

EZEQUIEL MARTINS FERREIRA  
(ORGANIZADOR)

# Antes:

INTERFACES E DIÁLOGOS  
INTERDISCIPLINARES

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INTERDISCIPLINARES

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### Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)

A786 Artes: interfaces e diálogos interdisciplinares / Organizador Ezequiel Martins Ferreira. – Ponta Grossa - PR: Atena, 2022.

Formato: PDF

Requisitos de sistema: Adobe Acrobat Reader

Modo de acesso: World Wide Web

Inclui bibliografia

ISBN 978-65-258-0053-0

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.530221103>

1. Artes. I. Ferreira, Ezequiel Martins (Organizador). II. Título.

CDD 700

Elaborado por Bibliotecária Janaina Ramos – CRB-8/9166

**Atena Editora**

Ponta Grossa – Paraná – Brasil

Telefone: +55 (42) 3323-5493

[www.atenaeditora.com.br](http://www.atenaeditora.com.br)

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**Atena**  
Editora  
Ano 2022

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## APRESENTAÇÃO

A coletânea *Artes Interfaces e diálogos interdisciplinares*, reúne neste volume quatorze artigos que abordam algumas das possibilidades da discussão em torno da arte.

Nos Capítulos 1 a 4 temos a experiência do teatro em suas relações com processos de subjetivação, e de compreensão da sociedade, além dos aspectos da comicidade.

É a dança que ganha voz, nos Capítulos 5 e 6, a partir da possibilidade do ensino da Língua espanhola e das relações entre corpo e capitalismo. E no Capítulo 7, temos uma relação importante, pela conexão atual entre o cinema e a condição pandêmica.

Nos Capítulos 8 e 9 são as artes plásticas que ganham voz. Enquanto os capítulos seguintes trazem as possibilidades a partir da música e da arquitetura.








Espero que pela leitura dos textos que se seguem, uma abertura crítica sobre a diversidade das possibilidades de uma leitura estética do mundo, surja para cada leitor.







Uma boa leitura a todos!

Ezequiel Martins Ferreira



## SUMÁRIO

<b>CAPÍTULO 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
LA PEDAGOGÍA TEATRAL, UNA PEDAGOGÍA DE SÍ, POTENCIADORA DE PROCESOS DE SUBJETIVACIÓN	
Arley Fabio Ossa Montoya José Joaquín García García Nubia Jeannette Parada Moreno	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211031">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211031</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 2</b> .....	<b>21</b>
O TEATRO DE GRUPO E SUAS PEDAGOGIAS SUBTERRÂNEAS	
Sinésio da Silva Bina	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211032">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211032</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 3</b> .....	<b>31</b>
DA NECESSIDADE DO TEATRO PARA A SOCIEDADE: DIÁLOGOS ENTRE DENIS GUÉNOUN E AUGUSTO BOAL	
Amanda Lima	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211033">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211033</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 4</b> .....	<b>39</b>
ATUAÇÃO CÔMICA: EXPERIMENTAR, CONVIVER E COMPOR	
Rita de Cassia Santos Buarque de Gusmão	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211034">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211034</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 5</b> .....	<b>49</b>
POSSIBILIDADES E LIMITES DA DANÇA FRENTE AO ESTRANHAMENTO DO CORPO NO CAPITALISMO	
Lailah Garbero de Aragão	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211035">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211035</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 6</b> .....	<b>58</b>
O ENSINO DA LINGUA ESPANHOLA MEDIADA PELA DANÇA NO CONTEXTO SOCIOCULTURAL NO ENSINO MÉDIO	
Adailza Aparício de Miranda Adalberto Gomes de Miranda Adailson Aparício de Miranda	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211036">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211036</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 7</b> .....	<b>79</b>
ARTE EM TEMPOS DE PANDEMIA - RESISTÊNCIA E VISIBILIDADES NA OBRA FÍLMICA JOAQUIM (2017)	
Zeloi Aparecida Martins	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211037">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211037</a>	

