

A STUDY GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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MYTH AND MANPOWER: GRAPHICS AND THE CALIFORNIA DREAM

Organized by the Museum of **California** Design



I Grow These Myself in California
Riverside Navel Orange Company
Riverside, California
Designer: Unknown, 1898
Printer: Calvert Lith. Co. Detroit & Chicago
Medium: Offset Lithograph
Collection: Archive, A.K. Smiley Public Library



I Am Somebody
Designer: Graphic Arts Group, San Francisco, 1975
Printer: El Taller Grafico
Medium: Silkscreen
Collection: Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles

Presented at: **CAFAM**
...because a shrinking world requires an EXPANDED mind

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CURATOR'S FOREWORD

What Is Design?

We often hear about designer shoes, designer clothing and designer furniture, which makes it seem as if other shoes, clothing and furniture have not been designed. On the contrary, everything man-made is designed by someone, whether a single person or a team.

Design, as opposed to art, has a function. It is usually made to be sold and used, or used to sell things. And even though design is almost always quantity-made and machine-made, it can be very beautiful. Graphic design, which is often used to entice us to buy a product or to sell us an idea, can be especially appealing. Successful graphic design, both for packaging and advertising, works surreptitiously, conveying non-verbal messages through the use of symbols, type styles, colors and images. It uses these elements to appeal not only to our minds, but also to our senses and our emotions.

Some of the most effective American graphics produced in the last century were fruit box labels once affixed to the wooden crates that oranges and lemons were shipped in from California. Those boxes were displayed in grocery stores all across America with their labels visible to all. Thus, before television and other communications innovations, those labels conveyed their messages to everyone who went shopping for food.

Later, graphics were used by the California-based labor union that represents the agricultural workers who tend orchards and pick fruits and vegetables. The posters of the United Farm Workers union were designed to convince workers and their potential supporters of the importance of organized labor and to encourage the passing of legislation that would improve the working conditions of agricultural laborers.

I have juxtaposed the labels and posters in this exhibition to facilitate seeing how their very different messages are conveyed using the same basic principles of graphic design. But it is my hope that, in addition, the exceptional aesthetic quality of these works will bring immediate pleasure to those who view them.

Bill Stern, guest curator

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition encourages us to look at how graphic design works. At first glance, there may seem to be no connection between glamorous labels promoting the sale of California-grown oranges and lemons and posters promoting the United Farm Workers, yet when we look at them in terms of graphic design, we see the ways in which they connect to the viewer's emotions: the labels by appealing to our desire for luxury and an upper-class life-style, and the labor union posters by encouraging workers to struggle for fairer treatment.

The setting for these visual strategies is often the California landscape, presented on the one hand as a desirable destination and on the other hand as a site for labor struggle. To explore these and other themes, a series of questions will be provided to help you “read” images, much as you might read a text. Like words, images can assign meaning such as who someone is, what is for sale and what action should be taken. When we consider the symbols, colors and style of type used in graphics their hidden messages become clearer. While only a few of the pairs of images from the exhibition are shown in this Study Guide, you can apply the questions to all the images in the exhibition, as well as to the many examples of graphic design you encounter in your daily life.



Auto Brand
 Tustin Packing Co.
 Tustin, California
 Designer: Unknown, c. 1930
 Printer: Reproduction
 Medium; Offset lithograph
 Dimensions: 10 in. x 10 _ in.
 Collection: Museum of California Design



Huelga! Strike!
 Support The U.F.W.A., (Huelga! Apoya a la U.F.W.A.)
 United Farm Workers of America
 Designer: Ricardo Favela 1976
 Printer: Royal Chicano Air Force
 Medium: Offset lithograph
 Dimensions: 19 in. x 25 in.
 Collection: Royal Chicano Air Force Archives
 California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives, Dept of
 Special Collections, Donald Davidson Library, University
 of California, Santa Barbara

FOR THE IMAGES ON THE COVER

Did Uncle Sam actually grow those oranges?

What does his flag clothing signify?

What is the difference between the lettering on the label and on the poster?

