

Graphic Design

Issues that affect our cities and communities are at the forefront of many professions and stakeholders. Professionals include urbanists focused on the topic holistically, as well as incremental contributors such as me to the ongoing evolution of our cities as organisms. Joining my profession of architecture and planning are sociologists, politicians, developers, public space artists, traffic engineers, authors, business owners, environmentalists and many others who have influence in the evolution of our environment for living. Of recent note here in Los Angeles, even professional sports team owners are joining the push for downtown stadiums as an integral part of mixed use retail, hospitality and entertainment districts that can provide new forms of urban revitalization. So there is momentum building to reverse the decades of decentralization and suburban spread especially as the economic toll of far reaching infrastructure to support suburbia is realized. Diverse and self sustaining urban conditions of increased density are now seen as a goal for sustainability. But many of the above lists of players have economic incentives at stake that keep them focused on a limited set of issues. Furthermore except for planners and architects, none of them has the design skills to give vision to the issues and solutions. Enter Felicity, to recognize that among the design professionals, none has the inherent power of immediacy and identity that come with graphic design.

With immediacy comes influence. The first to convey an idea, a political movement, a new product, a new technology, or a new aesthetic is vested in its authorship and a player in its representation to the public. Graphic design has always been imbedded with immediacy. History is full of iconic examples of posters, magazine covers, advertisements of all types where the graphic design is the first public consumption of that which it represents. Yet another phenomenon is that in many instances the graphic design becomes the identity of that entity. As an architect my attraction to graphics began during University studies and was rooted in European magazine covers from the early Bauhaus movement such as *Stijl* and *Mecano* by Theo Van Doesburg. At an earlier age, graphic design was also shaping my childhood landscape of American advertising. Beyond populist billboard and media advertising for McDonald's and other franchises, an example of this impact during the 1930's to 1960's existed in the southeastern states of the US. There, entire barn facades were painted by Clark Byers with highly graphic promotions for "SEE ROCK CITY", a natural phenomena in southeast Tennessee. So now when memory brings back *De Stijl* or *Rock City*, the magazine covers and barns are as much a part of the understanding as the referenced entity itself.

Now with the maturity of computing capabilities, the world of graphic design is ever more quick and powerful. Fully integrated in product design, corporate branding, computer apps, broadcast and digital media, graphic design is all around us. More than ever it has a central stage in University academic programs and museums that deal with contemporary art through new media artists and exhibitions. Graphic design is usually our "first contact" with what it represents, as it is infinitely more powerful than text or spoken word alone. Ultra quick in its movement from idea to reality, it is likely the most rapidly evolving of the design professions. So much so that one can argue its aesthetic influence over other design endeavors such as fashion, automotive, products, interiors, architecture, computer gaming and mobile device apps is immense. Even globally critical campaigns for national leaders and awareness of environmental stewardship are encompassed in the graphic design world. Graphic design is always front and center and Felicity now encourages that boundary of influence to extend upon the urban condition.

So it is clear to me that there is great value in a competition program such as Felicity that uses graphic design's inherent values of immediacy and identity to exert a positive influence on our communities and the well being of humanity. In a time of global economic crisis and environmental stress there is synchronicity between the urgency of new ideas / solutions needed and graphic design's ability to be quick and forceful in communicating solutions. I am appreciative of a catalogue such as this that gives us a recorded glimpse at this competition and this moment in time, not only of this design profession, but also of the freshest possible look at where we are headed globally with our culture, intellect and aesthetic. Enjoy the submittals and catalogue and look closely not just at what the images are but think about what they do and will do.

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