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ART 365

Analysis Paper 4

A. Idea No.46: Floating Heads

Heller and Vienne state that floating heads are used as a simplified design element. By separating the head from the body, we lose extra details and the context behind the image. According to Heller and Vienne, using disembodied heads has been a part of graphic design since the early nineteenth century. For viewers, this disembodiment can be intriguing, as it often takes the eye longer to process what is going on and fully grasp the image. Personally, I find the use of the floating head to be effective, as it highlights the surrounding information in the design.

1. Example One: The first example is a 1994 poster titled, '*Diva is Dismissed*', designed by Paula Scher for the New York Public Theatre. The authors selected this piece to showcase how nineteenth century design influenced modern graphic design, noting in their statement that "... the floating head was influenced by nineteenth century collage." In this poster, the floating head serves as a focal point, creating visual and conceptual impact. This effect is heightened by the use of contrasting colors and bold typography, which creates tension within the design. The visuals seem to serve as a direct highlight of the event featured on the poster.
2. Example Two: The second example, titled '*Hitler*' (1932), features a photograph taken by Hitler's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann. While the designer of the poster remains unknown, Heller and Vienne suggest it was likely created by someone working for Hitler under the Nazi party. The poster's intended message was to portray Hitler as a figure of light emerging from darkness, positioned as Germany's savior in a campaign ad. With what is now known about Hitler, the poster is often described as "ominous." Compared to the previous example, this poster incorporates fewer elements, leaning toward a more modern style approach, which was unusual for its time.
3. Example Three: The third example discussed by Heller and Vienne is the '*Für das Alter*' (1949) poster, designed by Carlo Vivarelli. This design features a black and white image paired with minimal text. The title, which translates to "For the Age" in English, is seen in the underlighting of the subject's face, emphasizing the details of age and supporting the poster's theme. Even without translation, viewers can infer the message due to the focus on the subject's aged features.

By concentrating solely on the head, the design highlights facial details that might have been overlooked if the entire figure was included. Like the Hitler poster, this piece uses a black and white contrast palette, but the two works differ significantly in intention. Vivarelli directs attention to the subject's facial expression and complements it with minimal yet effective text to convey the message. With these simple elements, Vivarelli successfully delivers a clear statement.

B. The example chosen from Meggs is a title page named '*Aurem Opus (Great Works)*' by Diego de Gumiel. This is an early Spanish graphic design made in 1515.

1. This title page acts as an introduction to the works discussed in Section A. While it is not a photograph, it uses a black and white color scheme similar to the posters '*Hitler*' and '*Für das Alter*'. The artist created the design with white-on-black woodblock printing, a technique that represents an early example of Spanish graphic design influenced by German printing methods. The imagery on the title page features heraldic symbols, which historically held great meaning for specific groups, such as families or governing bodies. These symbols often included details that revealed important information about the group, such as where they came from, their social or political status, and their role in society. The design's attention to detail, particularly in the headpiece and surrounding elements, shows how significant these symbols were to the people they represented. The focus on the head area in this work emphasizes how much information can be conveyed through facial features and associated details. Even without text, the viewer can interpret meaning from the imagery based on context and visual cues. This idea connects to the way we naturally read faces in everyday life. We are constantly observing expressions and emotions to understand what others are feeling or thinking, even without words. This ability to read faces has become almost like an unsaid language, making the head and its features an important aspect of graphic design. Over time, this emphasis on the head area has remained an effective way to communicate meaning and emotion in visual works.

C. The example from Graphis was created in 2023 by designer Carmit Makler Haller. It is titled *'Macbeth'*, this was self initiative and created in consideration of the leading feminine heroine Lady Macbeth.

1. This piece, like the other works mentioned, focuses on the depiction of a floating head as its central element. Similar to *'Hitler'* and *'Für das Alter'*, it uses a dark background and minimal text, allowing the image to speak for itself. However, unlike those earlier examples, this design seems to have been created with the help of tools like Photoshop to add a greater level of detail. One important feature of the design is the placement of blood. It flows from the crown, through the subject's eyes, and down her face. This choice is not random, it instead plays a significant role in telling the story of Lady Macbeth. The blood on the crown symbolizes the crimes she has committed, while the tears running down her face represent her guilt. Her seductive gaze adds to the overall mood, reflecting her inner turmoil and moral descent into madness. Through this carefully crafted imagery, the designer tells Lady Macbeth's story without needing any words besides the title of the story. The floating head becomes a symbol of a complex character and the consequences of her actions. This piece is a great example of how visual elements can work together to create a story, showing how much can be communicated through facial expressions, details, and symbolic choices.

