Concept of this book:

To describe the secretive nature of the Dutch and the tolerance and openness they have to various issues and the openness they have to design in the same regard. The design will be pragmatic and strcutured, while at the same time, conceptual and dynamic. The book should adress history and play/use it's context in new ways as well.

studio

a research essay by Mathias burton

dumbar

Graphic Design has a multitude of diverse characters. Various aspects of their life help to define the work that they create and help us to understand it. Gert Dumbar is a graphic designer from a culture that is well known for its presence in the graphic design world, the Netherlands. His work has been displayed and described in many articles and magazines, and there is discussion on the impact his work has had for his surrounding culture, other designers, and the movements of art, design, and philosophy that he has been compared to and a part of. Gert's work for specific clients such as Royal PTT Nederland's and the Zeebelt theatre have been topics of discussion for many designers and design publications defining and describing much of Gert's impact in the field of Design today. Now, after a forty-plus year career, which he has just recently retired from, the name Dumbar can be spotted on at least three separate continents His studio, Studio Dumbar, continues to make a lasting impact under it's co-founder Michel De Boer, and so prominently continues the Legacy Gert began back in 1967 after finishing his graduate studies (Galgiani 3).

I believe that his work has an important resonance in understanding the role a graphic designer plays in creating visual forms and the roles that one is responsible for in his society. Gert Dumbar is great designer that has impacted the field in a positive way, resulting in great work, better understanding of other designers, the importance of education in design, and the relationship a designer has with his own cultural history. He has brought a lasting impact in many different places of global society.



The Netherlands is a unique culture in Europe, known for its historical presence in the realm of fine arts. This historical relationship with art, art appreciation, and creativity has led it to also have a firm relationship to the practice of graphic design.


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locat

The land of the Netherlands being below sea level has had the challenge of securing their country against natural disasters. In this regard, the land has been greatly altered by its people to protect themselves from natural disasters such as floods that could destroy their cities. "The landscape is the most synthetic and orderly countryside in all of Europe, and to a large extent natural forms have been removed, supplanted, and reorganized by man's creation" (Purvis 3). A multitude of audacious and unique designers dwell there. "Geographic conditions had an effect upon the Dutch vision, and there is a distinct link between the landscape of The Netherlands and the origins of modern Dutch Graphic Design"(Purvis 2). Dutch designers are well aware of their context in graphic design, and Gert Dumbar is no exception. The influence of Dutch culture on Gert and his studio, Studio Dumbar, is very clear. Especially in that he has visually helped to produce much of its urban landscape. "There is no Dutch town that does not convey a Studio Dumbar Design: if there happens to be no police car nor a post office to be seen, there will be a poster somewhere, or a telephone close by" (Dumbar 1). This is referring to a few of the projects Studio Dumbar has done over the past forty years, including work for PTT, the Dutch communications company, and the Dutch Police force. Along with work from another client, the Zeebelt Theatre, Gert has certainly played a major role in defining the culture he is a part of as well as defining the goals of his studio, and the special relationship that a designer holds to it's clients. It is unique to the Netherlands to see their government as a good client let alone as a receptive one. Ultimately, Gert and Studio Dumbar have created impacting designs that are relative to Dutch life and their relationship to it.

ion





The Netherlands has a very rich history, deeply rooted from it's own unique tradition and styles. Although its population is decently small, fewer than 20 million, however, many famous and influential figures, especially in fine arts, have come from there (Print 50). It is position very well for global trading, very likely a part of the causes that led to it's rich history. Along, with other European countries, English grew fairly popular after the war ended in 1945 (Print 50). especially in comparison to their neighbors in Belgium. Religion has been less important in the Dutch culture, while politics and philosophies have been more influential in dividing the people's opinions on various topics.

"It was possible to find a Protestant cycling club and a general cycling club, and a Roman-Catholic cycling club, although special-interest groups would be just as easily split politically" (Print 53). Posters have played important roles in Dutch History of graphic design. This likely influenced Gert in his life as a member of his Dutch Society. "[The] Dutch poster embraces the idiosyncratic, conversational aspect of design" (Print b 80). Dutch designers, especially in their medium of posters, direct their concepts much more toward sense than logic, thus bringing another historical relationship to Dutch design in Gert saying, "It's an emotional thing," when describing his own poster designs. The tolerance and even embrace of their more excited and playful poster designs has actually led to more embrace of graphic design in the Netherlands are closely knit together. as a profession. In fact they have even become expected to provide "cultural stimulation usually sought from the fine arts"(Print b 83).

"Flexibility is the norm for a large portion of graphic design, which is geared to change. In posters and magazines, the visual languages of photography, typography and the fine arts are easily mixed together"(Roadshow). The lines between these areas, although defined separately, Gert has lived in Holland almost all of his life. He was born in Batavia, Dutch East Indies in 1940. There he grew up relatively unnoticed until pursuing college studies at a Dutch school, Academie Voor Bedende Kunste in The Hague. This helped to establish his interest in Graphic Design and eventually directed his studies into the field of Typography. Following this, Gert left Holland for a short period to study typography at the Royal college of Art in London, England. The RCA was very well known for it's fine art programs, beginning out of the arts & crafts movement. When Gert studied there, the college was in the process of Dramatic changes. His studies took place just before he began working at his first studio, from 1964 to 1967

history

perso

1967 One famous contemporary that studied there along with Gert was John Pasche, the designer of the Rolling Stones Lips logo, defining the sense of influence pop art was able to hold at the school during that time. It is unclear if the two were friends or not, however, they are most certainly each other's contemporaries (RCA). After finishing at the RCA, Gert returned to the Netherlands, and helped open TelGraphic Design Studio in 1967. He stayed there for almost a Decade before creating his home studio, Studio Dumbar in The Hague, Netherlands in 1977. He left in fear that his efforts for more commercial success would lead to his work being negatively impacted (Print c 93). Then, in 1995, he settled in at Hoscule der Bilendend Kuntste in Saar Brucken. Gert Has always been a dynamic character filled with personality. "Dumbar is an intellectual anarchist."(Print c 95). One small insert in Eye Magazine describes a firm amount of character about him in describing his collection of inter-war Parisian motorbikes.

He led at Studio Dumbar before finally passing the Studio on to his partner Max van Boer in 2005 (Galgiani 3). Between those times, he also worked as a visiting professor at the Royal College of Art in London from 1985 to 1987. "The Department at the Royal College is in a trough; it's like a motor out of tune" (Print c 99). Upon making major changes to the department, he was fired as he was said to be making the faculty "look bad." (Print c 99). He also held temporary teaching positions at Cranbrook, Bandung and Indonesia. Crazy, Spontaneous. Romantic. Optimistic!" Gert Dumbar's unabashed enthusiasm for French motorbikes from the inter-war period gushes forth. His is a mechanical escapism into scrap heaps, gourmet food and technological daring. "Sense. Feeling. Improvisation. Imagination." The expressive form of the motorbikes captures, for Gert, a spatial logic akin to typographic relationships. The French passion for the future, and spirit of adventure are manifest in the bodies of the bikes and in the hand painted logos that ride on their sides. It's the joy as well as the expression, and the willingness to take risks that characterizes French engineering innovation. It's a way of looking at life. "Good food, Good wine. Good Cigars". And style. On the weekends when he is in the French countryside, Gert joins up with the "Collector's mafia": former professors and professionals who traded in their coats and ties for grimy hands and rare spare parts. After 3:00 p.m. at the Parts Market, the eating and drinking begin and the unshaven devotees swap parts, passion, technical secrets and folklore As the day comes to a close, Gert Dumbar mounts his silver steed and rides into the sunset (Burdick 20). Along with his rebellious and exciting nature, Gert is a spirited person that believes in what graphic design can be. "These boys believe that they have all the answers, but in fact market-testing and analysis can kill the spirit of a project. (Print c 99). Without a doubt, Gert was a man of a unique character. Both dynamic and structural, He was both Dutch and globally aware, and he truly presented himself to the world as his own being. Upon his first meeting of Gert, Steven Heller describes his meeting of the man himself.



nality

I vividly remember our first meeting. Dumbar wore self-confidence like a finely tailored suit, but he was not really what I had expected. He did not dress in the finery typical of a big-shot design mogul who works for prestigious companies. Nor did he come off like the irascible anarchist I thought I would find. His appearance was unpretentious, yet he had a total sense of himself and his purpose as a designer (Print c 88).



