CHAPTER 6

FLEXIBLE ID:
TO ADAPT IS TO RESIST

RITA COELHO

An exploratory approach combining actuality and moving dynamic visual identities

Dynamic visual identities have been existing in our design arena for almost 70 years now. This pandemic, however, allied with the available technology, have created new fertile ground for designers and brands to revise and tailor their visual identities in this state-of-the-art. This current uncertainty can make us look to branding and to dynamic visual identities in a fresh way.

Indeed, this chapter was written under lockdown, due to SARS-CoV-2, in imposed quarantine, just like a significant portion of the world's population. The culprit, a tiny microstructure, also known as Coronavirus, has made quite a stir in societal, economical and political macrostructures. *Mutatis mutandis*, if one studies the impact of a logotype or a picture mark on its consumers' behaviours, one will observe that such a tidy microstruture has deep impacts on the brand's macrostructure: the audience's perception, its image, its values.

During this confined time, selfpromotion, sales and advertising, seemed different. And even as the lockdown was starting to be lifted, as people, governments and the economy were getting adjusted to the new normality, much reflection was needed: What is now the role of graphic design and branding? What happens to our profession? Are we dependent on traveling and sales? Clearly, we have managed to survive without them, so now, what happens to graphic design and to visual identity in particular? What happens to brands and to the millions of design students worldwide, who were

confined in their rooms without workshops and open studios and are now graduating? What is going to happen then? One might wonder, now that many of us are working remotely, that some companies have come to the conclusion that some professionals can be substituted by machines, and now that we can use automation or generative design, thanks to Artificial Intelligence, what is the role of the designer? And of visual identity design in particular? Generative design is a current paradigm, and one can find several results put together, for instance in Algorithm-Driven Design website (Vetrov, 2019).

Those are neither outstanding nor one can say they do not respond to a brief… They are underwhelming to say the least, but they're not completely inappropriate. The design is simple, probably too basic and similar to so many other logo designs; the drawing of the lines and curves are bland; and the chosen colors, shapes, are safe, but not completely original. They are not wrong *per se*, but they are not enticing our emotions either (so important according to Costa, 2013) in a world moved by images and moving images. These are the questions this chapter is delving in.

First of all, we do not consider that the designer is going to be extinct in any shape or form, but a new role in commissioning design results is fresh anew. Flexible and algorithmic processes have been embraced throughout history, the latter built on randomness as a fertile principle of generativity in which results are more diverse, than if they are individually designed from a manual process, one by one, by the designer. Some designers are not accustomed to coding. (Coding in a visual manner, would help those unfamiliar with hard core coding and would feel more at ease.) Would AI and algorithmic processes substitute the designer? Their virtually infinite results could be an extension for the human judgment.

On https://algorithms.design website (Vetrov, 2019), one can find generative and artificial intelligence designs such as: Brandmark or Automagic Design[1]; Nutella Unica[2] and Google AutoDraw[3]. In most of these apps, human designers and artificial intelligence are combined in order to offer the user a logo, according to the app itself, in seconds. The so-called rough sketches are softened, the angles and lines become fluid Bézier curves, the proportions are harmonized. But a logotype or a picture mark

---

[1] Algorithm-Driven applications which allow you to design a simple brand identity
[2] Graphic identity that derives from an algorithm that searches in a database of several patterns and colours to splash it across its packages;
[3] A project that turns sketches into icons, helping non-designers manipulate icons in their mockups

are not a visual identity in themselves alone.

In between worlds, a virus is neither a true living cell nor a dead object, but rather some kind of *zombie*. During this pandemic due to the Coronavirus, one could argue that visual identity should also be placed in between worlds, not choosing either one strict image or a set of given options, but rather navigating movement, a *fluidity* of *several universes*. In short, not choosing from a system of several designs, but in itself, showing motion, animated sequences, a fluidity that shows flexibility contrary to a stiff over-controlled-not-too-authentic-picture-perfect with overly-strict-manual-of-norms visual identity of the past.

Firstly, we will make a short summary from certain dynamic visual identities from 1959 to 2020. Then, we will skim through the notion of movement, allowing the growth from the frozen image to the animated sequence of visual identities and connecting that to our brains' need for pleasurable feelings, and finally, making an exploratory connection of motion against stillness in these uncertain pandemic times.

The fun in function: a brief history from 1959 to 2020 of fun and vibrant dynamic visual identities

Any corporation or institution possesses a visual identity and any visual identity retains a logotype or a picture mark. Some of them even seem to take on a life of their own on the minds of the users. Take for instance, *Nike, Adidas, Starbucks, Mobil*, to name a few. Logotypes and picture marks, from the corporate boom in the 1950s, were made to last at least 10 years and were made to conjure loyalty, dignity and recognition in the users' minds (Olins, 2008; Rand, 1994). Visual identity was key – and still is (Rowden, 2000; Thomas, 2000; Delahunty, 2013, Van Nes, 2013) – in portraying a positive, memorable, emotional image of the company. Through it, the design had to deal with consistency, color, proportion, scale and a myriad of relationships, it had to be attractive and legible in any medium, hence its simplicity to conquer its functional and beautiful effectiveness. Viewers were and are, indeed, considered not only as users, but creators of the visual design, as they contribute to its semiotic landscape (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) being creators of meaning (Arnheim, 1969; Berger, 1972).

John Hewitt designates *Boîte à Musique* by Karl Gerstner from 1959 as one of the first examples of a dynamic visual identity (Hewitt, 2008).
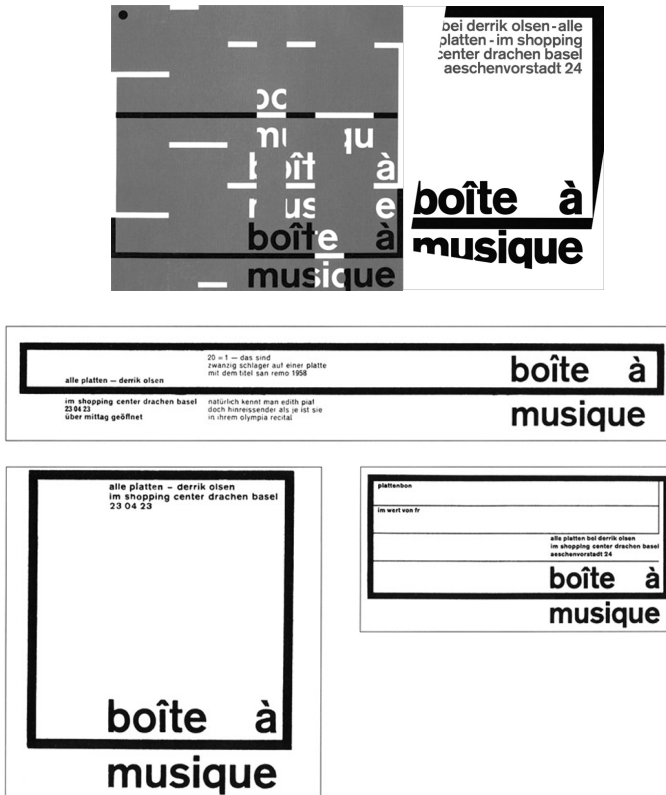
Fig. 1. *Boîte à Musique* visual identity design, by Karl Gerstner, 1959

In flexible visual identities there is a constant part of it: some of the graphics remain the same to guarantee recognition; and a variable part: which might be the color palette, position, scale, shape, typography, visual language, that trigger its flexibility. As we can observe from figure 1, in *Boîte à Musique*, which was a record shop in Basel, the typography, kerning and leading are constant, but the position of the logotype, black box within it, and pretty much everything else is variable in position, color, combination of elements and scale.

