

~~MANIPULATE~~

FREE THE  
FORMULAS  
OF DREAMS



# SUMMARY

5	Preface
7	Intro
<b>9</b>	<b>Roles of imagination</b>
11	<b>Standardisation and manipulation</b>
15	<b>Between ethic and morality</b>
17	<b>Status of graphic designers</b>
20	Bibliographie
23	Acknowledgement

## **Free the formulas of dreams**

Tamara Thys  
Report (DSAA)  
Graphic design, lycée Raymond Loewy  
With C. Nicolas, S. Devaud-Judas & C. Pradeau



# PREFACE

This picture of Bordeaux, a French city, could have been taken anywhere else.

Indeed, nowadays, wherever we go, we are surrounded by a huge amount of images. In the street, in newspapers, in public transports, on television...

To me, letting our spirit go free, getting lost in our imaginary world, getting absorbed in any detail, image, or whatever is around us is very valuable and important.

But all these images are trying to catch our attention all the time to make us buy things, and to prevent us from thinking. They appear to me as a heckler, intercepting and catching my attention.

That's why I feel concerned by the impoverishment of images and imaginary worlds, both as a spectator and a graphic designer, who's creating images.



# INTRO

We are living in a society surrounded by images. Whenever our eyes turn around, there is an image trying to catch our attention and take us out of our thoughts of imagination.

As we will see, the roles of imagination are numerous and very important for human beings. It's why we will be thinking on the question of impoverishment of imaginary world, due to an impoverishment of images.

We will first see which part as our imagination to play in our daily lives. Then, we'll search about the reason, and the actors of these impoverishment. And, finally, we are going to get interested on the question of the creators of images, the graphic designers, how they have a part to play in this impoverishment, and how they should or could act to get a rid of this mass culture which standardise and impoverish our contemporary society.





# ROLES OF IMAGINATION

These images are affecting people, transforming them into consumers, and they entail a passivity of people looking at them.

They are connecting us back to some reality, but not our reality, the reality we are supposed or expected to adhere to. Today, the culture of images is mostly based on entertainment, and distracts us from any meaning, or even hides from us what reality is.

Nevertheless, images are constantly living in stories, not only when dreaming, but almost all the time, when we remember something, thinking on about something could have happened another way, when we think what is going to happen... And we resort to our imagination in many different ways.

First of all, it's our capacity to imagine something, and to create, which allowed Humans as groups of mammals to become a civilized society, distinct from animals. That's why Jonathan Gotschall calls us the "storytelling animals". Thanks to this capacity of creating something new, humans are able to innovate and evolve constantly, beginning with the invention of tools during the paleolithic age.

But it is not just a tool, it's a liberty anyone has, an alternative to the real world, and to all the difficulty going with it. Creating allows us to free some repressed drives created by a world too difficult, creates a balance, by transposing in an imaginary world whatever is not possible or not existing in real life, for instance unsatisfied desires, or repressed drives.

By giving us the opportunity to transpose anything, any action or fact on our mind, as many times and in as many different manners as we want, imagination is a way to simulate social behaviors and get prepared, get adapted to them. Jonathan Gottschall compares it to a flight simulator which allows pilots to test a same situation with different what-if scenarios.

Moreover, it is thanks to imagination that things or people can get some value, or some respect. Without this faculty, things would just be what they are, in a pragmatic way. The example of a child's softie is a good illustration of this idea. Indeed, why does a child give such importance to some piece of fabric which usually ends up in a really poor condition ? Rationally speaking, the piece of fabric should be perceived only as old stuff and thrown away, but thanks to the faculty of imagination, things are what we imagine they are, and if a child projects a huge amount of feelings and emotion on an object, it will have a high value and importance to him. About that, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard said that imagining is enhancing reality.

It's a need we have, because it's necessary to our biological functions, mostly to our behavior. As J. Gottschall said : "fiction is one of the primary sculpting forces of individuals and societies", and he calls us "the storytelling animals".



Joshua Hoffine, *After dark, my sweet*, 2009

# STANDARDISATION & MANIPULATION

If the impoverishment of images and imaginary world is noticed, the question then is: what forms of impoverishment, and who or what caused them?

