

Political Graphics Cubes

Josh MacPhee



A significant portion of my practice has always been focused on history, and in particular the history of political graphics and imagery. Over the past couple of years I've had the opportunity to install a number of exhibitions which pivot around this history, and encourage the audience to engage in this history. One of my main goals for these shows has been to create as many points of entry into this visual language of social movements as possible. One of these is the creation of giant graphic blocks—who doesn't like to play with blocks? These blocks are a creative tool to engage a wide range of pedagogical questions: media literacy, image iteration and copying, the ownership and copyright of visual ideas, and the history of how images are used by people organizing to change their world.



I've designed and produced eighteen blocks, each side featuring a different image from one of thirteen visual themes (for a total of 108 images, or sides). These blocks were created in 2022 and deployed at my We Want Everything exhibition at the Reinberger Gallery at the Cleveland Institute of Art.



Catalog of images which appear on the cubes

THEMES

- [A] The Sharp End of the Stick (bayonets)
- [B] Silenced (people being gagged)
- [C] More than LOVE (riffs on Robert Indiana's LOVE painting)
- [D] Rats! (The use of rats in political graphics)
- [E] Saturn Devours (references to Goya's painting)
- [F] Triangles, Pink and Otherwise
- [G] The People of Vietnam Will Triumph! (tracing the use of a photograph of a North Vietnamese fighter)
- [H] I Want YOU (the use of direct address in political graphics)
- [I] Red Wedges (iteration based on El Lissitzky's Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge)
- [J] The Fuzz (representations of police and representation)
- [K] We Must Stay Productive! (the evolution of factory and workplace imagery)
- [L] The Many Arms of Feminism (feminist recuperation of religious iconography)
- [M] Shout (the many uses of Alexander Rodchenko's Lengiz graphic)

CUBE 1

- [A] John Heartfield, detail from The Sense of Geneva: Where Capital Lives, Peace Dies!, photomontaged cover illustration, Germany, 1932.
- [B] Atelier Populaire des Beaux Arts, Une jeunesse que l'avenir inquiète trop souvent (A Youth Who Worries Too Much About the Future), screenprint, France, 1968.
- [C] General Idea, AIDS, acrylic on canvas, Canada, 1987.
- [D] Atelier Populaire des Beaux Arts, Action Civique: Vermine Faciste, screenprint, France, 1968.
- [E] Seth Tobocman, You Don't Have to Fuck People Over to Survive, comic and street stencil, US, 1984.
- [F] Front d'Alliberament Gai de Catalunya, Amnistia Total (Amnesty for Homosexuals—Amnesty for All), sticker, Catalonia, 1977.

CUBE 2

- [A] Designer unknown, Individual No. 5, magazine cover, Iran, 1978.
- [B] Intersindical, detail from Solidariedade Com o Povo do Chile, offset poster, Portugal, 1976.
- [C] D*Face, HATE, acrylic rug, UK, 2006.
- [D] Berkeley Political Poster Workshop, Fascist Infested, screenprint, US, 1970.
- [F] Miecyslaw Wasilewski, Miesiąc Pamięci Narodowej (Month of National Remembrance), offset poster, Poland, 1982.
- [G] Johannesburg Sub-Regional Mass Action Council, detail from Bisho Bleeds!, offset poster, South Africa, 1992.

CUBE 3

- [A] Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias/FIJL (art: E. Alumbros), detail from La Juventud Defiende La Union (The Youth Defend the Union), lithograph, Spain, 1937.
- [B] Berkeley Political Poster Workshop, Money Talks, screenprint, US, 1970.
- [C] Gran Fury, detail from RIOT, offset printed sticker, US, 1989.
- [D] Artist unknown, Side With the Farmworker, screenprint, US, ca. 1973.
- [F] Artist unknown, Gay Pride 1981, button, US, 1981.
- [G] Alan Okada, Bridge Magazine Vol.1 No.6, cover illustration, US, 1972.

