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Department of Visual Communication

Television Graphic Identities

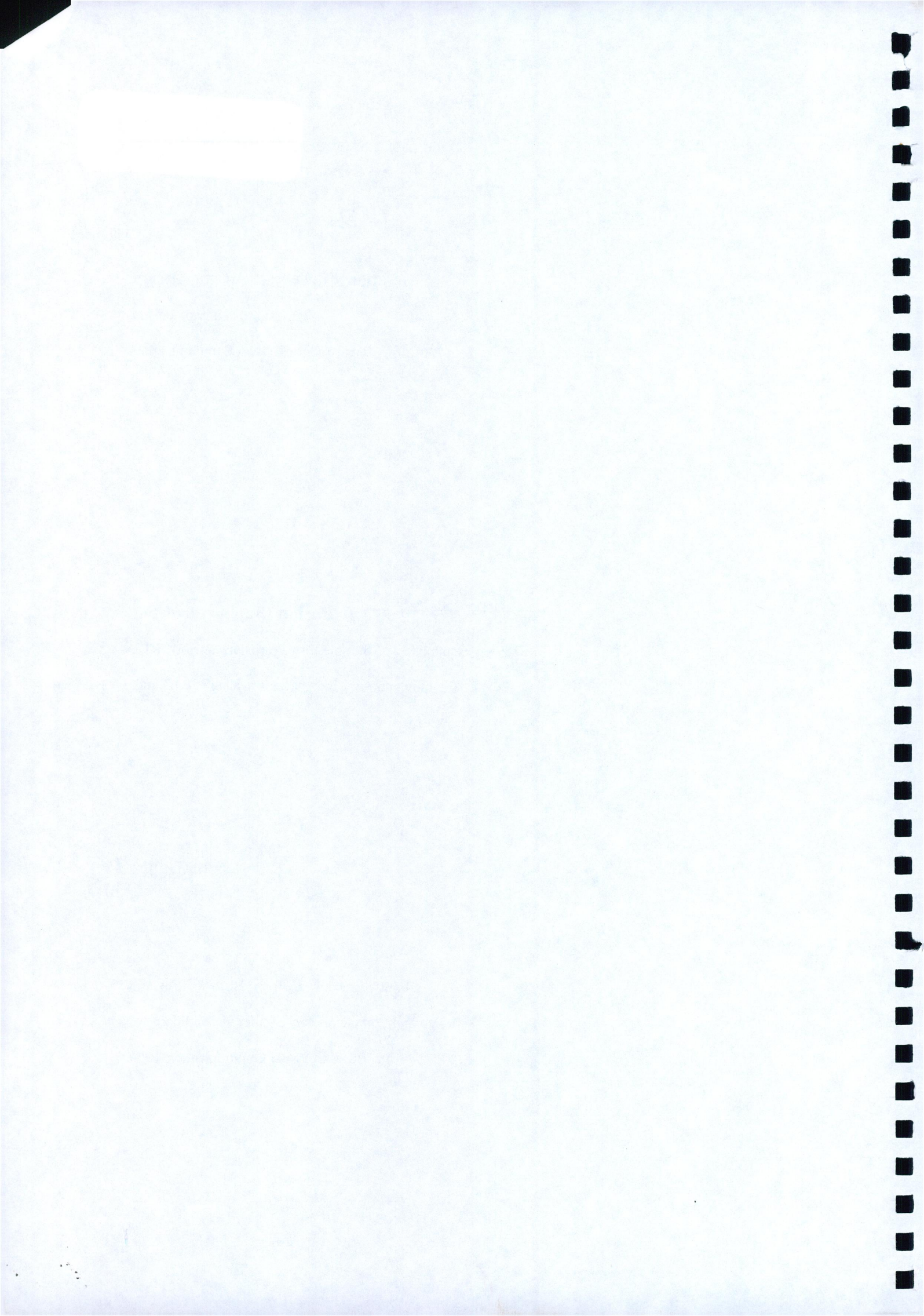
An examination of the sole Irish Television network, RTE,

in relation to other stations available in Ireland.

by

Sarah Maguire

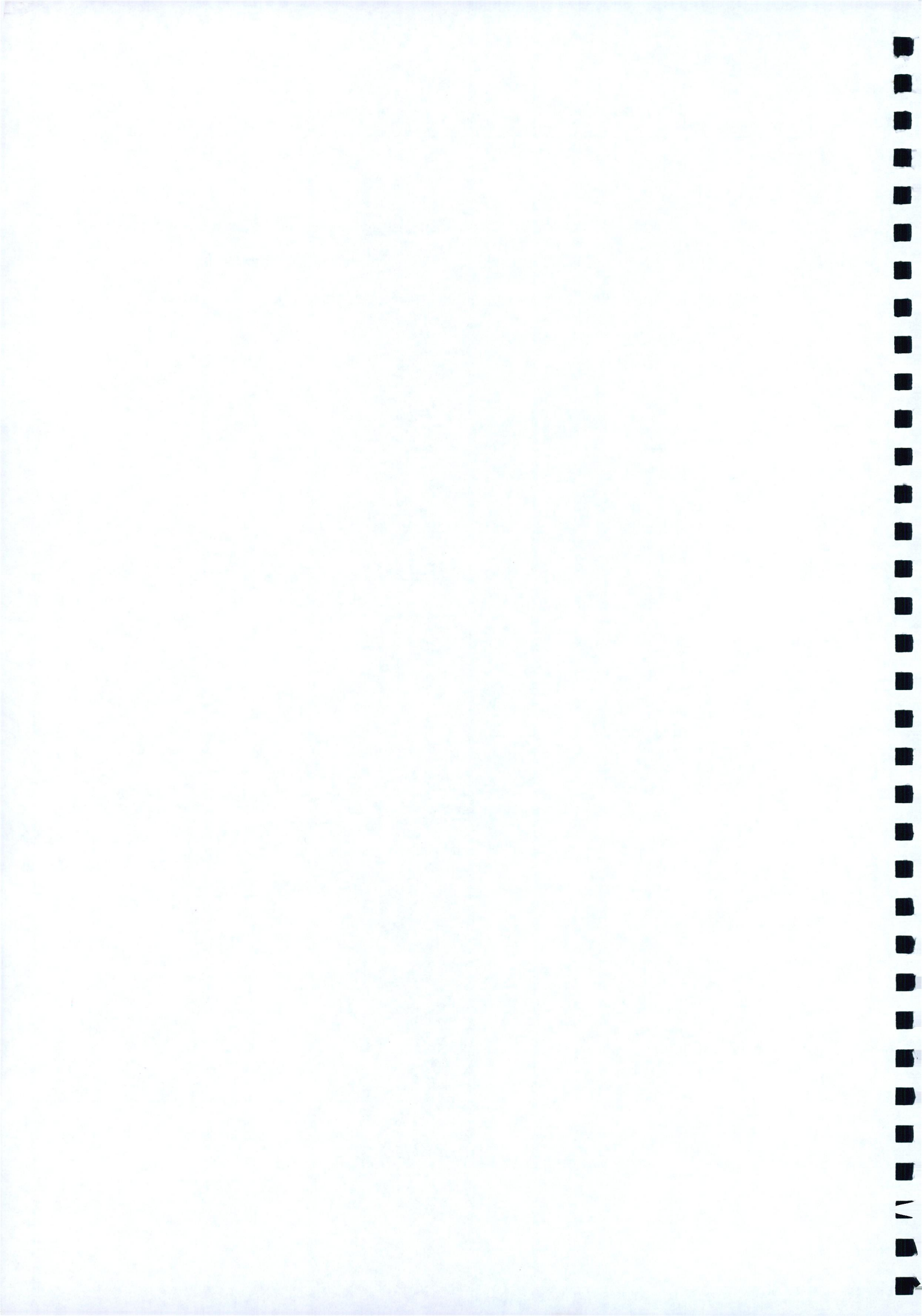
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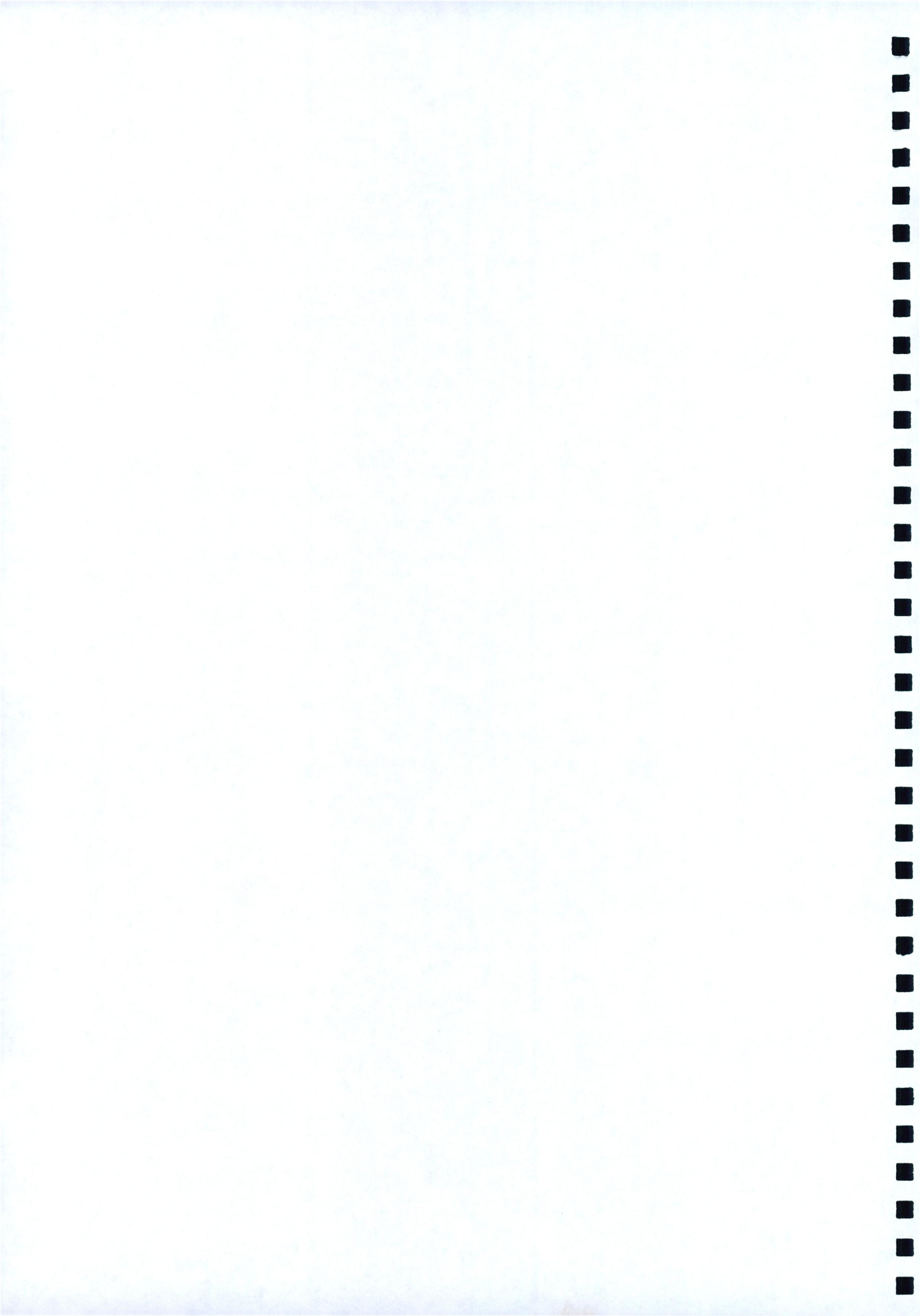
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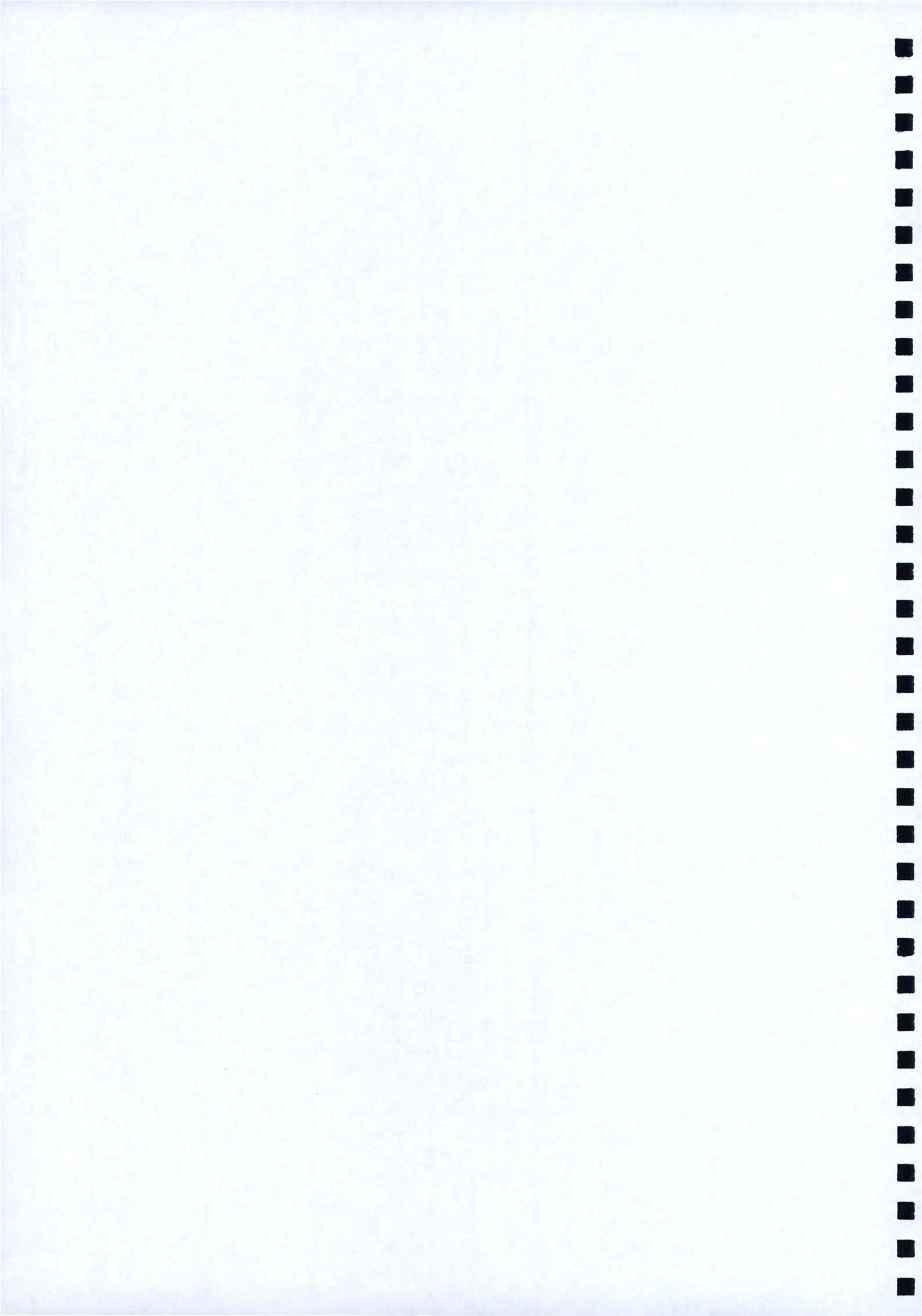
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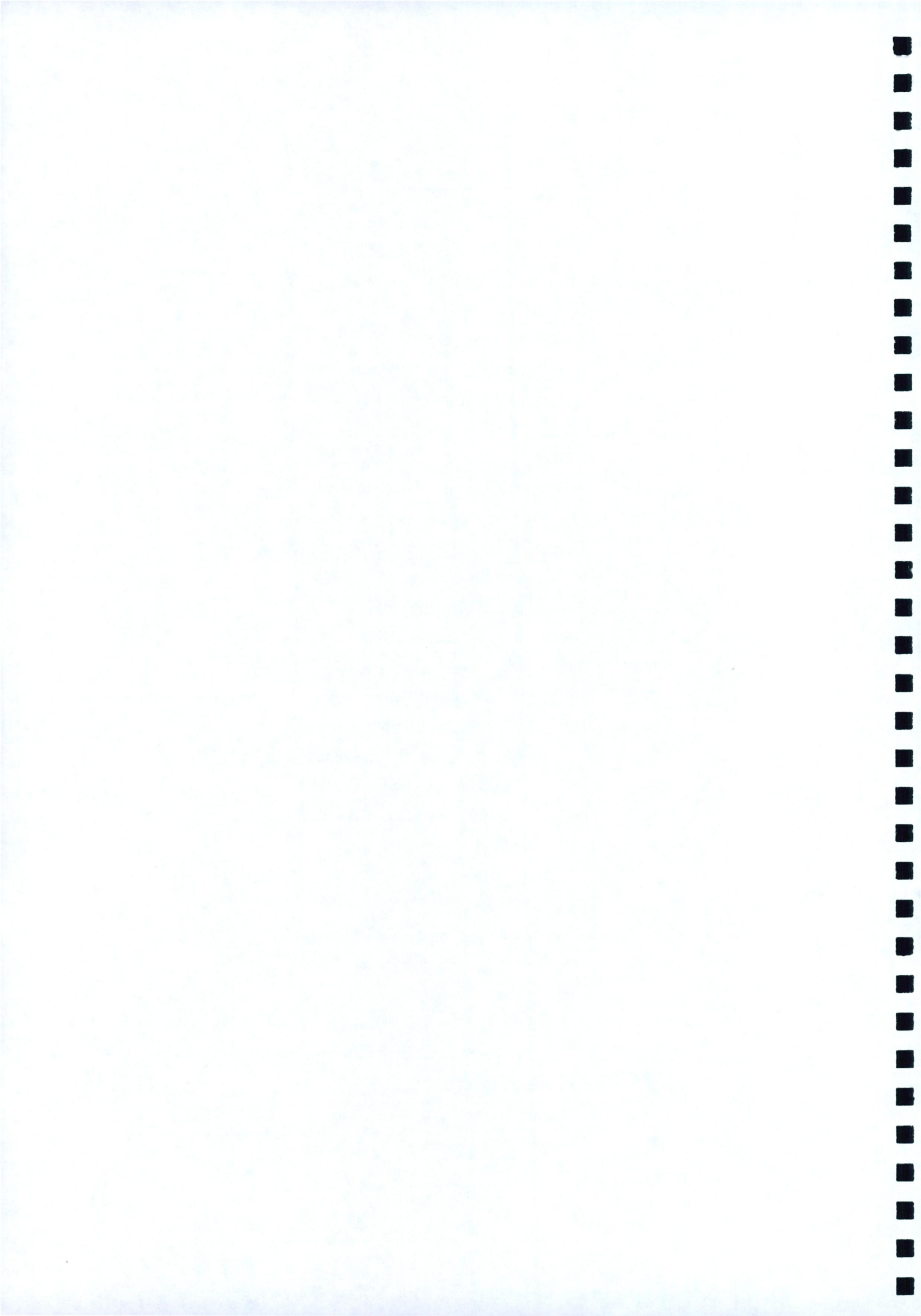
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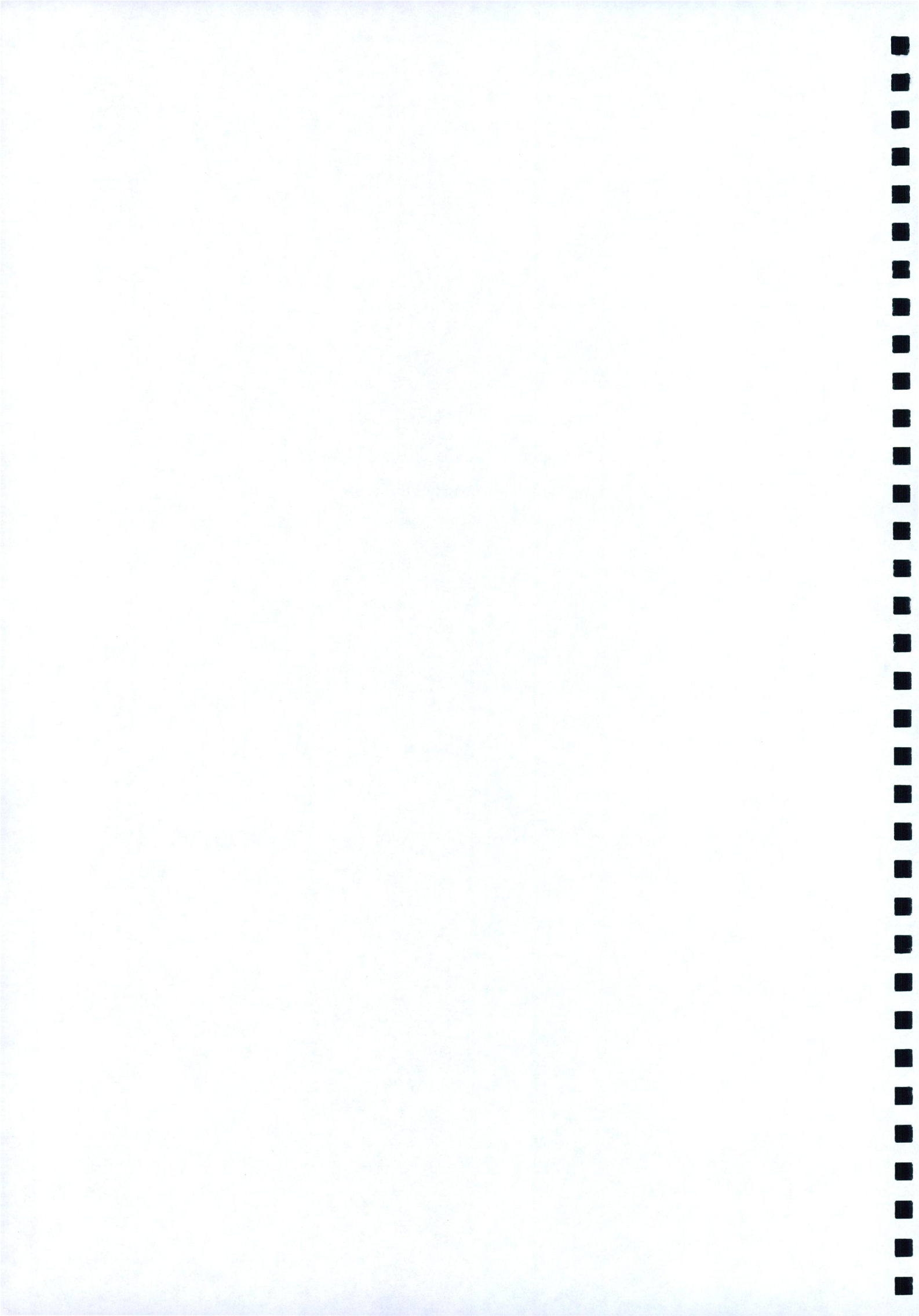


