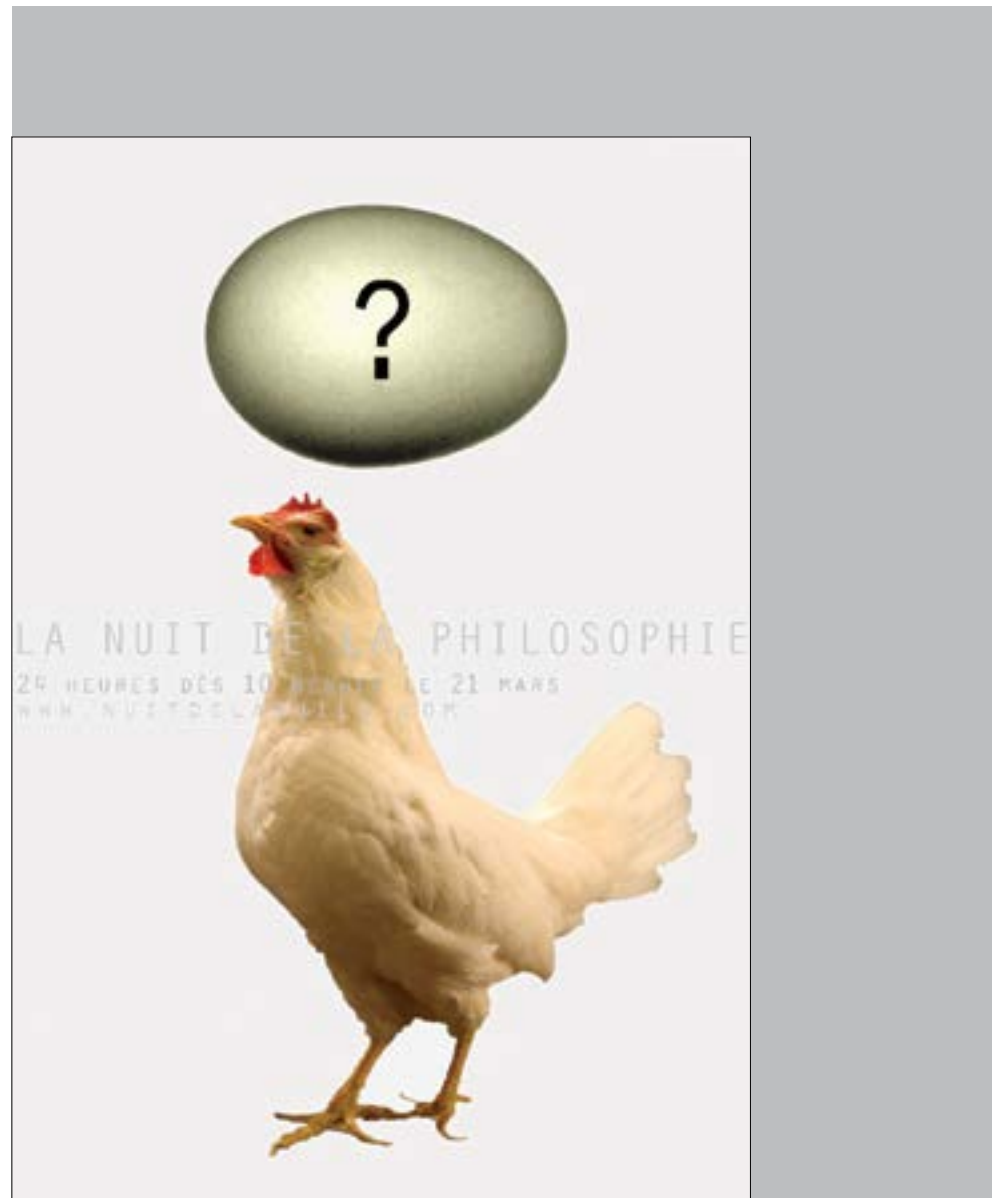
U.S. should not take action (5%)

Strong (95%)

Not strong (5%)

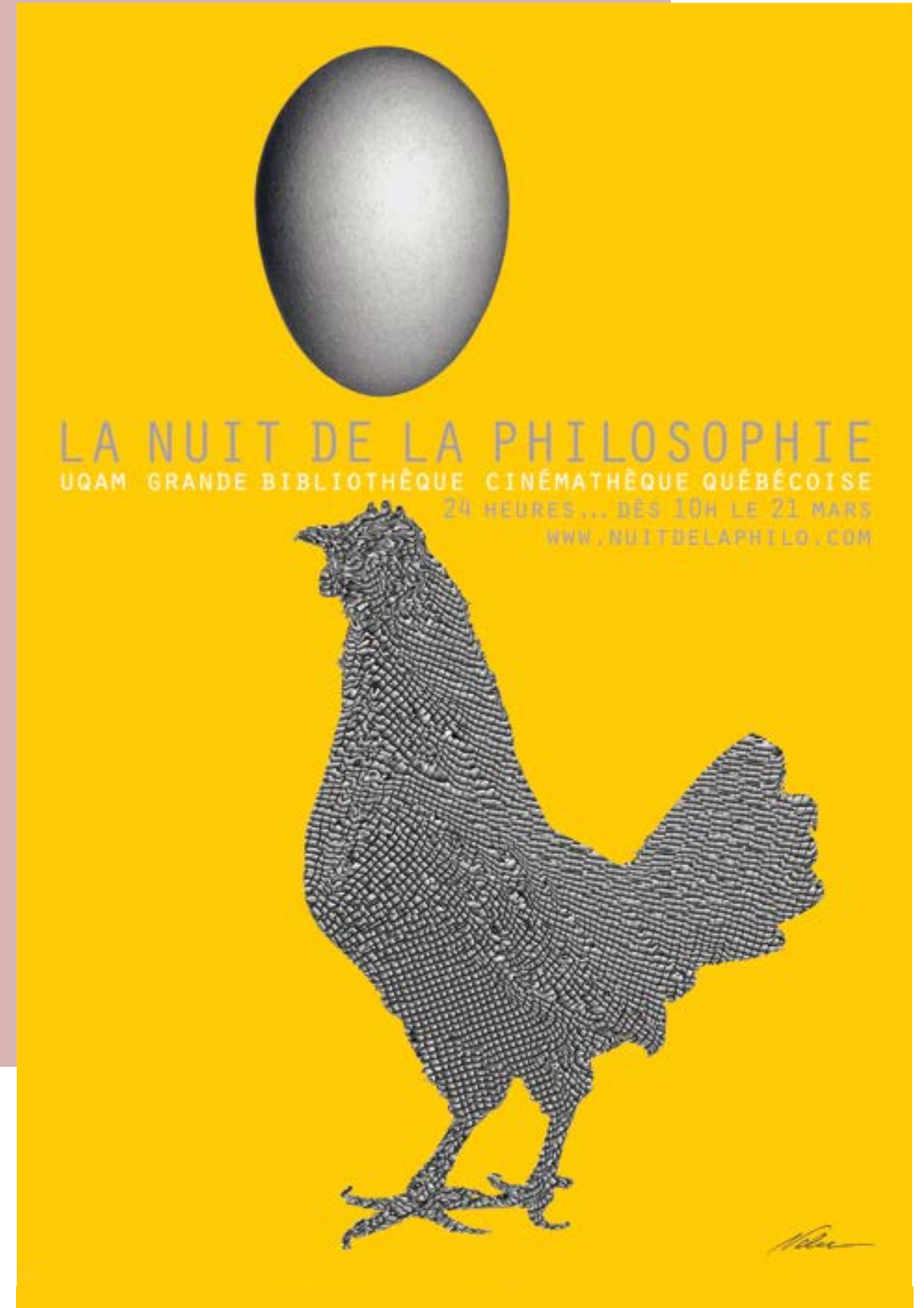
Not strong (100%)





LA NUIT DE LA PHILOSOPHIE
2009 ITERATION

LA NUIT DE LA PHILOSOPHIE
2009



THE TYPOGRAPHIC METAPHOR



1944 - 2014 / 70 AÑOS DE RELACIONES DIPLOMÁTICAS MÉXICO - CANADA / 70 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIPS MEXICO - CANADA

70 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS MEXICO-CANADA
2014

The typeface is the message, as every designer knows. From selecting the font family and the face size, to tracking and kerning, there is more to putting the letters together than just making the message legible. It has to fit in and complement the layout, the image, the colours. It has to be credible too. And emotional. Inspiring.

The way the letters are sized and shaped, positioned in relation to each other – conveys a meaning. The design qualities of the letters, their arrangement in the composition, give form to a range of connotations.

Let us take for example the poster announcing a Bruno Monguzzi conference; it is composed of black and gold letters. Unable to resist a word play, Wolfensohn arranges them in a T format, inviting the viewer to read the word ‘Mon’ (my) set horizontally, and linked by the use of black to the rest of the surname, while ‘Bruno’ is overwritten in gold. The use of clever lettering to announce a conference on typography is not only appropriate, but the poster is also an homage to Monguzzi’s style and predilection for solving design problems with typography solutions (like Monguzzi’s familiar logo for Musée d’Orsay).

Strong, black letters and numbers read like a graphic shorthand in the poster celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and Mexico (2014). Here, the use of the two-letter

country codes are arranged to form a cohesive vertical bloc suggesting equality and unity. The colon and parenthesis punctuation make up the smiling emoji, giving the statement an approving, lighter finale, to contrast with the stark black on white lettering.

Sometimes the words are sufficient, no other image is needed for Wolfensohn to express even powerful messages, especially in word play. *City Evolution* (2013) is achieved through Love, by mirroring the first half of the word Evolution and making it stand out in red – as opposed to the rest of the letters which are black against the grey concrete background.

Word play and colour are also the tools for anti-consumerism poster *Bye Buy* – shorthand for ‘Goodbye unnecessary and compulsive buying, overconsumption is a thing of the past, it is destroying our planet’. Many millions of words have been written this century to try and persuade people to buy less (compared with the zillions of words written and uttered in the last century to persuade us to buy more). Here Wolfensohn chooses happy colours – bright yellow background, blue and pink lettering. Despite the light tone – the use of homophones, the nursery palette – the words are strong, the typeface serious and enforced by the shadow in the opposite colour, reflecting the earnestness of the message.

L'ART DE LA DIFFÉRENCE

INAUGURE, LE 10 JANVIER 1995, SON NOUVEL

E S P A C E

AUTEURS, ARTISTES, SPECTATEURS, CE

T H É Â T R E

MAINTENANT, VOUS APPARTIENT!

4 8 9 0 , B O U L E V A R D S A I N T - L A U R E N T
 GESTION DU PROJET: ESPACE 3D • CONSEILLER DE PROJET: ARMONT GESTION DE PROJET INC • ARCHITECTURE: BLODIN, FAGNER, ARRETTIN, BRODEUR, GAUTHIER
 MÉCANISME ÉLECTRIQUE STRUCTURE: LES CONSULTANTS GEMEC INC • SCÉNÉGRAPHIE: THÉÂTRE CONSULTATIONS INC • ACROUSTIQUE: OCTAVE ACROUSTIQUE INC • RÉALISATION DU PROJET: GEMPRO CONSTRUCTION INC
 LE MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DES COMMUNICATIONS, LE MINISTÈRE DU PATRIMOINE CANADIEN, LA VILLE DE MONTRÉAL ONT CONTRIBUÉ AU FINANCEMENT DE CE PROJET

MON
 BRUNO
 GUZZI

Bruno Monguzzi
 Lundi 21 septembre 2009
 École de design, UQAM

Image et signification
 Master class sur la
 perception de l'image
 local DE 3240
 9H30-16h

The Naked Word
 Conférence sur la typographie
 local DE 1610
 18h-21h

GO GO GO
1995

BRUNO MONGUZZI
2009

HOMELESSNESS
A GLOBAL ISSUE
2013



The inspiration for a poster could arise from – and focus on – just one letter, like the T in *Terre et Trame* (Earth and Weft, 1982) where the T is a three-dimensional block of red and black shadow, repeated on the upside-down mirror light green. The blue background and the diagonal composition create more action than would be expected from a single letter – like the synergy in ceramic and in weaving.

The single letter D has come to symbolise the concept of design in Wolfensohn's work. It features on the poster of his exhibition *Notes Vagabondes* (2006), in which the D is half of a CD, with such a sharp edge it has dissected the eye (the viewer, the consumer of images) into two smaller Ds – a vigorous representation of the power of design.

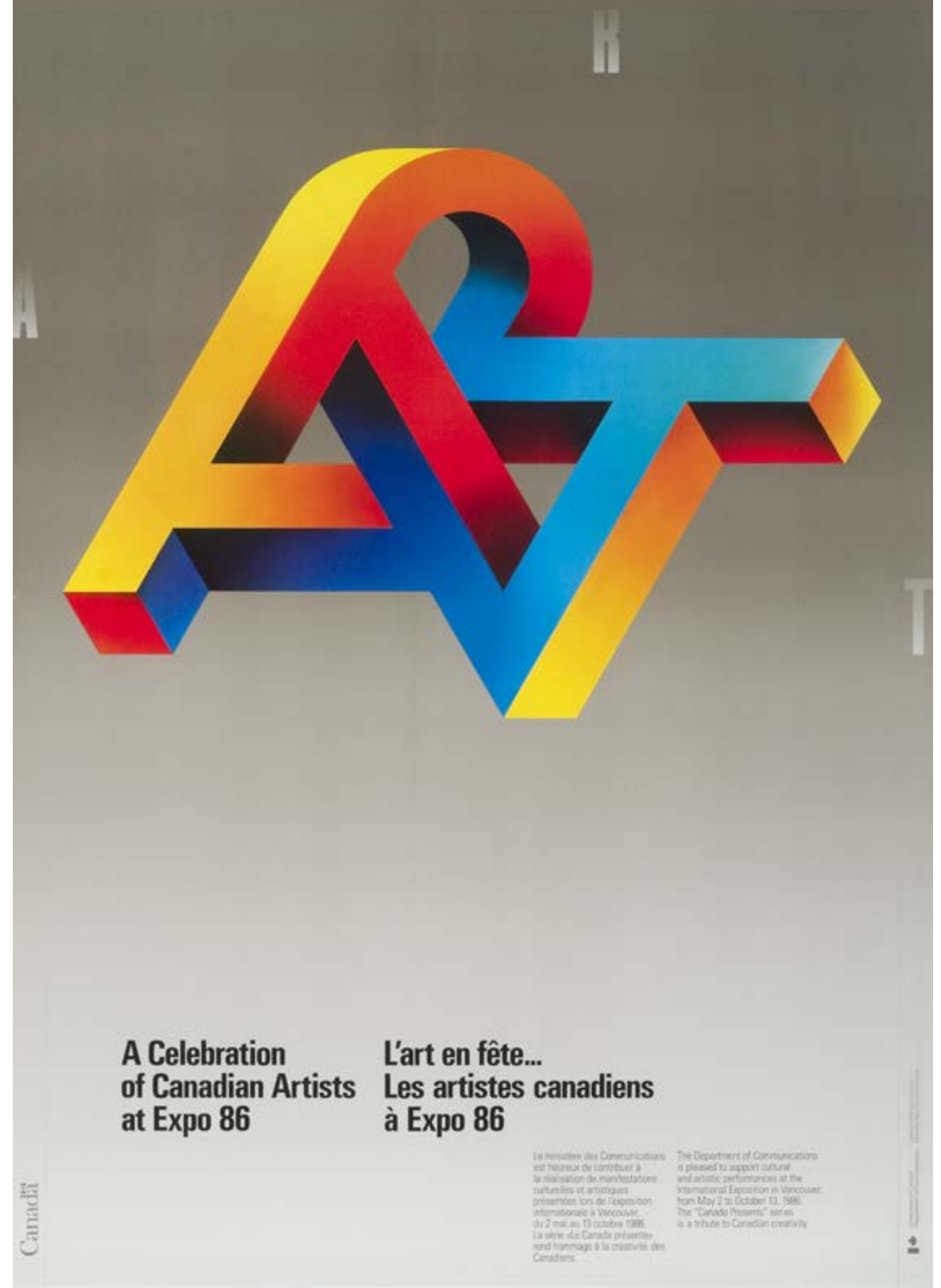
To create an image for art itself (1986) Wolfensohn makes the three letters of the word dance in a colourful embrace. The three-dimensional A, R and T in red, yellow and blue, are linked to form an elegant diagonal composition, like a continuous form puzzle. The colours melt into each other, on a background of grey fading to white at the base of the poster.

ART
1986

By changing the colour or the type, Wolfensohn invites us to rearrange the letter, to read several messages in one word. As well as achieving economy of space, this kind of puzzle-solving is an effective way of engaging the audience in a shared game.

An international poster campaign celebrating 100 years of Bauhaus has attracted a number of contemporary designers. One of Wolfensohn's contributions features three groups of letters: KNOW, BAU and HOW – to be read as KNOW HOW and/or BAU HOW – to suggest Bauhaus (albeit at a stretch). All in capitals, the letters are slender and elegant, the blue, yellow and orange words neatly lining at the left on a black background.

The promotional poster for the Institute of Design Montreal, *Idées* (2000) is also an audience participation exercise. The first three letters are the initials of the Montreal Design Institute: IDM. But, as we reach the third letter, it changes colour (from black to gold) and falls sideways: it is no longer an 'M', it became an 'E' and by adding a couple of lightly scripted letters, the word is formed: Ideas. This is what design is about, this is what the IDM is there to do: to generate ideas, to develop and process them, to deliver them into the world. The use of different typefaces and colours in one word reflects the diversity of ideas: no two great ideas are the same, but they all shine loudly and clearly on a glorious red background.



A Celebration
of Canadian Artists
at Expo 86

L'art en fête...
Les artistes canadiens
à Expo 86

Le ministère des Communications
est heureux de contribuer à
la réalisation de manifestations
culturelles et artistiques
présentées lors de l'exposition
internationale à Vancouver,
du 2 mai au 13 octobre 1986.
La série «Le Canada présente»
rend hommage à la créativité des
Canadiens.

The Department of Communications
is pleased to support cultural
and artistic performances at the
International Exposition in Vancouver,
from May 2 to October 13, 1986.
The "Canada Presents" series
is a tribute to Canadian creativity.

2009

IRAN
Vote

WHERE IS MY VOTE?
POSTERS BY DESIGNERS FROM THE WHOLE WORLD
PROTESTING AGAINST
THE REGIME OF AHMADINEJAD
AND HIS "GUARDIANS OF REVOLUTION"
A BRUTAL, CLAUSTROPHOBIC AND OBSCURANTIST
GOVERNMENT WHICH STOLE THE
RESULTS OF THE IRAN'S 2009 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

IRAN VOTE
2009

KNOW
BAU
HOW

100

B A U H A U S A N N I V E R S A R Y

KNOW BAU HOW
2020

SOME SIGNS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

I was surprised to read that the sign for ‘equals’, as in ‘ $1+1=2$ ’ was invented as late as 1557 (by Welsh mathematician Robert Recorde). Until then, and for some time afterwards, the concept of equality was expressed in words (‘is equal to’) or by the first letters of the Latin word *æqualis*. The difficulties experienced by mathematicians writing down new formulae and equations apart, the symbolic expression of equality is a helpful shorthand for the concept as used in a social and political context. It is applied to indicate quality and value, as well as quantity.

Which is how Wolfensohn uses it in the series of posters on education (2012). The equals sign in bold red lines is firmly positioned above a girl’s profile. The girl is recognisable as black – and the text at the base of the poster reiterates the message: *When it comes to education, all children are equal* – regardless of gender, race, etc. The next poster is even more succinct: just the ‘equals’ sign, the horizontal lines are black, white and brown – on a yellow background. Yes, there are three parallel lines, but we automatically recognise the equals sign – or signs, as there may be more than one equals symbol.

Predictably, the most recognised symbol for gender equality also features the equals sign, usually alongside – or in between – the male and female gender symbols. Wolfensohn selects the use of letters – dynamic, painted in a hurry

letters to indicate urgency. The letter ‘E’ in ‘MEN’ has been replaced with the two parallel lines of ‘equals’ without diminishing readability. Above it, two red letters ‘WO’ complete the narrative in just one word: women and men should be equal, we demand gender equality now.



WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATION
ALL CHILDREN ARE EQUAL
2012



GENDER EQUALITY NOW!
2012

SMALL BUT MIGHTY!

The admiration mark – better known today as the exclamation mark – is not very big, but has the power to change the sense of a statement – words, images or a combination thereof. Like with any sign (word, image) overuse dilutes the power of significance, so Wolfensohn uses the exclamation mark sparingly: not shouting, but admiring.

Beethoven's 9th is the stuff of legend: written after the composer has lost his hearing, it is the first choral symphony; it is also one of the greatest pieces of Western music, ever. Most people recognise it from the first notes. The familiarity and uniqueness of this piece of music is conveyed by the exclamation mark in the poster *La Neuvieme!* We see the image: one of the most recognised images of a composer. Mouth open, he is singing (it is a chorale, would he be the tenor?) and his image is created by undulating staves, some notes floating around his wild hair. It catapults one to the premiere of the 9th, in Vienna.

At its premiere in 1824, Beethoven himself conducted, that is, he stood in front of a conductor's stand and threw himself back and forth like a madman – according to the violinist Joseph Böhm. One can almost hear the movements, which the composer could not hear, and see the enthusiastic reception of the public, the five standing ovations, the hats and handkerchiefs in the air, the atmosphere of jubilation. Expect the same at this concert, the poster suggests.

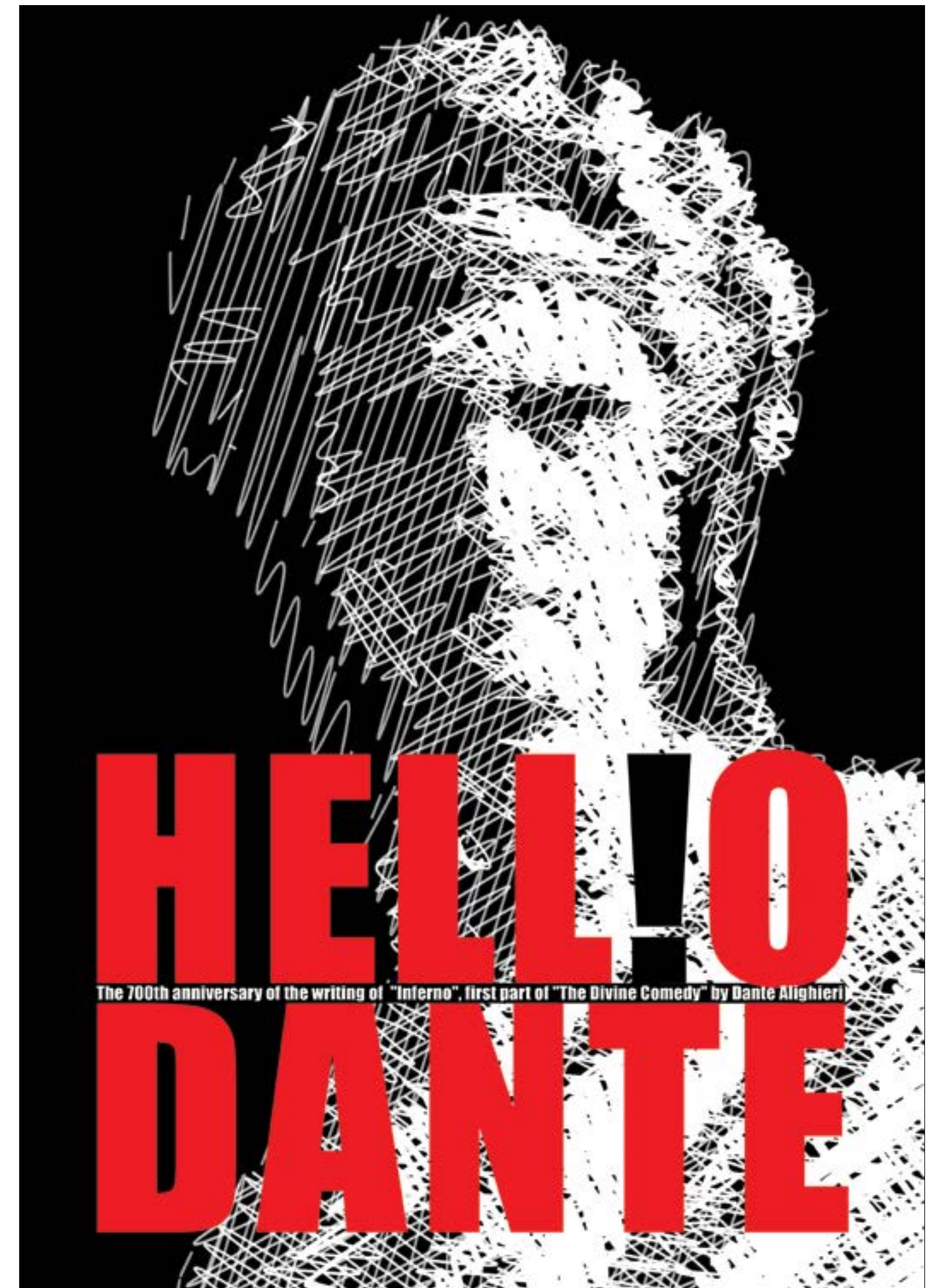
Make an effort, viewer, to find the details (time, place) of this extraordinary event.

On occasion, the job of the exclamation mark is to emphasise an order (*Compost!* rather than *Compost*, or *Think Twice!*), as per its definition, to give the viewer a start and prompt to action. But sometimes it is given its own role in changing the meaning of the message, just by moving a little to the right: Hello Dante! (on the 700th anniversary of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*), or *Hell! O Dante*. You choose.

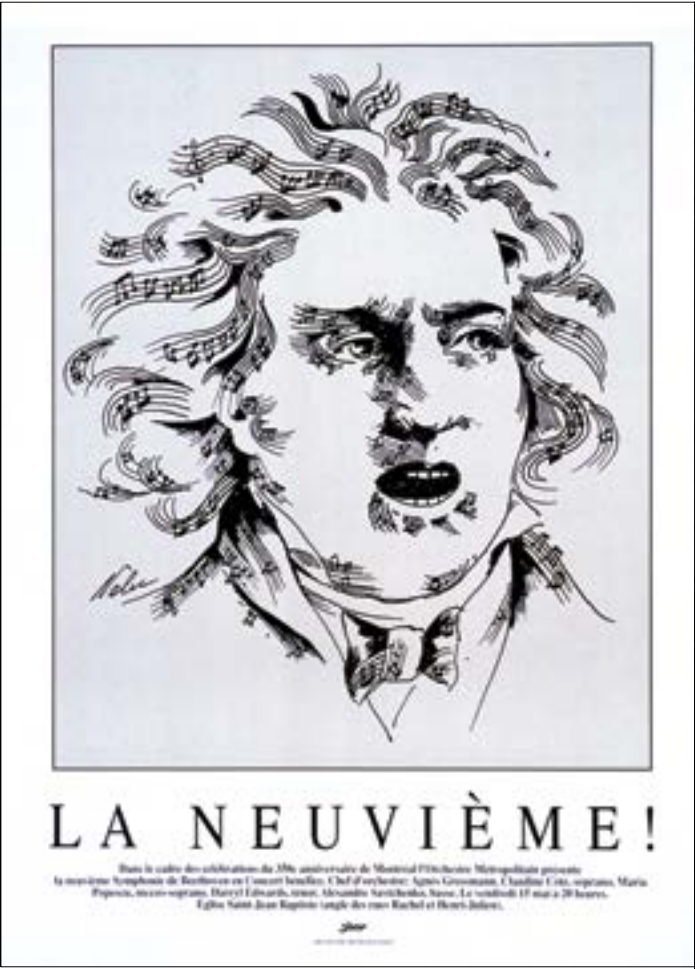
Or should you? Artists, like children, should and do question everything. Curiosity and creativity are twin sisters. What is the relationship between the vast amount of human knowledge and the Unknown? How can one get to know the Great Unknown? The questions formulate in the human brain like a thread linking the curved eroteme to the 'point' somewhere ahead - in space or time. The human profile is a simple outline, line and colour appear to be sketched, hesitant, fluid, suggesting a lack of certainty. This is not the finished work, it seems to say, there are more questions, fewer answers, there is no end to the brain's quest for the mechanism of the imagination.

