

Hope to Nope

Graphics and politics 2008-18

Teacher Notes

It has been a turbulent decade. The financial crash of 2008, global protest movements and divisive leaders have made people more politically engaged than they have been for a generation. Graphic design, from election campaign posters to protest badges, has had a prominent role to play in much of this. It is often through graphics that our political hopes and fears are expressed.

This was also a decade that saw the rise of social media. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have made it easier than ever to spread political graphics. Entirely new forms of visual communication have emerged, such as the internet meme, which can be viewed by millions of people if they go viral. Today, anyone can make political graphics and reach a global audience. This makes grassroots activists more of a challenge to the political establishment.

Organised in three sections – ‘Power’, ‘Protest’ and ‘Personality’ – Hope to Nope explores the different roles of graphic design in political discourse. It begins with the Hope poster designed by Shepard Fairey for Barack Obama’s presidential campaign in 2008, which inspired countless imitations, including the Donald Trump Nope meme. The exhibition includes significant graphic stories from across the political spectrum, but endorses no particular political point of view. Rather, it examines how graphics give both the powerful and the marginalised a voice.



Power

Assert/Subvert

Nation-states, political campaigns and corporations all use graphic design to project authority. But the same symbols can be subverted by opponents to mock or attack the establishment. More than ever, political iconography has become a battleground.

Symbols of nationhood, from flags to banknotes, are essential to building identity and legitimising power. That is true of new nations, such as the terrorist organisation Islamic State. But in today's political landscape, conventional graphic design has its limits. Hillary Clinton's clever 2016 campaign logo wasn't enough to beat Donald Trump and his baseball cap to the White House.

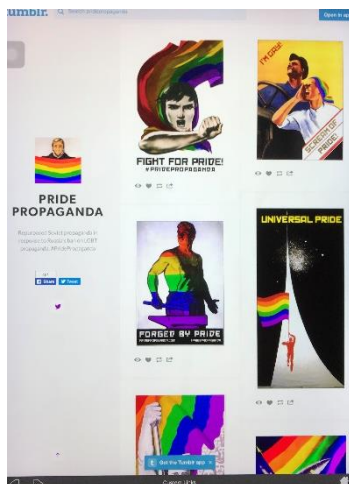
We live in a visual world – graphic design is everywhere and so easily appropriated. With social media, an image can have a life independent of its maker as soon as it goes online. Graphic symbols are vulnerable to being subverted – Coke's logo was turned into 'Choke' by Greenpeace in a Campaign against plastic bottles.

These examples of graphics asserting or subverting power are explored in four sub-themes: propaganda, borders, brands and campaigns.

What you will find in this section:

Trump 24K Gold-Plated poster
US
2016

Inspired by Michael Bierut's H logo Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, Design is Play created an unauthorised monogram for Donald Trump, emblazoning it on a poster.



Pride Propaganda subversions of Russian posters
Global
2014

Although homosexual sex has been legal in Russia since 1993, President Vladimir Putin outlawed 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations' in 2013. Tumblr site, Pride Propaganda, responded by publishing versions of Soviet-era Socialist Realist posters adapted to incorporate the rainbow Pride flag.

Political technology wall

Global

2018

Digital media platforms have changed the landscape of graphic design and given rise to new types of communication, such as gif (animated images) and memes. This wall plots major political moments in online life.



EU referendum graphics including the Sun's Brexit Bayeux Tapestry

UK

2016





Protest

Demonstrate/Participate

It has been a decade of protest. From the occupy movement and the Arab Spring to the recent Women's Marches, the internet and social media have galvanised mass demonstrations. Here, professional graphic designers and amateurs alike use their skills to bring about change.

Posters, banners, placards and badges are the traditional media of protest. Now they can be made and shared digitally, expanding their reach and resonance. The power of some protest graphics comes from their diversity – such as the huge variety of hand-made, often witty placards at the 2017-18 Women's Marches. Others use visual repetition to communicate. In 2015, millions used 'Je suis Charlie' artwork shared online to show solidarity with those killed in the attack on Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris.

