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Visual communication in a time of crisis: Insights into the relationship between visual communication and health

The impact of Covid-19 has taken numerous forms. It will continue to affect individuals and groups in a multitude of ways, due to the ever adapting, ever changing uncertain world. A shift has taken place in our perspectives, knowledge and understanding of health crises, with visual communication being integral to this process; through the visualization of health data, communication of scientific knowledge, and as a crucial force for knowledge mobilization.

This paper will outline a research study of visual communicators' experiences and visual manifestations of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing greater insight into the relationship between visual communication and the Covid-19 health crisis, along with historical knowledge, such as the information design of Florence Nightingale, Spanish Flu, and the AIDS campaign.

Research methods include, a survey of sources, interviews with selected designers, and qualitative content research analysis of published visual communication works during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data will include the Message Graphic Communication Design research journal Covid-19 special issue, which has asked, "with what, why and how have visual communicators responded through graphic communication design to the Covid-19 pandemic."

The paper will provide research results, giving insights into the relationship between visual communication and the Covid-19 crisis. It will briefly highlight where visual



Through the (Looking) Glass
 Message Covid-19 Special issue
 Photograph ©Carole Evans, from *Through the (Looking) Glass*, photobook ©James Alexander
 London, UK



Revive +
 Message Covid-19 Special issue
 ©Kelly Salchow Macarthur
 Michigan, USA



Self-reflection (2021)
 Message Covid-19 Special issue
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 Plymouth, UK

communicators' have contributed, for example, inspiring and capturing new ways of teaching and learning; reaching out and collaborating with communities; seeking solace in practice to provide comfort to themselves and others.

The focal point will be the relationship between visual communication and health. This will include examples such as, using visual communication as a means of escape and refuge during isolation; capturing and portraying emotions, disturbance or tension, improvement and healing; communicating positive messages back to oneself and to others.

Finally, the paper will speculatively question the future of visual communication and health highlighting examples such as, where, and how can visual communication capture feelings and emotions when supporting the processing of fear and uncertainty? How and why is graphic co-creation supportive to the health of community? Can visual communication create empathy and kindness in others through capturing the voices of individuals in challenging situations?

Keywords

visual communication, graphic design, health, Covid-19 pandemic

VICTORIA SQUIRE is a Graphic Design & Typography educator and researcher in the School of Art, Design & Architecture at the University of Plymouth, UK. She holds an MA Communication Design degree from Central Saint Martin's College of Art & Design, London. Her research explores graphic design in relation to sustainable development goals, particularly health and community, where she is interested in proposing and communicating future alternatives to visual communication design, moving away from a commercial

role, into the relationship between design, health, and social change. Victoria has exhibited her research as practice in the UK, United States, Denmark and more recently through the United Designs Alliance 'Messages to Humanity' poster exhibition, South Korea. Victoria is a co-founder and co-managing editor of the international peer-reviewed academic Graphic Communication Design Research journal, *Message*. Alongside this, Victoria is a co-chief editor of the international Design Behaviors research journal, *United Designs Alliance*.