People who use patriotism for personal ends are said to “wear the flag,” and in the 1898 label on the cover of this guide Uncle Sam, literally dressed in the flag, proclaims that he himself grew the California oranges he holds. Standing tall and proud, he could have stepped out of a contemporaneous Spanish-American War jingoistic graphic. But beyond this allegory of patriotism is the inference that a crop which had recently replaced gold as a major California export was produced without laborers. By featuring the word “California” this label also shows that even before the turn of the 20th century the state's name had become what today we call “a brand,” in this case, a land of the good life which includes that precious commodity, the orange.

On the United Farm Workers poster the artist, by reducing the figure to an outline, has made him into a symbol of all farm workers. In addition, the contrasting color background pushes him forward dramatically as he proffers a fruit of his labor and points discretely to the UFW logo.

FOR THE IMAGES ON PAGE 3

How do the figures in vehicles differ within each of the images?

What is the significance of the vehicle in each image?

In what ways does the apparel of the figures differ and why?

How does the text and its style relate to the images in each image?

The label's image derives its power from the connection made between citrus fruit and luxury. For the group of sightseers, dressed in the garb of the upper classes who drove in open touring cars, their vista is a pristine citrus orchard. To enshrine this leisure activity, a graceful gilt frame surrounds the scene, the text announcing the brand name in a style reminiscent of early car logos. In contrast, the poster, designed by Ricardo Favela of the art group The Royal Chicano Air Force, is rendered as a crude news photo dramatically devoid of detail and harshly colored. Here the United Farm Workers assumes a paramilitary tone, its activists, in sunglasses and military caps, riding defiantly in an open jeep. And the bold graffiti-like message -- “Huelga!” “Strike!” - urges action.

*Why would a polo player appear on a label for oranges?
 How much importance is given to words and text in each? Why?
 What does the style of lettering in each convey?
 What are the differences and similarities of the implement in each image?*

As a game associated with the British Empire, polo has long been identified with a leisurely lifestyle. The Polo Brand label is virtually free of text, the word “Polo” alone being enough to evoke aspirations of social mobility and wealth. The elegant, Old World typeface and the image of a dapper polo player caught in a dynamic moment, as if in a freeze-frame celebrating his day’s “work,” reinforce this idea.

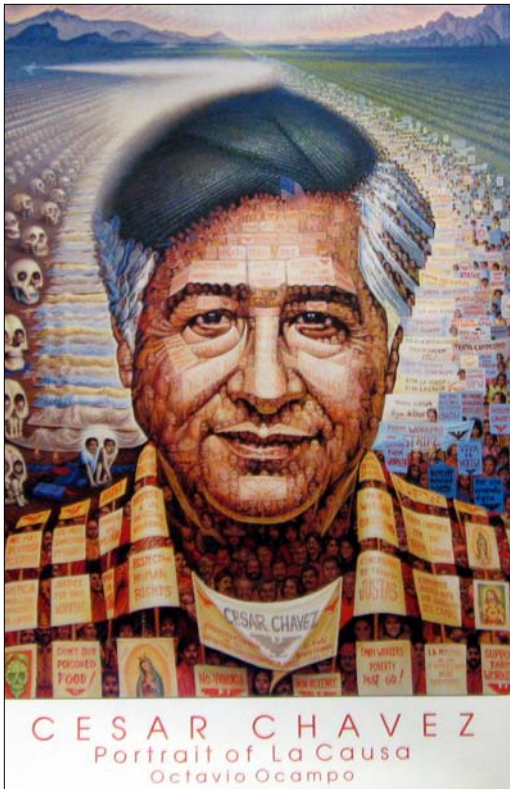
Compare the mallet raised to strike the polo ball on the citrus label to the tool wielded in the United Farm Workers union poster. In the poster a worker seems to be raising his half-hoe, a common field workers’ tool that forces laborers to work stooped down, as a symbol of defiance. This gesture speaks directly to the farm worker who is the audience for this poster’s message.