From 1959 we move on to the 1980s, to another reference in visual identity flexibility: *MTV*.

Fig. 2. *MTV* visual identity, by Manhattan Design, 1981

Here, the M opens up as a window to show different textures, videos and images that inhabit that character, functioning as the variable, but everything else remains constant. Unlike Hewitt (2008) who argues that *MTV*'s flexible identity has little connection to its function, the purpose for its fluidity, we think, is to convey a musical, rhythmic flexibility and a human, emotional connection to its young viewers (Kreutz, 2005). The M in *MTV*'s logo functions as a static window for different colors, textures, images and movies that live inside it, which is a common strategy for dynamic visual identities.

The technical parameters that defined the 1950s and 1960s, even from the 80s, have expanded, the digitization *zeitgeist* allows a more freely approach to the visual identity and, particularly, to the visual mark or logotype. It allows a more iterative and interactive design process. For instance, visual identities that change according to the year's season, that react like a living organism or a creature that feeds from its surroundings, as a seductive actor who lives different personas according to its audience.

There is *Seed Media Group, Casa da Música, Lovebytes, MTV, Københavns Naturskoler, Troll, imagine everything D&AD Festival and Awards 2020*, among others, as we will observe. As Hewitt puts it, limitations in visual identity design are disappearing faster than ever, and other possibilities in multiplatform, flexible, moving mediums are rising: possibilities that should not be overlooked, neither should they be blinding the designer's judgement. Drawing, sketching and designing have had the ability to stop time, but in this fast-paced panoply of a myriad of digestible gadgets, one must find the time for it and fight for it, as the study of the human mind by Lorenz-Spreen has recently found (Lorenz-Spreen, *et al*, 2019). So we shall fight for drawing and sketching in our design process, in our iterations, even in these crazy digitized multi-platform times. To adapt, they say, is to resist...

Meanwhile, a long time ago, notably from 1921 to 1986 the brand *Betty Crocker* changed appearance showing the female character, supposedly Betty Crocker herself, on product packages, writing recipes and even having her own radio show, without ever having existed as a real person. Mascots can be considered a flexible part of a visual identity: it changed according to the likings and trends of each era. Even if in today's digitally driven, media-focused society, this printed portrait format might seem odd, the idea behind it doesn't cease to entertain. Even though it took *Betty Crocker* 65 years to change seven times, it can be considered a flexible approach in order to resist through the ages… Changing haircut, hair color, posture, jewellery, blouse, appearance and smile, but maintaining constant her name, portrait format appearance, light background and jacket's dominant red color (*vide* figure 3).
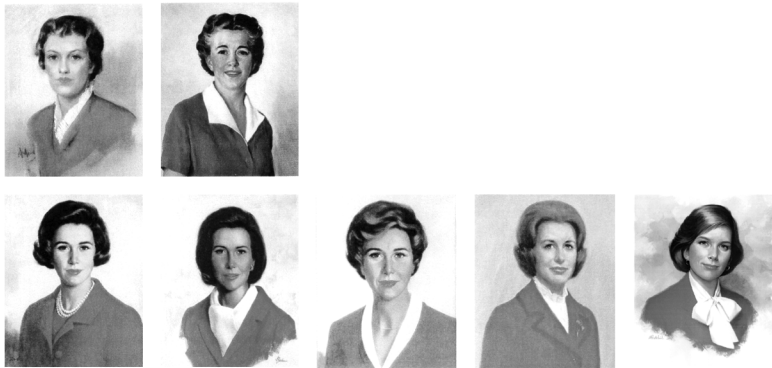

Fig. 3. *Betty Crocker* visual images from 1921 to 1986[4]

A similar approach can be observed in *Mr Bibendum* from *Michelin*. One can consider it a flexible part of the visual identity, also being a mascot. It too changed posture, through the decades has gotten slimmer, but its smiling, friendly face and body constituted of tires, has resisted through time, due to its lively energy. It has also been a core part of the *Michelin*'s identity since it was launched. But unlike *Betty Crocker*, *Mr Bibendum* has its own name which differs from the company for which he stands, although it appears in several of its range of assets and communication media, expressing distinctiveness, personality, playfulness and warmth.

---

[4] Image source: Olins, Wally (1990). Corporate Identity. Boston: Harvard Business School
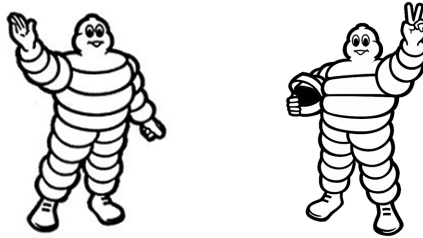
Fig. 4. Mr Bibendum, from the visual image of Michelin, triggers a lively energy and human connection to the brand

Another example of a dynamic visual identity is *Casa da Música*, a concert hall situated in Porto, Portugal. It was designed by Stefan Sagmeister (Art Direction), Mathias Ernstberger and Quentin Walesch, deriving from the architecture of Rem Koolas' iconic building. Based on its perspectives, the chromatic pallet of its different surfaces adapts to the event's image *Casa da Música* intends to publicize, based on an algorithmic procedure on 17 facets of different colors from the image of the music concert (*vide* figures 5 and 6).

