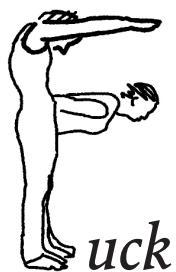
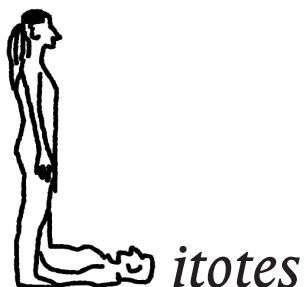


Methods of Translating, MAGCD 1
Written Response
Mark Ecob, November 2024

Fuck Content by Michael Rock translated with *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau. Using Surprise, Retrograde, Litotes, Notation, Double Entry and Metaphor to alter each paragraph style. One example from each appears in black, the rest of the filtered article appears in grey to meet the word count.

Typeset in ITC Golden Cockerel with added illustrated letterforms mimicking the original Queneau 'filter', you will find conclusions and referencing at the end.

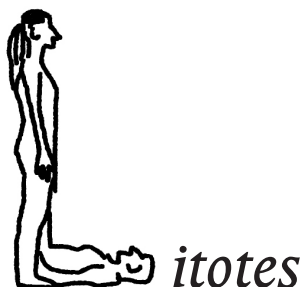




We are SO insecure about the value of our work!
That's what I said in Designer as Author! And are
we envious of authors' power? YES! So, it's no sur-
prise then that we declare ourselves "designer/
authors", is it?! We've made a whole MOVEMENT
out of our anxiety!



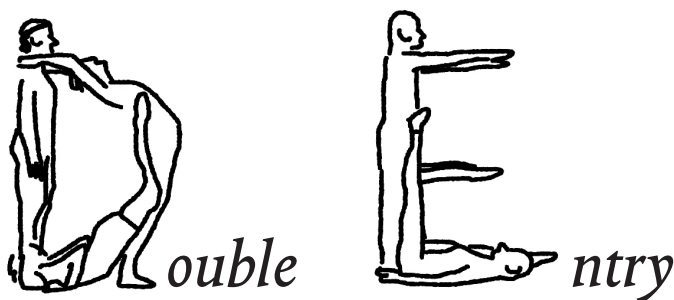
You should have taken that article as I intended it, it said that design is language. But it's been read as encouraging you to be designers AND authors. Authors are great, but that it not what I meant.



The issue isn't lack of content. The misconception isn't that shallow meaning means pure design. In graphic design circles, form-follows-content trounces form follows-function. If form doesn't come from content, never benefiting, formed content is fruitful.



We go ON and ON about Beatrice Ward's famous Crystal Goblet metaphor! It's the absolute deification of this idea, and we're still talking about it! It claims that the glass (design, OBVS!), should be transparent in order to show off the wine! The WINE!! Anyone who likes the bedazzled is a NEANDERTHAL! Both sides of the ideological spectrum argue and argue to see who's right from their opposite points of view. YAWN. Neither side seemed to think that IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WINE, PEOPLE!



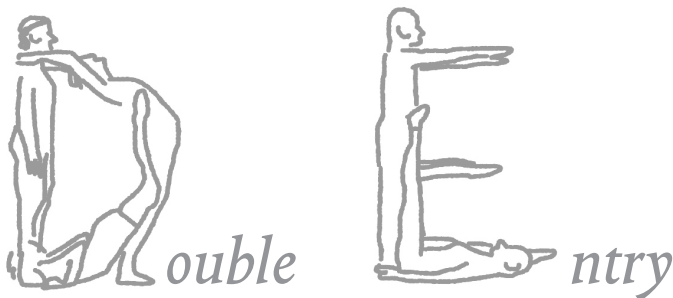
All the fake and faulty division has disseminated and distributed so far over time, that we in our community have begun to commence belief in it. Developing and growing into a fundamentally key design belief, this new principle of creative learning and discipline is the standard criterion against which design is carefully considered. We seem to get and welcome the evidential premise that developing content is ever more fundamentally crucial than sensitively developing it, that favourable and acceptable content is the measure of good design.



I was intensely annoyed at reading Paul Rand's quote about content and form. To me, it was an abdication of a designer's responsibility to meaning. Subsequently, I reconsidered and concluded that the designer's scope was to shape, not to write. After this conclusion came the realisation that shaping itself was a profoundly affecting form. (Perhaps this was the reason that modern designers—Rand, Munari, Leoni—always seemed to end their careers designing children's books, the purest venue of the designer/author because the content was negligible but the form's evocative potential unlimited.)



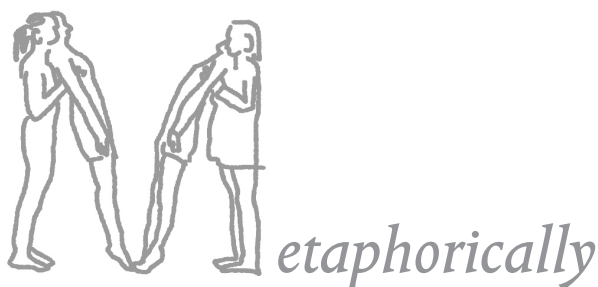
So, WTF else is new, eh? I know it's boring, but for some inexplicable reason, we as designers don't really believe it, do we! Shaping is not enough! So, to bring design out from under the thumb of content we must FIGHT FOR IT! Treatment is, in fact, a kind of text itself, as complex and referential as any traditional understanding of content!



