

Iconoclash galore

This article first appeared
in the book 'Masters of Rietveld',
published by All Media in 2007

The work of Hendrik-Jan Grievink



Almost casually he produces a steady stream of brightly colored pictograms, logos, silhouettes and other clear cut shapes that make up a two dimensional world that is full of visual juxtapositions. His strategy can be best described as iconoclasm for postmodern times, or rather as an attempt for *iconoclash*. Whereas the former term is commonly associated with the deliberate destruction of religious icons, the latter expresses the forced collision of imagery that Grievink utilizes in an attempt to liberate pagan imagery from fixed meanings.

His work draws on such diverse sources as semiotics, pop art and commercial advertising. It cuts through the clutter of visual culture with collages that are razor sharp without ever becoming literal representations of cultural critique. In his quest for new meanings, he combines the visual clarity of traffic signs and Miffy with the activism of Adbusters and Naomi Klein, but never without a strong poetic twist à la Alan Fletcher. Existing images are skillfully assembled or recontextualized in order to expose their crumbling significance. The Mercedes-Benz hood emblem becomes a peace sign only by extending the upper point of the three-pointed star. And the warning sign for radioactivity blends easily into a landscape, like a rising yellow sun that appears on the horizon.

In a no frills, almost anti-style he shows the interchangeability of artistic, political and commercial interests. This is best illustrated by Grievink's playful reshaping of the letter 'c' in a copyright symbol, turning it into a diabolical snake that is chasing its own tail. As always, he seems to question whether true creativity can still be safeguarded if designers continue cannibalizing themselves by detaching the visual appearance of their work from its meaning in response to an all-encompassing market demand.

Michiel van Iersel

July 4, 2007

Image[®]