Fig. 5. *Casa da Música* visual identity, by Stefan Sagmeister (Art Direction), Mathias Ernstberger and Quentin Walesch, 2007
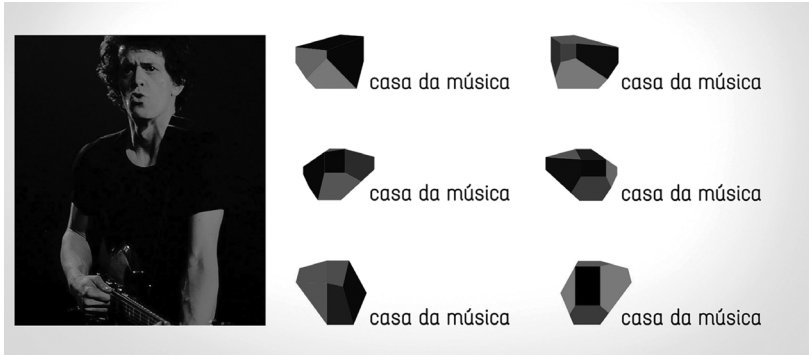
Fig. 6. *Casa da Música* visual identity, by Stefan Sagmeister (Art Direction), Mathias Ernstberger and Quentin Walesch, 2007

On the other hand, *Seed Media Group*, a scientific publisher, has another standardized but flexible visual identity. It has a constant number of cells arranged in a permanent flowery way. It is inspired by *phyllotaxis* that allows a variability through chromatic differentiation of each cell in the icon, allowing its personalization identifying every one of its collaborators.

Fig. 7. *Seed Media Group* visual identity images, by Matej Koren, Stefan Sagmeister and Matthias Engelsberger, 2005

Diversely, the visual identity of a large scale project of Copenhagen's City Hall, *Københavns Naturskoler* (which has the objective of teaching children about the natural world) has scale and position of the picture mark set as variables, which can be visually treated has a *rhizome* or biological organism. Copenhagen's City Hall project actually encourages children to manipulate its visual mark while teaching them about natural growth. That flexibility in growth and interaction with the project's main audience is clearly portrayed in the communication of that visual identity. It shows flexibility and playful manipulation over scale, position and direction, in parallel to a resistant, adaptative, evolutionary natural being.
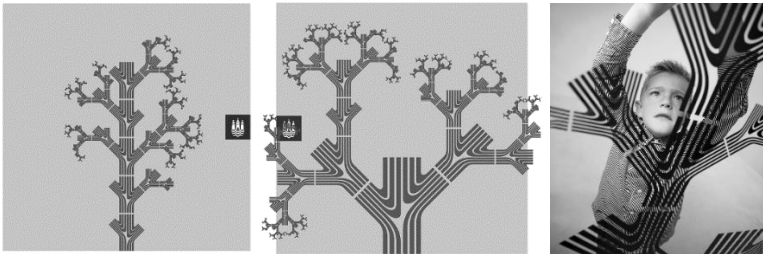

Fig. 8. *Københavns Naturskoler* visual identity, by Peter Graabæk, Kursiv, and photo by Torben Nielsen, 2008

Joan Costa in his seminal book *Imagen Global* (1994) described the communication process as a sequential order from emitter, to encoder, to message, to media, and finally, to the receiver. Nowadays, all these agents interact with each other in a virtuous cycle (or is it vicious?), contrary to a linear process. The user becomes key and also a co-creator, as we can observe in the photo in figure 8 for *Københavns Naturskoler*.

Creative nucleus on social media and the current global digitization accelerate the power of manipulation, of assembly, of accessibility and of visualization. Creating, streaming, downloading or viewing a motion graphics, a video, or any short animated sequence is faster than ever. Virtually anyone with access to a computer, phone, or tablet can create, observe or interact with enticing visual identities. We're now far from Thomas Carlyle's history of *The Great Man Theory* (Shirky, 2008; Grossman, 2006; Manzini, 2015). Hence, for instance, the visual identity of the UK design studio *Bunch*, which was created and recreated by over seven hundred people who decided to participate by downloading the letter B (the

matrix or constant in its visual image) and transform it completely, making it part of an eclectic visual system, virtually infinite, flexible and dynamic. The audience, the user, is also a coauthor. Several users interacted and co-created the dynamic visual identity, as can be observed in a small sample on figure 9.
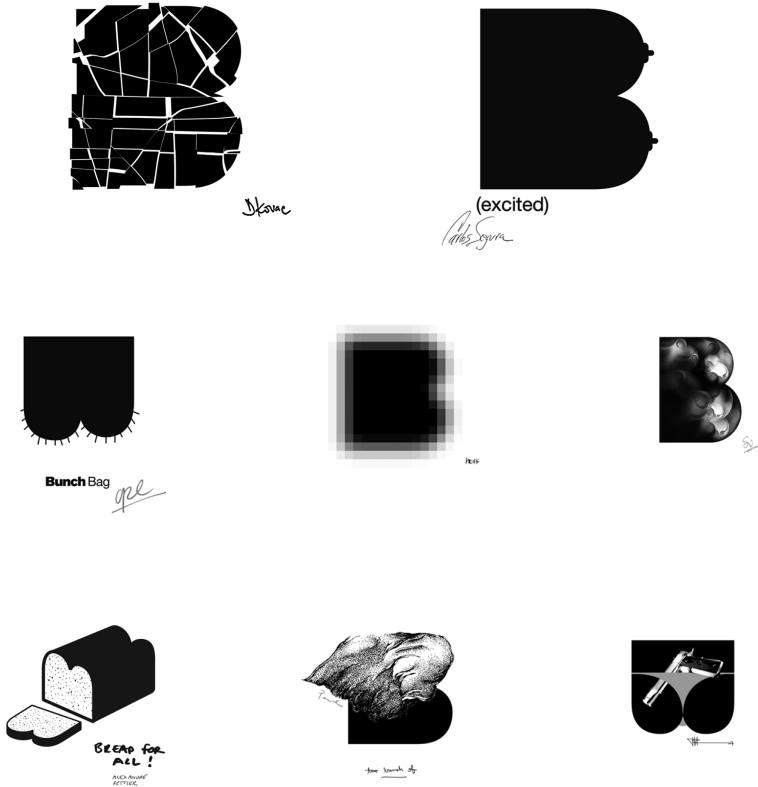

Fig. 9. *Bunch* visual identity by several coauthors, namely Denis Kovac (Bunch Design), Carlos Segura, Aaron Easterbrook, Gary Hoff, Si Scott, Alexandre Bettler, Paula Castro, Paul Insect, 2008

Additionally, another example of a virtually endless dynamic visual identity system is for the music festival *Lovebytes*, designed by Matt Pyke and Karsten Schmidt from Universal Everything, in 2007. Being an example of generative visual identity and through an algorithm that maintains as constant an interval for the position of the eyes, for the area of the body's

color gradient, shape and length of the fur of each of the creatures; and varying, in contrast, color gradients, shape and look of each of those little monsters, the solutions are basically limitless, easily created and distributed, in accordance to the playfulness and rhythm of a joyful youth music festivity.

