

Hello!



I AM THAT KID ON A PLANE



- Used to have hair.
- Designer at <http://analog.coop/>
- Lives at <http://jontangerine.com/>
- Responds to @jontangerine
- Likes Toblerone.

1963 & 1964

Notes:

The early 60's were turbulent times. In the UK, we were just emerging from the austerity following WWII: An impoverished Britain looked across the pond to the booming consumer culture of the USA with envy and ambition. Consumerism was on the rise. Advertising was on the rise.

1963: 70,000 march to London against nuclear weapons. Test ban treaty signed. Martin Luther-King's 'I Have a Dream' speech. James Meredith is the first ever black student to graduate from the University of Mississippi. First ever X-Men comic from Marvel and Iron Man debuts. First ever episode of Doctor Who. Coke launches its first ever diet drink, 'TaB'. JFK assassinated.

1964: Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed into law by Lyndon Johnson in the USA — it outlaws segregation. Race riots in Harlem, Philadelphia, and Singapore. Terence Conran opens the first Habitat Store opened in Fulham Road. Vietnam War escalates. Mary Poppins released by Disney. Labour party end 13 years of Tory rule. Death penalty abolished for murder in the UK. Nelson Mandela made his "I Am Prepared to Die" speech. Roald Dahl wrote Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

first

things

first

A manifesto

We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, photographers and students who have been brought up in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable means of using our talents. We have been bombarded with publications devoted to this belief, applauding the work of those who have flogged their skill and imagination to sell such things as:

cat food, stomach powders, detergent, hair restorer, striped toothpaste, aftershave lotion, before-shave lotion, slimming diets, fattening diets, deodorants, fizzy water, cigarettes, roll-ons, pull-ons and slip-ons.

By far the greatest time and effort of those working in the advertising industry are wasted on these trivial purposes, which contribute little or nothing to our national prosperity.

In common with an increasing number of the general public, we have reached a saturation point at which the high pitched scream of consumer selling is no more than sheer noise. We think that there are other things more worth using our skill and experience on. There are signs for streets and buildings, books and periodicals, catalogues, instructional manuals, industrial photography, educational aids, films, television features, scientific and industrial publications and all the other media through which we promote our trade, our education, our culture and our greater awareness of the world.

We do not advocate the abolition of high pressure consumer advertising: this is not feasible. Nor do we want to take any of the fun out of life. But we are proposing a reversal of priorities in favour of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication. We hope that our

society will tire of gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders, and that the prior call on our skills will be for worthwhile purposes. With this in mind, we propose to share our experience and opinions, and to make them available to colleagues, students and others who may be interested.

Edward Wright
Geoffrey White
William Slack
Caroline Rawlence
Ian McLaren
Sam Lambert
Ivor Kamlish
Gerald Jones
Bernard Higton
Brian Grimby
John Garner
Ken Garland
Anthony Froshaug
Robin Fior
Germano Facetti
Ivan Dodd
Harriet Crowder
Anthony Clift
Gerry Cinamon
Robert Chapman
Ray Carpenter
Ken Briggs

Published by Ken Garland, 13 Oakley Sq NW1
Printed by Goodwin Press Ltd, London N4

First Things First — A manifesto, 1964, by Ken Garland

Notes:

During a meeting of the Society of Industrial Artists at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts on 29th November, 1963, Ken Garland wrote First Things First, A Manifesto. He read it out to copious applause. In January 1964, one hundred copies were printed by Goodwin Press. Caroline Benn, the wife of Tony Benn, saw it. She passed it to husband who published it in full in his Guardian column. Following that, Ken Garland was invited on to a BBC program to read the manifesto in full.

Full text:

'We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, photographers and students who have been brought up in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable means of using our talents. We have been bombarded with publications devoted to this belief, applauding the work of those who have flogged their skill and imagination to sell such things as: cat food, stomach powders, detergent, hair restorer, striped toothpaste, aftershave lotion, before-shave lotion, slimming diets, fattening diets, deodorants, fizzy water, cigarettes, roll-ons, pull-ons and slip-ons.

