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I'm sitting across the table from Piet Schreuders in his home studio in Amsterdam, and I'm struck by how quiet and shy he seems. This is the man who published a small book in 1977 entitled *Lay In, Lay Out*, in which he accused the graphic design profession of being a criminal enterprise, and that it should really not be allowed to exist. According to Schreuders, designers are vain and self-important charlatans, while their theories are no more than bubbles to be popped. Despite (or because of) Piet's position as an outsider, a self-taught designer no less, the statement infuriated professional graphic designers. Their heated reactions revealed more about graphic designers and their motivations than anything they might have said in the absence of such provocation. I wonder if I could bring such outrageous statements to the table when interviewing designers for *Emigre*.

Piet shows me copies of his self-published magazine *Furore*, which he calls his "archive." He is an avid collector of all sorts of esoterica. The shelves and drawers in his office overflow with materials of all kinds, from Beatles bubblegum cards to pulp-fiction paperbacks. He tells me that one way of bringing order to this mess is by turning it into a magazine. When an issue is published, that's his archive, and he throws out most of the material that was included.

I ask him if he was surprised by the attention *Furore* received from graphic designers. He says he never wanted to be known for his design work; he's a journalist. It is the content that matters most to him and the design simply evolved according to his needs. But designers only noticed the surface of *Furore* and used what they liked.

The profession of graphic design is criminal and really ought not to exist at all.

We shall dedicate a booklet to this notion.

The profession did not exist a hundred years ago. In another one hundred years it probably will not exist anymore. However, today it is experiencing a remarkable period of growth and development.

Everyone who writes a letter and uses a one inch margin on the left is designing.

Everyone who sets the dining table in a certain way is creating a layout. Everyone who paints revolutionary slogans in huge letters on walls is practicing typography. In this sense, as long as people have been aware of the shape and form of things, the profession has always existed.

But because design developed over the years into a commercial entity, where time is money and business is big, the design of printed materials became more a matter of efficiency than of clarity and beauty. This degradation of the profession resulted in, among other problems, certain new typefaces being designed not according to typographic but commercial considerations. Such developments can only be explained as criminal.

Most designers are criminal.

A designer is criminal because his profession is one of those specializations that the world can easily do without; he is criminal because he sells contrived ideas about order and objectivity while in reality he is obliterating content by pouring a tasteless sauce over the assignments that are entrusted to him.

Nowhere does chaos and subjectivity dominate as much as in today's graphic designs. In the name of "design," numerous useful existing designs have been maimed or replaced by logos, corporate identities or pictograms. There is even an organization for designers; in other words, organized crime.

It is this graphic crime that I am so attracted to in graphic designers, much as I was attracted to the cowboys and gangsters of long ago. Probably in another thirty years we will reminisce about Jan van Toorn, Wim Crouwel and Pieter Brattinga, just as we do now about Billy the Kid, Al Capone and the Godfather. Designers: you'd rather not have anything to do with them, but at a distance they can be quite entertaining.

From *Lay In, Lay Out* (1977) by Piet Schreuders