I would argue that the exclamation mark is the certainty and exuberance of youth, while the question mark is the doubt and ambiguity that comes with age; but this argument may be easily contradicted.

HELL! O DANTE
2014



THE COMFORT OF NUMBERS



LA NEUVIÈME!
1992

70 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS MEXICO-CANADA
2014



*Numbers are such comfort
reliably the same
They come together, they grow apart
and when they reconvene
they are unchanged
triumphant
always making sense
in their orderly groups
like an army.
We can trust numbers
for equal, for square
always gentle and same.
But letters are treacherous
The way they write
And how they sound
They gather into words
Same letters different words
They gather in phrases to catch us out
Do not trust the letters the words
They can distort the phrases
They may not tell the truth
or the entire story
from death and old age
to freedom and youth.*

TO TELL A TALE OR THE TOOLS OF NARRATIVE

To survive, you must tell stories
(Umberto Eco)

All the little and large signs – words, colours, images – combined into metaphors, poetry, perspective, abstraction, etc., are essential elements in creating a story. Positioned in the right order, following agreed criteria of grammar and composition, they are the tools the storyteller uses to survive.

Some people use words to tell a story, and they do it very well, and at great length. Witness the number of fiction and non-fiction books published every year, every week. Readers love these stories and the publishing industry flourishes. Some storytellers use visual images, paintings, or photographs, still or moving. Some artists choose music. Poets combine words with rhythm, or rhyme, or music. Over time, they have honed, combined and refined the ways of telling a story, making it more sophisticated, its codes more and more exclusive and excluding.

Our day-to-day tools of storytelling, as a way of survival, are symbols; things that stand in for other things, real or imagined: trees, animals, feelings. But if this other thing that the symbol stands for doesn't exist, are we telling lies? What is the difference between a story (good) and a lie (bad)?

'If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth: it cannot in fact be used 'to tell' at all.' (Umberto Eco)

The act of standing in for something else, which defines it, makes the symbol both vulnerable and powerful, depending on how, when and where it is used. Between the signifier – the symbol – and the signified, there is a space in which the artist invites us to participate, to create connections.

The symbols – words, images, sounds – we use to tell our story are the same as those used to tell lies. For the artist to be believed, he must choose a different tool, select the one or the combination that only tells the true story.

To tell his story, to survive, the artist often needs to create his own symbols, his original myth, instead of, or alongside using existing ones. How can the artist create a myth? By definition, a myth is a story or set of stories, made up a long time ago and passed on through generations, in order to explain the unexplainable: life, love, natural phenomena, the universe. Or is a myth a belief mistakenly held, other peoples' story?

Praxiteles made a nude statue of Aphrodite around 330 BC – the first known life-size statue of a woman. The people of Kos were so shocked by the nudity, they didn't want her so she was bought by the island of Knidos, who knew a bargain when they saw one, and it ended up there. She was so beautiful, men wanted to have sex with her, and at least one sailor tried, leaving a stain of shame on her thigh. He is said to have then jumped off a cliff to his death. In his defence, the statue is a tease: one of her hands is moving to cover her pubic area, in a way that seems to draw attention to it. 'Just how did Praxiteles see me naked?' she asks in a later Hellenistic poem, apparently complaining at the invasion of her privacy, and at the same time confirming her nakedness. The signifier became the signified and the artist would take pride in creating such close similarity that the two can be confused.

Since prehistoric times storytellers continued to create myths and they always found a large audience, because people need to hear the stories. A good story is one that makes us suspend our disbelief.

LA MÉTHODE PSYCHANALYTIQUE
DANS SES MISES À L'ÉPREUVE
2002



THE MYTH OF DESIGN

Once upon a time there was a beautiful woman, with a delicate nose and high cheekbones. Her skin was pale as if she were made of marble. In fact, she was chiselled in marble, and at times painted, by many artists. This classic beauty opened her mouth and delivered objects that also pleased our sense of aesthetic; what's more, they were things we could use, like the red Panton chair. And this is how it happened that one icon – the classic female profile - gave birth to another icon – the stackable plastic chair. Combining beauty with functionality is the contemporary myth of design.

Wolfensohn takes us through several levels of significance. First (but this is not a hierarchic, or logical, order) the words: *Let's speak design* in three languages. Not, as we would expect, 'Let's talk about design' – but let's speak this language called design. The marble-like woman speaks design – as design comes out of her mouth, a scarlet tongue in the shape of this metaphor for design, the Panton chair. 'Language' is in most languages synonymous with tongue (langue, mother tongue, etc.)



LET'S SPEAK DESIGN
2000 DETAIL

‘The idea of creation, the idea that, simply by an act of willpower, nothing becomes something, is, of all the contradictory ideas, the least comprehensible to the human spirit’
(Jean-Jaques Rousseau)

How do we respond to design? Like the dog in Pavlov's classical conditioning experiment, suggests Wolfensohn, we create associations, generalisations. We respond to new stimuli with a condition response. As 21st century

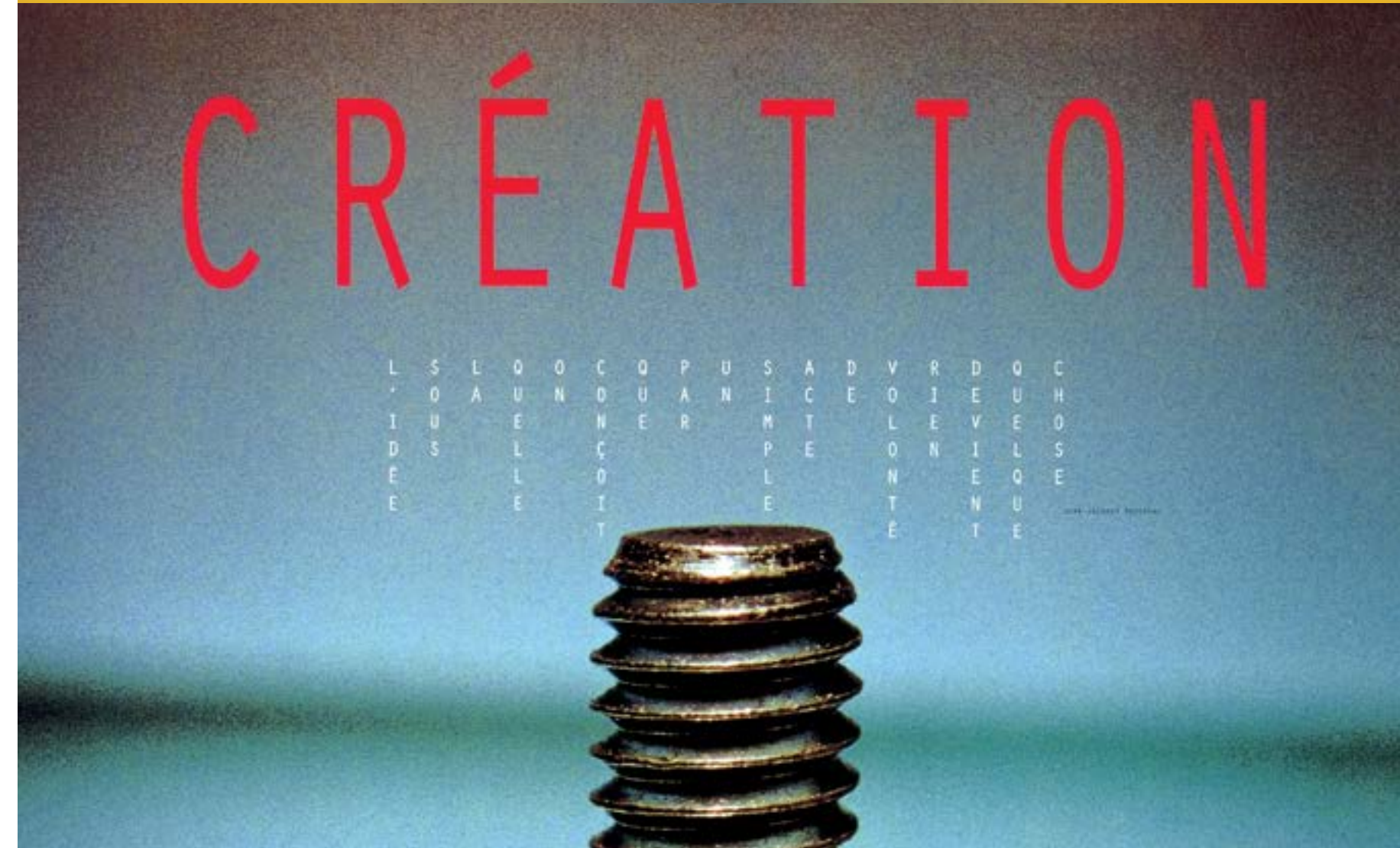
WHERE ARE WE HEADING?
2010

Two elements appear frequently in Wolfensohn's work: the eye (seeing, image, creation) and the mouth (swallow, ingest, consume).

This is how a myth is created, says Barthes: starting with a signifier and a signified, we have a sign, the association of concept and image. This sign becomes a signifier for another signified = a new, second degree sign. We can – and we do – go on to an increased level of significance. The relationship between the three elements, says Barthes, ‘is not one of equality but one of equivalence’. It is also one of interdependence.

Images (words, ideas, concepts) are repeated until they become familiar, cosy. They become a commodity. We use them to tell our story, or our lies. For the artist to be believed, he must choose different tools, the ones that only tell the true story.

CRÉATION
1999 DETAIL



THE MYTH OF THE UNKNOWN

Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.
(Michel Foucault)

Are design and science some constructs to hide reality (and art) from us? Questions Wolfensohn in *The Thread to the Unknown* poster, designed for the Image Conference in Poland, in 2012. The head, a lightly sketched grey profile, is a big question mark. The text directs to the point of the question mark, positioned in front of the human profile, setting the direction of his/her gaze. 'Are our constructions replicas of known things that hide the unknown from us?' In other words, are the signifiers we created used to hide the signified, rather than express it? Are we using the tools of communication in order to conceal the truth?

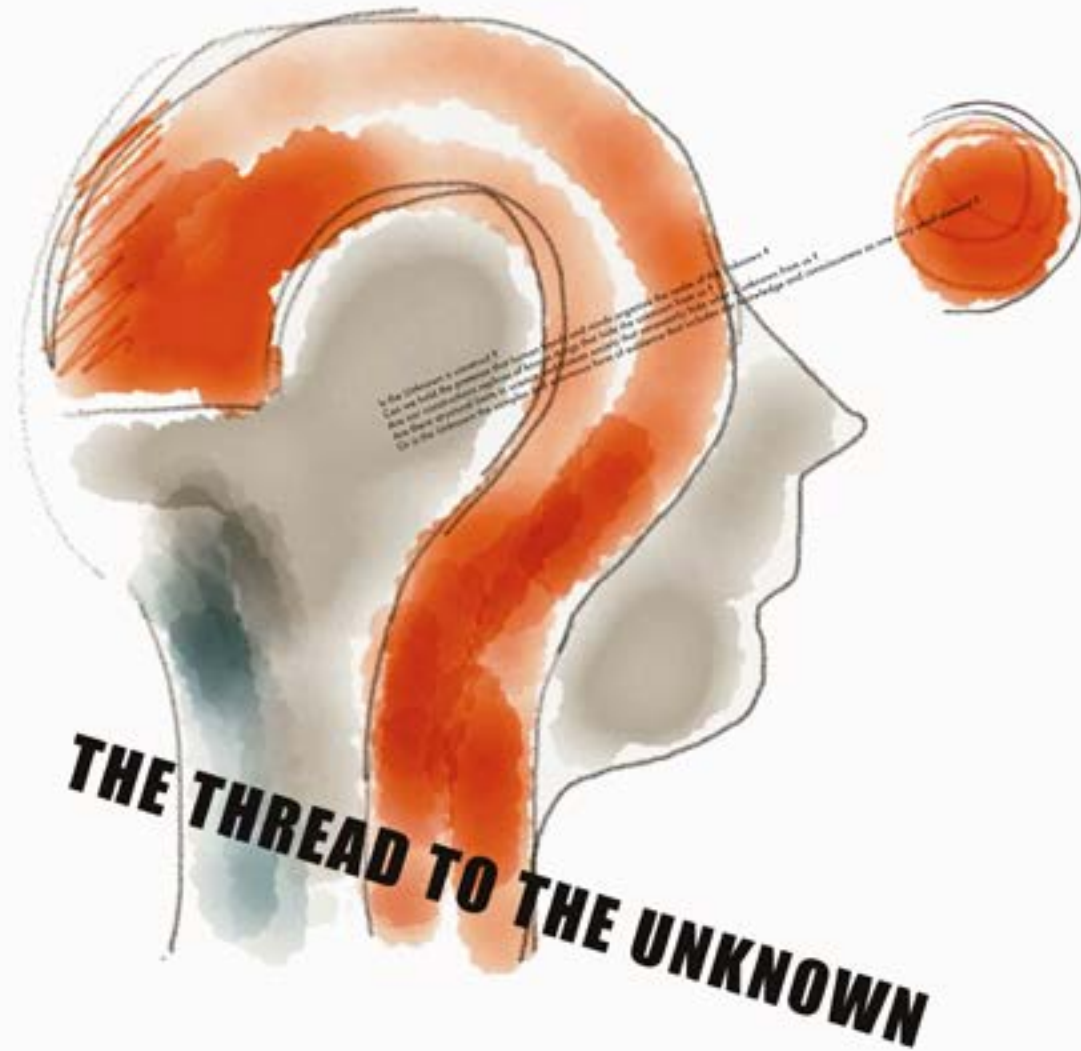
The temptation to get inside the head, especially inside the head of the artist, cannot be resisted. How does the brain create images that never existed in a physical reality? The workings of the human head are a puzzle waiting to be solved. Vertical Interrogation, a digital collage from 1999, raises as many questions as it provides answers. On the left, on a pure black background, the exterior, visible to all: monochrome, immobile, chiselled in marble. On the right, like a colourful

ultrasound picture, a volcano has exploded into red, yellow and magenta flames. Knowledge is fluid and too hot to be handled.

The inside of the head theme returns in 2006, for the Design Month poster. The same right facing profile, this time more elaborate, and on a pedestal of fine red, yellow and green lines. The background is blue, the head, transparent, is a lighter shade of blue, but we are privileged to look inside: a surreal array of biological and mechanical shapes, bright colours, snake and undulate into each other like melting paint. The grey matter is actually colourful and full of creative movement, like Dylan's hair in the psychedelic posters of the 60s (Glazer, Unknown). Somewhere near the forehead, a reminder of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man overlaps the corner of a prominent 'D' (D is for design).

But knowledge is made for cutting, and design is always at the cutting edge: for fashion, for interiors, for the stage, for our day-to-day objects. The consuming public is ready and willing to swallow design whole, like the devouring mouth of the crocodile- baguette – a recurring theme in Wolfensohn's work.

THE THREAD TO THE UNKNOWN
2012



LES PRIX
DE L'INSTITUT
DE DESIGN
MONTRÉAL
2004

[illegible]

THE MYTH OF LOVE AND DEATH

“What will survive of us is love”
(Philip Larkin)

Love and art go together like a horse and cart. The opposite of death is not life, but love, and so love and death are united in mythology, in art, in literature. The two concepts meet on several levels: they both conquer all; they last for ever; they offer inspiration and desperation.

Expressing such profound human sentiment in a visual way is a challenge that energised many artists over the centuries. Love between a man and a woman, between Cupid and Psyche, is often translated in painting and sculpture as an embrace. We may never know the identity of the two lovers in Rodin’s sculpture *The Kiss*, or Klimt’s golden canvas with the same title. The couple in Magritte’s 1928 canvas *The Lovers* is even more mysterious. Hiding under a white veil, Magritte’s lovers are embracing, their heads tilted towards each other, but *Ceci n’est pas un baiser*, the surrealist kiss doesn’t happen and the lovers remain separated for eternity by the death-like veil.

The scenario suits Wolfensohn’s perception of romantic love: if approached at all, the subject should be treated with a healthy dose of cynicism, or at least vague irony. And in the context of something bigger, more real – like death, for instance.

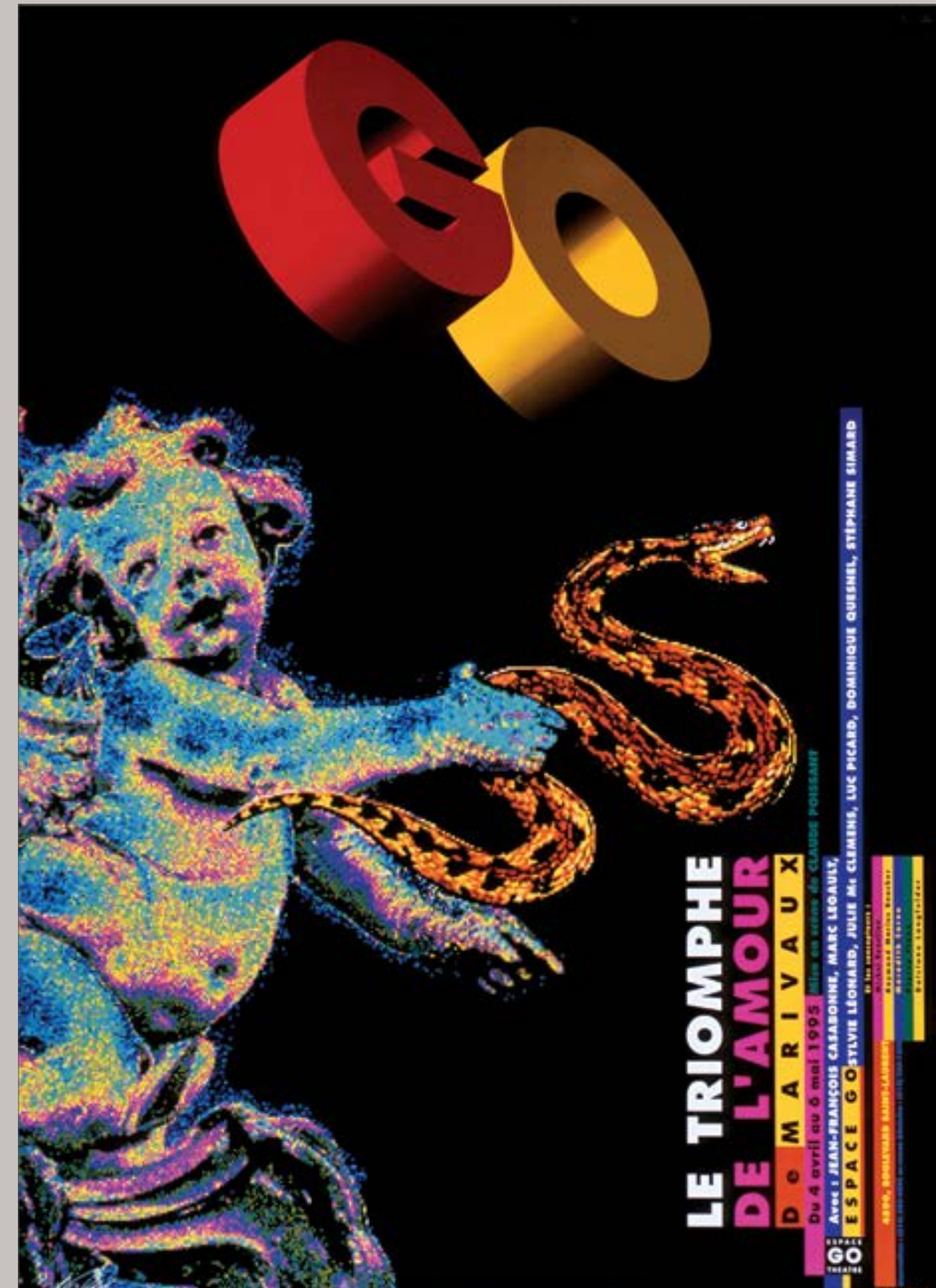
Like in Brancusi’s sculpture, *The Kiss*, the actors in *L’acteur l’actrice en scène. Corps, jeu, voix* (1995) could have been cut out of a single slab of stone.

What is the story of death, and how can it be related visually, with sensitivity and tact?

It is as natural to die as it is to be born, and probably just as painful. But as we were not there for the first, we would rather not be there for the latter, as Woody Allen put it ‘I am not afraid of dying. I just don’t want to be there when it happens’.

‘After your death, you will be what you were before your birth’ comforted Arthur Schopenhauer. As not many of us remember the feeling of that prenatal state, we are not entirely reassured by the prospect.

LE TRIOMPHE
DE L’AMOUR
1995



HELL!O DANTE
2014
PRELIMINARY DRAWING

Fear of the unknown characterises the concept of death in Western culture. Religion didn't make it better when it invented some terrible stages to pass through before we even get to the prenatal state of peace and nothingness.

The destination of a fresh corpse, or the spirit that inhabited it, is quite complex and never attractive: there is Heaven and Hell, Purgatory, Paradise and, the most frightening of them all, Limbo. It is not easy to understand the qualifications required for a place in each of them. In Christianity, the after-death is seen as punishment or reward for a life lived within or outside the rules it imposes. He who was bad rots in Hell (although, technically, the matter described as prevalent in Hell is not conducing to putrefaction). Hell was not invented by Christianity, or even by Monotheism. The Sumerians, the Greeks and the Egyptians all had a version of it, mostly involving fire and eating dust. In Jewish folklore, people in Hell have food, but only long spoons and, as they are unable to cooperate by feeding each other, they starve to ...death.

The fate of the wicked, from shame and public contempt to eternal purgation in molten metal has, over the centuries, given inspiration to opera, poetry, film, painting and more recently action video games. As in the case of Dante's *Divina Comedia*, poetry in turn inspired drawings, paintings and posters.

The first part of Dante's epic poem was composed between 1308 and 1320. In terza rima, Dante describes the nine circles of the Infernal Funnel and indicates the place for various sinners.

Based on Dante's description, Botticelli created a map of Hell, along with 91 other drawings that illustrate *Divina Comedia*. In the 19th century, artists like Gustave Doré and William Blake gave us images of the enchanted forest and the monsters that torment the sinners in Hell.

One of Wolfensohn's posters celebrating the 700th anniversary of this writing, is a conversational greeting: Hello, Dante, as to an old acquaintance. An exclamation mark divides the first word to read HELL!O, but the exclamation mark is black, like the background and the letters of 'Hello' and Dante are large red capitals, so at first glance it is a friendly greeting to the Tuscan poet. The portrait of Dante, sketched (scratched?) with white lines on the black background, is based on the statue by the sculptor Enrico Pazzi. The monument was erected in Piazza Santa Croce in Florence in 1865, to mark the poet's 600th anniversary. This approach seems to indicate the fact that we don't know for certain what Dante looked like. There is a beautiful profile by Botticelli, but this was painted some 200 years after Dante's death. The Botticelli portrait echoes a description we have from Giovanni Boccaccio (who changed the name of *Comedia* to *Divina Comedia*).

'His face was long, his nose aquiline, and his eyes big rather than small. His jaws were large, and his lower lip protruded. He had a brown complexion, his hair and beard were thick, black, and curly, and his countenance was always melancholy and thoughtful.' (Giovanni Boccaccio).

The other *Inferno* poster brings us brutally into the 20th century and the Hell brought by the Nazi regime. The sign ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ at the entrance to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps is immediately recognisable as a synecdoche for the Holocaust and the horrors of war. This is death at its grimmest, most cruel, the worst Inferno of all. Rendered more repellent by being brought on people by other ‘humans’. There were 15,000 children at Theresienstadt, less than 150 survived.

‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ at the entrances to concentration camps was a possible attempt at cruel irony. A more appropriate sign would have been Dante’s phrase from Canto III of *Inferno*: ‘Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch’intrate’ (Abandon all hope, you who enter here).

Western religion and history have created a culture of mystery, pain and fear around death. We don’t talk about it for as long as we can avoid the subject. We don’t mention death in front of the children, so as not to upset them (how long for?). It takes a long time to understand and accept that death, as inevitable as taxes, happens to all of us, and the more prepared for it we are, the better.

‘While I thought that I was learning how to live, I was learning how to die’, wrote Leonardo da Vinci. (This level of mortality salience is apparently related to high self-esteem).

TO DEATH
WITH A SMILE
2017 DETAIL

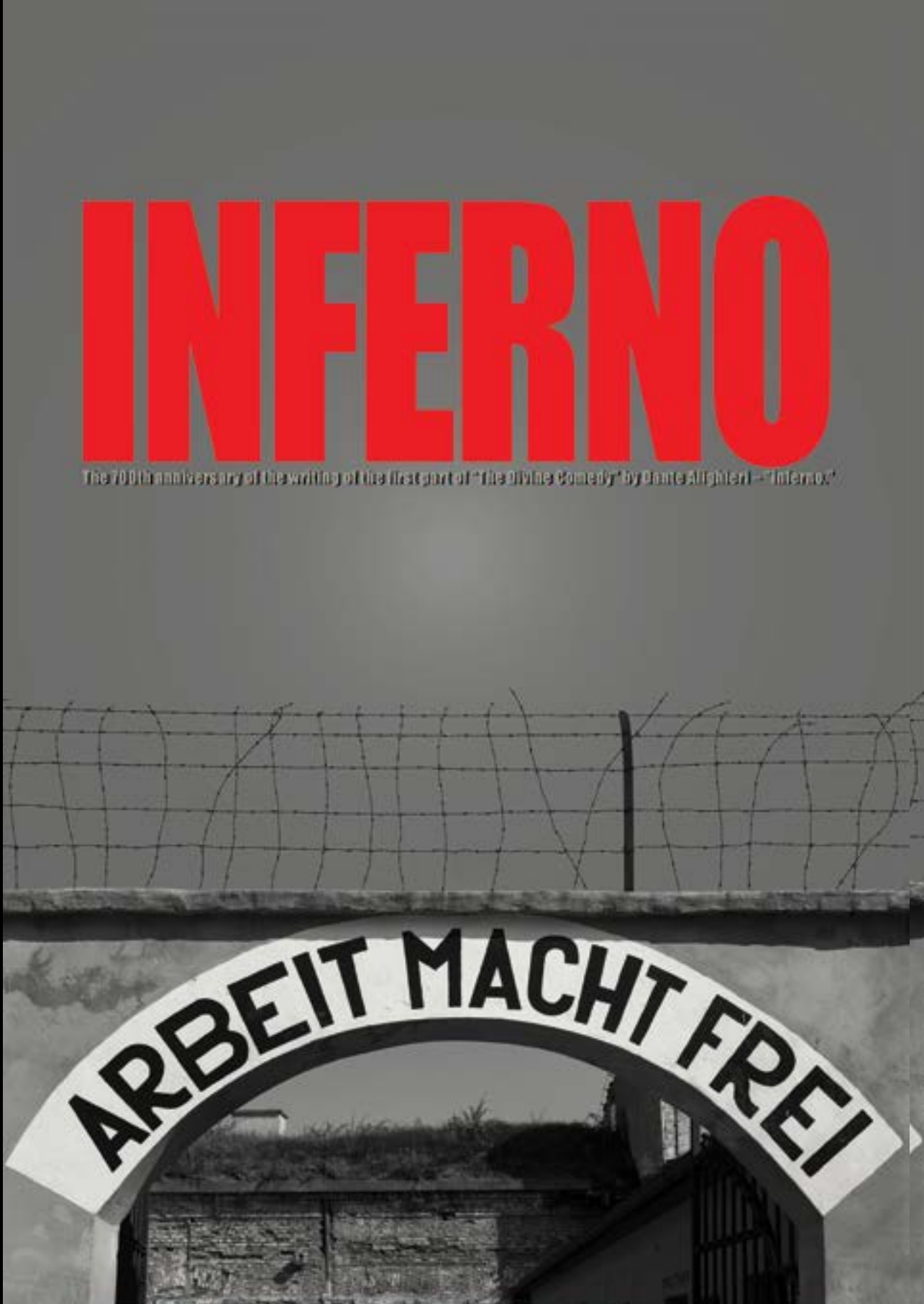
INFERNO
2014

Like everything else that lives, sooner or later all humans die. The cause varies: illness, warfare, punishment, self-sacrifice, martyrdom, accident. The disposal of the physical remains also varies – burial, cremation, cryonics, mummification – depending on customs and beliefs.