CUBE 4

- [A] Josh MacPhee, Too Much Info!, etching & aquatint, US, 2020.
- [B] John Heartfield, detail from Wer Bürgerblätter Liest Wird Blind und Taub (Anyone Who Reads the Papers Becomes Blind and Deaf), photomontage illustration in AIZ, Germany, 1930.
- [C] Bruce Kaiper, detail from Ideological Coverup, screenprint, US, 1974.
- [D] Partido Revolucionario do Proletariado Brigadas Revolucionarias, Morte ao Fascismo—Vigilância Revolucionaria (Death to Fascism—Revolutionary Vigilance), sticker, Portugal, ca. 1975.
- [F] Ros en Schröder Beekers, Internationale Homodag '80, poster, Netherlands, 1980.
- [G] Photographer Unknown, photo from The People of Vietnam Will Triumph! The U.S. Aggressors Will Be Defeated! No. IV, Foreign Languages Press, China, 1966.

CUBE 5

- [A] Artist unknown, detail from Fateful European Adventure, lithograph, USSR, 1940.
- [B] Adolfo Mexiac, Freedom of Speech, linocut, Mexico, 1954.
- [D] Poster Workshop, Rent Infested, screenprint, UK, ca. 1970.
- [E] Claude Moller, San Francisco Devouring Its Future, screenprinted guerrilla bus shelter advertisement, US, 2009.
- [F] Heinz Heger (art: Aubrey Walter), The Men With the Pink Triangles, book cover, US, 1980.
- [G] Poster Workshop, Victory to the NLF!, screenprint, UK, ca. 1969.

CUBE 6

- [A] Un Mundo Feliz, Peace, digital illustration, Spain, 2008.
- [H] ASAR-O, ¡Pueblo! ¡Defiende Tu Petróleo! (People! Defend Your Oil!), block print, Mexico, 2010.
- [B] Modern Dog Design (artist: Robynne Raye), Don't Vote, offset poster, US, 2000.
- [D] Artist unknown, Scabby the Rat, inflatable, US, ca. 2000.
- [I] Vickto Deni, detail from Down With Fascism, lithograph, USSR, 1929.
- [F] Artist unknown, Queer Nation Berlin, offset poster, Germany, 1992.

CUBE 7

- [J] Atelier Populaire des Beaux Arts, Untitled, screenprint, France, 1968.
- [H] Dmitri Moor, detail from Have You Volunteered?, lithograph, USSR, 1920.
- [K] El Fantasma de Heredia, Aguas Limpias Ya! (Clean Water Now!), digital design, Argentina, 2000.
- [B] Josh MacPhee, detail from Money Talks... Too Much, screenprint, US, 2011.
- [I] Saks Fifth Avenue (design: Shepard Fairey), Brave New Pants, advertisement, US, 2009.
- [G] Freedom Singers, Freedom Singers 1968, 10" vinyl record cover, Sweden, 1968.

CUBE 8

- [J] Berkeley Political Poster Workshop, US, mimeograph poster, US, 1970.
- [H] Nederlandse Vereniging Sexuele Hervorming, detail from U hebt de NVSH nodig (You Need the NVSH), offset poster, Netherlands, ca. 1970s.
- [K] Izquierda Cristiana (design: Antonio Larrea & Luis Albornoz), detail from Izquierda Cristiana a la Universidad (Christian Left to the University), offset poster, Chile, 1971.
- [B] Sex Pistols (design: Jamie Reid), God Save the Queen, offset promotional poster, UK, 1977.
- [I] Campaign Against Plastic Bullets (design: Stephen Dorley-Brown), It Smashes Heads, postcard, UK, ca. 1980s.
- [E] Josh MacPhee, Devoured, etching & aquatint, US, 2021.

CUBE 9

[J] Artist unknown, L'Art, street stencil, France, ca. 2000.