Many graphic designers put their skills at the service of their own political beliefs. Using design to provoke debate or even to educate, they have often produced alternate narrative to mainstream media, such as the factsheets and newspapers produced by the Occupy movement. This work shows how designers can help cut through the noise of political protest.

What you will find in this section:

Black Lives Matter quilt

US

2018

This handmade quilt features the Black Lives Matter logo and the raised fist graphic associated with the movement. The quilt was raffled to fundraise for the Expect US activist group in St Louis, Missouri, which is campaigning for justice in another white-on-black fatal shooting and to support progressive black electoral candidates.

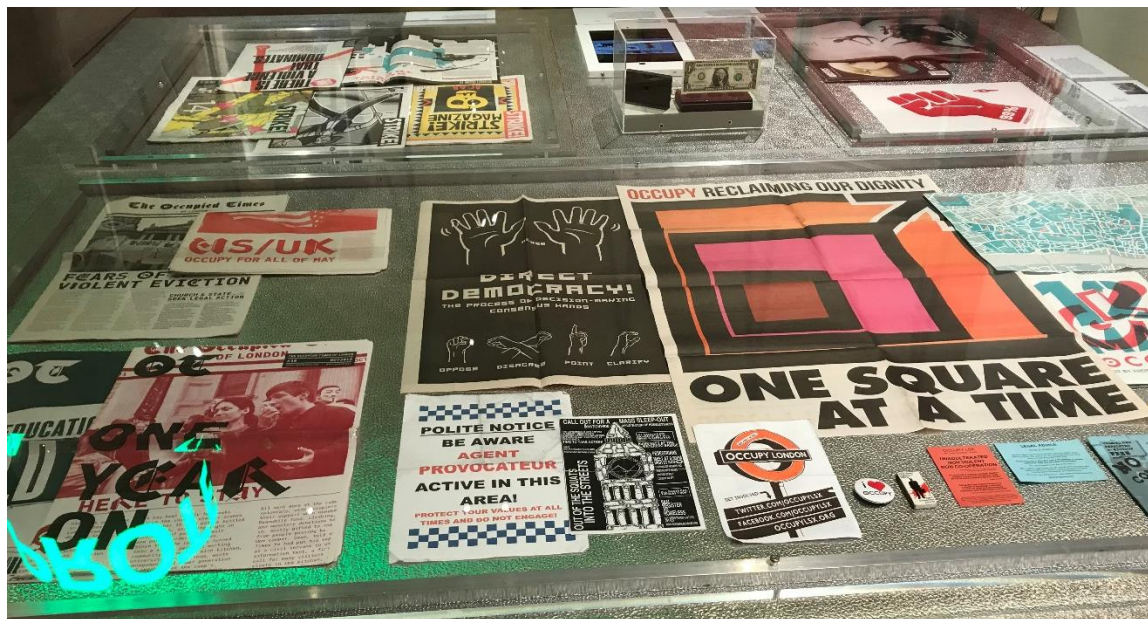


Occupy St Paul's protest materials

UK

2011/12

When police forced Occupy protestors away from the London Stock Exchange, they set up camp next to the nearby St Paul's Cathedral. Dozens of tents were decorated with hand-made banners and signs, reflecting the grass-roots nature of the protest.