The presence of images is increasing all around us, and impacts on our imagination.

The question to be asked then, is who creates these images? How does our consumer society impoverish the realm of imagination?

There are many stakeholders behind images: photographers, directors, artists, and all the average citizens who are allowed to create images quickly, thanks to all the software available.

But images are mainly created by graphic designers, particularly in public spaces.

Because they can influence other people's imaginary world, we cannot deny that they contribute to the impoverishment of imaginary worlds, and they should be aware of their responsibility.

They need to know how signs, language, symbols work, and how they are evolving. They must also be aware of social behavior changes, because their profession is evolving with them.

Since the 80s, we've been able to notice some transformation with the emergence of "graphisme d'utilité publique".

It was born in a period when the creation of a visual identity started to refer to a dynamic process instead of referring to some well-known and traditional values.

From then on, the distinction between private and public institution started to disappear, the codes of practice being used started to be alike for both of them.



Exemple taken  
and analysed by  
Anick Lantenois,  
in *Le Vertige  
du Funambule*,  
about the evolu-  
tion of logotypes

The particular example taken by Annick Lantenois, an art historian and professor, is that of the logotypes that replaced the old coats of arms and all that they used to convey.

The result of these changes is the priority given to visibility over legibility.

In parallel, the new communication tools help the excessive display of some images or messages, make little and ephemeral productions disappear.

We are in a more and more industrialized society, and the industry has understood the power of images and communications on consumers.

When the industry started to get interested in it, we started to enter in the industrialization of cultures. Productions are used not only to communicate, to inform or to create feelings, but also to manipulate consumers into consuming more and more.

Advertising makes people believe that what they see is what they are dreaming of, whereas it isn't. Most of the time these stereotyped and standardized images, leave no place to reflection, they just transform individuals into passive consumers.

The industrialization of cultures is also the standardization and globalization of a unique culture with a loss of all the treasures provided by the multiplicity of other cultures, and also a standardization of our consumption. All our cities are full of the same display advertisement, filled with the same images, same ads... Doesn't this mean that each city's character is blurred?

We can talk not only of a manipulation of images and therefore of our imaginations, but also of a commercialization, a commodification of it.

Here, we could take the example of Walt Disney productions, which are generally well regarded by people, thanks to the innocent image they have had since their origin and the first animated movies created.

But today, Walt Disney is a huge company, with all the amusement parks, the products on sale (from a softie, to a laptop or pasta), but what is most controversial about Walt Disney is their presence and the part they play in some American schools, in which they have an influence on children's education.

Mass culture entails globalization, standardization, manipulation, passivity, which means a culture in which the abandonment of our imagination leaves our spirits available for industries, advertising and consumption. And this mass culture seems to be out of phase with our contemporary society.

First because they were invented in the 60's, when supermarkets were also invented, and because most of the ads we can daily see promote products or services in opposition with all the emergent issues we are trying to deal with. (Ads selling junk food, promoting pollutants...)

We are in front of images trying to play with our emotions, our impulsive part. They are trying to manipulate us with a mercenary goal. That's why the involvement of individuals is something I got interested in, and is illustrated in this report through the cover of the book. Because if the color yellow attracts people's attention, it is necessary to hold the book and touch it to be able to read the title, that is embossed.

This notion of involvement as opposed to passivity entailed by most images, leads to questioning how spectators can appropriate an image, how a picture can be evocative, generate a meaning, and allow people's own interpretation?

The speed appears as preventing this from happening. Because images are so often changed, replaced, and so quickly consumed, we cannot attribute any value to them. Images don't have time to live with the people they are addressed to, and so individuals cannot recognize themselves in them.



Examples of products on sale by the Walt Disney company



# BETWEEN ETHIC & MORALITY

The problem related to speed also concerns the creative part as graphic orders which are faster and faster.

Now that the impoverishment and the part of responsibility of designers in it have been noticed, how then can graphic designers act to liberate this abandoned, neglected faculty?