The plethora of emotions caused by mortality – anger, confusion, fear, hope, sadness – has inspired great works of art, literature and film. Personification – The Grim Reaper, carrying a scythe – is a way of coping. Death is just an ex-human, hiding the fact that it’s only a skeleton by wearing a long cape and/or a hoody. The skull, a shorthand signifier for death, features in painting from Medieval times to Damian Hirst.

Do we dare to make fun of death? Artists and caricaturists often do.

As the Mexican novelist Octavio Paz put it: ‘The Mexican ... is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it. True, there is as much fear in his attitude as in that of others, but at least death is not hidden away: he looks at it face to face, with impatience, disdain or irony.’





At the start of November, Mexico celebrates the Day of the Dead (el Día de los Muertos) when the souls of the dead visit their living relatives. Like any reunion, there is food, drink and music. The celebrations include parades and costumes, mostly based on skeletons and skulls; the festival is on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

On the subject of death, the Mexican Museum of Design MUMEDI organised an international poster competition 'To Death With a Smile'. It invited personal approaches to the way a designer's own culture fears or deals with death. With a nod to Día de los Muertos, Wolfensohn's contribution features skeletons and skulls, and a comic element: brightly coloured accessories (yellow sunglasses, red shoes). It is interesting to observe that this approach is quite removed from the traditional Western art, which has always regarded death with respect, seriousness and sadness, maybe because our part of the world has experienced so much of it, in such an untimely fashion.

Traditionally, the closest we come to death while still alive, is sex. Romantic love also leads to death in many of our legends and myths. In *Relax Baby* we can admire the curves of the

bikini girl, but the purple bikini is worn by a faint skeleton, melting into the darkness, becoming invisible. Relax baby, don't worry – it's going to happen.

The last verse of Dante's *Divina Comedia* summarises his entire work: love is the meaning of life, the universe and everything:

'L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stele' (Paradiso XXXIII) (Love, that moves the sun and the other stars).



RELAX BABY
2017

TO DEATH
WITH A SMILE
2015

THE MYTH OF THE ARTIST'S EYE

The world only exists in your eyes
(F. Scott Fitzgerald)

‘The eyes are the mirror of the soul and reflect everything that seems to be hidden; and like a mirror, they also reflect the person looking into them.’ (Paul Cohello)

As I look at paintings, I feel like the baguette/alligator in Nelu Wolfensohn’s poster: hungry, greedy, ready to swallow one work of art after another, chasing after the eye, the image created by the artist. A consumer of art, like a consumer of fashion, or technology, is never satiated.

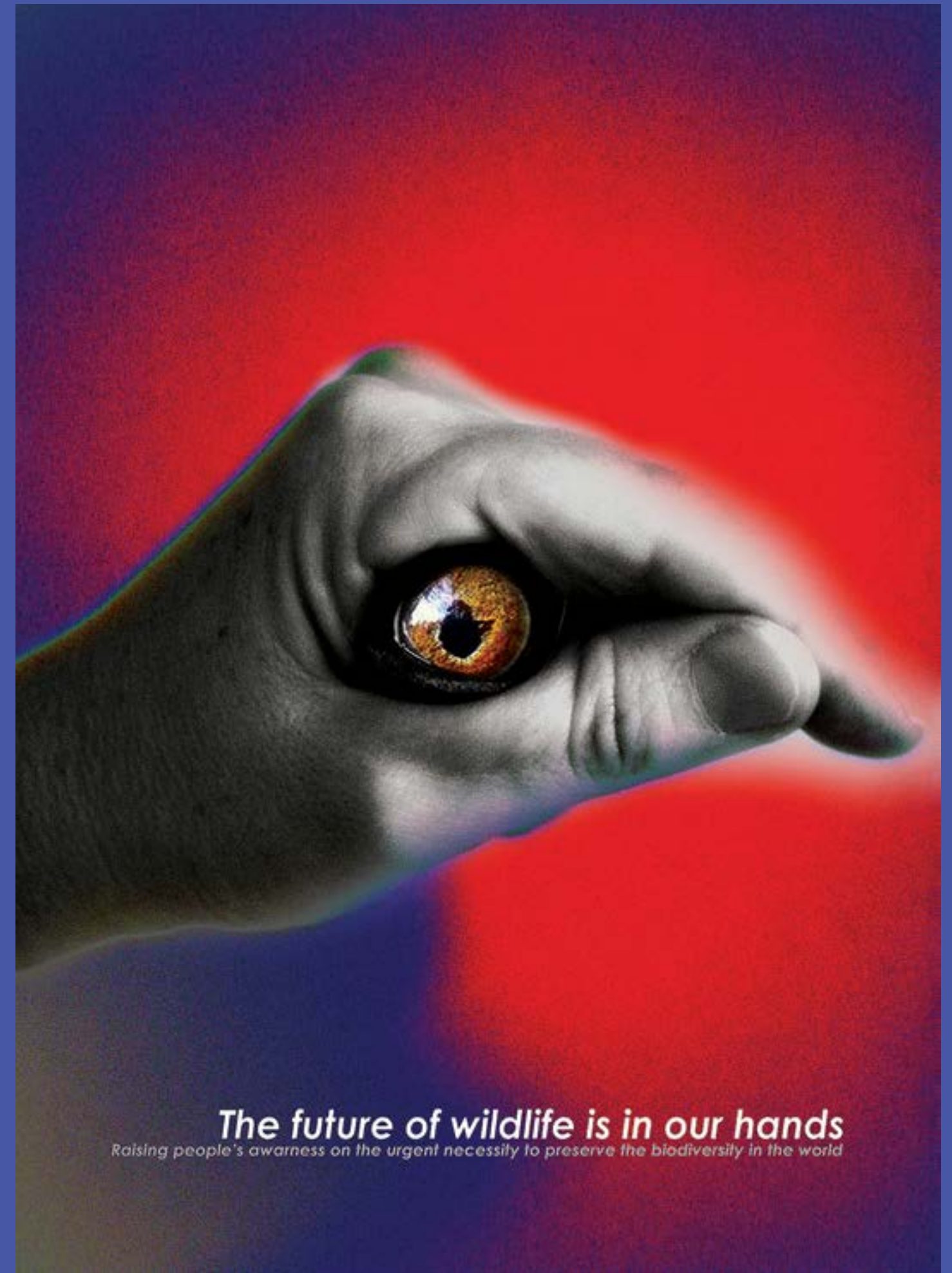
From the eye of Horus to the Eye of Providence – the eye is one of the most powerful and multidimensional symbols in Western culture. It has been linked to myths, legends and beliefs, playing a significant role – sometimes positive, sometimes negative, but always powerful – in the life of humans. The eye is an essential organ of communication, as important as speech in face-to-face exchanges. In several languages ‘to see’ means to understand. The eye is the mirror of the soul and the artist’s most valued tool.

We are used to seeing the eye as the synecdoche for the artist himself. In Wolfensohn’s posters, rendered with photographic precision, the concentric iris, luminous and with a perfectly round pupil, is shown at the cutting edge of

design, at the centre of the hand holding the pencil, ready to be swallowed by a baguette – the all-consuming public.

In Egyptian mythology the eye was not the passive organ of sight but more an agent of action, protection or wrath. Horus was god in the form of a falcon (not unusual for an ancient Egyptian god); his right eye was the sun, symbol of power and quintessence, and his left eye was the moon, representing healing. In one myth, his brother Set, god of the desert, gouged out Horus’s left eye. The eye was later restored through magic and Horus offered it to his father Osiris, designating the eye as a symbol of sacrifice and healing. The eye of Horus, or the Wadjet, remains one of the best-known symbols of protection. Western culture has devised other metaphors for protection: two hands forming a pitched roof, umbrellas, etc. In the poster entitled *The future of wildlife is in our hands*, the hand is protecting the eye which is reflecting the silhouette of a tiny, vulnerable bird. The message is loud: to help preserve biodiversity in the world, we need to see (i.e. to understand) it. The future of wildlife – the future of the planet – is in our hands. The bird, a small and precious thing, and the hand protecting it are monochrome on a background of red (danger) and blue (hope).

THE FUTURE OF WILDLIFE
IS IN OUR HANDS
2016



And there are other eyes in Wolfensohn’s posters. There is the Eye of Ra: like the disc of the sun, the source of heat and light, a frightening, sometimes aggressive power.

The power of Ra – the red circle - is used in Western imagery as a symbol for ‘Stop’, ‘Forbidden’, ‘No Entry’. In the centre of the composition, on a black background, it is used to create a shocking impact – required for the treatment of the subject: Stop homelessness; Housing is a universal human right.

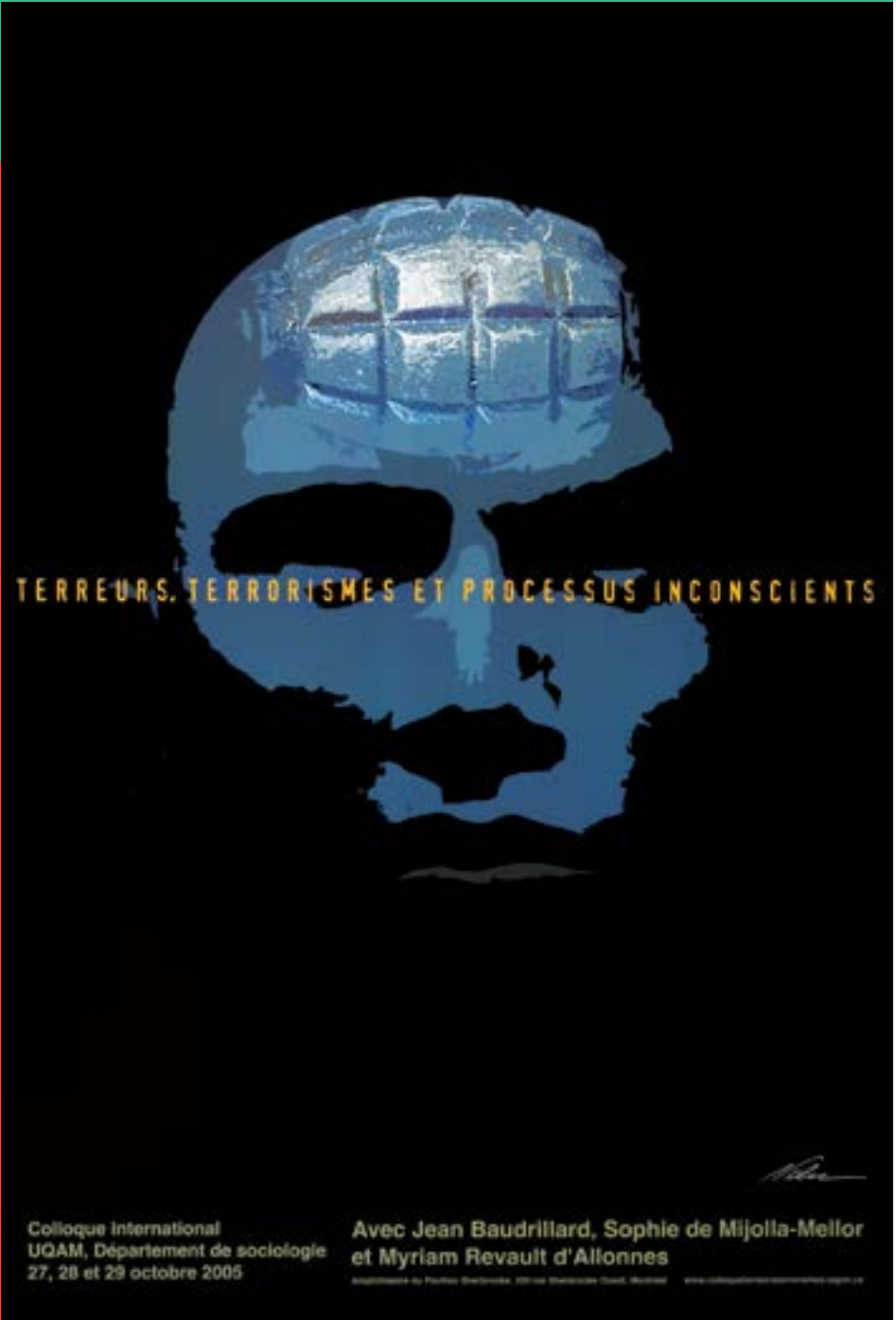
Sometimes the eyes are conspicuous by their absence. The eyes of the dead are closed, as they gaze into another world under their eyelids. Or, in *To Death With a Smile*, under mirror sunglasses, reflecting a festival of fireworks and fun.

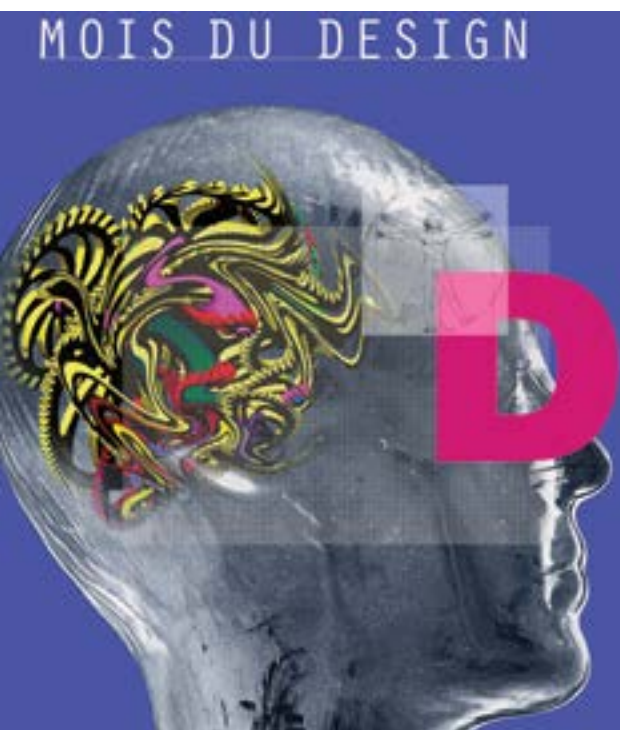


Hidden eyes are often a reason for concern, even fear. We cannot read the feelings, the intentions of the character. In the poster for the conference on terror, terrorism and the unconscious process, the illustration is a grenade-like cranium coming out of the darkness, the eyes concealed in black shadows. We can distinguish some of the features, but not the eyes, and this is scary. Like in the parody of Munch’s *Scream* and the skull wearing sparkling mirror sunglasses, the absence of eyes, the inability to see into the soul of the one seeing you – this is the stuff of nightmares.

HOUSING
A UNIVERSAL RIGHT
2013 DETAIL

TERREURS,
TERRORISMES ET
PROCESSUS
INCONSCIANTS
2005

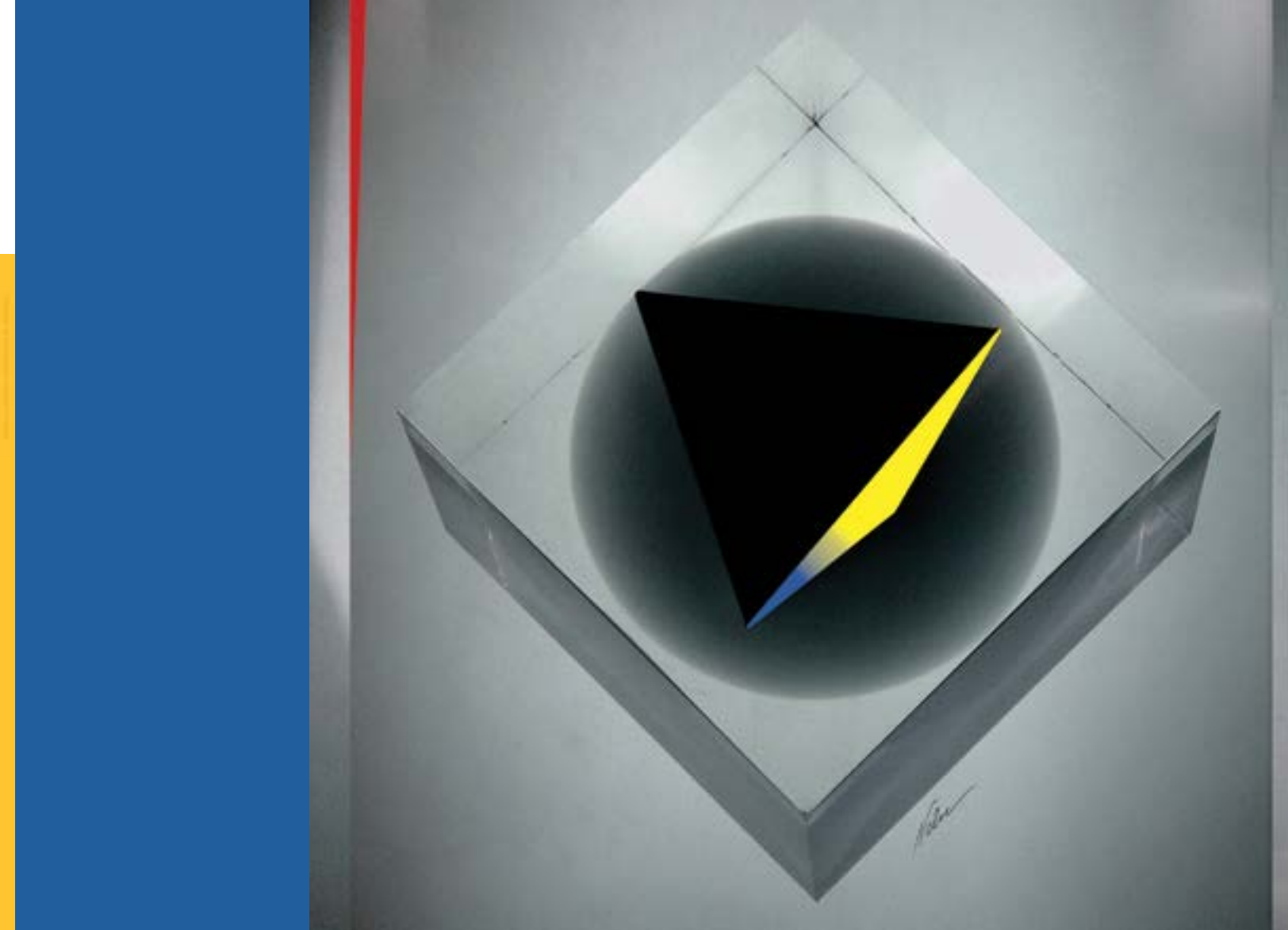
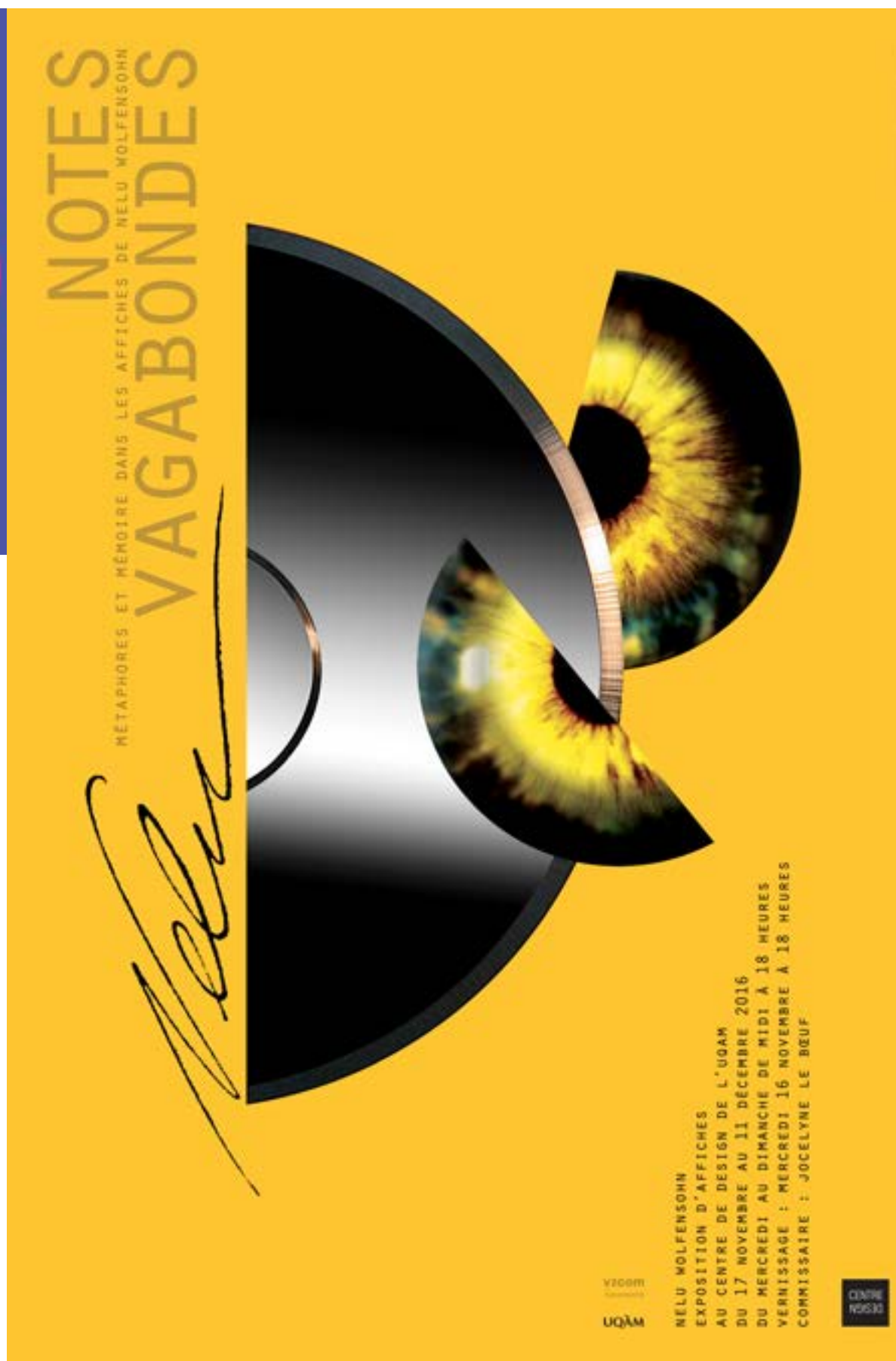




MONTRÉAL
MAI 2006
MOIS DU DESIGN
DETAIL

NOTES VAGABONDES
2016

LES PRIX
DE L'INSTITUT
DE DESIGN
MONTRÉAL
2005 DETAIL



As Wolfensohn is a designer, it is the eye of the artist that he prioritises. Design Month May 2006 pictures a profile on a clear blue May sky background. We can almost hear the whirr of the intense activity inside the head: complex shapes and colours, Leonardo's Vitruvian man, tell us that this head is busy with creative and technical ideas. We don't see the eye, though: where we expect to see an eye, a large D – for Design – features instead. And from behind

the square, the triangle and the circle fading into the darkness, shines brightly; the light, the vision of the designer, like a sleepy eye, yet ready to become all seeing, like the eye of providence (*Les Prix de L'institut de Design a Montréal 2005*) on the poster for Wolfensohn's 2016 exhibition Notes Vagabondes - an homage to the surrealist eye. Recalling the eye in Dali and Buñuel's *Chien andalou* the letter D (for Design) is a sharp razor slicing the image of an iris.

THE MYTH OF THE ARTIST'S HAND

It follows that the soul is analogous to the hand
(Aristotle)

Holding a pencil or a mouse, a quill or a stylus - the creative waves and eruptions in the brain are translated into art via the hand.

Since the discovery of their ability to paint, humans have naturally been fascinated by their hand, the hand that holds the brush – this instrument of creation. Witness Cuevas de la Manos in Argentina: a somewhat disturbing sea of waving hands have been stencilled by a graffiti artist using his right hand to spray colour around his left, which was resting on the wall. The work is dated at around 7300 BC. I like to imagine this artist, nearly 100 centuries ago, looking at his own hand with wonder, the way babies do, then admiring its image on the wall of the cave.

One of Wolfensohn's early (1992) posters features such a hand - decorated with a rainbow of finger puppets. The poster reflects the innocent time when we believed globalisation to be a good thing for all nations.

Conforming to restrictions imposed by the Bible – as it suffered many translations and interpretations – Jewish and early Christian artists did not feature God in their work. To express his actions, or his influence, or even his voice, they would use the hand as a synecdoche, more precisely his right hand (Dextera domini).

This metaphorical reference remains in usage in modern English – and possibly other languages too. Indeed, languages remain rich in idioms featuring the hand in a variety of roles: hand in hand, hand in glove, free hand, heavy hand, bite the hand that feeds you, upper hand, safe hands, etc.

The complex expressiveness of hands continued to be a subject of fascination for Renaissance artists. They studied hands in a variety of poses and movements, trying to represent them as close to reality as possible.

'Behold the hands, how they promise, conjure, appeal, menace, pray, supplicate, refuse, beckon, interrogate, admire, confess, cringe, instruct, command, mock, and what not besides, with a variation and multiplication of variation which makes the tongue envious.' (Michel de Montaigne)

It was important for Renaissance artists to portray the human body as lifelike as possible; painters and sculptors' studies of anatomy enabled the creation of some remarkable works – beautiful images of hands, arranged in expressive poses, detailed rendering of delicate bones and cartilages of the fingers and wrists.

The tool of tools, as Aristotle defined them, hands are the instrument of creation: the spirit becomes material through the action of hands.

SIR NEVILLE MARRINER
1987 DETAIL



Actions, as well as expression – from tenderness to strength, human interaction (shaking hands, holding hands, kissing a hand) the relationship between man and God, hope and order - can be read in the hands. In Michelangelo's Creation of Man, God's hand doesn't quite reach the hand of his creation, Adam, but the nearly touching index fingers belong to nearly identical hands and arms; a reminder that man was created in God's image, destined to be himself a creator. The hands of Renaissance were not just anatomically correct, but charged with a complexity that gives their paintings a vibrant, dynamic significance. Artists have focused on the expressive possibilities of the hand to represent emotions, identities, conflict and collaboration, as well as their own feelings and fears.

From the realistic working hands of Van Gogh's peasants to the surreal, scarlet fingernailed hands of Salvador Dali's passionate woman; from Diego Rivera's painting of Dr Moore's hands severing the root from the tree, cutting through the female body to M. C. Escher's hands that appear to be drawing each other – the representation of hands was instrumental in the creation of character, atmosphere, mood, message.



As a metaphor, the anatomical precision matters less than its role in the composition. Giorgio de Chirico can therefore borrow the right hand and forearm of a famous sculpture and place it in a frame at the centre of his canvas in *Metaphysical Interior With Hand of David*.

Liberated from the chains of realistic detailed drawing, artists have moved from hands-on (as it were) practice to conceptually based work. Wolfensohn's hands are lifelike achieved by high definition photography. The designer's right hand is holding the pencil. On the left-hand side of the poster, the designer's right hand is holding a USB. The poster is asking *Where Are We Heading?* but whatever the direction of design, the degree of technological intervention, it is clear that the artist's hand has the decisive role.

Like Magritte, Wolfensohn associates the hand with the eye, the seeing with conveying the vision. At the centre of the hand that holds the pencil/USB, there is the all-seeing iris, the photographic image of a perfectly round, black surrounded by yellow, iris.

Giving and taking, accepting and rejecting, comfort or coldness are themes that occur frequently in works of art. And often the representation is through hands open in acceptance and comfort, or closed in rejection and animosity. Used to express hopes and anxieties, but also fundamental feelings like friendship and dependency, a desire to protect and nurture. The hand that creates, as well as the hand that protects (*The future of wildlife*) is the hand that sees.

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?
2010

In Wolfensohn's work, the hand is often a synecdoche for the artist: the hand that draws, the hand that creates. So I find it intriguing to compare the static hand of the designer with the hand of the piano player, the conductor. A poster announcing the participation of Sir Neville Marriner at the Festival Lanaudière features the conductor's hand as a focal point of the composition, making the rest of the image blurred by light rays, by movement.

SIR NEVILLE MARRINER
1987

MARIKA BOURNAKI
2006



In another poster, for Marika Bournaki's piano recital, the hands of the dazzling pianist are in the foreground of the poster, her Pre-Raphaelite beautiful face and golden hair dominating the centre of the composition. Yet the focus appears to be at the lower part of the poster, where her hands and the piano are in a dynamic pose, inviting the eye to move across the composition at sharp angles.



ALL THE WORLD'S A ZOO

Humans are animals. A thin curtain of culture separates humans from the rest of the animal kingdom, yet part of the culture is a series of parallels drawn between the two, in legends, fables and visual arts.