In that meeting, Gert made it clear that he knew exactly what he was designing, who came before him, who his contemporaries were. Gert grew up without a father and lived in what is now Indonesia, but was then the Netherlands (Print c 91). His mother married a lawyer when he was eight and tried to bring them to Indonesia but they were forced to return to the Netherlands (print c 91). He also served time in the army for almost two years after a year of studying painting when he was 18 (print c 91). He finished an apprenticeship underneath Paul Schuitema, a Dutch designer that he greatly admired (print c 91).

He believes in putting humor into his work and does it extensively. "The pepper spices the food the way humor spices up design; and for me, it is automatic. Frankly, I simply can't take things too seriously. Well birth, love, and death need to be taken seriously. But graphic design? Never!"(Print c 95). The most essential thing that is apparent about Gert is his consistency with everything he does. He continues his creativity through each of his clients, both big and small. He is someone that is not afraid to stand out. Upon working on a smoking commemorative, his design "was the only one out of 100 posters by a group of internationally know artists and designers." Gert certainly was accomplished as a character and as a designer, in describing Gert's career for an article in Graphis, Max Bruinisma said, "To say that Gert Dumbar is a very established designer, is a truism and an insult at the same time" (Bruinisma). In that same article he said, "thirty years of criticism didn't prevent Dumbar from becoming one the most copied designers in the Netherlands," a means to accurately describe his influence in the culture he is a part of (Bruinisma). He understood his cultural and historical context, and believed that that graphic design should be fun. His character and his designs were one in the same. Also, to understand Gert is to understand a bit about Dutch Culture. A few important Characteristics that the Dutch have become suited towards are pragmatism, tolerance, and unique sensibilities in modernism. The pragmatism that seems prevalent in the Dutch is the rationalization in the purpose of their projects.

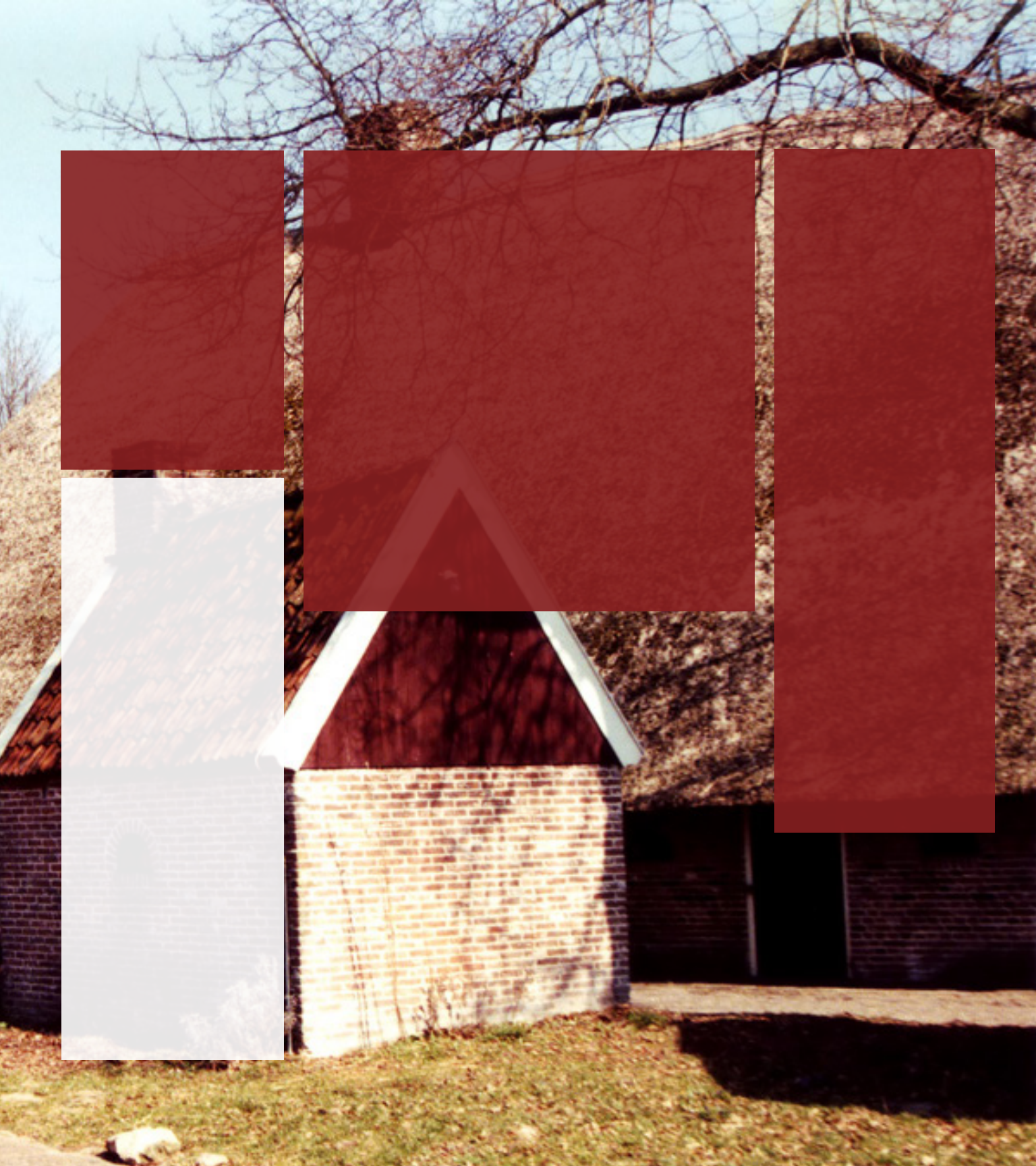
"Dutch Graphic Designers have always pursued a firm rationale and theoretical basis"(Purvis 5). Whenever reading about a project, it is quite clear that Dutch designers know what they have done within the project and rationally can describe why this decision was as important as it was. Gert describes Dutch design as having two distinctive characteristics, which can be easily found in his designs as well, " Individual Freedom," and "Order and Planologie" (Dumbar 1).

