

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND REVOLUTION IN MEXICO, THE '60S::
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A revolutionary movement was conceived and developed in Mexico in 1910, in which a government regime that was the result of the assimilation of the old order into the conquering forces became part of the political system, allowing for the reaffirmation of national identity through the promotion of its culture and social development. The Revolution is established due to historical necessity and in defence of its internal and external enemies. A doctrinaire pragmatism is established along with an authoritarian democracy centred around the president's relationship with the official party and the official party's relationship with the organized popular movements, introducing practices that allow it to keep its power, to maintain social balance, and to continue its political ideology whose various tendencies allow for the convergence of several ideologies: from Madero and Carranza to Zapata, Calles and Obregón, to lead the people toward democracy according to the times and opportunities: women's right to vote in 1953 with Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, privatization of the natural resources with Lázaro Cárdenas, or Adolfo López Mateos's political reform.

However, a failure to remember the Revolution results in the government not fulfilling its commitments with the people, avoiding its return to national identity and its own educational project, allowing for an amorphous democracy that is self-satisfied by its deep thoughtlessness.

1968 is a transcendent year in which the various social movements taking place around the world influence Mexico and contribute to sharpening the political, economic and cultural crisis. In all this, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México plays an important role, its students participating in an important movement of protest that, in a short time, glues together social forces of all levels and turns the student conflict into a serious national problem with tragic consequences: on October 2, 1968, a betrayal of the movement is promoted and, with it, the cruel massacre of civilians by a section of army and paramilitary groups.

Comprehension of what occurred in 1968 must be linked to the cold war and, in Mexico, to the geopolitical conditions, “1968 was the year of the student revolts. Germany, Italy, France, England, Japan, the United States, Mexico participate [...] it was the year of the revolutionary students [...] there is a general tonic in the European movements, they began with protests against the war in Vietnam and with criticism of the educational system [...] since its origins, the Mexican movement was attached to political demands.”¹ There are differences between the movements and their characteristics: the conditions under which they are developed, the repression responses, their organization, evolution, and incorporation to social sectors such as the workers’ or farmers’. An important convergence: the absence of revolutionary cells or factional organizations. The actions arise in a spontaneous manner, based on brigades or action committees, multiple ideological visions and excessive expansion. Mexico’s 68 is also Stockholm’s, Tokyo’s, Prague’s, San Francisco’s and South America’s.

...but 68 is specially Paris’s 68, starting at Nanterre University and culminating in the Sorbonne [...] it is a student rebellion, of the word, Roland Barthes points out “a capture of the word, a wild word, founded on invention and under the form of invention” [...] it is a violent and desperate word of Nietzsche, Sartre, Marcuse, Heidegger, who set the truth of life before the truth of concept and reveal the real man, surrendered, offended and humiliated by a system of irrational and alienating production and the inherent bourgeois dominion that deprives man of any destiny that is not spending his life for the benefit of industrial progress.²

There is a process of graphic communication that sustains this movement. The Popular Graphics Workshop along with the workshops of the Mexican National School of Visual Arts create a printed campaign much influenced by post-revolutionary German graphics and Cuban graphic design; Mexico’s closeness to Cuba makes obvious the impact of the images of Che Guevara and of the revolutionary manifestos that were being created in the island. Both thematically and technically, the rhetoric of implication and denunciation is used, belonging to political imagery and its characteristic codes: monochromatic force and the symbolism of traditional political propaganda: the fist, the chains, the gorillas and the skulls, contrast perfectly with the image of President Díaz Ordaz, the soldiers and several characters involved in the national politics. Lithography, engraving and serigraphy would become the imprint systems of the student resistance, with the evident rejection of any choice of commercial impression. The internal issuers were the student groups, workers, farmers and disadvantaged people in general; the receptors were well-defined: youth, workers and the people; the content of the messages referred to values such as democracy, freedom and solidarity.³

A few days later, parallel to the student tragedy, the 19th Olympic Games open, their visual communication system overshadowing the student propaganda. The informative complex formed on the one hand the program of identity in all of its applications, to broadcast the sporting image as well as activities, and on the other hand, a valuable cultural program was put together, which required a specific informative subsystem that would not lose its visual link with the games nor the system unit.⁴

In the image of the Olympic Games, international identity – the five rings - was merged with a series of morphological derivations that even though – as was mentioned - came from the art of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, did not hide their clear pop art and hippie movement influences. The compositional tendencies, the dynamics of the formal elements in which curved lines prevailed, the chromatic openings, with oversaturated and brilliant and topographic tones, with an alphabet projected in gradients that provided novel alterations to legibility,

¹ Medina, Ignacio and Rubén Aguilar. **La ideología del Consejo Nacional de Huelga en 1968. Canciones y carteles.** Editorial Heterodoxia, Mexico, 1971. pags. 53 and 54

² “En busca de la verdad perdida” en Alejandro del Palacio Díaz. **68, la historia que no fue.** Mexico.

