

# PRAYER

O Sacred Gridd,  
 Protector of the Realm of Non-reality,  
 Defender of the Faith Dubious,  
 Keeper of the Status Quo,  
 Saviour of the Bourgeoisie;  
 We come before Thee in this hour with mixed pivots  
 and humbly do we employ Thee and ask Thy remittance  
 for those deeds done in Denver and in the heat of Venice.  
 Betray us the Bombdeath Eternal,  
 Protect us from Evil Knæevil,  
 and deliver us from the fall of the colbolt.  
 Further, O Faithful Gourd,  
 We compose to petrify our existance in Thee  
 and to perpetuate without reason  
 as will be Thy folly.  
 Gerd over all those in deed  
 and deliver us from Immaculate Perception.  
 All this do we compromise  
 In Ford's Name  
 Amend.



Blessed are the Simple-minded  
 for they shall be fleeced

Blessed are the Vidiots  
 for they shall be led by the nose

Blessed are the Cloven Hooved  
 for they shall be in good company

Blessed are the Schizophrenic  
 for they shall know no loneliness

Blessed are the Mono-minds  
 for they not stray from the program

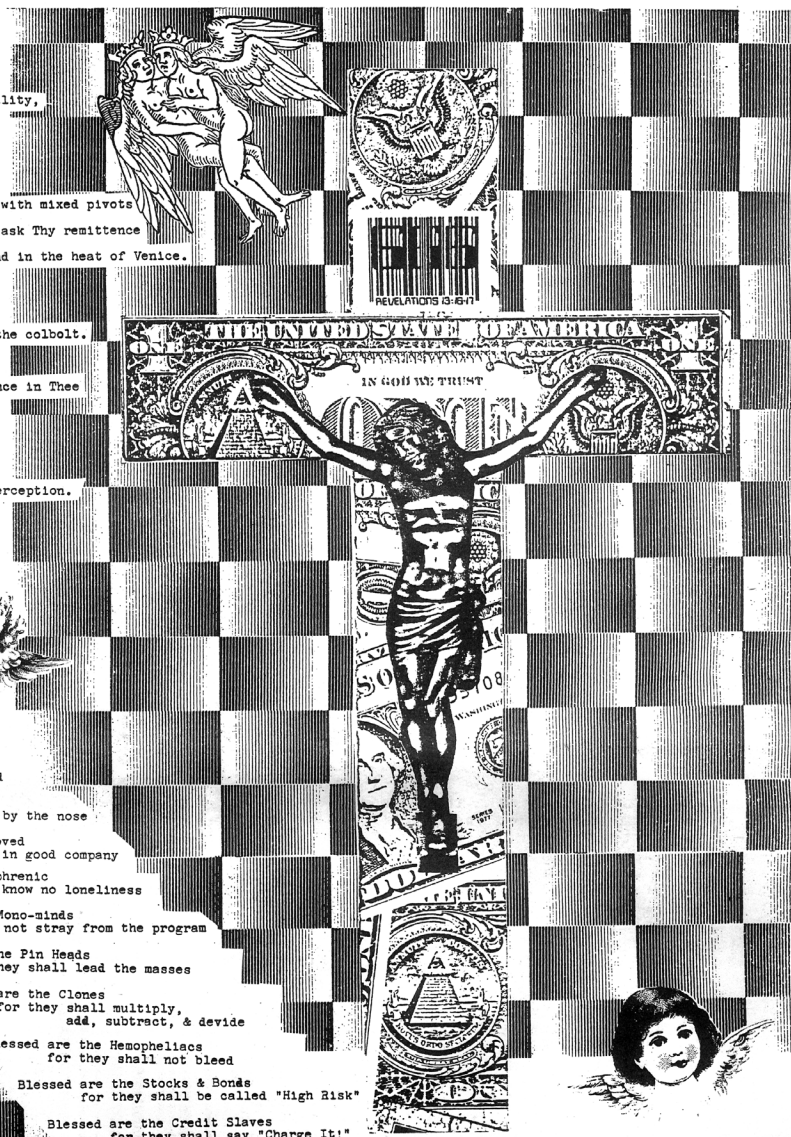
Blessed are the Pin Heads  
 for they shall lead the masses

Blessed are the Clones  
 for they shall multiply,  
 add, subtract, & devide

Blessed are the Hemopheliacs  
 for they shall not bleed

Blessed are the Stocks & Bonās  
 for they shall be called "High Risk"

Blessed are the Credit Slaves  
 for they shall say "Charge It!"



