

The Rise of Faux Maximalism

Essay response to Question 4

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INTRODUCTION

Design movements generally are responses and reflections of the economical and social states of their respective times (Yu 1). Today, current trends and motivations in design might lead toward the emergence of a movement that is Faux Maximalism. This would be especially evident in the field of graphic visual communication, of which the author is a practitioner, thus this essay will focus on impacts on visual communication in the next 5 years.

In Faux Maximalism, design is intended to optimally represent everything but communicate nothing. It is not a grim accusation of meaningless design in the future, nor is it drawing parallels to conceptually stylised movements of Expressionism or Art Nouveau of the past. Although seemingly counter-intuitive, it is the author's methodical prediction based on current and projected states of technology, economy and society. This essay identifies 4 key qualities in design content, focus, delivery and style ascribed to this prospective shift in design and the influences leading to it.

i. CONTENT REPRESENTATION

Faux Maximalism derives from the notion of providing an excess of information that begets no meaningful conclusion. It will see a revival of a myriad of excess as witnessed in Maximalism. To stay relevant in a digital age, design strives to encompass all types of information and executions jammed into one delivery. The key difference would be the lack of clear direction and actionable communication in this revival. In an increasingly socially, politically and environmentally conscious globalised landscape, the utopic ideal has been to find mass solutions for everything. This forces designers to strive to conquer such a ludicrous endeavour (Sandberg 3), ultimately resulting in counter-productivity.

ii. CONCEPT-DRIVEN FOCUS

Born from the age of rapid automation that will see an increase in mass production over the next 5 years (Desjardins), Faux Maximalism emerges as a highly abstract, conceptually-driven, theoretical approach to design practice. With automation, designers will either be subordinates or competitors of machine. In either, the role of designer ceases to control the technical balance between function and form. Instead, this human role becomes highly focused on generating conceptual ideas and captivating storytelling. As ideas are idiosyncratic and cannot be programmed into machinery, it is the advantage that human designers will have (Yeo 27, 39, 43). In rapid automation, this quality will reshape design practice as designers strive to prove indispensability by honing and selling abstract concepts. As most services and activities become automated, demands decelerate for practical user products alleviating manual effort. This redirects demand for audacious conceptual ideas in packaging, campaigning, advertising and branding as companies strive to stay attractive in the commercial market (Pralhad and Sawhney 7, 17). An influx of competing, compelling narratives will overwhelm the market, becoming noise with side-tracked purposes of outshining competition.

iii. DELIVERY PLATFORM

Multi-media engagement will take precedence over print, as designers create multi-sensorial experiences to communicate ideas. In visual communication, advances in technology in Extended Reality and Artificial Intelligence are being embraced by designers as extensions to provide cohesive immersion to audiences. As consumers are constantly engrossed in varying digital screens and platforms, multi-medium engagements is the new print for commercial companies to stay relevant (Ruiz 1). Faux Maximalism happens when this demand adversely results in forced application of technology and bombardment of information into design just to stay relevant, rendering communicative endeavours ineffective. If utilised carelessly, multi-media experiences may transition from purposeful to passively performative. Faux Maximalism is taken further as design education acknowledges these technological developments. Curriculums are modified to place tremendous emphasis on theoretical interdisciplinary explorations (Sathikh 4) to churn out conceptually-versatile graduates capable of ideating stellar transdisciplinary concepts, with little focus on real-world feasibility. Portfolios would display well-designed integrative concepts bearing little critical thinking into effective messaging, ultimately immersive visuals with no communication.

iv. VISUAL STYLE

In 5 years, visual communication design would likely reach its saturation point for minimalism (Budds). Heavy, detailed-laden designs and bold colour applications will see a renaissance. When graphic design has plateaued in minimalistic commonality, the opposite will thrive, as evident in past movements and popular culture. In an age of rapid technological advancements and emotionless, profit-driven mass consumer products, users will still innately respond better to authenticity and relatability. The essence of heritage and tradition exuded in vintage styles, and establishment of humanistic connections will have unmatched resonance over clinical rigidity of algorithmic precision (Sandberg).

CONCLUSION

In summary, design work encapsulating this movement engages in multi-media communication loaded with excessive information to preserve relevancy. It strives to create tangible immersiveness out of a world of abstraction, pouring heavily into details to recreate phenomenal connections.

Be it a satirical narrative or accurate manifestation of the coming 5 years, the author believes that Faux Maximalism is a trend to embrace and anticipate. With the power to shape realities, communication, and life, designers will always challenge to break boundaries of convention. Visual communication is about communicating with a purpose. In Faux Maximalism, bringing no meaning might be the new meaning. This is not a failure to communicate per se, as the lack of communication begets something to talk about.

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