

# Experimental Jetset Interview by Design Boom

Reading Presentation by Kyle Yu

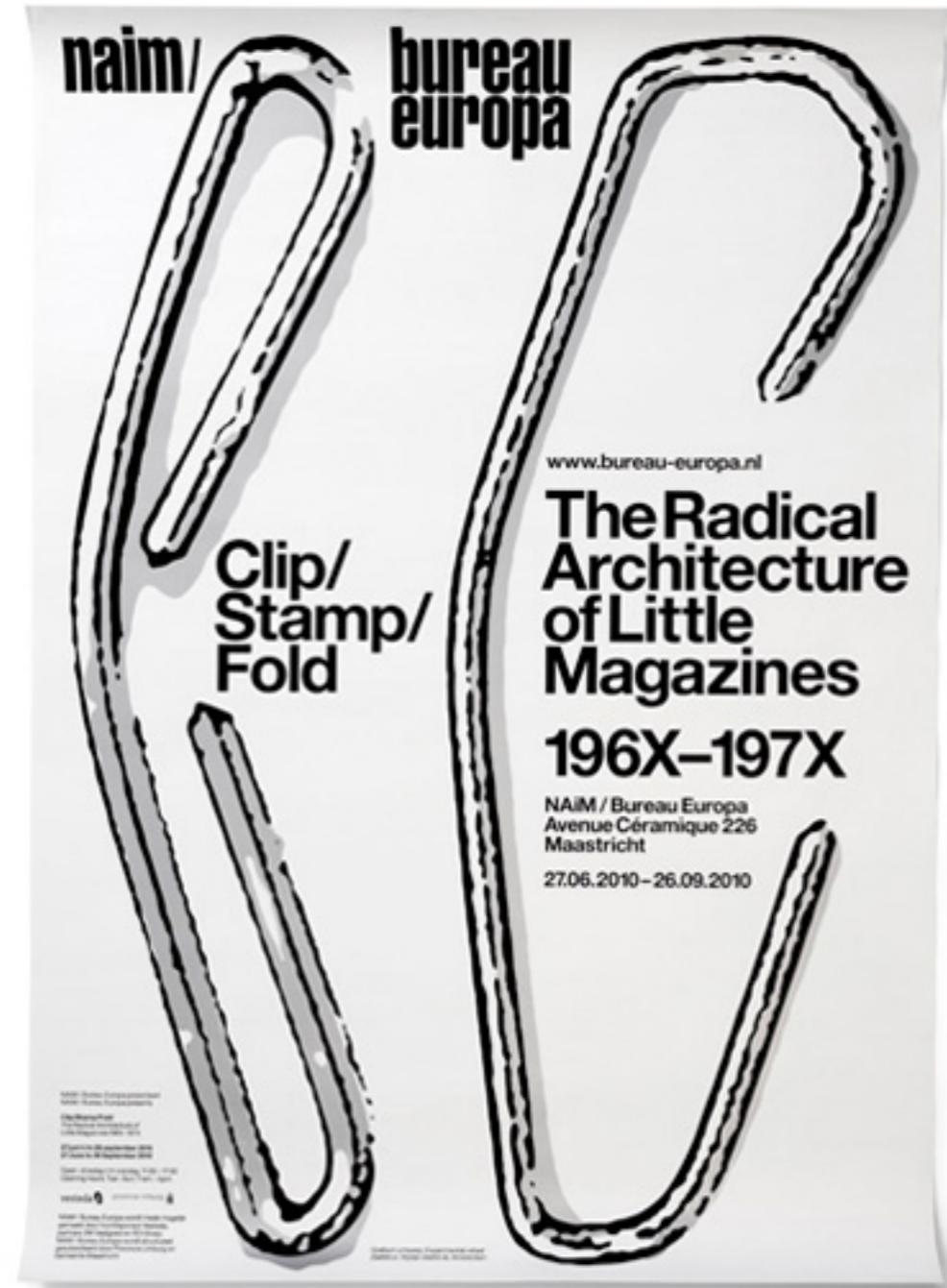
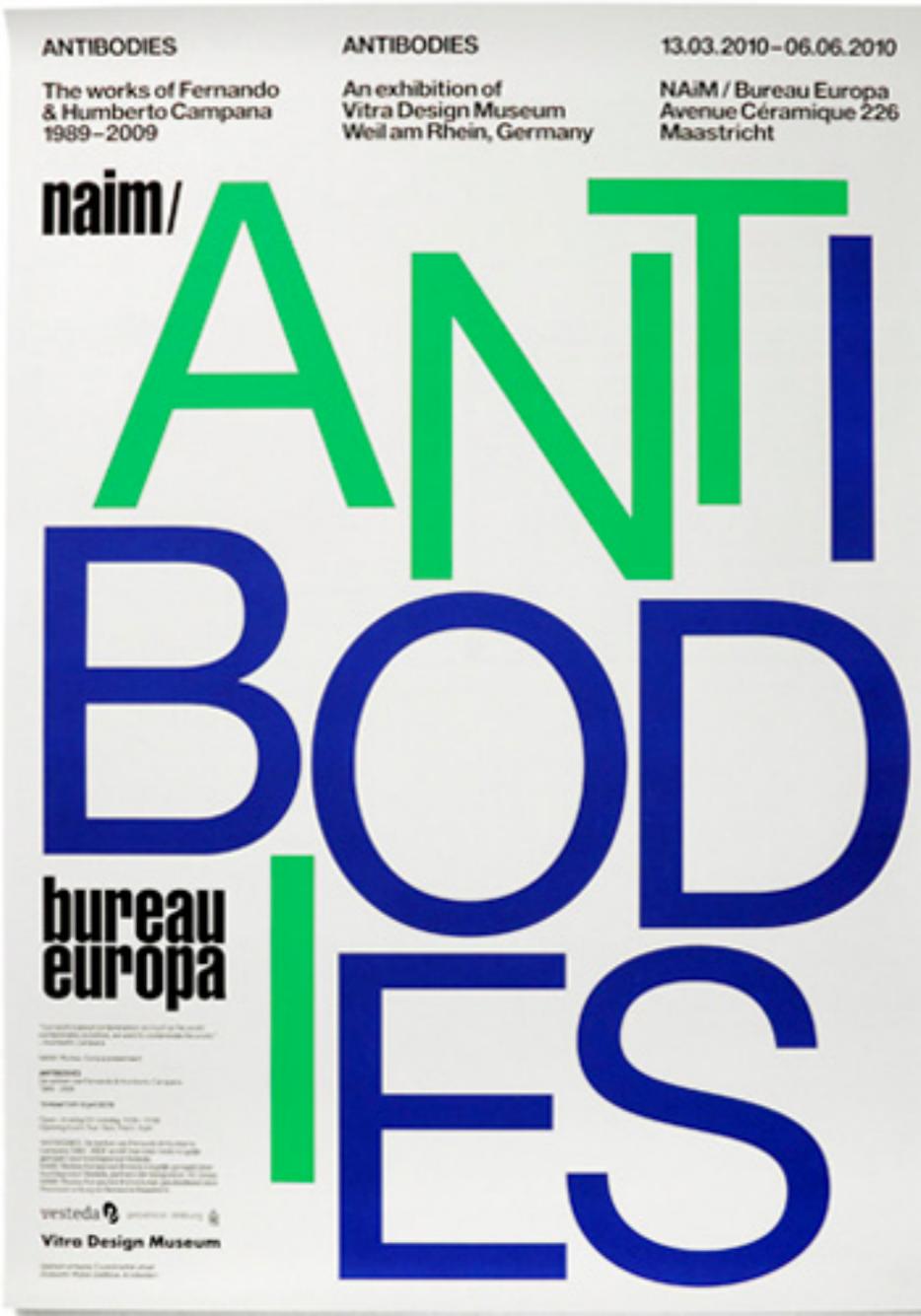