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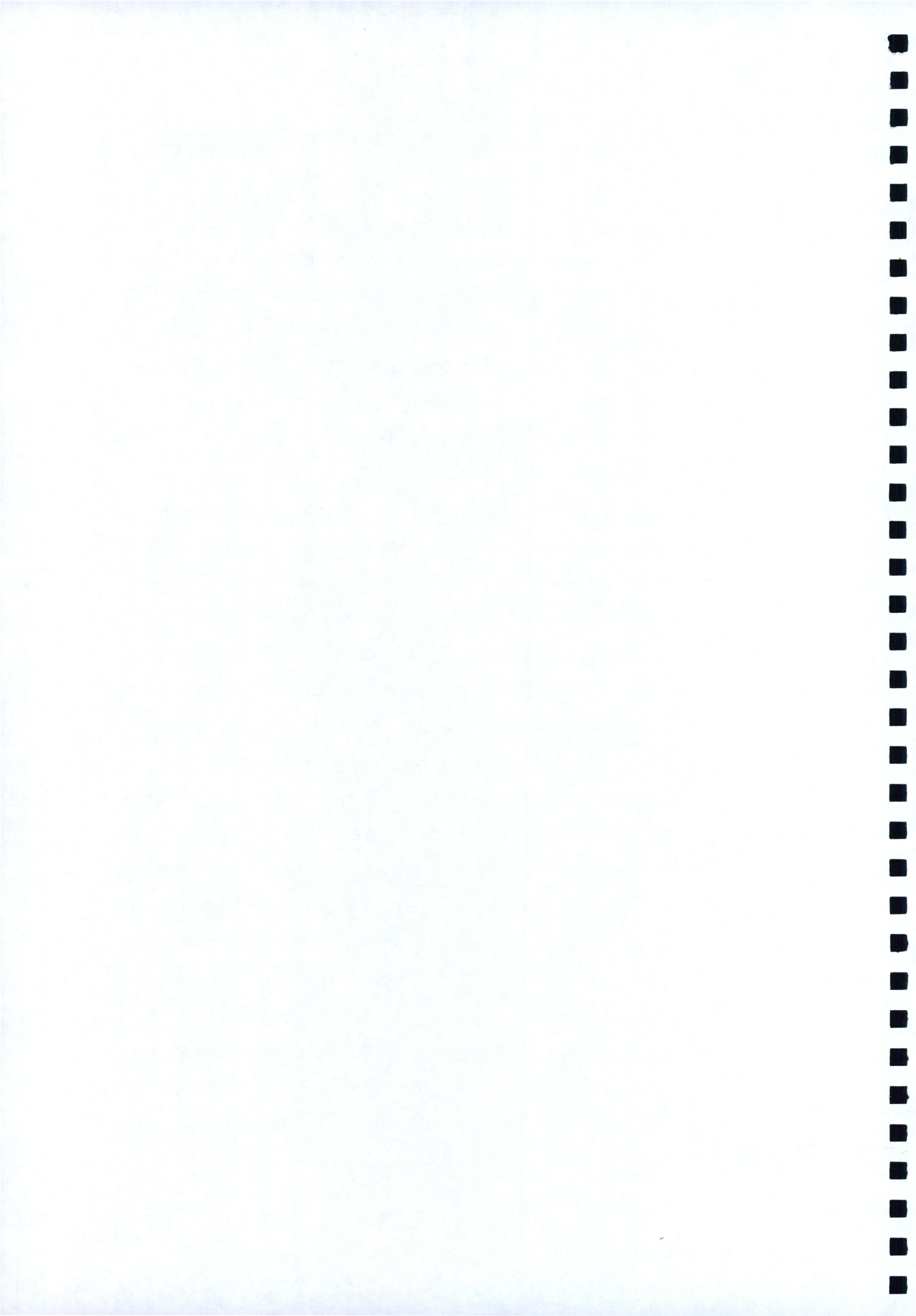


Note: The Image Chart on page 71 is a vital part of this examination and should be unfolded now so that it remains open above the thesis while reading, without interference to the flow of type.



Television is a medium with which we are all familiar. It has become a very large part of today's society, and whether we all notice it or not each television station is layered and wrapped with graphic images designed to express messages in a simplified form. This area of design is viewed by millions of people everyday, and is therefore a subject of interest to everyone in some form.

This thesis is an examination of this area of design, specifically the area of corporate identity for television stations, as opposed to programme titles or news and current affairs graphics. It is about the graphic symbols and sequences that represent and distinguish each channel. The aim of this thesis is to look at the corporate identity of the sole Irish Television network, Radio Telefís Éireann (Radio and Television Ireland) better known as RTE, and to see how that identity has progressed. How does RTE's identity compare today to other television station identities also broadcast in Ireland, the majority of these being British? No television station is ever seen in isolation; they are received as a complete package, and it is up to the viewer to choose what they watch. So it is not unusual to view these stations in a comparative light. Firstly I intend to look at these stations historically, seeing how they have influenced each other, and how technological changes have affected production and quality standards. How have RTE fared in comparison to the other stations during its thirty three years in existence? Secondly, what makes television identities different to other types of corporate identity? In a comparison of today's existing television identities, which ones are more successful at performing their required function, and what is that function? How does RTE compare, and what knowledge might they gain from the success of others?