³ Luz del Carmen Vilchis. **Diseño. Universo de Conocimiento.** Claves Latinoamericanas, UNAM, Mexico, 1999. pags. 47 and 48

⁴ “...the special character that Mexico wanted to print to the [Olympic Games] which, as shown later, increased, because a distinctive style was created with this purpose [...] Pedro Ramírez Vázquez created the Departments of Publications and Urban Design [...] he acted as General Director, Lance Wyman as designer of the program of visual communication, Eduardo Terrazas was in charge of the program and urban design and the publications were run by Beatriz Trueblood.” Olga América Sánchez Duarte. **El diseño gráfico en México, su lenguaje conceptual y metodológico (1960-1980).** Memoria de Suficiencia Investigadora. Advisors: Carlos Plasencia and Luz del Carmen Vilchis. Mexico, 2006.

made evident a stylistic eclecticism that came from a multicultural vision. Visual acceleration, restlessness, and commotion were some of the main directions of the Olympic designs.

It is important to mention essential antecedents such as Diego Rivera's Posters and Letters Workshop in the San Carlos Academy, or the sustenance contributed by Miguel Prieto since 1939 with the design of important editorial formats, and the systemized work that Vicente Rojo continued in 1956 after the death of Miguel Prieto in an important effort to assign a particular space to the designer's tasks, beyond graphic arts, creating along with Tomás Espresate and Eduardo Naval the Imprenta Madero, with a team from which important designers such as Rafael López Castro, Luis Almeida, Peggy Espinoza, Bernardo Recamier, Azul Morris, among others emerged.⁵ However, professional graphic design in Mexico is considered to have started with the development of two movements, one emerging from the bosom of society and the other determined by official conditions, the first being caustic, fatuous and obstinate, the second, completely studied, obeying basic principles and concepts of visual communication, and then there are the encounters between both movements, like the posters denouncing the "1968 Olympic Duel".

Among these two visual frontiers, Mexican universities - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Universidad Iberoamericana – began offering degree programs in Graphic Design, the teaching of graphic design was formalized, its pedagogic fundamentals were conceptualized and the first generations of professionals were formed.

One may say that design in Mexico, following its communicative determinants, was created out of a single necessity: graphic communication that requires reaching the masses, the making of visual campaigns whose objective is to impact the national and international societies, expressed in two trajectories: a popular, ideological and fragmented graphic, and a graphic organized in a programmed and directed visual totality. These are two identities that receive and assume differently the influences of a design that alludes to each of its discourses, promoting visual texts whose reading then and now compiles defined meanings and a sense that is expressed in form and content, reasserting with certainty that graphic design never becomes separated from its context.

And so, design was conceived as the profession that studied the behaviour of forms, their combinations, their associative coherence, their functional possibilities and aesthetic values captured in their integrity. Likewise, based in the developments of important European schools, mainly Bauhaus and Basle, graphic design was understood as a design discipline oriented toward the solving of visual communication problems that man raised in his continuous process of adaptation to the environmental and according to his physical and spiritual needs.

This discipline identified with the human action of conscious change of the form, moving around important concepts of philosophy, obtaining ideas from historical materialism and the new liberation trends. Thus, design in a *transcendent praxis* because it begins in the agent itself and ends outside it; it is a *creative poiesis* because it adds to the being something that did not exist – art corresponds to it par excellence. This way, graphic design can be characterized as a specific form of art, like a *poetic praxis*, and as such, it responds to specific function which is visual communication.

This new semantic field takes over the stage in order to turn it into the academic substance that, years later, would deny this discipline its critical nature, reducing it to a one-dimensional globalizer of neoliberalism that limits man to the categories of the merchandise and expels reason out of daily life, denying a subject in which to find roots.

The roots of design are found in the '60s in objects; it is not for free, the development that Abraham Moles generates of a specific theory that explains the diversity of object spheres that enwrap man, among which is the sphere of graphic communication, whose designed messages establish new significant orders and tasks that demand formal and expressive definitions.

⁵ Cf. **Miguel Prieto Diseño Gráfico**. CONACULTA, UNAM, UAM, UDLA, Matiz, Trama Visual, Panorama and ERA, Mexico, 2000 and **Vicente Rojo Diseño Gráfico**. UNAM, FIL Guadalajara, ERA, Imprenta Madero and Trama Visual, Mexico, 2000.

The movements that took place in that decade, especially in 68 in Paris and Mexico, carry a deep criticism of the culture that draws upon violence of the word in order to deny it - for being deciduous and alienating – but that, in an excess of equivocality, pretends to do without it. The great response of communication in all its manifestations is, apparently, the great rejection, the no of Marcuse, who encouraged repudiating logorrhoea as a resource of assimilation evidently powerless to raise problems in its simplicity. No revolution has ever changed anything, assented Marcuse in the 24th thesis of *The Letter of La Sorbonne*, revolutions only knock down existing relationships.⁶

This way the graphic designer's essential task is deconstructed and restructured, which is considered the transformation of the environment expressed in graphic objects that, in a broader sense, change the same man whose research is in charge of explaining the conditions of his process and the factors that form it, comprising the interaction of the design, the designer and the designed. Graphic design is to be configured as a daily language with multiple interrelated inherent phenomena that provide specific study objects.