Experimental Jetset is an Amsterdam-based graphic design studio trio. The three designers who make up Experimental Jetset are Marieke Stolk, Erwin Brinkers and Danny van den Dungen.

The three met in 1997 at the Rietveld Academy when they were students. For their graduation project, Marieke and Danny worked on the redesign of BLVD, a dutch pop-culture magazine), and they asked Erwin to help them.

Their aesthetic is closely related to that of the Modernist movement. The resemblance is reinforced by their use of Helvetica, implemented on nearly every one of their projects, as well as their often monochromatic color palette.

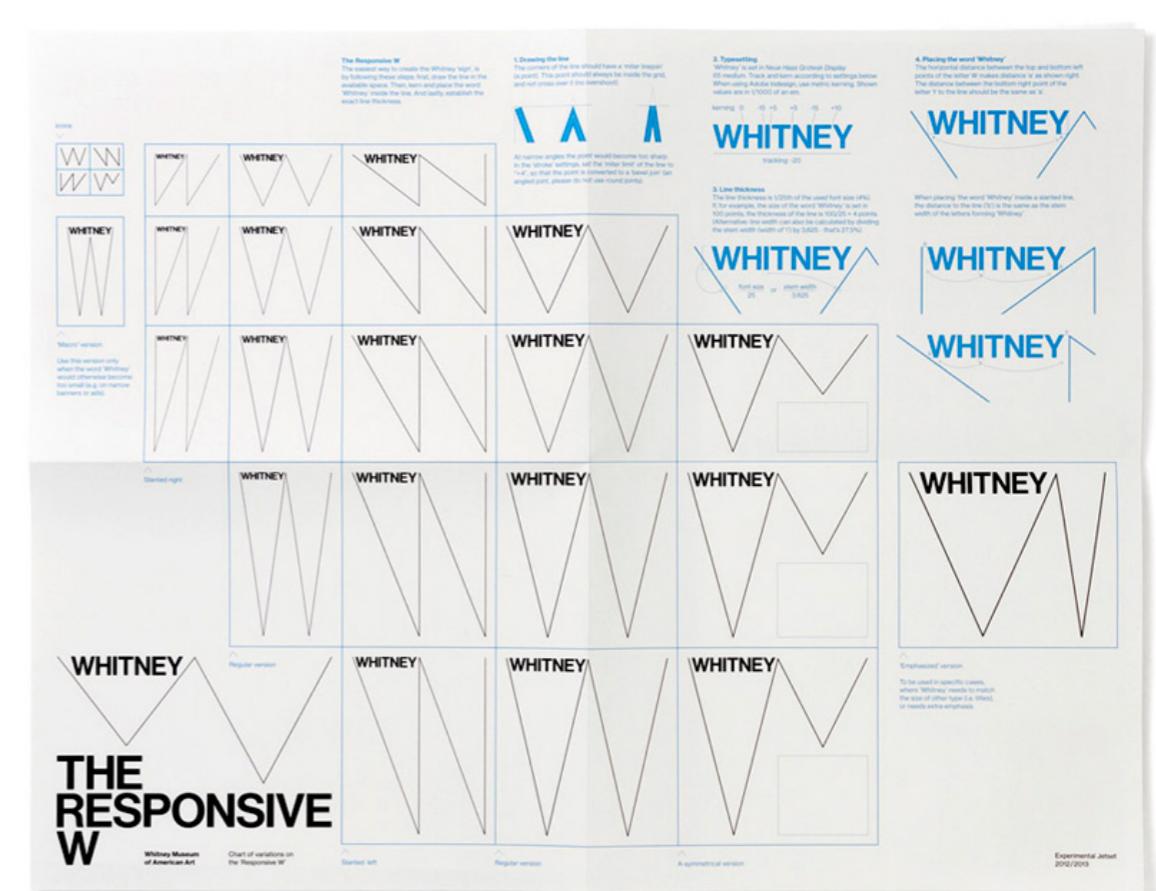
All three designers adopted the idea of ‘totaal voetbal’ (‘total football’). Total football is a system where a player who moves out of his position can be replaced by any other player from the same team. The three have adapted this concept to the way they work. From the article, “Our ideal is to stay away from fixed roles. When dealing with stress and deadlines, we sometimes fall back into certain roles... Our intention is that the workload is divided equally, and that each one of us has more or less the same set of skills.”



When asked by Design Boom about Experimental Jetset's most interesting or favorite work they said that there were two projects that pushed their boundaries. One was the exhibition 'Two or Three Things I Know About Provo' and the Graphic Identity of the Whitney Museum.



Two or Three Things I Know About Provo (2012)



Whitney 'Periodic Table', part of the Whitney graphic identity manual (2012)

Experimental Jetset said that, “these two projects have been the most satisfying, in the sense that they both required us to function to our full abilities. Writing, reading, researching, designing for printed matter and signage, even working with sound and moving image – in both projects, we did all that.”



Experimental Jetset is known for their almost full time use of the ‘Helvetica’ typeface. When questioned about this in the interview Experimental Jetset said, “It’s obviously not true that we always use helvetica but nevertheless, we can’t deny that the late-modernist graphic landscape in which we grew up had a big influence on us. As a consequence, we feel as if this late-modernist vocabulary (of which helvetica is undeniably a part) has become our authentic language, our mother tongue.“

They identified two projects they worked on that did not use the Helvetica typeface. Those two are the graphic identity they designed for the Stedelijk Museum CS (SMCS). They specifically used Univers in reference to the history of the institute. In 2007 they used Futura when creating the graphic identity for Le Cent Quatre (104) so that the 104 logo could really be ‘embedded’ in the typeface. They said its a total myth that they only use Helvetica.