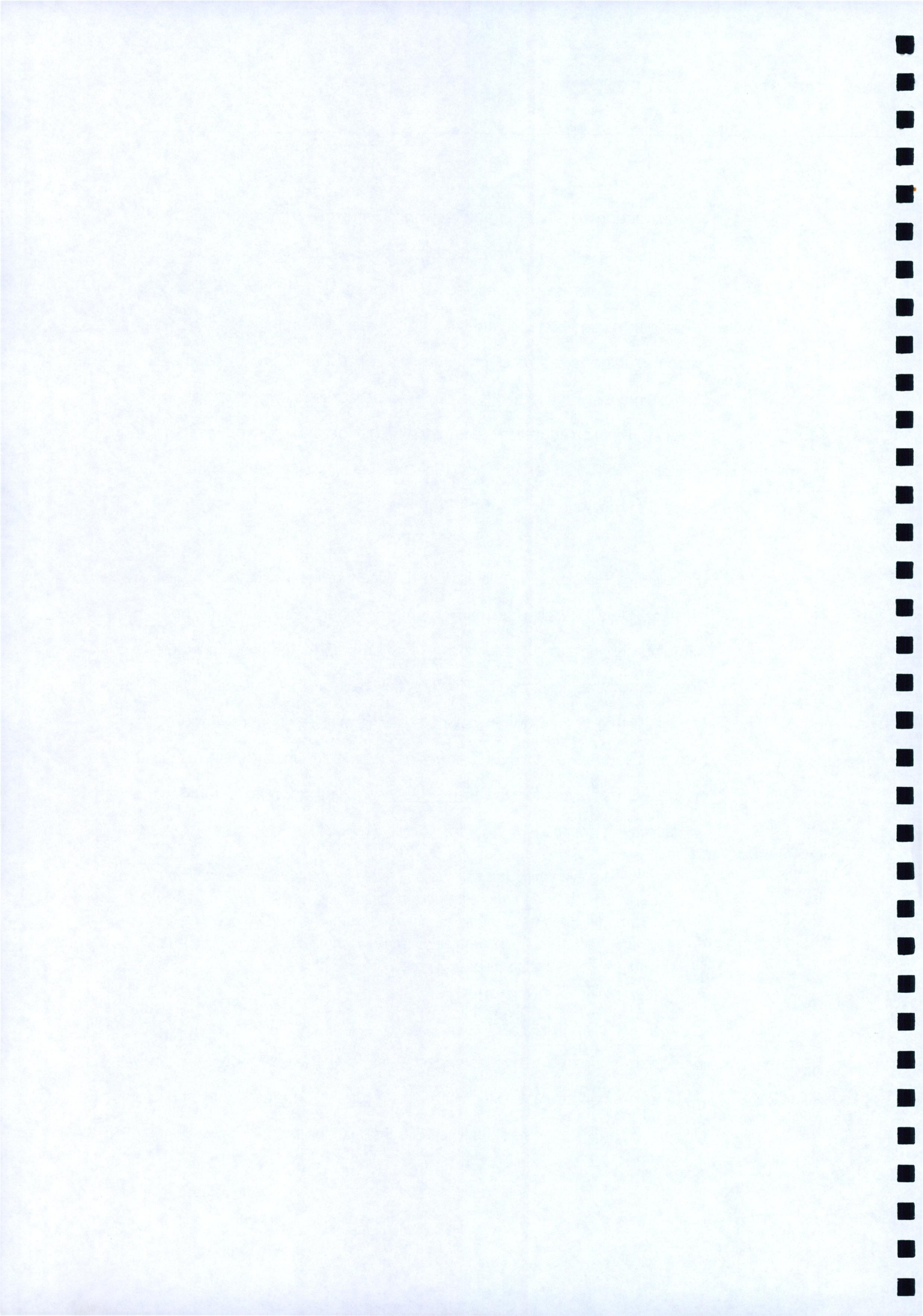


My attraction to simple graphic symbols, and my admiration of BBC2's present corporate identity made me take a closer look at this area. Fascinated to realise that, in essence, these station graphics are simply an expansion of corporate identities, I became interested in looking at the wider scope available to a symbol or logo when it had the illusion of depth as an extra dimension: through the screen. Corporate identity requires an ability to simplify and reduce the elements of the organisation down to their essence. This is an ability which I feel has been lost in the technology and overkill of today's design.

People like Massimo Vignelli (Italian designer in just about every area of design), Uwe Loesch (German graphic designer), Paul Rand (American Graphic designer) and Alan Fletcher (English graphic designer and founder member of the design group Pentagram) have a great talent for simple designs with a degree of minimalism, believing that less is more. In a recent visit to Ireland to talk to SDI (Society of Designers in Ireland), Alan Fletcher spoke with a writer for the Irish Times, summing up what is for me the golden law of design:

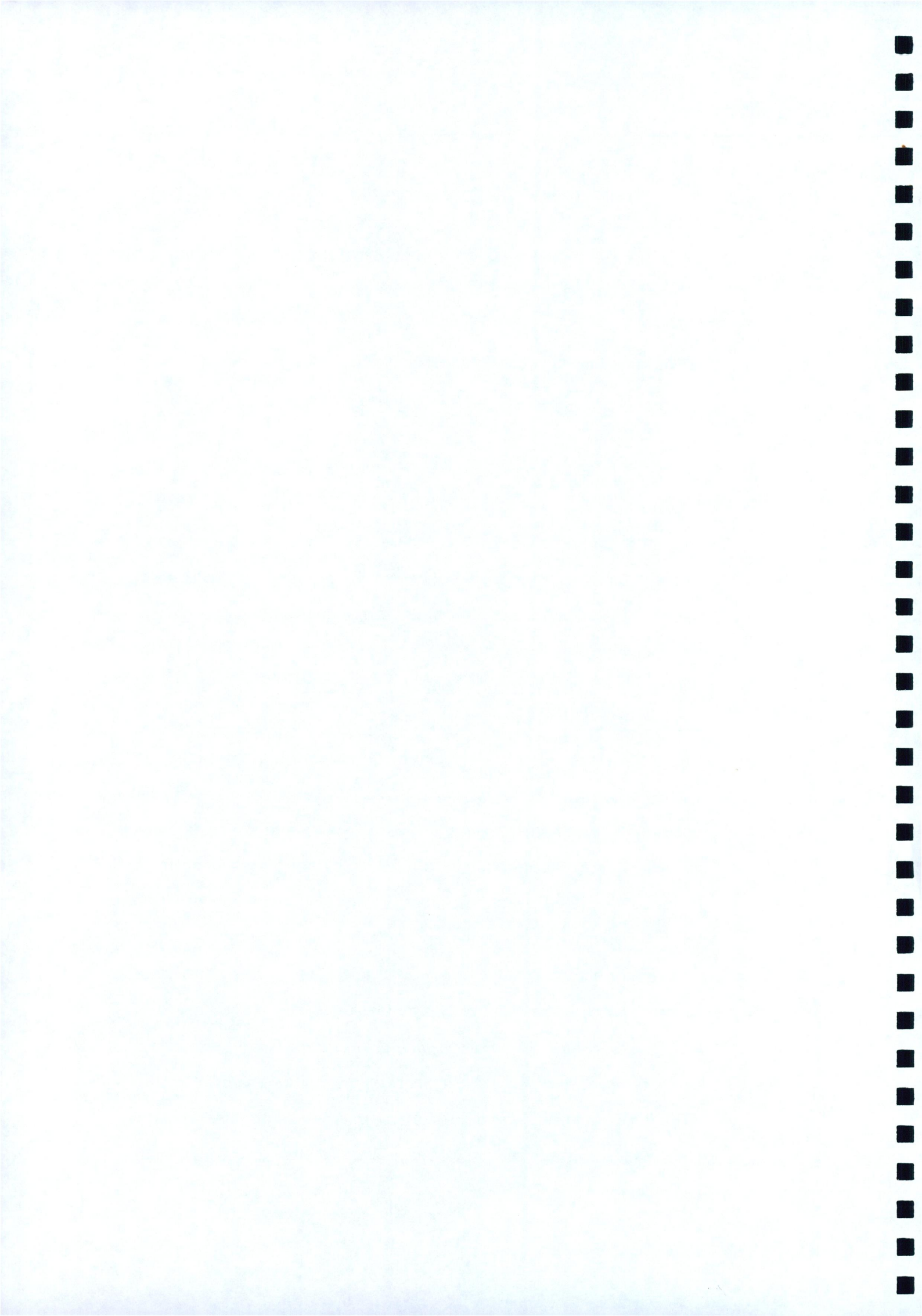
I believe everything has to have an idea in it, and I believe in wit, if you say something and the other person laughs, you've therefore communicated. You should be slightly quirky, otherwise no one will remember it and quirkiness helps to give it some personality. I think you should be as simple as possible but in a original way.
(O'Byrne, 1993, p11)

Television is an area that adds expectations to the average logo. Not only must it communicate as a static image, but must also be capable of some kind of animation to make use of its three-dimensional quality.



A design group called Lambie-Nairn & Co. best known for their Channel 4 identity, hold a near monopoly in the world of television graphics, . I considered doing a close examination of this independent agency, yet became intrigued, not so much by the work this company had produced, but by the challenge faced in the design of television identities. This led me to question how RTE have coped in the face of this challenge.

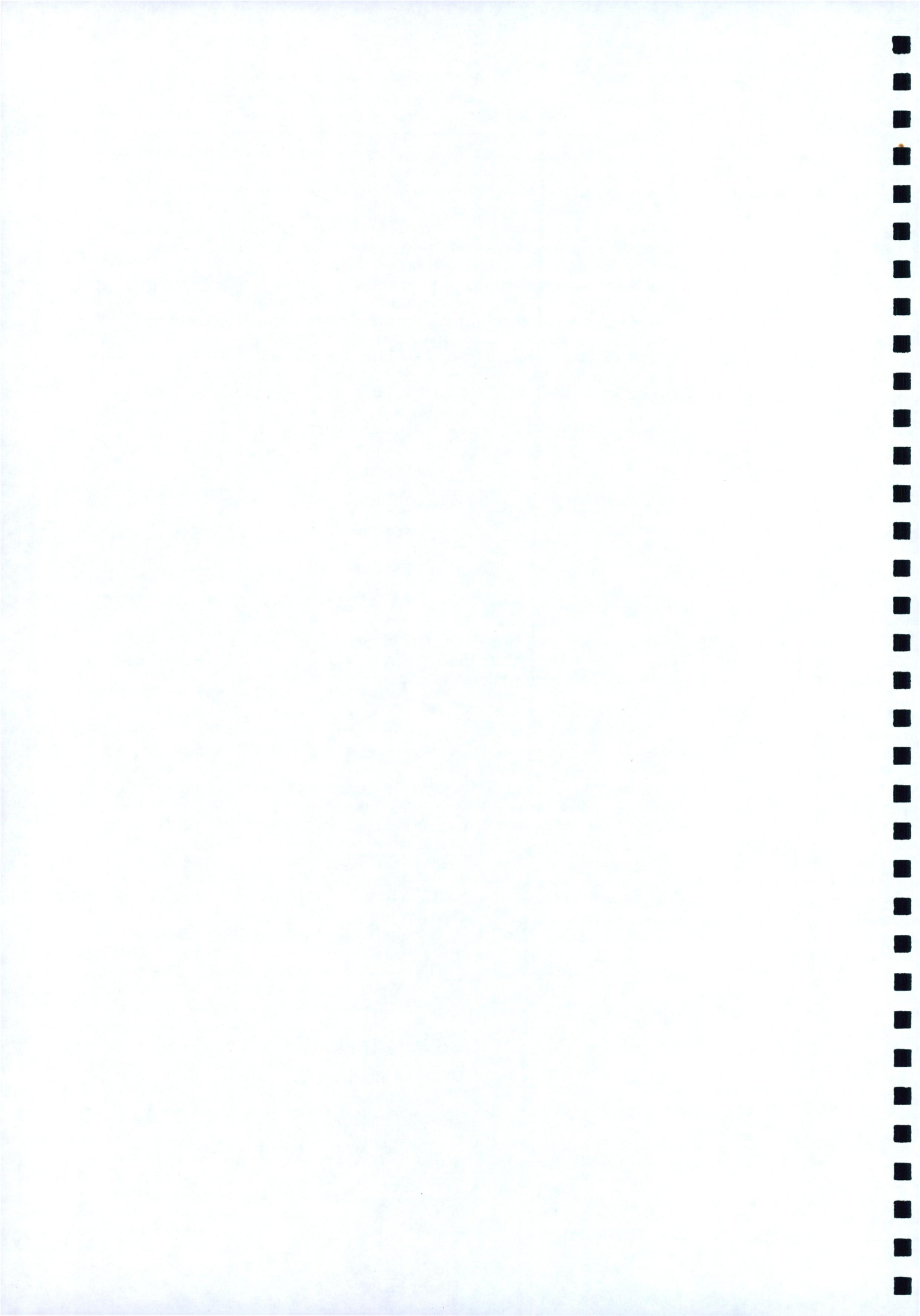
My research began with looking at the main publications that have been available since RTE was launched. I found that in comparison with other areas of graphic design, there has been very little written on the subject of television graphics. The main books that I have looked at are Douglas Merritt's (Head of graphic design at Thames Television at the time of publication) Television Graphic's: from pencil to pixel, 1987, Gerald Millerson's The Technique of Television production, 1969, Wally Olins' Corporate Identity, 1989, and Ralph Montagu's The Television Graphics Handbook, 1991. The most useful of these was Merritt's book. He commented himself about his own difficulties in collecting images for his book, and I have also experienced a difficulty in tracking down some of my images. A great proportion of my research and images came from periodicals over the past ten years, many of which went into little depth on the subject, simply proclaiming the arrival of a new identity. I received co-operation and aid from the Design Department at RTE, having the chance to interview both the Head of Design, Mr Alan Pleass, and the Head of Graphic design, Mr Hilliard Hayden, who provided me with his experience and knowledge while also supplying me with most of my images related to RTE. But finding that it was difficult to acquire images from other stations, I have collected these myself on video tape, and outputted them in colour by computer.



Television is very ephemeral: here today, gone today. Each day brings new title sequences, promotions and programme links on television. Every time I watch television I find more material for this thesis, for that is the nature of television. I would be writing forever if I was to talk about the different sequences that have been created. However for the purposes of this thesis I will use examples that are of relevance in supporting my points.

I will start by assembling a chart which cross references the different identities used by the stations available in Ireland over the 33 years since RTE was launched. I will look at how the different identities changed in response to technology and their competitors. Are television graphic designers influenced by trends to the same extent as other areas of design, like fashion? Are certain styles used because they are 'in'?