And so, in the new educational proposals, the phenomenon of graphic communication is privileged, and includes an external issuer, a need, a context, a designer, a means (which includes morphologic, chromatic, typographic and photographic codes), an internal issuer, a message, visual communication means, cultural conditions, the perceptual environment, the possible relationships between the message and the references made of the material or imaginary reality, a receiver, and the possible answers that the receiver provides to the external issuer, to the mean and to the context. To this we add the idea of the perceived reality – which includes both the perception's central object and the context-, the percipient subject, the forms of mental representation and organization of the perceptions, the determination and destiny of the perceptions – accumulation in the memory, organization in the knowledge, representation – and the relational structure formed by previous and posterior perceptions that create the processes of classification, archive and discrimination.

Since then, graphic representation includes material and imaginary reality as mediations, intention and content as presuppositions of the context, and cultural conventions as determinants of the stages of representation that relate symbols and objects, indistinctly integrating material, perceptive, technical and technological operations.

Social grievances establish correlations between the substances as forms of the expression – syntactic structures created by the possible interrelations between the morphological, iconographic, chromatic, typographic and photographic codes-, and the substances as forms of interpretation – pragmatic structures that emerge from relationships of proximity, perception and interpretation between the semanticized object and the interpretative subject.

The concepts of production, distribution and consumption, by-products of economic and sociological theories, involve the systematic procedures that are conducted so that a project of graphic communication can be reproduced and become communicable, involving the working relationships with the processes of analysis, planning, organization, research, solution, reproduction and evaluation of a design project.

Theories that emerge from the context of countercultural movements, like Jean Baudrillard's Political Economy of the Sign, establish disciplinary links between the functional logic of the value of use –involving the practical operations of design -, the logic of the value of change – referring to exchange relationships -, the logic of symbolic change – manifested in the valuative differences of exchange – and the logic of the value/sign – which includes the forms of social status determination -; according to these guidelines, the object of design was now considered respectively a tool, merchandise, symbol and sign.⁷

⁶ Cfr. Nicolás Casullo. París 68. *Las escrituras, el recuerdo y el olvido*. Manantial, Buenos Aires, 1998.

⁷ Luz del Carmen Vilchis. *Op Cit.*, pp. 35-38

It is affirmed that these times created two simultaneous attitudes, *theoreticism* and *anti-theoreticism*,⁸ the first made possible, to begin with, disciplines such as graphic design, conceptual transposition and interdiscipline, creating structures that will allow on the middle and long term the founding and explaining of its different manifestations. The second would found the basis of the pragmatism that unfortunately invaded the academic formation, causing after three decades the emerging of study plans and programs whose fundamentals are based on the performance and mechanical dominion of new technologies.

However, the transcendence of the theories of communication and significance stood out in the field of design, because in addition to explaining the need to satisfy demands of rationality in design – according to which it is possible to think of the signs integrating a way to transform things, in order to create realities that lead to other realities -, this field of knowledge has made possible an extrapolation from some linguistic and semiotic theories to the theory of the image. And thus grew the terms of comprehension of visual communication as a *phenomenon of conscious meaning* in the understanding of the possibility to consciously use signs, that is, of the reference to fundamental characteristics of human behaviour such as the capacities of evocation, representation or reference, all of which are relationships that are conceivable in signs.

Semiosis, understood as the process in which the formal elements operate as signs and, therefore, are susceptible to interpretation, allows explaining both the configuration of any visual message as well as its social behaviour as an object of meaning that is determined by the material relationships of some signs with others, the possible relationships between the visual signs and objects or ideas to which they apply, and the complex links between the signs and the interpreters, where there are two inclinations: the first describing the links between the necessity, the message and the designers, and the second which is exclusively interested in links between perceivers, receivers or users of design and the objects of visual communication.

This theorization also originated cruel epistemological and educational experiences, among them the fatuous attempts to apply the Saussurian model with its structure focused on the study of the language from the syntagmatic vision to the visual communication distinguished for its variable and pragmatic essence. I could also mention the absurd narrowing that has been taking place in Perice's philosophy, a world-view based on the understanding of signs as universal, delimiting a terminological triangle to the expressions of what is designed.

It is also worth mentioning the confusions that these ups and downs in theorization created between the semiotics of communication and the semiotics of meaning; this coincided with the incomprehension of the functionalist and structuralist theories, reaching an eclecticism whose superficiality has been the cause why so many design students abandoned all attempts at understanding.

It is not possible to understand the development terms of visual language if their group of signs lacks conceptual coherence that results in the comprehension of the relations of the meaning of the signs among each other and of the signs with the objects and the receivers in the so-called *rules of formation*, which determine the visual complexes that can be obtained from the basic visual groups.