ÉTABLISSEMENT  
ARTISTIQUE  
DE LA  
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**LIVRAISON  
DELIVERY**



**LABORATOIRE  
LABORATORIUM**



**INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITIONS AS  
SECRET BLUEPRINTS FOR  
MUSEUMS, ART; INDUSTRIAL  
PRODUCTS PROJECTED INTO  
THE PAST** WALTER BENJAMIN

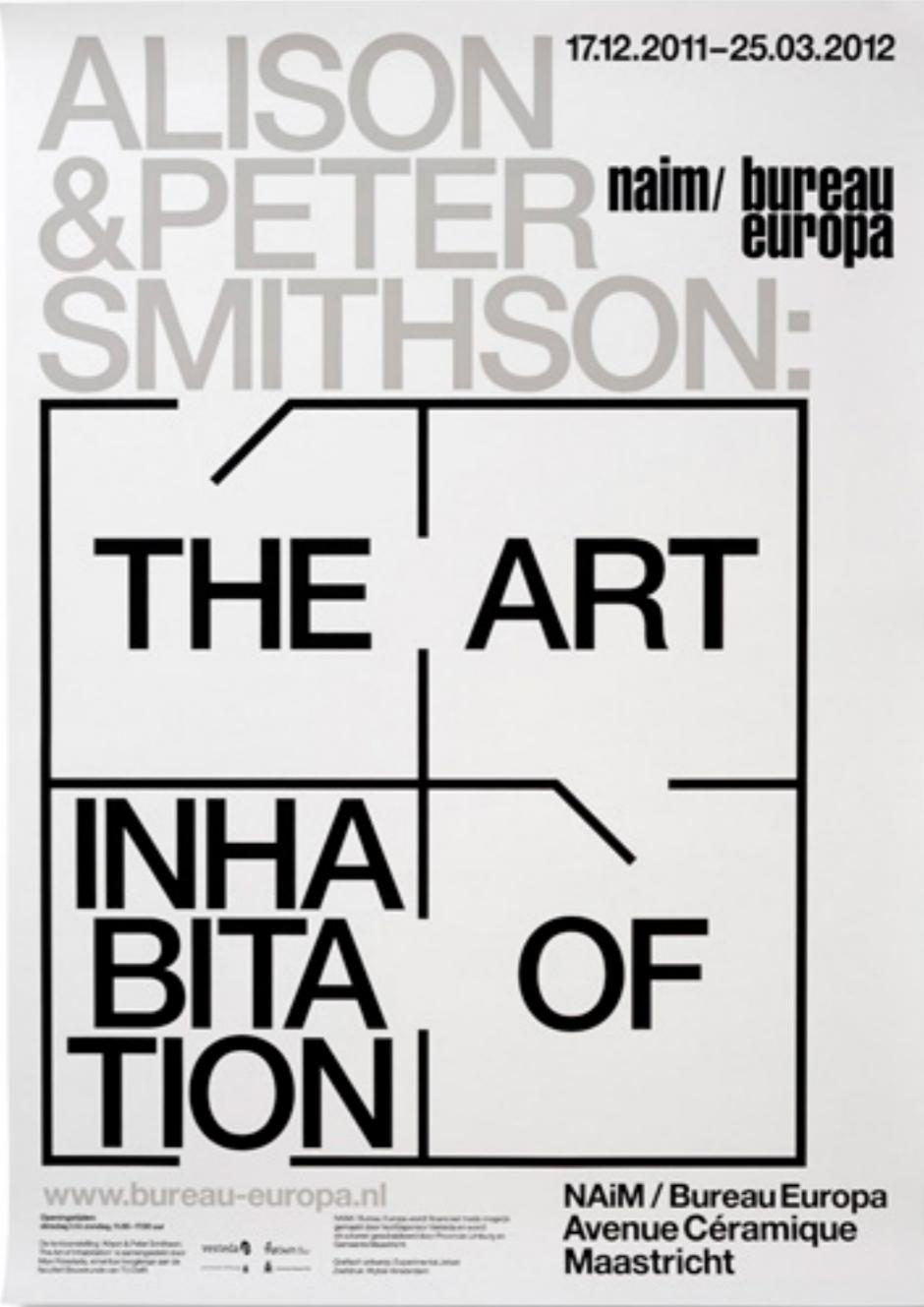




When asked about the most significant developments in graphic design have been in the last five years, Experimental Jetset said, "The crisis we currently find ourselves in [is] we think the work created by young graphic designers nowadays is more interesting than it was in previous decades. We're really talking about the economic and political crisis that is taking place in society at large. And obviously, this crisis has a very dramatic effect on the current cultural landscape."

