

*Self/Society* was an opportunity for Gallery 400 to show how four graphic designers expressed their own strong values through their work, and how they made their various commissions a medium for personal statements, both social and aesthetic. These designers included Paul Davies of the United States, Alain LeQuernec of France, Uwe Loesch of Germany, and David Tartakover of Israel. Each of the designers found ways to make his posters an extension of his own values, emotions, commitments, concerns, and stylistic preferences. Although each designer was from a different country, they were all about the same age, and they all had a legacy of social concern that they expressed through their work, including through their choice of clients, choice of styles, interpretation of content, choices of technology, and various other criteria.

Paul Davis's career began in 1959 when he joined Pushpin Group in New York City, where he worked with Seymour Chwast and Hilton Glaser. In addition to his work for the Shakespeare Festival, his work has appeared in television commercials, on the cover of *Time* magazine and hundreds of other publications. According to Davis, "A lot of people say that you shouldn't be mixing art and politics. If you're doing that you're creating propaganda. But people are always making propaganda."

Alain LeQuernec is a leading French poster artist who chose to devote his mass-communication art to non-commercial purposes. His work and ideas were influenced by the Polish poster tradition, which helped mold him during the time he studied in Warsaw. After leaving Poland, LeQuernec moved to the remote northwest of France, where he dominated poster art in the region while maintaining an international presence through exhibitions. According to LeQuernec, "My work is far from that of the advertising poster. The advertising poster fascinates me in some ways and scares me in many others. Publicity has become such a profession, divided into so many distinct parts and using so many different people from the start of the idea to the final result, that creativity seems to be restricted from the onset - one's work in that case is already defined before one starts painting it. That is why I chose, once and for all, the cultural and social poster rather than that of the commercial one."

Uwe Loesch has worked as a free-lance graphic designer and copywriter in almost every branch of the communications field. The spectrum of his clients reaches from publishing companies to service and industrial enterprises, from state ministries to cultural institutions. Loesch's work has a pure feeling for space – a connection to modern simplicity in the Bauhaus tradition and the meditative beauty of Japanese calligraphy. He created such well-known works as the nonposter series, *sign Quotes* and *Mental Leap*. His work has appeared in such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museum of Art, Ein Harod. In 1985, Uwe Loesch was appointed a professor at the College for Applied Art in Düsseldorf.

David Tartakover has mastered the skills of the poster and has learned how to approach every aspect rather than to concentrate on some narrow subject or visual style. Tartakover uses the poster as an extraordinary social and artistic document. His work involves cultural, political and commercial issues. Many of Tartakover's political posters sought to reflect a collective experience in a country (Israel) that had been besieged by war. Tartakover realizes the impact of the printed image and word and how poignant they are in conveying topical issues. His macabre humor in the use of a Coke bottle as advertisement while second glance shows it being used as a Molotov cocktail makes the point all too clearly.

In *Self/Society*, each of these artists employed a variety of aesthetics and applications within the realm of poster art and demonstrated the vitality of the medium to its fullest. Their works stand in contrast to slick abstract formalist design. All of the designers used images and were concerned with the different ways in which these images communicated their statements. Their choices were based on a certain notion of audience -- they were not designing for themselves, but for a specific audience. Each designer drew from existing images and codes for their statements. They were not preoccupied with style; their work did not display a single stylistic solution. They did not see the poster as high art, but rather as a popular medium and a part of popular culture.