

Design and Emotion: The Value of 1970s French Children's Books in the Middle East

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Abstract : In the early 1970s, a graphics revolution - in quantity and quality - marked the youth publications sector in France. The increased interest in youth publications was supported with the emergence of youth libraries and major publishing houses. In parallel, the 'Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique' (currently the International Organization of the Francophonie) was created, and several Arab countries had joined as members. In spite of political turmoil in the Middle East, French schools in Arab countries were still functioning and some even flourishing. This is a testament that French culture was, and still is, a major export to the region. This study focuses on the aesthetic value of the graphic styles that characterize French children's books from the 1970s, and their personal value to Francophone people who have consumed these artifacts, in the Middle East. The first part of the study looks at the artifact itself: starting from the context of creation and consumption of these books, and continuing to the preservation and remaining collections. The aesthetic value is studied and compared to similar types of visuals of juxtaposed time periods. The second part examines the audience's response to the visuals in terms of style recognition or identification, along with emotional significance or associations, and the personal value the artifacts might hold to their consumers. The methods of investigation consist of a literature review, a survey of book collections, and a visual questionnaire, supported by personal interviews. As an outcome, visual patterns will be identified: elements from 1970s children's books reborn in contemporary youth-based publications. Results of the study shall inform us directly on the aesthetic and personal value of illustrated French children's books in the Middle East, and indirectly on the capacity of youth-targeted design to create a long-term emotional response from its audience.

Keywords : children's books, French visual culture, graphic style, publication design, revival

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