When I started studying, I already had my own view and opinion about what graphic design should be, and how I imagined my future as a professional graphic designer. My experience in agencies, by the way of internships, have strengthened my beliefs. Indeed, most of the points playing a part in this impoverishment can be applied to the experience I've had in advertising agencies.

The first point is about how this profession is received, whether it is by individuals, sponsors or even graphic designers themselves!

And you will realise it if you simply check all the ads asking for a voluntary or non paid designer on internet.

Today, many think graphic design is only related to advertising or marketing - which are themselves related to manipulation and power - whereas the most important aspect should be the content of the message.

Moreover, I could notice during my experience that the decision about what was selected to be proposed to the client was often left to the boss or any other person in charge who were not graphic designers and only made choice according to their personal, and subjective taste.

On the contrary, a graphic designer can justify a proposition, assess its efficiency or not.

Whether it is because of an absence of reflection, the easiness of an efficient recipe used again and again, unsupported clients and spectators : there are numerous points leading to this impoverishment of images. The problem is that nowadays, many graphic designers prefer the easiness of mercantilism instead of their ethics, and their reflection in their creations.

The graphic designer Pierre Bernard said : a graphic designer's production must encompass a position, a stand, and a responsibility of those creating it.

“We do not advocate the abolition of high pressure consumer advertising : this is not feasible. Nor do we want to take any of the fun out of life. But we are proposing a reversal of priorities in favor of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication”. First thing First, 2000

This manifesto, which this quote is extracted from, illustrates what I think graphic designers should work for : use his services, competences and imagination not only on profitable things but on more worthy subjects.

Moreover, individuals should be considered as spectators, and be the subject of the reflection, not only as targets since they are now considered as mere consumers.

*Le Vertige du Funambule*, by Annick Lantenois



Annick Lantenois wrote a book, “Le Vertige du Funambule”, (meaning the vertigo of the tightrope walker), in which she talks of the situation of graphic designers: between ethic and morality. She deals with this book on fashion and graphic designers, but nowadays, it could be apply to our entire society, including town hall, which rent some space to industry selling advertising places in the city.



# STATUS OF GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

The first city to be strongly opposed to advertising in public spaces was Sao Paulo, in 2006. Today, it's Grenoble: for the first time in Europe, a city put an end to one of their contract with JCDecaux in 2015, the second one should end in 2019.

It's a totally innovative action in Europe.

Their goal is to replace all the spaces which were used by advertising, with free expression places or with trees. And they talked about their intention to work in collaboration with some associations or teams to create a new type of iconography.

This goes along with the desire to revitalize a local identity, for every different neighbourhood, and for the people living there.

The point is to leave all the standardized and imposed values behind.

The urban environment as it is now turns citizens into consumers. What if we changed this environment by giving it back to those it belongs to?

What tools do we have to fight against huge material capacities of advertising? How can we propose an alternative to what shapes a consumerist, individualist and standardized imaginary world?

It seems important to recreate a link between graphic design and social movements, and think out a collective work rather than a client to service provider relation. It by time to go from a commercial approach to one which advocates professional ethics.

What should be the status of graphic designers and their creations : an image made to last and to be kept by people, going up to a piece of art, leading the graphic designer to be also an artist? Or a political graphics, with political signs, and a work done about the diffusion of images and forms within social conflicts? For instance, the group “Ne pas plier” is giving the possibility to people to reuse some signs, available in an image bank on internet, in order to avoid the poverty of forms to be added to the forms of human poverty, as the graphic designer Gerard Paris-Clavel said during an interview.

To Tony Fry, a design theorist and philosopher, designers have to become political agents, or “politicized change agent” as he said, to be able to meet all the challenges raised by contemporary issues.

But he makes a distinction between what he calls “politics” and “the political”.

The first one is expressed through institutionalized practices, and is exerted by individuals, groups or sovereign powers. And he considers this aspect of politics as blind to its tendency to inflict “grave damage on the material world”.

On the other hand, “the political” is a wider sphere of activity, integrated in the directive structures of society, and the management of people as “political animals”. This conception should allow designers to prefigure, and shape individual, social or economical behaviors.