## Bibliography

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Figure Plates



Fig.1: 'Diva is Dismissed', by Paula Scher

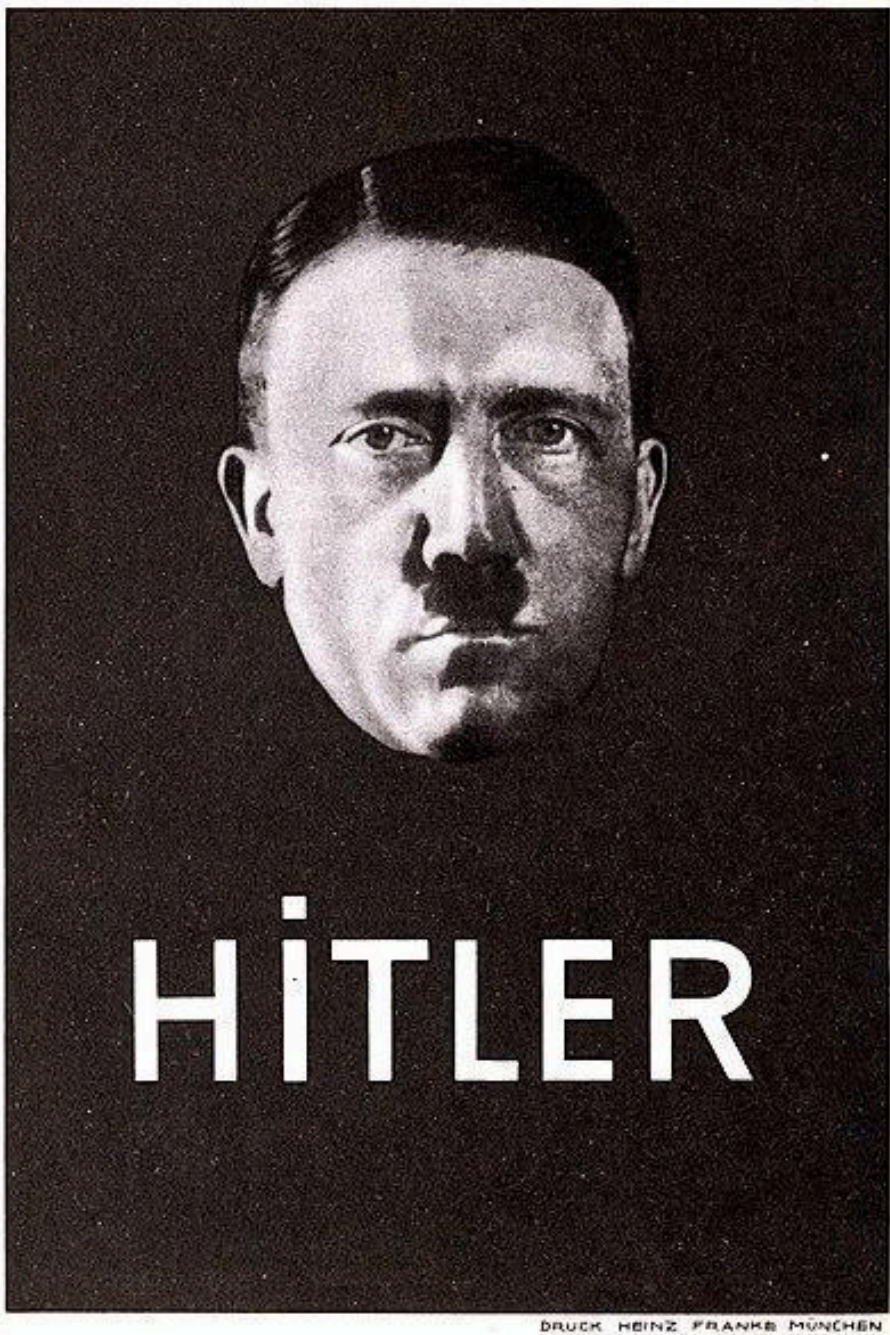


Fig.2: 'Hitler' (1932), by Heinrich Hoffmann.