<b>CAPÍTULO 8</b> .....	<b>88</b>
O MERCADO DE ARTE: NOÇÕES HISTÓRICAS E CONCEITUAIS	
Bruno Cordeiro da Rocha Roseli Kietzer Moreira	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211038">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211038</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 9</b> .....	<b>98</b>
CROSSING BORDERS: INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN. REFLECTIONS ON THE ARTWORK OF FUKUDA SHIGEO	
Tatiana Lameiro-González	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211039">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.5302211039</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 10</b> .....	<b>108</b>
CADEIA PRODUTIVA DA MÚSICA DURANTE A PANDEMIA DE COVID-19: UM ESTUDO DE CASO SOBRE SÃO LUÍS DO MARANHÃO EM 2020	
Daniel Lemos Cerqueira	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110310">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110310</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 11</b> .....	<b>130</b>
ALFABETO MUSICAL, TABLATURAS MISTAS E A TÉCNICA DO RASGUEADO: A HISTORIOGRAFIA DA GUITARRA FLAMENCA NA RECONSTITUIÇÃO DA PERFORMANCE	
Dagma Cibele Eid	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110311">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110311</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 12</b> .....	<b>141</b>
VAMOS CANTAR: A IMPORTÂNCIA DA MÚSICA NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA CRIANÇA	
Ezequiel Martins Ferreira Ana Lucia Sena Neres Luciene Gonçalves Leite	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110312">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110312</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 13</b> .....	<b>153</b>
AS “HISTÓRIAS DA CAROCHINHA” DE HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS COMO RECURSO DIDÁTICO PARA ESTUDANTES DE PIANO DO ENSINO BÁSICO E SECUNDÁRIO DA UNIDADE ACADÊMICA DE ARTES DA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE ZACATECAS	
Samuel Caleb Chávez Acuña Solanye Caignet Lima Edgar Henoch Bautista Acosta Federico Morales Pérez Tejada	
 <a href="https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110313">https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.53022110313</a>	
<b>CAPÍTULO 14</b> .....	<b>168</b>
ARTES DECORATIVAS / INVENTARIO ARQUITECTÓNICO IGREJA DO SANTÍSSIMO SACRAMENTO DO CARVALHAL, BOMBARRAL, PORTUGAL	
Olívia Maria Guerreiro Martins Rodrigues da Costa	

<b>SOBRE O ORGANIZADOR.....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>ÍNDICE REMISSIVO.....</b>	<b>187</b>

## CROSSING BORDERS: INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN. REFLECTIONS ON THE ARTWORK OF FUKUDA SHIGEO

*Data de aceite:* 01/02/2022

*Submission date:* 07/01/2022

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**ABSTRACT:** Taking as a starting point the bilateral influences between Japan and the West in Graphic Design, this paper will try to delve into how the Swiss International Style has been part of the work of some of the most relevant designers and artists of the Japanese graphic scene. It will also address one of its most emblematic and influential designers, Fukuda Shigeo, paying special attention to his posters. Fukuda was an advocate of a movement that has spread all over the world and lives on in professional practice to this day. Graphic design, as a discipline, has existed since the middle of the 20th century, but its beginnings trace back much earlier. In the same way that cultures have been developing and, with them, different movements have arisen in literature, painting, etc., this same evolution has occurred in graphic design. Accordingly, many styles have been developed throughout history, among which one of the most important and characteristic is the Swiss International Style, a movement which emerged mainly in Switzerland, after the Second World War. Developed through the 1950s in Switzerland and Germany, the Swiss International Style peaked in the 1970s. Many of the theories that drew from

the style, especially those about typographic form and grid composition, are still very much present in the teachings of today's design schools. These formal parameters served as an inspiration for Fukuda Shigeo's artworks, who developed a personal style by narrating complex ideas through simple images, one of the basic premises of contemporary graphic design. Therefore, this essay aims to establish a formal multidirectional relationship between Europe and Japan. The European influences exercised on Japan during the second half of the Twentieth Century and how Japanese references in turn became part of contemporary graphic design, will be analysed through various graphic words.