The pragmatic nature of their work seems to stem from the pragmatic nature of the visual landscape they live in. Beyond Aesthetic measures the Dutch have taken in sustaining their land, the reason it is structured the way it is structured is for the rational purpose of safety, and sustenance to their future. They structured their land out of necessity and they approach design problems with the same sense of necessity. Tolerance is probably quite a passive word for what the Dutch are willing to embrace. Very few other countries offer as much freedom and acceptance to their people regardless of its possible negative outcomes. The Dutch allow people to make conscious decisions and accept and even embrace them much more than other countries. Amsterdam, well known as the home of the Cannabis Cup, is one example of their tolerance. As one of the few countries allowing it's citizens to participate in the use of Marijuana, prostitution, and other controversial issues. Their reasoning is primarily pragmatic, stating that controlling problems is more important than trying to force a solution. In any case, however, it is clear that their pragmatism has led them to accept and embrace various ideas and tolerate others. This sense of tolerance has led to many unique perceptions within the context of their graphic design. "Perhaps the Dutch feel they are free to do [what they do] because only 14 million people speak their language and they live on different sides of different canals" (Print b 61).



In many ways, the layout of their country, being small in contrast to the mass of Europe, in way forces them to defend their identity, as to what makes them Dutch (Krayer). "Design is like a sports event," as the culture embraces graphic design in the ways that other places simply haven't giving them the free dom that they have (Krayer). The Dutch government in this way has become a unique client in the world.

"In Holland, design for government is of a high standard, setting Holland apart from most other countries. It is a state of affairs that may be attributed in part to the fact that the Government in the Netherlands has always been a good client, having been quick to recognize the great importance of good graphic design for effective communication with the public" (B'lak 7-8). "It starts with the government," as much of the embrace to good graphic design is passed to the culture from its government (Krayer). In the same spirit, its people have come to both tolerate and appreciate various forms of graphic design. In Fact Gert himself claims, "In the Netherlands, top-quality graphic design is for everyone"(Dumbar 1). The audience of the Dutch is most certainly unique from the rest of the world. The Dutch people and designers are often described in a similar way. "The Dutch are innovative, tolerant, and receptive to new ideas while at the same time tenacious about their beliefs"(B'lak 4). The various contexts of Dutch history, from the De Stijl movement, and external influences such as the Bauhaus have subjected the Netherlands to a uniquely modern visualization in design. It is very clear that the designers understand where they sit in the context of Graphic Design history. "The graphic design that goes on here [...] is the direct result of this deeply rooted tradition [of Dutch design history] (Dumbar 1). Their unique approach to modernism has taken on a definition all its own. Gert and Studio Dumbar have also translated these unique modern traditions in their work and redefined them to their own contexts. "[...] Transparent structure and order on the one hand and anarchist playfulness on the other."(Dumbar 4), Studio Dumbar rides this line as often as they can; making it apparent in every job they produce.



One of the unique things about Studio Dumbar is the way in which they hire new designers. Gert believes in youthful energy and creative ambition. He established a consistent process of hiring young employees, often bringing in designers graduating from the prestigious Detroit-based graduate school, the Cranbrook Academy of Art, along with other various schools. This has also allowed Studio Dumbar to have his visual aesthetic that is constantly changing and growing. It also brings in a variety of styles that have brought about the diversity and range of visual solutions he's provided to a variety of clients. In this manner, designers will come and work for a few years and will leave on good terms and go on to explore other studios, or even start their own. This has made Studio Dumbar an active place that many famous designers, especially well-know Dutch designers, have at some point worked at. One of the major relationships that Gert has held is with his long-time photographer Lex Van Pieterson, which has developed the studio as being a unique balance in it's use of type with image. Studio sessions are done within the studio. And often with some wild and very interesting results. Pieterson brings a unique style and aesthetic to the Dumbar process. Often, his photographs play important roles in the final designs they are created for. The images are made with three-dimensional objects, and are blurred, cut into, and destroyed in an infinite number of ways. "Objects, photographs, and type are combined in dramatic 3D assemblages that redefine the boundaries between graphics, photography, and illustration"(Print c 95). Studio Dumbar keeps a fairly small to medium staff size, currently somewhere under 30 designers. This allows for better flow of concepts and idea creation throughout the different sections of the studio. Studio Dumbar has seen a variety of impressive clients in their thirty years of business: Apple, Dutch police force, KPN, PTT, Holland Festival, and Zeebelt Theatre just to a name a few. These clients have ranged in size from completely local in the Netherlands to continent-wide and even worldwide. Gert understands the role he plays in Dutch graphic design, well aware of his place within its context of history and even his geography.



"So it was more or less a forgone conclusion that in the early 1920's, when all over the world graphic design began to evolve into a discipline of its own, Dutch designers Piet Zwart, Paul Schuitema and Gerrit Kiljan should be in the front line"(print 4).

"Young designers yearn to work at Studio Dumbar because Dumbar is both a vociferous critic of mediocrity and a charismatic proselytizer of good design." (Print c 93). The dynamics of Studio Dumbar are a breeding culture for ideas and development. In describing how Studio Dumbar works Gert responds, "I travel a lot", says Dumbar, "and I visit a lot of other design bureaus. And it always strikes me to see how much less hierarchical Studio Dumbar is in comparison. In many design bureaus you see a few stars surrounded by an army of slaves who work out their sketches. Nothing of the kind has ever happened at Studio Dumbar's! We cherish the originality of the individual designers; they produce concepts and sketches and then Michel (de Boer, co-creative director at Dumbar's) and I just give our fatherly comments.

We bring in our experience" (Bruinisma). Collaborations seem to have happened with just about everyone that has made any impact in Dutch Design. Irma Boom, a famous Dutch Book designer had worked there for a while even. Another name from Studio Dumbar is Vincent Van Baar, known for loving Theater Zeebelt, one of Dumbar's major clients of the past. Another designer to come through the doors of Studio Dumbar is Petr Van Blokland, a typographer and designer from The Hague. Martin . Venezky finished an internship there. Vincent Van Baar "has worked with Studio Dumbar as a designer from 1981 till 1988 and since 1997 as a design director. Vincent Van Baar is an accomplished designer and director who worked on complex visual identity projects for large organizations"(World Connect).



Harmin Louwe began her career after college at Studio Dumbar." It was a seamless continuation of being in art school," she would exclaim (Bucher 1998). Luc(as) De Groot worked with Studio Dumbar during the process of designing the PTT identity. He designed an intermediate weight through a pragmatic process, leading to his development of the interpolation theory (Millendorp 192).

It allowed him to create the intermediate weight to balance effectively between Frutiger, the PTT identity typeface, in its bold and regular forms. In many ways, Dutch graphic design involves a sense of community and interaction of various designers. Many designers from the Netherlands's movement of De Stijl interacted with each other in a similar way. Piet Zwart worked with Theo van Doesburg and so forth. "Dutch graphic design is a hermetic world. To continue the story: all the members of Pingpong also used to work at Studio Dumbar"(B'lak). However, their styles still continue to be unique, to a point some say," These designers share little other than an assertive attitude"(B'lak).

Defining the aesthetics of Studio Dumbar is a complicated thing. His range of client work is extensive and approaches various audiences and clearly describes his awareness of his historical position in graphic design. His type seems to present a classical modern style that becomes transformed and progressed over time. Describing the style that Gert creates is difficult. He says, "People ask, what is this for? But there is no logic to what we do: it is an emotional thing" (Dumbar 3).

In the same context, however Gert also said, "I would love to present a timetable which is completely unreadable"(Dumbar 3). His Dutch style has also led to his pragmatic approach to design problems, leading to simple and successful results. In on specific project this becomes extremely apparent. "'Dutch Design for the Public Sector' is the title of a traveling exhibition shown in galleries, museums and a variety of other locations throughout the world. The Dutch ministry of Culture commissioned Studio Dumbar to Design the exhibition in 1978. Four people can assemble the result in less than an hour, and the packing cases become the benches so there's no dead weight and nothing to be stored or mislaid while the exhibition is under way.



mento

Another unique aspect of Studio Dumbar was its relationship with Britain. Along with his influence as a teacher at the RCA, Gert often put his studio's work into D& AD competitions, which he would often win and receive quite a multitude of recognition for. A few of his more notable students, David Ellis and Andrew Altmann at the RCA began Why not Associates (Poynor 59).

