



Tibor Kalman was a graphics design genius born in Budapest in 1949 and later migrated to the United States in 1956<sup>[1]</sup>. He spent a year at New York University, studying **ABOUT** art and design, where he joined Students for a Democratic Society and also travelled to Cuba to pick cotton with the Venceremos Brigade, which took middle-class Americans to help support the Communists<sup>[2]</sup>.

# TIBOR KALMAN

THE BAD BOY  
OF GRAPHIC  
DESIGN

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by  
Muhammad Arham Khan

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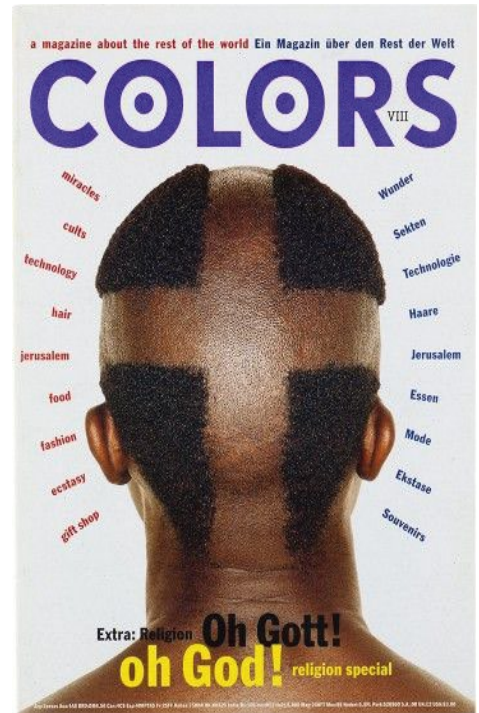
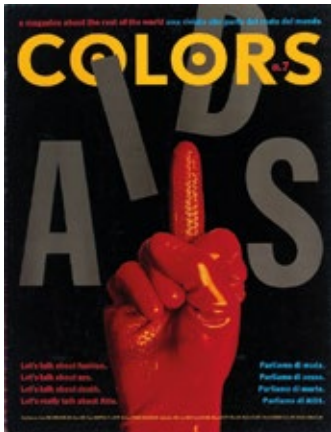
As a visionary graphics designer, his innovative ideas about art and their importance in relation to the society helped form the way an entire generation of designers perceived the world and approached art.

He founded a revolutionary design firm called M&Co. (named after his wife Maira) which became a social prod to his clients across the nation<sup>[5]</sup>. Apart from this, he also found M&Co. Labs, which designed and manufactured clocks and watches with quirky faces and rearranged numeral pins that helped set the wheels running for such designer fashion accessories. Considering the vastness of his thought and insight, he soon realized that Graphics design was too bound-ed a platform to express all his ideas and he moved to creative directions for magazines. He was the former editor in chief of the Colors magazine and worked as the art director in a variety of music and television productions<sup>[4]</sup>.

He was titled as the “bad boy of graphics design”<sup>[1]</sup> as he was a revolutionary designer and a harsh critic of the traditional/ formulaic or as some would refer to it, professional design approaches. He preached greater responsibility in design and wanted designers to keep more sight towards the influence their designs could and would have towards the general society and the upcoming



generations. Mr. Kalman liked to describe himself not as a designer but as a social activist who liked to promote causes like racial/ economic equality and environmentalism. He also publicly opposed use of and production of items that were considered harmful to the workers that manufactured them.



Tibor Kalman is **FAMOUS FOR** his radical and provocative work for the magazines Interview and Colors magazine which was a famous publication intended for young adults and often covered controversial topics in each issue. During his early days as the editor-in-chief, his work on the first 13 covers for the magazine garnered him substantial attention as a designer for his wildly different, yet thought-provoking works.<sup>[2]</sup>



Kalman famously believed that an award-winning design wasn't possible while following rules and complying with norms of the industry yet advocated working with ethical clients only. He also often called out other designers when he didn't agree to their approaches. He defined good design as a benefit to everyday life and should be used to increase public awareness of social issues. Kalman adopted a vernacular style as a way to protest corporate International Style which was the primary design style of the time<sup>[5]</sup>.

Through his work with the Colors magazine, he was famous for communicating the controversial and radical perspective of the ideas through bold graphic design, typography, and juxtaposition of photographs and doctored images,



including a series in which famous figures like the Pope and Queen Elizabeth were depicted as racial minorities.<sup>[5]</sup>

Tibor Kalman is universally acclaimed as one of the greatest and most gifted graphic designers in the history of mankind. A true creative genius and a passionate rebel, his highly celebrated work for the Talking Heads, Restaurant Florent, Interview, and Colours left behind an immense influence on art, literature, society, culture and morality.

**UNDERSTANDING** his different perspective and approach to design, it is evident that he can be considered a major pivoting point in the history of design and someone who not only propelled designers to promote more important and social causes through their designs, but to also believe in the prospect of honest and good design and utilize its influence to convey a message. Furthermore, considering the amount of impact and popularity that his designs received, he may be considered a revolutionary similar to the likes of Frida Kahlo, who utilized her work to convey ideas of social change and challenged norms of the society through her designs.

### Further Information:

- 1) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibor\\_Kalman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibor_Kalman)
- 2) <http://www.designishistory.com/1980/tibor-kalman/>
- 3) <https://www.famousgraphicdesigners.org/tibor-kalman>

### Sources:

- 1) [https://www.sfmoma.org/artist/Tibor\\_Kalman/](https://www.sfmoma.org/artist/Tibor_Kalman/)
- 2) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibor\\_Kalman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibor_Kalman)
- 3) <https://www.pinterest.com/eduardkovacs/graphic-design-tibor-kalman/>
- 4) <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-tiborkalman>
- 5) <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/05/arts/tibor-kalman-bad-boy-of-graphic>