**KEYWORDS:** Graphic Design; Influences; East-West; Multidirectional; Fukuda Shigeo; Swiss International Style; M.C.Escher; Artworks; Typography;

**RESUMEN:** Tomando como punto de partida las influencias bilaterales entre Japón y Occidente en el Diseño Gráfico, este artículo tratará de profundizar en cómo el Estilo Internacional Suizo ha formado parte de la obra de algunos de los diseñadores y artistas más relevantes del contexto gráfico japonés. Se abordará a uno de sus diseñadores más emblemáticos e influyentes, Fukuda Shigeo, prestando especial atención a sus carteles. Fukuda fue un defensor de un movimiento que se ha extendido por todo el mundo y que perdura en la práctica profesional hasta nuestros días. El diseño gráfico, como disciplina, existe desde mediados del siglo XX, pero sus inicios se remontan a mucho antes. Del mismo modo que las culturas han ido

evolucionando y, con ellas, han surgido diferentes movimientos en la literatura, la pintura, etc., esta misma evolución se ha producido en el diseño gráfico. Así, a lo largo de la historia se han desarrollado numerosos estilos, entre los cuales uno de los más importantes y característicos es el Estilo Internacional Suizo, un movimiento que surgió principalmente en Suiza, después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Se desarrolló en Suiza y Alemania a lo largo de los años 50 estando en auge hasta los años 70. Muchas de las teorías surgidas del estilo, especialmente acerca de la forma tipográfica y la composición sobre retículas, siguen muy presentes en las enseñanzas de escuelas de diseño de hoy en día. Estos parámetros formales sirvieron de inspiración para las obras de Fukuda Shigeo, que desarrolló un estilo personal narrando ideas complejas a través de imágenes sencillas, una de las premisas básicas del diseño gráfico contemporáneo. Así pues, a través de esta propuesta, se pretende establecer una relación formal multidireccional entre Europa y Japón, analizando las influencias europeas ejercidas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX en Japón a través de diversas obras gráficas y cómo dichos referentes japoneses forman parte del diseño gráfico contemporáneo.

**KEYWORDS:** Graphic Design; Influences; East-West; Multidirectional; Fukuda Shigeo; Swiss International Style; M.C.Escher; Artworks; Typography;

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

A new style of Graphic Design, known as the Swiss International Style, was developed in Switzerland and Germany during the 1950s. Soon, this trend was assimilated by some of the most relevant designers and artists of the Japanese graphic scene, as their work demonstrates. Taking into consideration the bilateral relations between Japan and the West pertaining Graphic Design, this paper will try to examine in detail how these influences are echoed in the posters of Fukuda Shigeo. Deemed as one of the most emblematic and influential graphic designers, Fukuda advocated a movement that has spread worldwide and lingers in professional practice to this day.

Many of the theories that stemmed from the Swiss International Style, especially on typographic form and grid composition, remain highly relevant in the teachings of today's design schools. These formal parameters also served as inspiration for the works of Fukuda Shigeeo, who developed a personal style by narrating complex ideas through simple images, one of the basic premises of graphic design. Therefore, this essay seeks to establish a formal, multidirectional relationship between Europe and Japan. The European influence exercised on Japan during the second half of the Twentieth Century and how Japanese references in turn became part of contemporary graphic design, will be analysed through various graphic works.

## 2 | BILATERAL INFLUENCES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

Graphic design —understood as a discipline of its own— was only distinctively developed from the mid-twentieth century onwards. According to Richard Buchanan, until the mid-nineteenth century, it was barely an art intended for commercial purposes in the

West, and the distinction between art (subjective expression) and design (communication) had not been drawn (1992: 5). Gradually, designers evolved from merely decorating to holding an active role in society and culture. Over time, graphic design has undergone different transformations resulting in several trends and conceptual approaches.

Poster Art, as a social practice of public nature that combines text and image for communication and accessibility purposes, plays a fundamental role in the development of graphic design. Such communication is based on local visual codes, attributes or singularities specific to a culture and a particular register. Consequently, this factor has to be considered during the elaboration of a study where visual messages are present. Addressing graphic design research requires to analyse and recognise the idiosyncrasies, local values, customs, culture and socio-political history of the country under study, in order to determine crucial points to decide what matters. Moreover, the scarcity of academic material regarding Japanese graphic design should also be considered in current research. In addition, the Western world has painted a selective picture of the East, which has influenced our way of understanding, representing and approaching it. While the globalisation of capitalism has further Asian cultural awareness, stereotypes and beliefs that shape our perception still persist and, therefore, are infused in the production, determination and reading of visual codes.