From the Ice Age Mammoth in the Pech-Merle Cave to Albert Durer's Rhinoceros (1515) and Damien Hirst's Away From the Flock (the famous 1994 sheep preserved in formaldehyde)

artists have considered animals interesting and mysterious subjects, to be immortalised in painting, drawings and installations.

Understanding and translating metaphors is an instant, nearly automatic process and animal metaphors are a direct and powerful method of exploring our relationship with another part of nature. In Western culture, animal symbolism is multilayered, with roots that can be found

in mythology, the Bible or local legends. The gods of ancient Greeks and Romans had a habit of metamorphosing into other creatures in order to seduce or defeat humans – and unsurprisingly that action has inspired many artists. Most – but not all - zoomorphic (the use of animal metaphors for human personality characteristics) are unflattering, reinforcing our desire to distance humans from other mammals. At times they are used as shorthand for the

immediate characteristics: the fox is sly, the snake is treacherous, the dog is a symbol of fidelity, but sometimes also treachery, the wolf suggests cruelty.

However, not all animals are evil, and some (like cats and horses) are beautifully designed.

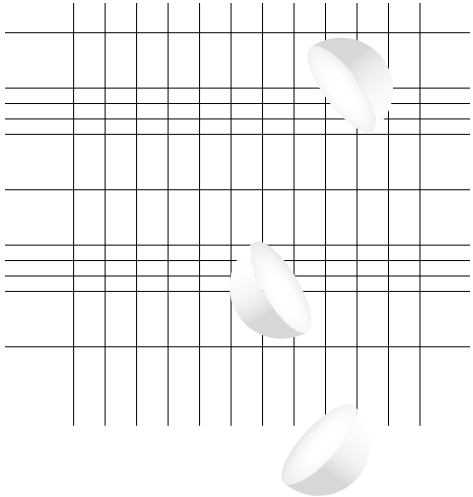




COCK A DOODLE-DOO

With its luxurious plumage, red crown and powerful voice, the rooster is a colourful and frequent presence in art and crafts. As a Chinese zodiac sign, one of the symbols of Portugal, Italian ceramics and ubiquitous ornaments in French kitchens, roosters hold an enviable position in art. If the rooster's pomp and brightness are not enough to attract attention, his crowing certainly does. A symbol of masculinity and pride, it is linked to the dawn, the sun, new beginnings. He is good at announcing, the cock, and fits so naturally into a poster.

In a tribute to the Théophile Steinlen poster announcing an exhibition of Art Nouveau artists, Wolfensohn's poster for his own exhibition of posters *Metaphors and Memories* features a rooster, entering from the left to make his announcement. However, Wolfensohn's composition is decidedly modern; his rooster emerges out of a smooth egg (as they do) onto an egg-yellow background; the plumage is made of steel curls and his crown is gloriously red. The text, limited to essential words, is in black, clean and slim, all upper case.



METAPHORS AND MEMORY
2018

THE LOVEABLE KITTEN, THE FIERCE DOG

From the ancient Egyptians who cast it in bronze, to millions on Instagram pictures, who doesn't like a kitten? Mysterious and fearless, cats have domesticated and charmed us with their elegance, independence and curiosity. They are said to have nine lives, and as such represent rebirth and resurrection. As well as the combination of laziness and agility, it is the playfulness of cats that has appealed to many artists.

The poster for the 2010 Hubert Reeves conference, with a kitten playing with planet earth reduced to the size of a ball, reminded me of the ultimate argument against the flat earth theory: 'if the earth was flat the cats would have pushed everything off it by now', as it appears on pins and T-shirts, complete with grammatical error. Wolfensohn's kitten is stripey, blending into and emerging from the stripiness of the universe. Hubert Reeves is a French Astrophysicist born in Montreal, and the conference that pays tribute to him is about science and human values. This information along with the time and place is featured on narrow black bands that frame the image.

Every kitten aspires to be a big tiger one day – and some achieve this dream. The tiger- lecturer calling all back to school for the start of the

academic year (2000) doesn't seem to intimidate the cat student below. The cat appears impassive, bordering on bored, compared with the excited tiger in the red bubble.

Unlike the cat, the descendants of wolves have been domesticated some 40,000 years ago. Greek bas-reliefs and Roman mosaics testify to their use as hunting companions and guards. Every century has examples of canine art, spreading the myth of the pet's loyalty, unconditional love and protection, and even contemporary artists would paint portraits of dogs, with or without their master.

None is so famous as Nipper, the Bristol mix terrier who was painted by Francis Barraud looking intently into a cylinder phonograph. The image of the loveable dog's puzzled expression, together with the slogan 'His Master's Voice' became the trademark for British record label HMV. Today music no longer needs a phonograph, but in Wolfensohn's poster Nipper is still listening; his head tilted to the left, his gaze focused on the voice of his master – a roll of dollar banknotes. Yes, the music industry is always listening, as the 2015 poster proclaims, and we all know who it is listening to, who is its master.

HUBERT REEVES CONFÉRENCE
SCIENCES ET
VALEURS HUMAINES
2010

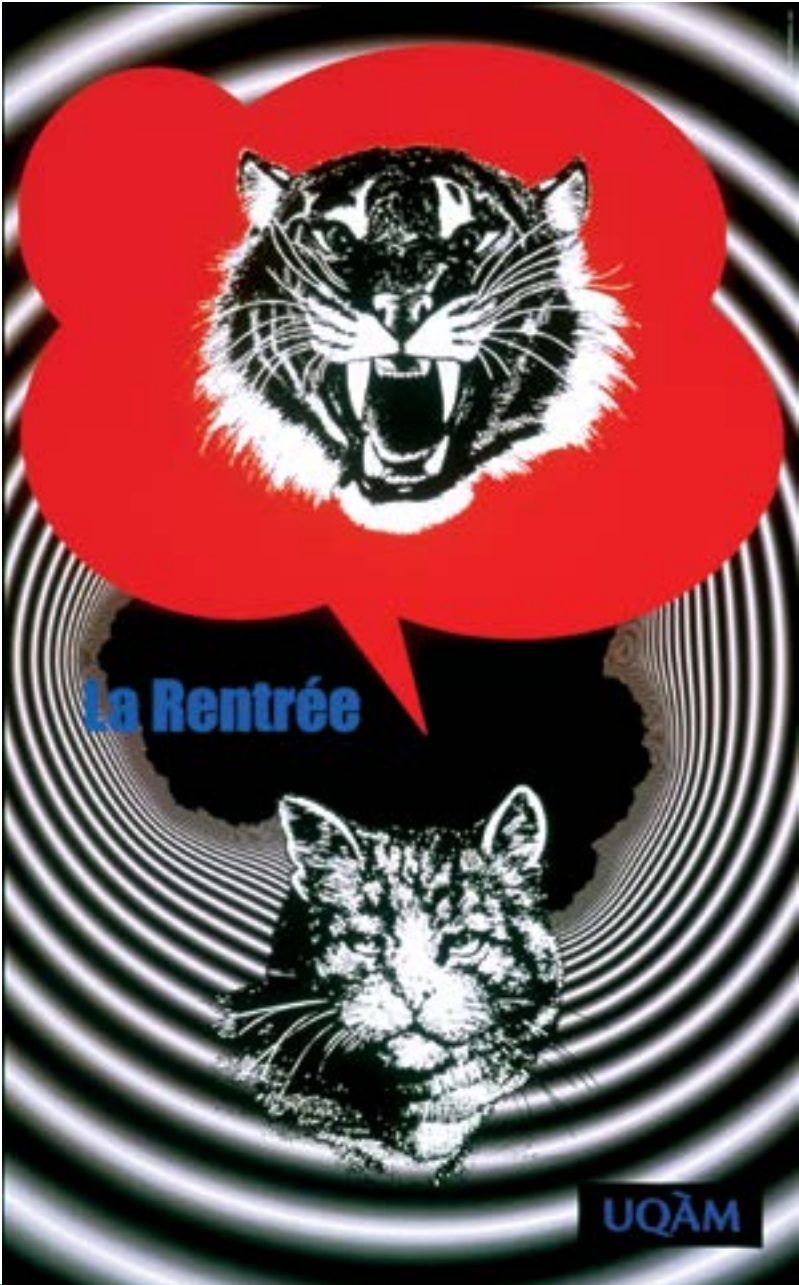


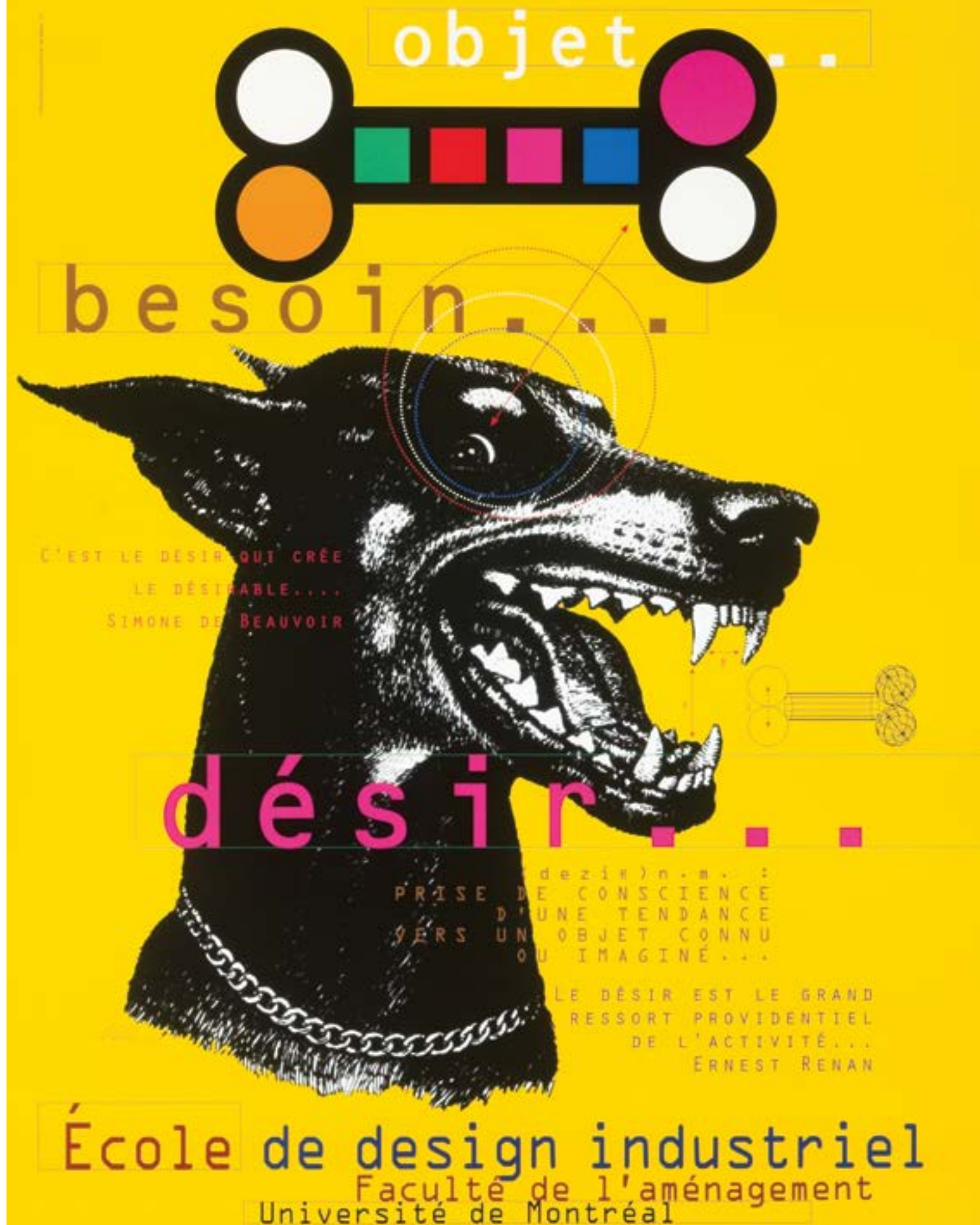
HIS MASTER'S VOICE
2015 DETAIL



LA RENTRÉE
2000

DOSSIER RIGOLETTO
1989

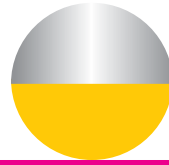




The dog can be an aggressive animal, but sometimes he can experience – and express - fear and submissiveness. In his 1989 poster for a theatre show, Wolfensohn superimposes the face of a woman on the dog, seated on human haunches and showing a hint of human breast in profile. The submissive woman is a bourgeois conception frequent in opera, probably none so evident as in Verdi's *Rigoletto* (with misogynistic arias like 'Questa o quella') featured in the poster title. In the poster for *Dossier Rigoletto*, Wolfensohn has used a sketchy and ironic execution.

The relationship between designer and consumer is a complex one. The Pavlovian unconditioned stimulus – unconditioned response may not be the most obvious way of explaining it, but Wolfensohn's 1997 poster for the School of Industrial Design attempts to do so. The fierce-looking dog is salivating at the thought of the bone floating above it. In front of its open mouth, revealing sharp, threatening teeth, the technical drawing of a bone is teasingly close. This Simone de Beauvoir quote clarifies: 'It is the desire that creates the desirable'. Object. Need. Desire.

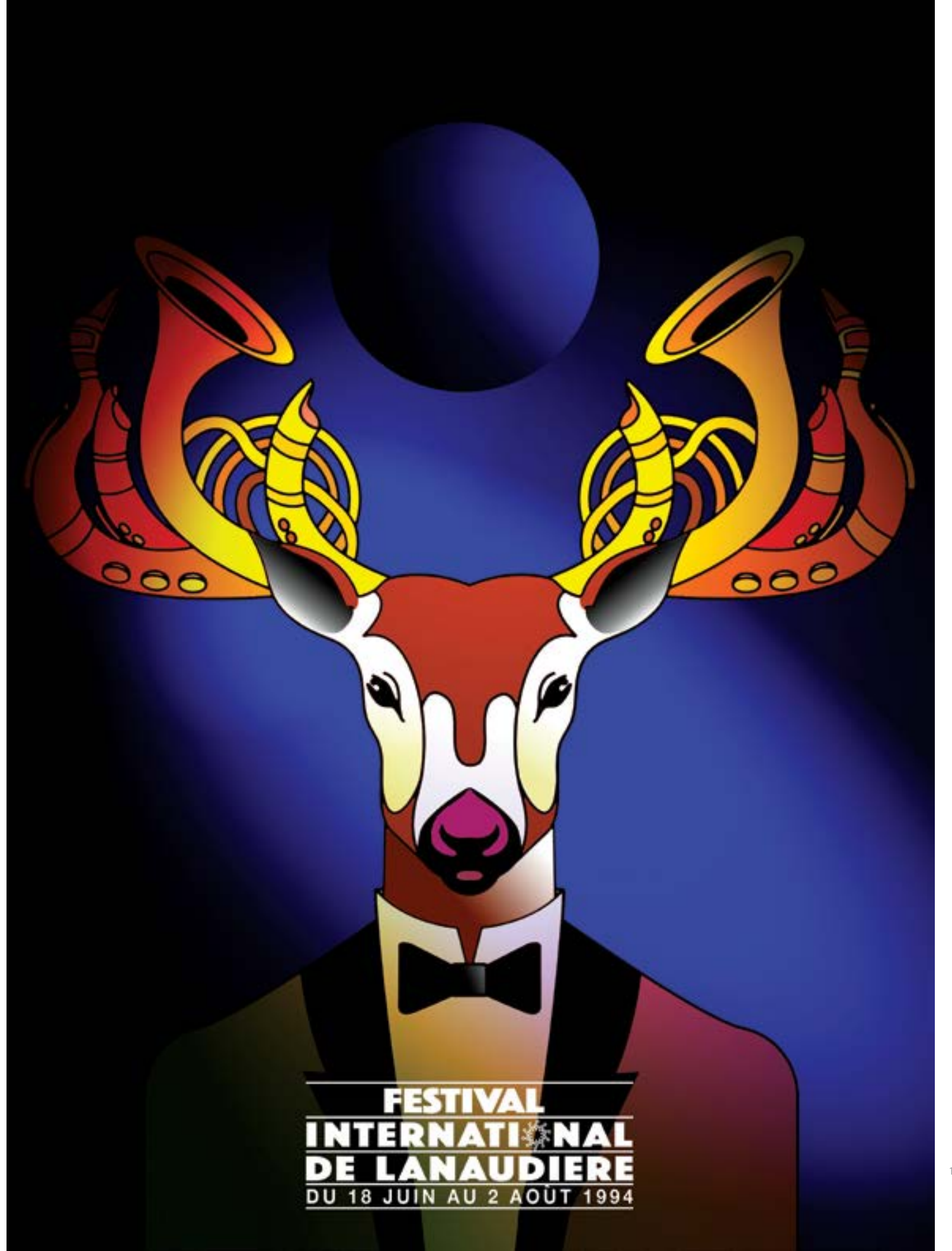
OBJET... BESOIN... DÉSIR...
1997

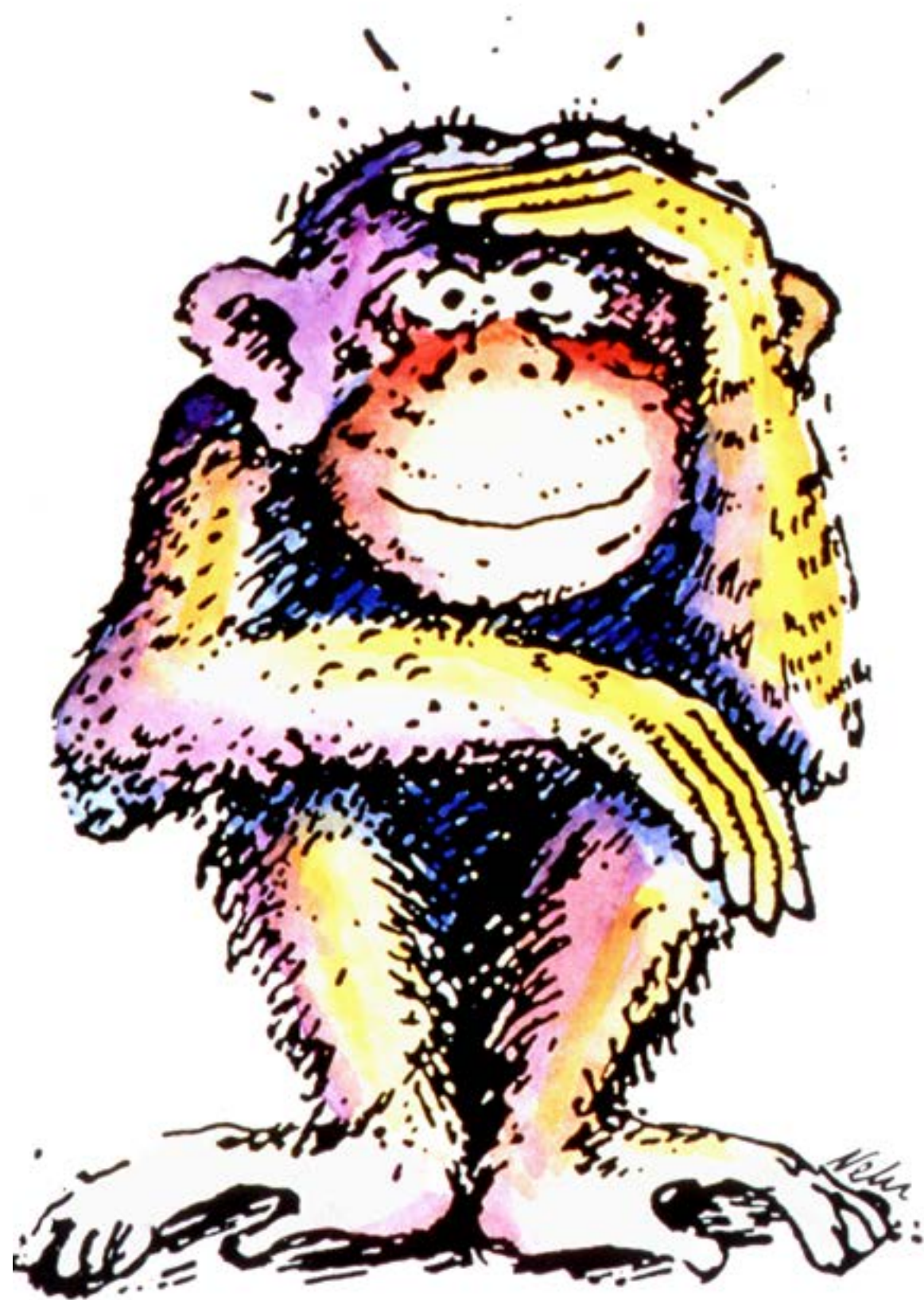


Let us not forget – the dog is actually a wolf. But the real wolf is much more frightening. When he shouts ‘Vote!’ from a red rectangle above, the poor sheep run. Are they running to the polling station, or away from the wolf? Being sheep, they probably have no idea. Ironically, the poster is titled *Vote! The Right to Decide*. The sheep make an appearance again in the same year (2015), this time in jolly colours. The four animals are identical, in purple, yellow and blue, while the one in the foreground is black. Is it the leader of the strangely titled *LeaderSheep*? Or is the leader the wolf of the previous poster? Back to a higher plane of spiritual superiority

and glory; the deer (or elk, or wapiti) is, in many cultures, a symbol of authority. When Sir Edwin Landseer’s iconic painting *The Monarch of the Glen* was exhibited at the National Gallery, visitors could understand why this Victorian melodrama felt so emotional. The deer’s antlers stretching towards the sky make it sacred; and as they fall and grow again, they symbolise rebirth and timelessness. Unlike *The Monarch of the Glen*, with its quiet authority, Wolfensohn’s deer is happy, friendly and funny. Looking straight at us from the centre of the poster, the animal proudly exposes his antlers, morphed into musical instruments. The colours are bright against the night sky and the stag is dressed in black tie – as indeed one should be, heading to an International Music Festival (1994).

FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL
DE LANAUDIÈRE
1994





And then there is the best among beasts: the monkey. Closest to humans genetically, one step behind evolutionary, primates are the most recognisable in portraying human characteristics. The famous saying ‘see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil’ (mizaru, kikazaru, iwazaru) did not include any reference to evil in its original Japanese form, but the repetition of zaru could have been interpreted as saru – monkey. So the three wise monkeys are not so much wise, as devoid of senses (see not, hear not, etc.). In Wolfensohn’s poster *Expotec 89*, the three monkeys have their senses restored.

One is listening, one is shouting, the third is watching something far ahead. Zoom in on the senses is the exhibition theme, with the subtitle for those plugged into communication, where speaking and listening is essential. The monkeys look cute and friendly, sketched in dancing short lines and coloured in gentle pastel shades of blue, green and purple.

EXPOTEC 89:
ZOOM SUR LES SENS!
1989

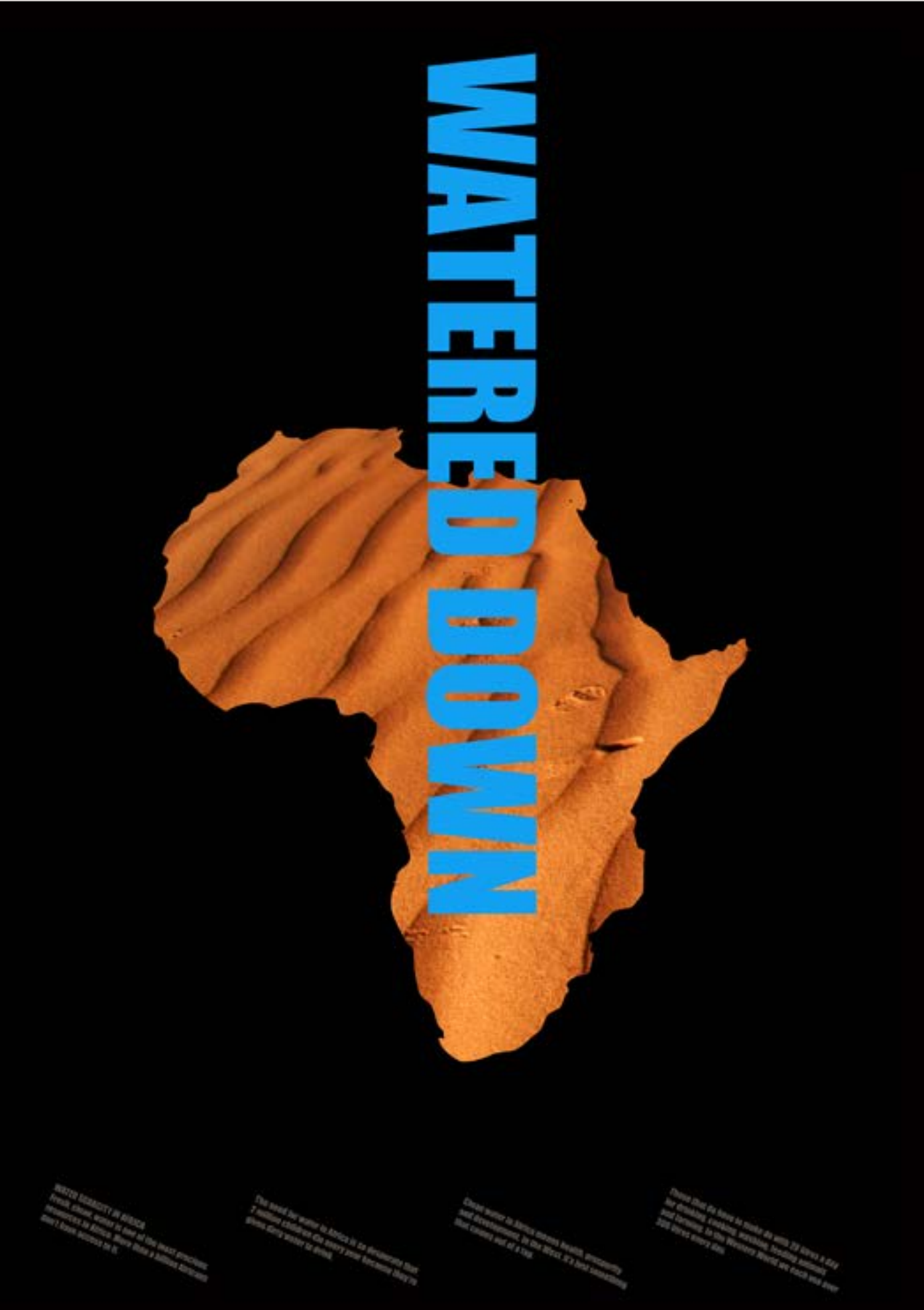
The ape is really a man, give or take a few millennia of evolution, and it represents the primaeval desires and actions of man, before he was reshaped by civilisation. Before it changed. *Change is good*, proclaims succinctly the 2008 poster on the theme of the positive aspects of change. It features the ape, already walking on two legs, determinedly striding forward. The small text on the left tells the story of evolution, by mentioning Darwin's theory and Lucy – the collection of fossilised bones discovered in Ethiopia in the 1970s said to date from 3.2 million years ago. The drawing is simple but eloquent. Sketched in a few decisive lines on the yellow background is the ape, leaving all

CHANGE IS GOOD!
2009

this narrative of evolution behind, walking confidently towards its future, busy with a conversation on her mobile phone. But here Wolfensohn can't resist the joke: the only other colour is a patch of red on the animal's behind, corresponding to the red of the mobile phone. Change is good, change is progress, but let us not forget the human condition and our link to the animal world, to nature.

Artists hold many tools of storytelling. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I shall begin.





THE STORY OF WATER

‘Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, – roll!’
(Lord Byron)

Once upon a time, we lived on ‘The Blue Planet’ named thus because of the vast expanse of liquid water on its surface. We know that water and the sky are not actually blue, but as water filters the red part of the light spectrum, we see it as blue or sometimes green. In paintings, red or orange hues appear on water as artists see all the colours and show them to us.

Like the planet, our bodies are made mostly of water. From the first morning splash, breaking the mirror of the lake, to the soothing lullaby of a stream – our senses love to be immersed in water, yet it remains a largely mysterious element, the depth of the oceans populated by unknown creatures.

No liquid water has been detected anywhere else in our solar system, or anywhere else in the entire interstellar space; water makes planet Earth, and us, unique.

