Thesis Report 2020

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ITLAAT-E-AAM

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Chapter 1

KEYWORDS

Language, Visual Communication Design, Visual Culture, Material Culture, Print Medium, Relevancy, Exaggeration, design practice, vernacular, Ideology, religion, Propaganda, Hyperactivity, graffiti composition, Posters, print medium, wall chalking, subconscious tapping, southeast Asian practice, Pure in nature Harmony through mess, Typography, forming precedence

ABSTRACT

The relentlessness of the human mind to truly understand each other's identity and language is the main the drive to a path of knowledge that has no success, Understanding identities has been an ongoing quest for human beings ever since of the inception of our very society but there are times when certain identities gain precedence over others and neglect starts to develop, To counter this neglect and reigniting ones language, it requires to form an interaction again and sweep aside all preconceived notions and develop a true comprehension of what it truly stands for.

SIDE NOTES

1: Islamic Religious Posters are everyday posters based on our own vernacular that you see everywhere under the bridges walls and streets.

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My thesis is set upon this very prologue in which I try to discover the true identity and language of a lost process, I have developed my thesis primarily on the basis of understanding a visual language that is lost and shares neglect within the society

PASSION

Ever since I was a child, the inquisitiveness of the mind and always harnessing more knowledge, Almost every object took precedence over every other hobby that I had, It's essential as a child that you're embedded with the concept of having been passionate about something as it tends to create a drive within you, which often leads you to a part of growth and success. When I was growing up in an environment where I saw a lot of passion but in a very concentrated version, Passion of my childhood friends or what used to truly embody them revolved around making a career out of two or three professions. They were often told that these are the only options you would have and would have to chunk out your passion for it one way or the other. A successful formula for a lot of people. All these inquiries in my childhood often made me question my own passion for something. I was sure, as a child, that I would achieve growth and success because I had passion in me and the drive to succeed but not one definite passion as I grew up realizing that I need to find something that truly captures my attention, I found my fervour in art and design. My inspirations for this project came from a very personalized inquiry as whenever I used to travel around the city or drive my car, these very

posters often captured my attention and most frequent questions that used to come to my mind was who is putting them up. I never saw any single person in my entire life putting them up yet they had been plastered all over my city. These “Urs conferences”, all these Islamic events do they ever even happen. All these mind-boggling questions sort of developed a drive into me in getting to know what really is behind this image and to be honest, I was surprised at every step of my research

Islamic Religious Posters are often based on different topics but the most widely accumulated topic is that of **URS, Urs** means birthday and often it is referred to the birth of the last prophet but its connotation has changed over the years with it being associated with notable **Pirs**, **Maulvis** and **Maulanas**

PROJECT SCOPE

-Itlaat-E-Aam tends to emphasize on the mere argument of creating relevancy of this visual language within the world of design, it also aims to empower younger generations and older generations to consider this design approach as well within their designs as it is the vernacular of our society and something that could result in being a heritage in the near future.

Itlaat-e-Aam means information for the general public, where here I’m referring to general public as the community that neglects this imagery

DESIGN STATEMENT

Is it a proposal based on *Speculative Design.* Relevancy is often created in different ways when it comes to spreading an ideology and a practice in the age of information itself. The obsession of today's world in being unique often leads the down

to a path where uniqueness often repeated again and again becomes negligible thus creating an impact initially but then being lost to ravages of time because of it getting under the shade of an umbrella of unadorned, the culture of design is known to have power of bringing things back into relevancy and this is where an opportunity often arises where as an individual one can have a chance to reignite that relevancy and bring in a new light to this very ideology. Itlaat-e-Aam is a project that talks about a distinguished but often unexplored style in the South East Asia of designing posters for religion which are often left ignored and less talked about because of them not following the very "precedent" ways of the west in designing the narrative based through the medium of Print. The project discovers various insights into how religious marketing ideology is developed through a design practice that brings a plethora of different inquiries of these posters that tend to be pure at their message and often creating a harmony within a mess.