[...] He introduced his students to the Dutch concept of combining craft skills with avant-garde ideas. He then challenged them to continually dispute what is conventional and inspired them to fashion their own graphic vernacular. In the case of the Future Why Not designers, that dare eventually led them to develop a look that is best described as a mishmash do digitally produced New Wave. Constructivism and hallucinatory internationalism, featuring bright colors, fractured grids, and randomly layered images set against soothing backgrounds, of clean, white space (Harper 140).

In ways like this, Gert has left lasting impacts in London, along with other areas of Britain. Although his time at the Royal College of Art was being cut rather short because of the extreme progressive nature of teaching that he has, he was able to accelerate student to be independent, creative, and take risks, adjectives that could describe his life in an extremely accurate manner.

Many other small studios, another more famous one being 8VO, were started in Britain following Gert's short teaching position.



His times as a visiting professor to Cranbrook held much of the same influence. Although Gert held much different beliefs about the purposes of and theories of Graphic Design, he found himself intrigued by the forms that the students at the school were making, creating and developing a relationship with the school's students to come work for him for some time (Poyner 58). Some of the students influenced from his teachings and lectures were Jan Jancourt, Edward Mcdonald, Robert Nakata, Devid Frej, Allen Hori, and Martin Venezky (Poyner 58). They had influences on his studio as well as their forms became part of the visual identity presented through the work that came through Studio Dumbar. Things such as this have begun to build a reputation of studio Dumbar as an experimental environment. "Studio Dumbar is a School in the best sense, where the "students" contribute to the curriculum."(Print c 99). In many ways, European design studios are generally closer than other places with academic programs as internships are mandatory to supply as requested by the government (Krayer).

This is something Gert tried to accomplish while teaching at the RCA. Although his time at the RCA was cut short, it was not without growth, the school did develop very much so, and Gert really does visualize himself as more of an educator and leader than that as the head director. Likely the thing that has attracted people from Cranbrook and the RCA to come to Studio Dumbar is the open-ended attitude that Gert and Michel hold about what the designers beneath them should be doing. They come to Studio Dumbar knowing that they would be asked to play with type, that they would be asked to enjoy what they are doing, and yet the seriousness of a professional job will still be there. "Work Hard. Play Hard. That was Studio Dumbar, as Ken Krayer reminisces to his experience as a Cranbrook graduate coming to an internship at the studio (Krayer).

Being a graphic designer in Holland is a unique experience, often described as blessed. "The position of a graphic designer in the Netherlands remains very different from other countries, even neighboring ones such as Germany or Belgium. Peter Blak commented, "Solid traditions and respect for graphic design; open, progressive education, funding to begin a practice, and a broad range of clients with subsidized projects. Ignore the first paragraph; the easy life is not such an oversimplification. Having studied, lived and worked in the Netherlands for the past few years, they are reasons why I work here too"(Blak). "It is impossible not to notice the impact of graphic design in everyday life."(B'lak) In a largely different way, the Dutch people not only tolerate good design, they embrace it. Their clients, and specifically the Dutch government, is more than just receptive to the designer's ideas and are willing to take in ideas that other country's clients would never even pay attention to. Upon asking Lust, a design studio, if they ever work with American clients, and what it is like, the responded saying with a smile, "It just doesn't work for us to work the way they do. " It seems that many Dutch designers hold that opinion. One of the unique aspects of the Dutch design studio experience is the backing the government gives to up and coming designers. Grant money is available to them. "The BKVB (The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture), for example, subsidized more than 5000 artists and designers in recent years, enabling them to concentrate on developing their work, to keep afloat in day-to-day practice or finance their personal projects. Such support offers newly starting designers an opportunity to establish themselves without major financial difficulties. Although most of the stipends come directly from the central Ministry of Culture, the funding institutions make their selections independently, employing juries of experts. Many designers in the RAS exhibition ben efited directly from this process" (B'lak). The most important difference between Dutch Graphic Design and graphic design everywhere else is ultimately the level of trust the client will put into the designers. The designer is often treated more like a colleague than that of tool to improve their business. They see graphic designs being just as important as their job, and their input is just as valuable as theirs. They respect what a designer studies and the unique perspective he or she brings to the projects that they work on. "The position of the graphic designer is constantly changing. What was once described as a problem-solving industrial art no longer considers itself merely subservient. We are currently witnessing the designer's urge to establish his or her own voice, which includes the creation of autonomous (non-commissioned) work. It is not unusual for designers to be involved in specifying the exact nature of vague assignments , or creating and editing content, so the difference between the self-initiated and 'real' commissioned projects becomes increasingly blurred"(Blak). "Thanks to the great creative freedom that cultural institutions extend their designers, posters also reflect changing mores: sexual openness. Pluriform ethnic culture and sometimes even an almost alienating compulsion for innovation" (Roadshow).

In the Netherlands, until recently, telecommunications were a governmental organization. Pay phones and so forth were run by a governmental organization, combined with their postal service, PTT. PTT stands for Post, telefoon en telegraaf. Many artifacts of Dutch culture came through the way of PTT. Stamps were designed for PTT, phone booths, advertisements, and so on. It would be difficult not to be near something managed by PTT in the Netherlands in the 20th Century. Recently (1989), PTT has become privatized and is now known as the company KPN.

They are located in The Hague. KPN now provides almost 6 million Dutch with mobile phone services and about 3 million with Internet services. It is also the largest telecommunications workforce in the Netherlands with over 100,000 employees (Hulsink 208). Both PTT and KPN identities were designed at Studio Dumbar and are some of Studio Dumbar's best-known work. Studio Dumbar took on the task of creating the standards manual for PTT telecom, extensively researching and defining the identity of the company visually and structuring it into a set of manuals describing the visual identity in a multitude of situations. The corporate typeface is called Frutiger. The intermediate weight was designed by Luc(as) de Groot, which led to interpolation theory (Millendorp 221). PTT has been open client to many Dutch designers, Jean Francois Van Royen, the director in the 1930's commissioned major designers, like Piet Zwart and Neville Brody on stamp Designs (Literacy 284). Van Royen played a major role in causing the PTT, a governmental organization to be such an excellent client for Dutch designers to work for. He was extremely critical about state publications and the ways in which they were presented visually (Millendorp 314). He had interest in typography, graphic design, and bookmaking, all of which he had influence from the Art's and Crafts Movement. Although he did take criticism back from the organization, he worked extremely hard to create opportunities for various designers in the Netherlands. Early on he commissioned K..C Bazel, a modern Dutch architect and designer, to design stamps. Following this success he also designed their first telephone kiosk, laying much of the early groundwork that Gert and his studio would eventually create a standards manual for.