Fig.3: 'Für das Alter' (1949) by Carlo Vivarelli.



Aureum opus regalium privilegiorum ciuitatis et regni Valentie cum historia cristianissimi Regis Jacobi ipsius primi conquistatoris



Figure.4: 'Aurem Opus (Great Works)' by Diego de Gumiel.



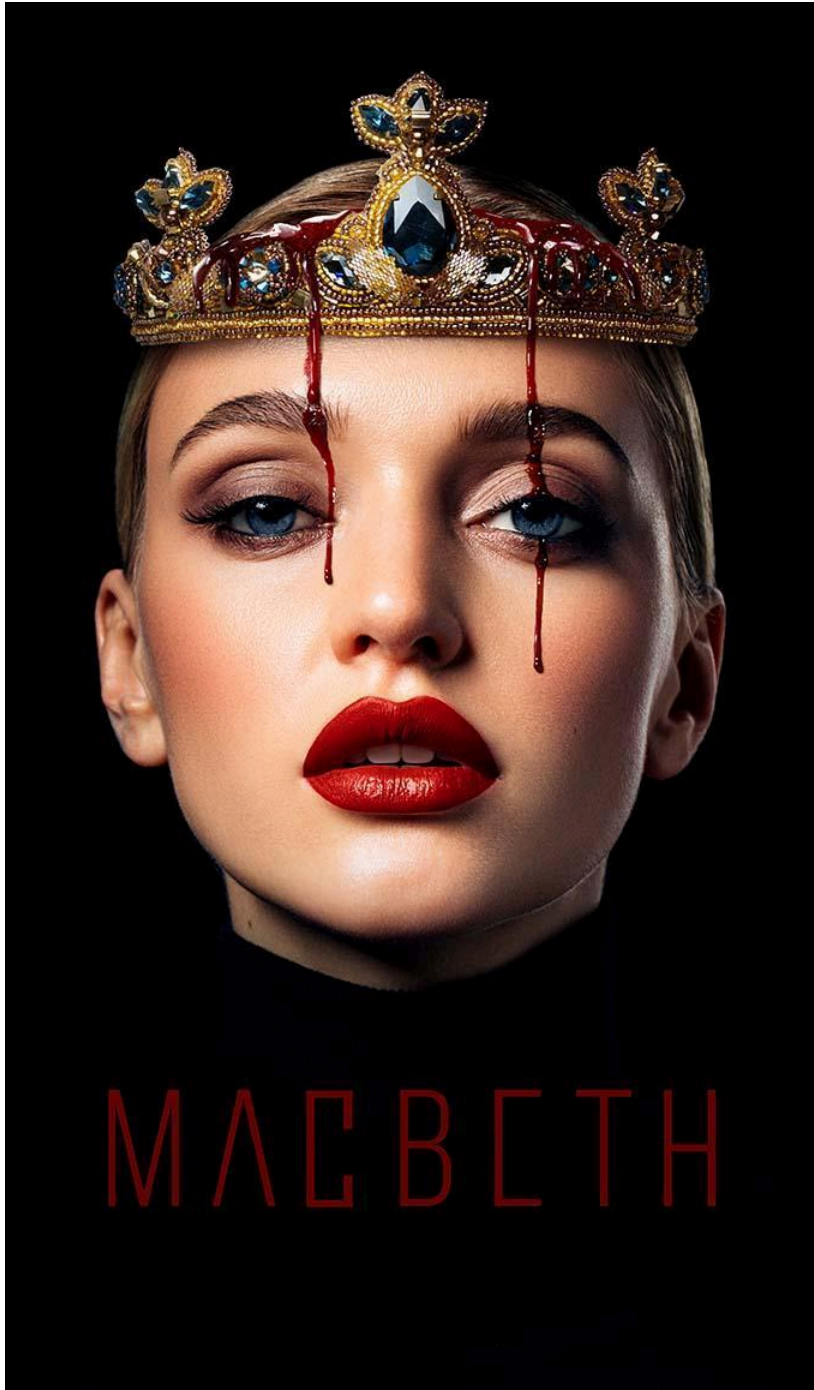


Fig.5: 'Macbeth' by Carmit Makler Haller