2. **Pirs, Maulvis and Maulanas** are different people who tend to be considered more religious than usuals, **Maulanas and Alims** are considered the top tier in terms of religiousness in Islam while Pirs are more related with having knowledge of the unknown

TARGET AUDIENCE

The Project, Itlaat-E-Aam's focuses on a mature audience to truly understand what the project is trying to incorporate and what meaning it truly holds, due to the mere fact that the project is based on "**Religious Marketing**". It is not wrong to assume that the audience might find offense in it however the basis of the project is truly creating relevancy and to develop a proper interpretation of the visual culture that is so ever present in the society.

Religious Marketing is a term that is coined when religion is enforced upon to you in different ways, These religious posters often act as catalyst of inviting people to be close to the religion of Allah, Also Religious Marketing is done in this context to keep the society in check as well

Chapter 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that I formed for my thesis kept evolving as my process went ahead. The questions sometimes have very simple concerns but sometimes very complex concerns as well, Formulation of questions often asked me to go back and forth in understanding this religious marketing language. Since the very first day of my research I had decided to keep questioning my queries regarding this very topic as well, questioning and finding my own obsession with this topic which I later did eventually find out. These are some of the very briefly explained questions that over all cover all the questions that I had

How to create relevancy for these religious marketing posters

What kind of aesthetic do these religious marketing posters develop for our cities and surroundings?

A design Opportunity for designers to explore religious marketing poster practice and develop a culture in a more modern context through it?

Where did the religious marketing poster narrative building start from and why in this medium.

Why is exaggeration important in these religious marketing posters and what light does bring to its ideology.

How is Harmony within these religious marketing posters is created even though its a visual mess, Understanding this practices

Why isn't religious marketing posters practice is compared to visual culture where no rules or conformity towards the institution of design are followed(Example of David Carson's work)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

To understand the sense of language and understanding identity through the lens of language itself. the theory of the Structuralism, structuralism requires to understand the society and its language in its

very context and its true to the fact that one needs to understand its surrounding to truly gauge how communication is done within this society through a system, Structuralists view society as deep structure, A binary code, laces tangled up together to a shoe where one cannot truly understand what they mean unless they are separated and studied in the context of what they mean to the shoe itself. Understanding any language whether its visual or linguistics, requires an individual to carry out introspection, this requires learning, developing an ideation within the language and seeing what effect it would have, one cannot truly experience and develop a hypothesis from learning it without incorporating one's own self in it. The use of semiotics (Based on semiosis), Semiotics represents the object in the mind of an interpreter, the "interpretant" refers to a sign that serves as the representation of an object (**C.S Pierce, Selected Writings, 1958**). Structuralist approach paved a new way of seeking out the human personality, which was however later hijacked by the post structuralist

Structuralism talks about how a collective and an individual arise together from some sort of underlying structure. The Structure is a system of interconnected concepts

The concept of language of conformity played an integral part in understanding the essence of language, a modern day example of language of conformity could be resulted in the very need of learning the English language in order to Have recognition within the world, the precedence that the English language is set upon is not because it's the most commonly spoken in the world, it is how during colonial times it was spread around the globe. There has been a lot of experimentation when talking about social conformity but when that really made a difference for me individually was Sherif's Autokinetic experimentation, in this experiment he selected a group of people for

a very unclear sort of situation, they were placed in a very dark room with a single light dot being projected, the light dot was projected in a way that it served as an optical illusion provided that the view that it the light dot is moving, however it wasn't moving at all, the people were asked whether it moved or not and here Sheriff manipulated the group, he chose two people who had similar projections as to where the light dot moved and chose one person who had completely opposite in which way the dot moved, after diving these groups of three he realised that the person with a different view of as it to where the light dot moved conformed towards the two people who had similar view. This study in it's very own essence provided me with understanding that how easily social conformity works and how immensely it would work on a much more global scale