In Japanese culture, Graphic Design developed as a commercial art form influenced by the Western avant-garde movement from the 1920s to the First World War. Both Hobo and Kaiser agree on modern graphic design in Japan as the fusion of different sources. (Hobo, 2015; Kaiser, 2006). This is exemplified by the Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, which strongly appealed to people and paved the way for the printing of commercial graphic communication, along the Neo Ukiyo-e or Shin-hanga, illustrated posters, and many others up to the most experimental and contemporary practices. Nonetheless, Japanese graphic art also played a role in Western Graphic Design. Art Nouveau, one of the most obvious expressions of commercial art in the West, was influenced by Japanese art, particularly when it comes to the Arts and Crafts movement. Conversely, the impact of the French movement on Japanese graphic design was evident too, especially when looking back at figures such as Sugiura Hisui (1876-1965), who advocated for the professionalisation of designers and raised awareness about visual design education.

Menegazzo stresses that a very particular trait of Japanese culture – extremely captivating to the outside world – is its ability to innovate while preserving its cultural identity at the same time (2014: 11). Despite being influenced by Western views, 20th century Japanese graphic artists produced a number of masterpieces that reflected the heritage of their artistic legacy. Not only they documented the changes in their society, but showed the specific features of Japanese visual culture.

Due to westernisation being banned in Japan during the Second World War, it was only in 1951, when the Japan Advertising Artists Club settled, that graphic designers turned

posters into tools of artistic freedom and expression, propelling them to cult status. In this regard, poster design is one of the most functional and effective ways of communicating messages, and commercial and ideological information. A key element in the history of Graphic Design, used to visually convey ideas and meanings in everyday life.

In “Graphic Design: A Concise History”, Richard Hollis explains why posters might be considered a starting point of sorts (2002). Indeed, he understands them as the simplest medium in Graphic Design. A single sided, unfolded sheet. Poster art compels designers to become aware of and explore the relationship between words and images in order to make the most of it. Thus, displaying the synthesis, coherence and harmony that are expected in Graphic Design.

As a matter of fact, how a culture develops can be studied by analysing the visual language of its poster designs. Although it has been established over time that their language is deeply connected to social movements and technological advances, this has not changed their original function, nor has it diminish their value as communication outlets. That is the reason why graphic designers still rely on them to meet their communication needs in an ever-changing society.

### 3 | FUKUDA SHIGEO

Fukuda is a Japanese graphic artist who developed his work during the second half of the twentieth century. He is currently acknowledged as one of the most prominent designers of his time, the ambassador of a worldwide artistic movement that remains deeply influential within the contemporary artistic scene. Born in Tokyo in 1932, he experienced the consequences of the Second World War during his childhood, which had a deep impact on the pacifist, social, critical and introspective mood of his work.

After graduating at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts & Music in 1956, Fukuda soon became a poster design master. He challenged utilitarian design through images that defied people’s biases and social conventions. Additionally, Fukuda experimented with several media, from paper to public space interventions, and incorporated countless volumetric and optical illusions, origami or popular symbols in his work. His minimalist graphic style, based on colourful and flat illustrations, epitomises the opportunity of combining and arranging design elements in such a way that the message is prioritised over anything else.

Fukuda was first internationally recognised in 1967, after designing the official poster for Japan’s Expo’70. Over the course of his extensive career, he has received many international awards, including the Gold Medal at Warsaw International Poster Biennale in 1972, the first prize at the 1985 Moscow Poster Biennale, or the Grand Prize at Helsinki Poster Biennale in 1995. Furthermore, Fukuda has exhibited in New York, Italy, France and Japan, and some of his works have been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art of New York and private art collectors from Colorado, Paris and Moscow.

Besides his graphic design work, he created sculptural pieces too, presided over the Japan Graphic Designers Association, and he was member of some remarkable institutions such as the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA). Fukuda also devoted himself to teaching and stood up for educational ideals that matched those of the Bauhaus School. He taught at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music from 1973 to 2002, and at Yale University's Department of Graphic Design in 1982 and 1984.