General methodology makes possible an elemental classification of the signs based on their level of semantization: *indexic signs*, those that can mean a single idea or object (a square); *characterizing signs*, those that can mean a plurality of things and therefore be combined in different forms that explain or limit the reach of their application (a man); and *universal signs*, those that can mean anything whose relationships are open to any sign and have universal implications (an arrow).

The sense, which includes all the acceptations and meanings that integrate in the interrelation of codes a visual text in the framework of a particular discourse, is made possible thanks to the multivocal condition of what is designed. Design makes different senses according to the political, economical, personal or social conditions and circumstances of its interpretation. That which is designed is *multivocal* – always presenting more than one meaning -, design is *polysemic* – always presenting more than one meaning.

⁸ Barbara y John Ehrenreich. *Itinerario de la Rebelión Estudiantil*. Ed. Nuestro Tiempo, México, 1969, pp. 55

A *main sense* – associated with the message's nucleus -, *secondary senses* – associated with the message's syntactic and expressive conditions -, *contextual senses* – depending on the conditions and contacts in which the communication is immersed -, *socio-cultural meanings* – related to habits, customs, knowledge and experience -, and *affective senses* – linked to emotional aspects -, are identified in a graphic communication. *Ambiguity* in an object of graphic design can provoke the *unconscious transference of meaning* – indiscriminate mobility of meanings – or an alteration in the possible ranking of the different meanings.

The staging of design as a professional discipline seemed to authorize an open interpretation of its meaning, the receiver's relationship with the design is not a *catharsis* – elimination of memories and references –nor is it an *anagnorisis* – the action of recognition -, that is, although design has a *surplus of meaning*, it is always going to be conditioned to the formal and stylistic conjugation of its elements – it is not possible to interpret what is not fixed in the object -, although it is considered a residue and is contextualized in another time and place, interpretation will not be unlimited.

Understood as a pertinent unit of communication, by which an isolated sign is not comprehended, nor is a group of signs (the letter and word in linguistic theory), but a structured and coherent block of signs that includes the communicative intentions of a visual design whose articulatory elements are indiscernible because it constitutes a communication strategy and has specific pragmatic intentions; to disarticulate it would translate into the tergiversation of the message.

The image under the determinants of the strategies of communication becomes visual text, it is the graphic message fixed in a printed support that produces the visual expression. We must recognize in the text an existence that is linked to the context and, hence, the multiple discursive answers that it can manifest from its relationship with reality. This way, the concept of text is linked to the notion of discourse, understood as a maximum unit of determinants of the visual text. Comprehension of the visual text involves all the properties beginning with the concept of unit and coherence, in these terms, one can elaborate a textual analysis based on the theories of visual literacy, iconism, isotopies and context. As mentioned earlier, context has been a determinant in the professionalization of graphic design.

The 1960s, one must not forget, is the decade of Vietnam, Cuba, the Tricontinental that supports the liberation of the Third World; when in Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Uruguay nationalist rebellions develop against the dictatorships inflicted by the United States, when the black movement and the leadership of Martin Luther King, after the murders of the Kennedy's, unveil the deep fissures of the empire that accentuates its eagerness for dominion in the America of *manifest destiny*.

In spite of the fact that there is no ideological tendency characterizing the movement of 68 and that it displayed nearly no criticism of the system, regime or capitalism, in the marches of the Mexican student movement there was a clear display of portraits of Che Guevara, Mao, Ho Chi Min, Castro, all of whom in the 1960s symbolized the fight for freedom in many places around the world. There was also an air of anticommunism fed in two ways: on the one hand, the hegemony of the radicals and communists that were being excluded from mass organizations during the Germanism, and on the other, the general climate of the cold war and McCarthyism that strengthened these tendencies.

The General Strike Council defines itself as apolitical; in its own versions, its members never participated in anti-imperialist manifestations and lived the Olympic illusion of the moment ...⁹

One mustn't set aside the feeling of *counterculture*, invoking images of the beat movement, which emerged after the Second World War due to the disenchantment of the youth in regards to the society of that period, embracing mysticism, looseness regarding social norms and sexual freedom. This is the era of the '60s, which joined Alan Watts' Zen, Free Speech, hippies, Yippies and psychedelic drugs.¹⁰

⁹ Cfr. Alejandro del Palacio. *Op Cit.*

¹⁰ Alan Watts. ***La cultura de la contracultura***. Kairós, Barcelona, 2001

These are some references to the reality that surrounded the graphic signs of the '60s, as surrounding conditions or as specific activities. The context was formed by a plotting of expressive visual and non-visual mediations, likewise as a whole, due to the complete situation that surrounded the controversial or official images that determine its meaning. The reference and the analysis of the total context of that time shows what is implicit in it, it is a piece of work to interpret it and to then integrate it to what is explicit – that which is designed – in order to this way achieve the sense of that period's visuality.

