

How design duo Rob en Robin sexed up data vis and their local car park

Where art & AR meets graphic design.

As coronavirus made its spring debut in Europe, creative platform Graphic Matters (GM) managed to plaster the Dutch city of Breda with uplifting posters asking residents to ‘.’ Around the same time, GM saw some of its projects win big at the European Design Awards, with its pre-campaign for their 2019 festival being awarded a Silver prize.

That campaign came comprised of posters by , who honoured the festival’s theme of information design with some ‘sexed up’ takes on data vis, incorporating charts and graphs amongst some very playful illustrations.

“The seventh edition of Graphic Matters showed cutting edge data visualisation, infographics, manuals and cartography,” explain Rob and Robin by email. “This immediately led to us wonder how you can visualise data in an attractive and understandable manner.

“Let’s face it, data isn’t the most ‘sexy’ subject. For days we tried to evade clichés of bar graphs, diagrams and everything else you would normally associate with data. This went on until we came to the conclusion that elements of ‘boring’ graphs could be put to use, visually, as they are already well known by people in general.

“It has a powerful and simple aesthetic to it which makes it fun to look at from different perspectives.”

By combining a mix of iconic graphics and the narrative nature of illustration, Rob en Robin turned lifeless objects into characters, hoping to make an abstract subject more accessible.

“By adding a little joke here and there, ‘non-designers’ can also have fun passing the poster series,” as they tell *Digital Arts*.

“Because people already know the visual language, we found out that a new original image is born through a very small ‘intervention’ in the cliché. The latter has been very important to (our process). Some illustrators would like to completely fill the image, but because of our graphics background we (can’t help) minimise ‘noise’.

“By looking at our illustrations with graphic design glasses, we hope to create an aesthetic image that is iconic and ‘strong’ communicatively. Without decoration; ‘Swiss style’ drawings, but with humour.”

The duo also created GIFs based on their images, with the illustrations being in “constant motion” in their heads while designing.

“We’re both young lads and we get that movement garners attention, so it seemed only logical to animate the posters. In order to connect the offline campaign to the online campaign we coupled the animations to the Artivive app with which the posters could be scanned.

“The posters would start to move, people could navigate to the website, and share the vibe on Instagram. We can tell a little story and let a surprise moment take place in the image/video. It also offers the possibility to not have to tell everything in one image, which is a solution sometimes.”

More recently, Rob en Robin have ‘infiltrated’ the offline world once again with a mural on behalf of Graphic Matters, as inspired by a Breda local.

“The mural was commissioned by Blind Walls Gallery, who provide murals in Breda and make the city like a large museum. Each mural tells a story about the place where the painting is located.

“Our design is inspired by a story of Annie van Gils, who has lived next door to the Mols Parking (the parking spot where the mural is located) for more than 60 years. In her early years, the many companies and crafts that were located in and around this place provided an almost constant flow of suppliers, delivery vehicles and car traffic.

“Annie and her peers were therefore not allowed to play outside in the neighbourhood, so she was forced to play with her siblings in the backyard that was only a few tiles in size. The design shows two spring riders that are placed very tightly together, making them actually useless. We thought that was a great metaphor for Annie’s story.

“The parking lot is behind our studio, so we are often

spectators of people who are arguing, honking at each other and almost causing accidents to get a spot to park their car. The idea that this would take place in front of our colliding spring riders was a funny thought for us. The design fits in well with the pre-campaign for Graphic Matters: It is iconic, without decorative background, and contains humour.”

Curious about how it compared with the data vis project, I ask the creative studio how it felt switching from digital to paint.

“To be honest, we are not big stars in drawing,” they reveal. “So we sometimes have some tricks to make drawing in perspective and proportion easier for ourselves.

“We made the spring riders in Cinema4D, where the spring could bend like a real spring and the car on top of it would move with it. That is how we got the perspective accurate.

“In addition, at the same time it became a smaller step to animating the riders. They were already made in the program anyway. We thought it would be cool to rewind the accident to see what happens with the cars. People can watch the video with the same Artivive app.”

Catch Also check out their other Silver prize winner at the European Design Awards, , another data vis-related project for Graphic Matters 2019 that won in the Book & Editorial category.

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