Shigeo Fukuda is one of Japan's most distinguished and influential artists. His work gets the audience engrossed in mind tricks and reflections. Thus, he remains widely known as one of the masters of Japanese art and design, both nationally and internationally.

## 4 | WESTERN INFLUENCES IN FUKUDA'S ARTWORKS

A variety of Western influences are notably present in Fukuda's work. Whereas most of them come from the characteristic features of the Swiss International Style, traces of several Western artists' works – in which optical illusions appear – are evident too.

### 4.1 Swiss International Style and Fukuda

Due to Fukuda's early interest in the Swiss International Style, which concerned itself with modernist and constructivist ideals, his work was more involved with social responsibility and work ethics, going beyond mere advertising. In the Swiss style, poster design was not overdone but intended as a particularly representative tool for communication. Fukuda followed this movement, keeping a keen eye for details and craftsmanship as he supported the formal education and technical training that would help provide higher standards in graphic design.

The Swiss International Style, also acknowledged as the International Typographic Style, is a widely known and prominent movement in Graphic Design that appeared in Switzerland after World War II and was on the rise until the 1970s. Many of its famous theories –especially when it comes to typographic form and grid composition– are still applied in today's design schools. Eventually, it brought German, Italian and French graphic artists and typographers, who sought an obstacle-free sociopolitical environment to grow professionally, together.

The Swiss International Style appeared in the Basel School of Design and the Zurich University of the Arts, both led by Ernst Keller's pupils. A graphic designer and teacher in Zurich, Ernst Keller is considered to be the father of the Swiss Style because of two basic premises of his work: simplicity and legibility (according to Bauhaus' values) and Jan Tschichold's *The New Typography*. The Basel school was run by Armin Hofmann and Emil Ruder, who defended design based on full, systematic layouts, with grid compositions that guarantee harmony and dynamism. Meanwhile, the Zurich school was led by Josef Muller-Brockmann, who became the most representative figure of the style, both for his theories



and designs. He advocated a universal graphic language that would prevent the designer's subjectivity from interfering.

The main pillars of the Swiss International Style's visual language are the use of a mathematically drawn modular grids where design elements are asymmetrically organised, the use of left-aligned sans-serif typographies, and the use of black and white photographs and photomontages instead of illustration. As a result, this strategy provided visual unity to the design, and gave rise to a new and straightforward visual language, easily understandable, which quickly spread globally becoming a focal point in contemporary graphic design.

Typography played a major role in The Swiss Style. Sans-serif fonts, especially Aksidenz Grotesk, became really popular within the movement, increasing the demand for new and similar families. The Swiss Style created three significant typeface families: Folio (by Walter Baum and Konrad Bauer), Univers (by Adrian Frutiger), and Helvetica (by Max Miedinger). Generally, they feature clean shapes, uniform strokes, black and white contrast, and no terminals, providing consistency to the body of the text. Typographies were of such importance in poster design that artists began to use them in larger scale. After a while this technique became such an effective way of communication that many poster designs relied upon playing with black and white typefaces alone, resulting in a surprising compositional solution.

The purity and objectivity of this movement attracted adherents from all over the world. Although Fukuda embraced its formal language, he developed a style of his own, communicating complex ideas through simple images, which is one of the key premises in today's graphic design. Thus, Fukuda's commitment to visual uniformity and efficient communication, the use of modular grids that ensure visual impact and dynamism through the asymmetric disposition of the elements, and the presence of left-aligned sans-serif typefaces as a key step in the designing process, testify to the relationship between The International Typographic Style and his work. These features can be observed in some of his works. For instance, the use of inclined typography can be appreciated in the lower right and upper left sides of the poster "Rio 92"<sup>1</sup> (1992). Likewise, the Japanese Exhibition Poster: Tradition et Nouvelles Techniques<sup>2</sup> from 1984 exhibits an inclined grid. In another version of this poster design the information is arranged in a three-column grid, along illustrations that play with lines to indulge the viewer with rich optical illusions. Common traits of the Swiss International Style, such as the simplicity of the language or how it entrusts inclined sans-serif fonts to add dynamism, can be seen in both cases.

