

Methods of Contextualising - written response

At the very beginning, I knew nothing about greenwashing, but through this project and the group work exploration, I gained a new understanding of climate justice and greenwashing.

In this group practice, our group first defined a brand of greenwashing, which is Fiji water. Through our research, we found that it tries to promote itself as a completely eco-friendly brand through packaging design and advertising, but in reality it caused a lot of pollution to the environment whether in the process of production, transportation or recycling.

During the exploration process, our team examined the various misleading sustainable elements used by Fiji water in brand packaging and advertising, such as flowers and the contrast between natural environment and industrial environment, and analyzed how these elements misled customers.

Then our team members used diagrams and methods of iterating to explore what the adverts actually said, what they shadowed and how they related to the system.

We chose to translate and iterate on a new theme of storytelling through images, or "communicating without words." Positioning ourselves outside of institutions, we use graphic communication design to highlight marginalised and oppressed groups adversely affected by climate justice, and to highlight the consequences of over-consumption. The question is then posed - how do people read images?

This series of explorations gave me a new understanding of the influence of designers on climate justice. Although visual communication design is a discipline born under capitalism, as designers we can serve the market and help corporate propaganda. but at the same time, if we are outside of business, designers can have their own position on climate justice.

Text1

"Women, femmes, non-binary, and gender-fluid people are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change, environmental disasters, and other environmental problems (e.g. pollution, deforestation, oil spills).

This is because many are often:

Denied the right to acquire land and own property

Directly reliant on natural resources and/or income insecure due to traditional gender roles

Unable to migrate to avoid environmental disasters because of caregiving responsibilities or threat of gender-based violence"

(Chandni, M. et al., 2023)

Manufacturing companies have caused the Climate crisis to a certain extent. They produce, promote, and sell products to make profits, but the victims are indeed oppressed groups, such as the locals of Fiji.

Fiji Water Company makes a lot of profits by packaging FIJI water as "Untouched" and "every drop is green", but it leaves local residents and animals in Fiji without a way to obtain clean water. This is ridiculous.

What is even more sad is that the residents of Fiji do not have any right to choose. Their families have been rooted in the land of Fiji for generations, so they have no way to move. Therefore, they can only be forced to bear the negative impacts caused by the Fiji water company. This is not fair. At the same time, animals do not have any right to choose. A very common fact is that animals have always been the ones to pay for the mistakes humans have made.

Text2

"Contradictions of sustainability are all around us. From the airport regulations that require you to fit all toiletries into 100ml bottles in a plastic bag and having to dump any drink even if under a hundred milliliters. Before going through security to force you to buy another one wrapped in plastic. To the culture The Cutlery wrapped in plastic or the paper cups and bottles and the packaged food on the airline to the reusable plastic bag initiatives."

(Danah Abdula, 2022)

Contradictions are everywhere. Although society has been constantly promoting sustainable development and environmental protection, at the same time, social institutions or governments have invisibly promoted pollution. Businesses continue to produce products in order to obtain profits, and cause pollution in the process of manufacturing, transportation, and sales. But at the same time, society and the public are constantly emphasizing the need for environmental protection. Faced with multiple contradictions, companies choose to use greenwashing to package products as green and environmentally friendly. This seems reasonable but also absurd.

Faced with such a situation, what can graphic design do? I think graphic design is divided into two camps at this time. One is for enterprises. In order to expand the publicity effect and provide sales, designers help enterprises create environmentally friendly images through various marketing methods. For example, the visual language of "green" leads consumers to fall into the trap of "environmental protection". The other camp breaks away from the enterprise and stands from the standpoint of humans and even animals and plants, revealing the reality to the public from a more candid and sharp perspective, and emphasizing the consequences of over-consumption.

Text3

"Despite FIJI Water claiming that they provide 'sustainable business enterprises' for locals, the villages have often been the first to bear the consequences of the rift. With such rapid and extreme changes in employment, lifestyle pressures in the local villages are inevitable. During these two episodes of redundancies, many local employees who lost their income, and thus their ability to provide for their families, and reverted to subsistence livelihoods or working as manual harvesters for Indo-Fijian sugar farmers. "

(Catherine Jones, Warwick E. Murray, John Overton, 2017)

Although Fiji Water claims that it can provide local employment, in fact, local residents have been marginalized. FIJI locals lost control of their resources and at the same time passively bore the negative impacts of drastic changes in the employment situation. These problems have overtones of neocolonialism whereby FIJI Water has indirectly occupied the local space and pursued its own interests. The continuous production, sale and consumption of FIJI water is proof of the growing wealth of fiji companies and evidence that fiji locals are deeply oppressed.

Through the packaging and advertising of FIJI water, consumers' re being sold a fantasy. A moment in Fiji. A Taste of Fiji. At the same time, fiji water attempts to raise the price of its product to twice that of its competitors by claiming that it helps the environment, which is unreasonable and optimizes consumerism to a certain extent. "There is no need for us to have bottled water, there is no need there, it somehow represents a distortion of needs, the manufacturing of wants, the illustration of gross inequalities in the world" (BBC, 2008).

Text4

**"When Nature becomes robust within limits and threshold theories of harm are dominant, land relations become managerial rather than reciprocal."
(Liboiron, M., 2021)**

Although FIJI Water claims that it provides local employment resources and even promotes economic development. But all this is based on its occupation of the resources of local residents. As long as this resource relationship is changed, the dominant player will no longer be the FIJI residents, but the FIJI water company. Reciprocity disappears and it becomes a top-down management. I think this means we need to rethink how fiji locals live on occupied lands and use graphic communication design to highlight the detrimental effects of resource plunder on marginalized and oppressed groups.

Text5



Suzy Chan: Plastic in the ocean, website

(Available at:<https://suzychan.com/Plastic-in-the-ocean>, 2019)

Suzy Chan attempts to use cheerful design language to speak about the heavy issue of ocean pollution. I think what is very interesting about this project is that she allows the audience to experience the process of ocean fishing through visual communication design, and she hopes to express the death of ocean animals in a relaxed and humane design language to give these animals more "dignity".

When we design projects related to environmental issues such as pollution and deforestation, we usually adopt a sad perspective. Whether it is the death of animals or plants, we hope that it will be serious and thought-provoking. For example, designers will use some photos of animals dying tragically in order to achieve a shocking effect. But maybe for animals, they also want to live or die decently and with dignity.

At the same time, it is not only sad visual language that can cause human reflection, but perhaps relaxed and cheerful graphic language has a more ironic effect.

Text6



Gjorgji Despodov: Skip Ad, Book spreads (Copyright © Gjorgji Despodov, 2021)

Gjorgji Despodov's book is a must-read for taking mass consumerism out of graphic design. This project challenged my understanding of the relationship between graphic design and consumerism. With *Skip Ad*, Gjorgji Despodov rethinks the role of graphic design as a tool for critical reading. It's a process that allowed Gjorgji to point a critical finger at mass consumerism, opening up "the possibility for an alliance between the graphic designer and the users," Gjorgji pointed out, "The graphic language in the book that deals with the entire space can be defined as conceptual." "So it can be said that the graphic language in the book is completely devoid of content." He hopes that the audience's reading process becomes a process of self-discovery.

This inspired the idea for our project 'communicating without words'. We have always been obsessed with analyzing the impact of text on reading. Whether it is product packaging or video advertising, planners will always come up with some wonderful slogans to attract consumers. But what if the text is erased? How do humans read images, and what do images tell us? This question guided my project exploration.

Reference list

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