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2000

Notes:

By the turn of the millennium, corporate consumerism had co-opted the counter-culture which was woven into mainstream brands throughout the 90s. Counter-culture heros from surfers to skateboarders and DJs to designers were willingly commissioned into endorsing and designing the messages of consumerism. Culture became profit.

FIRST THINGS FIRST 2000



Readers' replies

1999: Emigre 51



Notes:

First Things First was re-written in 1999: Initiated by Adbusters, and co-ordinated by Rick Poynor, it was signed by luminaries like Eric Spiekermann (amongst many others, including Ken Garland). References at the end has a link to the full text and article in Emigre 51 by Rick Poynor.

Full text:

'We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, art directors and visual communicators who have been raised in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable use of our talents. Many design teachers and mentors promote this belief; the market rewards it; a tide of books and publications reinforces it.

'Encouraged in this direction, designers then apply their skill and imagination to sell dog biscuits, designer coffee, diamonds, detergents, hair gel, cigarettes, credit cards, sneakers, butt toners, light beer and heavy-duty recreational vehicles. Commercial work has always paid the bills, but many graphic designers have now let it become, in large measure, what graphic designers do. This, in turn, is how the world perceives design. The profession's time and energy is used up manufacturing demand for things that are inessential at best.

'Many of us have grown increasingly uncomfortable with this view of design. Designers who devote their efforts primarily to advertising, marketing and brand development are supporting, and implicitly endorsing, a mental environment so saturated with commercial messages that it is changing the very way citizen-consumers speak, think, feel, respond and interact. To some extent we are all helping draft a reductive and immeasurably harmful code of public discourse.

There are pursuits more worthy of our problem-solving skills. Unprecedented environmental, social and cultural crises demand our attention. Many cultural interventions, social marketing campaigns, books, magazines, exhibitions, educational tools, television programs, films, charitable causes and other information design projects urgently require our expertise and help.

'We propose a reversal of priorities in favor of more useful, lasting and democratic forms of communication - a mindshift away from product marketing and toward the exploration and production of a new kind of meaning. The scope of debate is shrinking; it must expand. Consumerism is running uncontested; it must be challenged by other perspectives expressed, in part, through the visual languages and resources of design.

'In 1964, 22 visual communicators signed the original call for our skills to be put to worthwhile use. With the explosive growth of global commercial culture, their message has only grown more urgent. Today, we renew their manifesto in expectation that no more decades will pass before it is taken to heart.'

But, but, what about the Web?

2010

Notes:

As the decade came to a close, I wonder, are we trying to design for amenity — and to add to the cultural fabric of our society — or is it just for profit? If user centred design / user experience design is the new black should its value always expressed by profit? For example, the figures on the indices of HugeInc.com, '8.3 billion annual revenues of the online businesses created by HUGE' or CXPartners.com 'We've increased client revenues by £327 million over the last two years'. I count CX Partners as friends as well as colleagues so there is nothing personal in this observation. Indeed, I understand the need to qualify and validate design. However, what does it say about our profession. Are we resetting the perception of designers from stylists to profiteers?

I understand that agencies use these figures to re-align the perception of design away from the mere frippery of presentation and style to hard figures. The argument is commercial instead of aesthetic. Should it be something different.

How do the First Things First manifestos of 1964, and 2000, port to the Web? What is our manifesto?



I HEARD...


“ In the USA, designers do what the client wants.
In Britain, designers do what the client needs.
Dutch designers do whatever they like. ”


Notes:

Are there alternatives? The vast volume of awe-inspiring creative work in the Netherlands that adds to the cultural fabric of the nation, and to all of us is a product of public commissions and grants for designers giving them creative freedom.

Design is everywhere. It is the filter between content and people. As such it is political. It should be moral. It should have a cultural value beyond its commercial ability to convince. Therein lies the irony: Given a choice, would you, as a designer, work on commercial branding and advertising, or something else?

COULD YOU WRITE ONE?

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_____ `</ins>` 

Thank you!



REFERENCES & CREDITS

- 1964 from Gen Garland: <http://j.mp/FTF1964>
- <http://www.xs4all.nl/~maxb/ftf1964.htm>
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- Rick Poyner Emigre 51 article: http://www.strg-n.com/edu/hgkz_BuK/files/first_things.pdf
- <https://www.adbusters.org/>