[H] UGT-PSU (art: Lorenzo Goñi), Y tú? que has fet per la victòria?, offset poster, Spain, 1938.

[K] Antonio Frasconi, detail of illustration from On the Slain Collegians, US/Uruguay, 1971.

[B] Artist unknown, cover illustration from Secheba, UK/South Africa, 1972.

[E] Berkeley Political Poster Workshop (artist: Jay Belloli), Amerika is Devouring Its Children, screenprint, US, 1970.

[G] Rupert Garcia, detail from ¡Fuera de Indochina! (Get Out of Indochina!), screenprint, US, 1970.

CUBE 10

[J] Solvognen, detail from Lov & Orden i Christiania, screenprinted poster, Denmark, 1974.

[H] Personality Posters, I Want YOU, offset poster, US, ca. 1972.

[K] Josh MacPhee, Fuck Work, screenprint, US, 2012.

[B] Ben Shahn, detail from This is Nazi Brutality, offset poster, US, 1942.

[L] Speak Collective (art: Mukti Magazine, UK), Women's Work is Never Done, offset poster, South Africa, 1988.

[I] Josh MacPhee, Red Wedge Beats the Whites, illustration, US, 2017.

CUBE 11

[J] Josh MacPhee, The Cops Are In Your Head. . ., risograph poster, US, 2018.

[H] KuK, detail from Alle Menschen auf die Beine gegen die Faschistenschweine (All People Stand Up Against the Fascist Pigs), offset poster, West Germany, 1989.

[K] Atelier Populaire des Beaux Arts, detail from Mai 68: Debut d'une lutte prolongee (May 68: Beginning of a Prolonged Struggle), screenprint, France, 1968.

[B] Solidarite Internationale Antifasciste (art: Badia Vilato), detail from Gala Franco Espagnol, lithograph, 1953.

[I] Gustav Klutis, detail from The USSR is the Shock Brigade of the World Proletariat, lithograph, USSR, 1931.

[M] Artist unknown, Downfall, Not Reform!, graffiti, Egypt, 2013.

CUBE 12

[H] Vance Packard (design: Derek Birdsall), The Naked Society, book cover, UK, 1964.

[K] FETE-UGT (artist unknown), detail from El Obrero Ignorante Forja Sus Propias Cadenas (The Ignorant Worker Forges His Own Chains), offset poster, Spain, 1937.

[B] Italian Collettiva Femminista, detail from Quando Gli Uomini Parlano le Donne Devono Tacere (When Men Speak Women Must be Silent), offset poster, Italy, ca. 1970s.

[L] Dones de l'Associació de Veïns de l'Esquerra de l'Eixample, Fuera la Sobre-explotacion de la Mujer (Out with the Overexploitation of Women), offset poster, Spain, 1977.

[I] Artist unknown, Beat! Apartheid, button, UK, ca. mid-1980s.

[M] COSATU (printing: CAP Media Project), detail from Let's Fight For Our Rights, Farmworkers!, screenprint, South Africa, 1988.

CUBE 13

[H] OSPAAAL (design: Victor Manuel Navarrete), detail from World Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, offset poster, Cuba, 1980.

[K] John Phillips (Paddington Printshop), detail from Printing Is Easy, screenprint poster, UK, 1976.

[C] Rage Against the Machine, Renegades, record sleeve, US, 2000.

[L] South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (design: TOPS), Living Wage Rally, offset poster, South Africa, 1989.

[D] Josh MacPhee, Eradicate, linocut, US, 2017.

[M] Artist unknown, detail from Ho-ruck nach links: Wählt sozialdemokratisch! (Move to the Left: Vote Social Democratic!), offset, Germany, 1932.