Next I will look at why television stations need identities, and the functions they serve. In Chapter 3, I will look at the structure of the network identities that present more than one station. This is relevant to RTE's identity because they broadcast two different channels. How important is structure, and how can a good structure be of benefit? Symbol representation is important to this study because RTE have been using a representative symbol since their first broadcast, and I will look at the implications of this in Chapter 4. My final chapter will look at some of the individual stations their cohesion on and off screen, and their versatility, that is, their ability to brand all station-related graphics on-screen and in print. My conclusion will sum up the points I have made and bring together the conclusions I have formed about RTE in relation to other stations, the direction RTE should take.



Radio Telefís Éireann, better known as RTE, is the sole Irish television Network, broadcasting two television stations and two radio stations nation wide. The first broadcast went live on air on the 31st December 1961 with a speech by the then President of Ireland, Eamon de Valera. Already they were twenty five years behind the British Broadcasting Corporation of Britain (BBC) who had been broadcasting since 1936. At this time there were only two stations available in Britain, BBC1 and ITV which had begun in 1955. The Irish watched the only station available to them, and the British were already able to choose between two different stations. RTE received its funding from both television licenses and advertising, while the BBC relied solely on license fees, and ITV was the first to bring advertising to the small screen at the time of its launch. In RTE's history they have changed their on-screen identity ten times at an average of every three years, while ITV and BBC changed less than five at an average of every ten years, and MTV and Channel 4, although not as old as the others, have not changed theirs in the twelve to thirteen years of their existence.

All image references in this chapter appear on the image chart (fig 1.1) at the back on page 71. This is designed to fold out so that it can be seen at all times while larger images are included where appropriate alongside text. This chapter will chronologically look at the changing television logos from 1961 (the launch of RTE) to present day, 1993. I will refer to television identities as 'idents' throughout as this is the commonly used word. How have the identities developed, and have they been influenced by each other? Are television graphic designers influenced by trends to the same extent as say, fashion designers? Are techniques used because they are 'in'?

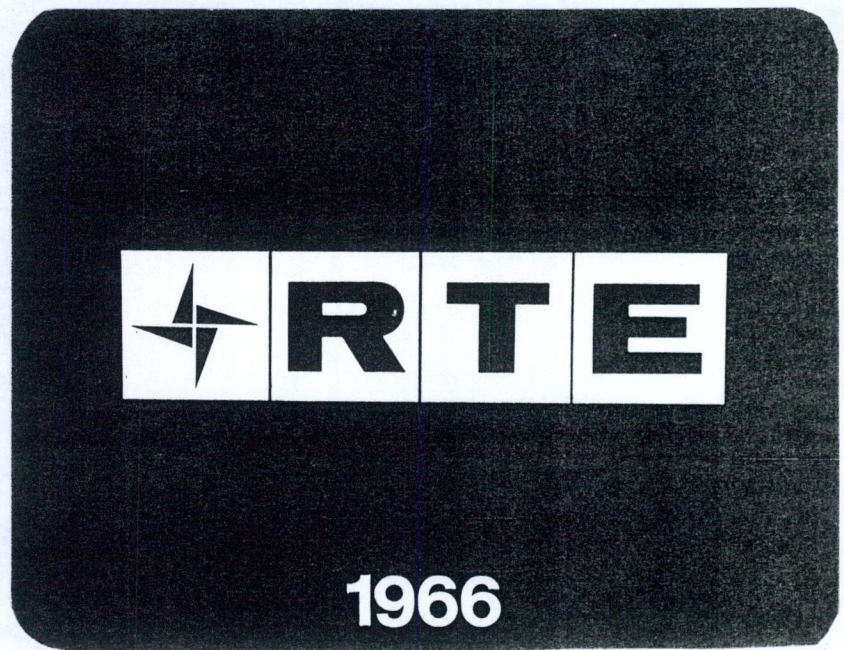


Fig 1.2 RTE's identity 1966 incorporating the St Brigid's Cross

The 'Sixties

In 1961 RTE began its career as 'Telefís Éireann' with the original St Brigid's Cross made of reeds as its symbol. That same year saw the introduction of Photosetting - a process that produced instant white lettering on black. (30, p44). During the 1960s RTE changed their design 5 times, while BBC1 had one re-vamp, probably due to the launch of their second channel in 1964. The quality of these designs would have been slightly higher than before because the number of lines in the television screen was changed from 405 to 625 in the same year. (Merritt, 1987, p7)

In 1966, possibly to take advantage of the improvement in screen quality, and due to the name change from 'Telefís Éireann', to 'Radio Telefís Éireann' when they collaborated with Radio Éireann, RTE re-designed their station identity, still using the Brigid's Cross (Fig 1.2). 1969 was an important year for television as it saw the introduction of colour (Merritt, 1987, p7). Also in that year BBC received a character generator. This was similar to a typewriter keyboard but the letters or numbers appeared on screen and could be changed in size and style very easily. But the model they received, the 'anchor' (Alpha-Numeric Character Generator), did not improve typographical standards due to its uniform spacing between letters which were technically accurate but looked wrong visually.(Merritt, 1987 p 44)

Also, in 1969 the seventh edition of a book by Gerald Millerson called The Technique of Television Production was published. In the preface Millerson explains why he had revised the original 1961 version so many times:

Many of the facilities and procedures it outlines were so new that they were experimental, confined perhaps to a few large organisations. Now

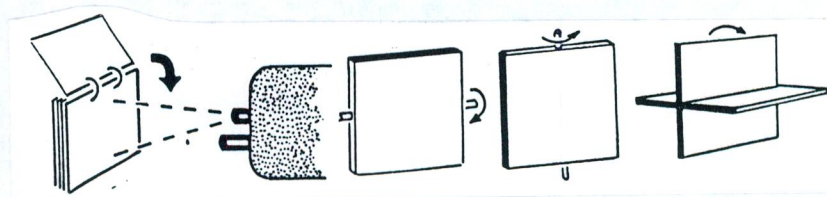


Fig 1.3 1969 method for shooting text on 3x4 formatted card



Fig 1.4 1969 method of creating moving type on screen

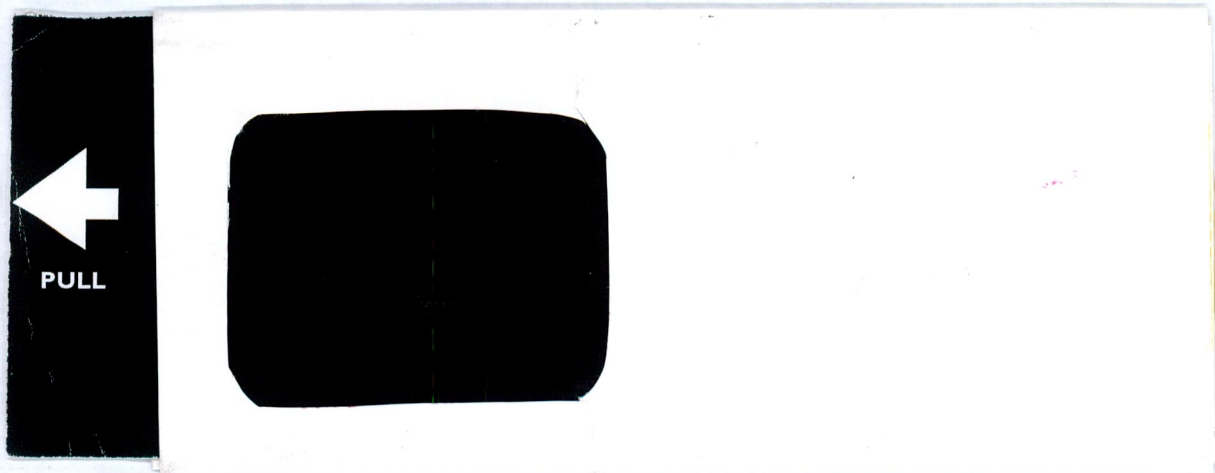


Fig 1.5 Reconstruction of one of the methods shown in Millersons 1969 book

many of them have taken their part in the operational scene of TV production, and we encounter further new innovations. This typifies television. Equipment develops, techniques (and fashions) change.
(Millerson, 1969, p.11)

When you check the section entitled 'GRAPHICS-TITLING-CAPTIONS', it is interesting to see that what they regarded as highly developed techniques probably no longer exist even in the smallest of studios: hand produced lettering in 3 by 4 format placed in front of the camera, often with lettering of a standard size to prevent loss of quality (Millerson, 1969, p.354) (fig 1.3). Backgrounds consisted of layers of transparent sheets of imagery with printed or stuck on lettering. Moving titles were created using rotating bars, or drums (fig 1.4). Shadowed lettering was created naturally, so to speak, using direct illumination on three-dimensional letters. Animation involved a lot of unflapping, unsticking, sliding and wiring (Millerson, 1969, p.365). I have reconstructed an example of this early technique to show its limitations (fig 1.5). When I spoke to Mr Alan Pleass, Head of Design at RTE, he told me about the days when lettering was produced using a wet version of letraset. Today letraset is rarely used but was a useful product before computers. It is made up of sheets of dry transfer letters available in various typefaces and sizes which you simply place over the area you want them and rub their surface heavily with a blunt object like a pencil or biro. The wet version was similar to the fake tattoos you used to get with bubble gum. By wetting the surface of the transfer, laying it down and rubbing the back, the letter appears on the required surface.

The Head of Graphic Design in The National College of Art and Design, Bill Bolger, told me about his own experiences in television. He remembers

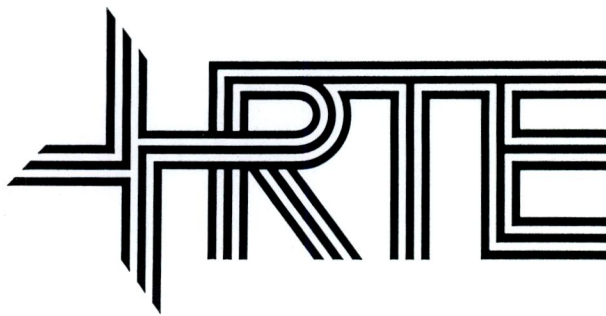


Fig 1.6 RTE's identity 1970 - 1986

having to produce cartoons while the camera rolled and commentary was added at the same time. He had a series of half started cartoons in front of him which he was to add to. One of these was of a sandy beach, blue sea and clear sky. The commentary was about urbanisation so he was to add buildings to the scene. It meant that every time something went wrong with the commentary, he had to keep adding more to his cartoon!

The 'Seventies

Between 1969 and 1980 RTE retained their longest running symbol (fig 1.6). This was a good incorporation of the network's title and the brigid's cross combining the two as part of one image. The design department certainly did not let the arrival of colour television in the same year go to their heads, still using monotone and retaining the corporate colour that had been in use in all printed media since they began, a pale blue.

In the '70s the Electronic Paint System became available. This would have been the precursor of the Quantel Paintbox¹. It allowed a designer to work with a digital pen in hand on a clean white board while all artwork appeared on a screen (Merritt, 1987, p41).

In 1977 computer control was introduced in Britain to the rostrum camera² which was to increase the speed and accuracy of shots, and allow for greater

¹A system which has the ability to perform all traditional graphic design techniques - typesetting, paste-up, illustration, retouching, airbrushing, combining a number of different images with type. It can also store stock images for selection. (Cotton, 1990, p41)

²A camera which shoots still frames one at a time, and then runs them in sequence. (Merritt, 1987, p.37)

precision due to the extensive memory of the computer (Merritt, 1987,

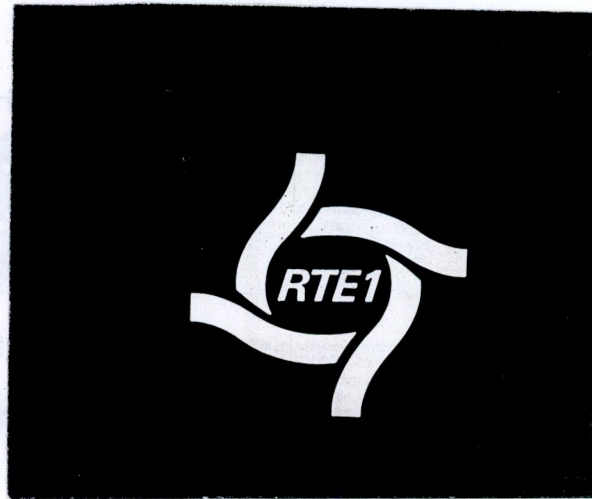


Fig 1.9 (a) The RTE corporate logo, (b) RTE1 and (c) RTE2 1980

their image and started to make changes to keep up with the fresh new graphic work emerging. This can be seen by looking at the image chart at the back. The number of stations and the changes in the logo designs are few and far between before 1980 although, since its launch, RTE seem to have had an unnatural number of re-designs in relation to its competitors.

Not only did the '80s see the emergence of many new stations, it was also a time of change technologically. In the '80s the Apple Machintosh computer was introduced; a highly advanced piece of equipment especially useful in the design field and extremely user-friendly. The Quantel Paintbox also came into use in the 'eighties.

In 1980 RTE had three symbols in use: the corporate RTE logo, RTE1 and RTE2 (fig 1.9). They were all quite different from each other. There is little or no consistency in the structure of the identity as a whole. Surprisingly the new logo introduced in 1980 (fig 1.9b) was designed by the same person, Don Farrell, as the corporate logo. It appears that RTE saw little importance in being consistent or logical about the structuring of the identity, but I will discuss this further in chapter 3.