Polo Brand
 Gold Buckle Assn.
 East Highlands, California
 Designer: Unknown, c. 1940s
 Printer: Schmidt Lith. Co., Los Angeles, California
 Medium: Offset lithograph
 Collection: Museum of California Design



Delano Boycott March
 United Farm Workers of America
 Designer: Frank Ciociorka, 1966
 Printer: unknown San Francisco union print shop (LPIU label)
 Medium: Offset
 Collection: Lincoln Cushing / Docs Populi Archive, Berkeley, California, courtesy Lincoln Cushing



Miracle Brand

Bradford Bros. Inc.
Placentia, California
Designer: Unknown, c. 1940
Printer: Western Litho. Co., Los Angeles, California
Medium: Offset Lithograph
Collection: Museum of California Design

Cesar Chavez Portrait of La Causa

United Farm Workers of America
Designer: Octavio Ocampo, n.d
Printer: Unknown
Medium: Lithograph
Collection: Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles

*Compare the types of figures in these two images.
What is emphasized in each? And why?
What is the function of the background in each?*

Exoticism, a theme that pervades California citrus labels, takes center stage on "Miracle." In the foreground a combination of British Raj theatricality and unabashed beefcake serve to equate the three golden orbs being proffered to the public by the turbaned servant with jewels from his master's treasure chest. In an obvious reference to the lyrics of "America, The Beautiful," the purple mountains and perfect orchard rows in the background proclaim themselves as the source of this royal bounty.

In the Cesar Chavez poster the human figure is also foregrounded. But here seductive exoticism is replaced by the gritty reality of the farm workers' situation. The poster designer creates the illusion of a conventional image when, in fact, a closer look reveals that Chavez' face is actually composed of numerous intricately placed placards and human figures. In the background, instead of rows of perfect trees, are rows of trompe l'oeil -- literally a trick of the eye -- skulls which are composed of crouching figures. And an insecticide-spewing crop-duster sullies the cold blue horizon. This is an extreme example of how background (and foreground as well) can communicate in unexpected ways.

How is gold used in these images?

What feelings do the images evoke?

What messages do the map and the figure in the headdress send?

The elegantly simple lemons in the Golden State label could come from a Renaissance still-life painting. They are the luxurious “gold” of the Golden State. And the three-dimensional letters of the brand could have been carved out of gold bars. Add to this the topographical map of California, which presents the state as an unsullied, fertile land, and the message is revealed: the state of California, like its lemons, is something to be desired and experienced. This is not only a sales tool, it is also a mini travel poster.

The gold in the United Farm Workers poster is another thing entirely. In the headdress it evokes the power of the kings of the Aztecs, ancestors of many farm workers. And some of the grapes in the “king's” hands are the yellow gold of the fields worked by farm laborers, while the juice of red grapes runs like rivulets of worker's blood across the poster's blatant message. This is certainly not a travel poster.



Golden State

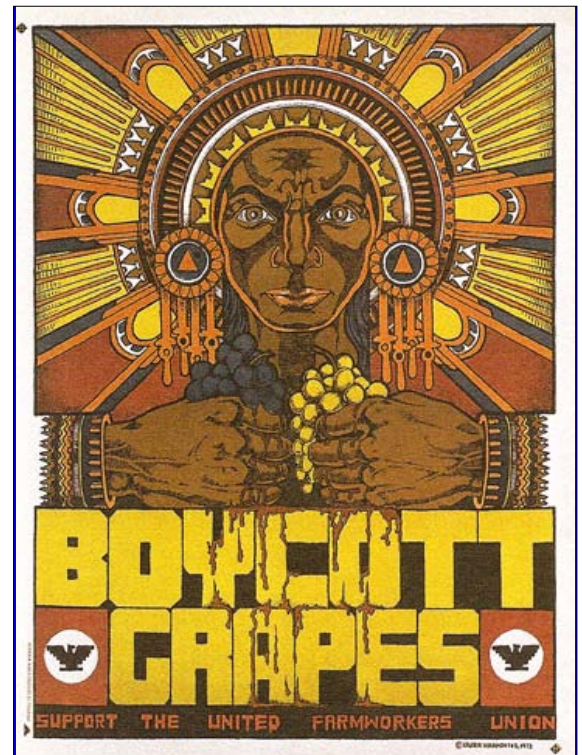
Sunkist, Lemon Cove Association, Tulare, California

