

## 01 Annotated bibliography

### **‘Ten Principles for Good Design’ by Dieter Rams**

How to get to know a designer quickly and accurately, apart from browsing their works, I think a more straightforward and quicker way is to check out their manifesto. Many designers come from different times, countries, fields and have different cultural backgrounds, and their design manifesto and visual spirit is very clear and concise. I initially chose 5 designers to do an identity exploration of their manifestos, but in the second week I ended up with this one by Rams. He focuses more on functionality and clarity, with a key principle being that ‘good design is as little as possible’. He emphasises simplicity, practicality and honesty. The first thing that came to mind when I considered his manifesto was ‘subtraction’. Instead of ‘designing as little as possible’, how about ‘designing with only the essentials’. I took this as logic and would Iteration ‘0’ motifs to start reducing the excess. However, today's designer identity seems to pose some problems for ideas like Rams's: must designers always remain disinterested and neutral? These ten principles define the designer identity as a responsible, rational problem solver. This challenges me and is a new starting point to think about the relationship between functionality, creative rights and self-expression.

### **‘Gender Trouble (1990)’ by Judith Butler**

Butler's ‘Gender Trouble’ does not just discuss gender as performative, she also argues that identities are fluid and unstable. This notion of performativity can be applied to racial, professional and designer identities, that is, any identity that is produced and reinforced through repetitive behaviours. Through my 100 iterations, I wanted to show this using the form of the same object in different contexts, how different declarative forces can change a designer's identity, and the fluidity of meaning. In my opinion, the role of the designer is fluid and performative. Of course, I find that this idea also questions whether the designer is truly neutral. Objects and environments reinforce identity embodiment. Even within the same designer's manifesto, different ‘iterations’ occur at different times. So I have in my practice to develop different and interesting rules for the ‘performance’ of identity. People may re-imagine what the manifesto implies rather than a single truth.

## **‘Designer as Author (1996)’ by Michael Rock**

Rock defines the designer as an active position-holder rather than a neutral form creator. Designers can, and should, be authors. Authorship in contemporary design has frequently become ambiguous; designers may be facilitators, performers, or authors. When creating iterative content, I take on the role of a storyteller, leaving the audience to form their own opinion about a potential designer's manifesto. Among the ever-changing ‘faces’ are conceptual ones that range from those that exist in the landscape to abstract ones in the form of lettered phrases. These cannot be understood at a glance and require some imagination on the part of the viewer. I give meaning to the different ‘faces’ under the same declaration as an author, which would be what Rock emphasises in making choices on a creative level through style and form. I am not losing authorship, but declaring it. By applying Rock's perspective, the identity of the designer can be positioned as an active, self-conscious subject.

## **‘Statement and Counter-Statement (2015)’ by Experimental Jetset**



‘Design is both a statement and a counter-statement.’ The book documents and reflects on the friction between modernism and everyday life. Fusing graphic design with popular culture and politics, design can reflect and critique social ideologies and identities, rather than merely solving problems. This echoes the reference above that a designer's identity should be proactive. And, in the same way that this design team Experimental Jetset wanted to convey, I see such iterations of stylised faces not as neutral, but as ideological material. With each iteration and change, I see the value of critical reflection. So the goal of this project might not be a visual exercise? It is also a critique. I'm wondering how design constructs, contains, and ultimately eliminates its own creativity. When patterns vanish and materials become transparent, what is left for

the designer? Perhaps I'd like every design manifesto to be both a statement and a counter-statement.

### **'Image, Music, Text (1977)' by Roland Barthes**

< Image, Music, Text> This book is a study in semiotics: the meaning of a work lies not in the creator's intent, but in the viewer's interpretation. It occurred to me as I was thinking about the second week's work that if I kept iterating, as the image moved from colour to lines to a simple symbol of a pair of glasses, could the viewer be reminded of the original image of Rams? Or could a mere circle or half a face be interpreted as the original image. Barthes focuses on the active role of the user in the construction of meaning. When I did the 'subtractive' iteration I wanted the final image to be retained in a way that could be effectively communicated to the audience. I enlarged parts of the facial structure one by one during the process, simply because I wanted to finally define the complex image of Rams as a small simple symbol, not just a mechanical 'subtraction'. I rethought his identity and performed an extraction operation on his image. The identity of a designer is fluid and can be misinterpreted or redefined by intention.

### **'Mini Manifesto' by Daniel Eatock**



Ref: RD. 190 (sold)



Ref: RD. 189 (sold)



Ref: RD. 188 (sold)



Ref: RD. 187 (sold)



Ref: RD. 186 (sold)



Ref: RD. 185 (sold)

His manifesto is very interesting, as it shows the rules he sets for himself, the everyday materials he uses, and the direction his experiments take. While his work contains a great deal of coincidence and poetry, he also advocates for constraints and rule-based design. Inspired by his logic, I added operations like reducing to greyscale, downsizing elements, and removing borders during 'subtractive' iterations. I also try to accept

coincidence and embrace imperfection when it comes to iterating process sequencing in the hopes of achieving a smooth 'descent'. As I work through the first week of 100 iterations, I'm also considering incorporating the rules of repetition. For the audience, this feels like an exploratory game, rather than an elaborate show. Whenever the rules change, the identity changes. I really enjoy these serendipities.

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## 02 Statement

Exploring the use of illustration to interpret designers' multiple identities and how identity evolves when what defines it changes or even disappears. I was particularly interested in Dieter Rams' manifesto on the concept of less but better. Instead of using design to add or express style (as in the first week's iteration), I ended up subtracting until the identity was 'invisible'. This was not done to minimise the image, but to see if identity could persist in the end. What I ultimately embrace is that 'subtraction' is not a stylistic choice, but rather an attempt to critique and reveal: what happens to identity when we remove everything that defines a designer's identity?