The Language of conformity in today's world could be regarded as the English language that how it has become so important and survival with understanding or speaking it seems dire

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language can be described in my forms and variants and its true to say that everything has a language of its own whether they are living beings or just mere objects that are ever so present in our every household, To truly have this understanding, It is important to have an observant mind where you question more than what is on the surface level of things. The fundamental importance of language in linguistic format can't be better described as in Russel Hoban's book "**Riddley**

Walker" (1980) The lot of the books serves of dystopian times where every religious scripture in the form of language has been destroyed and the only way human being remember it is through folk songs, The book tends to re-explore the very foundations of language but with already established literacy present in the society

Sapir and Whorf Hypothesis could be the most underrated theories which couldn't have defined and given a new meaning to language and whole new horizon as in how language tends to shape identities and personalities, The hypothesis is based on a very single argument in which both American Linguistics argue that the man's reality is driven by the language he speaks, further explaining their argument could be defined in the fact that language tends to hold emotions within itself and those certain emotions are untethered by that very single word of that given language, a primary example of this is given by the linguist which make the theory more understandable is the fact that, The Hopi Indians of Arizona used to pluralize clouds as they were animate objects, There language did not have spatial metaphors for time and didn't not have past tense, A popular example of explaining this would be how modern Europeans have words for seven basic colors where as in some societies of the world they would have two or three words for all colors. The theory is more or less brilliantly explained in popular media through the movie "**The Arrival (2016)**". In this very movie the aliens arrive and start writing sentences in circles and these very circles move, through this way they have no beginning or end, When the linguist Louise Banks played by Amy Adams starts decoding this language, her own perception of the world tends to start to change. The Alien visitors to the planet earth see time

in a circular pattern too adding more to the plight of Humans in the movie. The core idea at the heart of the film explains that a prime relationship exists between the language you speak and how it tends to shape the realities of the society for you. Whorf after the death of Sapir published an article in (**MIT technology review)** stating that how people Eskimos spend their whole life in snow and would have different words for snow rather than people spending less time in snow, inspired from Albert Einstein's theory of relativity this gave birth linguistics relativity arguing the fact that different languages would have different grammatical characteristics, Sapir wrote" ***The grammar of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas***.*"*. This gained popularity but was later debunked known linguist Noam Chomsky who argued that all universal language shares some grammatical characteristics, However this theory couldn't be completely regarded as null and void considering there are exceptions like how Linguist Lera Boroditsky, at the University of, has done research showing that members of the Pormpuraaw Aboriginal tribe think about time passing differently than English speakers, because their language relates it to cardinal directions instead of from left to right.

Looking at language in terms of visual experience, the most commonly found trend since the past 40 years could be that of Graffiti's, That how through the art of Graffitis, one is able explain their messages sometimes aesthetically and sometimes in the form of

vandalism as most modern day societies deem them as. In the Book "**Banging Your Head in The Wall by Banksy" 2001,** He says

"*Graffiti is one of the few tools you have if you have a smile while they're having a piss.*"

When looking upon graffiti and comparing it with Islamic religious poster aesthetic and how it tends to have the same effect as graffiti itself, One of the key insights that was available in terms of literature was Saima Zaidi's book **"Mazaar Bazaar".** The book itself generally comprises many chapters which focus on vernacular design in Pakistan, however one of the chapters discusses these Islamic religious marketing that happens around, goes to the root of islamic religious poster development. It talks how these posters were first designed entirely through hand, with designers using the process calligraphy and painting it, forming a poster. Arrival of Print Media and its prominence however changed the whole spectrum of it. One of the other books that was constantly referred to was Jergen Wasim's **"Journey To God".** This book is mainly devised on the sufism and its evolution but however does touch upon how even sufism is marketed in our society in different manners

The term **Desi** in Urdu language is a direct translation of the word **vernacular** in English Language