Designer: Unknown, c. 1940

Printer: Western Litho. Co., Los Angeles, California

Medium: Offset lithograph

Collection: Jill and Lily Collins



Boycott Grapes, 1973

United Farm Workers of America

Designer: Xavier Viramontes, 1973

Printer: Striking Farm Workers

Medium: Offset lithograph

Collection: Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles



Ramona Memories

San Fernando Heights Lemon Association Inc.
San Fernando, California
Designer: Unknown, c. 1940s
Printer: Western Litho. Co., Los Angeles, California
Medium: Offset lithograph
Collection: Museum of California Design



Noviembre (November), calendar page
United Farm Workers of America
Designer: La Raza Silkscreen Center, 1975
Printer: La Raza Silkscreen Center, San Francisco, California
Medium: Silkscreen
Collection: All Of Us Or None Archive, Berkeley, California, courtesy Lincoln Cushing

*How does each of these figures relate to its setting?
What is emphasized in each background?
What message does each of these women convey?*

A comely figure draped in a floral shawl stands before a wall, a circular opening framing a courtyard and a Mission style building. The arches and columns seem to invite us into another, exotic era. This glimpse of a mythic "Old California" refers to the enormously successful novel "Ramona" - 650,000 copies sold -- which chronicled the ill-fated love of an Indian man and our heroine. This idealization of the Spanish occupiers as benevolent fathers did much to polish California's history and boost tourism in the state. Here landscape is mere fiction, as is the Anglo Ramona who gazes wistfully at us.

In the United Farm Workers graphic, a page from the 1975 calendar of the La Raza Silkscreen Center, the woman in the foreground represents the many women who were toiling in the fields and orchards along with men. The color of her skin and of the flowers on her dress - the same as that of the distant hills - connects her to her earthy surroundings. Unlike the "purple mountain majesties" on citrus labels, the mountains here - and the rows of crops that extend towards them - are rendered in sober monochromes. In the absence of text the link to the union is made simply through the understated presence of the UFW logo.

*How are women used in the “Carefree” label and in the “Dolores” poster?
How much attention is paid to detail, such as hairdo and adornment, in each?
What would explain this difference in depiction?*

Their ability to entice buyers having been quickly recognized, women have been represented in advertisements since advertising was born. Citrus labels employ a number of feminine stereotypes from coy flirtation to downright seduction, and the women on them were often presented as if they were Hollywood starlets.

The key element in each of these graphics, the face of a woman, has been simplified to convey quite different messages. On the Carefree label the blonde's cheeks have been given a soft rosy hue and the very tilt of her head lends her a seductive air. The diagonal typeface of the brand name, a Streamline Moderne style which grew out of the aerodynamic forms developed for cars, trains, and air planes, amplifies the label's life-of-ease message.

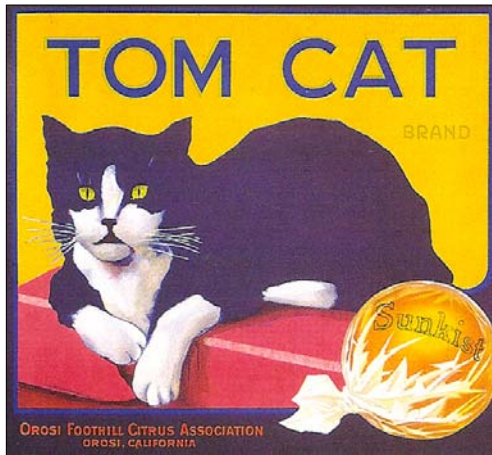
In contrast, the image of Dolores Huerta, reduced to a few colors and even fewer facial details, provides an economical, but expressive likeness of the co-founder, with Cesar Chavez, of the United Farm Workers union. And it takes just a bold sans serif type and a hint of a UFW button to say who the poster depicts and what she represents.