Unsurprisingly, water holds a number of powerful symbolic meanings: purity and cleansing from sin; divine life (in Christianity); tranquillity; tempest and tumultuous energy; renewal, birth, fertility. Flowing water suggests change and the unavoidable passage of time, our spiritual journeys, metamorphosis and more.

Too much, too violent water can harm us, although the rainbow on the horizon, the link between Earth and Heaven, also made of water, reminds us of the promise of ‘no more deluges’.

The ancient Egyptians believed that in the beginning there was only water. They left us representations of rivers and marshes and the gods associated with them. One of the early Egyptians hieroglyphs designates ‘canal’, which interestingly also means ‘love’ and ‘Nile’.

Judeo-Christianity also saw water as a pre-creation element; before there was light, there was only water. ‘The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the water.’

Poets and painters have long been fascinated by water and the creatures that inhabit it, real or imaginary. Among the multitude of nymphs populating Greek mythology there were the daughters of Oceanus, the nymphs of the Mediterranean Sea (Nereides) and the naiades, the nymphs of fresh water – rivers, wells, lakes, brooks. Nymphs were portrayed as beautiful young women, just out of adolescence, living in the watery abodes and sharing some of their attributes.

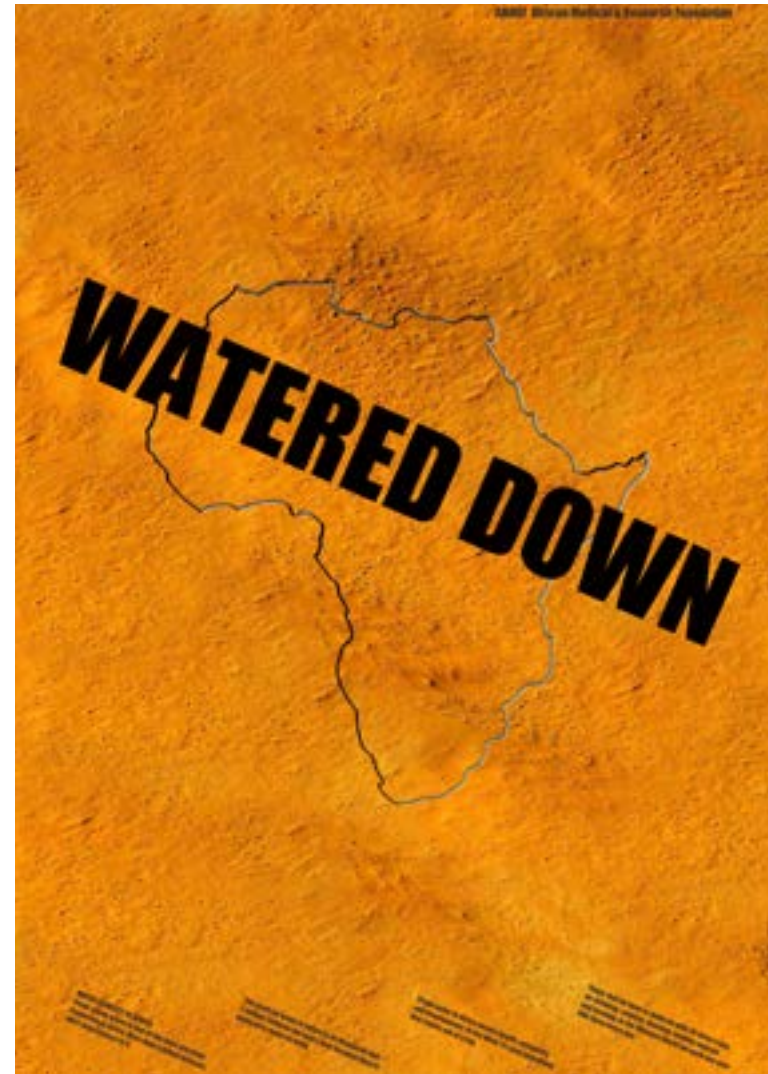
WATERED DOWN
2011

SOOTHING WATER, TROUBLED WATER

We see naiades on Greek vases and Roman mosaics and later providing inspiration to Pre-Raphaelites. Attracted by and to mortals, they remain in their watery prison, occasionally attempting to persuade a handsome young man to join them. John William Waterhouse *Hylas and the Nymphs* (1896) is one of the most remarkable depictions of such an encounter.

Characterised by contradictory features like movement and stillness, purity and transparency, tranquillity and ferociousness, water has always been a challenge and a delight for painters. Unsurprisingly, artists have always been attracted to the image of water: silent lakes act as mirrors, reflecting trees and buildings on their shores as upside-down replicas. A turbulent ocean roars and moves in unexpected, fascinating waves. A river, a waterfall, provide a point of focus in a landscape and painters have often added a bridge, some flora, a boat, a goddess, or a splash on the surface.

Water is an indispensable component of painting material (not only aquarelle, but also oil, tempera, fresco, aquatint, suminagashi) and is a nearly constant element featured in works of art. From basic streaks and zigzags to dramatic colour contrasts, from the calm waters of Canaletto to Hockney's swimming pools, artists have been inspired by the shapes and colours displayed when light hits water and have used numerous techniques to capture the transparency and treachery of this element.



WATERED DOWN
2011 ITERATION

The dramatic composition of Titian's *Perseus and Andromeda* (1556) is one of a series inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Andromeda's mother had boasted that she and her daughter were more beautiful than the sea nymphs, a claim that attracted the wrath of Neptune. He sent a sea monster to destroy the kingdom. Andromeda was chained to a rock as a sacrifice, but Perseus arrived just in time to slay the monster and save her life. Here, the emotional tension is achieved by the representation of water: it is dark and threatening, small white crests froth around the sea monster, drawing attention to the danger, and at Andromeda's feet, the curls of Medusa turn into coral.

In contrast, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1485) painted calm and happy waters, the waves as little white ripples, like so many tiny tame birds. Sky and waters merge in Rubens' chalk and oil painting *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1618). The shallow waters of the Sea of Galilee are disturbed by the miraculous arrival of a multitude of fish and the small white waves echo the shape of seagulls flying low.

The sound and sight of water is often soothing and represented as such in music and paintings. The impressionists enjoyed spending time near and on the water; Monet, Berthe Morisot, Renoir, Seurat, Signac have painted rivers, lakes and the sea, with or without people and boats. With the painting that gave the movement its name,

Impressions Sunrise, Monet gave us a new way of looking at water, colour and light. There were already fragments of abstract treatment, which becomes evident in his later work. When surrounded by his *Water-lilies* (1916) we feel immersed in the pond that fills his later canvases. We can taste the humidity in the air and feel the effect of the light hitting the water, creating waves of colour and abstract shapes.

The troubled waters in Turner's seascapes are different from the threatening sea encircling Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* off the coast of Senegal. Born and bred on an island, Turner was attentive to the moods of the sea. His seascapes show furious, cyclonic waves, sometimes with a hopeless boat at the centre – a symbol of human fragility in front of the forces of nature. Snow, wind, heavy low-lying clouds and slate grey skies feature prominently in Turner's work throughout the first half of the 19th century, with titles such as *Storm at Sea*, *Sea Scape With Storm Coming On*, *Ship in a Storm*.

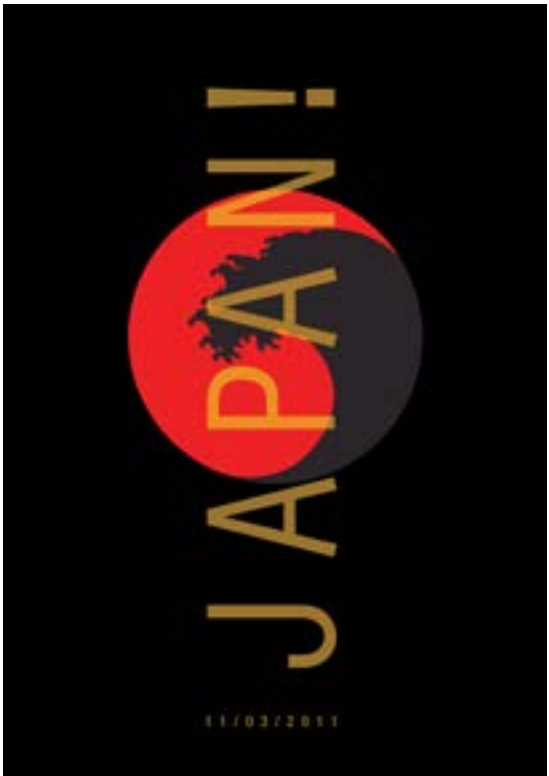
The damage that can be caused by water is described and hyperbolised in Greek and Hindu mythology before the Great Flood of Genesis. In *Metamorphoses*, Prometheus warns his son Deucalion about a forthcoming flood, and advises him to build a chest with provisions, thanks to which he and his wife survived. From Michelangelo's depiction of panic and distress on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1504) to

the atmospheric and intriguing reflection on the theory of colour by Turner in *The Morning After the Deluge* (1843) the destructive power of water is a reality that has often been captured on canvas.

The image of blue water doesn't feature in Wolfensohn's poster *We are all Japanese*. Instead, it is a cry of solidarity following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that brought destruction and loss of life to Japan. The Earth is pictured in its serene space rotation, but a large area on its Eastern side is blood red. The fateful date 11/03/2011 is like a shadow, as if the ink has been washed off. More optimistically, in the second poster the sun is rising from the darkness. A red half circle emerges from the black background, as the solid letters JPN are illuminated from above by the rising sun. The caption below, in capitals, 'Still standing' and the date at the top are faint, barely readable. The land of the rising sun is still standing.

The final poster on this topic reiterates the concepts in the other images of the series. On a uniform jet-black background, the huge red/orange sun, symbol of Japan, dominates the centre of the poster and the gold letters spell Japan across it, vertically, followed by an exclamation mark: the country is still standing, strong and upright. The date of the earthquake is at the bottom, noted, but this time not inducing fear or hoping for oblivion. Covering the right side of the sun/globe, where the Sea of Japan would approximately be, is a huge wave – a reflection of the *Great Wave of Kanagawa*.

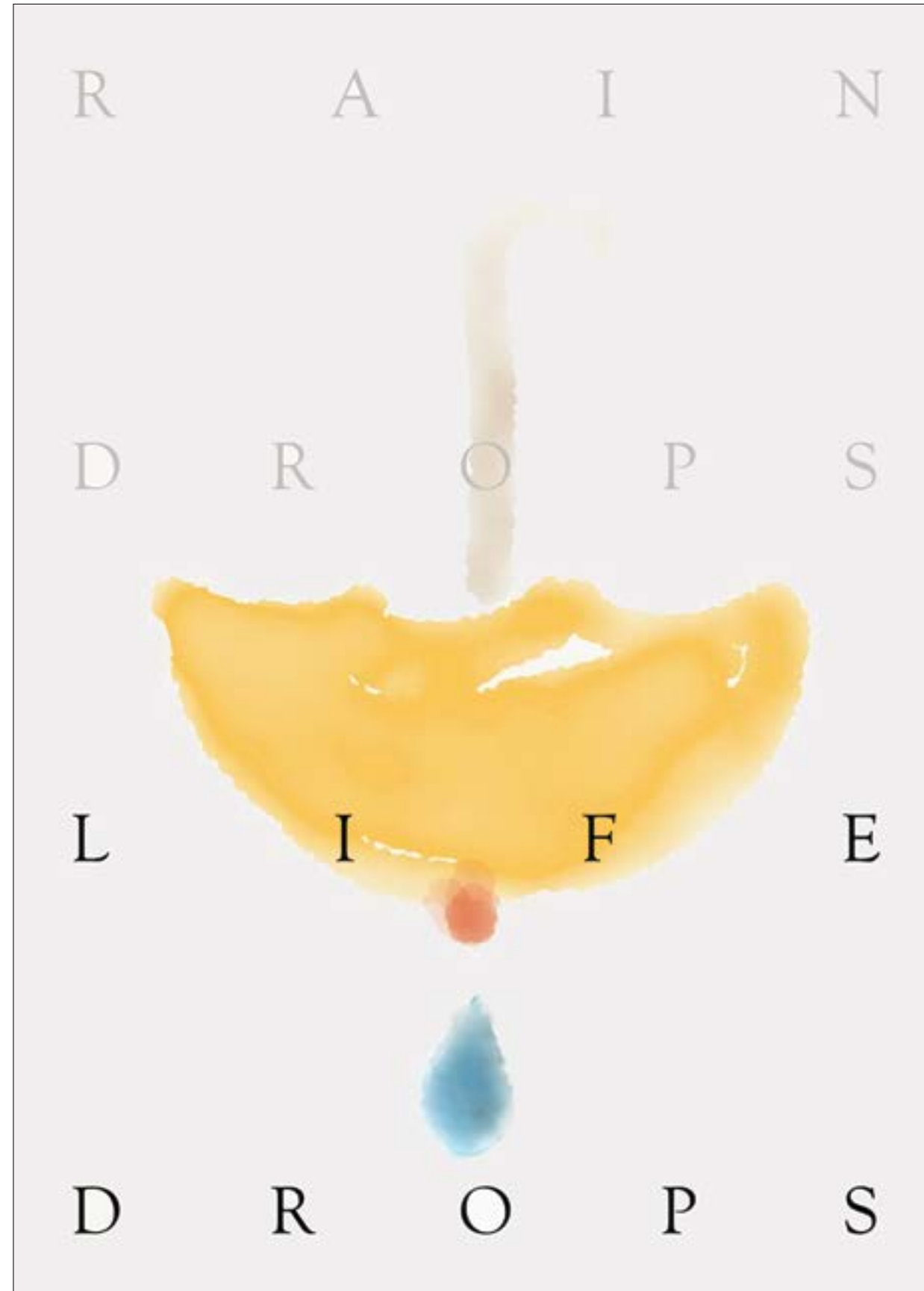
Created by Hokusai Katsushika in 1831, *The Great Wave of Kanagawa* is the best known in the series of *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* and one of the best known works of Japanese art in the West. Mount Fuji can just be seen on the horizon, while the foreground is dominated by the tall wave about to crash. The three boats and the men in them could be crushed by the curled claws of the giant wave, which seems to symbolise the weakness of humans facing unstoppable forces of nature – a frequent theme in Western art as well. Although the actual subject of the woodblock print is Mount Fuji, a clever use of perspective makes it look like a small mound in the hallow of the wave. It is, however, a strong presence in the centre of the composition, solid and permanent, unperturbed by the furious explosion of the wave.



JAPAN!
11/03/2011

JPN
STILL
STANDING
2011

WE ARE ALL
JAPANESE!
2011



A VALUABLE AND UNDERVALUED ELEMENT

'We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.'
(Unknown source)

Water is often represented as a symbol of plenty: of life essentials, of flora, of beauty. In many parts of the Earth, we take water for granted. After all, it comes from the sky, or from the ground, for free, and there is usually plenty of it (England-based author).

Although it takes up over 70% of the Earth's surface, only a small proportion of that – a mere 0.014% - is both drinkable and easily accessible, leaving millions of people on the planet without clean water.

The scarcity of water in some parts of the globe is a problem for us all. The world has been aware of it for a long time, but in Europe we only think about it when a long dry spell creates a hose ban and watering the garden becomes a slightly more tedious task. At times, there is an appeal for a remote African community, we see women and children carrying buckets in sun-drenched, arid landscapes. To help these communities, the first step is to create awareness.

Many artists have used their skill to highlight the water shortage crisis through paintings, photography, poetry, music and choreography. Although water is essential to everyone in the

household, it is usually the burden of women to obtain it, carry it, save it. Many artistic forms representing water scarcity feature women and children. Often, the symbolism of the last drop is represented by a drying out tap, or an hourglass indicating that we are running out of time to save our water supplies. Nelu Wolfensohn's *Rain Water. For Rainy Days* (2013) is a silhouette of a woman, or a man - or are these water pipes? - carrying heavy drops.

Social media campaigns, like the #H2No (responding to the less successful Coca Cola campaign) were used to raise awareness of local issues, like the California draught.

Inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's observation ('Water is the driving force of all nature') Wolfensohn's poster *Rain Drops Life Drops* (2013) is an invitation to save and protect water. The symbol of protection that is the umbrella is (literally) turned upside down: it is no longer protecting a person from water, it is lovingly gathering the drops of rain and protecting them.

RAIN DROPS LIFE DROPS
2013

The shape is similar to that of a human breast; from the pink nipple a drop emerges, the drop that feeds humanity. Water to the planet is like mother's milk to a new-born baby.

The famous Japanese designer Shiego Fukuda has used his posters to convey environmental and anti-war advocacy messages. His *Water is Life. Life on Earth* (1989) encapsulates in simple monochrome shapes, the energy that makes life on Earth possible. Fukuda's *Victory 1945* (created in 1975) gently mocks the futility of war, by illustrating a gun with the shell pointing down towards the barrel of the canon.

In his homage poster, Wolfensohn is using the same composition and yellow background, the same gun barrel, but from it a drop of water is launched skywards. The poster is titled *Victory* with the caption: 'Rainwater matters; quenching a thirsty world'.

Looking now at paintings featuring water, from Canaletto's Venice to World Water Day posters, every picture showing water is a reminder of its scarcity and the inextricable link between water and climate change. These painters and designers are climate change activists.

Middle-class urban gardens are embellished with water features, a fashion that may well run dry soon. Pity the landscape designers who have to walk the line between their awareness of global water scarcity and their clients' fondness for decorative fountains. A modern solution is waiting to be unveiled.

VICTORY



RAINWATER MATTERS! QUENCHING A THIRSTY WORLD

TO LOVE A POET

*One morning perhaps
when I was closer to one sun
so far away from another
ailing with saudade
yearning to swim with my sisters
in virgin waters
I too a silent siren
My lover was a painter
His palette without yellow
he couldn't paint the angels
their transparent wings
My lover was a singer
deaf to the cries of exotic birds
flying around his studio
My lover was a poet
the cruellest of them
his rhymes like slaps of water
his every word a bullet
painful reap through the flesh
that cherished him
He sees every colour
he hears every note
he uses them as weapons
to fight against the world
He is fierce and brave and bloodthirsty
So furiously I love him
that's why I miss him so
My poet lover*

THE STORY OF FOOD

‘All sorrows are less with bread’
(Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra)

Food is for life, food is for love. It divides and it brings people together, it marks celebrations and mourning, it is interwoven into so many aspects of our life. Apart from being an important element of human life and wellbeing, it has become an expression of national identity, religious, economic and social status. Food choices are determined by the environment and the climate, but also by social, political and religious factors.

From ancient times to Instagram, the strong relationship between humans and food has inspired many artists. On its own or as part of still lives, city scenes, markets, depiction of banquets or tinned soup, food is fascinating. The cultivation or capture of food, its preparation, preservation and consumption has been recorded in art works over the centuries. We learn about culture, customs, social and economic structure by observing what and how people eat.

The values and beliefs of a society are reflected in the food they choose to consume, which in turn become symbols of these aspects of their culture. Egyptian pharaohs prepared for their journey into the afterlife by packing a few provisions. A painting from an Egyptian tomb, c. 14th century BC, depicts porters carrying fish, ducks and grapes to be buried with the deceased.

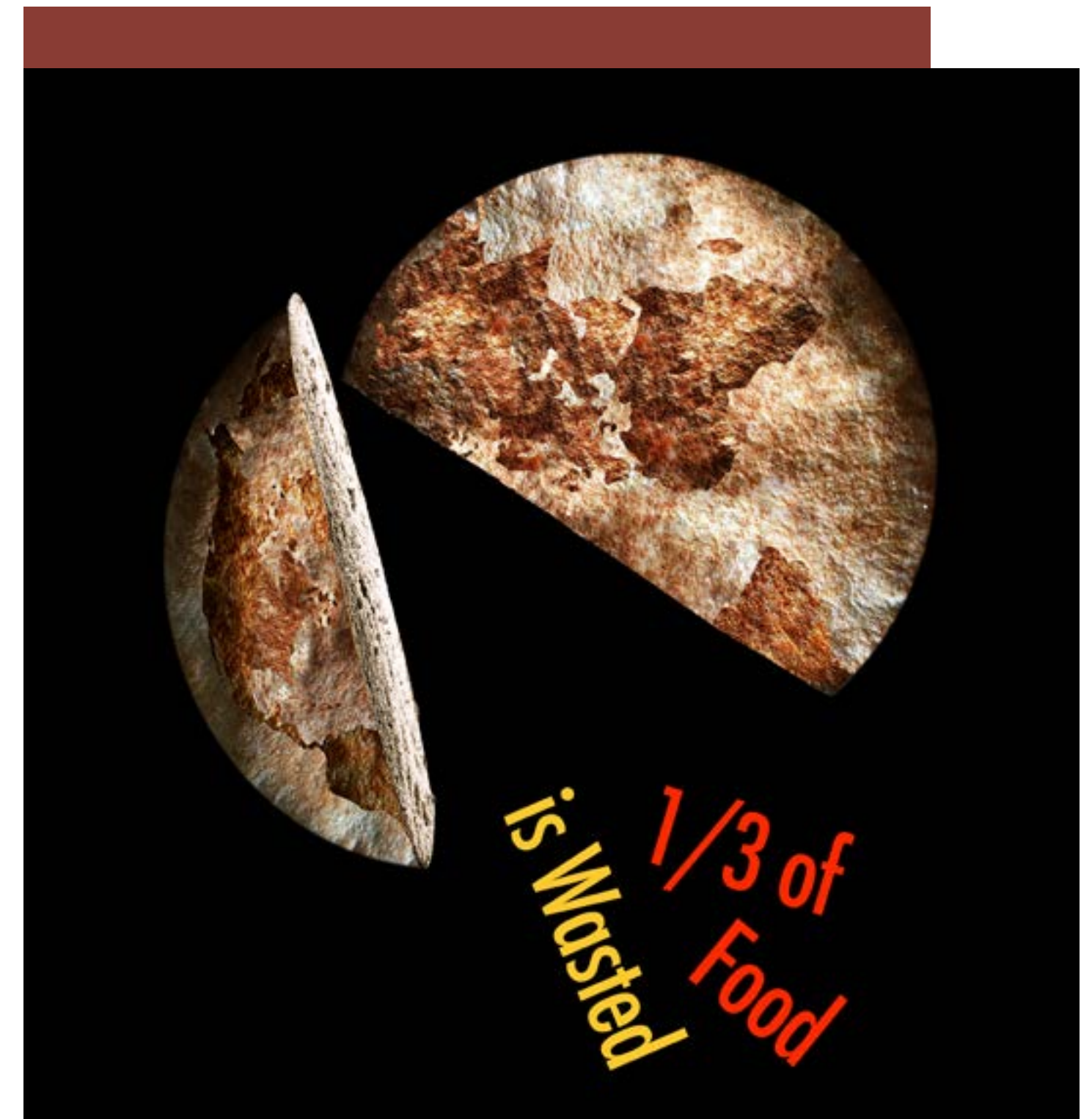
Ancient Greeks valued frugality and regarded as decadent and immoral the excesses of the Persians, and even considered this taste for culinary luxury as the reason for their defeat. Greeks were proud of their Spartan diet of bread, olives and fish, but by the 3rd century conversation about gastronomy and toasts to Dionysus became more prominent.

Around the same time, the Romans’ diet was inspired by the Greek one, with the addition of meat and spice. But the Romans were not interested in austerity: the rich ones attended and hosted luxurious banquets, with copious amounts of food and drink. Frescoes uncovered at Pompeii depict an abundance of fruit – apples, pomegranates, figs – fresh or preserved, fish and seafood, poultry and pulses. The Romans were quite messy eaters, and they littered the floor with bones, crumbs, shells and other bits of food – for the servants to sweep later, hopefully before mice and rats also came for a feast. Romans, especially the poor, who didn’t have a kitchen, also ate out, in thermopolia, a kind of restaurant that offered both eat-in and takeaway options.

1/3 OF FOOD IS WASTED
2015 DETAIL

As Christianity became the powerful religion of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, there was a concern that the focus on food may be interpreted as gluttony – a deadly sin. Where food was scarce for the majority of the population, the aristocracy continued to feast – wearing fine clothes, sitting around tables adorned with beautiful cups and cutlery, piled up with rich dishes. Artists were

more interested in depicting the banquet as a social event, detailing clothing and tableware as a record of fashion and customs. The miracle of multiplying the fish and bread sufficiently to feed thousands of famished followers has inspired many artists, as there are numerous paintings featuring this most famous of suppers.



THE TASTE OF COLOUR

In the hierarchy of genres, still life used to score pretty low, well below portraits, battle scenes and landscapes. Still life paintings are not just experiments in colour and composition: they are often loaded with food and associated symbolism.

Adam and Eve regularly appear holding or eating an apple – symbol of sin, temptation and unavoidable entropy, but also knowledge and later, when in the hand of Jesus, redemption. The tactile and sensual qualities of fruit have rendered it a symbol and a metaphor for sex and fertility, especially luscious forms like peaches and seed-rich pomegranates. Cherries and strawberries are also featured as symbols of sweetness and blood, or sacrifice.

Over the centuries, painters have enjoyed caressing the curve of a pear, conquering Paris with an apple, describing people dining al fresco and the contents of their plates.

The fruit in Caravaggio's *Basket of fruit* (1595) is remarkable in its accuracy and realism. The apple has a visible blemish (as if harbouring a worm), the fig leaves are drying out and

turning partially brown. Grapes, the symbol of fertility, but also of debauchery, appear dusty. In *Still Life with Fruit on a Stone Ledge*, painted a few years later, Caravaggio is much bolder in the use of religious and sexual symbolism. The ledge on which the fruit rests is solid, yet cracked in a couple of places, suggesting that even a strong structure can break and perish. The fruit is ripe and inviting, the red melon split and exposed, glistening with juices; the long and bendy gourds decidedly phallic. To the left, where the light appears to come from, there are pomegranates and peaches, symbol of fecundity, but also salvation and truth.

The connection between food and sex continued into the seventeenth century. Items of food as symbols of gluttony, male and female genitalia, male prowess or lack of, all piled up in genre scenes such as those of Franz Hals and Jan Steen.

Socialising around food remains a favourite theme, from Renoir's *Déjeuner des canotiers* and Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* to Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*.

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DE LANAUDIÈRE
1991 DETAIL

EATING - A POLITICAL ISSUE?

At a time of plenty, when TV programmes about cooking and baking are inexplicably popular, when people display pictures of their meals on social media, does food still inspire artists in the same way? Food is still an emotive subject, and making it the subject of artworks is today a powerful way of drawing attention to excess consumption, wastage, globalisation and the future of our planet.

Food had a special place in the hearts of pop artists. In *Campbell's Soup Cans*, Andy Warhol painted the packaging of the food, rather than the food itself, repeated 32 times – reflecting on the sameness and the processed nature of the food we consume. Roy Lichtenstein's enamel on steel *Hotdog*, complete with mustard, although not very appetising, has become one of the most recognisable icons of Pop Art.

Nelu Wolfensohn's poster displays a bolder approach: a giant tomato, with such perfectly shaped and smoothed skin it cannot be real. Labelled *Grown Elsewhere* and suggesting genetic modification, the huge tomato sits on top of a

normal sized one, squashing it. *Food Invaders* wants to raise awareness of the danger posed by food that has travelled thousands of miles to local producers, as well as the effect this food and the chemicals it was treated with may have on consumers.

But maybe a giant tomato is a beneficial phenomenon – it can feed more people, for longer. New technology and improved chemicals have enabled producers to provide more food, faster. This is a positive development, and it was hoped that malnourishment would be eradicated. But a lot of this food goes to waste. To be precise, 1.3 billion tonnes of food, aimed at human consumption is thrown away every year. Visualise that, invites Wolfensohn's *1/3 of Food is wasted* 2015 poster, featuring a round loaf of bread with one third of it cut off. The bread is round like a pitta, and floating in a dark empty space, much like a parched planet Earth.

Reversing this unacceptable trend, says Wolfensohn, is a global task, that needs to be performed together in order to be successful.