A filmmaker/director can be the esteemed auteur of a film they didn't write, score, edit or shoot. What makes a Hitchcock film a Hitchcock film and why? Is it not the story or plot but a consistency and repetition of style, which winds and meanders intact through different and varied technologies, plots, actors, and time periods like a substance or material of its own. Every film or reel is about filmmaking. His great, great genius is that he and he alone can mould the form and design into his style in a genuinely, authentically unique and entertaining way. The meaning of his work is not in the story but in the storytelling.

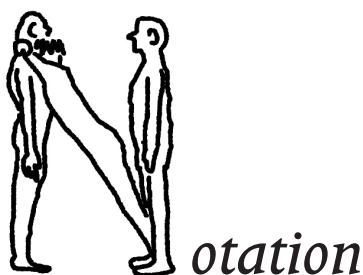


The bard as well traffics tales. The notes we must master are not the tunes themselves but the bars on which they sit: the notation, the stave, key, timing, length and pitch. We sing through composing, literally through the ledger lines.



The long tale of graphic design is not a fictitious, fanciful fable, but of down-to-earth descriptive form. The latter has evolved dramatically over centuries, its legend learning from one Gregorian year to the next, and in a twist of fate has become the saviour of reshaping the world through the way it is MADE. The most exciting characters in its prose often come from in between the lines and the unlikeliest of places. An advertisement for ink that drips with invitation, one for cigarettes that smoulders, sparkplugs flash like lightning off the page and machinery grinds printed ink loudly for your attention. Hold your quill and let your mind wander, and think if you will or Piet Zwart's

catalogues for eboring electrical cable; or the travel posters of Cassandre or Matter that transport you places without moving; or the poetic New Wave work of Weingart, Greiman and Freidman; or the provocative punk incitations of Jamie Reid, in which the manipulation of our collective fable has an essential, even transformative, meaning. What will happen at its end?



At a Pop Art Symposium on the evening of Thursday 13th December 1962, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. Art Critic of The Nation, Mr Hilton Kramer, is quoted as condemning Pop Art as “indistinguishable from advertising art” because “Pop Art does not tell us what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization. Its social effect is simply to reconcile us to a world of commodities, banalities and vulgarities.” It is possible that the content of graphic design is “what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization,” with all its “commodities, banalities and vulgarities.” For example, discussion of typographic content in context could

otherwise become irrelevant, or the reasoning behind passion projects achieving credible public exposure. There is an imperative to graphic design communicating something rather than simply being about something.



The designed object can almost never hold wholly rendered ideas! Ideas themselves are indexical slaves to time! Our work is ours and it will always echo our being! By choosing to do something instinctively, we designers show ourselves somehow topographically, to a point where our inner design voice and its characteristics are unveiled!



No link between designer and making could ever modulate a user in their world. Leaving form untouched, design cannot affect that essential relationship. Can form ever be replaced by exchange? A non-maker can never be in charge of the relationship of the made object.



Find varied, rhetorical ways to speak through treatment! Written, visual AND operational! You can make passionately poignant proclamations! Return consistently to your central ideas, re-examine and re-express! You'll build a body of work, and thence a singular message, maybe even what it feels like to be living now! Our content is, perpetually, Design itself!

CONCLUSIONS

Michael Rock's (2009) article *Fuck Content* is explanatory, calm, qualified and clear. Even though the title has teeth, the author explains the intention of his previous article, Designer as Author intelligently. When 'filtered' through styles of the Queneau (surprise, litotes, retrograde etc), each paragraph changes tone. 'Surprise' makes paragraph 1 energetic and fun in its proclamations, I take notice of its tone more than the original. 'Retrograde' makes the author annoyed in paragraph 2. 'Litotes' confuses the already threefold 'form-follows-content' of paragraph 3, like its cousin 'Double Entry' in paragraph 5. 'Metaphorically' again lightens the mood in paragraphs 9 and 10.

Using Queneau to 'filter' certainly is 'an experiment in the philosophy of language' that rids 'it of some of its scabs', but it also highlights the effectiveness of unique paragraph styling to make an argument. Whilst I enjoy the enterprise in this process, *multiple* tonal changes in a single piece writing should be kept for those that can support meandering multiplicity of styles. For example, imagine that *Fuck Content* was reimagined just using 'Surprise', this could serve to lighten its tone and widen its audience.

Redesigning the text and layout to match the original Queneau serves to informalize, pushing it towards fiction. The added space and illustrated elements take you to the snippets of text rather than the continuous, dense original web page, making it all feel like a fiction book rather than a call to arms. I find the Helvetica Neue, palette and no-nonsense design of the original to fit perfectly.

REFERENCES

Rock, M. (2009) Fuck Content. Available at: <https://2x4.org/ideas/2009/fuck-content/> (Accessed: 15th November 2024).

Queneau, R. ([1947] 1998) Exercises in Style. London: John Calder.