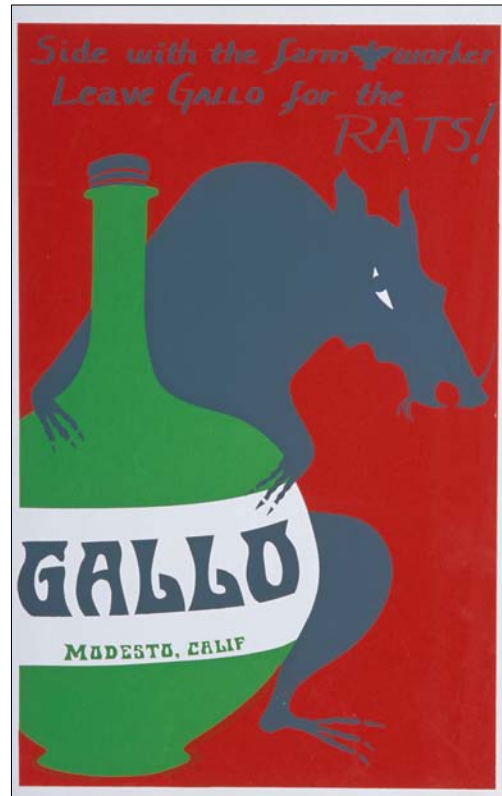
Carefree Brand
Redlands Orangedale Association
Redlands, California
Designer: Unknown, c. 1940
Printer: Unknown
Medium: Offset lithograph
Collection: Museum of California Design



Dolores
United Farm Workers of America
Designer: Barbara Carrasco, c. 1999
Printer: Self-Help Graphics
Medium: Silkscreen
Collection: Self-Help Graphics Archives
California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives,
Dept of Special Collections,
Donald Davidson Library,
University of California, Santa Barbara



Tom Cat
Orosi Foothill Citrus Association
Orosi, California
Designer: Unknown, c. 1930
Printer: Unknown
Medium: Offset lithograph
Collection: Archive, A.K. Smiley Public Library



Side with the Farm Workers
United Farm Workers of America
Designer: Unknown, c. 1970
Printer: Unknown
Medium: Silkscreen
Collection: Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles

*What messages were these animals chosen to convey?
How is color used in each design?*

Animals have been used as symbols ever since humans began painting them on cave walls. A rat is a rat, whether it represents a person or a company (in this case, the Gallo Winery). In its powerfully simplified depiction the over-scaled rat viscerally conveys the Farm Workers Union's opinion of the company they are striking against. And the bilious green color of the wine bottle reeks of poison while the burgundy background may represent either wine... or blood.

From a design point of view Tom Cat proves a worthy adversary to the Gallo rat. Confident, perhaps a tad arrogant, he exudes the kind of self-satisfied entitlement that, with his primary color surroundings, has made Tom Cat the most popular citrus label for home décor. But what about his pedigree as a sales tool? Do cats actually eat oranges? It doesn't matter. It's Tom Cat's aura that transforms the oranges in his crate, making them much more desirable than any others.

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Books, Magazines:

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Steven Heller, *Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design* (New York: Allworth Press, 2004).

Alice Twemlow, *What is Graphic Design For?* (Essential Design Handbook, 2006)

Lincoln Cushing, Timothy W. Drescher, *Agitate! Educate! Organize!: American Labor Posters* (Cornell University Press, 2009).

Richard Buchanan and Victor Margolin, *Discovering Design: Explorations in Design Studies* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Mark Resnick, *The American Image: U.S. Posters from the 19th to the 21th Century* (RIT Graphic Arts Press, 2006).

Film:

"Helvetica," Produced and Directed by Gary Hustwit (Swiss Dots Ltd, 2007). Available on DVD.

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MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA DESIGN

The Museum of California Design is dedicated to exhibiting and documenting the full range of California's rich commercial design history through traveling exhibitions and public programs. These exhibitions demonstrate how California's innovative spirit has reflected, and often led, America's cultural and economic development, how that spirit helped shape the way Americans lived for much of the 20th century, and how it continues to influence our everyday lives.

For more information about the museum and how to become a member please visit our Website: www.mocad.org.

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