1981 was a turning point for television graphics. A specialised station called MTV (Music Television) was launched in the United States, and although it did not reach Britain or Ireland for another few years, its existence was known because it was different and unconventional. Because MTV was a specialised station it would have been natural to use musical imagery. But a different approach emerged. Instead of fitting music into the symbol, they made the symbol fit into the music. According to Robert Pittman, Chairman of MTV:



Fig 1.10 MTV's base logo, 1981-present day



Fig 1.11 ITV's identity, 1981

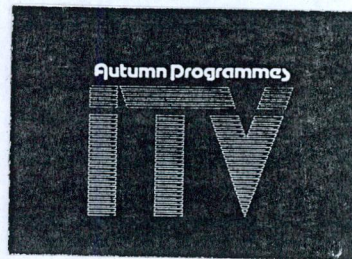
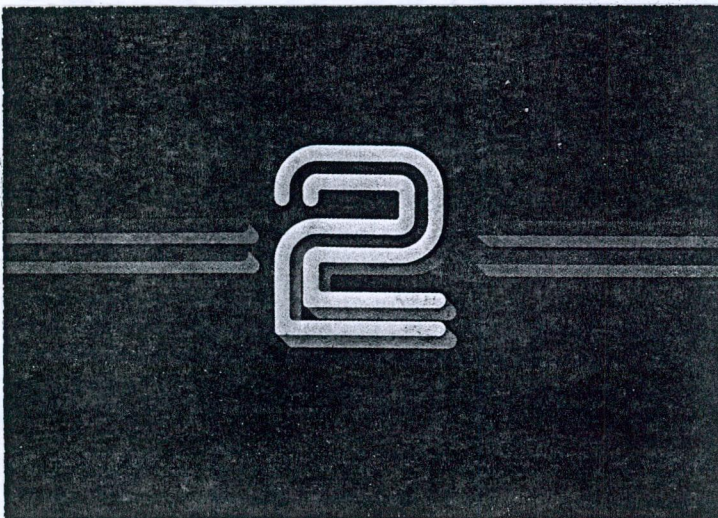
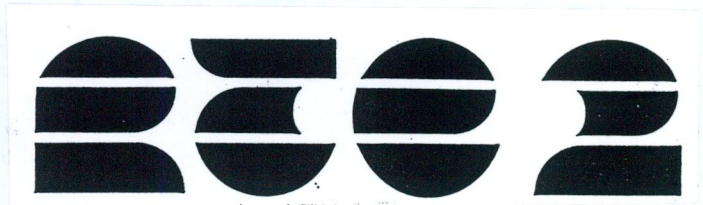


Fig 1.12 RTE corporate identity 1970, RTE2 1978, BBC2 1979 and ITV 1981.

Music is about emotion and attitude - it makes you feel. It moves you. Within the creation of MTV, we changed the form of TV to fit the form of music, as opposed to trying to fit music into a narrative structure.
(Canemaker, 1992, p. 21)

The idea was that the accompanying graphics would be as free-forming as today's music, and would be as much a part of the station content as the music features themselves. The station was aimed at 12 to 35 year olds and 'was meant to drive a 55-year-old person crazy'(Canemaker, 1992, p.21) and the logo had to reflect that. The station was to have a free-style open ended unpredictable structure, and the logo that resulted is always recognisable, never predictable and always intriguing. This logo was built around a solid 'M' which took on different forms, but retained its basic shape. Fig 1.10 shows the base logo. I will look at this logo's mutations in more detail in Chapter 5.

Conceived as a free-form, open-ended visual showcase of rock-'n'-roll, MTV needed a graphic image that bespoke youth and anti-authority/anti-establishment attitudes, something forever-changing, ever-evolving, and totally cool - on-the-edge and in-your-face. The famous MTV logo - numerous 10-second animated station identification spots seen through out each day for over a decade - conveys all of the above.
(Canemaker, 1992, p.21)

In the same year ITV re-vamped their identity, by, simply re-working the initials, showing yet again the use of series of lines making up the letters similar to RTE and BBC2 (fig 1.11). Trends were beginning to emerge in the world of television design. RTE, RTE 2, BBC2, and ITV all had similar styles around the same time (fig 1.12). RTE's existed before the others but it is unlikely that they were the trend setters. It is more likely that RTE had inadvertently stumbled on a style that was to become fashionable later on,

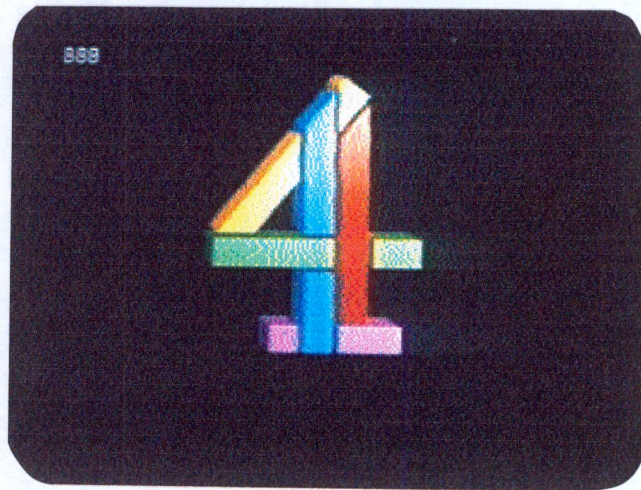


Fig 1.13 Channel 4 identity, 1982



Fig 1.14 BBC1's identity, 1983

and this probably contributed to the logo's long standing. The head of Graphic Design at RTE, Hilliard Hayden, told me that television is very much a fashion industry. There are trends that everyone is aware of. Like everything else there is quite a healthy network in TV (Hayden, 1993).

1982 was also an important year in television graphic design - the first television identity designed using computer animation, Channel 4, was created (fig 1.13). MTV and Channel 4 are the only two channels that have never re-designed their first logo and the need not to do so is due to their unquestionable success. I would agree with Douglas Merritt when he praises Channel 4's logo (designed by the outside design company Robinson Lambie-Nairn now known as Lambie-Nairn & Co) as a highly successful and widely admired piece of design:

How rare it is and how pleasing, when chance, skill and inspiration combine in some strange proportion to produce a memorable and successful result. The creation in the UK of Channel 4 had these happy coincidences; a single number as a station name; a peak in the new computer technology as midwife; and one of the earliest independent graphic design groups to be set-up outside the then established company structure. (Merritt, 1987, p.19)

Channel 4's symbol had to be sent to an aviation company in Los Angeles to be created on computer as the facilities needed were still not available in Europe. (Merritt, 1987, p.19) I will look at why this logo has achieved its success in Chapter 5.

In 1983 BBC1 re-designed their identity, creating something not dissimilar to their previous symbol (see BBC on image chart page 71), retaining their viewers' trust by remaining reliable and familiar (fig 1.14). BBC received their first Quantel Paintbox in 1983, which was probably used on this new design;

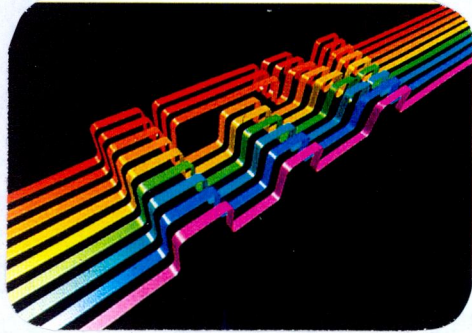


Fig. 1.15 ITV's identity, 1985

this would explain the less wooden effect achieved. RTE were not to receive their Paintbox until 1986.

In 1985 a Design group called English Markell Pockett was established which was to become involved in television graphics as an independent agency. ITV re-designed this year too, producing something that must have been a result of Channel 4's achievements. ITV had used little colour until this re-design which used burst of bright primary colours, which are exactly the same as the Channel 4 colours and were still using the line structure (fig 1.15). They could not be accused of copying the actual colours as they happen to be of rainbow origin and no-one can claim to 'own' or copyright colours, but I would dare to say that they were looking for a piece of Channel 4's success. This is the same trap that RTE have continually fallen into: trying to keep up with the competitors instead of running faster. ITV produced this new logo on computer possibly being misguided into believing that it was the method of animation, that is computer animation that gave Channel 4 its success:

The ITV companies thought they could take their symbols, put them into a computer and that maybe that would improve them. A lot of the companies spent a lot of time and money doing that, but the problem was that their symbols had not been designed to work that way, and also there were no reasons for them to be animated in that way.
(Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.476)

As a result of Channel 4's success and an increase in computer equipment becoming available, the next few years was to see a lot of computer created work that was produced for the sake of showing off what the new toys could do instead of using them as the design aids that they are meant to be. The Head of Design in RTE, Mr Alan Pleass, believes that even in the hands of a

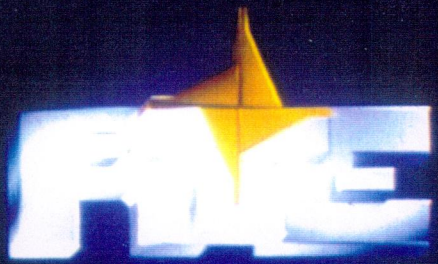


Fig 1.16 The complete RTE Corporate Identity, 1986



Fig 1.17 BBC2's identity 1986

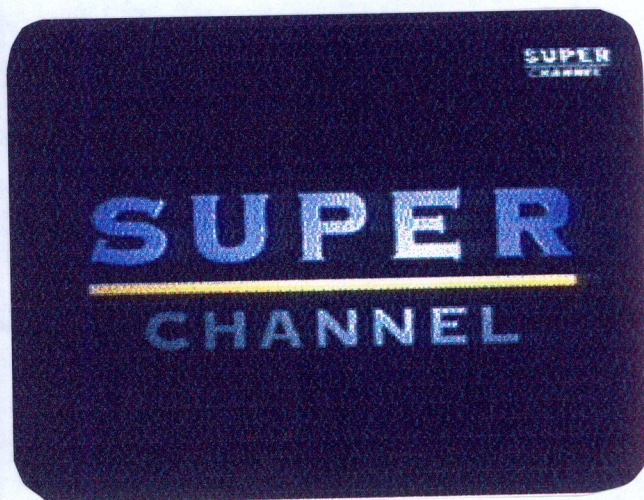


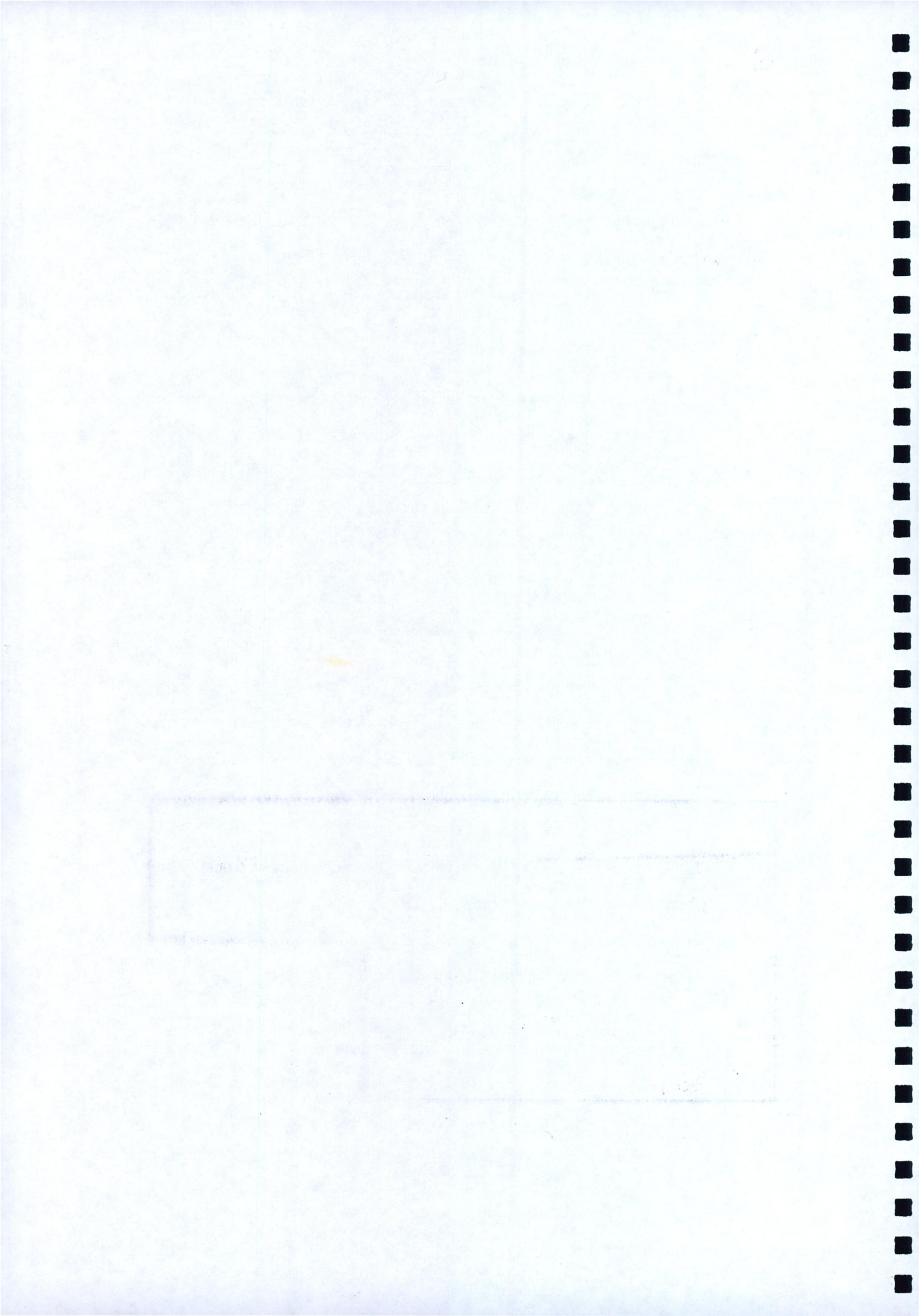
Fig 1.19 Super Channel identity, 1987

non-designer the computer will serve its design function, but they will lack the talent and imagination that only a designer has. No amount of technology will ever replace the designer's insight and experience. (Pleass, 1993)

1986 brought a brand new image for RTE and their first Quantel Paintbox. For the first time they had taken the two stations and the overall identity into consideration and worked on them as one project. I will discuss the corporate structure in chapter 3 but for now I give credit to the overall idea of making the 'RTE' similar throughout and linking the brigid's cross, '1' or '2' into that frame even if it did result in a rather nasty phallic symbol (fig 1.16). This new symbol still exists today, and was designed by an outside agency. RTE had not been altogether successful up until now but I think they rest easy knowing they were not responsible for this one! The Head of Graphics at RTE, Mr Hilliard Hayden, described this logo as a deadweight. He feels that a television logo should be light and be capable of movement to enhance the screens illusion of depth. (Hayden, 1993)

BBC2 re-designed also in 1986 in what has been described as a post-Channel 4 style (fig 1.17), and was notably the first station to use a white background instead of the familiar black (Thrift, 1988, p53-54). However BBC2 did mimic '4' before this when they animated their 1979 design in 1984(fig 1.18).