Another early project Van Royen commissioned was The PTT Book, designed by Piet Zwart, for the audience of children, and pushed the aesthetic direction of PTT forward (Heller 315). Van Roen's impact was left well after his death at concentration camp in 1942(Heller 315). Until the PTT became privatized in 1989, the primary policy of the PTT's art and design department was to provide the proper image for the organization, while providing ample and open opportunities to the artists and designers it commissioned (Heller 315). PTT has supported art quite prominently throughout it's history and it's art collection can display art from every major movement of Dutch art history (Heller 316). In 1970, research began as to what the image of their company was to the employees and local culture (Heller 317). The project for the Standards manual began in the hands of Gert's first Company Tel Graphics, and was then passed to Studio Dumbar (Heller 317). The primary director on the project was another famous Dutch designer, R.D.E Oxenaar, who was then chosen as the Esthetic Adviser for PTT in 1976, and helps to launch the project in 1981 (Heller 317). Although the manual is dramatically extensive, extremely thoroughly researched, and reworked and examined in a multitude of directions, there were many exceptions for historical and efforts for high quality (Heller 317). PTT has set much of the standard as the ways in which Dutch industries as an example to follow, leading to many new initiatives of other firms (Print 53). PTT has benefited very much so from the interaction it has had with Dutch designers and artists (Print a 61). Much like Studio Dumbar, collaborations with designers run deep with names: Sandberg and Walter Nikkels have done annual repots, R.D. E Oxenaar was the esthetic advisor, and so on (Print a 66). The high quality of art on their stamps and designs of their standards manuals and its manifestations, help to identify the same qualities to the character of the company, something of even more importance, as they no longer have complete monopoly over their country's telecommunications (Print a 68). The KPN identity is both rigid and dynamic, presenting the sense that Gert created opportunity for creative development within the strict standards he developed.



process

Another early project Van Royen commissioned was The PTT Book, designed by Piet Zwart, for the audience of children, and pushed the aesthetic direction of PTT forward (Heller 315). Van Roen's impact was left well after his death at concentration camp in 1942(Heller 315). Until the PTT became privatized in 1989, the primary policy of the PTT's art and design department was to provide the proper image for the organization, while providing ample and open opportunities to the artists and designers it commissioned (Heller 315). PTT has supported art quite prominently throughout it's history and it's art collection can display art from every major movement of Dutch art history (Heller 316). In 1970, research began as to what the image of their company was to the employees and local culture (Heller 317). The project for the Standards manual began in the hands of Gert's first Company Tel Graphics, and was then passed to Studio Dumbar (Heller 317). The primary director on the project was another famous Dutch designer, R.D.E Oxenaar, who was then chosen as the Esthetic Adviser for PTT in 1976, and helps to launch the project in 1981 (Heller 317). Although the manual is dramatically extensive, extremely thoroughly researched, and reworked and examined in a multitude of directions, there were many exceptions for historical and efforts for high quality (Heller 317). PTT has set much of the standard as the ways in which Dutch industries as an example to follow, leading to many new initiatives of other firms (Print 53). PTT has benefited very much so from the interaction it has had with Dutch designers and artists (Print a 61). Much like Studio Dumbar, collaborations with designers run deep with names: Sandberg and Walter Nikkels have done annual repots, R.D. E Oxenaar was the esthetic advisor, and so on(Print a 66). The high quality of art on their stamps and designs of their standards manuals and its manifestations, help to identify the same qualities to the character of the company, something of even more importance, as they no longer have complete monopoly over their country's telecommunications (Print a 68). The KPN identity is both rigid and dynamic, presenting the sense that Gert created opportunity for creative development within the strict standards he developed.

"Provides a severe order that stimulates a high degree of recognizability, while at the same time leaving surprisingly ample room for playful variations on the established theme" (Bruinisma). Another special client of Studio Dumbar is Zeebelt Theatre. This is a local art center in which independent artists are brought in to perform, making it a local theatre in The Hague. Gert was a co-founder and board Member for a long time. Studio Dumbar is well known to have worked on their posters. "In an inversion of their usual relationship [type and image], the photograph takes on the role of the 'grid' while the type becomes the illustration allowed to play freely across this stable base." This is one project in which Lex Van Pieterson's photography played an extremely important role. The images played the role of grid and structure as the type above moved about in a multitude of ways. The poster would be reprinted and silk screened over top of the previous series, keeping consistency through the image, and reusing materials. The Zeebelt Theatre logo was designed at Studio Dumbar in 1989. Prominently transforming the letterforms by repeating their structure, Dumbar continued their concepts of appropriating things from the project itself and even in a sense, deconstructing the identity of Zeebelt itself "(Lupton 53). "Using dramatically staged still-life photographs as a ground for finely wrought typographic compositions (Lupton 53). The reusing of the posters even develops conceptually in historical contexts of the Dutch East Indies. Designers such as Jan Bons were reusing posters and printing over them again and again during times of paper rations in the mid 1940's and it is likely that Gert came across poster like his during his adolescence and has appropriated this historical practice, maybe not just in rationing like the designers before him, but rather for the aesthetic forms that it creates (Print 50). The projects for Zeebelt are some of it's most prestigious."

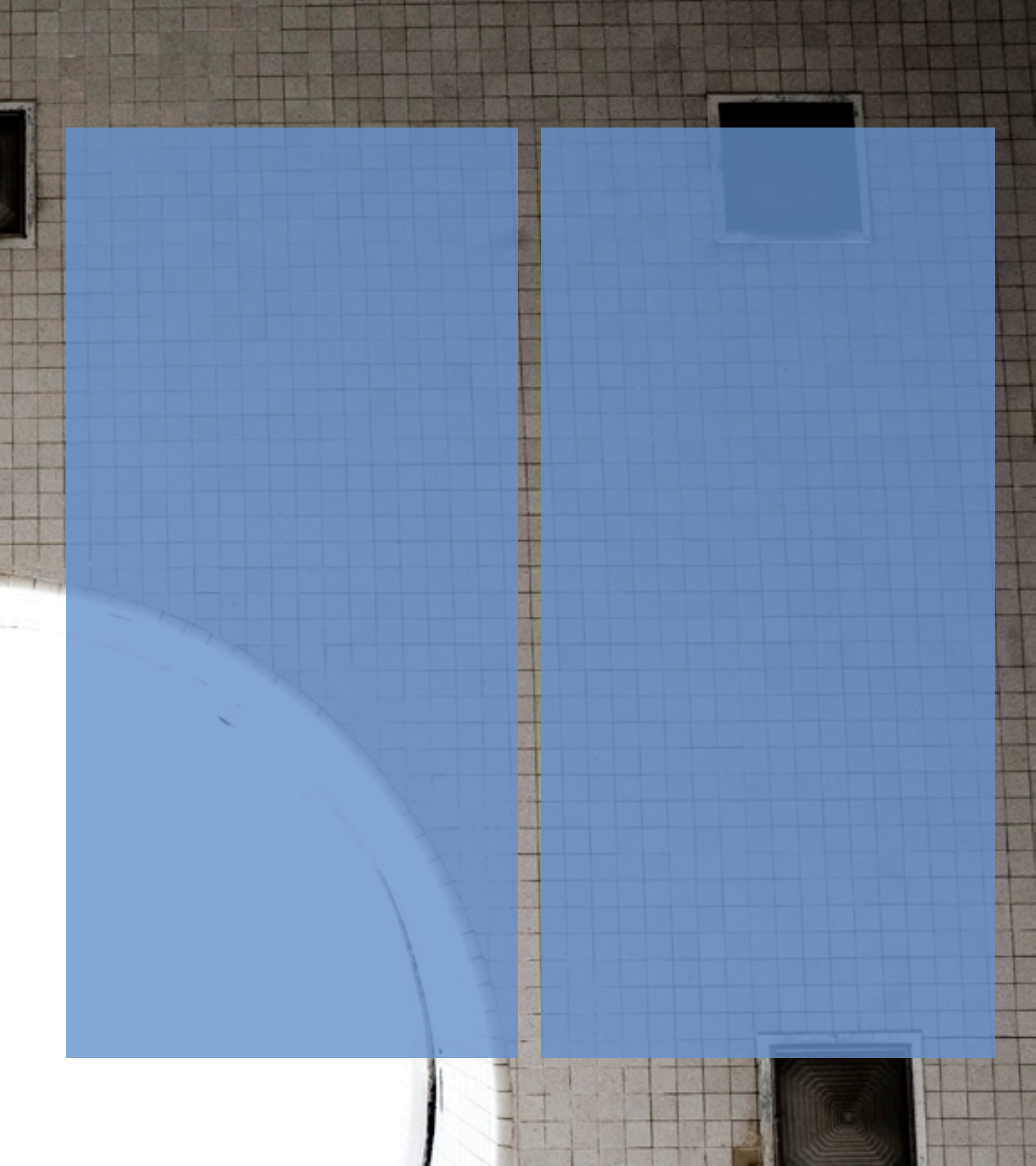
We (like the French) find our strongest visual culture in announcements for cultural events, such as theatre performances, festivals or exhibitions" (Roadshow). His involvement with Zeebelt and the excitement for the client is very clear in the output they created. "Even when compared to their regular output, the posters that Studio Dumbar design for the local cultural center of Zeebelt, are irreverent indeed. Dumbar, co-founder of Zeebelt, 'sponsors' the theater by providing their posters and other publicity material. "It is the playground of the Studio", he says, "where we can experiment with images and typography in a way that is sincerely informal. We don't do that all the time - actually most of the time we're very serious!"(Bruinisma). One aspect that rings true in Dutch design is a subtle, passive, yet important piece of Dutch identity. In their tolerance and embrace of various issues, such as prostitution and their soft drugs policy, there is a sense that secrets are just as important as their openness. Although, they allow and embrace prostitution, there is a sense that one not needs to introduce it often. In the multitude of articles about Dutch culture, very little is said about the policies other than that they are working to control the issues that are seemingly uncontrollable. Although the use of marijuana, for example is legal, buying marijuana through means of warehousing is still illegal, however the police realize that it the only way that they can receive the amounts of the substance that are needed to sell within their coffee shops. The owners recognize this issue as do the cops, but instead of constantly arresting these people, the police will passively allow it to happen, not with their consent, but rather their allowance of the coffee shops to hold a sense of secrecy to this process.