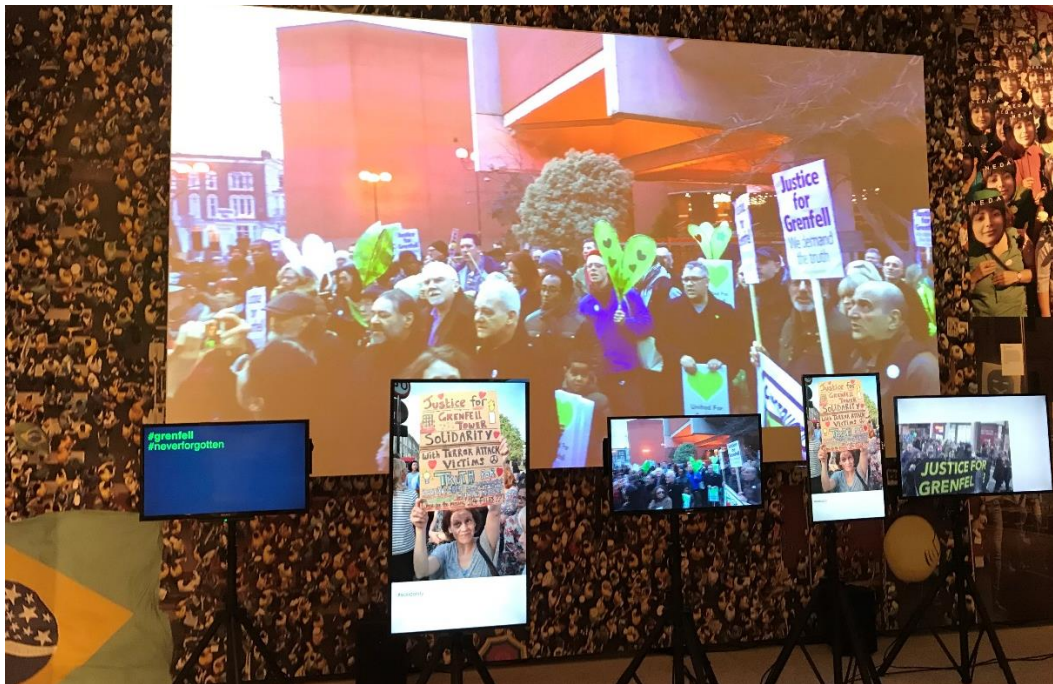


Film installation including Grenfell justice march

UK

2018

London-based moving image designer Paul Plowman evokes the experiences of public protest. Restricting his usual bold graphic style to the opening segments, Plowman has combined actual hashtags, footage and images from five protests.



Chega de Pagar a Pato
(I will not pay the duck) protests
 Brazil
 2015/16

The saying 'pay the duck' means 'to take the blame for something that is not your fault'. Groups pushing for the impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff used a large rubber duck as a mascot to make the point that the president's 'window dressing' of financial accounts prior to the 2014 election should not be paid for by the Brazilian citizens.



Personality

Idolise/demonise

Powerful leaders obsess over their image, sometime building personality cults around themselves. Such portrayals are ripe for satire and subversion. This section examines how well-known politicians are idolised or demonised, getting behind the official and unofficial images.

Of all politicians of the last decade, Donald Trump's image has perhaps lent itself best to becoming a satirical graphic icon. Elsewhere, the leader's image is carefully cultivated through state propaganda. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin, for example, are all officially presented as charismatic nation-builders, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, however, was often maligned by the UK media but saw his image boosted by a grassroots rebrand during the 2017 general election.

In contrast to personality politics is Anonymous, an international network of activists and hacktivists that has cohered, anonymously behind a smiling Guy Fawkes mask. Here an historical character is adopted as a symbol of resistance.

This section also includes newly commissioned works by 'audience intelligence' platform Pulsar, which chart the reputations of five politicians on social media.

What you will find in this section:

Corbyn GQ cover, comics and t-shirt

UK

2017/18

From supporting the Libertines to being a star of the UK grime scene in his late 60s, Jeremy Corbyn has been a much maligned figure in the predominantly right wing press but the groundswell has come through his supporters who have made a cultural icon out of the MP for Islington North.



All-Seeing Trump machine

US

2016

Launched a month before the 2016 US presidential election, this 'misfortune' telling machine aimed to give voters a taste of having Donald Trump as president. Visitors are invited to press the big red button and have their misfortune read to them.

This is placed next to magazine cover caricatures of Donald Trump that mock his candyfloss comeover, overlong red tie, baggy suit and permaman. All of this is juxtaposed with the Trump campaign's own graphic design masterstroke; Make America Great Again cap.



