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Lake Placid 1980

The Lake Placid poster was designed by Robert Madden for the Winter Olympics in the 1980's. This poster features a very simplistic design with the Lake Placid emblem featured in the lower left corner, created and designed by Robert Whitney, five of the same hockey player featured in CMYK colors along with the color grey. The emblem designed by Whitney is shaped like a mountain and two Olympic cauldrons at the top, which symbolizes the second time the Winter Olympics are being held in Lake Placid since 1932. The cauldrons are holding the classic olympic rings logo, and features the text, "XIII Olympic Winter Games Lake Placid 1980" in black. This same text is also seen at the top of the poster. This poster style of the offset printing in CMYK can be seen in a series of posters created by Madden. The poster featuring the hockey player is most significant because of the 'Miracle on Ice', in which the USA olympic team had beat the USSR Olympic team, considered to be the best in the world, during a time where the USSR wasn't viewed in a positive light. During the 1980's, in which the country and the world were facing extreme problems there was the Iran Hostage Crisis in which fifty-two United States diplomats were taken hostage after a group of Iranians had overtaken the United States Embassy in Tehran. There was also an economic recession and many countries, including the United States, experienced extremely high unemployment rates, and Russia had invaded Afghanistan thus creating the Soviet-Afghan War. Despite the problems in the 1980's the Winter Olympics

marched on and became an important time for fans and people around the world. This poster created by Madden can relate to the readings we have read in the past. Particularly the readings *Graphic Design Theory: Readings From The Field* written by Helen Armstrong and *Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand De Saussure.

Helen Armstrong wrote *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the field* where she explains how design has played a significant role in our lives and in our culture. She also covers what it means to be a designer in a world that is constantly changing. In the text it explains that, “As graphic design took shape as a profession, the ideal of objectivity replaced that of subjectivity. Neutrality replaced emotion. The avant-garde effaced the artist/designer through the quest for impartial communication.” The idea of objectivity replacing emotion can relate to this poster created by Madden. There is no personal bias and no emotion that can be seen by Madden. The ideas of avant-garde neutrality can relate to poster design, especially in the Olympics. When designing for the Olympics you are most likely not allowed to show any bias towards any country, any team, and any sport because you are creating an advertisement for the world to see. The poster design is not meant to make you feel emotion but is intended to simply showcase one of the winter olympic sports, in this case Hockey. In the text Müller-Brockmann states that, “The withdrawal of the personality of the designer behind the idea, the themes, the enterprise, or the product is what the best minds are all striving to achieve.” In order to achieve success you must set your ego and personal preferences aside and design for the client. Robert Madden created a series of posters in the same style for the winter olympics and each style showcases the offset printing technique with the colors, grey, cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. The poster background is white and features the emblem created by Robert Whitney. It also features text at the top. This simplistic design is void of any emotion from the designer. Thus allowing the

audience to interpret the design and associate meaning to the poster themselves, rather than the designer giving direct meaning to the poster itself.

The Course in General Linguistics by Ferdinand De Saussure goes over the concept of sign, signifier, and signified. The poster was created for the Winter Olympics in the 1980's, a time in which the USA and the world were in disarray. With the capture of fifty-two American Hostages in Iran and Russia invading Afghanistan, the USA and the world needed a win. The poster showcases a hockey player for the olympics, during that time the USA Olympic team had made history when they claimed victory over Russia, an undefeated team in Hockey for over ten years. This victory was extremely important, and became known as the Miracle on ice, to the people in the United States, thus the poster can symbolize hope, justice, and triumph. In the text Saussure explains that, "The word symbol has been used to designate the linguistic sign or more specifically, what is here called a signifier" The symbol is a signifier, which means that you are acknowledging its existence and giving meaning to the sign. In relation to the poster the Hockey player can symbolize many different things, some more simpler than the other. For example, it can simply symbolize a man playing hockey, hockey as a whole, or it can symbolize hope and justice for the United States Olympic team. It symbolizes the Miracle on Ice for many people, it wasn't just about the USA defeating the USSR in an Olympic Sport, it was about celebration. During a time of such perel the United States needed something to celebrate and an underdog team filled with young amateur hockey players beating the five time gold winning USSR is exactly what was needed.

Despite the poster having no emotion or bias when created initially, the poster now symbolizes justice for the USA Olympic hockey team for many people. The design allowed people to personally attach their emotions and feelings to it, which wouldn't have happened if

Robert Madden didn't follow the avant-garde principle of neutrality over emotion. The sign can be broken down into the signifier and the signified, which can be related to the poster. The sign of the Hockey player can signify hope, justice, a sport, and have signified people's emotions to the poster. Robert Madden designed the Lake Placid poster in the 1980s not knowing one of the greatest moments of all time in sports would occur so the poster doesn't carry any emotional value or significance. As stated previously it is simply a poster showcasing one of the Winter Olympic sports in an offset printing technique using the printing colors of CMYK to showcase the hockey player. This poster relates to many design movements and trends and holds significant value for many people despite its original purpose not showcasing any bias at all.

Sources

Armstrong, Helen. (2012). *Graphic design theory: Readings from the field*. Princeton Architectural Press, page 9.

Saussure De Ferdinand.(1916). *Course in General Linguistics*. Page 68.