## 4.2 Optical Illusions and Fukuda

Since optical illusions challenge our preconceptions about what constitutes reality, artists have been fascinated by the nature of perception and ocular behaviour for many centuries. These mechanisms, capable of deceiving the human visual system (from the

<sup>1</sup> Available from: <http://indexgrafik.fr/shigeo-fukuda-rio-1992/>

<sup>2</sup> Available from: <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/509751251544332565/?!p=true>

eyes to the brain) create a distorted perception of reality, in which what we perceive takes several forms. This phenomenon can happen naturally or be induced by visual effects and specific techniques that may highlight the operating principles of the visual system. Hence, they may trick the viewer into perceiving something that is not really there, giving a distorted image of what is real.

Optical illusions in art go back to the 1950s, with Op and Kinetic Art. However, it is rooted in centuries of perception research, and the rise of new technologies and psychology. Artists who have worked with optical illusions include Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Patrick Bokanowski, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, M. C. Escher, Charles Allan Gilbert, Jasper Johns, Oscar Reutersvärd, Bridget Riley, and Victor Vasarely among others. Nowadays, many contemporary artists create pieces that challenge our concept of time, space and reality.

Fukuda has been renowned for his ability to create complex illustrations that play with perception. Notwithstanding, he has also played with shadows and optical illusions in the Art field. His sculptures are beautiful metaphors that lead us to see beyond all visual noise. Usually rendered with an emphasis on lights, angles and perspectives, his work creates the illusion of a 'parallel universe'. In this way, the essence and message of his artworks are concealed behind the technical virtuosity. When it comes to Fukuda, creativity lies in the different gaze he casts upon art. Thus, the sculpture is not the artwork, but its shadow. "Lunch With a Helmet On"<sup>3</sup> 1987, is one of Fukuda's earliest works, which was made out of an assortment of 848 forks, knives and spoons welded together. Undoubtedly, his work has inspired many contemporary artists.

## 5 | FROM FUKUDA'S POSTERS TO CONTEMPORARY GRAPHIC DESIGN

Perhaps Fukuda's most well-known poster is "Victory 1945,"<sup>4</sup> which shows a projectile heading straight back for the opening of the cannon barrel. This type of visually humorous but elusive style in Fukuda's posters set an example for today's designers. Thanks to this work he won the grand prize in the Warsaw Poster Contest from 1975 and donated the competition's proceeds to the Peace Fund Movement afterwards. Among his works it would be fitting to highlight some pieces such as: "Earth Day poster"<sup>5</sup> (1982), which shows an axe with its head against the ground, having a small branch sprouting upwards from its handle; the official poster for the 1970 World's Fair in Osaka; the poster dedicated to Amnesty International<sup>6</sup>, where the letter 'S' of the word "Amnesty", at the top, forms a shackle and underneath a fist outlined with barbed wire is illustrated. In addition, in 1995 he devised a poster for the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki<sup>7</sup> bombing and another in 1997 for

3 Available from: <https://www.designer-daily.com/remarkable-shadow-art-405>

4 Available from: <http://www.designishistory.com/1960/shigeo-fukuda/>

5 Available from: <https://medium.com/@ningchanginside/japanese-poster-art-ed2f5a84dd93>

6 Available from: <http://drewnguyen.design/shigeofukuda.html>

7 Available from: <https://www.designindaba.com/articles/interviews/life-design>

Worldwide Fund For Nature<sup>8</sup> as well.

There are many examples of Fukuda's influence on contemporary works, both formally and creatively. Therefore, the visual language of some contemporary poster designs might be taken into consideration in the light of Fukuda's work, thereby suggesting that Fukuda's graphic art has become an important part of the contemporary graphic scene. Some examples illustrating this will be listed below.

During the promotional campaign for Injustice<sup>9</sup>, an exciting psychological thriller aired on ITV1, the world-famous British agency BBH (London) launched five print and digital ads. Fukuda's influence is apparent on them. These posters focus on optical illusions, using the strong contrast between light and dark to convey powerful messages through images. The use of sans serif font exhibited in different ways and inclination levels over the grid can be appreciated too.