# Graphic Anarchy

## Winston Smith — All Art Is Propaganda

In 1976, upon returning from a seven-year absence studying classical art in Italy, the Oklahoma-born artist that would become known as Winston Smith legally assumed the name of George Orwell's protagonist (from his classic 1948 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) as a direct response to the striking changes he observed in American society. As Smith recalls, "I hitchhiked across the country in March of 1976 and arrived in San Francisco on Saint Patrick's Day (which, believe-you-me, was one hell of a welcoming party!)." Initially, he worked as a roadie for a couple of years, where he was to encounter the nascent punk scene first-hand. "I recall my first inklings of awareness of that scene, when a band called 'Television' came through our studios and a local performer named Mary Monday rehearsed there. Then my awareness grew of the Stranglers and then the Sex Pistols, etc. And it's been all downhill since then."

At that point, the US West Coast punk subculture was very art-based, employing a whole gamut of strategies ranging from performance, film, photography and visual arts to music and fashion. Smith's early contribution to the scene began with the creation of spoof flyers for fictitious gigs, often utilising found photographs and illustrations taken from advertising and the news media, and particularly archive images used to promote the 'American dream' of '50s consumerism. The names of performers and venues on these flyers were dreamt up by Smith himself – groups such as Lenny and the Spitwads, the Rejex or Idiot Child "performing live at the Orb" or at other fictitious clubs such as Nico's and Room 101 – names that were close enough to the conventions of the growing scene to sound realistic, with convincing graphic treatments to match. Some of these names arose directly from Smith's own reflections on contemporary issues. "Another fake band name I made up

was ‘Anonymous Technicians.’ That name came to me after reading an article in 1978 about a new plan they had for executing people. Instead of hanging, firing squad or electrocution, they were proposing ‘death by chemical injection administered by anonymous technicians.’ Now that is the norm.”

Smith soon formed a partnership with fellow artist Jayed Scotti (later of Feederz), producing the self-published magazine *Fallout* from 1978 onwards. This 11 x 17 inch newsprint publication provided a vehicle for bringing together various parts of their practice – including spoof flyers, politically-charged essays, barbed comments and original collage and illustration material that was to later reappear on some of the record sleeves of Dead Kennedys and other Alternative Tentacles label releases. Smith also ‘created’ a number of other fictitious contributors to *Fallout*, extending the editorial ‘team’ to a group of seven (including the wonderfully-monickered Zeno Weevil, Krass Vermin and Rangoon Dandy – even Smith’s cat, 355, got a name-check).

The combination of offbeat, surreal practical-jokery, combined with disturbing and hard-hitting satire in Smith’s work found a common accord with Jello Biafra. During the early development of Dead Kennedys, Biafra had been working with visual material along similar lines, collecting images from popular magazines and newspapers along with headlines and commentary that could be re-positioned in order to question and undermine the original message. Both Biafra and Smith recognised the potential for their visual compositions to amuse and shock through the employment of heavily ironic and disturbing graphic humour. Such strategies were not new, of course – European Dada artists in the early twentieth century had used collage techniques to critique the horrors of World War I and the subsequent collapse of the Weimar Republic. Notable exponents of political critique through the discordant juxtaposition of found imagery included Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, while John Heartfield’s experiments with photomontage were to reach a worldwide audience in the ’30s as the artist fled the Nazi regime

and developed a sophisticated visual response to the horrors that beset Germany in the lead-up to World War II. Such precursors, along with the radical politics of the early surrealists led by André Breton, were to directly inform the founders of the Situationist International in the early ’60s. Especially relevant to the field of visual communication was the situationist notion of ‘détournement’ – whereby a visual message could be disarmed or corrupted through its combination or juxtaposition with alternative texts or other visual elements.