CUBE 14

- [H] Yolanda M. López, Who's the Illegal Alien, Pilgrim?, offset poster, 1981.
- [K] Goois Energie Komitee (design: Fred van Brouwer), De "hoop" voor de toekomst (The Hope for the Future), poster, Netherlands, ca. 1970s.
- [L] SOVA, How Many Hands do I Have?, poster, India, undated.
- [I] South Atlantic Souvenirs, Constructive Xmas, christmas card, UK, ca. 1980s.
- [E] Artist unknown, Hillary Devours Bernie, digital meme, US, 2016.
- [F] Silence = Death Project, Silence = Death, offset poster, US, 1986.

CUBE 15

- [D] Independentistes dels Països Catalans, Acabem amb les Rates Feixistes (Let's end the Fascist Rats), sticker, Catalonia, 1979.
- [I] Sandy Kaltenborn, detail from Wider den herrschenden blick! Autonomie-Kongress Ostern '95 (Against the Ruling Gaze! The Autonomous Congress, Easter '95), offset poster, Germany, 1995.
- [M] Lesbian Avengers (design: Carrie Moyer), Lesbians Speak Out, photocopy flyer, US, ca. 1990s.
- [E] Peter Paul Rubens, Saturn Devouring His Son, oil on canvas, Southern Netherlands, 1636.
- [F] Tom Robinson (designer unknown), Stand Together, 7" record cover, West Germany, 1982.
- [G] Quilapayun (design: Antonio & Vicente Larrea), X Vietnam, 7" record cover, Chile/Peru, 1968.

CUBE 16

- [H] Hervi (Hernán Vidal), ¡Viva Chile! ¡Por Fin el Cobre es Nuestro! (Long live Chile! Finally the Copper is Ours!), offset poster, Chile, 1971 (photo: Leonore Mau).
- [K] Taring Padi, illustration from Terompet Rakyat zine, Indonesia, 1999.
- [L] Taring Padi, Giat Bekerja, Giat Berkarya (Active Work, Hard Work), linocut, Indonesia, 2004.
- [I] El Lissitzky, detail from Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, lithograph, USSR, 1919.
- [I] Gunter Rambow, Kommentare zur Gesellschaft (Comments on Society), offset poster, East Germany, 1990.
- [M] Alexander Rodchenko, Lengiz—Books In All Branches of Knowledge, hand-painted sign, USSR, 1925.

CUBE 17

- [B] Komiteen mod Berufsverbot (artist: Dea Trier Mørch), detail from Væk med Berufsverbot (Away with Berufsverbot), linocut poster, Denmark, 1977.
- [C] Artist unknown (photo: Luna Park), VOTE, street stencil, US, 2008.
- [I] KuK, detail from Entarte Kunst, offset poster, West Germany, 1986.
- [M] Karel Teige, Untitled, photomontage, Czechoslovakia, 1927.
- [E] Francisco Goya, Saturn Devouring His Son, Spain, 1819–1823.
- [G] Artist unknown, Vietnam Demonstration, offset poster, West Germany, ca. 1970.

CUBE 18

- [K] Centro Stampa Movimento Studentesco, Cosa Vogliamo? Tutto! (What Do We Want? Everything!), screenprint poster, Italy, 1969.
- [B] Radical Alternatives to Prison (design: Red Dragon Print Collective), detail from Control, offset poster, UK, 1975.
- [L] Les Groupes Femmes de Nancy, 30 Mai: Fête de l'Exploitation de la Femme (May 30: Women's Exploitation Festival), offset poster, France 1976.
- [I] Red Wedge (design: Neville Brody), Red Wedge/Labour Listens, logo, UK, 1985.
- [M] Moviment Democràtic de Dones del País Valencià, Llibertat (Liberty), offset poster, Catalonia, ca. late 1970s.
- [F] Turkey Baster Records (artist: Bones), Stop Homophobia, 7" record cover, US, 1994.

Each cube is made of cardboard, and assembled from 3 pieces, which can be affixed together with a hot glue gun or other adhesive. Each side is 18" x 18", and the images are full color vinyl stickers affixed directly to the cardboard.

The unassembled cubes are stored flat in 2 large cardboard boxes, each one measuring 38" x 38":



