image-shift
visual communication & other misunderstandings

this is not a manifest
we sketched out these 13 points to share our view on (graphic) design, on our visual communica-
tion practice. these points were written down by us, but are a product of entangled discourses and
floating knowledge which others have put into this world before and aside of us. they are many -
and they not even have been necessarily bound to a design project, as this is not about design at
its core. this is a draft.

1. design requires positioning. you need to know where you stand, to know from where you are
speaking. otherwise you are like a leaf in the wind, pushed by aesthetic trends and market requests.
this is not something static - its is something which has to be re-questioned over and over again as
the "being shapes our consciousness" - and we are not immune against the complex offers of cap-
italist (market) culture, which confronts us every day. in this sense we are (productively) dependent
towards others who share our values. for us these people are our friends, the left (whatever this
is...) and people we meet here and there. they are everywhere - though we don't always share the
same language we are happy to say "hello" once in a while.

2. we work with our clients. we don't work for our clients (or for any kind of market requests), but
on society, as a service to society. this also means we reject the working conditions created by the
culture of service industries - where money structures the dependencies / the relations between
us and our clients rather than the ideas we share with them. we are not friends with the cultural
industries, as we believe that culture has other cause, than serving an industry.

3. we are interested in the social usage of images and the visual products we put into this world.
we try to implement this understanding into our design work. we understand the distribution of the
visual products as part of the (communication) design process. we try to see the recipient on the
same level in shaping the discourses as us the designers and as our clients who bring the prob-
lems, the tasks, the work to our desks.

4. "good design" is not determined by its form but by its social access and usage. we are not inter-
ested in aesthetic trends, hi-tec orgies, visual drugs or visual masturbation and discourses which
reproduce such approaches and understandings of design.

5. we don't want to create images (or aesthetics) to exclude people. not by language, nor by form.
we understand that our aims are limited in this matter. every class and every group of people
creates distinctions. as visual / cultural workers we have a specific responsibility to be aware of
these exclusions we can shape, as well as the image politics we choose. we want to ask dialogical
questions. and these questions always are in relation to one's position in society.

6. we try to avoid "inner-circle-logics" which are created by the circumstances, the dependencies,
the job settings, our daily life we work in and that we are shaped by. therefore we try to relate to
other people and further discourses to "correct" and question our views, to challenge and shift our
certainties. critique can not live without a question mark.

7. we do not create uniqueness - and "new" is no value per se for us. we like democratic media
formats and mass-products which people have easy and public access to. we respect the individ-
ual reception and usage of these visual products and love the collective discursive concentration
which can lie in them. we believe that images are social.

8. we don't sell. we don't want aesthetically wrap up or to put things into this world we don't relate to. we want to do our work matching our values, social, cultural and political ideas. we are dependent from larger discourses - not only theoretically, but also practically, as the design process, the work (and its limitations) always brings up different results, experiences and further questions along.

9. it is a privilege to speak, to design in a society where most are not even asked about their opinion. this leads to "response-ability" not to abuse this specific power designers have. we believe that (visual) culture and its different forms are a matter of solidarity and critique. we honour this matter.

10. we are not artists. we are (productively) dependent from our clients and the discourses, the questions, the problems which they are a part of. they come to us through them. we appreciate the process where we can discuss, shape and communicate these matters with them.

11. we want to push back, to relativize the authorship in favour (advantage) of the task and content. even though we are in love with us, with what we do and the things we design. we are dependent and appreciate the feedback we get from others - through this we become a part of their life.

12. design does not end at the desktop edge. design is social intervention, a discourse and communication, which talks not only to the so called audience - but as well shapes the clients and designers.

13. we don't want to be winners in a society / culture which creates such categories in the first place. we tend to fail. we tend to try. as many others before and next to us.

thank you for reading (this draft) - and have a good day.

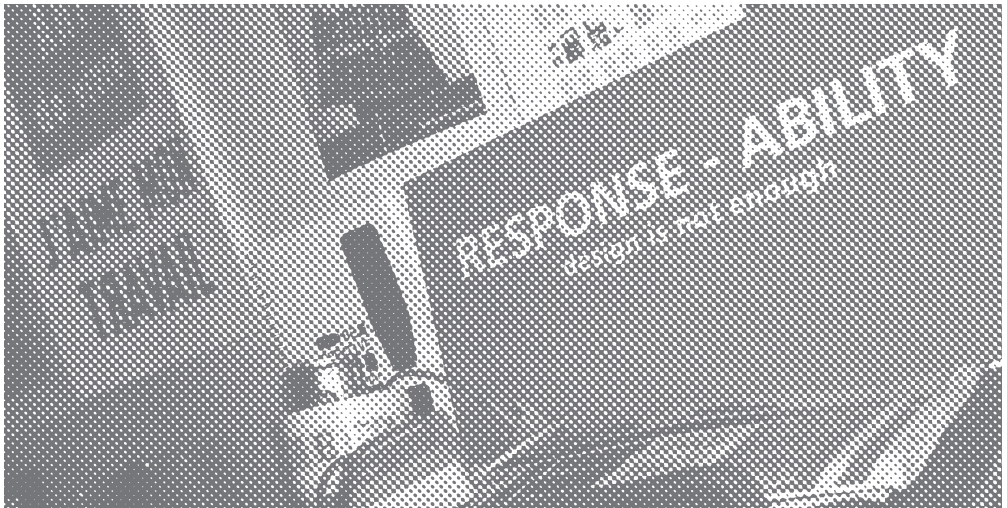image-shift / 2009 / creative commons ⊛⊕⊝⊜

image-shift is a graphic and communication design studio based in berlin. image-shift is dedicated to cultural, social and political graphic- and communication design. our daily work at the studio are concepts, strategies and design works for print products and other media formats. our clients are cultural and educational institutions, artists and curators, film makers, video groups, associations, social and political groups. image-shift was founded in the year 1999. we occasionally give lectures, teach - and take a break. www. image-shift.net