

30 July 2018



Reference: Hope to Nope at the Design Museum

Our exhibition Hope to Nope: Graphics and Politics 2008-18 tells the story of political protest in the last ten years, assessing the role of social media on political activism and how graphic design has evolved in this context.

This exhibition has been a popular and critical success, with over 30,000 visitors to date. It presents a range of views, from across the political spectrum. Our objective was never to side with any party or world view, but to show how different sides have expressed their beliefs, through design.

As an educational charity, we cannot take an overt political stance as some activists would like us to do. Recent events have shown that breaching the laws that regulate charities could put us at risk of having our charitable status removed. In a statement today the Charity Commission reminded the charities sector that, "educational charities can play an important role in informing the public. The law is clear, however, that they must do so in a balanced and neutral way. There are clear rules for charities regarding political activity that form a key part of both charity law and public expectations."

On Tuesday 17 July the Design Museum atrium was hired by a company in the aerospace and defence industry for a private event. Professional activists whose work didn't feature in the exhibition took the view that the museum had acted wrongfully and were quick to exploit the situation.

The museum is now being targeted by a group of activists, not all of whom are being accurate in their presentation of the situation. We are in the midst of an argument not of our making. We will not be seen as an easy target and a surrogate for the real targets of these campaigners. We do not want our programmes to be co-opted by the agenda of others and we stand by our curatorial independence.

The Design Museum policies are in line with those of all other major cultural institutions around the world. These haven't changed since the exhibitors agreed to be part of the exhibition. We have committed to review these policies and those that apply for event hire at the museum. The outcome of these protests will be to censor the exhibition, curtail free speech and prevent the museum from showcasing a plurality of views.

The museum has entered into a dialogue with exhibitors to keep the exhibition intact for the public to continue to see its broad message. We have committed to not having such private hires while we take time to discuss the issues with our peers in the sector and review if any of our policies need to be updated.

We are a charity which receives barely 2% of its funding from the public purse, we work hard to raise the income to support our exhibition and learning programmes. The long term impact of these protests will be to reduce the work that we do which is designed to benefit the sector and the wider public.

Deyan Sudjic and Alice Black

DIRECTORS OF THE DESIGN MUSEUM