There are also elements of Fukuda's language on the Sanccob poster<sup>10</sup>: Saves Seabirds - "See the reality before it's too late" by the South African Bittersuite Agency. It contains traces of Escher's language and plays with positive versus negative space, challenging the viewer to notice the penguins' transition from life to death. In fact, the same idea is expressed in the poster "Design can help change the things that matter"<sup>11</sup> designed by Fukuda for the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA). The graphic elements of the poster create an image in which the gun pattern at the top progressively changes into peace signs. Generally speaking, Fukuda is characterised by the use of minimalist graphics to convey anti-war and pro-environmental messages.

In Kaushik Shivanagere's design work for the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival<sup>12</sup> 2007, the artist depicts fork prongs as wine bottles. Thus, the use of a single element to communicate many ideas exudes simplicity and clarity, and the typography of choice only reinforces the message.

British graphic designer Simon Page displays in his work "Hero and Villain"<sup>13</sup> (Criminal Underworld) a visual play between positive and negative space, reminiscent of what is observed on Fukuda's posters. Likewise, the award-winning advertising company McCann plays with opposites in its 2010 campaign "Two seconds to spot"<sup>14</sup>. This poster was created for "The support centers union for victims of sexual assault in Israel".

Milutin Markovic is a Serbian graphic designer who made several posters<sup>15</sup> exploring the possibilities of graphic language and typography in order to convey an implicit idea within the work itself. (Movie poster, Titanic, 2011 and Theater poster, Hamlet, 2012).

8 Available from: [http://ibytes.es/blog\\_los\\_mejores\\_carteles\\_de\\_shigeo\\_fukuda.html](http://ibytes.es/blog_los_mejores_carteles_de_shigeo_fukuda.html)

9 Available from: <https://adsspot.me/adsarchive/prints/itv-injustice-evidence-bag-233927dbed10/>

10 Available from: <https://bittersuite.co.za/sanccob-see-the-reality-poster-campaign>

11 Available from: <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/197947346105836001/?lp=true>

12 Available from: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/950840/Food-Wine-Festival>

13 Available from: <http://excites.co.uk/Hero-and-Villain-Part-1>

14 Available from: [https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/the\\_support\\_centers\\_union\\_for\\_victims\\_of\\_sexual\\_assault\\_in\\_israel\\_two\\_seconds\\_to\\_spot](https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/the_support_centers_union_for_victims_of_sexual_assault_in_israel_two_seconds_to_spot)

15 Available from: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/9262851/POSTERS>

Similarities can also be found in Fiat's campaign: "Don't text and Drive"<sup>16</sup>. Developed in São Paulo 2014, by creative director Marcelo Reis and executive creative director Guilherme Jahara from the Leo Burnett Tailor Made agency, it devises a strategy to promote road safety involving a series of posters build on the idea of an image within another image. A girl with a balloon, a dog or a bus become symbols of accidents about to happen due to distractive driving. The campaign won Gold for Poster and Bronze for Art Direction in the Design category at the London International Awards.

Lastly, the British agency Isobel developed "Good food would choose Bordeaux"<sup>17</sup> in 2010, for The Bordeaux Wine Council –the trade association representing the French wine region. This advertising campaign specifically catering to the UK market celebrates the natural relationship between Bordeaux's wine and food. The aforementioned references (colour, shape play, simplicity and legibility) can be seen on their posters too.

## 6 | CONCLUSIONS

Fukuda's role as a prolific and relentless designer should be highlighted. Not only his work stands out due to its quality, versatility and variety, but also due to Fukuda's responsibility to society, which is a constant in his work. In this respect, he frequently explores the search for a state of well-being that leads us to reflect on the future. Fukuda conceives graphic art that transcends time.

Moreover, he teaches us to build bridges between Art and Design, making the most of the relationship between the two. Conceptual clarity can only be achieved by conciliating what is present and what is not, the light and shadows. Fukuda shows that nothing has to be what it seems, and that ambiguity may transform into clarity. His work seeks to preserve only the strictly necessary while filtering meaningless ornamentation.