This appears to him as a pervasive, structuring force, disposable to all designers. And he adds that current issues are due more to a lack of moral reflection and political will, rather than to a material or technological problem.

Since designers cannot avoid their role in creating, shaping futures, and the “inevitable destruction that accompanies these births”, designers have a moral obligation and the responsibility, the obligation to extend what he calls our “collective finitude”.

Graphics as politics is then a way for graphic designers to stop being commodified and to stop taking part in the impoverishment of imaginary worlds. They may transcend the way we destroy our world and ourselves, and go beyond the inadequate solutions to replace them by new ways of thinking.

Graphic design, and all types of design are likely to contribute to the necessary changes we are confronted with, but not design as it is now. Design as it could (and should) be, if it is transformed into a powerful agent of change, will be a force to extend our liberty.

The reflection in this report led me to the idea that graphic designers have to be mediators, intermediaries, between people and their imaginary worlds, furthermore they have to be guides, scouts, and leaders. Political images (in the sense of “the political” we mentioned before) have to get into the spaces of people, in their daily life, and should not be isolated.

If culture is what allows people to express their solidarity to other humans, as Gérard Paris-Clavel said in reference to Paul Langevin, we can say that culture conveyed by thoughtful images is what is going to allow humans to express freely and completely their imaginary world. It should help revitalize this faculty limited by standards that make us believe in emotions, dreams and needs that are finally just framed by these standards.

And because the obsession to possess, and the worship of utility are drying out minds, the stimulation of neglected imaginary worlds is what will allow them to wake up.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

This following bibliography was elaborated to sustain a piece of research carried out in french

Bachelard, G. 1960. La poétique de la rêverie. Paris : Bibliothèque de Philosophie contemporaine. 183p. 978-2-13-057791-1

Chapelle, G. 2004. Imaginer pour grandir, Entretien avec Paul L; Harris. Sciences Humaines, Hors-série n°45

Ginestier, P. 1968. Pour connaître la pensée de Bachelard. Paris : Editions Bordas. 223p. 1289-10-68

Lantenois, A. 2011. Le vertige du funambule, le design Graphique, entre économie et morale. Paris : Edition B42. 78p. 978-2-917855-47-8

Lavaud, L. 2011. L'image. Paris : Flammarion. 237p. 978-2-0812-6537-0

L'imaginaire contemporain, 1999, janvier. Sciences Humaines, Auxerre. P19-33. 0996-6994

Musso, P. 2011, L'imaginaire industriel. Paris : Editions Manucius. 45p. 978-2-84578-411-6

Ozeray, E. 2014. Pour un design graphique libre. Mémoire de 4ème année, consultable à l'adresse <http://etienneozeray.fr/libre-blog>

Simondon, G. 2008. Imagination et invention. Chatou : Les éditions de la Transparence. 191p. 978-2-35051-037-8

Souty, J. 2006. L'imaginaire, un champ encore à déchiffrer. Entretien avec Jean-Jacques Wunenburger. Sciences Humaines, n°176

Souty, J. 2006. Gilbert Durand - La réhabilitation de l'imaginaire. Sciences Humaines, n°176

Wunenburger, J-J. 2013. L'imaginaire. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France. 125p. 978-2-13-060858-5

Wunenburger, J-J. 2011. L'imagination mode d'emploi ? Une science de l'imaginaire au service de la créativité. Paris : Editions Manucius. 43p. 978-2-84578-133-7

Bertrand, Y. (2008). Tout le monde est graphiste [en ligne], <http://issuu.com/yoambertrand/docs/yoambertrand-memoire-08>

Cassagnau, P. (2005). M/M (Paris) [en ligne], [http://www.mm-paris.com/texts/mm\\_cassagnau.html](http://www.mm-paris.com/texts/mm_cassagnau.html)

Dagnaud, M. (2007). Les artisans de l'imaginaire. Comment la télévision fabrique la culture de masse. Questions de communications [en ligne], <http://questionsdecommunications.revue.org/7407>

Denet, M. (2008). M/M (Paris), Vision tenace. Parisart [en ligne], <http://www.paris-art.com/marche-art/vision-tenace/mm-paris-/904.html>