Furthermore, an example of a playful dynamic visual identity is *Troll*, by the Portuguese design studio This is Pacifica, for a post-production company, based in Berlin, and created with motion capture technology. The dynamic visual identity is composed of several variants, that mimic the human gestures made with typography, which seek to be fluid, similarly to the human body with different attitudes and poses. The visual identity surprises with a new gesture turning the logotype into a charismatic, performative character. The visual identity was created linking the typography to the movements of the human figure and, because it was able to entice and inspire an emotional response from the viewer, it has won several international design awards. A sample of the visual results from this dynamic visual identity can be found in figure 10.
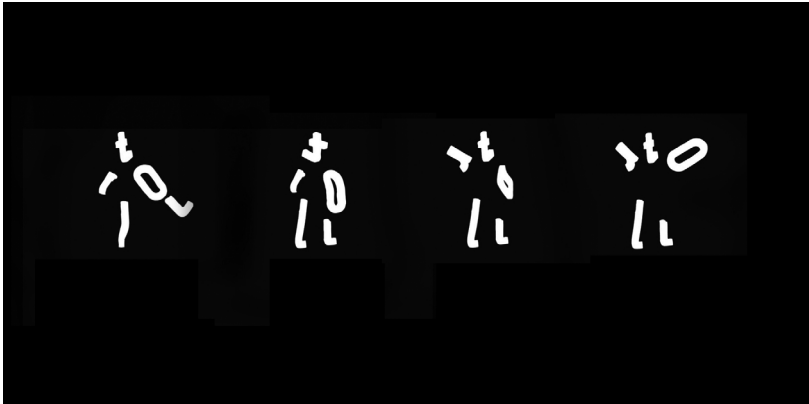
Fig. 10. *Troll: Supernatural Post-production* visual identity, by This is Pacifica, 2015

The digitization of multi-platforms through which we now experience brands, makes it even more plausible for visual identity to present itself, not through a sole image, but as a living creature, packed with movement, action and motion. But firstly, what is that? Motion or movement is an action. It is perceived as the adaptation of a constant (the main overall object perceived)

through variables (that can range from position, to scale, direction, color, content, or shape, just to name a few of the compulsory *gestalt* theories that no matter how many years have passed, still remain reference), giving it rhythm. This motion results in an emotional part of the visual identity. More than rational, in a world where there is a clear migration of conventional media, towards multi-platform, the strategies require new, *authentic* modes of engagement[5] that mimic the real, emotional, endogenous biological world.

In dutch, for instance, there are two words to describe design: *vormgeving* and *ontwerpen*. The first stands for a somewhat superficial process of making things look appealing; the latter, *ontwerpen*, stands for design as more of a 'problem-solving' activity. *Ontwerpen* versus *vormgeving* (Coelho, 2019). In the examples examined in this chapter, *ontwerpen* is *vormgeving.* Visual appeal, emotional connection, interaction and fun, *are* the solutions to the design problem. Therefore, fun is an integral part of function. In this process we – both as designers and as audience – are facing a fresh adaptable response, in which the problem to be solved is, in itself, an emotional issue. The dynamic visual identity design that new brands present, either by means of several variants or by fluid videos, by generative coding techniques or animated sequences, entice a somewhat emotional, passionate response from the viewer because he/she is seeing something alive, that breathes and lives just like he/she does. (There is this subtle and hidden anthropocentrism in which we, observers and users, respond in a deeper level to something that recalls our very own animated nature). You and me, us, the users, are at the centre[6]; we are vital in the zoetic operation of these flexible visual identities that keep thriving amongst others, in this digitized world of ours.

From 2D to 4D: From tiff to gif or from image to moving images

In diametrical opposition to the inflated 3D tendency observed almost ten years ago (Coelho, 2011), there is, nevertheless, a certain degree of minimalism in the drawing of the curves and shapes of recent visual identities, specifically their picture marks and logotypes, due to the fact that two-dimensionality and flatness respond more effectively in a multiplatform world. From a punctum (Barthes, 2005) of a stable image or a set of given images, such as a system of static results from a dynamic visual identity (in

---

[5] Ways that mimic living organisms and nature with its rhythmic cycles.
[6] Even Time magazine, already back in 2006 chose You as the Person of the Year.

the form of a number of versions for a logotype or a picture mark), we come to view a motion set, an animated sequence which still responds to our perception of purity and *gutten form* – straight lines, simple shapes, complementing colors – but in the new digitized multiplatform screen experience with logos and visual marks, visual identity is portrayed in an animated sequence. From one still frame to an animation. From a punctum to several. A line, a plane, a narrative with rhythm, time, and sometimes, even sound – in short, from one image to the mimic of the real, as it breathes and moves. Part of the digital lexicon, gifs, or other short movies in apng, avif, webp or other format, promote an enriched experience.

There is definitely a certain allurement in biological traits such as motion, rhythm. Therefore, whereas ten to five years ago the trend in visual identity, in logotypes and picture marks was such that resulted in a set of several static images, established jpg, eps or tiff results, today it is hard to find an identity design that does not showcase itself through *motion*. Apps such as *TikTok*, *Youtube*, *Instagram*, even *Facebook* and previously others, are now urging users to create, edit and publish *videos*, which respond to our inner bio-rhythm that is, to us, so natural. Even artificial intelligence which ceaselessly works better than humans, most of us may think, needs rhythm – it needs a time to work, but also another to rest and sleep, similarly to our human condition, to find moments of quietness, in contrast to other moments of huge activity, according to a recent scientific study (Cuthbertson, 2020): this narrative, this rollercoaster between stillness and changeability, between night and day, light and dark, utopia and dystopia, is basically the sound of life and, in its essence, what we are drawn to. 4D, motion throughout time, through storytelling, through short animated sequences, portrays that more effectively than 2D. Visual identities shouldn't stand aside and, in contrast, replicate this endogenous kinetics phenomenon.

Cross-platforms are defining the *zeitgeist* of visual imaging and short animated sequences are powerful tools in turning a visual identity discussed and viewed in a more mainstream manner. Short-form videos, even shorter than 60 seconds, are fragments of life, a snippet of nature of our true selves, of authenticity, of motion and complexity. A cool motion graphics of bold plane colors, with fast and fluid travellings, short cuts, accompanied by a hip soundwave, makes wonders in bringing an image to life. Chion (1998) would put it more eloquently. Nevertheless, flexible identity design in this fluid, visually moving manner, makes brands demonstrate themselves in a more rhythmical, human and authentic spirit.

Making a not so obvious comparison, the new SARS-CoV-2 that cannot be seen but has also got a visual identity, spreads itself, adapts, resists to the most varied hosts and environments, infects and recurs again to keep us confined in an altered space of our houses or in our safety nets. We will have to change our ways of working, to an even more networked, online and digital way. Interestingly, it was due to this network facility – of aviation, of diluted borders, of democratization – after all *the world is flat*, as Friedman put it in 2007, that the virus spread so easily through the globe in the first place.

We work more digitally, more online; therefore, will jobs and people be replaced by machines whenever possible? What about the designer, the freelancer? Graduates from around the world in this area? More and more young people are choosing this area of expertise, but it's more and more difficult to find a stable paycheck, particularly in these troubled times.