After Fukuda's death, graphic designers from all over the world paid him tribute by creating a significant number of posters inspired by his work. Danish artist Finn Nygaard, for example, made a poster<sup>18</sup> out of one of Fukuda's best-known sculptures for the occasion. His work has not only inspired print design but has also left its mark on audiovisual media such as Pet Shop Boys' video clip "Love etc."<sup>19</sup> by Han Hoogerbrugge.

Finally, this essay shall conclude highlighting his playful spirit. As Fukuda himself said: "I believe that in design, 30% dignity, 20% beauty, and 50% absurdity are necessary".

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16 Available from: <http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2013/flat-texting-or-driving/>

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## ÍNDICE REMISSIVO

### A

Administração musical 108, 114, 127

Análisis musical 153, 156, 162, 167

Arte 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 37, 41, 48, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 114, 116, 143, 144, 146, 147, 148, 152, 154, 155, 164, 165, 167, 168, 186

Artes cênicas 22, 31, 39, 42, 117, 123, 186

Artes decorativas 4, 168, 173, 175, 176, 178, 183

Artworks 98, 99, 102, 104

Atuação cênica 39, 42

Azulejo 168, 176, 178, 179, 183, 184

### C

Capitalismo 2, 3, 18, 19, 49, 50, 51, 52

Cinema 2, 31, 36, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87

Comicidade 2, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 48

Consciência corporal 49, 64

Corpo 2, 3, 32, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65, 75, 76, 78, 85, 86, 87, 124, 143, 144, 147, 150, 171, 178, 179

Criança 4, 65, 72, 141, 142, 143, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152

### D

Dança como prática pedagógica 58, 60

Desenvolvimento 4, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 51, 52, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 72, 73, 76, 78, 80, 81, 84, 89, 91, 92, 111, 114, 124, 127, 141, 142, 143, 145, 148, 149, 150, 152, 186

### E

East-west 98, 99

Ensino-aprendizagem 27, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 76, 134, 141, 142, 143, 148, 150

Espect-ator 31, 33, 37

Estranhamento 3, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57

Expressão e comunicação 58

## F

Fukuda shigeo 4, 98, 99, 101

## G

Graphic design 4, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107

Guitarra barroca 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139, 140

## H

Heitor villa-lobos 4, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 160, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167

História 19, 25, 34, 35, 48, 63, 65, 73, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 97, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 150, 151, 152, 170, 186

História da arte 80, 88, 89, 90

## I

Influences 98, 99, 102

Interdisciplinaridade 39, 40, 41, 42

Interpretación musical 153, 156, 165, 166

Inventario 4, 168

## J

Jogo do ator 31

## L

Língua espanhola 2, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 68, 70, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77

## M

M.C.Escher 98, 99

Memória 54, 56, 79, 81, 83, 84, 86

Mercado de arte 4, 88, 89, 94, 96, 97

Multidirecional 98, 99

Música 2, 4, 59, 63, 66, 68, 69, 71, 75, 77, 82, 83, 86, 108, 109, 110, 111, 116, 117, 120, 121, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167

Música latinoamericana del siglo XX 153

## N

Notação musical 130, 131, 134

## **P**

Pandemia 3, 4, 79, 80, 108, 109, 110, 114, 119, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 161, 162

Patrimônio 168

Pedagogias subterrâneas 3, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

Pedagogia teatral 18, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30

Piano 4, 127, 153, 154, 156, 162, 163, 166, 167

Políticas culturais 108, 109, 110, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 122, 124, 128

Processo de ensino-aprendizagem 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 141, 142, 148, 150

Produção cultural 91, 108, 114, 116

## **R**

Rasgueado 4, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140

Resistência 3, 79, 84, 85, 86

Riso 39, 40, 41, 47, 48

## **S**

Sociabilidade 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56

Sociedade 2, 3, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 41, 42, 50, 53, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 64, 66, 73, 76, 79, 83, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 117, 125, 126, 127, 128, 147, 174, 178

Swiss international style 98, 99, 102, 103

## **T**

Teatro de grupo 3, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

Teatro do oprimido 31, 32, 38

Toque flamenco 130, 131, 136, 137, 138

Tradição oral 130, 131, 133, 136

Typography 98, 99, 102, 103, 105




## **V**

Visibilidades 3, 79, 80, 86, 87






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