RESEARCH QUESTIONS EXPLAINED

Starting straight from the very first question, Relevancy for this practice could be created in many ways, when I started my research and shared my ideation with my advisors, they were used to seeing these posters but my inquiries provided them with a different outlook

to see this sort of an imagery in a different light, This could be regarded as one of the first steps relevancy that could be seen as preposterous opportunity for future designers to delve into this and seek out more answers to why it is prevalent in our society, There are other ways where I transformed this design with some western ideologies and western popular culture developed in this practice, this also could be regarded as another key step in my project where I was developing relevancy for it

The aesthetic that this very imagery creates adds to our own version of “Desi Graffiti”, These very posters though tend to be developed to serve a specific social group but the same very aesthetic could be seen in other social groups as well marketing themselves and adding more to the city’s environment, If one is to look from a very outsider sort of perspective, it does leave an effect on them as sometimes you would see walls, bridges and houses filled with this imagery

This could be regarded as one of the great opportunities for designers to research and develop more ideations from this very topic as well as for academic researchers as this could give them more study into how different religious sub groups tend to market themselves or make aware their presence in the society

My narrative building developed from one of the areas of my research which required me to look at language in a very nonlinear way and think of it as being something visual rather than it being spoken, Looking at graffiti’s and understanding its context and then comparing it with this form of graffiti which is in a different medium helped me built my narrative and made me understand that why it happens in print medium rather than another medium since it’s much easier to

develop this message in printed format than requiring to make a whole graffiti

Exaggeration within this imagery occurs as it gives the impression of the social groups main focus on being the message and the messenger who is spreading, the other details become less important and take up less space in the imagery, The exaggeration is also done in order constantly tap in to the conscious of the audience though done very subconsciously when researched upon.

To Understand Harmony, one at first needs to understand how this poster develops and how the developers and designers of this concept work their way through, The Harmony in a mess can only be understood when the audience understands its relation with the harmony, In this case both can't be achieved without one and other

Why doesn’t this Religious marketing poster practice is compared to likes of David Carson’s work, Its mainly because of the fact that this practice doesn’t have any one single founder, It started coming into being all over south east Asia, firstly through calligraphy and then trough print medium itself, Negligence and ignorance also plays a big part in this as audiences and researchers don’t try to find about this practice as it doesn’t cater to western standards and they disregard it as the very first instance of it not making sense

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY + DATA SOURCES

My research methodology was entirely and purely based on it being qualitative since there was no data or any sort of surveys that were carried around regarding thesis project, It its very first sense of research it did contained a lot of excitement for me as an individual as I would become a primary source of information on this very inquiry, My research begin by first me going around highly populated dense areas of my city Lahore, photographing these images and the environments around them truly understand what they would contribute to the whole space. Initially It was troubling since these posters contain very heavy religious contexts, I was questioned by self-proclaimed religious fanatics as in to why I was documenting these images, After getting myself out of that situation I realized in order to indulge myself in to this scenario, I need to also change my apparencies and outlook as in to why I was doing this so this required me to go under considerable changes where I would have often have to dress up like a religious "Maulvi' and go out for my research and lie about everything

To understand the fundamentals of designing Religious Marketing visual culture, I decided to find out places where these mega banners and posters are designed and then later printed. One good thing was it was very easy in terms of finding these places as the designers or printers often leave their information on these posters in order to gain more outreach. A plot was planned in getting these posters designed

David Carson, is an American Graphic Designer that became famous in 90's for his unique innovative typography design which questioned the principles of design

sense and layout

as I acted my part of being a relative to a religious scholar who wants to hold a session and wants that session to be marketed in this very format. Getting posters designed by just giving out information and giving the impression of having no sense of design help me develop a true comprehension of how the designers of Religious poster practice have the true power of hierarchies within this imagery and how they often change information in order to add more stress or importance on the message and the messenger as well. This on field qualitative research and experimentation could be regarded as the backbone of my thesis development