FOOD INVADERS
2014

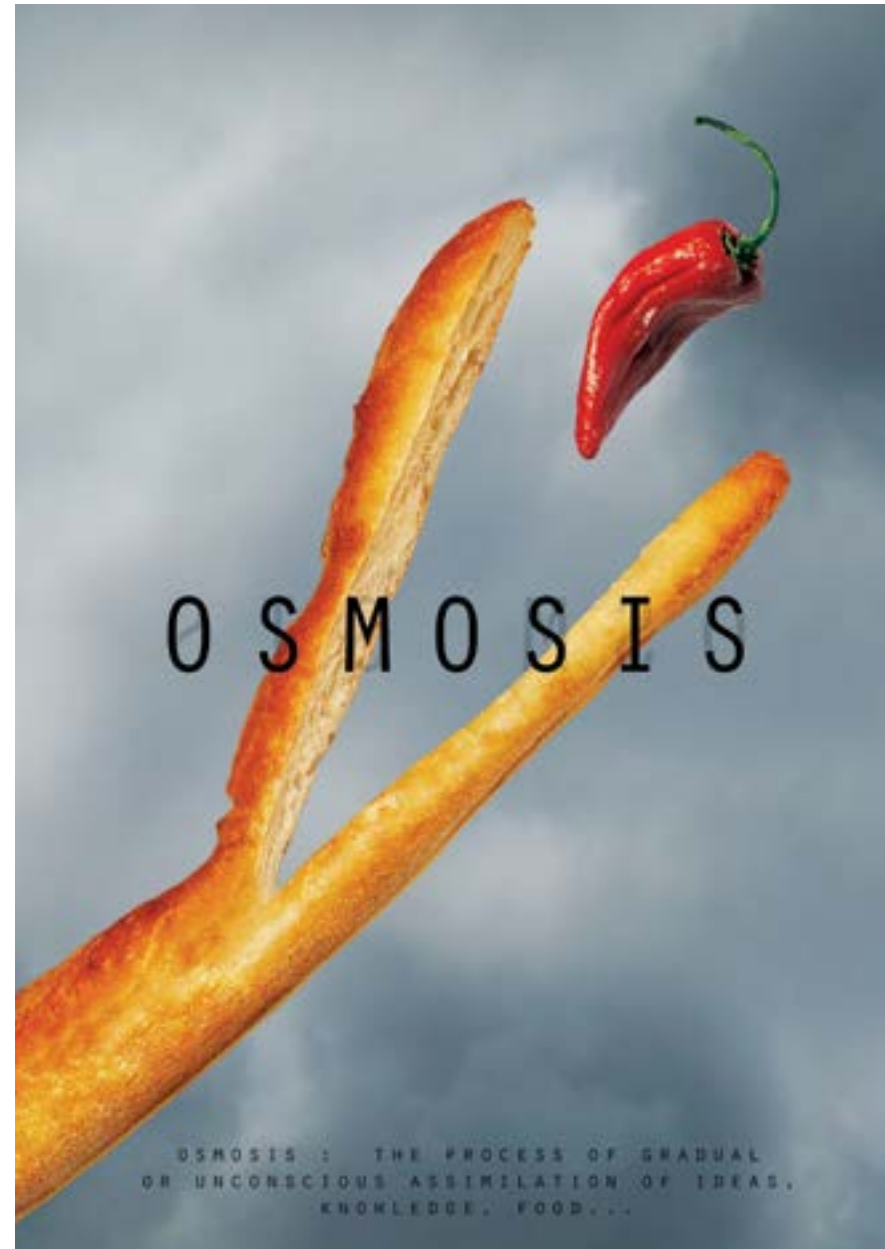


Food is one of the universal human rights and one of the universal pleasures. We must not forget the element of fun in food.

We are reminded of it in *Osmosis* (2014). In biology and chemistry, osmosis refers to the spontaneous movement of molecules through a semi-permeable membrane from a lower to a higher concentration solution. Metaphorically (and often incorrectly) social or cultural osmosis refers to the indirect acquisition of knowledge through diffused content – like through social media, for example – without experiencing the actual phenomenon.

The osmosis Wolfensohn refers to is closer to its original definition in biology: certain aspects of culture (knowledge, ideas, food) penetrate the semi-permeable membrane that divides nations and becomes an integral (and integrated) element of the host culture. Like foreign words, like fashion. Like British Indian cuisine, I think, not daring to taste it. Wolfensohn's poster imagines a French baguette on the point of swallowing a red chilli to create the (successful) fusion of two very different eating traditions.

From survival to haute cuisine, from extreme diets to over indulgence, food will always be a source of pleasure and togetherness, but also of conflict and suffering. It inspired artists to use food in order to debate issues of social inequality, power and wealth, consumer culture. This debate continues in contemporary art.



OSMOSIS
2014

Out of the post-war economic boom emerged the consumer society – with its new norms and values – a world which we still inhabit. Artists, poets and philosophers reacted to it almost immediately, expressing their opposition to what they regarded as an inhospitable environment for arts and culture to thrive in.

Their fears were not entirely unfounded. Today mankind may consist of customers, but customers also consume art and literature. The relationship between arts and consumer culture remains a complex and strained one.

Andy Warhol's *Cadbury Soup Cans and Green Cola Bottles* can be seen as a criticism of mass production and mass consumption but some detect a hint of affection for the familiar images that are so much part of our daily life, and the acknowledgement that mass art is democratic.

'I shop therefore I am' declared Barbara Kruger in her 1987 poster and around Christmas 2005 Banksy went further, with an image of Jesus Christ on an invisible cross, carrying shopping bags full of gift-wrapped objects.

In a world of plenty, is there a danger of spiritual famine? The world of separation, estrangement, created by mass media and exacerbated by a pandemic is causing poverty of imagination, of creativity.

So think about it, urges Wolfensohn. Think twice! Stop the merry-go-round of browsing, choosing, purchasing, using, discharging. Shopping is so much part of our lives that we assign it medical terminology. Retail therapy may be ironically defined as such, but it is suggested that shopping has a beneficial effect on our mood. The first time I heard someone say that the only exercise they take is shopping I thought it was a joke (and it was). But it appears that some people do count their steps and calories spent while strolling the supermarket aisles.

Research carried out in (not surprisingly) the US found that half of Americans engage in some form of retail therapy, from buying items to overcome negative feelings, to celebratory purchases.

But buying a bar of chocolate or a pair of red shoes (my choices) in order to cheer one up on a grey day is regarded as a harmless indulgence. In some quarters, so is shopaholism, although excessive, expensive and time consuming retail activity is classed as a personality disorder (oniomania).



For the sake of society's and your own health 'Think Twice'. Wolfensohn's poster features the pixelated silhouette of a modified version of *The Thinker*, the iconic Rodin sculpture. The original *Thinker*, created in 1880 was only 70 cm high, but we are more familiar with the much larger 180 cm (seated) bronze statue which is to be found in various locations around the world. Immobile, with his chin resting on the back of his hand, the man's colossal naked body suggests restrained strength and readiness for action. It is an unusual use of the male body: throughout the history of art, the male body suggested power and virility. The strength of *The Thinker*'s body is contained. Although not in movement, he is not relaxed, his power is concentrated in the act of thinking.

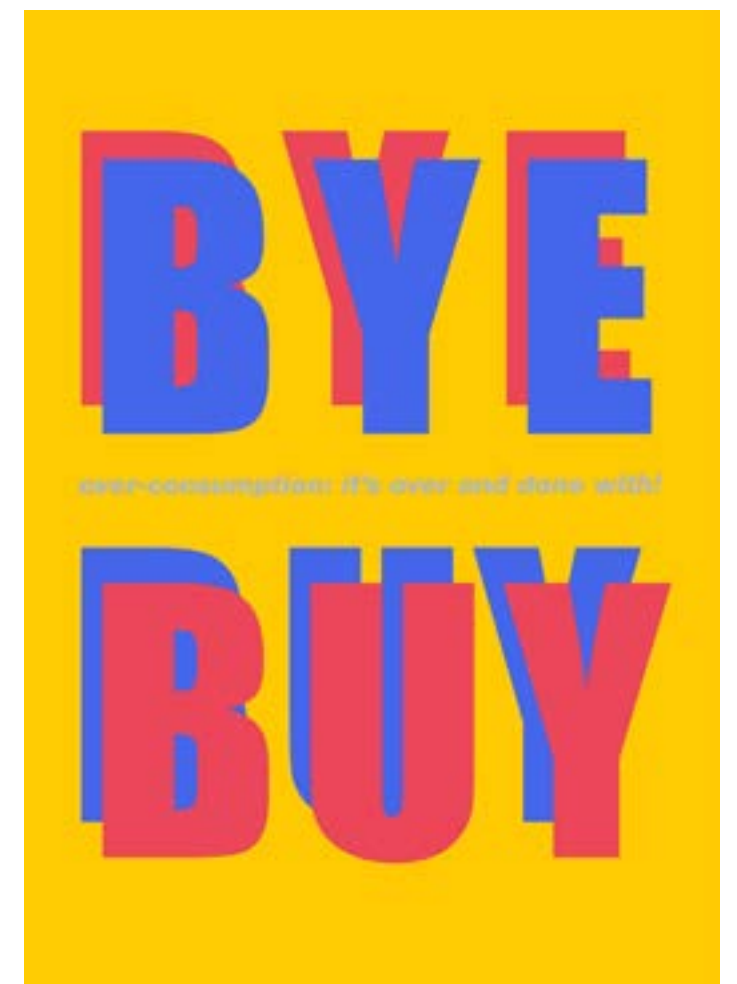
In contrast, Wolfensohn's thinker appears unable to think or indeed, to act. He is weak, nearly transparent, made up of pixels, rather than solid bronze. His arm rests crossed over on one knee and his head is replaced by a QR code. The head becomes a product, a machine readable matrix. On the red (warning!) background, the text falls diagonally in yellow all caps text: *Consumption: Think Twice*.

CONSUMPTION: THINK TWICE
2012

BYE BUY
2012

If we think well enough we might reduce consumption, eliminate unnecessary purchases. *Bye, Buy* is the cheery message in another poster. Here, the light-hearted, chatty use of homophone is emphasised by the nursery colours: blue and pink on a yellow background. The 2012 poster optimistically proclaims that 'over-consumption is over and done with'.

This may be wishful thinking, or artistic licence. In 2020, consumption by wealthy nations has the highest human impact on the environment. We need more than waving bye-bye to compulsive purchasing – what is required is a fundamental change in our mentality, our attitude to wealth and a review of our values.



The Western world is defined as a consumer society, as if humans are above all else customers. Artists and philosophers invite us to resist this label and in particular oppose postmodern consumer culture.

Since the 1980's we have seen a widening of the (already substantial) gap between have and have nots, under regimes which were both conservative and largely philistine. Second-class mass media communication and art prevailed. This is irrelevant, claimed postmodern theorists, who aimed to remove the perceived barriers between the 'high arts' and 'popular culture'. If there is such a thing as 'mass arts', then this is one of the most significant achievements of the industrial society. It means that it is no longer the élite who control and dominate all aspects of art. Mass art is democratic. The world of consumption (selecting, purchasing, using and discarding goods) is a lonely one. It is 'the world of everyone's separation, estrangement and nonparticipation' (Guy Debord 1960). Rodin's thinker, with his head, his thoughts dominated by a machine readable code, is alone. He was chosen by Wolfensohn to represent the loneliness, the separation, the drifting into another world which the shopper has created, where he is surrounded by consumer goods.

'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?' was the ironic question posed by Richard Hamilton in the collage that

became the first icon of Pop art. Created in 1956, the collage anticipates the consumer era by a few years, but then it was created as a vision of the future, his contribution to the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition at the Whitechapel gallery. Among the furniture, domestic appliances, lights and pictures, a muscular man is standing in a comical body-builder pose, holding a giant lollipop with the word POP on it. In post-war England, this parody of American materialism could be interpreted as a mockery of middle-class aspiration. Some of the objects in the room are already unrecognisable by millennials (reel-to-reel tape recorder, anyone?) Hamilton's *Tomorrow*, is now yesterday.

According to Wolfensohn, tomorrow is whatever we want it to be. We have a choice. In his 2018 poster, another pixilated *Thinker*, this time on a grey and pale yellow background, thinks about the options. The wall behind him is defaced by rough and angry graffiti. Two signs in heavy black bloc are interposed on the image: plus and minus. Positive and negative. Create or destroy. *The Future. A Matter of Choice*, says the caption.

What is it that we want from the future? How can we build on what we have and make it better? Wolfensohn's posters support a few positive ideas for society: education; gender equality; justice; homes for all. But actually, When do we want it? Now.

THE FUTURE.
A MATTER OF CHOICE
2018





THE STORY OF CONFLICT

‘The measure of intelligence is the ability to change’
(Albert Einstein)

The world is not perfect, so we need to change it, we dream of changing it. The artist, the scientist, the writer, the dancer – we all try to a greater or smaller extent to change the world for the better. And the time for change is now. Motivational slogans invite us to change ourselves first, to change our perspective on the world; they remind people that if we don’t keep changing we roll backwards. Staying still is not an option. Maybe not all change is good (‘if it ain’t broken don’t fix it’ advises popular wisdom) but most of it is necessary. It is called progress.

Art and artists have the ability – indeed the duty – to change society, to influence the way people think and act, as individuals or in groups. They do that by changing our perspective, by creating awareness of what they consider society’s ills, showing the way to remedy. In the last two centuries, traditional values have been challenged and replaced by artists and writers who created movements like realism, futurism, Dada, Surrealism. Society was shocked; people stood and listened, watched.

From 2700 BC in Ancient Egypt and China to 2020 AD Europe and USA, history is a long list of revolts, rebellions, uprisings which, if successful, achieved abrupt social and political change. However, most of humanity’s progress was accomplished through slower, continuous, sometime unnoticeable sociocultural evolution. The first type - violent, noisy, brutal – has always been an attractive subject to painters and composers.

‘Although I may not have fought for my country, at least I shall have painted for her’, commented Delacroix with reference to his iconic *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) glorifying the revolution, while others, like Goya, paid tribute to the civilian victims, refusing to glorify war (The Third of May 1808).

Heroes of revolutions, from Marat to Che Guevara, has entered history, and the history of art, on an elevated and often reproduced position, next to the saints. Their memory, and image, replicated on art posters and T shirts, is still used as a symbol of courage and valiant courage, to raise the spirit and incite to action.

At first, the new set of values, as the novel methods of creating art, had the effect of shocking people. This is good, it is how art should be. The first step towards changing those dusty values is to become aware of the issue – the legislation, the event, the practice – that should be altered, or abolished.

In difficult times, art has the audacity to tell the truth, when the truth is inconvenient to (and capable of punishment by) the ruling elite. So we find exposure of unpalatable laws or practices, citizens’ hardship, inequality, expressed in theatre, music, sculpture and poetry. And posters. Quick and inexpensive to produce and reproduce, the poster had a significant role to play in propaganda and mobilising to action.

OLD TUNE, MODERN PLATFORM

Around the world, exhibitions, installations, projects strive to create awareness of human rights or ecological issues we should support or protest against. Traditional society values did not prevent war, famine, social inequality, climate emergency. We need change, we need a new set of values.

Petitions, demonstrations, marches, protests show that the public understood, has committed to action and taken to the streets, holding banners. Wolfensohn's 2008 poster *Change*, could be held up high by any demonstrator; it is issue-neutral. The simple word 'Change' in all black capital letters, is clearly recognised despite the A having been replaced by a hand, making the V victory sign. The hand emerges like a ghost from a dusty yet luminous desert yellow, rising gradually towards an optimistic, clear and bright blue sky.

What are the best features of our society? Is it our education system? The way we care for the poor and the vulnerable? A justice system for all? Yes, all of that, you say.

And what are the areas that can be improved: over-consumption? Inequality? The way some fellow members of the human race have no homes, no food, no water? We can send a man to the moon, but here on Earth, in some of the richest countries, thousands of children go hungry. Countries build walls, to keep others off their land. People are murdered in the name of justice. So, maybe some things need to change.

Change is good, proclaims another poster of the same year. To illustrate this statement, Wolfensohn brings as witness Lucy, the pile of fossilized bones discovered in 1974 in Ethiopia. Lucy is generally considered one of the earliest humans. Despite being 3.2 million years old, Lucy is strutting confidently ahead, chatting on her mobile phone, for all the world like the adolescent she is (apparently Lucy died as a young adult, aged around 12 (is there a story here?). Her right side, closer to us, is more primate than human, with furry long arms, large feet and sporting a tail. The left side is human, her slender ankle and arms that of a young human female. The caricature style of the execution and the humorous splash of magenta on the phone, echoing the same colour on the primate's buttock tell us that we don't need to take things too seriously. However, Lucy is a reminder that change is for good, that were it not for change we wouldn't be here at all; that change, whether achieved dramatically through revolution, or the slow process of evolution, is as good as it is inevitable.

We are living in a democratic society, or so we are told. Yet not only are the advantages of democracy questioned, but the existence of democracy itself – in the sense of demos (the people) kratia (power) – the power of the people. Those who defend the concept of democracy point to art and art institutions as proof of its existence; art, however, is far from being democratic.

CHANGE
2011





VOTE!
THE RIGHT TO DECIDE
2015 DETAIL

LEADERSHEEP
2015

In a democracy, it is said, the way to achieve change is to take advantage of the right to vote. The famous Abraham Lincoln quote ‘The Ballot is Stronger than the Bullet’, is the title of Wolfensohn’s 2015 poster. Exploding out of a black hole into the pristine white background, the bullet appears to have made an impact. But the word ‘Ballot’ overpowers the violence of the black, somewhat askew ‘bullet’ to emerge victorious, in straight red block letters.

And the best way to use the ballot? Who to vote for? Who should the oppressed, the marginalised, the poorly educated choose to rule over them? In his chronicle *La Grève des Électeurs* (The Voters’ Strike) Mirbeau criticises universal suffrage, obtained after generations of struggle, as a form of trickery devised by those in power to ensure continuity. Wolfensohn illustrates Mirbeau’s thoughts depicting the hordes of ‘free will’ sheep being directed by the wolf. ‘More sheep-like than the sheep, the voter names his butcher and selects his bourgeois’. One would think Mirbeau lived in 21st Century Britain...

The freedom of choice brings its own risks and responsibilities. When the oaks complained to Zeus about their treatment by the woodcutter, the king of the gods answered that they should blame themselves, for supplying the wood for the axe’s handle. Democracy is the power’s way of blaming the people who gave it the axe.

From an elevated red platform, Wolfensohn’s wolf looks menacingly down at the sheep, shouting ‘Vote!’ and like one, the identical grey and black sheep rush towards the polling stations.

The idea of society made up of a bunch of sheep is explored in another 2015 poster, curiously titled *Leadersheep*. Like in the *Vote!* poster, the sheep are identical in size and shape (who would know one sheep from another?) but each is a different colour: purple, yellow, blue. A sheep is a gullible or easily led animal, with limited initiative; they are known for following each other, even when the path leads to disaster. The leader of the sheep is black. In many languages, black sheep is an idiom denoting a different, maybe wayward member of a group. Although the connotations are negative, the black sheep of the family often attracts other emotions from siblings and parents, from envy to acceptance and fondness.

Lack of, or even disregard for discipline, is a characteristic of the black sheep. The black sheep is not only different, standing out in a flock of white sheep, but is also undesirable. The wool of white sheep can be dyed in any colour - blue, yellow, purple – their identity transformed as Wolfensohn’s sheep are. But the black sheep cannot be changed, the strong pigment of its wool doesn’t allow interference, alteration. Its strength makes it a leader.

But beware the wolf in sheep clothing. ‘Inwardly they are ravenly wolves’ (Matthew 7:15) and we are unable to see through the skin of a sheep. I suspect the leader, the black sheep, is the same, or maybe in cahoots with the wolf from the other poster, encouraging sheep to vote. Like the trees that kept voting for the axe, because, as its handle is made out of wood, they thought the axe was one of them.



What do we want to change? A few things, suggests Wolfensohn: inequality in education (2012), homelessness (2013) censorship (2016), **artificial blood boundaries?** (2017), fake news (2020) human trafficking (2021). When do we want the change? Now.

THE STORY OF JUSTICE

Justice is the greatest good and injustice the greatest evil.
(Plato)

‘It’s not fair!’ screams the toddler deprived of an urgently required toy or snack, and the parent would patiently explain that life is not fair. We all received this lesson at some point in childhood, but most of us choose not to accept it, to fight for justice.

For many years, even as an adult, I naively associated the law with justice and fairness. Like so many abstract concepts, justice has many facets: there is a distributive aspect (receiving benefits and goods, or burdens, in comparison to others, like good grades, or promotions); the retributive (being punished for wrongdoing) the corrective (compensation). The more complex concept of ethics is to guide all these areas, but political and economic consideration complicate matters. The issue of fairness is as strong in adulthood (no one rule for them and another one for us, rang a recent complaint) as it was in childhood.

Greek mythology provided us with a visual signifier for Justice: a woman. She is the Titan Themis, the lady of good and balanced council, her judgement symbolised by the scales and the sword she is holding. She had wisdom and foresight, and she was in possession of secrets and mysteries unknown to other gods. Themis was a protector of the oppressed, at a time when the oppressed often had no other protector. Together with her daughter Dike (or Dice) she

would apply divine law in a fair and morally correct assignation of goods and retribution.

The Roman equivalent was introduced later, around the start of our era by emperor Augustus. Iustitia is not a fully fledged goddess, although she was given a temple in the year 13 by Tiberius. She is more the allegoric personification of a virtue that rulers wanted to be associated with. After Vespasian minted coins with Iustitia seated on a throne, the image was often used by other emperors.

Along with the Latin name, the symbol carried on to our times, complete with balance and sword: weighing the evidence with the scales, acting swiftly and with authority. Sometime in the 16th Century, she acquired a blindfold, to indicate that justice doesn’t see differences in wealth, power or social status, it’s totally impartial. This representation, now referred to as Lady Justice, often as a sculpture, is present at the front of many courthouses around the world, long after people understood that law and justice do not follow the same path. In a rare display of transparency, the statue atop the Old Bailey in London is not blindfolded. In medieval and Renaissance imagery, Justice is often accompanied by her fellow cardinal virtues: Prudence, Temperance and Wisdom. Baroque artists enjoyed painting large and extravagant allegories, featuring one or several

of these women characters (The cardinal virtues, like the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity are all female). They usually display a lot of pink flesh and are surrounded by various creatures and objects symbolising other abstract concepts (time, patience, truth) like a rebus puzzle. For no symbolic reason, Lady Justice would often bare at least one breast (Raphael) if not both (Vasari).

For Peter Bruegel the Elder’s Justice means retribution. *Iustitia* (1556) is a busy scene in which various kinds of punishments are imposed: hanging, burning, scourging. The blindfolded lady is standing on a platform at the forefront. More ladylike is the *Justice* by Piero del Pollaiuolo in his 1470 panel painting, now in the Uffizi. Here, the dignified Lady is sitting on a throne, fully dressed in an elegant grey-green cloak. She is not blindfolded, and on her knee rests a globe – a suggestion that Justice is Universal?

The character of Justice and her attributes - balance, sword, blindfold – became such a powerful symbol that there is no need to feature all of them together for the concept to be recognised.

Wolfensohn’s 2010 *Justice* is not blind. It is actually a cardboard or wood cut-out silhouette of a woman in a long dress. In one hand she holds the sword, pointing to the ground, in the other what looks like a balance, but it is actually two small human figures hanging. Like the Baroque painters, Wolfensohn’s uses a series of symbols; the viewer is invited to unfold the metaphors. The lady holding the sword is not Justice as we know it, but a shadow of it. She is not blind; she doesn’t have a face at all. The scales, the symbol of impartiality and the fair balance between the interests of the individual

against the needs of society, is absent. Instead, she is holding gallows from which hang two small men dressed in black, dead. There is economy of colour on the poster: grey and black on a uniform pale blue background. The statement in black capital letters is as stark ‘The Death Penalty is not Justice’. It may look like it for some, but justice that is solely retributive is backward looking and a mere shadow of the moral principles associated with justice.

In time, justice and law went their separate ways. The law, as my four-year-old understood, is a written piece of paper, to be applied, interpreted and amended as society leaders (lawmakers) see fit. Justice is about the ethics, of equal distribution and retribution, close to the concept of fairness.



LIBERTÉ, ÉDUCATION, ÉGALITÉ!

LIVE LEARN
AND ACHIEVE
2004
ITERATION

LIBERTÉ,
ÉDUCATION,
ÉGALITÉ!
2011



THE EQUALITY ALGORITHM

Since the French revolution, equality has held a powerful role as a leading ideal – and a strong element of political slogans. It remains the most controversial of social ideals, and the most widely accepted definition of the concept is ‘lack of inequality’. In the abstract, equality means that similarly situated people should be treated similarly. In practice, people are seldom similar and it is difficult to agree on what constitutes similar treatment.

Take gender equality. It is one of the (not so many) triumphs of feminism that the term ‘gender’ introduced by the movement to highlight the social aspect of sexual difference, is so commonly used today. So when Wolfensohn demands ‘gender equality now’ (2012) he is referring to legal, social and economic equality. He indicates that men and women are similar, or even equal, by the ‘equal’ sign, white and bright near the centre of the black bled poster. But reading the three colours (red, grey, white) together I see the word ‘women’, which is visually more powerful. Does the poster ask for women to be equal to men, or for men to have the same freedom, resources and respect as women? Of course the very concept should mean that there is not one group more equal than other. Living as we are in the Northern hemisphere, it is not clear what type of inequality the poster is demanding in 2012. But a swift perusal points to the fact that women suffrage was introduced in Saudi

Arabia as late as 2015 and there is still no vote for women in the Vatican. Other disturbing issues, like child marriages and equal pay for equal work are still not resolved. While acknowledging the socio-cultural determination of the concept, there is still in the western world a difference of social position.

Some inequalities are politically enforced, while others arise unless they are politically prevented. Where there has been discrimination in the past, some governments have introduced policies of affirmative action – which remain controversial, as being opposed to the concept of equality.

The most obvious and difficult to overcome is racial inequality. The sign for equal, two horizontal parallel lines is strengthened by a third parallel line in Wolfensohn’s poster about equality. The thick lines on a bright yellow background are black, white and brown; and they are equal in size. It is not a simple appeal to racial equality; here, the 2012 poster offers a solution. ‘When it Comes to Education, All Children Are Equal’. Or they should be, because education is one of the most effective means of narrowing the social and economic gap. It is a belief shared by many, that as long as there is equality of opportunity, inequality of results is unobjectionable.

Wolfensohn focuses on education, and the equal rights of children of all colours. Gender equality in education is also addressed in the poster featuring the beautiful profile of a child: clearly African, from the perfect semi-circle of her cranium and the prominent jaw, obviously female from the way she appears to be adorned by earrings, small splashes of colour on her ears and around her head. The equal sign is above her head, two thick red lines on the luminous blue background.

It is not a novel idea. Plato believed there should be no distinction between the sexes when it comes to education. A good, universal education ultimately benefits the state. In the Republic, Plato was concerned with educating people in such a way that a just society is the outcome.

In a just society, the distribution of desirable possessions has to be equal, or at least equitable. The walls separating the wealthy and the poor need to come down, and a 2011 poster shows these walls collapsing like dominoes in years to come. 'The Division Between Have(sic!) and Have Nots Has to Go', declares Wolfensohn's poster. These are not real brick walls, they are the succession of thinner and thicker vertical lines that make up a barcode. A product identifier. The divide is between those who possess consumer goods and those without; this is what our society aspires to, what defines it. Wolfensohn would return to the theme of consumerism in a series of posters a year later. The right to vote, the right to education ... we often mention our rights. Human rights

defenders are heroes (although they can be lawyers). The primary sense of the Roman term ius (just, lawful, right) was transformed, linguistically and conceptually, into liberty, power, or claim. There is a beneficiary, and a loser; where there is a right there is also a wrong, as is often the case in justice or law). The upholding of rights, or justified claims, is essential to human dignity.

One of Wolfensohn's most eloquent images comes from a poster asserting the right to housing. A bare foot emerges from the darkness coming straight towards us; the rest of the body is lost in the out of focus photographic background, but it clearly belongs to someone sleeping rough. The top of the poster adds further, if unnecessary, clarification, by making the 'O' of the all-caps word 'HOME' into a 'no access' sign. The image requires no explanation, however one is given: the Universal Right to Housing. Yes, humans have a right to sleep without the fear of cold, or abuse, in a house.

'We All Deserve a Home', declares another poster in the same 2013 series. The image is that of a body form cut out of a cardboard box. We recognise it by the symbols placed ironically at the top left hand of the box: this way up, fragile. The human figure has no identifiable features: could be male or female, old or young. A cardboard box is not a home. The fundamental right to human dignity requires that we live in a decent, warm house, however much the market parameter arguments of supply and demand try to distort the issue.