The apotheosis of the strategy of détournement wasn’t to come, however, until some time later, when the punk movement spawned a graphic language that could reflect its critical and anti-authoritarian message in a direct and visceral manner. Jamie Reid’s work for the Sex Pistols provided a clear lead in the UK, though he, in turn, had been working in a similar vein for some time with *Suburban Press* and had drawn extensively upon the heritage of graphic design activism and art practice. Gee Vaucher’s self-initiated publication *International Anthem* adopted similar strategies, while her subsequent visual work with Crass took the technique further, moving away from more traditional collage to the creation of sophisticated illustrations that appeared initially to resemble photomontage, but were in fact hand-rendered.

Winston Smith, working both individually and in collaboration with Jello Biafra, was to become the US equivalent of these early punk graphic pioneers in the UK. Smith’s approach to collage is astute, witty and sophisticated, with a keen eye for detail and a concern for composition and balance – together with a love of ironic humour and the power of graphic design to inform, persuade and provoke. Like other graphic auteurs – designers who choose to develop a personal visual critique of the world around them, rather than simply working to commercial briefs – Smith built an extensive portfolio of visual work that could be drawn upon when needed to fit the requirements of the job at hand. The overarching aesthetic of Smith’s work in *Fallout* is rough and raw – photographic images are usually distressed to stark monotone and the cut-and-paste

image construction is undisguised. Type is often either roughly cut from newspaper or magazine headlines, or simply hand-rendered in heavy black marker pen, with body text uniformly typewritten. The magazines were litho-printed, but retain some of the qualities of simple photocopying, very much in keeping with the generic punk fanzine style of the period.

Various examples of work that Smith published within the pages of *Fallout* in 1980-81 would see the light of day on record covers and flyers further down the line – even inspiring album titles such as the *Let Them Eat Jellybeans!* compilation and Dead Kennedys' 1986 final album, *Bedtime For Democracy*. One of Smith's most striking – and notorious – compositions, a three-dimensional crucifixion entitled 'Idol', based around a collage of dollar bills, was subsequently reproduced as a two-dimensional colour photocopy image and as part of another spread within the third issue of *Fallout* in November 1980. The image formed the central premise for the DKs' mini-album *In God We Trust, Inc.* in 1981, heightening both the group's and the artist's notoriety in the process. However, his most celebrated and enduring work was the design of Dead Kennedys' logo – a classic example of hard-edged, memorable, simple and direct graphic branding. The logo can be easily reproduced in its simplest form (a simple vertical line and cross to form the letters 'DK'), though Smith's original retains an element of apparent three-dimensionality through a clever use of line weight and tone.

Smith also designed the Alternative Tentacles logo, and recalls trekking across the city to the studio where the DKs were recording *Fresh Fruit* in order to deliver the artwork, where he also encountered the legendary Norm; "I personally met Norm the cat at Mobius Music. I had to hitchhike into San Francisco from my remote ranch and meet Biafra there to deliver to him the original for the Alternative Tentacles logo. When I got there he and the DKs were still recording, so I sat in the ante-chamber to wait. Norm the cat came and sat in my lap and after the band emerged from the recording booth Biafra was clearly tickled to introduce me to the cat and point out that he was being named as the 'Producer' of the new record.

Nice cat. Very friendly. Excellent record producer – for someone without opposable thumbs."

Winston Smith's design legacy is far-reaching – his graphic style has been widely imitated across the punk and hardcore underground, with more recent album sleeves by other designers for the likes of Leftöver Crack and Anti-Flag continuing the tradition. In an age of increasingly 'life-like' visual sophistication and the abundance of seamless Photoshop retouching, the rawness and directness of Smith's work from over thirty years ago still cuts right to the bone.

### **Russ Bestley**

Designer/Writer

Examples of artwork from *Fallout* #3, November 1980, and *Fallout* #4, March 1981, are reproduced on pages 7-9, 34, 35, 52, 64, 102, 103, 112, 113, 131, 146, 148-150, 170-172, 182-184, 198-202, 216-218, and 226-228 of this book. Design by Winston Smith.