Chapter 3

MEDIUM OF PRESENTATION+PRE PRODUCTION

To design my rendition of religious marketing ideology, I was primarily focusing on doing it digitally with showing different versions and my own versions of it through the medium of animation, even though to design this, it required me to understand the fundamental dynamics of 2D design and then to showcase on really large platform, while working my way through understanding the basis of 2D design and it functionality a first few attempts made me realize that this is an entirely ballpark and I should shift my work towards something that is more in my control, here the basic

implication was me guiding my thesis with the help of software rather than my software limitations guiding me in different way.

The Medium of Print was my strong suit since the beginning of my degree and it made more sense choosing that over software's, I personally felt that the physicality of my project and the interaction it could create could have an all different impact than it being done on screen, My reasoning behind this was primarily the fact that the whole mechanism of the religious marketing ideology is based on it being entirely done in print design so that its accessible, easy to make and can reach to the people who still don't have access to smartphones or computers in that matter, designing In print made me realize to study hidden layers within these posters and that helped me carved out my design master plan in executing and designing my own rendition

Designing my visual directory which eventually led up to my final project, saw very intricate changes although on the face value of it, the visuals might look less different. To understand where I had to begin with, I choose the medium of designing my first set of posters where I chose to single out one of the elements and then entirely developing ab abstract imagery out of it, This experimentation within my work was entirely done in order to understand how certain elements are important within the religious marketing posters, how some elements are constantly there to enhance its structure. The self-critique of the first experimentation was understanding and decoding a visual hierarchy within these religious posters, although I was off the view

that these posters do not have any visual hierarchy so what followed was a technique that I learned in my print elective to decode hierarchies which was called color blocking while doing it on numerous posters I realized that a common thread could be achieved through it. This helped me a lot as it helped me build a baseline on how to make perfect harmony within a mess and still achieve a hierarchy within it.

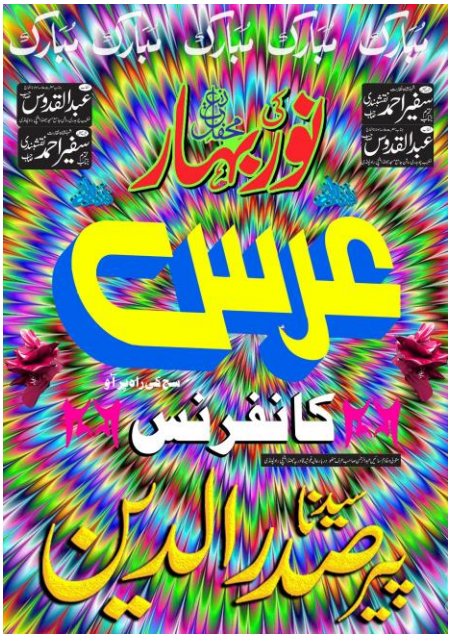
My experimentation phase could be divided into 4 major parts, two that I have defined in the previous paragraph, in my mini thesis project that I decided to experiment with the aesthetic while using a different projection on to it all together, I decided to use western populous events and coded them within this religious aesthetic and see what kind of imagery that it brings out, changing the language from English to Urdu played an important part as this where the context slightly begin to erode. The Urdu language would have different emotions attached to its word while its translation in English language might have a more subtle and direct meaning. This is where it begins to truly dross my mind of how I was missing out on the bringing or converting the context to its truest form and this is where I begin to understand that I need to relearn Urdu in a way that it could be applied properly. Typography plays an important part in Itlaat-e-aam as in these religious posters different type settings bring an entirely different aura to the imagery itself so after this experimentation I realized that I needed to have more grip on it and decided to keep creating these posters and emulating them in a perfect way where I could have the