The total context related the main features of the participants, their visual and non-visual actions, the relevant objects, the events, and the effects of the different attitudes. This contextual complex can be understood through the *visual context*, in which the walls, fences and urban spaces shared perceptual elements and complexes in severe morphological, chromatic, typographic and photographic contrast; the *discursive context*, which created meanings that were conditioned by the meanings of the formative and informative rhetoric and those involved in the rhetoric of opposition and exaltation; the *situation context*, which included the space-time binomial, two events displayed in the same city with ten days between them, one violent with bloody facts that are shameful to any nation, and the other aspiring to the most important values of culture and the physical and intellectual development of the human being, elevating the importance of sports and art to the sustenance of the people's culture, both were immediate situations that would come to generate on the medium term a niche of resentment against the government and an acknowledgement of its discipline and organizational capability, added to the evidence of the warmth and generosity of the Mexicans, even during the hurly-burly of a disgrace; the visual signs of this historical moment exceed local and regional contexts, their respective campaigns, in a system of organized significance and another that is completely arbitrary, transcended the national borders communicating to the world the area's socio-political conditions, the field's determinants and the environment's obstacles that were being lived through at the time; it should not be left unsaid that the emotional aspects related to the multiple meanings of the two so very dissimilar visual discourses have remained in the collective unconscious for more than three decades, so strong that today there are those who, as part of truth commissions, record archives and search for the guilty; the group of elements and situations of 68 changed substantively the citizens' way of life, habits and customs, and the political, cultural, religious, artistic, etc, knowledge and bonds.

The lexical field also appointed a sector of reality with antagonistic terms, culture and counterculture, and with that, two semantic fields were created in the field of graphic design: a cultivated, academic, professional graphic design, and a popular, underground and spontaneous graphic design, each involving categories, concepts and verbal and visual signs that mark the contour and the sense of a fragment of reality and of knowledge.

In order to understand these different phenomena of graphic communication, we must start with the definition of each one of them, since they correspond to different fields of knowledge and, therefore, to different languages; if we understand that each language builds its own semantic field and with it the form and specific limits for naming, explaining, and understanding the aspect of the world that we wish to explain, it becomes clear that the possibility conditions of knowledge of each of the phenomena of graphic communication assume specific categories that allow mediating between the semantic field of this discipline and the semantic field of the interdisciplinary relationship to which it alludes, until developing a common semantic field based on which it is possible to decide on the pertinence of any affirmation or argumentation.

Based on the previously mentioned, we understand that the Olympic Games' communication system awakens the marketing ideology, the importance of the symbol and the brand, the application of margins of qualitative evaluation of the indexes of communication, continuity of the graphic campaigns, and the powerful penetration of the institutional image. Logos, symbols, bulletins, Olympic cards, historical review cards, programs in general (de luxe and hand), special inauguration and closing programs, sports programs, informational brochures, official standards, catalogues of sports fields and courts, cultural pamphlets, exhibition guides, posters, wall newspapers, banderols, urban furniture (benches, light poles, information booths, mailboxes, paper baskets, etcetera), events signposting, transportation signs, stage design, monumental sculptures, banners, screens, pedestals, cauldron, podium, promotional paraphernalia (key rings, balloons, flags, clothes, glasses, cups, coins, etcetera), certificates, special stationary, forms, invitations and conducting the communication for different media: photography, radio, television, movies and others. All this shows the complicated problems of graphic design and the multiplicity of messages that are nevertheless directed with a single intention: to identify and transmit the details of a magnificent event.¹¹

The other side is under the limits of marginalization and improvisation from where emerge ways to express dissatisfaction and specific signs of identity in a movement so magnificent that no one in the country – whether they wanted to or not – could evade its impact. The visual manifestations that emerge reject and oppose, present the so-called alternative or resistance culture, the ideology of voluntary, honest and ingenuous protest, for which symbols are necessary in that they broaden the mottos' sense. There is no evaluation and the campaigns increase and expand exponentially as the movements strengthen in the collective unconscious. There is continuity, yet there is no morphological unity in the communication, and penetration becomes deeper in regards to the movement's reach. The most important means of communication is the poster, even though people appeal constantly to flyers and wall painting, and incidentally to the underground newspaper or pamphlets. The sense is conditioned by the terms of democracy, freedom of expression, repression, victims and victimizers, freedom, justice and victory.

These conscious configurations in the framework of communicative function display a series of variables dependant on the designer, the text, and the context; referentially, the intellectual and objective formulation of antagonist messages were carried out in regards to common references of the real universe: government, sovereignty, nation and people, and dissimilar references of the imaginary universe: humiliation against pride, oppression against freedom, darkness against transparency and violence against peace, all of them transmitting emotional and subjective attitudes of the internal issuer in regards to the reference: contrariness and liking, rejection and interest, repulsion and attraction, harshness and softness, based on which the receivers determined a spectrum of interpretations referring to all the mentioned surpluses of meaning.