It is a means by which the Dutch embrace the concept of secrecy into their culture. It infiltrates a multitude of aspects about the country. One of the most appealing things about the graphic design that comes from the Netherlands is this sense of secrecy. Even with all the information being quite presented, there always seems this sense around that there is something more going on. One example is the Zeebelt theatre posters. With the printing over old posters, one can recognize that there is information beneath, but it is no longer readable or even noticeable sometimes. Also, the images, being covered in areas by text seem to hide information about the image beneath and what is being shown to the viewer. Also, the passive notion of stereotypes in the icons used in one poster for Zeebelt, introduces the speaker's geographic background, however sparks an almost "secretive" sense of secondary meaning beyond presenting the speakers, and raises a dialogue about stereotypes about those cultures, an issue well outside of the poster's commissioned purpose, however, just as important as the poster informational aspects. The government recognizes this need for secrecy in working with R.D.E Oxenaar in creating their beautiful designs for their money.

"This same bank [Nederlandse Bank] thought of the bank note primarily as a functional consumer item and not as the carrier of a message from the state to the people. On the premise that designer and client have different responsibilities, the bank never felt it necessary either to usurp the designers function or to hand down an esthetic veto"(Haase 70).It is this sense of tolerance that helps secrecy to be part of the aesthetic in Dutch designers, as in the meaning things hold. In this way, words like, "It's an emotional thing" can hold resonance with clients in ways that clients in other countries simply cannot. It is somewhat a byproduct of the tolerance that people hold inside the borders of the Netherlands.

The art and design world of the Netherlands appears to be much closer than in other cultures. Although it is clear especially to Dutch designers that they are NOT artists, it seems as though the relationship between the two is slimmer. Stuart Bailey upon writing about the Good but beautiful design showcase in 1952 brought up, "Bearing in mind the accompanying protests that Dutch graphic design continues to consider itself art rather than industry, staging this show in a contemporary art gallery rather than a design institute is already a provocative act – but a popular one judging by the claustrophobic opening night. Such exposure and interest in contemporary graphic design on this scale was unimaginable back home in London, and the apparently exhaustive coverage across media, styles and generations since the last major survey in 1987 was accordingly overwhelming" (Bailey). Indeed, the relationship of art and design has always been around, a unique relationship seems to be apparent almost across the board of major Dutch designers. Although their work may resemble fine arts more than other cultures, it clearly has a defined structured understanding of the importance of clients as a part of the work they do. Gert, along with his contemporaries are very consistent about ensuring that the things they make, are usable and practical to use for a client. They are not looking to make a poster that would sell in some heavy golden frame on a wall of a museum of art, or to be kept safe by a curator and shown at shows in years to come. The Dutch designers want their posters to be in public, they want interaction with clients, especially ones like PTT or KPN.

Although these designers certainly aren't artists, their work is given the same level of creativity and is not diminished in purpose.



Although many times, the clients don't necessarily agree with studios immediately like Studio Dumbar, they are willing to tolerate and embrace them pushing concepts forward, simply for the sake of developing form and ultimately believing more in the power of design. Gert most certainly believes in his designs and he truly stands up for them when he needs to. His vivacious energy and extreme passion for design has helped give this level of credibility to Dutch designers. Their commitment to make the designs work for their clients has led to conceptually founded designs that accomplish things that solely market-researched designed cannot do. Max Bruinisma describes the official anarchy behind Dutch design in a publication he wrote: "Although I maintain that a typographical approach underlies most of Dutch graphic design, the designers that I want to introduce here are generally aiming at an image.

Ordering information is the least one can do. On top of that the design must be evocative, emotional—and personal. Dutch graphic design is concerned with two—apparently conflicting—goals: To order information so that it becomes generally recognizable, but at the same time to be recognizably individual: the designer, the carrier of messages, wants to assert himself as well." (Bruinisma).

Graphic Designers in the Netherlands strive to be just that, designers. They don't live solely in the realm of visual play, but they do understand the importance of that within their work. Gert Dumbar understands himself as a designer and his role to his clients to play as well as communicate to the audience. He avidly pursues this and does every project with both aspects mind. He makes sure that visual creativity can be matched by persuasive clarity and a sense of unique placement in the society around him.



dumbar

a research response by Mathias burton

These two clients represent what I would consider the unique process upon which Studio Dumbar goes through with their clients. For example, both are approached in the pragmatic manner, however a pragmatic manner that is relative to their respective purpose. Zeebelt is a local theatre speaking to an audience that finds interest in creativity, uniqueness and expression. Conceptual thought matters to them and they look for it. Corporate style culture, on the other hand, needs to be approachable by anyone and is practically as general as audience can be. Although children may not be using pay phones that often, they need to be able to just as an old person may need to. Also, trust plays into the pragmatism as well. Trust is almost essential for such a general company if anyone is going to use their phones or communication services. KPN is even more important to convey trust as they are now more focused to generating income. Being involved in the stock markets like Euronext involves having investors believe in them and their products. If people don't trust them, people won't invest in them. Therefore, the visual identity need be unique and dynamic as well as reliable and simplistic. Simplistic was essential in the identity of PTT especially, as postal services were involved as well. It is important that citizen understand where their post offices are, and that they trust them and uses them. The use of color offers an abstract pragmatism to this challenge. The pragmatism is ever prominent as well in their identity of police force. Here, they separate the police from other organizations and company through the visual contrast of stripes. PTT literally does the opposite, ironically making feasibly just as noticeable. Regardless, the purpose of the designs is resolved in practical manners, simplifying communication between the service provided and the person needing that service.



