



EPA Graphic Standards System

by Christopher Bonanos, created by Jesse Reed and Hamish Smyth. Standards Manual, \$79.00.

For the ultimate in design obsessiveness, look to the independent publisher Standards Manual. Specializing in the reanimation of graphics manuals, this outfit has published standards from the American Revolution Bicentennial, New York Transit Authority and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The *EPA Graphic Standards System* is a complete reproduction of EPA standards produced during the agency's ambitious youth in the Carter administration. What to the cynical eye may seem a masturbatory indulgence for the graphically inclined bureaucrat is, at its core, a methodology for concise and effectual communication. During the 1970s, graphics standards were being created for many agencies in an attempt to unite and clarify increasingly divergent information dissemination. The book showcases how the EPA intended to visually standardize its communication before the folksy whittling away of the Regan years, providing a mere snapshot of the young regulatory monster that now resides under the clumsily wielded guillotine of Trump, whose administration seems a fitting and (hopefully) final chapter in the Me Generation's saga of political aspirations — that generation whose counterfeit culture war, with abiding battles peppering passing decades, will outlive every aging skipper and pro-business peckerwood born on its front lines. In fact, it is the culture wars that, with defining fitful shifts of populism, gave rise to the EPA, charging that agency with the appraisal and ensuing mop-up of a toxic multitude of communal shit piles; it's very meaning these days is corrupted. The EPA manual is punctuated by a collection of photographs from the Documerica project, where from 1971 to 1977 photographers were tasked with documenting subjects of environmental concern. It's a beautifully haunting record that, if not for the 70s veneer, could be from a present-day float on the coal-filled Dan River in North Carolina, or a portrait of a desperate mother holding a glass of tainted water from taps in Flint, Michigan. To look through this rigorous manifestation of intention is to get lost in a designed world of unified vision and common goals, however untenable, making it a worthwhile archive of design that could have been. — *Trask Bedortha*



Environmental Protection Agency Graphic Standards System detail Photographs by Brian Kelley Courtesy of Standards Manual. Documerica photographs © The U.S. National Archive.



Never Use Futura

by Douglas Thomas and Ellen Lupton. Princeton Architectural Press, \$24.95.

If you've ever picked up a crayon, seen a Wes Anderson film, walked the hollow bowels of a dying mall or were one of the prodigious few to have landed on the surface of the moon, then you know this unassuming sturdy typeface well. Futura's omnipresence rivals even the Swiss giant Helvetica, and that asshole earned a movie roll for the blanket-ing of our shared visual space. Futura had its birth in 1920s German modernism, where the creation of modern and coherent letterforms served a radical ideal. You can imagine how a rising nationalism, bolstering racial identity propaganda through requisite Blackletter type, responded to egalitarian design. Thankfully Futura and its many lookalikes had already spread throughout the Western world as a face of modern design. Through its export with modernism and subsequent ubiquity in type



New York City Transit Authority: Objects

photographs by Brian Kelley. Standards Manual \$49.00.

Stepping away from the minutiae of logo criterion is *New York City Transit Authority: Objects*. This collection of photographs by Brian Kelly inventories more than 400 transit artifacts dating as far back as the 1850s — 356 pages of NYCTA ephemera from transit police badges, subway tokens and organized labor aphorisms to Massimo Vignelli's famous maps, all of it relating to the New York transit system. It is an absorbing cross-section of a longstanding organization's sub-culture that adapted in design through the presentation of everyday objects. A true collector sees value in the narrative, not the doodad. — *Trask Bedortha*

New York City Transit Authority: Objects Photographs by Brian Kelley. Courtesy of Standards Manual.

NEVER USE FUTURA

UNLESS YOU ARE

NIKE, WES ANDERSON, DAVID FINCHER, BARBARA KRUGER, THE MOON, PAUL RENNER, PAUL RAND, LOUIS VUITTON, STANLEY KUBRICK, SWISSAIR, FOX NEWS, UNION PACIFIC, PARTY CITY, ABSOLUT VODKA, AARON DRAPLIN, HEINRICH JOST, RICHARD NIXON, SHELL, VOLKSWAGEN, IKEA, MASSIMO VIGNELLI, THE UK CONSERVATIVE PARTY, ISOTYPE, DESIGN WITHIN REACH, VANITY FAIR, CHARLES S. ANDERSON, VAMPIRE WEEKEND, SHEPARD FAIREY, AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP, POLITICO, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF GERMANY, VOGUE, ED RUSCHA, OR THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

DOUGLAS THOMAS

WITH A FOREWORD BY ELLEN LUPTON

drawers nationwide, Futura became a staple for the work-a-day American designer long before cachet came with the trade. It plastered governmental operations manuals and adorned every button, gauge and knob of Space Race mechanization. It's since been adopted by the unflinchingly hip as an esthetic foundation in reference to this varied nostalgia. *Never Use Futura* licks the bowl clean of what is, has and will be the legacy of a great utilitarian typeface. And by all means, use Futura — but use it well. — *Trask Bedortha*