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MANIFESTO

# THE FIRST THINGS FIRST MANIFESTO 1964

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Written in 1963 and published in 1964 by Ken Garland along with 20 other designers, photographers and students, the manifesto was a reaction to the staunch society of 1960s Britain and called for a return to a humanist aspect of design. It lashed out against the fast-paced and often trivial productions of mainstream advertising, calling them trivial and time-consuming. Its solution was to focus efforts of design on education and public service tasks that promoted the betterment of society.

The influence of the manifesto was quick to reach a wide audience and was picked up by The Guardian, which led to a TV appearance by Garland on a BBC news program and its subsequent publication in a variety of journals, magazines and newspapers. It was revisited and republished by a group of new authors in the year 2000 and labeled as the First Things First Manifesto 2000.



We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, photographers and students who have been brought up in a world in which the **techniques and apparatus of advertising** have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable means of using our talents. We have been bombarded with publications devoted to this belief, applauding the work of those who have flogged their skill and imagination to sell such things as:

cat food,  
stomach powders,  
detergent,  
hair restorer,  
striped toothpaste,  
aftershave lotion,  
before shave lotion,  
slimming diets,  
fattening diets,  
deodorants,  
fizzy water,  
cigarettes,  
roll-ons,  
pull-ons,  
and slip-ons.



**BY FAR THE GREATEST EFFORT OF THOSE WORKING IN THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY ARE WASTED ON THESE TRIVIAL PURPOSES, WHICH CONTRIBUTE LITTLE OR NOTHING TO OUR NATIONAL PROSPERITY.**



In common with an increasing number of the general public, we have reached a saturation point at which the high-pitched scream of consumer selling is no more than sheer noise. We think that there are other things more worth using our skill and experience on. There are signs for streets and buildings, books and periodicals, catalogs, instructional manuals, industrial photography, educational aids, films, television features, scientific and industrial publications and all the other media through which we promote our trade, our education, our culture and our greater awareness of the world.

We do not advocate the abolition of high pressure consumer advertising: this is not feasible. Nor do we want to take any of the fun out of life. But we are proposing a reversal of priorities in favor of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication. We hope that our society will tire of gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders, and that the prior call on our skills will be for worthwhile purposes. With this in mind we propose to share our experience and opinions, and to make them available to colleagues, students and others who may be interested.

# A MANIFESTO — 2020 EDITION



Encouraged in this direction, dog biscuits, designer coffee, diamonds, detergents, hair gel, cigarettes, credit cards, sneakers, butt toners, light beer and heavy-duty recreational vehicles. Commercial work has always paid the bills, but many graphic designers have now let it become, in large measure, what graphic designers do. This, in turn, is how the world perceives design. The profession's time and energy is used up manufacturing demand for things that are inessential at best.

We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, art directors and visual communicators who have been raised in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable use of our talents. Many design teachers and mentors promote this belief; the market rewards it; a tide of books and publications reinforces it.





## WE PROPOSE A REVERSAL OF PRIORITIES IN FAVOR OF MORE USEFUL, LASTING AND DEMOCRATIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION –

Many of us have grown increasingly uncomfortable with this view of design. Designers who devote their efforts primarily to advertising, marketing and brand development are supporting, and implicitly endorsing, a mental environment so saturated with commercial messages that it is changing the very way citizen-consumers speak, think, feel, respond and interact. To some extent we are all helping draft a reductive and immeasurably harmful code of public discourse

There are pursuits more worthy of our problem-solving skills. Unprecedented environmental, social and cultural crises demand our attention. Many cultural interventions, social marketing campaigns, books, magazines, exhibitions, educational tools, television programmes, films, charitable causes and other information design projects urgently require our expertise and help.

a mindshift away from product marketing and toward the exploration and production of a new kind of meaning. The scope of debate is shrinking; it must expand. Consumerism is running uncontested; it must be challenged by other perspectives expressed, in part, through the visual languages and resources of design.

In 1964, 22 visual communicators signed the original call for our skills to be put to worthwhile use. With the explosive growth of global commercial culture, their message has only grown more urgent. Today, we renew their manifesto in expectation that no more decades will pass before it is taken to heart.



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