We will not call dynamic visual identities as viruses (as we know, advertising that now works, has this viral characteristic of infecting users, and is made by users and for users (Godin, 2008)), but undoubtedly, in these constraints, where technology is prevalent, the designer will have to be a curator of technology. The computer, the software, the technology makes mistakes much less often than a human does, it also does not get sick the way we do and might leave us more space and time for creativity, for delegating on automation the mundane, time-consuming, techy tasks. Universities and companies realize that redundancies were massive and that they can save money by working remotely, through technology; therefore, technology is something the designer should carefully embrace and indeed assume in its designs: from high-tech to low-technology.

Strikingly, during this pandemic, we were all connected in a network, then borders closed, physical distance increased[7]. Most of social relations started to be mediated by technology, the feeling of belonging to a specific community – home, family, neighbours, city, area, country – became stronger. Identity is born in contrast with *otherness*, similarity by contrast with difference, the notion of *us* or *we* by comparison to *the others*. For this reason, an identity that strives for flexibility, has these advantages: an identification that is adapted (*glocally,* Roland Robertson) to each medium and purpose while, at the same time, being very specific and unique for each

---

[7] There are several examples of logos that replicated this increased social distance, also trough motion graphics, with increasing kerning on their logotypes and spacing withing their picture marks representing a safe distance, seeking to maintain relevance of the brand (Valinsky, 2020)

one of them. It is a dynamic visual identity that varies for each purpose, but maintains constant the essential characteristics throughout all solutions: a consistency that admits flexibility. A similarity that admits alterity, a family, a system with common ground, respecting the identity of each of its members.

The criteria for designing a logotype or a picture mark was, according to the author of *The Regime of Visibility*, Camiel van Winkel (2006), simplicity, modularity, timelessness and applicability in multiplatforms. These characteristics can be traced back to the *Gestalt Theorie* in the 1920s, Bauhaus and to the Ulm School (Olins, 2008; Costa, 2001; Chaves, 2005). The criteria for a good design is no longer assessed by the influence of the few to the many, from institutionalized and recognized design firms, studios, agencies or designers, but rather from many to many, from users to users (those are not necessarily designers, they could be anyone, you, me, anyone with an outspoken or even unspoken influence). Therefore, the importance of visual identities such as *Bunch* or *Københavns Naturskoler*. In any case, they set the influence from many to many, which contributes to some degree of democratization.[8]

Much has been scientifically written about the importance of visual identity design, and within it, of a logo or picture mark for brands recognition, user loyalty and sales. In this wave of pandemic and longing-for-a-post-pandemic-era, even of racial protests[9], of cohabiting and structuring in various communities helping each other out, locally and globally, what one is looking for is more than a brand's inherent values, but its actions. Actions that can be seen easily. What the brand does, says, communicates, how it stands to global and local issues in this multi-platform, and cross-applications viralization, is defining the brands' *zeitgeist*. Audiences are weary of stillness, of the one image, of the one picture-perfect visual solution, they are thirsty for excitement, action, movement, entertainment and education. A visual identity image, logo or picture mark might even have its design issues, concerning its spatial relations, figure and ground, color palette, proportions, harmony, kerning or leading, but its vitality in movement contributes to its lightness, its distinctiveness and authenticity. The words of order are joyfulness, fun, amusement, entertainment; the user seeks snackable content that can easily be digested, identified with and

---

[8] That could, on the other hand, contribute to some sense of lost and noise, as well.

[9] The moving image has highlighted its importance in denouncing racial prejudice, abuse of power and murder in recent cases such as George Floyd case, and motivating action from people all over the world.

shared across apps and mediums. Additionally, when a myriad of Silicon Valley brands have adopted an equivalent cold, rational, sans-serif look (Tucker, 2020; Caruso, 2020), these touches of life, warmth and even sense of humor, are vital at helping brands stand out, to be recognized and interacted with.

The ever fast-paced evolution in technology has not been accompanied by an equally rapid evolution of the human brain and general biology. What made us get out of Plato's cave and, simultaneously, run away from our predators, is our attraction to movement, our ability to put moving, flexible images which contain consistency with adaptation, on top of our visual list, making them the most notorious to our brains. For instance, TV makes us turn our heads once it is on; flashes on a car draw our attention. Why are the flashing lights flashing, for instance? They are signs of danger, they are noticeable, and are perceived as a moving image; therefore, they overlap everything else, by having this apparent motion through time. Our complex selves, our emotions and perceptions of our five senses still operate in a similar way to our ancestors'. That being said, new opportunities arise from new platforms, apps, mediums and technology that can trigger our rational as well as our reptilian brains.

During this pandemic and slow lifting of confinement, we have witnessed both utopian and dystopian moments. We have experienced and viewed through mediums both uplifting moments of cooperation among communities, moments of lightness that restore faith in humanity and moments of sheer darkness that make us question its future (Pinker, *et al*, 2016). This fluctuation between utopia and dystopia, good and bad, light and dark, heroism and villainism, tension and tranquility, has characterized the vibrancy of life. It has been a distinguished mark in the passing of time, seasons, life and death, and it's what we can call rhythm or movement. Even a gesture in a person's attitude that completes its identity is composed of high and low, fast and slow. There is no engaging movement without rhythm, nor an appealing dynamic visual identity design without this kinetic appearance.

Brands are interested in storytelling through narratives with beginning, middle and end – accordingly, what better strategy to show the passing of time than motion, possibly, even with sound? The showcase of a dynamic visual identity through movement is a rhythmic powerful tool for the audience as co-designer, as creator of meaning and as emotional actors.

Today's market in this *liquid modernity* (Bauman, 2000)[10] is shifting from uniformity to diversity. It is becoming obsolete to create a visual identity through a conventional method. It is important to reflect the complexity of today's market by incorporating this flexible, moving, fluid concept of short moving images to visual identity design.

Autonomous sensory meridian response

In this hastily digitized world of today, one can associate those short animated sequences, moving images, gifs or videos to the so-called Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response trend: ASMR. Basically, ASMR deals with a biological phenomenon that arouses the senses when we see or hear something that is pleasurable to our brain. When there is motion, when there is synergy between sound and image, or when the image moves or shows that it has a natural connection with time or with sound, which is the vibration that denotes time and rhythm, through changes, mutations, flexibility, it is then perceived as a more pleasurable experience. This is supposedly a current trend on *Youtube* and *Instagram*, but as a matter of fact, this is not new. It's what has kept us alive as a species until now, it's the reason we escaped from our predators and into the light, as we have seen[11].

As a way to illustrate this, Design studio Vault49 worked with artists and CGI animators to try to communicate a satisfying experience for the brand *So Satisfying*. They did a motion presentation of a variable logotype. The fluid animation of the logotype, is smooth looking, resulting in an appealing animated sequence or motion graphics. (*Vide* frames on figure 11.)