1987 saw the launch of a station designed to be broadcast throughout Europe, Super Channel (fig 1.19). It was given a European flavour with the blue and yellow colours; it was uncomplicated and had a relaxed feel about it. This was yet another product of Lambie-Nairn & Co. It still remains the



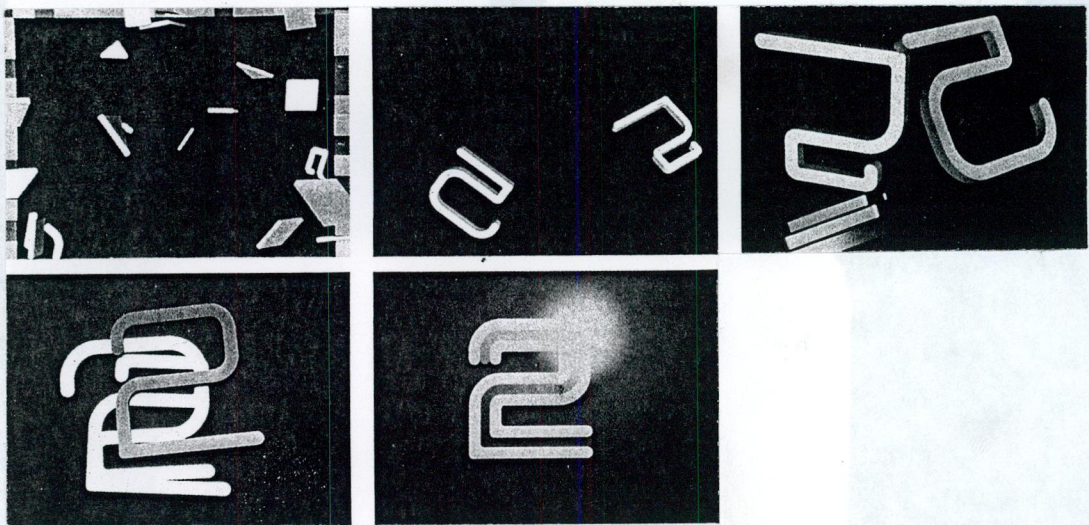
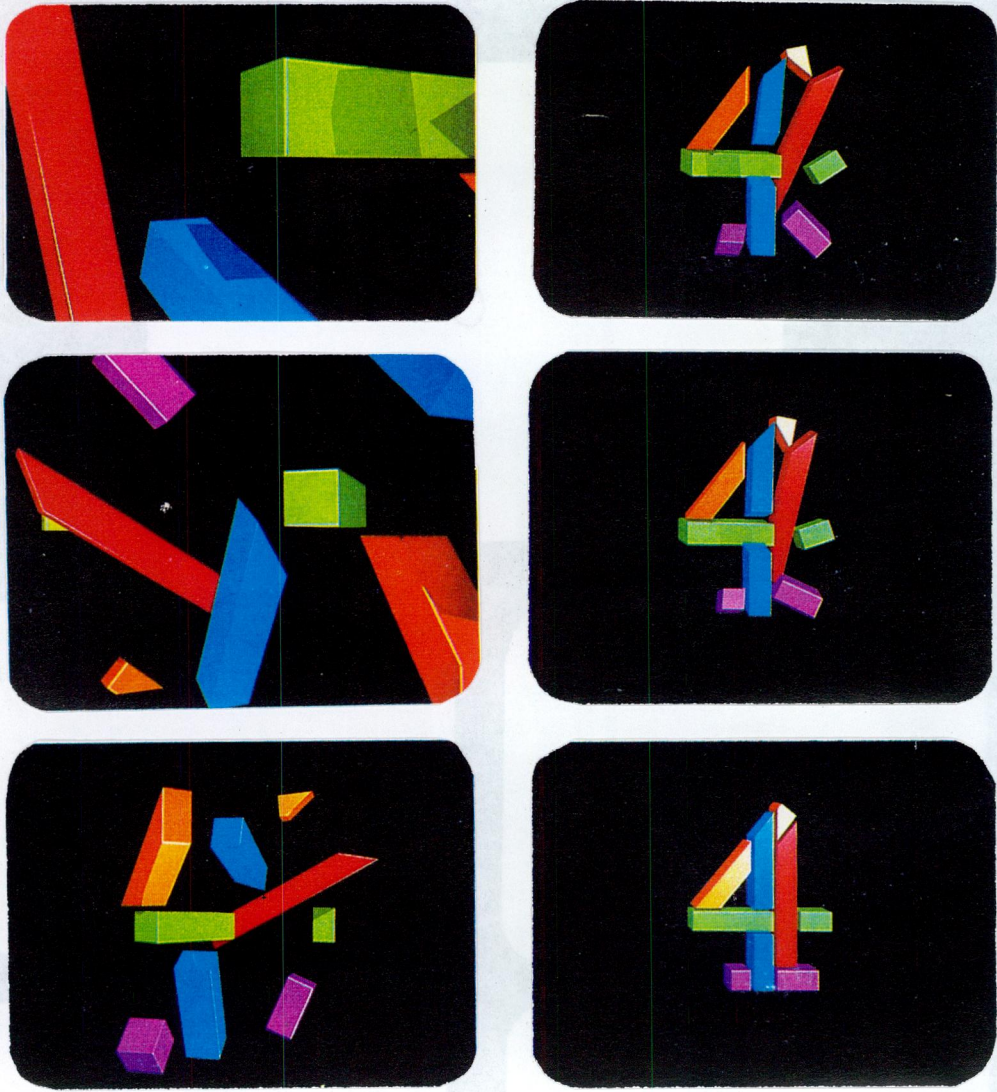


Fig. 1.18 Comparison of Channel 4's animation 1983 and BBC2's animation 1984

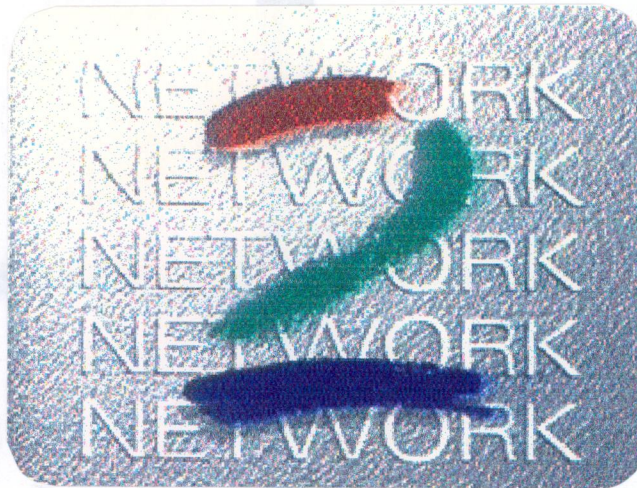


Fig 1.20 Network 2 identity, 1988

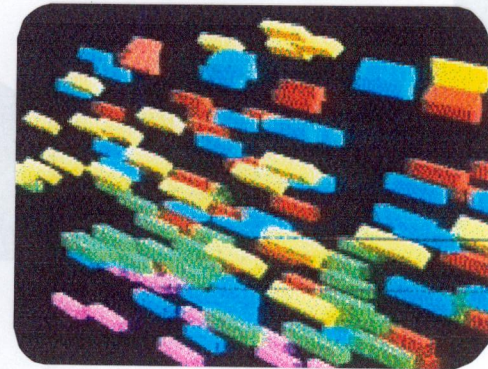
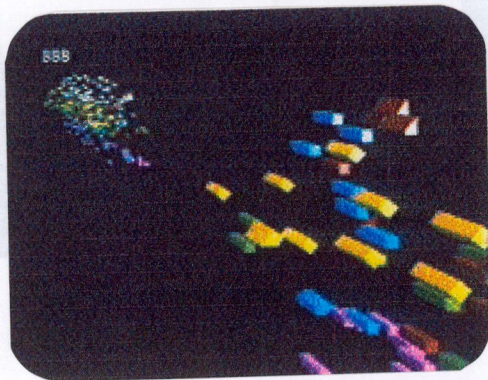
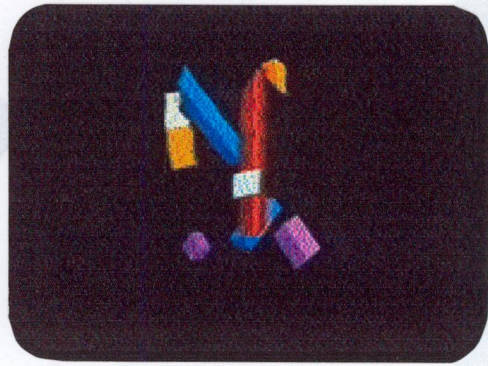
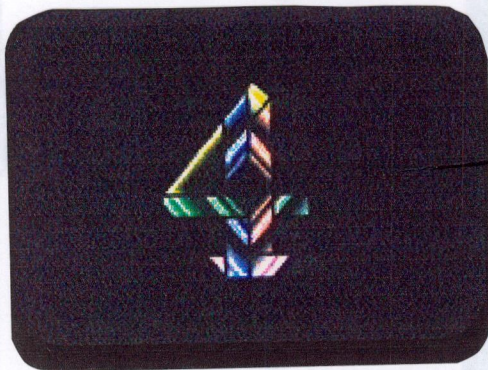


Fig 1.21 (a) to (d) Variations on Channel 4 animation sequences



Fig 1.22 Anglia Identity, 1988

same today with one quite large addition which I will talk about later in this chapter.

1988 was an important year for RTE, as their secondary station took on a new image and name; RTE2 became Network 2 (fig 1.20). Hilliard Hayden told me that this was because they wanted to give it a new image that would appeal to youth, a youthful alternative to RTE1. The public were asked to respond to more than two hundred possible names and out of a shortlist of eighteen, Network 2 was the clear favourite (Coady, 1989, p48). This name change makes it extremely difficult to maintain an overall identity for RTE (see chapter 3).

Network 2 seem to have taken a leaf out of Channel 4's success choosing to use three primary colours. It is simple and works quite well. Although I do not dislike it I feel has become tired and predictable after five years (fig 1.20), unlike Channel 4 whose logo still has the ability to intrigue. The basic difference between the two is in the animation. The Network 2 sequence has never changed its its animation in 5 years, while Channel 4 has various different animations which appear at different times and the ability to create more due to the 3 dimensional quality of the '4' adding an unexpected element. Network 2 uses limiting 2 dimensional brushstrokes and therefore lacks potential for variation. Fig 1.21 shows different variations on the direction of Channel 4's animation. Network 2 is due for re-design before the end of 1994 and it should be interesting to see what direction they take. That same year Lambie-Nairn & Co struck gold again with a re-design for a production company called Anglia Television (fig 1.22). There is an interesting story behind their old logo which had been in use since 1959 which I will

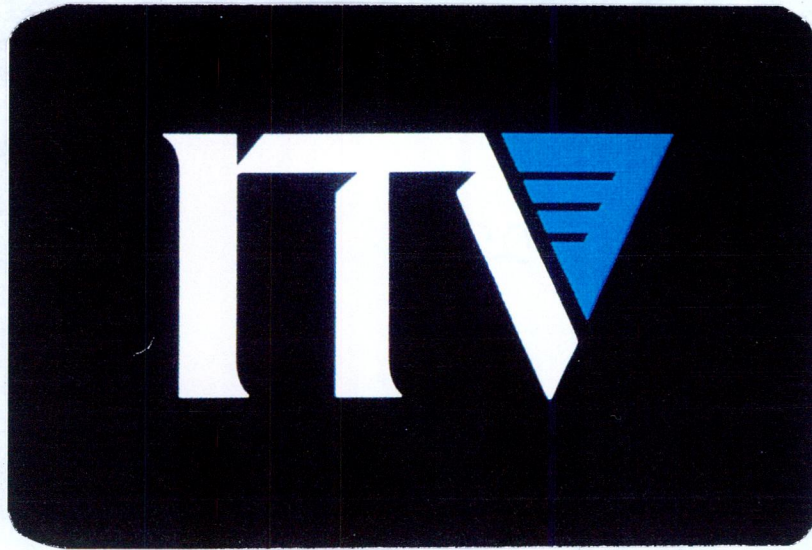


Fig 1.23 The new ITV Identity, 1989



Fig 1.24 BBC2 Identity, 1990



Fig 1.25 BBC1's globe and identity, 1990

discuss later. For now let it suffice to say that this is, in my opinion, one of the best logos in television, which is why I have chosen to include it even though it is not seen in this country. Also in this year Sky Channel was launched by the Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. 1989 was a big year for ITV and for English Markell and Pockett. EMP were approached by ITV and asked to perform a huge task. ITV, Independent Television, is made up of 15 separate groups all with their own identities, one of these being the aforementioned Anglia. ITV wanted an overall look for their station while the separate groups did not want to abandon their own image (fig 1.23). How do you please everyone without compromising good design? It was a challenge which they completed and I will look at this case study more closely in chapter 3.

The Nineties

1990 brought a new decade, and a new image for the British Broadcasting Corporation, resulting in more work for Lambie-Nairn & Co. They produced a new globe for BBC1, a return of the old BBC corporate logotype to bind them together, and a deconstructive image for BBC2 which was the talk of all designers. BBC2 really broke ground with their transforming numeral 2 (fig 1.24). This was a logo that had a personality of its own. Switch on BBC2 and you will rarely see the same ident appearing twice in one night. BBC1 while retaining the familiar globe, created a numeral '1' for their ident which is distinctively theirs due to the slit cut from the centre stem (fig 1.25).

Channel 4's logo remains the same. It shows true strength to last this long while still looking up-to-date in an industry that is so ephemeral in fashion and technology.