The plastic qualities made evident during the Olympic Games the mastery of the conditions of visual grammar, defining an identity outspread in several means while in the movement's propaganda, images were shown that were recurring, reiterative, repetitive, common in the so-called political imagery, which emphatically formulates visual mottos so accentuated that they force the spectator to conduct a perceptual polarization that carries an ideological imposition, thus complying with the phatic function through redundancy resources that capture the receiver's attention and constantly surpass the limits of the message itself – even of its semantization – to create reception.

Discourse is the maximum unit of determinants of the visual text, it is conditioned in visual communication by the ends to which it is destined. Each deliberate form of proceeding includes a specific and characteristic manner of constructing and organizing the messages.

Each one of the visual discourses is understood as a system of communication that requires its particular forms of showing issuers, messages and receivers, in which the forms of response cannot find their efficacy anywhere but within themselves. And so factors of pertinence define these discourses, where resources, such as rhetoric, also acquire sense in the framework of similitude and coexistence with other languages, such as the verbal, which can be used as consistent support for the messages.

¹¹ Cfr. Olga América Duarte. *Op. Cit.*

In the sixties, in Mexico, important visual discourses were defined for graphic communication:

The *discourse of advertising*, which integrated the relationship between the designed image and mercantile thought, manifested in all the forms of expression of the Games' advertising, whose goals were related to the promotion of events, products and services, clearly understood as merchandise, and the promotion of activities are considered commercial in that they belonged to the business of entertainment. The content of their messages mainly referred to values arbitrarily adjudged to a sporting event and its expectations of national prestige.

Semantically, people turned to the evocation that emotionally anchored the receivers and to the persuasion that incited individual and collective emotions based on subjective motives like the access to unknown levels of life, the participation in vicarial experiences associating multiple unconscious socio-cultural ideas, feelings and aspirations in which the individuals generate new interpretations of a certain phenomenon.

The *propagandistic discourse*, forming relationships between the designed images and the political thought, also known as political imagery, aimed at the persuasion or promotion of ideas, aspiring toward popular manifestation as a form of response including student leaderships and leaderships of important social groups, addressing mainly well-defined groups of youth, workers and marginalized people.

The movement's messages focused on values that are the object of the political combat, on the daily problems of a people, on the educational project and on the censorship over the prevailing form of power adding invitations to mobilization, unity and other types of manifestation.

The summons exhorted participation in political action, attempting to show the true face of the conflict aiming at defined situation without allowing the receiver any choice.

The *educational discourse*, forming possible relationships between the designed image and informative objectives, included in a sense the symbolic information manifested in arbitrary and conventional meanings, particularly in the development of signposting, museographies, and architecture photography narrating sports-related activities, and in another sense, information with contents referring to the articles that were published everyday in newspapers and magazines narrating reviews or commentaries on the student movement pretending with that to inform the public of the events taking place.

Although it is true that in the course of over three decades of evolution of design in Mexico, a more extensive discursive typology has been established, these were the fundamental discourses that emerged in the sixties with the approximation of these two historical events deeply coincidental in their content and their visual manifestations, with analogous contemporary expressions without losing the link with the historical sphericity to which Sloterdijk alludes, in which the universe is a related whole of which we only occasionally perceive fragments that we occasionally come to relate and synthesize.¹²

Graphic design is always immersed in the universal networks of culture, and as part of them, requires spatial and temporal distance to acquire its correct historical dimensions. Distance allows comprehending that the rebellions of the sixties awoke a sleeping generation that walks the streets chanting the *La Internacional* and closing a fist as a sign of inconformity without realizing that it is already impregnate by resignation and disappointment, marked by the right wing's lack of ideals and by the lack of reinvigorated strength of transforming visions. The word of this generation wears out in its own *nihilism*: *no* to being geniuses (*Berkeley*), *no* to the old world and *no* to the word (*La Sorbonne*), *no* to the consumer society (*Prague*), *no* to what is possible, asking for the impossible (*Mexico*). That decade was the time of escaping to nowhere (*The Nowhere Man*), for philosopher Alejandro del Palacio it raises "*the dilemma between being and existing, between life and duty, in a world of empty institutions, alien to their own goals, stagnant, false and corrupt, that deny the happiness that is present and make it impossible for the future, a result of the hypocrisy of history, that builds a labyrinth that never heard of Ariadne's thread.*"¹³

¹² Peter Sloterdijk. *Esferas I*. Ediciones Siruela, Madrid, 2003. Colección Biblioteca de Ensayo

¹³ Alejandro del Palacio. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 6 y 7

The sixties, amidst the deep crisis, promote the opening of graphic design, a discipline that sustains the possibilities of the current visual culture without deciding upon its permanence in the world of graphic arts, currently translated into depoliticized and decultured technological performance or affecting through visuality the historical subject that is reclaimed through the formative possibilities of design.