"There used to be a time when cultural institutes and museums would really support independent studios, and young designers. But nowadays (mainly because of the whole mixture of neo-liberalism, privatization and populism that is currently forced upon us), a lot of cultural institutes simply decide to play it safe, and choose to work with large branding and advertising agencies instead. In turn, these large advertising agencies then just hire some young designers, to do the 'cultural work' for them and just discard these young designers after the work is done."

"Young designers are currently producing a lot of very interesting work – but this production takes place on a more subcultural, isolated level: in the spheres of self-publishing, small exhibitions, underground projects. To survive, these young designers are either forced to work (or worse, to intern for free) for large corporate agencies, or they have to find a 'day-time job', outside of the field of graphic design. There seem to be fewer and fewer opportunities nowadays for young designers to just start their own small, independent studios, and inject their ideas straight into the public space – and we think that's a real shame."



When asked about the best advised they'd ever received they replied, "Advice that comes to mind is 'never excuse, never explain', which isn't really an advice that someone actually gave to us. The quote is attributed to a lot of different people and we actually wouldn't know if we'd consider it 'good' or 'bad' advice. but for some reason, we have been thinking a lot about this phrase, lately."

we write a lot about our work – not as an explanation, and certainly not as an excuse, but more because the activity of writing enables us to reflect on our own work, to look at our work from a bit of a distance. Around 2005, we decided to make our first proper website. Our website was always intended for the tiny group of people who were really interested in our work, in the stories behind it.

They go on to talk about the vulnerability of writing about their work because they feel that it give critics ammunition to critique their work even more. They find it interesting when they hear about authors or musicians who never do interviews, and never appear in public. They said,"It sometimes makes us doubt whether we did the right thing, being so open and honest about our practice from the very beginning."



Typographic Architect. 1



MoMA NY



DTC / Peanuts



MM / Internet Paintings



RMN



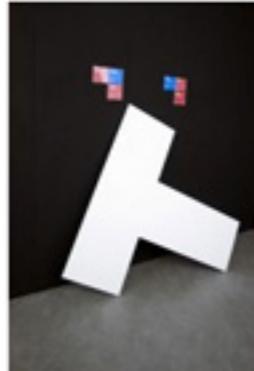
2K by Gingham 2006



DTC / Season 2006–2007



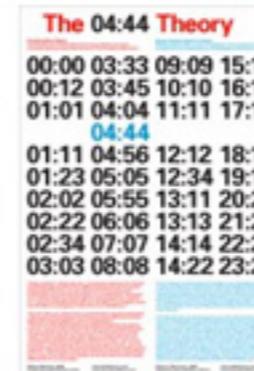
Helvetica / Hustwit



A Thousand Things



DTC / Annual report



MM / 444 Theory



Matters of Speech



DTC / Het Koude Kind



Stuck On Me



DTC / Vrouw van Vroeger



Ten Years of Posters



Vreeland



MM / Neen Manifesto



MUDAC Lausanne



DTC / 3KA



Design & Art Reader



104 / Le Cent Quatre 2



104 / Le Cent Quatre 1



The Metric Songbook



High Resolution



Forms of Inquiry



DTC / Ajax



Stair/Stare



Kelly 33.3



Everything That Exists



Jérôme St-Loubert Bié



Dazzle Rocket 2



Coming Soon Arnhem



Typographic Architect. 2



Helvetica / Blow-Up



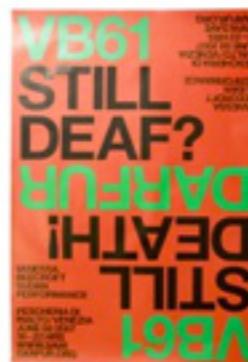
The Narrows



Helvetica / Kriterion



2K by Gingham 2007



Vanessa Beecroft VB61



NAIM Jean Prouv 



Vanessa Beecroft VBDP



Beauty is in The Street

## Two discussion questions

- 1) As Experimental Jetset discussed, do we as young designers worry or are we nervous about our careers after school? Are we worried or nervous that we will have to compromise our own ideas/aesthetics/vision to fit those of larger design company and so forth?
- 2) I never thought about writing about my work being that I've always spoke for it. Do you think writing about your work would be hard and would it make you feel vulnerable as did Experimental Jetset did.