Dupeyrat, J. (2014). Graphisme, art, critique. Entretien entre Etienne Bernard et Jérôme Dupeyrat. Tombolo [en ligne], <http://www.t-o-m-b-o-l-o-o-u/entrevue/graphisme-art-critique-entretien-entre-etienne-bernard-et-gerome-dupeyrat/>

Eagleman, D. (2012) The moral of the story [en

ligne] [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/books/review/the-storytelling-animal-by-jonathan-gottschall.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/books/review/the-storytelling-animal-by-jonathan-gottschall.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1)

Girolami, A. (2013). Codex Seraphinianus, meet Luigi Serafini the man behind the strangest book in the world. Wired it [en ligne], <http://daily.wired.it/news/cultura/2013/10/22/codex-seraphinianus-meet-luigi-serafini-the-man-behind-the-strangest-book-in-the-world.html>

Gondrin-Lefebvre, M. (2010). Volet analyse : Le travestissement des contes de fées : quand Walt-Disney adopte les frères Grimm. Je te plumerai [en ligne], <http://cegepshebrooke.qc.ca/~laplanai/jetplumerai/marickgondrin/marickgondrianalyse.html>

Gottschall, J. (2013). The Moral of the Story "The Storytelling Animal" [en ligne], [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/books/review/the-storytelling-animal-by-jonathan-gottschall.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/books/review/the-storytelling-animal-by-jonathan-gottschall.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

Houot, L. (2012). Rencontre avec Claude Ponti, la star des enfants [en ligne], <http://culturebox.francetvinfo.fr/livres/jeunesse/rencontre-avec-claude-ponti-la-star-des-enfants-121193>

Jarcy(de), X. (2013). Graphistes en colère : pourquoi ils ne veulent plus "fermer leur gueule" [en ligne], <http://www.telerama.fr/scenes/graphistes-en-colere-pourquoi-ils-ne-veulent-plus-fermer-leur-gueule,99666.php>

Lantenois, A. (2013). Ouvrir des chemins. Graphisme en France N°1 à 19: Archives graphisme

en France [en ligne], <http://www.cnap.fr/ouvrir-des-chemins>

Liam (2013). Disney : Empire, Marchandise, Idéologie. Le cinéma est politique [en ligne], <http://www.lecinemaestpolitique.fr/disney-empire-marchandise-ideologie-partie-15-publicite-marketing-et-controle-de-linformation/>

Oatley, K. (2012). Les romans renforcent l'empathie [en ligne], [http://www.cerveauetpsycho.fr/ewb\\_pages/a/article-les-romans-renforcent-l-empathie-29727.php](http://www.cerveauetpsycho.fr/ewb_pages/a/article-les-romans-renforcent-l-empathie-29727.php)

Obriet, U. (2004). Seventy-five suns in the sky over France, Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obriet, taken from M/M «Le Grand Livre» (Lukas+Stenberg/Walther Köning) [en ligne], [http://www.mmparis.com/texts/mm\\_huo.html](http://www.mmparis.com/texts/mm_huo.html)

Perrotet, V. (2013). Partager le regard [en ligne], [www.partager-le-regard.info/](http://www.partager-le-regard.info/)

Rawsthorn, A. (2008). M/M (Paris): Art, commerce and communication, all in one [en ligne], [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/11/style/11iht-design14.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/11/style/11iht-design14.html?_r=0)

Swift, B. (2014). Storytelling species [en ligne], <http://web.stanford.edu/group/storytelling/cgi-bin/joomla/index.php/blog/2014blogs/455-storytelling-species.html>

Turner, M. (2000) L'imagination et le cerveau, colloque au Collège de France [en ligne], <http://marktturner.org/cdf/cdf1.html>



# AKC NOWLEDGEMENT

To my tutors :  
Cyril Nicolas & Sophie Devaud-judas

To my english teachers :  
Catherine Pradeau & Tara

To the teacher's team :  
Elisabeth Charvet, Julien Borie, Laurence Pache,  
Ann Pham-Ngoc-Cuong, Didier Voisin,  
Alexandra Debonnaire

To my family  
To my friends

To Tili