Fig 1.26 RTEI's Identity, 1991



Fig 1.27 Comparison of BBC's '1' and RTE's '1', 1991

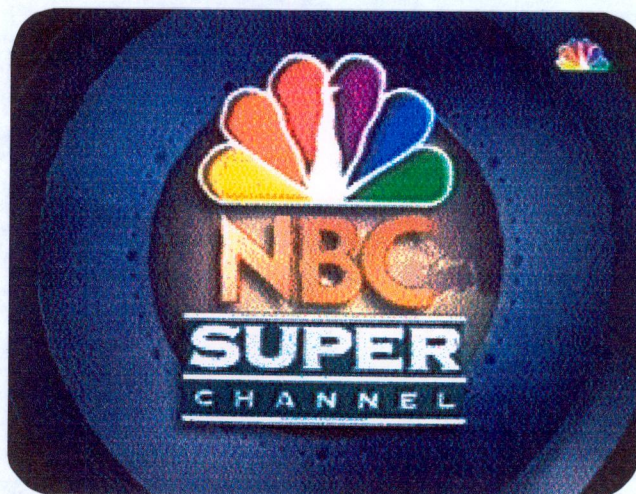


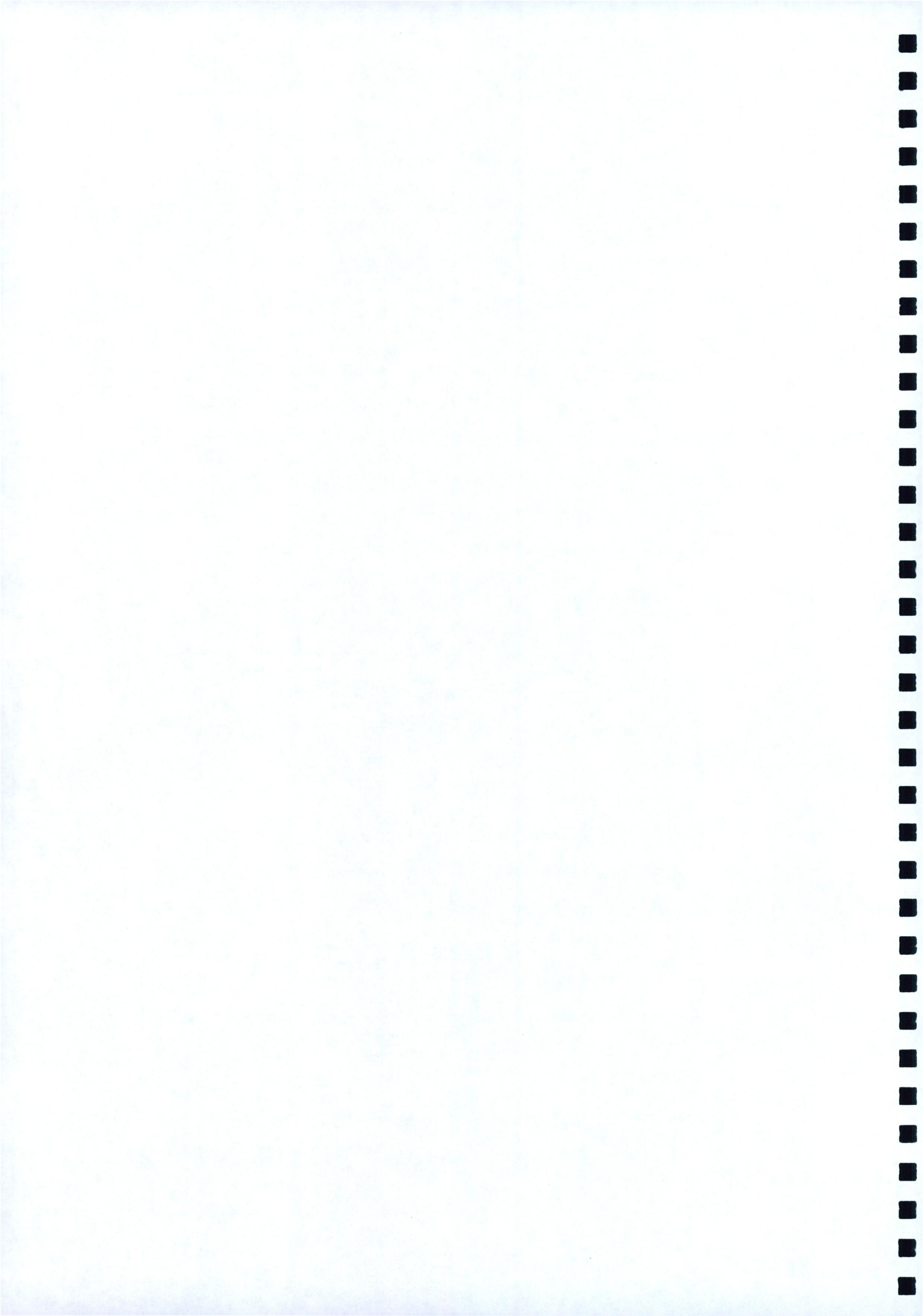
Fig 1.28 NBC Super Channel Identity, 1993

In 1991 RTEI produced the best piece of design in RTE's identity history. The reason for its improvement is the St Brigid's cross no longer plays a major role. The failure of the St Brigid's Cross will be the subject of Chapter 4, where I will examine it in more detail. RTE had begun to see the error of their ways, and although they still use the previous logo on all off screen media, I have noticed a gradual move away from the cross (fig 1.26). They are slowly weaning viewers away from the familiar cross, and stressing the numeral '1', without daring to drastically remove it altogether. I suspect they are taking a leaf out of BBC's book and are preparing for a new identity that will build around this numeral alone. Unfortunately this new '1' for RTE is almost indistinguishable from BBC's '1' as you can see in figure 1.27.

There has been little change since 1991. Irish viewers lost ITV in 1993 which was replaced with UTV(Ulster Television) and a new image. MTV and SKY Channel were also taken off Irish Air in 1992 much to the disappointment of many.

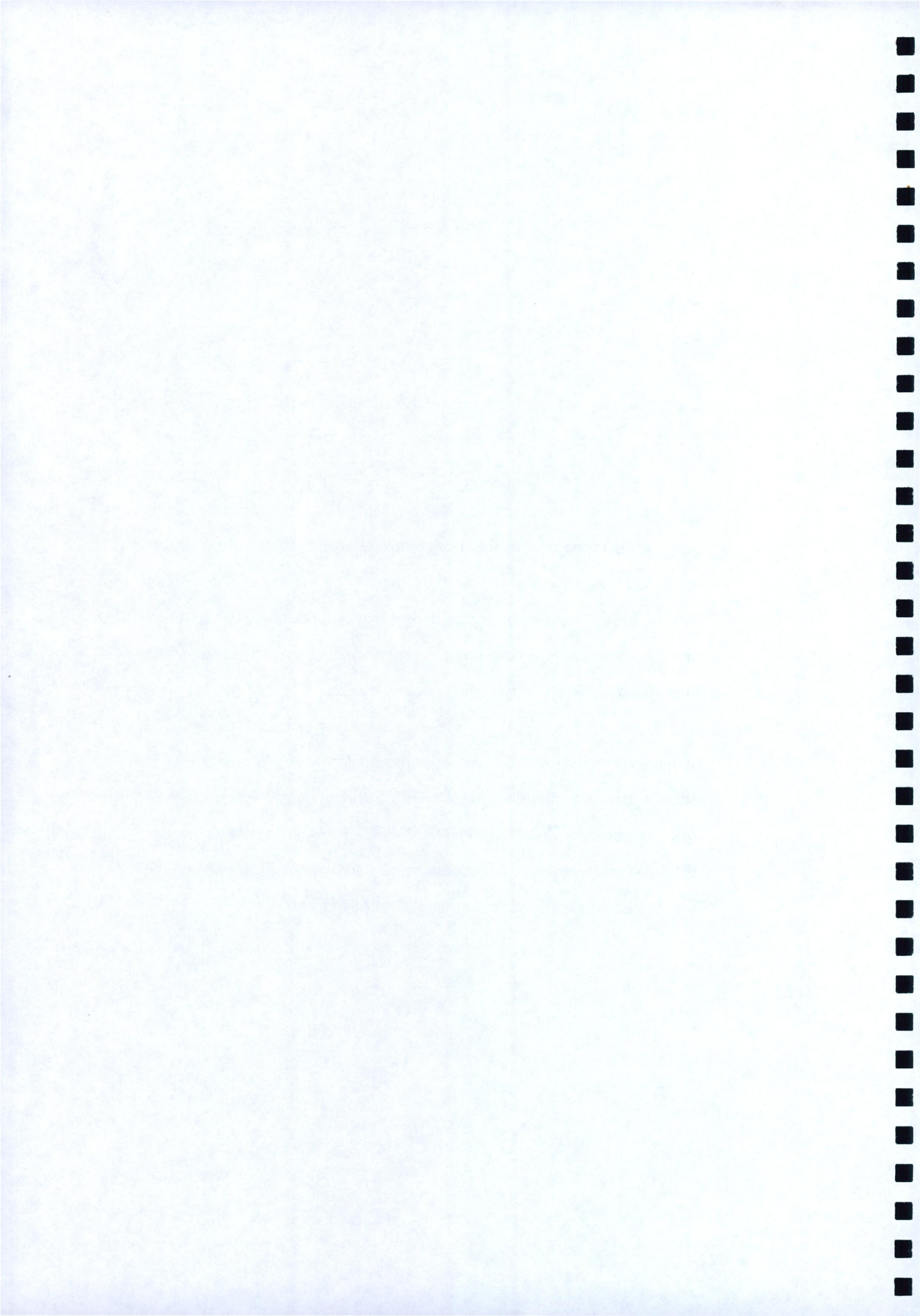
Also in 1993 a most peculiar thing happened to Super Channel. The 'European' channel joined forces with the American Network NBC which has not only taken over a large proportion of air time, but has also completely overshadowed the 'Super' logo with its peacock symbol (fig 1.28). It seems strange that a channel whose design and structure was entirely based on a European image should join forces with an American network, although it is refreshing to see some genuine American TV!

It is interesting to examine the identities seen on Irish Television between 1962 and 1993 together in contrast and see how they compare.



Television stations are rarely seen in isolation, because of the tendency today to 'channel surf'.

From this overview I have shown how much television graphics have changed and how stations are influenced by each other. The 'sixties was a time of exploration, and as Gerald Millerson points out on page 6 techniques were changing all the time. The 'seventies was the only decade in which RTE made no changes to their identity, and the eighties brought many new stations including the well known MTV and the synonymous Channel 4. Computers were slowly taking over as the new technique, until the nineties brought the realisation the method used should be the one to suit the individual design. We can see from the numerous re-designs that RTE underwent, in relation to other stations, that RTE have spent the last 33 years trying to keep up, rather than take a lead. The image chart shows how little ITV deterred from their first logo in their 48 years, and the extensive changes that RTE2 and BBC2 underwent. While BBC1 have never moved from the globe image, it still works today as a modern symbol. RTE's St Brigid's Cross has not aged so well. Stations like Channel 4, MTV and BBC2 have set their own standard. RTE have unadvisedly tried to follow these standards instead of setting their own by being too observant of styles instead of concepts.



Every organisation has an identity from your local launderette to major corporations like Coca - Cola. Why do we need these identities? The obvious answer is to help distinguish one launderette from another. But why do we need television identities? In this chapter I will look at the qualities that make a television identity different from other corporate identities and the function that these identities serve. In Wally Olins' book Corporate Identity he outlines some brief reasons for needing an identity:

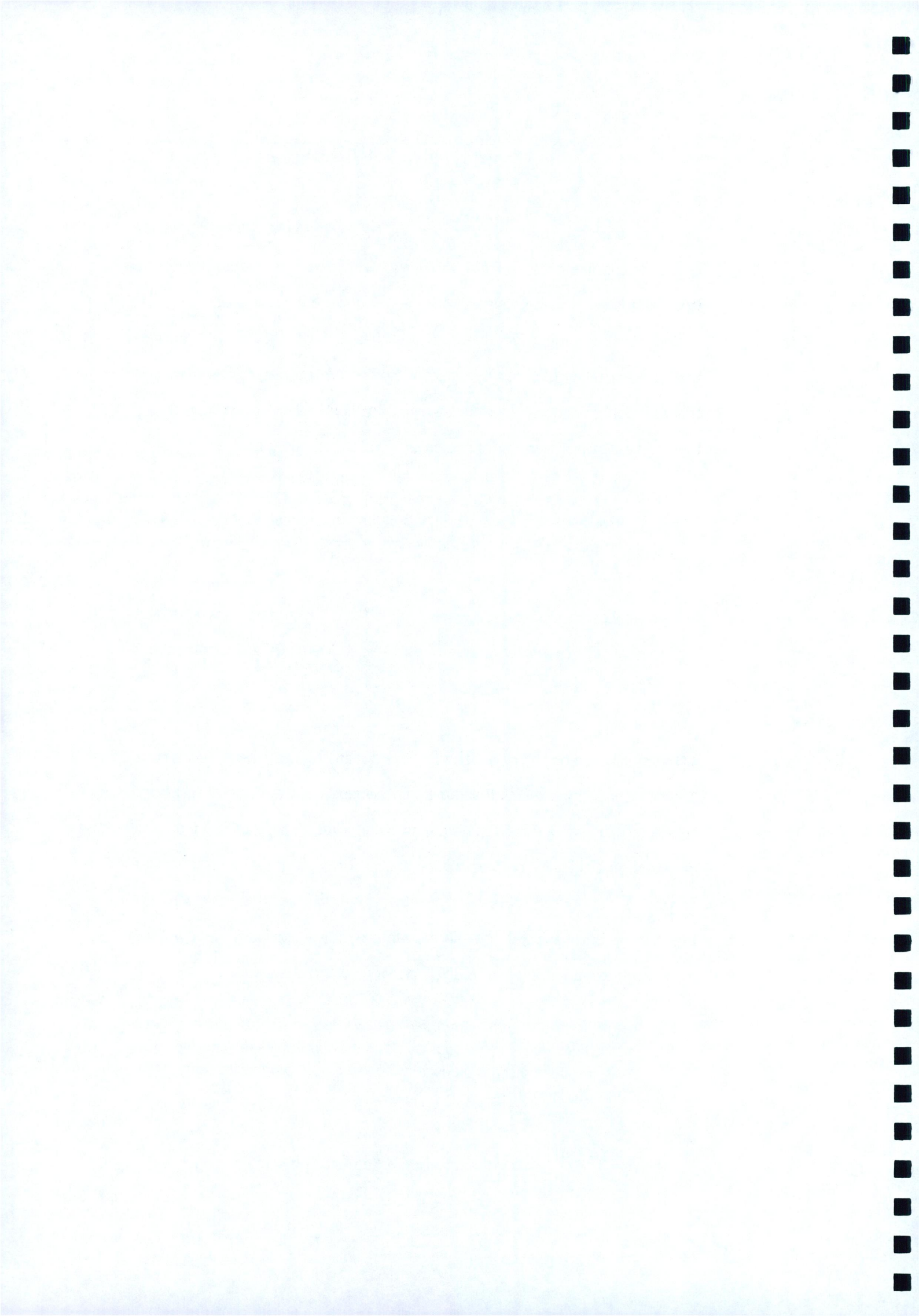
Purpose and belonging are the two facets of identity. Every organisation is unique, and the identity must spring from the organisation's own roots, its personality, its strengths and its weaknesses. (Olins, 1989, p. 7)

Everyone likes to feel that they are as normal as the next person, but also that they are in some way unique. People need identities, and organisations need them for the same reasons.

