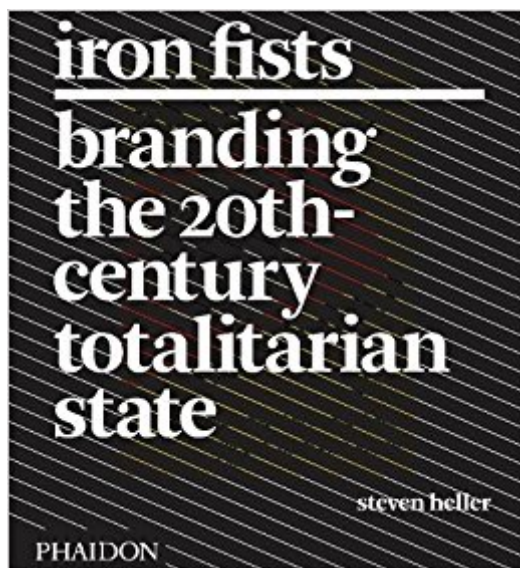


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Iron Fists: Branding The 20th Century Totalitarian State



Synopsis

An illustrated history of propaganda art and design from Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, the USSR, and Communist China.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Phaidon Press; Reprint edition (April 20, 2011)

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Customer Reviews

"A fascinating study of the power inherent in symbols and visual branding."-Creative Review

"Heller's text throughout is splendid, neither assuming any prior knowledge of the history of these regimes nor pitching so low that it will bore the more informed reader... [Iron Fists] is a powerful achievement, one that fascinates, and leaves the reader sickened and unnerved by the fascination."-Icon "Sophisticated and visually arresting... Heller, by means of unsettling images and shrewd analysis, amply restores the vileness of branding... Heller's prose is as clear and uncluttered as the graphic design he admires."-International Herald Tribune "The book looks amazing... One opens the book with a genuine sense of seduced trepidation... The great strength of this book lies in its coherence as an image essay, and you'd be hard-pushed to find such a comprehensive, considered display of documents that have shaped the modern political and cultural landscape... Heller deserves considerable credit for this."-ArtReview

Steven Heller is a Senior Art Director at the New York Times and co-chair of the MFA/Design program at the School of Visual Arts in New York. A respected authority in the design world, he has written and coauthored numerous publications, include *Merz to Emigre and Beyond*, also published by Phaidon.

A reasonable introduction to the way four totalitarian governments presented their public face. The book joins a slowly expanding library of titles dealing with State graphics in China, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. Steve Heller had an earlier look at Germany with his 2000 published book 'The Swastika: Symbol beyond redemption' and some of that is probably included in these pages, Prestel and Taschen have both published titles covering East German, North Korean and Chinese propaganda posters. Of the four countries surveyed maybe the odd one out is Italy, the images in the book don't seem to have any distinctive feel about them, perhaps Mussolini was content to have his face everywhere and that was enough. So completely different to the Nazi way of presenting their leader and political culture. Pages fifty-two and fifty-three show a 1938 graphics manual published by the German Labor Front showing the correct types to use: Fraktur; Rotunda; Futura. Rotunda in particular seems the type of choice in so much printed matter throughout the German chapter. The Soviet Union is the clear winner for eye-catching persuasion. The 1917 revolution swept away existing design styles and new European art 'isms' influenced several designers to start afresh with bold graphics and especially photomontages. Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky and Varvara Stepanova produced posters and photobooks that still look exciting today. Photography was an important part of Soviet propaganda but this didn't seem to influence the revolution in communist China where paintings inspired the masses, paintings and illustrations were part of their culture for centuries. Chairman Mao, peasants and the military were always shown striding confidently into the future (with or without Mao's Little Red Book). Most of the images are reproductions of printed matter: posters; book covers (and some inside spreads from illustrative ones) newspapers; magazines; postcards and more. Non-printed matter includes badges, paintings and statues. There are several interesting whole page photos, rather wasted because they are just used to carry smaller images of print material. Though the book was published by Phaidon it was designed by a New York company so avoids the usual tiny text and plenty of empty page space that is typical of their titles.

A fascinating book, Iron Fists looks at the way in which Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Soviet Russia and Mao's China created cultural environments which promoted the state through the use of what we now call branding. Lavishly illustrated with artwork and photographs the book also includes instructional material the regimes created in order to provide consistency of the brand. Without going into too much detail the book also discussed the cult of personalities surrounding Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini and Mao, each of which were an integral part of their respective "brands." This is a

neat book, a good collection of the "styles" without being a catalog, a discussion of totalitarian "branding" without becoming some sort of hyper-intellectual 500-page discourse. One thing I don't get is the black bars on the cover.

Well depicted, and explained treatise on the graphic design in totalitarian states. Especially insightful was the intersection of the styles more broadly employed world wide. Those interested in graphic design and the people who capably labor in anonymity have a great champion in Steven Heller and his several collaborators.

Check this out for sure!

This book contains an incredible amount of detail on 19th Century totalitarian states. Great depth of research and a well spring of engaging imagery bring the content to life. This is definitely worth the price.

Good

Amazing

Great book, good price, fast delivery

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