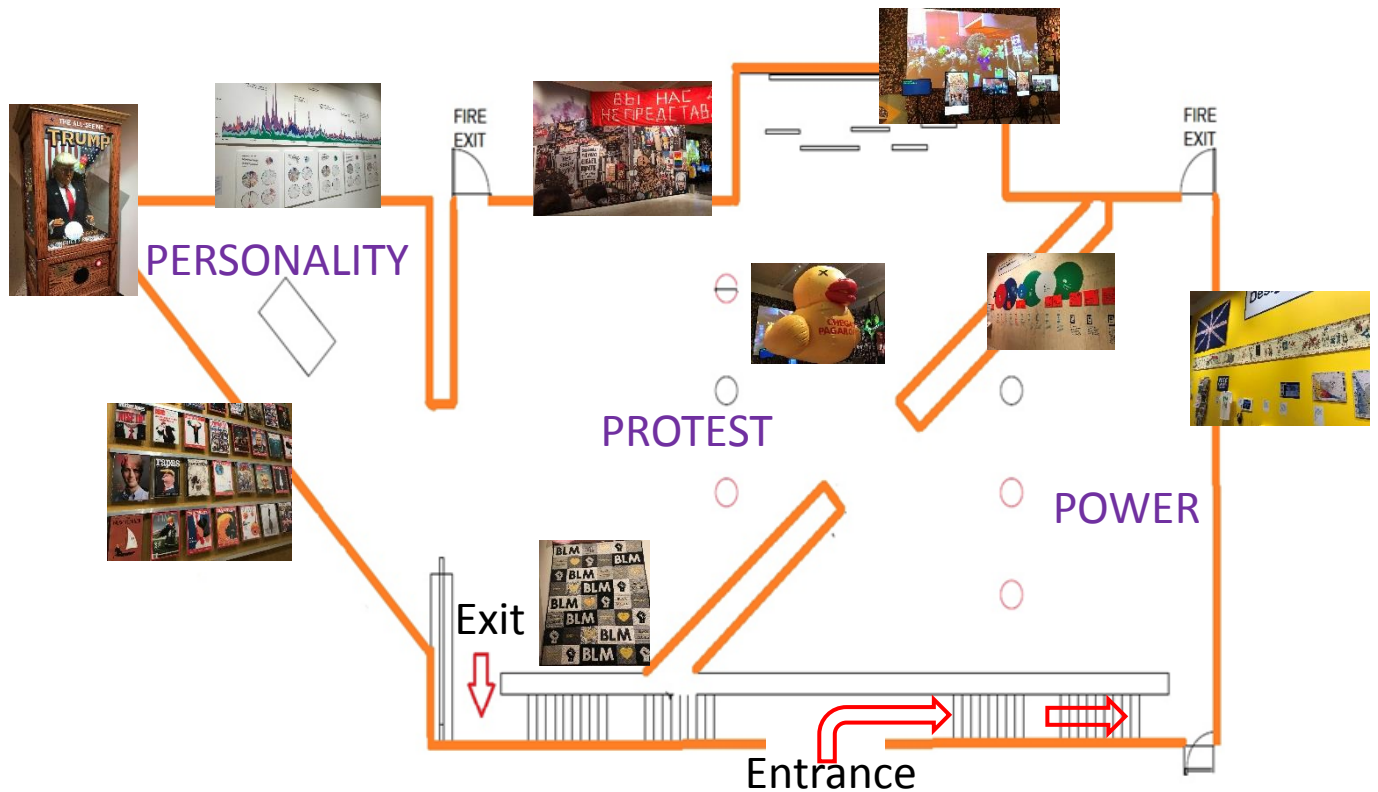
Theresa May cartoons

UK

2017

Chris Riddell has used leopard-print kitten heels as his visual trademark for UK Prime Minister Theresa May since 2002, when the then-Home Secretary wore a pair while giving a prominent speech.

EXHIBITION MAP



TASK FOR YOUR STUDENTS

Ask your class to pick a recent news story to create their own protest poster or piece of graphic design. They could be promoting a political candidate, protesting against a large company or just visualising the current political climate in an innovative way.

EXHIBITION GUIDANCE

Objects in the exhibition are often on open display rather than in cases. Care should be taken when moving around the exhibition and most objects should not be touched. Any objects that can be touched will be clearly signed. We would be grateful if you could brief your students accordingly.

Depending on your group and your itinerary for the visit, we would recommend that you set aside approximately 40 minutes to explore this exhibition.

This exhibition contains mature content.

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<https://designmuseum.org/schools-colleges-and-universities/self-guided-visit-terms-and-conditions>

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