In comparing these two clients of Studio Dumbar, Royal PTT Nederland's and the Zeebelt Theater, I believe a few specific things become apparent. Firstly, I believe that although the two clients are extremely different, the influence of Dutch Culture is extremely important and clear to see in the work. In the identity of PTT, Dumbar uses simple rectangle and square structures, however they work in a complex and dynamic way, making the versatile identity usable in a multitude of ways. It is pragmatic in the relationship to the products that are put through PTT and PTT's relationship in Dutch culture and everyday life. The phone booths fro example, provide a rectangular shape, using color and light to identify it's purpose and allow it to bring visual attention to anyone passing it by. In the same way, the color structure of PTT's identity is repeated in multiple places around the Netherlands, making it iconic and representative even in many ways of Dutch culture itself. Even when PTT transferred its identity to KPN, Gert and his design team were able to concentrate the visual identity into its complex relationship with daily life any place in the Netherlands. Using three new colors, and vividly clear letterforms, the identity for KPN continues the valuable assets of its predecessor PTT,

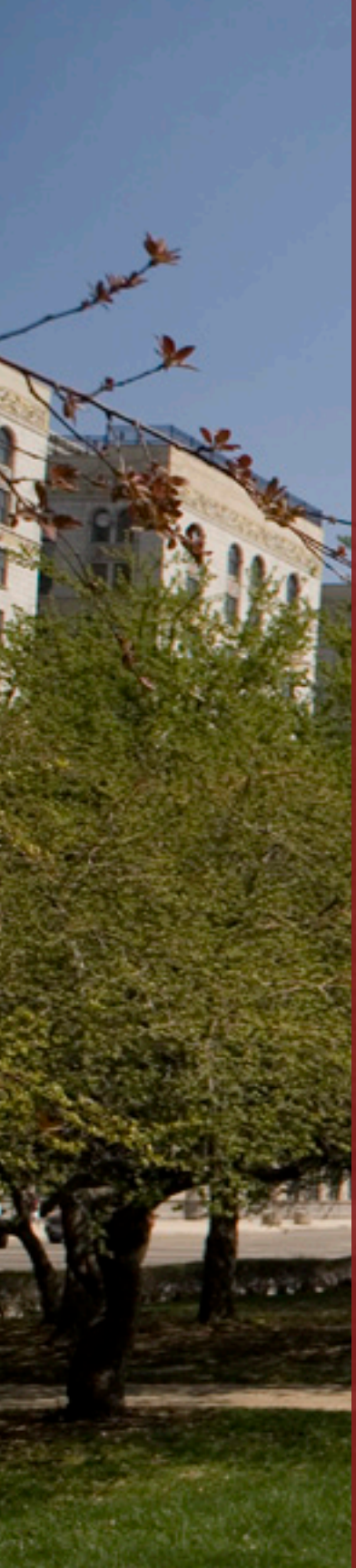
however with it's own identity structure. The unique shapes making up the visual logo to accompany the KPN letters bring visual attention to something that could otherwise easily be passed by. In the same way that PTT truck's colors and simplistic marking brought attention to the trucks that other wise would go unnoticed, strong visual graphics on KPN trucks and vans bring visual attention that speaks to a Dutch audience clearly and highlight the goals and purposes of KPN as did the simplicity involved in the visual forms of PTT. The forms are also uniquely modern as well. The structure of PTT as a governmental organization was likely overly complicated, and the identity structure created by Gert could make that simpler. PTT telecom stood for much more than one thing and a multitude of things within each of those things. It is hard to imagine connecting a postal company, telecommunications company, and constant interaction with public domain working simply, however, the strong colors create an arresting relationship between passive design, as there is actually very little happening, and the impact of those solid colors completing a simplistic relationship to the street they are displayed on and represent able in a business format as well.

The Dutch audience that Studio Dumbar designed for is a more tolerant audience than other places. They are willing to embrace things than other cultures. The police force tolerate soft drugs passing through people's hands at coffee shops, although warehousing this is illegal, and that is the way they are supplied. In this same way, the Dutch are willing to tolerate posters that change type drastically. That isn't to say that the poster are illegible, but rather that they take bit longer to retrieve information from. On the same hand, the Dutch appreciate clear communication as come from PTT for example. They are willing to embrace the bold colors and will start to appreciate them as well.

The Zeebelt posters, I believe have a postmodern aesthetic. Although the images are fairly stable and work to create a sense of a grid structure, displaying a sense of unity and so forth, many postmodern themes appear within them. The type for example is purposely handwritten, displaying a clear awareness of the poster's positioning in society as a mass medium object; however, it is challenging the mechanization that mass reproduction would generally do to a poster. The illustrations work with humor occasionally, such as the stereotypical icons. The image appropriates itself each time it is printed upon, reusing the image, and redefining it's meaning each time. The actual images used are of postmodern awareness as well. Most articles discussing these posters place this poster in this category; however, I believe that they have fundamentals of modernism apparent as well. For example, the concept defines the project in structural format.

Zeebelt, though still in public domain, has a much more directed audience. In designing for the Theatre, Gert's goal was not for everyone to pass by, pay attention to it and respond to it. One reason is that the theatre is not meant to hold hundreds of thousands or millions of people. The intention of designs for the Zeebelt theatre was not to communicate immediate trust, nor was it to relate to its public domain so naturally. The theatre wanted to be a place with unique statements within its culture and speak to an audience appreciative of expression or art of many kinds. The corporate nature of PTT in contrast to a small local theatre allows for much more visual freedom, and practically commands it to stand out, rather than blend in with it's surrounding culture. Concept plays a more appropriate role, as it is probable that the audience the Zeebelt posters were directed towards would be searching for meaning in those contexts. One example are the cliché icons used to create the posters such as German Sausages, representing a German speaker, address stereotypes, arousing questions and thoughts, offering visual interest, and even a sense of play or fun to their design. It is made in a way that is meant to emotionally resonate with the viewer. Also, the process becomes apparent as the image covered with color blocks, identifying them as separate from the other events, but related in content, as they share a connected visual form, the image.

Also, in concept, Gert applies a more open aesthetic, challenging his medium in a new way, by emphasizing and changing the general relationship of type and image, progressing his medium, as the artists the posters are meant to represent do in their mediums.