---

[10] Bauman explores that recent modernity is characterized by *light*, *liquid* software, contrary to the previous *solid*, heavy hardware characterized modernity.
[11] It is also the reason why we enjoy sugary or sweet sustenance that have proven compelling to our growth because they give us energy, or why we like fruits of the season because they give us the nutrients we need at that time of the year to protect us and to live healthier. For instance, oranges in winter have vitamin C to boost our immune systems. This is not new in the history of the human race, or even in the history of life for that matter. We do seek pleasure, from an infant stage as a child up to adulthood, considering the different notions of pleasure one has at each stage, or as a young creation on earth onwards which made us exist so far as a species for more than three hundred thousand years.
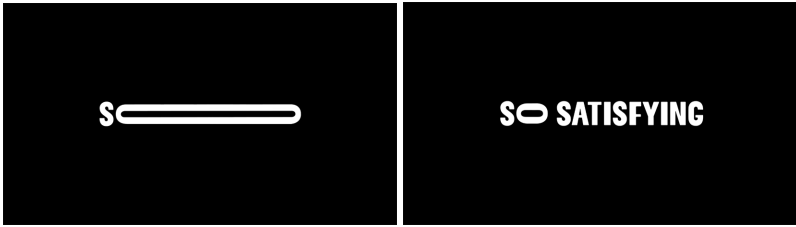
Fig. 11. *So Satisfying* visual identity: frames from its motion graphics, by Vault49, 2020

This Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response or, in better words, this pleasure seeking tendency of our brain is so pervasive, that if you look at logos from *Esprit* by Pentagram (showcasing a *joyful*, *authentic*, *effortless* new identity video, in 2020) to the new logo of *OLX* (2020), they show an animated sequence to explain that dynamic visual identity, particularly that picture mark or that logotype in motion: demonstrating a fluid, moving, flexible nature that appeals to the viewers.

One can also find this almost reptilian brain pleasure seeking nature, or ASMR in the way the brand is explained. Taking a few of the common words of a new logo description, such as the visual identity for *OLX*, in DesignStudio words: *«(...) we created a visual design system that's dynamic, confident and bursting with energy — expressing all the optimism and attitude that's true to OLX.»* [12] In OLX, the shapes that compose the logotype inflate or deflate smoothly, as technology now allows us to download and upload animated sequences faster than ever before and the smoothness of that rhythmic approach can be beautiful to watch (as can be inferred from the frames on figure 12.

Fig. 12. *OLX* visual identity: frames from its motion graphics, by DesignStudio, 2020

---

[12] https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new_logo_and_identity _for_olx_by_designstudio.php

Vibrant, confident, flexible, dynamic, custom… these are commonly stylised expressions, used at the designer's convenience when a new visual identity is unveiled. The visual identity expressing itself by virtue of fluid motion, appears responsive and vivacious to such an extent, that any misstep it might have in its design, its proportions, its spatial relations, kerning or scale, seems to be disregarded in the face of the immediate gratification its animated sequence provides to our brains, because it is the way our brains work.

Even the logotype or the picture mark explain themselves better through motion, such as seeing a person live can be more enticing than looking at one's identity card photo: one is still and lifeless, dull and unchangeable; the other a complexity of light and shade, a myriad of emotions that range from happiness to surprise and fear, a system of gestures, attitudes and tone of voice that doesn't seem to captivate us in a more emotional way, even in a subconscious level, or intrigue us in a rational way.

The notorious project among the branding design discipline fans, Brand New website, by Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez (UnderConsideration), puts together a voting poll on each new visual identity article. Every article about a new launch is followed by a ballot consisting of two questions: how users find the logo itself, and how they find its application. Curiously, no matter what the results are concerning the logotype or picture mark – which might range from great to fine or bad – the application's results are, in the majority of the cases, between great to fine. In other words, even if the mark or the logotype might be far from reasonable, its lively state, its flexibility in the different media, makes it so enjoyable that the website users tend to overlook those minor drawbacks and enjoy the dynamic reality of the design.

Therefore, even if an identity consists of only one solution, it is hard to find a visual identity design that does not have a video, or motion graphics somehow bringing its picture mark or logotype to life. No matter what you might call it – flexible brand (Hewitt, 2008; Felsing, 2010; Marriot, 2011; Cox, 2014), mutant or changing identity (Kopp, 2002; Kreutz, 2011), open or fluid visual identity (Lapetino, 2011), dynamic identity (Nascimento, Kosminsky, 2012; Nes, 2013), logomorphism (Elali, Keiser, Odag, 2012), or mutatis mutandis (Coelho, 2014) – recent visual identities show a flexible state to it. A flexible, moving, changing, morphing side in a *fluid*, continuous rhythmic state.

One final exemplification of this fluid motion in identity design is the one by Amsterdam's design studio, Studio Dumbar, which was invited to design the *D&AD Festival and Awards 2020* visual identity – *imagine everything – celebrating the infinite scope of human creativity*. Due to the pandemic, the festival adapted its presence to a digital atmosphere, and the variable font visual image is shown using video. Strategies, including naming, communication approaches and branding campaign are presented mostly by virtue of moving images. Indeed, the moving images of this visual identity in motion are inspiring: they trigger our emotions, they make us curious about what is coming next. Continuing the studios spirit, similar to D&AD's event objectives of engaging and amazing, Studio Dumbar even made AR face filters to use on social media reels and *Instagram* stories, to captivate users and to be manipulated by them, as can be seen on figures 13 and 14.

Fig. 13. Frames from the visual identity of *imagine everything – D&AD Festival and Awards – celebrating the infinite scope of human creativity*, 2020, by Studio Dumbar

Certainly, such epidemic stage has made us reflect upon what drives and motivates us deeply, seeking even further for joy, despite all the odds, despite all difficulties. Life is full of antagonisms, light and darkness, joy and sadness and to mimic that rhythm, we often enjoy and favour dynamism (one consistency that allows flexibility or a flexibility that in itself is composed of constants and variables) over pure stability and unrealistic stillness. Life is motion; there is a saying in Portuguese that litteraly translated would be – *to stop is to die*. The equivalent in the English language could be something like – *there will be plenty of time to sleep once you are dead.* This rhythmic vision of life can be more scientifically backed up already by Norman (1993), Huizinga (1998), Heidegger (1977), Fiske (1997) or Chion (1998). Rhythm is a particular kind of characteristic that

applies to sound, to life, to graphic design, and particularly, branding is no exception. It has the ability to surprise and to leave space for quietness, stillness, stability and constancy, as well as fun and dynamic emotion.
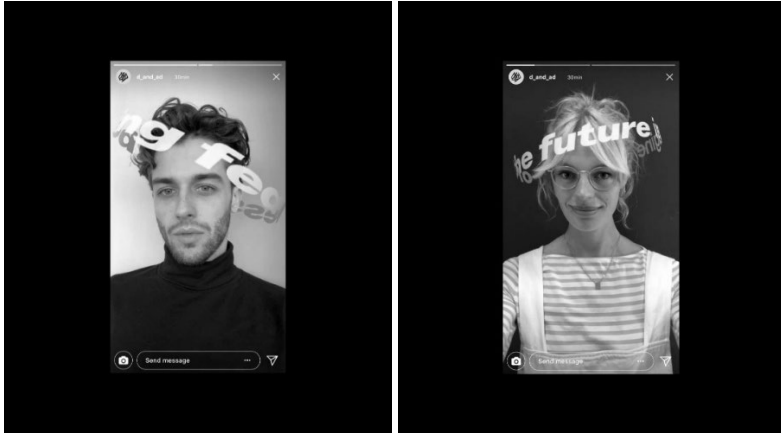

