

## WRITTEN COMPONENT 2

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There was a time I thought communication design would only be a mediator of content, an invisible force that used visual elements to clarify the message to the receiver. The International Typographic Style of the '50s bases its fundamentals on that theory, known for the use of mathematics to produce clear and objective visuals, the goal was to hide the designer's subjectivity so that the "content shines through" (Jacobsen, 2018). Contemporary mediums continue to follow this idea. For example, Interface Design values imperceptibility above complexity. In an interview for The Verge, Oliver Reichenstein, founder and director of Information Architects, asserted that "good design need to be invisible" so that users have "minimal conscious thoughts" when using an interface (Reichenstein, 2012). What both these examples show is that design, not only could be just a passive intermediate but could also conspire with power to shape people's opinion without them knowing (Nye, 2004). As for the designers, even if they wanted to express their voice, it would be hidden by the invisible rational structure that mutes subjectivity.

However, I believe design has the obligation to the people to identify and bring awareness to this issue. Since it is a discipline with knowledge of images and typography, it can identify when power structures use them deceptively. Similar to my position, while researching for the project, I came in contact with Metahaven's work. Founded by the graphic designers and writers Vinca Kruk and Daniel van Velder in 2007, they are a research and design collective based in Amsterdam. Using design as a form of analysing societal issues, the studio produces graphic design objects that intend to provoke social empowerment and political change. Therefore, their work is an example of the potentialities communication design has to confront power structures, using visual content to bring awareness to the general public.

In *Uncorporate Identity*, Metahaven collaborated with Marina Vishmidt to create a book which uncovers the government's use of soft power. They question the need to brand cities and countries, as if they were an entity that sells goods, and alert to the lack of transparency in the creation of corporate identities. It also investigates how this connection has become standardised in society, growing invisible and unquestioned. They believe that, as designers, they "have quite a keen eye for the psychology of font use, colour use, and drop shadows" (2014) therefore being aware of the hidden role of the images used everyday. Hence, in this publication, Metahaven implements its intuition into investigating what sort of visual and design tactics state branding uses. The book itself is not straightforward or simple on the eye. They intended to create another level of complexity to the book with the design itself, so it became a form of analysing the complexity of the topic.

Akin to Metahaven, I intend to uncover the usage of typography as a means of misleading public opinion. In the investigation process, I realised that typefaces could be a form of doublespeak when used in political contexts. For instance, in 2008, Obama's Presidential Campaign implemented Gotham to represent "hope" and "change", and in 2016, the Leave movement for the Brexit referendum used the same typeface to write "leave means leave". Taking into account that both have different perspectives, mainly on immigration policies, one starts to wonder how the same font represents opposite ideologies. Using design as an investigation tool, I aim to analyse and dissect the implementation of typography, representing it in a way that people are able to identify them-

selves when forms of power use these strategies in the future. I believe design should not be invisible and conforming, and it shouldn't live on the ability to create "easy" experiences for the user. On the contrary, it should give the tools needed for people to form their own opinions and clearly comprehend the world around them.

## REFERENCES

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