sense of the language, the elements, the hierarchies and most importantly type setting and font formatting, My 4th experimentation was probably the most crucial one that now I needed to find my own self within this, My own aesthetic, my own rendition, for this I decided to decode the poster furthermore and understand what's hidden and what's not hidden. This helped me in designing another set of posters in which I started questioning some norms and practices and the use of religious "Maulanas and Maulvis' ' imagery gave me an entirely different aspect to what these religious posters hold. Through this study it helped identify 4 key components or types of emotion that renders religious posters contained, which was moral awakening, Fear Factor, self-proclamation, social tapping and lastly the dream of pilgrimage. These 5 ideations within these posters helped me understand that how the concept of exaggeration tends to play a vital role as it helps build a tapping environment where an influx of religious posters within a street would look negligible but still would carry the attraction its supposed to have, that's why they are still so ever present in our society. Even though my 4th experimentation required me to build something upon it, it was deemed too controversial and hidden layers within my imagery could have caused problems and could have developed an entirely different meaning, the one that I wasn't hoping to develop. At this point I was advised to subtly do it and not use any religious people imagery (Even though I was blurring it out in order to not give away the identity) because of how the religious mafia has the society in its shackles. In my final renders I kept the ideology of exaggeration constant and through

different elements tried to create hypnosis effect or to make the attraction that I have talked about previously in a different light

Chapter 4

PRODUCTION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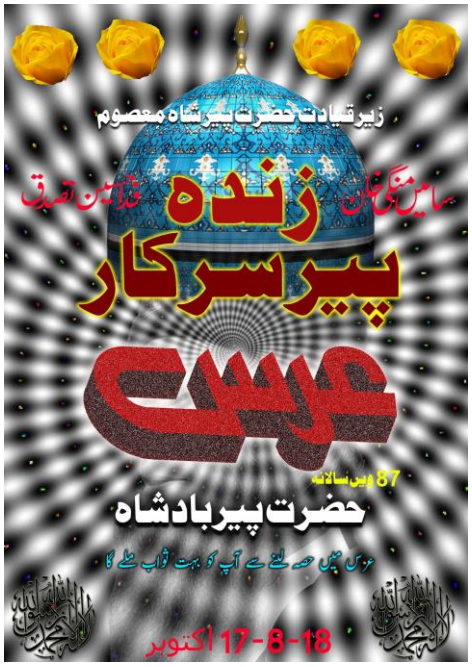
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Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Anything that I will write down would probably be an understatement to what this project helped me understand and helped me develop both professionally and personally also, while converging on this project that too of religious intent, it helped me realize that how within a single religion there are so many renders of Allah almighty himself, here what needs to be understood is that there's no denouncement or placing someone on the same pedestal as Allah but glorifying the word of God in different formats. This truly helped me understand that different sects have a different way of glorifying God, some might do it through fear, while some might do it through acceptance. While this was my understanding of social groups, It also helped me analyze an aesthetic that widely seemed negligible, while I stress upon so many times during my writing, I still believe the whole path of discovery and understanding the development of this aesthetic helped me understand our design identity that how even in terms of design, There's a trend that needs to be followed or a bandwagon that most designers would get on to, I remember when I first came to visual communication design, I thought my attraction to surrealism and my practice within it would somewhat make special or different from the rest while I then I realize that it's probably a lot of designers that would have the same sort of identity, Taking nothing away from their work or their understanding. My quest in this whole project was to find the "differentiable" within my work. The objective wasn't creating

something great or the best for that matter but something different to talk about. I think I have achieved personal satisfaction regarding the main objective that was to create relevancy. I think my project could be regarded as one of the renders or religious marketing posters where this leaves a door for future designers or whoever knows about this project to further create and develop from our vernacular, rather than emulating, recreating, appropriating something that we as south east Asians do not own.

All of this wouldn't have been possible without my friends and family and super great teachers for supporting throughout these 4 years and a special thank you to Maham Akhtar who rooted for me and believed in me since day 1 of this whole project

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