Although at first, the minimalist sensibility that can be found in PTT's visual identity, further study of the standards manual tends to prove beyond just a clean modern identity. Although communication is clear, the color system is quite straightforward, and the identity is quite positive towards modern ideologies, the letters and colors constantly change and react in ways that rethink their purpose in society, as much in the postmodern way as in the modern. The standards manual isolates cinematically in relationship to the area of PTT that it stands for. For example, the green used on the pay phones identifies PTT's telecommunication services, letting the user know that green marker in relationship to the PTT services. It becomes a signifier of that branch, but something interesting happens in the amount of simplicity involved. The pay phone stations cause a sensible relationship to minimalist art, and actually stand out in an appropriated way. Also, the organization of the arrows on a truck design reuses the arrow multiple times, borrowing the icon, and structuring the icon repeatedly in a way that creates new forms I believe that both of these clients present another important aspect of Dutch graphic Design. In the ways in which they approach their projects, a vivid sense of curiosity through various forms is present and really epitomizes their process. image, and their relationship, and most certainly would require a long amount of time in ways that are by no The work's playfulness invested into playing with the type, means scientific. It takes an excessive amount of curiosity to reach the complexity of the Zeebelt posters; much in the same way it takes to cause the relationships of shape and type structure to establish the PTT identity. Even the PTT standards manual itself was filled with playfulness within its structure and many aspects of its details were treated in way outside of its general structure. Although the typography is generally legible at Studio Dumbar and presents the information quite pragmatically, it still produces a sense of wonder as to what the type could be, leaving not simply a sense of a finished piece, but rather a process of playing and thinking of the type in various forms. The Holland Festival posters, somewhat similar in aesthetic style of the Zeebelt posters, convey a major playfulness to their typography and the means by which it manifests new shapes and structures, bringing energy, rhythm and movement into the posters. It expresses a sense of process as one and visually sees the growth in additions that the Holland Festival logo takes, and the type that surrounds it as well. This visual presentation of the process within the work expresses the effective curiosity that the Studio Dumbar's Designer are asked to work towards.



It does not give the sense that the poster isn't about legibility alone, nor is it solely about creativity alone. It balances these things in unique manifestations and is made even more apparent within the entire body of Studio Dumbar's portfolio. The Dutch ministry police force identity conveys idea of what the police could look like rather than what they have looked like in the past, and repositions the police as a more prominent thing in the society around them, very much so in a new way. Also, it brings even more unique character to the Dutch people in their ability to tolerate more assertive and dynamic design than other countries. Another example is their designs for ideas magazine, presenting ideas of their own and showing the manner in which there design was created. A fair challenge to the work of studio Dumbar would be that he is free and creative in his low-paying clients and stricter with his business-oriented clients. Although I think this argument is presentable. I would have to disagree with it. In all of the work done at Studio Dumbar, there is the same sense of wonder, curiosity and play. I believe that he approaches the work given to him by clients in the way it needs to be: fun and practical. He is doing work for the client to accomplish what the designs are for, and that sense of fun still comes through. For example, the work the Rijksmuseum or PTT may not be as out they're per say, nor is it so complex and wild. It shouldn't necessarily be that way either. Both of those clients need to be trustworthy and easily recognizable. I think that the PTT vans are a good example of this. Imagine passing a bright green Van with three letterforms on its side in America. It would capture people's attention almost immediately, yet it would be clearly understandable. The play is still visible, yet the results show even more development than that. "Dumbar weighs each client's merits before accepting a commission." (Print c 96). This is the way I perceive his work. Just because his work isn't always fully postmodern or isn't always pushing obvious boundaries, he still is satisfying his curiosity and playfulness and actively pursues it in every client he works for. I believe that in many ways, the simplicity of PTT's identity is even more playful than his posters.





To imagine a company like AT&T with blue, green, red almost makes me laugh. In so many ways, the vivid personality of an identity system can be diminished because of its placement in society. First and foremost, Gert wants his work to actually work in communicating something. He addresses the clients he works with in powerful ways. Designers like Neville Brody struggled to have companies outside of the music industry embrace his ideas, whereas Gert and his relationship with design work for the Dutch government, is able to present work to these clients that is as spontaneous and experimental as the posters for Zeebelt are. It is so extensive to see his work as whole next to the philosophies he holds. The idea humor may never seem present to some in the work of corporate identity, but imagining it there reminds me of the PTT structure. His use of dots and lines, shapes and colors remind me of growing up learning the color names and drawing shapes. In that sense, playfulness and cheer for something as serious as telecommunications is quite extraordinary and not normal answer. Also, I think that the nature of his work is to enjoy the process, thus redefining the reasons that Gert chooses his commissions so carefully. The best thing about his work is that it is very difficult to pigeonhole him as a conceptual poster designer, postmodernist, modernist, or even solely as Dutch. All of these things play parts in his design and he values that he presents to his clients. "Our style is that we don't have one." (Bruinisma). I believe this is what makes them stand out above other Dutch studios in that they create for projects, what they believe needs to be created for them. Another important relationship that connects the two organizations that Gert designed for is their historical contexts. In the Zeebelt posters, as I had mentioned, Gert's reappropriation of his poster prints, reprinting over them, like his predecessors had done, PTT was asked to keep the traditional building and history was involved in the research Gert and his team had done. Gert believed in history as playing an important role in the design of his client's projects. He was well aware of his historical context as he is documented saying even, but he made it much more clarified visually in the work he made. The awareness of position in both time of history and the place of history in which the projects were designed played important roles to Gert's design approach.

Possibly the most important connection Gert held with both clients was his dynamic personality, his energetic and positive attitude towards what he does. Gert lives to do his graphic design and loves it very much. He strives for quality and excitement on each project. His dynamic personality and charismatic soul is what pushes him towards a stronger concept as well as interest in Parisian motorbikes.

He loves beautiful form, something Van Royen aspired to bring into the identity of PTT. Zeebelt, PTT, and Studio Dumbar all loved their Dutch culture and wanted to bring a positive influence into it. I believe that Zeebelt's purpose was provoking thought to Dutch society and Gert wanted to accomplish this same thing. PTT presence in Dutch culture, and of course their telecommunications purpose shows their desire to spark community inside the Dutch people they serve. Even as KPN now,





Studio Dumbar's dynamic working structure very much so intrigues me. I try to imagine the sense of deadlines, meeting, intense hard work, and a high standard for excellence and quality in a perfect balance of enjoyment, playfulness creative energy and a whole lot of fun. Even though Studio Dumbar is another studio and nothing more, there is this sense that something is happening inside of it's designers and leaders, and even it's clients. The passion Gert has for graphic design bleeds through in every aspect of their business. He loves the process of creation, and he loves to make things that can resonate in the way that his work does. I think of how people at Studio Dumbar feel when they work on projects like the PTT and KPN projects, the Dutch police force, Zeebelt Theatre, and the European Union, and I imagine the sense of responsibility to visually identify the Dutch people, and the companies that make up it's landscapes and how they play such an important role in the way that people in the Netherlands live and feel, and the role that their culture plays in a broader relationship to the world they are still a part of.





Dutch men, women and children see Gert's design commissions every single day. They interact with and go by his posters. They talk on the phone booths of KPN, and they sometimes are in need of help from the police. Gert doesn't seem to design just for the expansion of his portfolio's range, nor does he just want to accomplish solving some visual problem that a client has. He and his team of designers are a part of a collaborative effort in Dutch designers to visually impact their culture, and even create aspects of it. The Dutch designers go beyond just identifying things happening in their culture and designing in response to them, they are making things happen within the culture. Although it would be so difficult to say how much impact the graphic designs that are everywhere around their culture have,

Gert Dumbar's work has been described as Dutch, as postmodern, inventive, and many other adjectives that shorten the impact his work has had over a forty-year career. Gert is a major character in understanding why graphic design needs to exist in the first place. He has shown what good character, hard work, passion, and even geographic location can do to impact the world. Through his legacy as a design educator, his work as a leader at his own studio, and even the judging of various design competitions, the world has been given a multitude of gifts through his life. He has shown that design can do great things and importance on the world around us. The so called, "Maverick father of Dutch Design," well aware of the grandfathers before him has left a lasting and optimistic legacy to the next generation of graphic designers, of which I can only hope would be aware of his legacy and continue his enthusiasm, creativity, and excitement into their work.



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