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The world's largest human logo, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, was created in Portugal on July 24, 1999. Each person to arrive at the National Stadium of Jamor in Lisbon was handed a white, black, red or green cape. At 7 p.m., when everyone had taken his or her assigned seat, the cameras started rolling. A signal was given, and one section of the group made up of 651 gymnasts simultaneously removed their capes, while another group released thousands of balloons. On cue, the entire crowd of 34,309 shouted: "Portugal, we love soccer!"

The view from above was of a giant soccer player who, at the signal, appeared to kick a soccer ball, which "burst," releasing the balloons. The kicking motion was created by the gymnasts removing their capes to reveal different colored garb beneath. Organized by events specialist Realizar Eventos Especias, the stunt took seven days to choreograph, but helped bring Portugal its goal: The country was shortly thereafter named host nation to the Euro 2004 soccer competition.
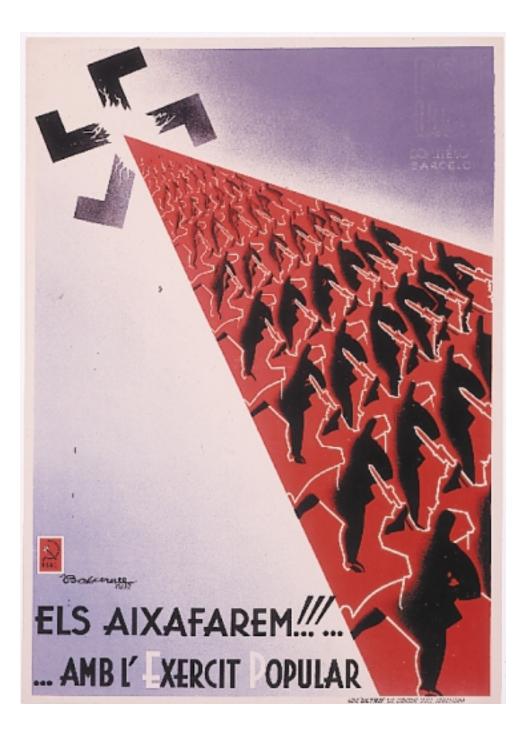
Choreographing crowds to create images, a little-noted branch of graphic design, has become something of a burgeoning medium in the last few decades. Increasingly elaborate images are being created for the eyes of aerial and stadium cameras—and millions of viewers—by transforming each person in a stadium crowd into a pixel. Literally. Scott Givens, who began designing and orchestrating "stadium stunts" as a student at Purdue University in 1984, uses a proprietary software system that turns each participant into a bright pointillist dot. "I started doing these things because I thought football games were boring—I got 600 kids and wrote some software that designed card stunts," says Givens. "Now it works for a whole stadium. The software takes each section and, like Quark or Illustrator, lets me paint it at the stroke of a mouse." Armed with this tool and a growing understanding of how much an audience can be expected to do, Givens's company, Stadium Stunts, has built a portfolio full of giant logos, patterns and emblems—from the orchestration of 1,400 schoolchildren to form Disney Animal Kingdom graphics in New York's Central Park to the opening and closing ceremonies of the Atlanta Olympics. One of Givens's biggest stunts at the Olympics was "growing" a 20,000-person laurel, which over a few seconds flourished from small stems into giant golden leaves.

Motivating the crowd to make the graphic is the easy part. Once the effect is designed on the computer screen, colored cards are distributed in the stadium with simple instructions on each seat before a game, and, when spectators arrive, cues appear on the stadium's television monitors. According to Givens's partner, Jennifer Munday, the rest is plain sailing. "I don't want to say 'monkey see monkey do,'" she says, "but people really get caught in the spirit of it and hold up their cards on cue, especially if they see what's projected on the other side."

This is no newfound revelation. Pageantry has been used to portray the omnipotence of everyone from Caesar to Hitler to Disney, and as every demagogue

by PETER HALL

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knows, it doesn't take much to get people involved. Depictions of crowds forming figurative graphics began to really catch on with the simultaneous emergence of proletarian movements and methods of mass reproduction, at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1920s Soviet poster design, the crowd motif became "pretty standard fare," according to Jim Lapides, owner of the International Poster Gallery in Boston. Lapides cites several posters in which the masses form Constructivist shapes as robust-looking as the factories and houses depicted alongside. "Solidarity was obviously the lynchpin of all these propoganda posters," says Lapides. "Showing a united front against some evil force." Subsequent classics include a 1937 Spanish Civil War poster by an artist named Bofcereell depicting dozens of armed soldiers marching to form a pointed arrow that pierces a Swastika.

At street level, the creation of a mass graphic can be as edifying for the participants as for the spectator, hence its popularity among left-wing and solidarity movements. A photograph of Red Square from the 1930s depicts part of a parade by over 40,000 youths belonging to various athletic clubs from around the Soviet Empire, with one group, from the "Locomotive Club," in star formations. A mass graphic is also an infinitely more photogenic demonstration of collective force than, say, a picket line. New York–based designer Stefan Sagmeister used the medium in a political poster he designed as a student in a small town in the Austrian Alps. Asked to create an image for a local anarchist movement, he persuaded his classmates to lie in the school playground in the shape of the anarchist symbol, while he photographed them from a rooftop. "First, you have to convince all these people to do it, which is also a good opportunity to tell them about your cause, and the day of the photo-taking is a great event for everybody concerned, or at least was in my case with the Anarchy 'A,'" says Sagmeister. "When it's done, some of the feeling of that big production—that it was difficult to do and pull together—gets translated to the viewer. And of course, for all the people in the picture, it's great to see if they can find themselves."