Graphic design has not known how to avoid the phantom of ambiguity that, since the sixties, moves along the stages of thought and reason, of creativity and imagination. The rebellion of the word propitiated in time the rebellion of the imagination, and with that, the vacuity of the designed. We graphic design professionals have allowed the natural critical and subversive character of our discipline to travel first as an academic issue only to dissolve in the subject of marketing, this way sacrificing the qualitative for the quantitative.

The influence of the dilution of the self, of the loss of the individual and his identity, is one of the sad heritages of the movements of the sixties, the lack of sense in the socio-cultural horizons motivates a permanent clash with the disciplines which, like graphic design, constantly struggle in favour of the sense of the image and the sense of the messages. These confrontations intensified during the most recent decade as a result of the advances of digital technology, favouring in design paradigms that are alien to it.

We must remember that in 68, culture in Mexico suffers incurable wounds, opening its doors to anti-culture; the universities are delivered to bureaucracies that are alien to their political and cultural tasks, eliminating all forms of youth participation in the academic life; the desire to know disappears from the classrooms, forums and dance, theatre, literature, film and reading workshops are closed down, as are student associations; forms of teaching that are alien to the needs of the new generations are imposed, halting the development of critical universities and of criticism of the universities.¹⁴

The silence of the movement surrounding culture, in spite of influence by the cultural Olympiad of the official world, does not offer, propose, or demand the spirit of humanism that teachers and students invoke in Paris.

The aggression against culture noticeably impacted the alternatives of visual culture, making it reductionist in morphological, chromatic, typographic and photographic aspects, notwithstanding the poundings of monoculturalism, the absence of local, national or regional choices. The eclecticism and stylistic regressions motivated, for example, by the lack of mastery in Bezier painting or the sensationalist pastiches that facilitated programs of image manipulation, none of them based on conceptual consideration, on the contrary, guided by aspects of operational incapacity.

In the configurations and expressions of design, knowledge is applied, whose intentionality creates, in addition to hybrid gratuitousness, confusion in the meaning of the messages, manifestation of conceptual scarcity in which form is transmitted through repetitive and inefficient schemes, resources are superficial, and not even a purposeful *Kitsch* can be declared, since the terms and contents are unbeknown, and therefore are not possible sustenance.

The stylistic mixture appears thanks to a haggard postmodernity whose argumentation is diluted in the vertiginous result of ephemeral information, “*everything goes*” is easily transformed into “*couldn’t care less*”, which combined implies that “*couldn’t care less about design*”, this way, form dominates content and this task only looks for the outer determination of the matter which no longer subordinates itself to any inner determination, this way paying the price of having chosen the uncritical and unconcerned vision of a decade that is understood as a turning point for understanding the docility and the diffuse conscience, loss of ideas in benefit of a globalizing vision that materializes in the isolation and passive solitude that promote television and the internet, the one-dimensional man of Marcuse, ideological guide of 68, whose work, financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, led dialectics to a point where it becomes impossible and is lost in the negotiation with no theoretical or historical possibilities to advance toward new stadiums of knowledge or social development.

Visual communication, which is the essence and standard of graphic design, moves more and more toward the same goals as the exercising of power, phenomena such as *marketing*, *styling*, *packing* or the *creation of image* are practices induced by the forms of productions, promotion and consumption that cancel the possibility of

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 73

communication and the conditions of dialogue, affirms Rubert de Ventós¹⁵, who alluding to the visionary attitude of Tomás Maldonado, agrees on the progressive hypertrophy of the media due to technical, economical, political dominants that are imposed according to the necessities of a productivist system that is supported by the concept of globalization.

Tomás Maldonado, since 1953, affirms that “*culture is communication. Any object created by man*”, he says before the sixties, “*must belong simultaneously to the ideological and material dimensions, therefore, every designed object is communicative. The communicational phenomenon is a fact that is both cultural and social, and nowadays communication, in all orders, has been replaced by chitchat.*”¹⁶ This type of chat is understood as a superficial exchange of words that, after the sixties, is not only verbal, but also visual, fulfilling its function based on a minimum repertoire of pseudo-meaningful graphic nuclei that are reaffirmed in strategies of continuity, constancy and permanence that are learned and repeated in endless chains of apparent communication that is presumed as dialogue when it is no more than a technique of simulation of the visual communication.

When in the phenomena of visuality one distinguished between *experience* and *perception*, the visual experiences have intentionality and direction toward a state of things, they point out paradigms and so their content is equivalent in a complete proposition, the fact that the visual experience always includes intentional contents by way of concrete propositions, allows affirming that they gather the conditions for the fulfilment of communication needs. Visual perception is a relationship between the mind and the world, which occurs interminably in receptive chains, which are genuine empirical experiences with properties and content, but this content, is not propositional. Intentional experience has a conscious sense, unlike perceptual experience, which is limited to physical conditions.