HOME
2013

HOMELESS
2013

WALLS DOWN
2011





WHERE IN THE WORLD

*Where
in the world you want to be
When
in history
if you could choose
Now is the time
so pack a bag
and pick a place
by the sea of course
bring some books
You'll need the words
The painter without fingers
the poet lost his words
and we stand naked
in front of fearless natives
I was a poet too
but my words were stolen
Now I am a painter
searching for a line looking for a colour
When there is nowhere else to go
the road just ends
and we have not arrived
I am an actor without a stage
forgot my lines
and there is a stranger at the door*

THE STORY OF MUSIC

*If music be the food of love, play on
Give me excess of it
(William Shakespeare)*

It is generally accepted that music is, indeed, the food of love, and possibly the food of art, too. It is also largely agreed that music and visual arts are strongly related through the traditional concept of mimesis.

‘Music is no more the art of combining sounds to please the ear than painting is the art of combining colours to please the eye’ wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

People who can hear colour, or taste melodies, or feel the spatial relationship of numbers are described as synesthetes. I think of them as poets, transcribing emotions into words; or painters, setting sounds and feelings onto canvas, or composers, who make us hear the colour and movement they see. Synaesthesia is a human – and if not general, at least widely experienced – perceptual phenomenon: stimulation of one sensory pathway leads to experiencing in another sensory or cognitive pathway.

Painting, architecture, poetry and music enjoy an intimate relationship with each other. Harmony, rhythm, colour and line have emotional value beyond the reality they represent. Accordingly,

a painting can be described in words, or musical phrases, a piece of music transcribed on canvas, and so on. The reinterpretation of a work of art into another form creates a more vivid expression and deepens the emotion experienced.

Music is, and always has been, a fundamental constituent of human life. In Greek mythology, music and instruments are of divine origins, and the art of music is a gift from the gods. One can hardly disagree.

Biblical culture would have been filled with music; the psalms are the poetry most set to music in Western civilisation. David is often seen playing the harp in paintings and mosaics. Throughout the centuries, on both hemispheres, art featured musical instruments, performance, musical symbols and allegories.

Music and painting often followed parallel paths in their development. More significantly, during the Renaissance the classical triangle became the predominant composition on canvas, just as the tonic triad centred the musical composition.

FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL
DE LANAUDIÈRE
2001



lanaudière

**festival
international
2001**

Musical instruments were painted as props to illustrate wealth and refine taste, or shown being played by men, women and angels, with or without an audience. Lute and viola da gamba seem favourites, but also flute, clavichord and bagpipe. In Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c. 1490) vision of hell, there is a music corner comprising of a harp, a lute and a book of sheet music. More music is tattooed on the naked backside of one of the sinners.

From the salons of the aristocracy to the open air concerts and the harvest festivals, music was a universal form of entertainment; paintings

and engravings document this aspect of social life with varying degrees of objectivity (Goya, Rembrandt, Renoir, Vélasquez).

The word 'Impressionism', usually connected to painting, in particular to Monet and the 1874 salon, started as a derogatory term and it was used as such to describe the first impressionist musical composition: Debussy's *Printemps*. The impressionist theories on the representation of light were seamlessly applied to music; with Fauré and Ravel, Degas and Manet, art and music forged a new, even stronger bond.



MODERN RHYTHMS

From then on, painters became more interested in using rhythm, tones and structures in their work. Like music, paintings began to convey aesthetic messages without the use of representational signifiers. Visual arts got closer to the goal of obliterating the distinction between matter and form.

When James McNeill Whistler painted a portrait of his mother as an *Arrangement in Grey and Black* (1871) he was accused of reducing a portrait (a clear signifier of a real subject) to an arrangement of basic formal elements. Whistler's flat, abstract *Nocturnes*, shocked Victorian viewers even more and changed the way contemporary painters and art lovers related to art. The *Nocturnes* displayed more affinity with Chopin's piano compositions than with the visual depiction of a dark night. Around the turn of the 20th century musical theories of composition and expression were adopted as a means to the advancement of visual arts.

'All art constantly aspires to the condition of music' is Walter Pater's often quoted aphorism; and apparently many modern painters aspired to be musicians. According to Pater, the difference lies in the fact that painting is mimetic, while music is not. This argument is no longer valid when analysing abstract art. Painters abandoned the notion of a subject in favour of pure form. The aesthetic message is more important than using representational, recognisable signifiers with equivalents in the 'real' world.

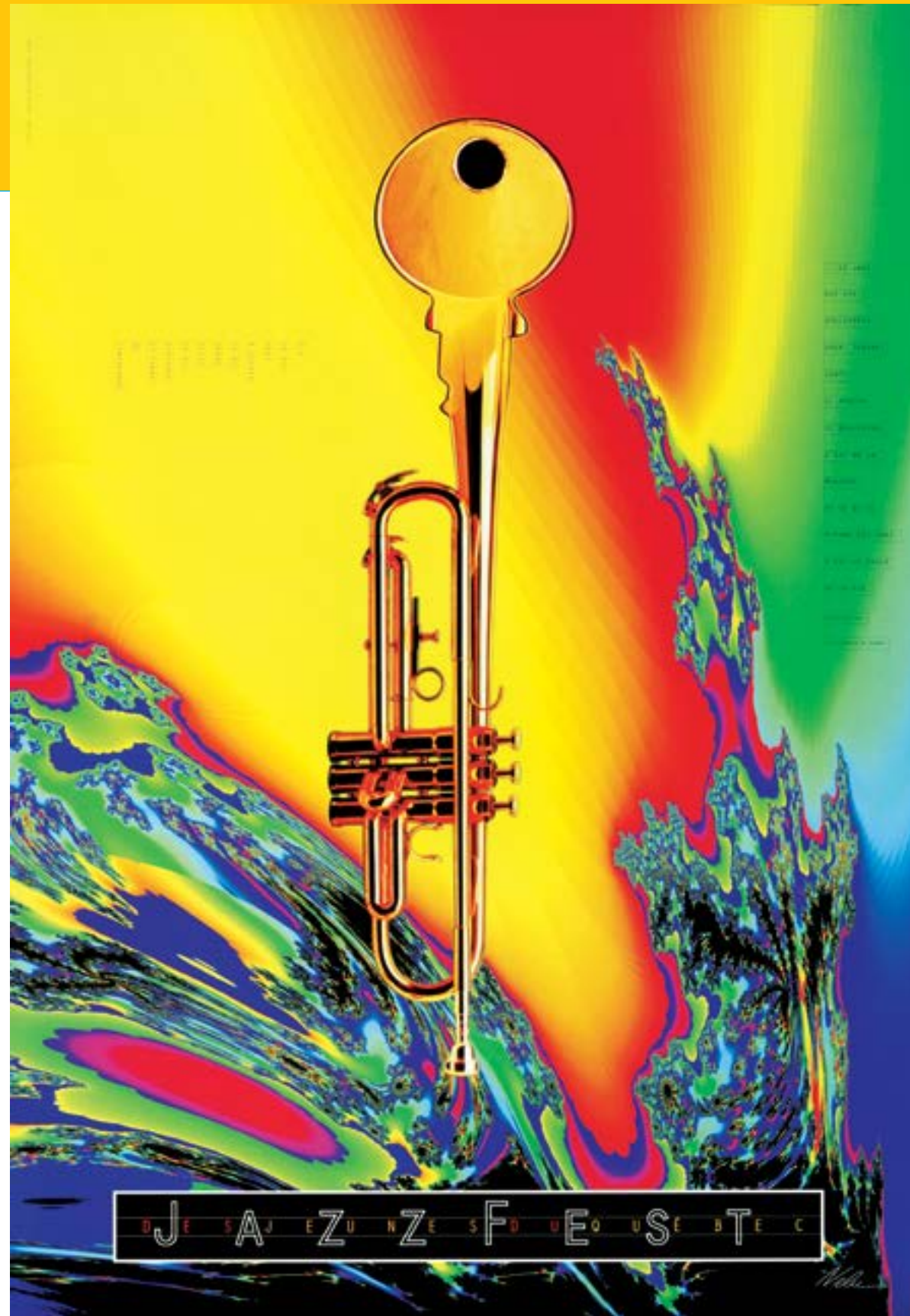
The union between poetry and visual arts has always been significant, as is the relationship between painting and music (Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* springs to mind).

Famously Kandinsky in painting and August Endell in architecture explored the possibilities of abstract visual expression created by music. For Kandinsky, colours resonated with each other to produce chords, harmony for the soul. He felt that, in abstraction, he had uncovered a powerful parallel reality, independent of the 'real' world. With titles like *Compositions*, *Improvisations*, *Impressions*, *The Yellow Sound* (his theatre piece) Kandinsky's paintings are music on canvas.

'More and more parallels between music and graphic art force themselves upon my consciousness,' wrote Paul Klee in 1905, years after abandoning a promising musical career and dedicating himself to painting. Music never actually left him, as he studied the connection with visual arts in his exploration of colour and colour theory.

Following Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian created compositions that moved away from Cubism towards the rendering of emotion through colours and lines, and the way they met on the canvas. Like in music, form and content become not just joined together in a tight embrace, but the same. Looking at their paintings, one can hear the music. And dance.

ALL THAT JAZZ



I like to imagine Mondrian in New York, swirling around the floor with Peggy Guggenheim at a great Gatsby party. Although apparently not a very accomplished dancer, the intoxicating rhythm of Broadway Boogie Woogie (1942) betrays a painter with music on his mind.

Wolfensohn is at the party too. For him, Jazz is an explosion, the emotion expressed by all the colour tubes emptying onto the canvas like a volcanic eruption. The iconic signs mingle with symbolic ones in his poster for JazzFest (1998): there is a trumpet emerging out of psychedelic waves, and it peaks into a golden key, washed over by a yellow, orange, green diagonal rainbow. Running down one side, the words of Canadian poet Andrée Maillet: 'Le jazz est vif, douloureux, doux, tendre, lent ; il apaise, il bouleverse, c'est de la musique et ce qu'il rythme est vrai, c'est le pouls de la vie'. (Jazz is alive, painful, sweet,

tender, slow: it soothes, it disturbs, it is music and its rhythm is true, it's the pulse of life).

Arriving in Paris with the American soldiers, Jazz was hip; it was slightly naughty, underground, inspiring. The freedom, energy and tempo of free jazz couldn't fail to inspire contemporary artists. It is recorded that Matisse would listen to Jazz for pleasure (by then Matisse couldn't dance), Picasso and Pollock were great jazz fans and possibly listened to jazz while painting.

The 1997 poster for the Lanaudière Festival suggests a designer listening to jazz. This time the instrument featured is another jazz favourite, the piano, and swings and swirls around the poster, heading for a chocolate and caramel abyss of invigorating contrasts, like the keys on the piano.

JAZZFEST
2013

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DE LANAUDIÈRE
1997 DETAIL



DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

Another type of music that launched a thousand posters is reggae. The term brings to mind silky beaches, red-yellow-green flags (and hats), sunsets and palm trees (or is it a cannabis plant?), all because of the strong association with Jamaica, where the genre originated. It gained international popularity in the 1970s, in spite (or because) of its association with the Rastafarian movement. Its popularity lasted until the 1990s when accusations of homophobia tarnished the reggae image. With a symmetrical 4/4 rhythm, played by two guitars, drums and keyboard, reggae is easy to relate to, sing along with the vocalist and dance to. But what colour is double riff on D?

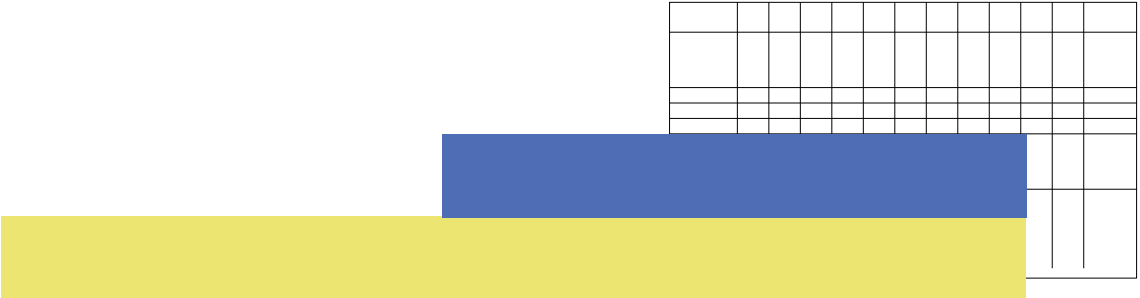
In Wolfensohn’s series of Reggae posters, the colours are true to the Jamaican flag, recorded at the centre of an LP (who remembers LPs?). The disc is sharp, like the music, cutting through the planet Earth, or coming towards it like a meteor in flames. Either way, making a decisively undeletable mark. But the music is personalised through plants and animals: it is red chilli pepper (*Reggae for Ever Hot!*), or a lion with its mane in flames, above the title of Bob Marley’s Rasta message ‘Iron Lion Zion’. The

image of Bob Marley and lyrics of his songs (*One Love, One Heart*) inspired other posters, as did the 1988 popular song by American Bobby McFerrin *Don’t Worry, Be Happy*. Elsewhere, the yellow and red words ‘reggae’ is seen from the other side of a transparent screen; the music has exploded through, burning a hole and creating a diffused rainbow.

It is ‘the expressed, and not the expression which matters’, so more important than the Reggae poster, the music; more important than the song, the message. The value of transcribing a narrative from one form into another is measured by the strength of the expression, the emotion felt by the receiver.

REGGAE.
FOREVER HOT!
2013

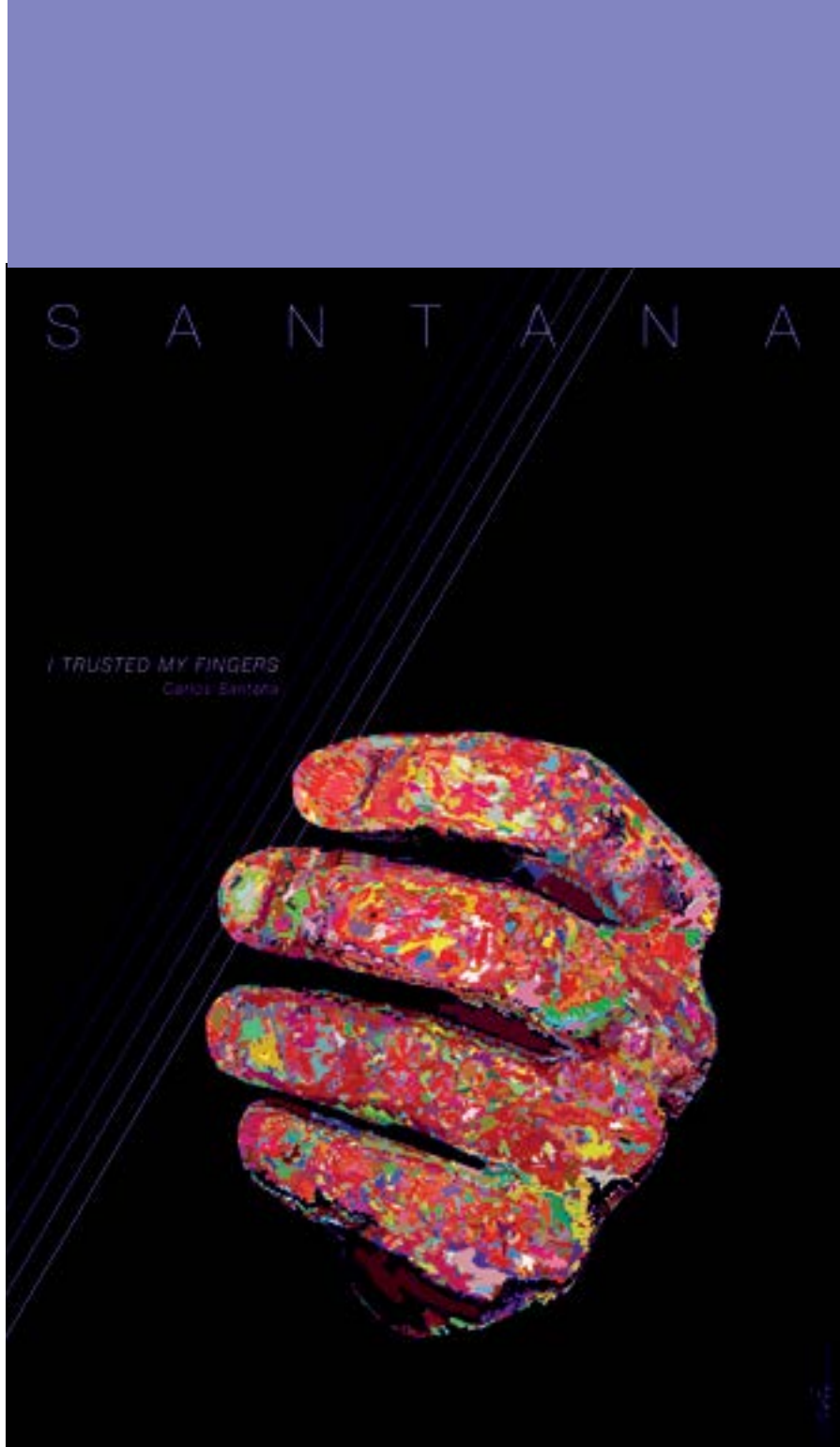
REGGAE EDGE
2013



‘I trusted my fingers’ said Santana when interviewed about his 1969 performance at Woodstock. I knew this quotation and had not given it much attention, until I saw the poster quoting it. Wolfensohn’s image is focused on the fingers of Santana’s left hand, emerging from darkness and lightly caressing his guitar’s chords. In his hand, the colours of the world, fragmented like shards of a kaleidoscope, turn into music. He had colourful fingers and was right to trust them with the music.

The symbiotic relationship between the concert and the poster dates back to Jules Chéret and Toulouse Lautrec. Without the concert – no raison d’être for the poster. Without the poster – no audience queuing up for tickets to the concert. It is the area where the functionality of the poster is most evident. With its long tradition, the performance poster may have used up most of its novelty tropes, so a new approach is required to achieve its declared aim: arrest, inform, create desire.

In his posters dedicated to a single composer, Wolfensohn combines the well-known with the unexpected.



SANTANA
I TRUSTED MY FINGERS
2020

CARLOS SANTANA
2020



PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST: MOZART MONDAY

In Salzburg, Prague or Vienna, the image of a post-adolescent Wolfgang Amadeus looks at us sideways from chocolate boxes and tourist souvenirs. There have been hundreds of portraits of Mozart and apparently many of them have little or no resemblance to their subject. Unlike Bach, Beethoven, Handel and others, he did not benefit from having been painted by prominent artists in his lifetime. Mozart iconography consists of several paintings of him as a child, alone or with his family, a few miniatures, some line engravings. They usually portray Mozart's characteristic profile, the wavy nose, the alert eyes. In a 19th century lithograph, a sheet music cover for Glover's transcription of musical gems, he looks even younger, with a more exuberant wig and full lips. The last portrait, by Johann Georg Edlinger, shows a more mature, more serious yet relaxed version of the composer. According to contemporaries 'he was a remarkably small man, very thin and pale' (the tenor Michael Kelly).

From the variety of portraits, not all authenticated, posterity chose the ones that represent Mozart as we would like him to look. The image in Barbara Kraft's post-mortem painting was based on the 1781 family portrait attributed to Johann Nepomuk della Croce, featuring 'one of the best likenesses' of him (Constanze Mozart Nissen). Personally, I would have chosen the other close likeness, painted by his brother-in-law Johann Joseph Lange around 1782.

It is, however, Barbara Kraft's posthumous portrait of Mozart that became the recognised face of the composer and the brand logo for the Mozart industry. And it is this familiar figure that was used as a basis for Wolfensohn's Mozart posters. A face so well-known may not attract more than a glance, a second that is not enough to read the details of date and time of the concert. This one is different from the face on the marzipan gift box, different from the farce that was the Milos Forman film Amadeus: here, the composer is sticking his tongue out at you, in a gesture of defiance, that is, paradoxically, inviting. Inviting you to get closer and whether a Mozart fan or not, read the when and where of the concerts (2001).

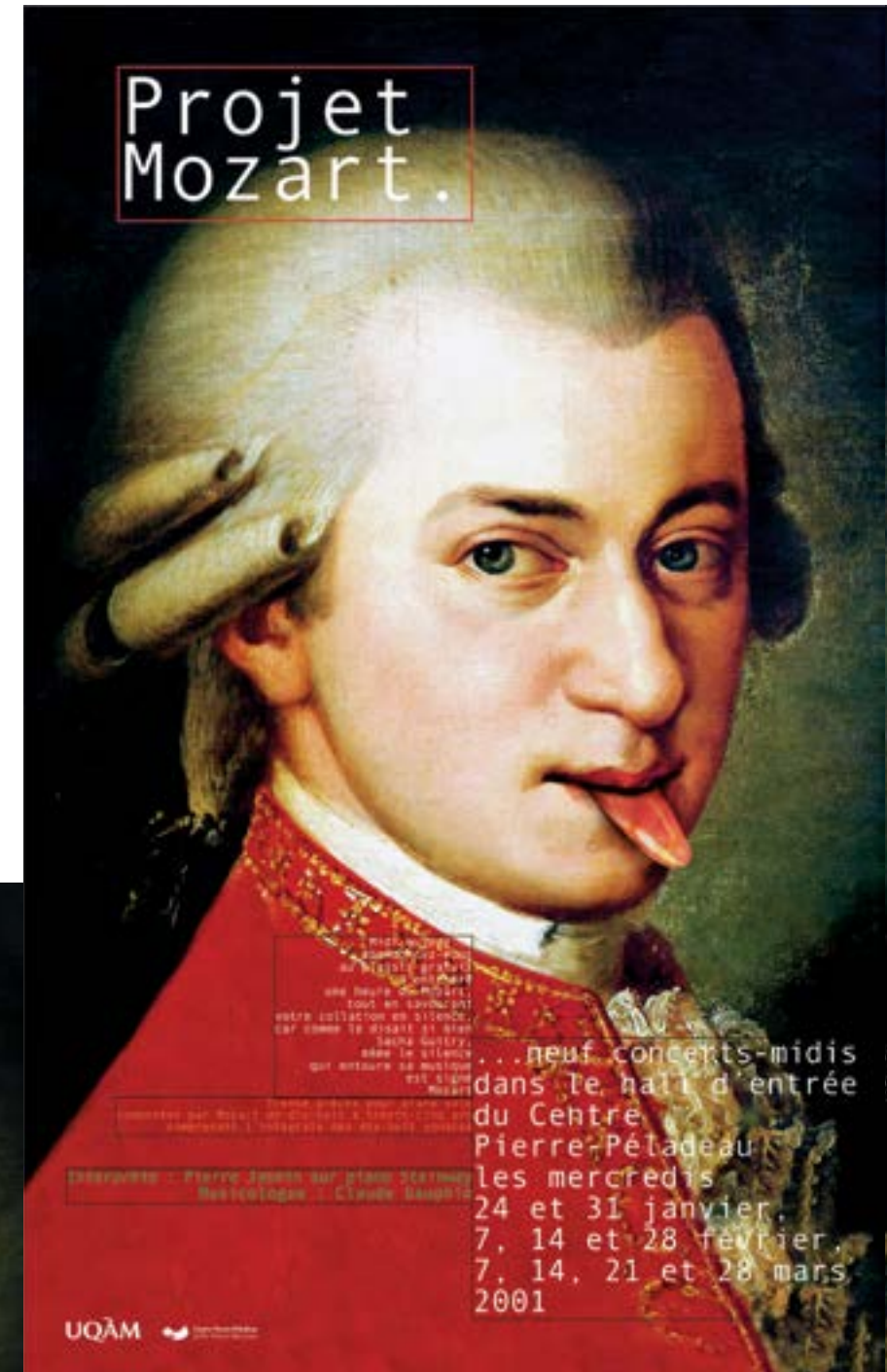
A few years later, we encounter the Mozart portrait again, on a poster for a series of concerts. This time the familiar young man is wearing the usual white wig and also full make-up: powder, rouge and lipstick. The face provides a background for a three-dimensional fly resting on Mozart's rouged cheek: a synecdoche for the airs and graces of Viennese high society of the 18th Century. When Mozart arrived in Vienna as a child prodigy, the Habsburg empire stretched from Belgium to Transylvania and was flourishing. The privileged classes looked more to the West than East for their cultural trends. Ladies dressed in the latest Parisian fashions and liked to emphasise their femininity with ruffles and ribbons and make-up. The fly on Wolfensohn's poster is the literal translation of

la mouche: a small circle of black silk or velvet, placed strategically on a woman's face to enhance her beauty – *un grain de beauté*, more prosaically, a mole. More than a make-up accessory, the fly was used to seduce and communicate, via its position, certain characteristics of the wearer: majestueuse, gallant, passionate, discreet, generous.

In the poster for the Mozart Mondays concert the image of the composer is flat and the fly on his cheek is repulsive in its realism. You feel like swatting it, especially if you don't know its French significance. A speech bubble over his head, bright yellow balancing the red coat below, invites 'à lundi' (See you Monday). The calm eyes of Mozart gaze back at you, impassive: made you look, made you stop. It is the role of the poster.

À LUNDI
2004

PROJET
MOZART
2001



BEETHOVEN BLUES

ODE À LA JOIE
1989

LA NEUVIÈME!
1992 DETAIL



The best known and most loved portrait of Beethoven is the one created by Joseph Karl Stieler, artist to the court of Bavaria, in 1820. This is how we like to imagine the great composer: broodingly handsome, masculine, emanating strength. He looks into the distance and upwards, towards the music in his head, awaiting inspiration. Above the wide forehead there is a wild mane of rich silver tresses. It is a fine painting, carefully executed and, as the only life portrait of the composer, probably the closest to his liking.

In designing his concert posters, Wolfensohn is most of all impressed by Beethoven's hair. Like Samson, this is where the force of creation lies. In his posters the locks of hair are staves on which music is written, and the composer has his mouth open as if in mid-song. The flying staves give Beethoven an air of daring adventurer, young and in full flight: his music gives him wings.

This is how we see Beethoven in the 1992 poster *La Neuvième!* The composer is singing with pathos, with his mouth open, we can see his teeth – unlike any other recognised portrait of the master. But it is the ninth, Beethoven's final symphony and his greatest work. The ninth! The exclamation mark signifies the enthusiasm, the anticipation, the joy of listening to *Ode to Joy*.

The 1990 poster was actually entitled *Ode à la Joie* as the ninth is also known; the words sung in the fourth movement by four tenors and a chorus, are the poem by Schiller, *Ode to Joy*. The poster features nine Beethovens, all but one members of the choir singing the final movement. The figure in the centre is silent, even pensive as he listens.

Thirty years later, Wolfensohn revisits Beethoven to celebrate the composer's birthday. December 2020 marked the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birthday, and several online celebrations marked the occasion, rolling over into 2021. The poster features the black and white image of Beethoven, the pell-mell hair, every line – in the hair, under his eyes and chin – being part of a staff with music written on it. It is said that Beethoven lost his hearing in his later years, and it makes one wonder if he could see the music, if in his head the sounds were translated into music notation.

Like his predecessors, and many contemporaries, Wolfensohn's great affinity with music and his exercises in musical composition have no doubt informed his visual compositions and expression.

FIESTA AND FESTIVALS



Fortunate among visual artists, the creator of posters has more than his fair share of opportunities to explore musical themes: concerts, competitions, recitals, festivals.