Fig. 14. Face filter from *imagine everything – D&AD Festival – celebrating the infinite scope of human creativity*, 2020, by Studio Dumbar

This pandemic, this quarantine in consumption we are now facing has forced us to turn our attention even further to simple pleasures in life[13]. And life itself is movement.

Furthermore, an utter impatience, user-generated-open-free-and-authentic state-of-the-art, algorithm generated paradigm implies an empowerment of the audience. Motion in the presentation of a visual identity translates this migration of conventional media towards multi-platform strategies: it translates these modes of engagement in a digital multi-platform context – in short, this overall digitization and meaning creation democratization in dynamic visual identities.

We have been confined to our little rooms looking not exclusively and not

---

[13] Even though, as some put it, as a negative drawback from this pandemic is that, for some companies, humans have proved redundant, and technology proved more economic and stable. Furthermore, by using user generated content, from people who are not employees but eager to share, that process feeds convergence in these troubled times, anxiety, impatience for results with invisible designers as the technology.

as much at TV anymore but at our personal screens for simple pleasures. And if those pleasures come from watching oddly satisfying videos of people cooking, people cleaning, dancing, etc, it will certainly also come from watching beautifully crafted dynamic visual identities which feature short motion graphics with contrasting bold colours, a strict palette, harmonious movements and rhythmic cuts, (even with or without sound), which catch the eye, draw attention and dance with us, giving it a sense of living beauty.

Final thoughts

There is no sector in industry that does not need graphic design in general and a visual identity in particular, so as the economy slowly re-emerges and society reconfigures itself, this is an exciting era to be, in which great creativity and dynamic visual identities are going to be crucial for the engagement of users. Audiences are no longer craving to buy, waste, or work without a solid cause. They are not open to hard-core economic hazard nor are they just passively receiving any content that does not engage with them. Users are also creators of meaning and crave to partake in meaningful, identifiable and, if possible, electrifying ways. This pandemic has made us look into the rhythm of life, to its core and express it in a more authentic way. This fluidity in motion of a dynamic visual identity (be it generative and computer automated or completely drawn by the author(s) and audience) is a highly effective way for brands to expand their appeal in the vitality of this new cross-platform paradigm. Organic content in the form of motion graphics, videos, animated sequences for moving brands, are useful creations in identity design for companies that seek to stay relevant and up-to-date in this ever changing world of fast-paced new technologies, in which our natural biology has, in its essence, stood true to our old complex selves: our *old-constructed* brains get adrenalin with activity, and much like a gesture to complete a person's identity, that vitality in motion is crucial to the completeness of a visual identity and for its message to come across.

This era will also present a great opportunity for design graduates and designers to excel at their creativity, pushing economic growth without creating havoc and for automating trivial tasks. In short, creating a society that they love, full of energy and determination. In this post-Covid19 era that is lying ahead one must learn to question new ways to think, reflect, and design visual identities that echo a better understanding of our complex lives, our relationship with nature, our relationship with technology and with each other, as it is by moving and adapting that a visual identity stays

relevant and resists throughout time. It is not only high-tech that is paramount in the flexibility of dynamic visual identities. Much like our human species, as we are born without much sharper capabilities compared to others, we have readjusted ourselves to our surroundings and we should use that flexibility to maximize and strengthen our creativity. Feeding the discussion of how fun is an integral part of function, from the brief sampling ranging from 1959 until 2020, we have come to realize the way dynamic visual identities can move from static to moving images, responding to deeper biological features. An animated result that becomes, in the near future, a natural phenomenon of almost any visual identity that seeks flexibility and resilience, in other words, visual identity kinematics.

Bibliography

Arnheim, Rudolph. (1969). *Visual Thinking.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barthes, R. (2005). *A câmara clara*. Lisboa: Edições 70.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Berger, John. (1972). *Ways of Seeing.* London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.

Campos, L. (2007). 'Flexibilidade da identidade visual do Google: um estudo de caso para o fortalecimento da comunicação das marcas com o novo consumidor'. *Signos, Univates*, 28, N.1.

Caruso, Cacilia. (2020, September 7) 'How Helvetica became fashion's favourite font: The typeface that homologated logos and communication of very different brands'. *Nss Magazine*. (Consult. September 2020 in https://www.nssmag.com/en/article/23383)

Chaves, Norberto (2005). *La Imagen Corporativa: Teoria y Metodologia de la Identificación Institucional*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.

Chion, Michel (1998). *Le Son*. Paris: Éditions Nathan.

Cuthbertson, A. (2020) Artificial intelligence that mimics the brain needs sleep just like humans, study reveals (Retrieved in 2020 at https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/artificial-intelligence-human-sleep-ai-los-alamos-neural-networka9554271.html?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1591719480).

Coelho, Rita (2011). 'The Logo is not Flat: evolving picture marks'. *In The 9th International European Academy of Design Conference: The Endless End Conference proceedings*. Porto: Faculdade de Belas Artes Universidade do Porto.

Coelho, Rita (2014). *Semiótica da Marca: contributos para a construção*

de uma sintaxe e retórica visual na prática do design de identidade.
Porto: Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto.

Coelho, Rita (2019). *Picture Marks Semiotics between Ontwerpen and Vormgeving. In* Providência, Francisco (org.) MADE.PT: Design Crítico para o Desenvolvimento e Prosperidade (pp. 105-112). Aveiro: UA Editora - Universidade de Aveiro.

Costa, Joan (1994). *Imagen Global.* Barcelona: Ceac.

Costa, Joan (2001). *Imagen Corporativa en el siglo XXI*. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.

Cox, Oliver (2014). *Are flexible identities the future of identity design?* Birmingham: Institute of Art & Design.

Delahunty, D. (2013). *The evolution of visual identities from static identities to dynamic identities.* Master's Dissertation in Science in Interactive Digital Media. Dublin University: Trinity College of Dublin.

