BICYCLE AS A SYMBOL OR: MARX ON A BICYCLE ON A MOOD BOARD IN A SCHOOL

On the second floor of the Estonia Academy of Arts, the second year MA Graphic Design students exhibited a series of visual references entitled Actual Pin-up Continuum. Glancing over one hundred images, there are always a few that tend to grab our attention more than the others. In my case, it was the figure of Karl Marx¹ casually standing next to a bicycle as if he's just waiting to hop back on. The relaxed yet amusing manner in which Marx is depicted surely garners some attention in itself, but the real draw was the unexpected familiarity of the image in the context of Slovenian graphic design.

The exact image originates from a well known poster designed by Slovenian graphic designer Matjaž Vipotnik. The poster was designed in 1983 to announce a tour of France by Mladinsko theater,² a theater group Vipotnik worked with. "Est-ce que l'Avenir et deja venu?"3 written in French the poster poses the question of whether the future has already come. The question is accompanied by an image of Marx depicted as a humble figure set in contemporary times wearing a red scarf around his neck4 — the handwritten form of the question mimicking its threads. With the more relatable demeanor the image of Marx proposes a fresh reading of his ideas away from the platitudes of the Communist Party. Vipotnik deconstructs the clichés of the Party's iconography, but not the idea of marxism itself.

The affirmation that this Marx is sort of a time traveler waiting for the revolutionary ideas of the past to come to fruition also lies in the images of the bicycle and the granite cube, placed behind the rear wheel. The bicycle alludes to the new ecological movements of the 70s and the cube to the mass student demonstrations that took place in 1968, Ljubljana and in other capitals of the Yugoslav republics — the granite cube pulled out of cobbled streets being the popular weapon of choice. In general, the symbols of the bike and the cube represent rebellion and the demands for change. In recent history, both symbols reappeared in various ways. During the nationwide protests in 2012 people fought back the police force by throwing granite cubes and in 2020 protests

were organized on bikes to circumvent covid restrictions preventing manifestations against the corrupt handling of the pandemic, in both cases protesting a far-right government. The latter even made use of a logo incorporating a symbol of a bicycle. In that sense, the ques- team Emirates, tion that Vipotnik's Marx poses doesn't just reference the late 60s and 70s, but also foreshadows future events. Marx on a bicycle becomes an image that connects these movements and concerns in time by possessing the ability to be appropriated in any which way needed. Even Vipotnik himself recognized the versatility of his image. The poster described is the second time the figure of Marx on a bicycle was used. The first time being earlier in 1983 when Vipotnik designed an announcement for the 100th anniversary of Marx's death, and he even used it for a third time the following year for a rally of the Italian communist party.

In the Actual Pin-up Continuum exhibition the image of Marx standing next to his bicycle is used by the second year student Andrew Beltran who, similarly to Vipotnik, reframes the context of the image and uses it to discuss institutional critique in an educational context. In this context, Marx is accompanied by Grapus' use of Picasso's Roglič⁶ and dove for a communist youth rally poster. Viewed together, both images seem to share a like-minded attitude and zealousness. Apart from the obvious function of advertising a play, the theater itself, or a rally, these posters allow for a different kind of reading and political engagement. The audience for the posters expands to not only include last year. Unlike those interested in theater, for example, but everyone who is willing to engage in its political message. As a result, the poster becomes a part of shaping the public debate and not just a passive disseminator of information.

Spending the past few weeks working on setting up this bulletin, I can't help but think about it in a similar manner to those posters. The format of the bulletin, namely the publishing strategy and the in-school context present an opportunity to construct a space for public discussion around graphic design and by doing so, find ways of engaging with design from different perspectives and experiences. Considering different viewpoints that arise, the bulletin should be an ever-changing and sometimes traveling structure that looks, reads, writes, and draws in a sideways manner. Rok

Visma were battling for the grand prize of Tour de France in 2022. Pogačar, a young boy from Komenda, Slovenia competed for an Emirati company that ended 2022 with nearly 30 billion USD of revenue. Emirati sponsored runner-up lost

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