But as Lapides notes, the paradox of mass graphics is that while the aim may be to raise the spirits and ultimately the status of the individual through collective action, at a certain scale, the effect is to dehumanize the individual. The person becomes about as important as a pixel, valued only in terms of his or her contribution to the whole. This fact has not been lost on the more heavy-handed regimes of the 20th century. When Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited North Korea in August last year, around 30,000 people in a stadium in the capital city, Pyongyang, flicked color-coded cards in a highly synchronized display to create images of Communist triumphs such as tractors, potato harvests and electrical transformers. An image from the *New York Times* report of the extravaganza on October 24 includes a photograph of the stunt featuring images closely resembling the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il, surrounded by cohorts.

Walter Benjamin argued in his seminal 1935 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that such efforts to render politics aesthetic were a means for fascism to give the new proletarian masses a chance to express themselves without affecting the property structure. "In big parades and monster rallies," he wrote, "in sports events and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves." In visual terms, the idea reaches its most resonant demonstration with Nazi propoganda, in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, a documentary film of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally that is both a hagiograph of Hitler and an illustration of the ultimate subordination of the individual to the will of the state, with marching lines of proud troops continually reforming for the Führer under the omnipresent gaze of the camera. In Hans Nidecken-Gebhard's 1937 film *Seven Hundred Years of Berlin in German History*, troops march on the field of Berlin's Olympic stadium to form a giant image of the eagle and swastika.

At its root, the mass-people graphic is inextricably linked to utopian thinking. A recent exhibition titled "Utopias" at the New York Public Library takes a journey through the ideal societies dreamed up by Western thinkers from Plato to Marx, with film clips that clearly belong in the mass-graphic canon. One utopic Eisenstein film from 1929, *La Ligne Générale*, shows agricultural machinery moving in formation, creating patterns in the earth to the glory of the Soviet Union. A clip from Fritz Lang's dystopic *Metropolis* shows workers marching to their underground workplace in converging lines that create a half-star formation. Plato's Republic, with "a place for everything, and everything in its place," finds a troubling visual expression in the spectacle of thousands of people moving in unison and harmony to form motifs.

In China, as Susan Brownell notes in her 1995 book *Training the Body for China*, choreographed mass spectacles make use of a Confucian principle. "When structured body movements are assigned symbolic and moral significance and are repeated often enough, they generate a moral orientation toward the world that is habitual because the body as a mnemonic device serves to reinforce it." According to Brownell, the mass calisthenics staged at the opening ceremonies of the 1986 National College Games in China illustrate how such events subtly make use of pre-Communist rituals deeply ingrained in the culture. The success of such events as demonstrations of controlled behavior seems to be derived from the instinctive human need for ritual. Brownell notes that the two most important early sports sites in Communist Beijing were located on the grounds of two especially significant temples of the Qing state religion, where dancing, music and ceremonial sacrifices took place until 1911. The Qing rituals were effectively replaced by athletics events with equally choreographed rituals, the purpose of which was to bring about a greater sense of unity among the participants—and "dramatize a

Left: Soviet members of the "Locomotive Club" parade in formation in a 1930s Red Square spectacle.

world order that organizes human bodies in space and time, with the State portrayed as the keeper of that order," as Brownell, a social scientist and former athlete who took part in the games, puts it. At the 1986 games, this included a performance called "Hope," in which 1,200 primary-school children were choreographed to form large multicolored blocks, and a "Dragon Dance Finale," in which 50 boys carried a dragon.

What is the difference between the "Hope" performance involving 1,200 schoolchildren in Beijing and the Disney Animal Kingdom stunt involving 1,400 schoolchildren in New York? One might argue that the former is a state-ordered event whereas the Disney incident displays a "performative expression of bourgeois culture," as Brownell describes the Western festival. One might also argue that Disney is more about fun than propaganda. At the Chinese ceremonies, "'joy' took a back seat to 'civilization,'" says Brownell. "Constant attention to obeying rules took much of the joy out of the occasion."

But this is obviously a Western perspective, elevating individual joy over societal goals. Though we might think that there is something sinister about training children to move in mass formations to create images that glorify a Communist regime, others might say the same of choreographing children to form corporate logos of brands associated with purchasable merchandise. It is difficult to escape the fact that during a mass spectacle, the individual moves in homage to a greater power, be it the state or the corporation. Even the "Mexican Wave," which begins apparently spontaneously at soccer matches and creates a pleasing rippling effect throughout a stadium, requires a humbling submission of the individual will to the mass gesture.

The "Utopias" exhibition concludes with a section on the web that examines techno-utopias, posing the question, "Is an ideal 'community' made up of virtual identities a utopia?" According to John Perry Barlow of the Electric Frontier Foundation (EFF), the answer is yes. "Cyberspace consists of transactions, relationships and thought itself, arrayed like a standing wave in the web of our communications," writes Barlow on EFF's website. "We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth." In other words, utopia.

Barlow's image of a "standing wave" is poignant. Like the Mexican Wave—or the sea of North Korean performers in the Pyongyang stadium—its beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The metaphysical transformation that was once required to enter utopias like Heaven or Nirvana is now available at the click of a mouse. But have we created an ideal society or a dystopic, dehumanized hell in the process? Are we being liberated, or are we finally becoming pixels? That, too, depends on your vantage point.

041   Left and previous spread: A mass gymnastics display in North Korea. © 1982 Hiroji Kubota, Magnum.