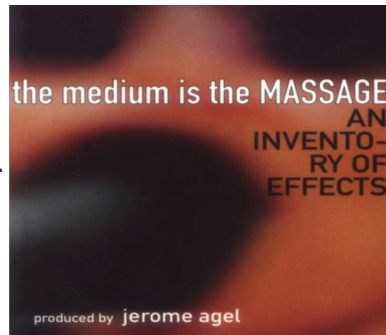


N: Have you read *The Medium is the Massage*¹? The politicization of a medium reminded me of this book, which talks about how a medium in itself is a (political) tool for conveying information. In his book, McLuhan writes "Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments." To him, the alphabet, for example, shapes the way children learn to read and think and, hence, construct their perception of the world. Then in a way, almost anything and everything become political.



As for the challenge of the context, I believe we need to make a distinction on how we define this so-called *context*. The first approach could be to see it as the project brief set by the client. In the second approach, however, context could refer to what the designer brings to the project in addition to the instructions provided by the client. In a way, this second approach would equate context with designer's individual style/practice. I believe having this dichotomy in what "context" refers to comes with how graphic design was initially defined: the field was founded on an agreed (signed) relationship between two parties, a designer and a client.

If we define context as something set by the client, decontextualization of graphic design would make the field a critical medium (designer as "author"). Defining context as designer's individual style, however, would work in the opposite direction, leaving the field "dry." I believe, this second kind of decontextualization is what happens in most of the graphic design exhibitions, which can indeed be flat. In most of these shows, graphic design works are presented as part of the consumerist culture, and, for this reason, design

is not given the chance to be perceived as something more than “the art or profession of using design elements to convey information or create an effect.”

13 February 2018

¹ <http://ptbm.myblog.arts.ac.uk/files/2009/01/themediumisthemessage2.pdf>

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/graphic%20design>