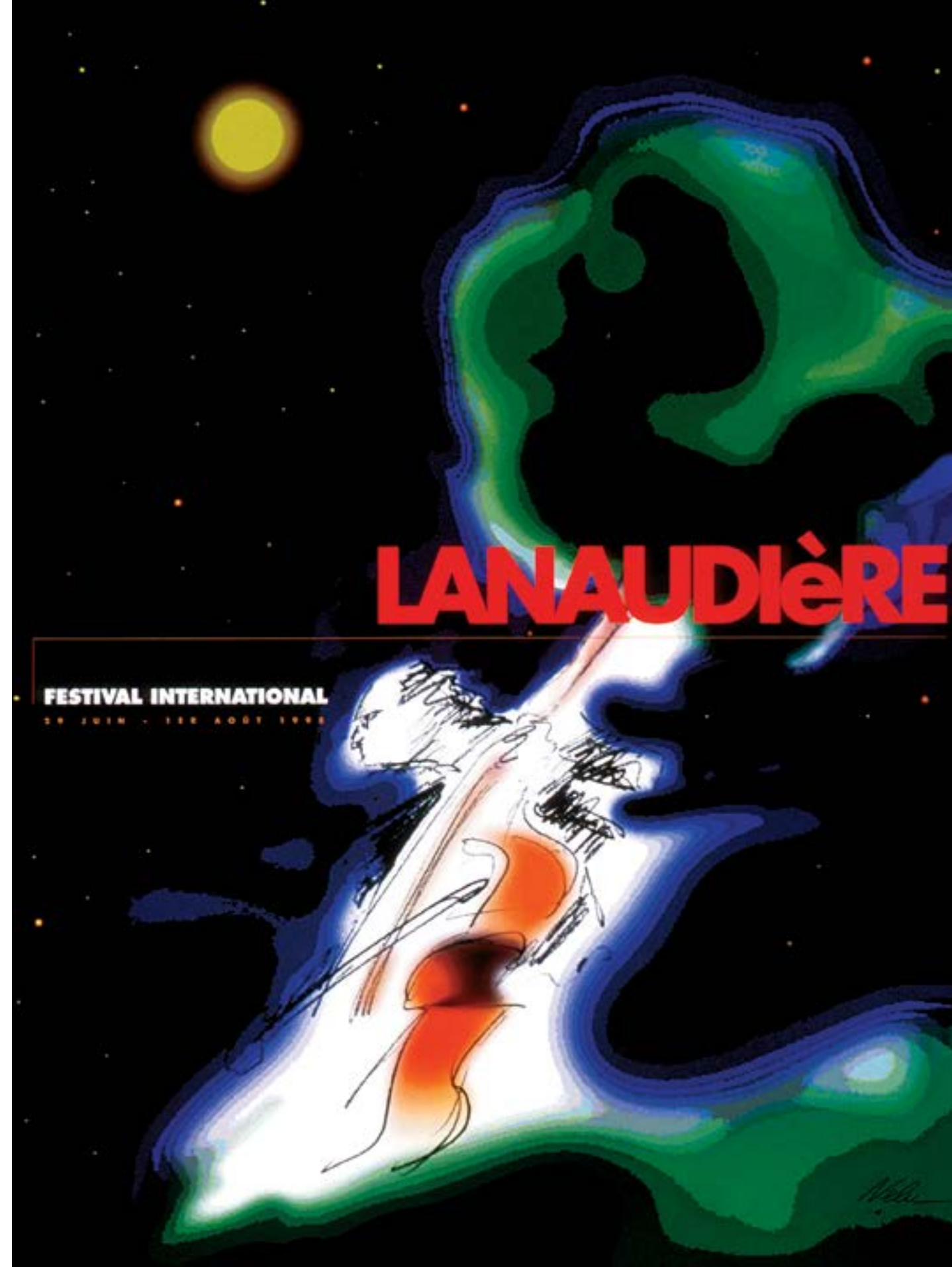
From the composer to the audience, it is the effort and the talent of performers bringing us the music. Wolfensohn focuses on the movement of their hands, the energy generated by the

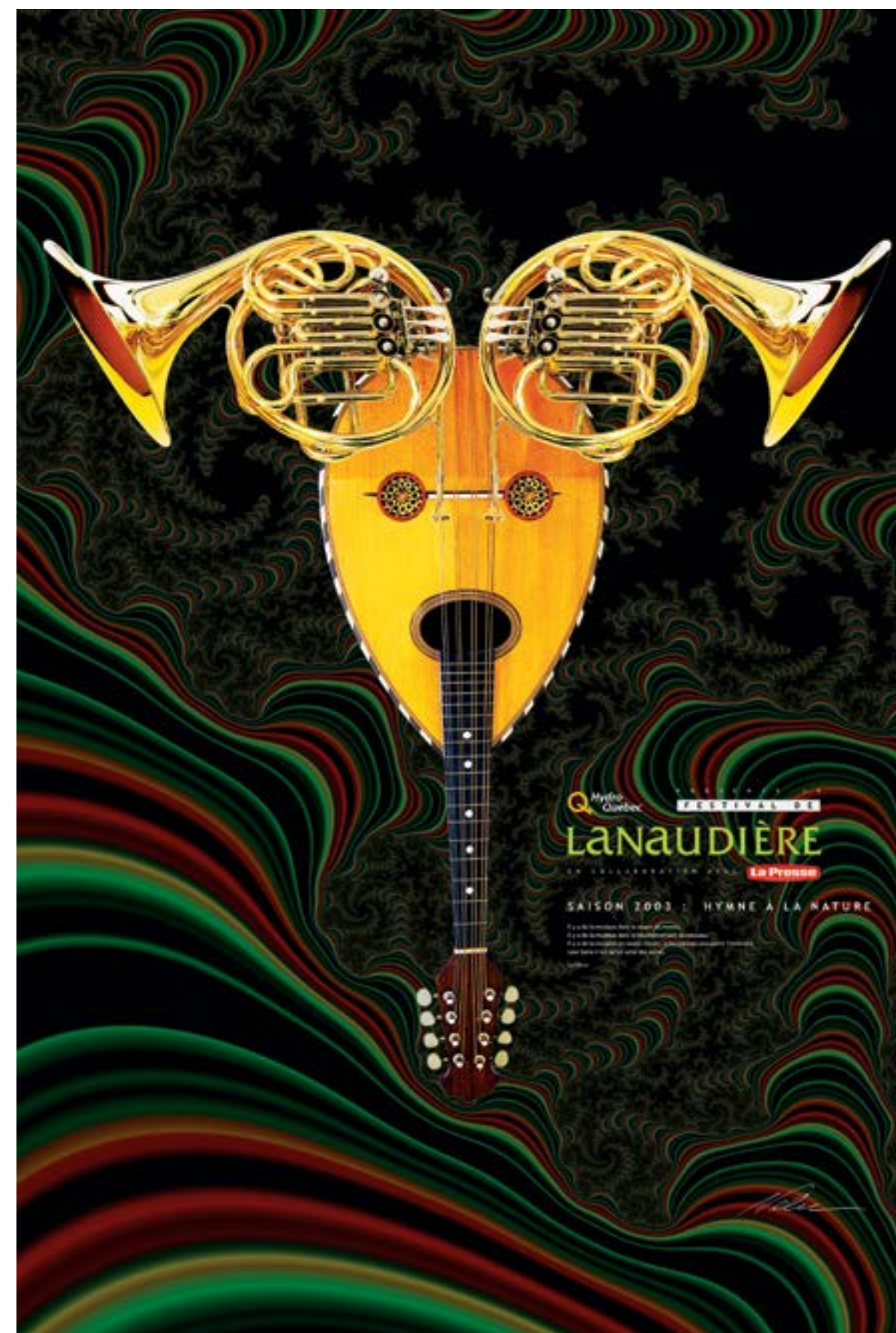
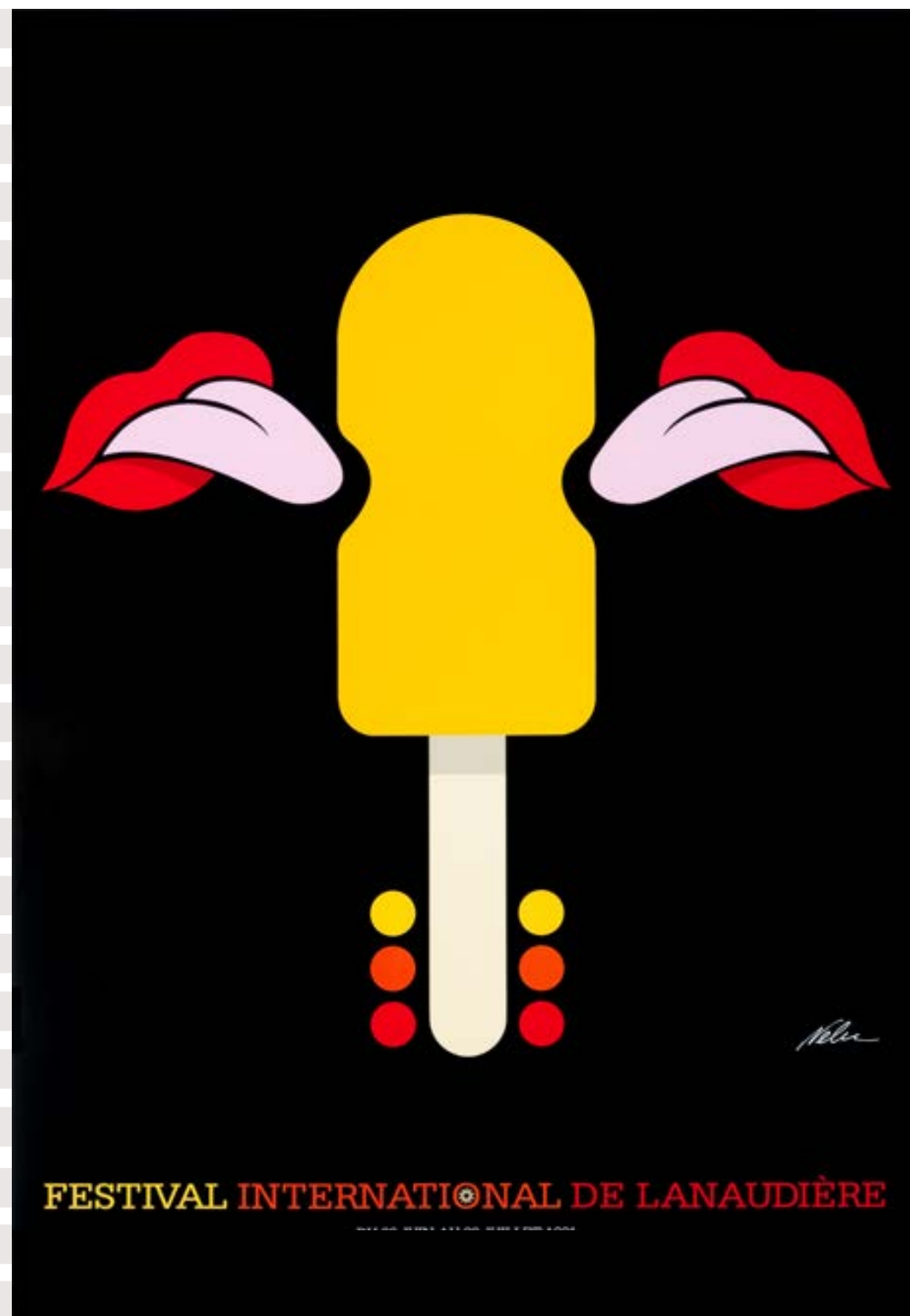
conductor (*Sir Neville Mariner* 1987), the fusion of instrument and player (*Marika Bournaki* 2008). The atmosphere created here, by real, living people, called for the use of photography, albeit digitally manipulated, as required by the narrative.

Like painting and poetry, music is the language of emotions. In Wolfensohn's posters it is inviting us to listen, to participate in musical emotion, in the fusion of rhythm, melody, composer, interpreter – the emotions skilfully expressed with line and colour and humour.

The melodious name Lanaudière evokes long lines of lords and explorers, some of them steeped in the history of the French colonial empire. The small district to the north-east of Montréal bearing this most appropriate name is home to an annual music festival since 1978, thanks to a very large auditorium and fine summer weather. Each year, there is a new poster announcing the festival. The concept of music, joy and a relaxed atmosphere is translated in Wolfensohn's posters with a fun and colourful treatment of musical instruments. Guitars, cellos, trumpets are metamorphosed into ice lollies, soft drink bottles, animal horns or simply exploding into a carnivalesque outburst of primary colours. In some complex imagery, the viewer is invited to decipher some kind of rebus game, with several connotations, challenging but also rewarding as they are uncovered one by one.

FESTIVAL DE LANAUDIÈRE
2002, 1998





FESTIVAL
DE LANAUDIÈRE
1991, 2003

CELEBRATING DESIGN

'Il n'y a pas de hors-texte'
(Jacques Derrida)

Unlike morality, which appreciates actions and their outcome, art appreciates emotion for its own sake. The emotional elements of design are an imitation of our physical existence, of Nature. Rhythm, like our movement; mass, like our struggle with gravity; line, surface and light like all the forms we see and touch.

Design, like all art forms, is mimesis.

Prosaically, graphic design (such as posters) and industrial design (products) have in common the element of mass production. The different meanings of the word design – from creation to planning – illustrate the heterogeneous nature of the discipline. A search for the most influential designers of all times directs us to software products, vacuum cleaners, furniture and political satire – from Leonardo da Vinci to Jonathan Ive.

One of Wolfensohn's early posters for the School of Industrial Design (1995) explains the notion colourfully and succinctly: the work of the designer is long, repetitive, experimental. The designer, represented here by a solitary pencil, attempts this colour, then another, tries again and again. The pencil wears out and eventually lies down, exhausted. A few years later, Wolfensohn presents an alternative to an ever shorter pencil: digital images, digital recording and storing,

offers new opportunities to the designer. In 2008, the artist is still ambivalent about the future of design: Which way are we heading? The hand, symbol of the designer's skill, and the eye, his perception of reality and tool of the imagination, control the USB in the same manner as they control the pencil. The future could be either, or a combination of both.

From the hero of this poster – the lead pencil – to LED and Lamborghini, the objects that surround our lives are successful design ideas. They started life on a drawing board; they were created.



ÉCOLE DE DESIGN
INDUSTRIEL
1995

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?
2010 DETAIL



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Creation starts in the head: in the designer's head, which Wolfensohn makes transparent, so that we can see the complicated network of colourful serpentine at work. The grey matter of the designer is polychrome and dynamic. It will transform ideas into material reality (Design Month 2006).

Or matter into spirit? The burning bright star, on pillar box red background, carries the message: 'Le design est matière fait esprit' (Design Month 2001). Matter, (Latin mater, mother, source) requires an idea in order to become real, concrete and tangible. The spirit, on the other hand, designates a reflecting and active reality generally associated with the human soul.

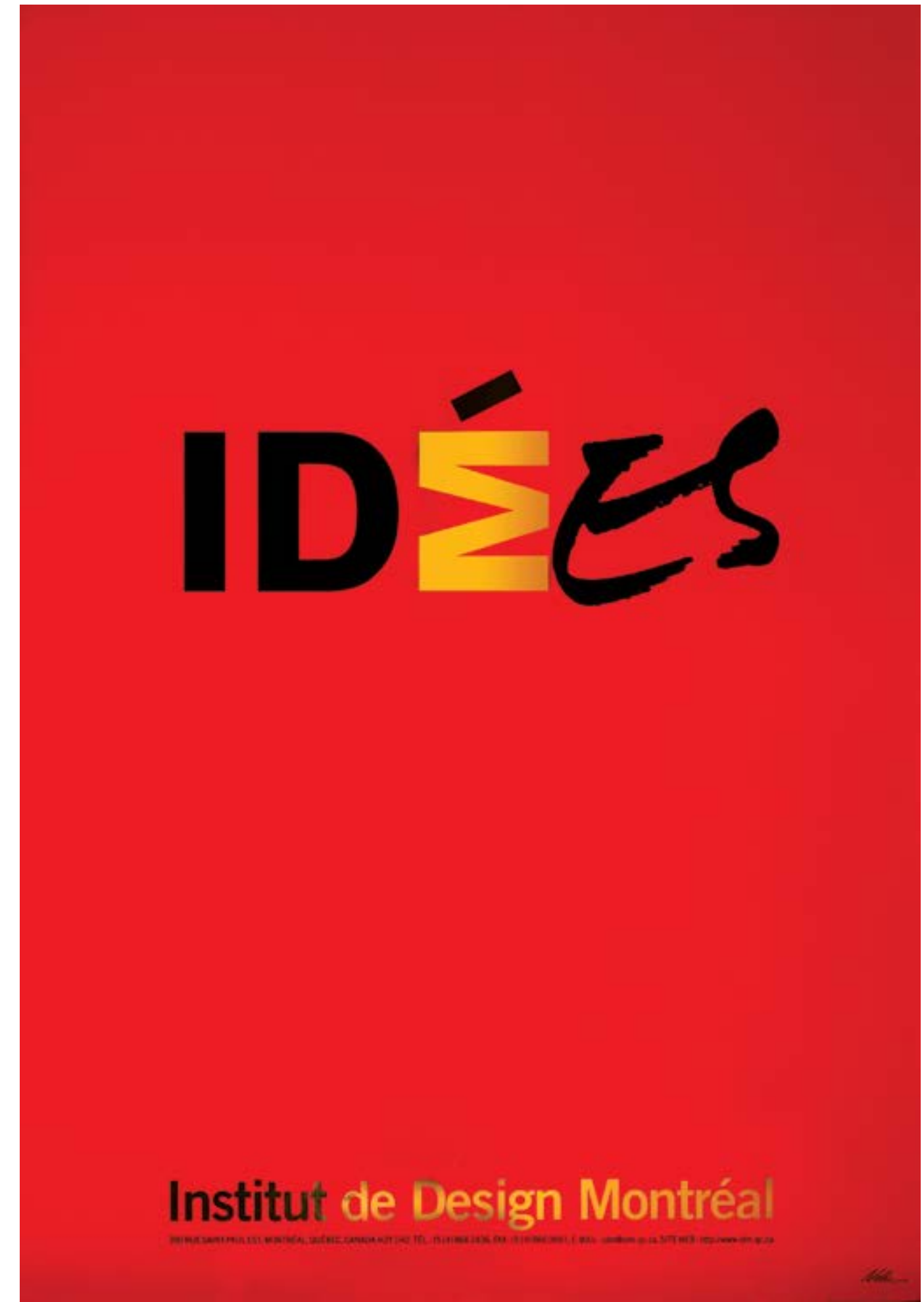
The debate over the relationship between matter and thought is not new. For Democritus, Epicure (3 - 4th Century BC) and later materialist philosophers, matter is the only reality, eternal and infinite. According to Plato and his followers, matter cannot exist independently of ideas. Mind and matter are usually defined by contrast with something they are not, which is not always clarifying.

Ideas are more easily understood as contents of the mind, all forms of consciousness: imagination, dream, memories, pain, love. The surrealist image in the 2006 poster illustrates the workings of the mind, the ideas. In the designer's case, these ideas lead to something material and functional. Many designers would raise an eyebrow at the definition of functional as 'designed to be practical and useful rather than attractive',

as they would not consider functionality and attractiveness to be mutually exclusive. If an object is created to be both functional and beautiful it will attract a good design accolade.

Wolfensohn's 'Le design est matière fait esprit' – matter turn into idea – could stand for an alternative definition of creation.

Both posters *Idées* (1999) and Montreal Design Month 2001 use a bright red background with brilliant yellow and black for the five point burning star and text. In *Ideas*, a promotional poster for the Institute of Design Montréal, Wolfensohn indulged in a typographic game. The first E is yellow and turned sideways to appear like an M of the IDM – the Institute initials. A variety of colours and typefaces within the same word suggest diversity of sources and outcomes, a divorce from the rules. The idea – as it were – of the poster is that a design institution is defined by ideas, it nurtures and produces ideas.



MOIS
DU
DESIGN
MONTRÉAL
2001
DETAIL

IDÉES
1999

‘When nothing becomes something’ is how Jean-Jacques Rousseau defined creation, the bringing of something into existence ex nihilo. When an object is created to be both functional and visually attractive, like a beautifully designed chair, or knife, or jacket, it makes sense to produce many replicas of said object. Industry and art can exchange signs without dilution of meaning; the synergy thus created is a new, enhanced reality.

Is architecture an art, or a service industry? And sculpture? Science? Renaissance artists and their patrons were not troubled by this question. Leonardo got on with his work, designing flying machines and robots, drawing and painting, researching. Imagination, invention, industry and fantasy can coexist happily in the creative mind.

The question of division and struggle between art and industry became irrelevant again in the 20th century. ‘The objective of all creative effort in the visual arts is to give form to space’, wrote Walter Gropius, founder of Bauhaus, in 1919. He believed in the correlation of all the processes of creation; students at the famous Weimar institution were encouraged to feel the interweaving of practical and formal work. It lasted only 14 years, but the Bauhaus movement was more than an artistic trend: it influenced art education, design, graphics, architecture and it affected the way we understand the relationship

between art and society. Based on equalitarian principles, it called for the abolition of barriers between fine arts and crafts, which should be brought together to create beauty in a modern industrialised society. If paintings and objets d’art are to be found in museums and displayed by the privileged classes, good design will benefit everyone in the form of everyday utilitarian objects and the houses they live in.

In 2019 the world celebrated the Bauhaus centenary with courses, exhibitions and competitions. Nelu Wolfensohn’s *Know Bau How 100* was one of the posters selected to be part of the main exhibition at the Global Biennale of Graphic Design in Moscow. Using a slim and elegant typeface on a stark black background, the poster celebrates the minimalist style that is part of the Bauhaus heritage. If the homophonic signifier remains cryptic to English speakers, the clean blue, yellow and red spell the reference to Bauhaus’ emphasis on skill and knowledge, as well as a talent for visual art. The followers of Bauhaus were (and are) idealists, both in the philosophical sense and in their pursuit of perfection.

In the summer of 2020 one of the most celebrated designers, Milton Glaser, died. His legacy goes beyond the *I Love NY* logo. Glaser co-founded and directed Pushpin studio, which exercised a major influence on graphic design throughout the world. His poster for Bob Dylan’s album and his campaign posters (anti-war, AIDS, climate change) inspired the work of many contemporary designers, Nelu Wolfensohn included.



MILTON GLASER
2020



Nelu's tribute poster shows the designer's profile as a black silhouette receding into a grey background. Above his head, a collection of signs that defined Glaser's career, and made us familiar with his work, if not always his name: the red heart (of *I love NY*), the push pin, the polychromatic psychedelic design.

WHAT'S NEXT
2018 DETAIL

All and each of Wolfensohn's posters are a celebration of design, with its freedom and its constraining rules, its inspiration and its perspiration. A celebration of creativity and supreme human values.

In the beginning there was the word. There was also the image. The words and the images met in the same narrative; and through their beauty the story was created.

POSTAMBLE

It was the turn of the millennium when I first encountered Nelu Wolfensohn's work and his ability to tame images. I have always enjoyed the fact that images have a life of their own, telling stories, coming together and drifting apart as they please. At that time, I was impressed by the large digital posters in Wolfensohn's exhibition *Manipulations*: here the images were sized and ordered following the will, and the whip, of the artist.

I also have a love of posters, this undervalued and underpraised medium, in which art and design, aesthetic and functionality work side by side: I like the fact that we don't have to choose.

But should a narrative that was created with line and colour resist translation into words? Not according to Jacques Derrida, who believes that these works are already full of virtual discourse. If I make any apology, it is for failing to make the transition with the same lightness and elegance.

Writing about Nelu Wolfensohn's posters, I was referring to him as 'the artist', despite his protestations. Shouldn't I say 'the designer? he suggested. I am surprised by what I consider to be his modesty, as my (and possibly many readers') perception is that art, with its limitless conceptual and execution possibilities, is in some way on a more elevated plane. Different, yes.

But the need for functionality widens, rather than limits, creativity. Design follows different rules of rhetoric, the poster has a role to fulfil, to invite us to leisure or pleasure, to persuade. In this book I looked at the posters produced by Nelu Wolfensohn through the years, through the pretexts, looking at the tropes and methods, trying to understand the motivation, the passion. The posters took me on a journey of my own, through other times, other myths. Whether the artist was inspired by these earlier images, or the poster I was looking at recalled the work of earlier painters only to me, I was invited to travel along.

I added the words to the pictures, and sometimes the words gathered themselves into poems, related to the images by some whimsical association, that may or may not be evident.

Throughout the book, the reading and interpretation of works are mine; they often, but not always, concur with the artist's intentions. The reader is, of course, invited to compile his or her own.



NELU WOLFENSOHN

There are moments in life when we suddenly take a different fork in the road, for no apparent reason, that turns out to be a lucky move. Such was Nelu Wolfensohn's walk pass the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, and the encounter with the school's general secretary. It was 1962, the summer holiday. As a result of this serendipitous meeting and the ensuing interview, Wolfensohn abandoned his plans of medical studies in Bologna, and accepted the offer to join the Graphic Design program at Bezalel. The world may have lost a doctor, but gained a prolific and uniquely talented designer.

Nelu was born in Bucharest, Romania, in 1943. As a child (an only child), he drew and coloured and dreamed of becoming a mural painter. The course at Bezalel was followed by Advanced Graphic Design at UCLA and, most significantly for his development, an encounter with computers in 1981 as part of Visible Language Workshop at MIT. Living and working in Israel, USA and Canada enriched his cultural perspective and visual vocabulary.

Whilst still studying, Wolfensohn joined a graphic design studio in Jerusalem, then in 1974, Advertising Designers in Los Angeles. He worked on projects ranging from postage stamps to annual reports. Building on this experience – of rigorously adhering to briefs, while allowing freedom of creativity – he moved to Montréal and founded his own visual communication studio.

For the following 14 years, he was Art Director at Lavalin Group; during this time Graphisme Lavalin – the group's in-house design team – won a number of prestigious graphic design prizes. By 1992, it was time to share this experience with the next generation. Wolfensohn joined UQAM Design School and soon had to make room on his mantelpiece for the prizes awarded to his students at various international competitions. Students were inspired by his enthusiasm and commitment to their progress, and under his guidance produced original and sometimes controversial posters.

Since 1975, Wolfensohn has exhibited, either solo or as part of a group, nearly every year, throughout the world. He has been a regular contributor to poster competitions, winning a range of prestigious awards.

Still fascinated by the ability of computers to create and manipulate images, Wolfensohn set up the Centre for Digital Image Research, which explores the possibilities of computer-generated images in the context of print. He also established the multilingual website Concepts for All, a bank of free images available for humanitarian campaigns, all conceived and realised by UQAM students.

As recognition of his contribution to Canadian art and the highest accolade, 27 of Nelu Wolfensohn's posters are part of the permanent collection of Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



ADRIANA DREDGE

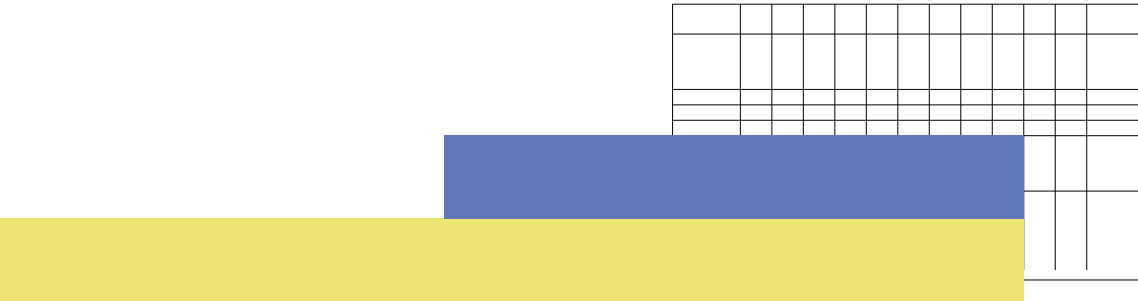
As an art consumer, collector and occasional commentator, Adriana is curious about the talent and the torment that drive creativity.

For the love of art, and books, and books with lots of pictures, Adriana went to study History of Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, despite expectations of a career based on a degree in mathematics. What started as a simple desire to learn and understand more about art and artists developed into a lifelong passion.

Following an MA from the Sorbonne, her work took her to London and into the fascinating world of public relations and advertising, and later higher education.

A senior lecturer at the University of the Arts London, Adriana challenged her students to investigate the use of images, words and sounds as communication and persuasion tools. She has written a number of articles on branding, marketing and advertising.

The passion for art continued throughout her 20 years' academic career and remains at the centre of her interest. In recent years Adriana's writing has focused on art and design. She likes to explore the artists' motivation and analyse the creative process. A keen observer and constructive commentator, she offers an objective view, inviting the reader to discover and enjoy their own enthusiasm for culture.





THE POETRY OF THE POSTER
MYTH AND METAPHOR
IN THE WORK OF
NELU WOLFENSOHN

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ADRIANA DREDGE

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