Elali, L., Keiser, D. & Odag, O. (2012). Logomorphism and Liquid Logos: An Analysis of Google Doodles, p. 183-206, 2012. In *The Dialogue Imperative Trends and challenges in strategic and organisational communication*. Covilhã, Portugal: Labcom Books.

Felsing, U. (2010). *Dynamic Identities In Cultural And Public Contexts*. Baden: Lars Muller.

Fiske, John (1997). *Television Culture*. Londres: Routledge.

Friedman, T. L. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Godin, S. (2000). *Unleashing the ideavirus: Stop marketing at people! Turn your ideas into epidemics by helping your customers do the marketing for you*. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y: Do You Zoom.

Grossman, Lev (2006). 'Power to the people', Revista *Time*, 25 Dezembro 2006.

Heidegger, Martin (1977). *The Question concerning technology and other essays*, Londres: Harper Torchbooks.

Hewitt, J. (2008). Flexible Consistency, Consistent Flexibility, Speak Up. (Retrieved in 2008 from http://www.underconsideration.com/speakup/archives/004431.html).

Huizinga, Johan (1998). *Homo Ludens*: *a study of the play-element in culture*. Londres: Routledge.

Kopp, R. (2002). 'Design gráfico cambiante: a instabilidade como regra'. *Revista Famecos*. Porto Alegre, N.18.

Kress, Gunther; Leeuwen, Theo van. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kreutz, E. (2005). *Identidade Visual Mutante: uma Prática Comunicacional da MTV*. Ph.D. thesis, Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Rio

Grande do Sul.

Lapetino, T. (2011). 'The future is fluid: inside dynamic logos'. *Hexanine*. (Retrieved in 2019, from http://www.hexanine.com/zeroside/the-future-is-fluid-inside-dynamic-logos).

Manzini, E., & Coad, R. (2020). *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation.* Malmö.

Marriot, J. (2011). *Could the adoption of flexible identity systems by some contemporary designers have any enduring influence on the field of brand identity design?* (Retrieved in 2014 http://www.pdfarchive.com/2011/04/19/investigative-study/investigative-study.pdf).

Nascimento, I. & Kosminsky, D. (2012). A evolução dinâmica das marcas. P&D Design, *10º Congresso Brasileiro de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento em Design*, São Luís (MA), Brazil.

Nes, I. (2013). *Dynamic identities: How to create a living brand*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

Neto, J. C. S. O; Pinheiro, G. L. A., (2012). Marca cambiante: a flexibilidade de uma estrutura fixa e sua importância. *In XIV Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação*, Recife: Intercom – Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação.

Norman, Donald A. (1993). *Things That Make Us Smart: Defending Human Attributes in The Age of The Machine*. Nova Iorque: Basic Books.

Olins, Wally (1990). *Corporate Identity*. Boston: Harvard Business School.

Olins, Wally (2008). *Wally Olins: The Brand Handbook*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Oliveira F, Raposo D (2016). Metamorfosis. dynamics of graphic behaviour on contemporary brands. *In: Primer Congreso de Diseño Gráfico: Marcas gráficas de identidad corporativa* (pp.161–168).

Philipp Lorenz-Spreen, Bjarke Mørch Mønsted, Philipp Hövel, Sune Lehmann (2019). *Accelerating dynamics of collective attention. Nature Communications*, 10. DOI: 10.1038/s41467-019-09311-w.

Rand, Paul (1994). 'Logos, Flags and Escutcheons'. In Michael Bierut, William Drenttel, Steven Heller and D.K. Holland (Eds.). *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* (pp. 88-90). New York: Allworth Press.

Raposo D., Ribeiro R., Amaral M., da Silva F.M., Martin Sanromán J.R. (2020). The Brand Mark Competitors Map as Visual Research Tool. Using Graphic and Symbolic Data in the Brand Visual Identity Project. In: Rebelo F., Soares M. (eds) *Advances in Ergonomics in Design*. AHFE 2019. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, vol 955. Springer, Cham.

Raposo, D. (2019). *Communicating Visually: The graphic design of the brand*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Rowden, Mark (2000). *The Art of Identity: Creating and Managing a Successful Corporate Identity.* Hampshire, England: Gower Publishing Limited.

Thomas, Gregory (2000). *How to Design Logos, Symbols, and Icons.* Cincinnati: North Light Books.

Tucker, E. (2020, September 17). 'How bland is your brand?'. *Creative Review.* (Consult. September 2020 in https://www.creativereview.co.uk/bland-brand-book/)

UnderConsideration. (n.d.). *Brand New*. (Consult September 2020 in https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/)

Valinsky, J. (2020). *McDonald's and other brands are making 'social distancing' logos.* CNN Business (Retrieved in 2020 from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/26/business/social-distancing-brand-logos-coronavirus/index.html).

Van Winkel, Camiel (2006). *The Regime of Visibility*. Nai Publishers.

Vetrov, Yury (2019) Algorithm-Driven Design: How Artificial Intelligence is Changing Design (Retrieved in 2019 from https://algorithms.design).

Pinker, S.; Ridley, M; De Botton, A.; Gladwell, M. (2016). *Do Humankind's Best Days Lie Ahead*? Oneworld Publications.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations*. New York: Penguin Press.

Rita Coelho
Affiliation: ESMAD P.PORTO – Portugal
e-mail: ritacoelho@esmad.ipp.pt
ORCID number: 0000-0002-5858-1843

Rita Coelho, PhD in Art and Design (Faculty of Arts University of Porto: FBAUP, 2014) and Master in Multimedia Art (FBAUP, 2008), is an Associate Professor in School of Media Arts and Design, Porto Polytechnic (ESMAD P.PORTO), where she was coordinator of the Design Master and teaches in the fields of Graphic Design and Drawing. She has published internationally and researches in her field of expertise: visual identity design. She received a doctoral grant by the Portuguese national funding agency for science, research and technology FCT and contributes to the research centers of ID+ and uniMAD. Rita Coelho has lectured workshops and has taught in different higher education institutions from ESMAD; FBAUP (MA of Graphic Design and Editorial Projects); University of the Arts London: Camberwell; Faculty of Arts Lisbon: FBAUL (PhD in Design); IPCA; ESE; to ESMAE of Porto Polytechnic. She has participated in several collective national and international exhibitions, participated in national and international conferences, such as in Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design and published scientific papers on her specialty subject. Rita Coelho has received awards such as the graphic identity for the magazine of Parks and Wildlife (2008), the Award António de Almeida Foundation (2005) and the visual identity for the Couto Foundation (2005); has worked on identity and communication design for clients such as WESC, Agros, Municipality of Santa Maria da Feira and University of Porto, among others. She graduated in Communication Design (Graphic Art) in FBAUP, attended the Architecture course at FAUP, courses of drawing and the Willem de Kooning Academie – Hogeschool Rotterdam.