

A Political Typography Manifesto by Prachi Kamdar



Beauty and politics are rarely understood as complimentary ambitions. As a visual artist, I have an innate desire to create beauty through what I do. It was only a few years ago that I began to realize the extent of my discomfort towards the magnitude of problems in India; I knew that the resulting unrest had to find its way into my visual manifestations. My desire for beauty became political.

I see a persistent fabrication and manipulation of truth disseminated throughout society by hierarchical power structures, which blur and distort our perception of the social, political, and economic order. However, we cannot underestimate the impact of the public in any system, as seen in the recent Middle East uprisings and the current revolt in Turkey. The strength in numbers speaks louder than the authority of any regime. I understand my role as a visual communications designer as contributing to the accurate representation of the causes and effects of socio-political struggles, and as a means of challenging misinterpretations of reality. If information and data become the currency of tomorrow, perhaps the plutocracy will have to turn their power over to the info-technocrats. But information is also the key to economic superiority. Who knows how soon oil will be traded for information? If the internet is seen as a democratic system that can help dissolve oppressive hierarchical structures by making important information more accessible to the masses, who in turn force governments to become more accountable and transparent, this seamless access also makes information extremely vulnerable. Because of this, as a visual practitioner I can take on the role of a critical designer and whistleblower by making political content more legible and consequential to social thought and practice. This is my manifesto—to expose bureaucratic violence with work that incites informed discussion and constructive, transformative criticism of unaccountable governments.

Invariably, I see myself as part of a much larger framework, living a life that is equivalent to a moment in an infinite time and space. The questions of philosophy have become my questions: What is it to be here and now? How does one aspire to make work and life meaningful? Visual catharsis, spurred by my concern for micro-societal systems within a macro-cosmic network, epitomizes my work.

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what would they PROMISE to ERADICATE?
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what would they hoARD?
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if
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were no
GUERRILLA^s
Who
would
they hunt?
Hunt?

About the featured typeface "Reed"

"Reed" is an attempt to create a culturally relevant and coherent font palette of Latin and the vernacular Indian script, *Devanagari*, which appear harmonious when used together in the Indian visual lexicon. The design is essentially based on forms of *Devanagari* script traditionally drawn with the reed pen (a slender wooden pen with tip cut at a 45-degree angle), which gives the letters its sharp endings and high contrast in its stroke width.✕

Bio

Born three decades after constitutional Indian independence to liberal-minded parents, **Prachi Kamdar** was raised with the notion that creativity was a way of life. She did her undergraduate in Visual Communications from The National Institute of Design, India, and after internship with Jonathan Barnbrook in London, she realized her immense affinity for type design, politically driven graphic design, and opulent Indian visual culture. India is an extremely rich nation—both culturally and traditionally, since antiquity—even as it is constantly battling issues like poverty, social inequality, and political instability. Growing up, she could not remain separated from the day-to-day concerns faced by its people at large. After almost five years in a design studio in India, Prachi redirected her course of work to align more closely with her goals as a visual practitioner. In 2012, she joined the Cranbrook Academy of Art to pursue her political visual design ambitions. Currently, she is in the MFA program at Cranbrook, where she continues to explore and express her views through her work, which strives to be cultural, beautiful, and an instrumental political agent of its time.