

## Notes: 2

### Notes 2: Paul Glennon

Barbican / London / 11.30 – 4.00pm, Saturday 7th Nov / 2004

Communicate Exhibition Symposium: What is the 'Spirit of Independence'?

R. Poynor, M. Johnson, J Barnbrook, N Brody & J. Warwicker

How does a designer retain his/her independence? Rick Poynor put this to the panel. The main point seemed to be how much the designer could get their own way over the clients. Michael Johnson from Johnson Banks exemplified this by showing work that was used outside the UK. Clients such as the British Council hired Johnson to promote British Culture abroad, e.g, clever posters that explained irregular verbs (drink, drank & drunk), or posters with two faces split down the middle and joined together to make one face (Benny Hill & Mr Bean). All such examples are in the exhibition. Recently, Johnson Banks have redesigned the Shelter logo – look out for the 'h' in Shelter!

Jonathan Barnbrook was amazing. He has his own company but has designed many excellent fonts such as 'Manson' (now called 'Mason' for interesting reasons) and 'Bastard'. Jonathan is a real maverick and manages to select his work from a moral stance. He appeared to be affected by politics and was not happy that 'Bush got back in'. He also introduced the audience to his term, 'Globalization'. This was in keeping with his book design which he did for Damian Hurst: 'I Want to Spend the Rest of My Life Everywhere, With Everyone, One to One, Always, Forever, Now.' Booth-Clibborn Editions; (June 1, 2000). Barnbrook needs to be different.

After lunch Neville Brody began his talk chewing gum and chatting about Tottenham and various football scores. This led him easily onto his topic of 'bringing chaos to order'. He recalled being in trouble at college and his tutors constantly telling him that he could not do 'this or that' with type. Neville continued in this vein mentioning the strikes that were occurring during his college years and how he was deeply affected by world events. He did admit to wanting to be an artist but thought that it was too 'money orientated' so headed for another form of mass communication.

Brody seemed perturbed that people had forgotten how to 'criticise' and that we were all living in a 'cloned world'. He made reference to replica town centres and highly polished Graphic Design with little narrative and no authorship. He was influenced by the work of the Constructivists and advised the audience to research great work: 'don't rip it off but interpret the work in today's world'. He made a lovely comment about putting words to image to make a third meaning.

John Warwicker from Tomato was the last to talk. Like most of the fifteen associates from Tomato, he seemed 'off the wall'. He challenged Heraclitus' statement that 'you can never enter the same river twice' He said this was 'bollocks' and that you could not even do it once. He is very preoccupied with change, flux and movement. Earlier in his career he was part of the music group 'Underworld'. Like Brody he feels that music is linked to the subject (he would not call it Graphic Design as he stated that he knew not what it meant!) One interesting piece of work was the 'Absolute Vodka' bottle made of lights near Wormwood Scrubs. The shape of the bottle was made out of lights and was shot from a helicopter. Looked pretty amazing, but not helpful for the prisoners.

The 'Spirit of Independence' seemed to be balanced by the designers' need to survive (kids, mortgage, etc.), however it was agreed that as designers we might just have the power to influence the powers that be, for the better. (NB – no women on the panel. What is that all about?)