Graphic design, along with its most important conceptual frameworks – graphic communication and visual communication -, have broadened, raising dilemmas in regards to the marginalization of knowledge and the creation of *pseudo-myths* that substitute the *raison d'être* of design and the critical vision of sense by the technological cult - which is not technical -, performance and instrumental mastery, thus understanding the new technologies as current forms of alienation, this being confirmed by the abysmal knowledge and by the digital world's dominion without obsession in the field of design.¹⁷

The professional strategies involve the sharp comprehension of the globalized world in its original version, in which the word only substitutes the words of colonization and imperialism that were generated by the manifestations, belligerent conflicts, interventionism and authoritarian and dictatorial processes of the sixties. Globalization is a concept whose re-interpretation, since the anthropological foundations of multiculturalism, provides enough reasoning to maintain *difference* as an essence of *identity*. Under this level of thought, there is a commitment to link the idea of knowledge to the idea of identity, establishing new semantic fields based on interdisciplinarity, that is, make an opening to alternatives of approaching design that will sustain its *praxis*, considering as primordial the notions of meaning and of design process based on the sequentiality of semiosis and interpretation.

Based on the previous, there is an attempt to establish as a transcendent condition, the equilibrium of thought based on the theory of mentalities that, originally conscious of its plurality, its historical wealth and its tradition in visuality, attempts a mediation between *equivocality* and *univocality*, including in equivocality the ideas of interpretation that in one way or another presume an infinite practice, in which significance never ends because it belongs to a chain of continuous interpretations, that are already given in many cases, and so one interpretation laps over another. On the other hand, there are the trends of univocality, whose interpretation techniques, in demands that could be qualified as reductionist, tend to search for a unique meaning, whose intentionality is also considered as the only possible and valid one.

15 Cf. Xavier Rubert de Ventós. *Las metopías*, pags. 83–90

16 Tomás Maldonado. “Problemas actuales de la comunicación” in *Escritos Preulmianos*, pags. 91-93

17 Luz del Carmen Vilchis. ***Reinterpretando la identidad. Esencia del diseño latinoamericano frente a la globalización***. Ponencia. UAM Azcapotzalco, México, 2006

Visual equivocality tends toward such complexity that it requires explanation in spite of its pretensions of maximum objectivity in messages and its manifestations in regards to attention to phenomena under conditions of equality of sense. At the far end, from a romantic – comprehensive and intuitive – imagery, there is a search for subjectivity that is manifested in the preponderance of the individual and his emotions, whose diversity, and variety of form and background prevents the identity of sense. It is symptomatic that both visions coincide with trajectories that emerge from the confrontations between objectivity and subjectivity in the sixties which, by not thinking beyond themselves, cancel the possibilities of defining future horizons and their assimilation, remaining as simple catalysts that allow neutralizing and destroying the most authentic intentions of the student movements.

In the fields of knowledge of design, it is important to overcome the limitations of univocality, in this case represented by the apparent nationalism that is characterized by the frivolity of the signs and the superficiality of its meaning, creating confusion in aspects of difference, and therefore in identity, thus act the *virtual designers*, parochial simulators that only want to secure the insertion of their work into the context of minimum perceptual effort of their receivers, also included here are those who guarantee the “recipe” for design, and, on the other hand, the miscalculations of a equivocality that always looks toward other spaces and cultures designing its own thing, in a dynamic malinchismo that looks anxiously at all the models that are liable to be copied that, with minimal modifications are presented to the receivers who sometimes do not even understand them due to lack of elements necessary to elaborate a precise translation of their elements, this way, the *android designers* are created, who are automated entities that pretend to build a “globalized” image that apparently formulates meanings that are common among many although in fact they do not satisfy a single person, we can also include here those who consider that, based on given repertoires, it is possible to solve a design problem.¹⁸

In both ends there are deceits, false representations, disguise, and deep inside there is ignorance regarding the processes of communication, all of this in the constant revealing of that which is fictitious which sometimes, painfully originates in the teaching of design that imposes the acritical and casual conditions of the decade of uncertainty: people simulate knowing design, simulate teaching design and eventually, people simulate designing creating a synergy that underlies in the different disciplinary fields around the world, in an inevitable sequence that produces behaviours in dimensions directly proportional to the transculturation of their people.

The comprehension of most of the connecting threads of the current conflicts in the conceptualization of design must not be separate from the transcendent moments of the ‘60s, nor should it be separate from the effects that stirred up the ethical judgements regarding social movements that ended as they started, amidst confusion and contradiction; for some, these were merely failed rebellions in which the main actors became spectators of the decay of culture, for others, it was a confirmation that it is impossible to escape the system and that protest is futile; for the critical minds, the subversive actions wear out when the historical subject is cancelled, vanishing all possibilities of social transformation. The theorists of graphic design face a dilemma ever since the sixties: to remain within the comfort of the apparent amorphous and hollow vanguard, deprived of ideas, opening the path for theoretic contamination and perversion that leads to the cracking of discipline, or to deliver to future generations methodological foundations that legitimize their task, returning to the authentic active and combative convictions that participate in the premises of reason and understanding, this way avoiding the disciplinary marginalization of graphic design and the loss of its disciplinary identity.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*