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The MAGA Hat

Paper 1

Design was made to serve a purpose, great design is both aesthetically pleasing and effective in delivering a message. As a communication design major I truly believe in order for design to be great it must meet this criteria. The object that I will be going over in this essay is the “Make America Great Again” hat also known as the MAGA hat. Though I do not believe it is an example of great design, there are a lot of things wrong with it, for instance it uses a serif font which is not the most easy to read on displayed items, the kerning is terrible and overall a boring design. However it was a very effective tool of communication and has become iconic, and extremely recognizable.

According one of our readings this semester by Herbert Byer, typography is a service art not fine art. I correlate this to the MAGA hat because it the design of is strictly typography. The hat serves a purpose in delivering its message to Trumps base. It is very effective in its message simple and to the point. The design is as much the type as it is its message in a form of a statement. Make America Great Again, in no way is this fine art but the type serves a purpose. The saying even seems to have transcended language, it is almost a universal in how it communicates, not quite as how

Byer may have imaged but the shape of those word put together in that particular typeface is recognizable to many who do not even speak English.

The MAGA hat first came on the scene in July 2015 when Trump formally announced his run for presidency. It became famous if not infamous shortly after that. However the history of the phrase goes back before then, back in 2012 six days after the presidential election Trump set out to trade make the saying. You can say that this act was the birth of what might be the most recognizable campaign slogans of all time, its language is also disturbing, it begs the question of when was America actually great, at least for who. The saying is now associated with a certain demographic of people and is synonymous with the red cap it is displayed on.

In the Nature of Linguistic Sign, Saussure talks about the sign, signified, and signifier. The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and sound image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. To me this directly correlates to the MAGA Hat. Whenever someone says Make America Great Again or you read it, you don't think about what you just heard or read you instantly think of a red hat, of Trump, of the typeface, and the division it sprung on our country. The saying represents so much. Saussure says we regard the words of our language as sound images. In this case when we see a red cap regardless of what it says on it we thing Make America great again, and vice versa. We now label each other with this, you see someone wearing a red cap you might begin to question if this individual is a Trump supporter, we then being to conceptualize this individuals beliefs we then image what their values are, what they align themselves with and who they associate with, is this

right, I don't have an answer to that but this is an example of the sign, signified and signifier. Symbols can represent language as described in Lupton Milliers A brief history of Written Numbers. The Roman alphabet is an attempt to analyze the innumerable sounds of speech into a couple dozen signs and the MAGA is a symbol that holds many meaning depending on who you ask. It may represent greatness and forward thinking to some and to others it might represent pain, hurtfulness and anger. Most definitions of writings take the physical permanence Lupton states and also believes that writing is assumed to be graphic. To me the MAGA hat checks both those boxes and a lot more. Not great design but a representation of many things and an effective tool of communication.



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