In my small experience as a designer and design student I have done more corporate identity projects than anything else, and have developed what one could perhaps call a 'philosophy' of my own. One definition of 'identity' is distinctive individuality or personality. Television was not always seen as a corporate identity candidate. A symbol was used to distinguish or regionalise the station, but was rarely seen in the same light as a company identity. This is something that Lambie-Nairn & Co discovered and changed:

They (Channel 4) rang us up and said 'we need a symbol' and they got in touch with four other groups and said the same. We replied: 'No you don't, you need a corporate identity', and we had to prove it to them. (Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.475)

That was in 1982. A symbol is a single image that represents an organisation,



while a corporate identity is an overall style incorporating symbols, colour schemes and type faces in all printed and related material giving the organisation a distinctive style.

Following the design of Channel 4's corporate identity, other stations began to introduce structures, identity colours and matching on-screen clocks. Designers saw the potential for expansion of the logo for other purposes. According to Bernard Lodge (television graphic designer) a good identity stems from a well designed and carefully thought out logo, symbol or logotype.

An ident is based around a base unit: the logo. Ideally it should be a simple graphic mark because it is essential that it will register not only on, but also off the screen. (Thrift, 1988, p52)

If the logo is good enough to provide a good base for all other designs, then it is a good television identity. The first thing that I do when designing a logo is word association: a list of words that I connect with the service, product, event or company. Very often the brief will stress elements of the organisation that they want to put across. Then I cross reference these words. For example if for example a symbol for an event is needed there are a number of categories which key words or images can be taken from.

1. The event's location
2. The type of event: musical, theatrical, film, convention, etc.
3. Possible associated colours
4. Suggested qualities; for example, achievement, success,
5. Traditional images that may already exist.

Each one of these may produce a list of words that on their own would produce cliches, over used images, symbols that have become associated with

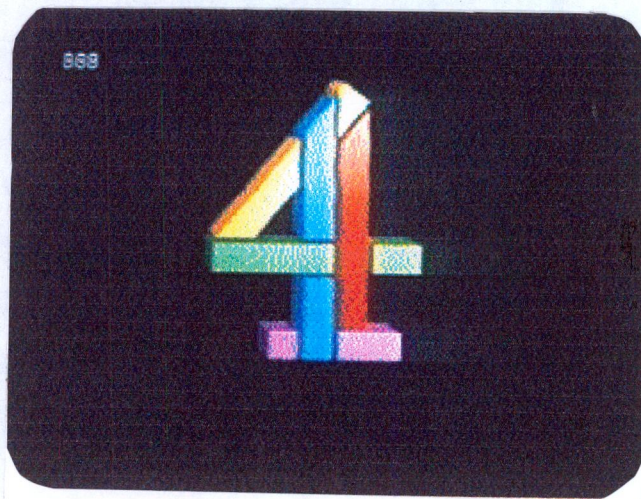


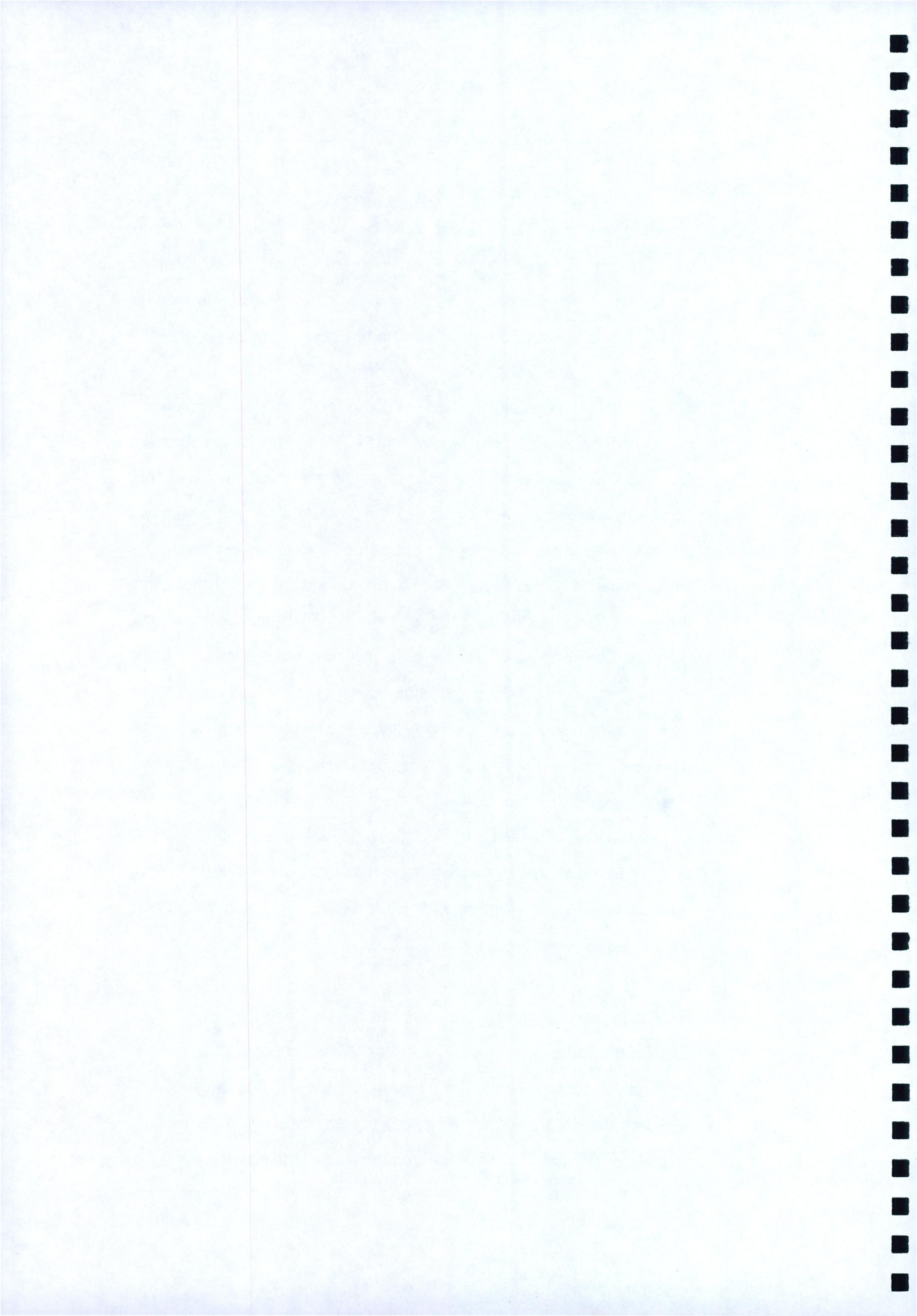
Fig 2.1 Channel 4 Identity, 1982



Fig 2.2 Super Channel uses the EC flag colours for a European flavour.

other organisations. This is bound to happen with the number of symbols that have been designed. But that is where the designer comes in. By taking a well known image and cross-breeding it with another quality something unexpected can be created. An inanimate object can be given an individual personality. For example, Channel 4's symbol (fig 2.1) is not just a numeral 4, it's Channel 4's '4' because of the style of '4' used and the coloured sectioning. Before Channel 4 came along anyone could have used the '4' as a logo, but few would be brave enough to attempt it now after Channel 4's success. Combining different qualities in this way can produce something familiar, yet original. It should have a strong idea behind it or a visual pun. For example, if the organisation had a letter 'i' as an initial, turning the dot on the 'i' into something that is also associated with the organisation would give it a personality and a sense of humour of its own, and make it uniquely linked with that organisation. It is no good producing a brilliant logo if it bears no relation to the organisation. A symbol should also be simple. Although it has become a cliché and many of my colleagues cringe at its mention, it is true that 'less is more'. Colour should always be considered from the start and should never be an added feature. It is an added bonus if the colour also bears relevance to the organisation, for example, the use of blue and yellow (the colours of the EC flag) worked well for Super Channel because that is the image they wanted to achieve (fig 2.2).

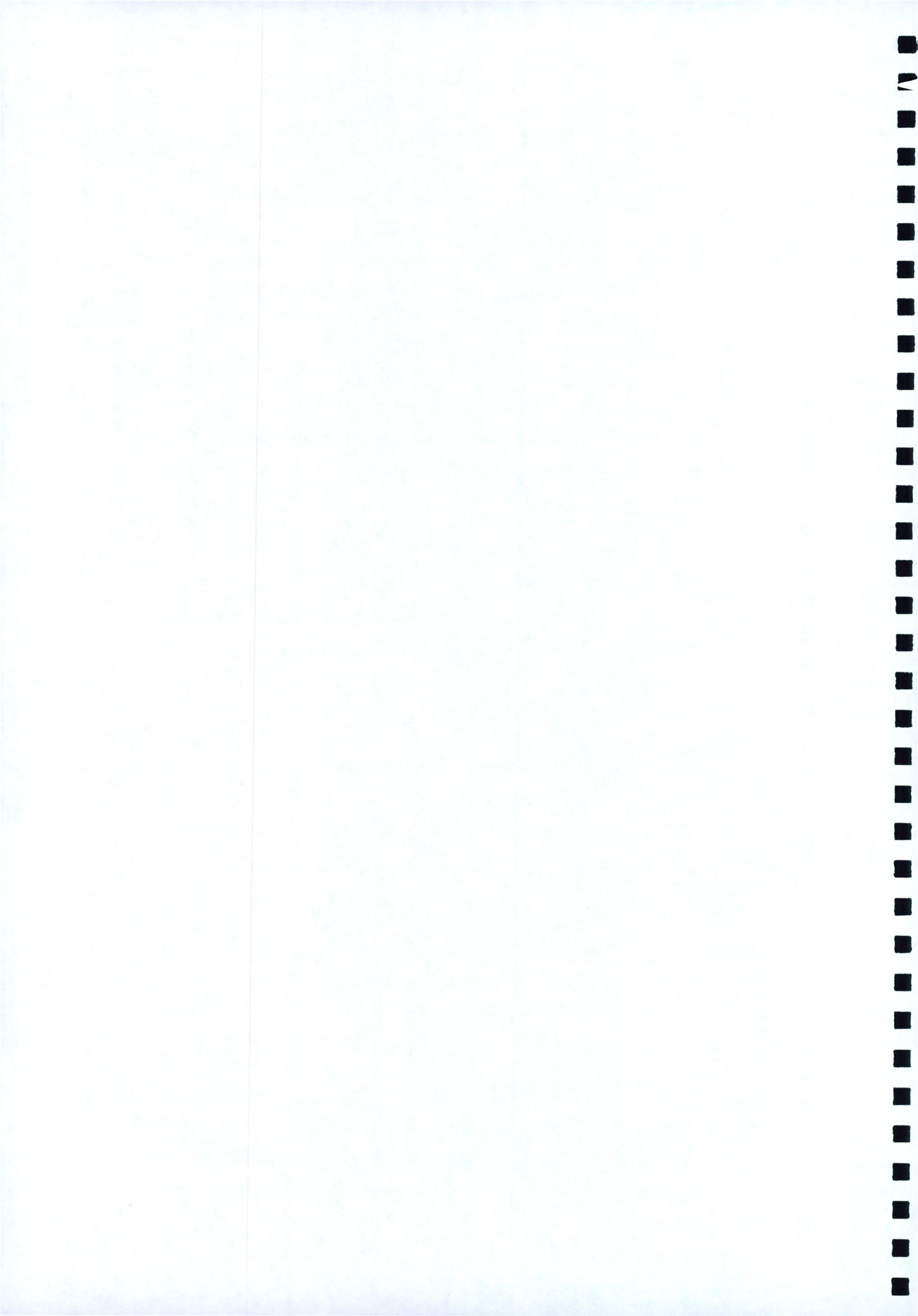
If the organisation's name is made up of its initials and they want to use these as their symbol, then it is important that the right type of lettering or typeface is used. Very often little consideration is put into choosing a relevant typeface, and a 'trendy' or recognisable typeface is chosen for the sake of having to use one. Type is all too often an afterthought.



In short a good logo should have

1. Originality, yet some form of familiarity
2. Where possible a visual joke or quirk that will stick in people's minds
3. Relevant colours that can be used throughout all associated designs as a corporate colour scheme.
4. Relevance to the organisation's values, services, products.
5. Simplicity
6. Attractiveness
7. It is often of great benefit if there is something about the logo that acts as an irritant. For example, an uncompleted circle, because every time it is seen people will always want to push something into place or draw in the missing piece. This can have the effect of making the logo very memorable.
8. Technically it is also good if the logo will work in one colour. If the logo has to appear on a press advertisement or on a fax it may have to appear in black and white, so this is an important consideration. However this element could be sacrificed if the design is good enough. Besides, since a good proportion of logos seem to be designed on computer, it is possible to make any computer image monotone by converting it to what is called greyscale; so it is always possible to by-pass this problem.

All too often it will be hard to acquire all of these qualities, but if you are aiming for less than 100%, you are already diminishing the possibilities. So all of these should be considered. However, not all successful logos can claim half of these qualities. That leads me to another vital ingredient: time. This is



completely uncontrollable and not every company will be lucky enough to benefit from it. An organisation could have the worst piece of design representing them but as a result of long establishment of a logo it will always bring that organisation into mind. RTE, for example, have used the St Brigid's Cross since Day One and have never produced anything worthwhile with it (see RTE on image chart page 71), but I am confident that because of the cross's long establishment it is recognised as RTE. In 1989, RTE ran an internal design competition for a new on-screen logo. Alan Pleass, Head of Design RTE, laid out guidelines for the new design:

Good design emanates from trained minds which can evaluate and function at an elevated level of creativity. It is not instinctive or part of a 'lucky break' intuitive approach. The highest quality design comes from the best defined brief and not the 'let's see what we can come up with' approach. However this is not to be confused with the competitive approach which can allow a number of minds to work on and perhaps, best interpret this accurate brief. The modern trained designer must now create with four distinct strands in mind:

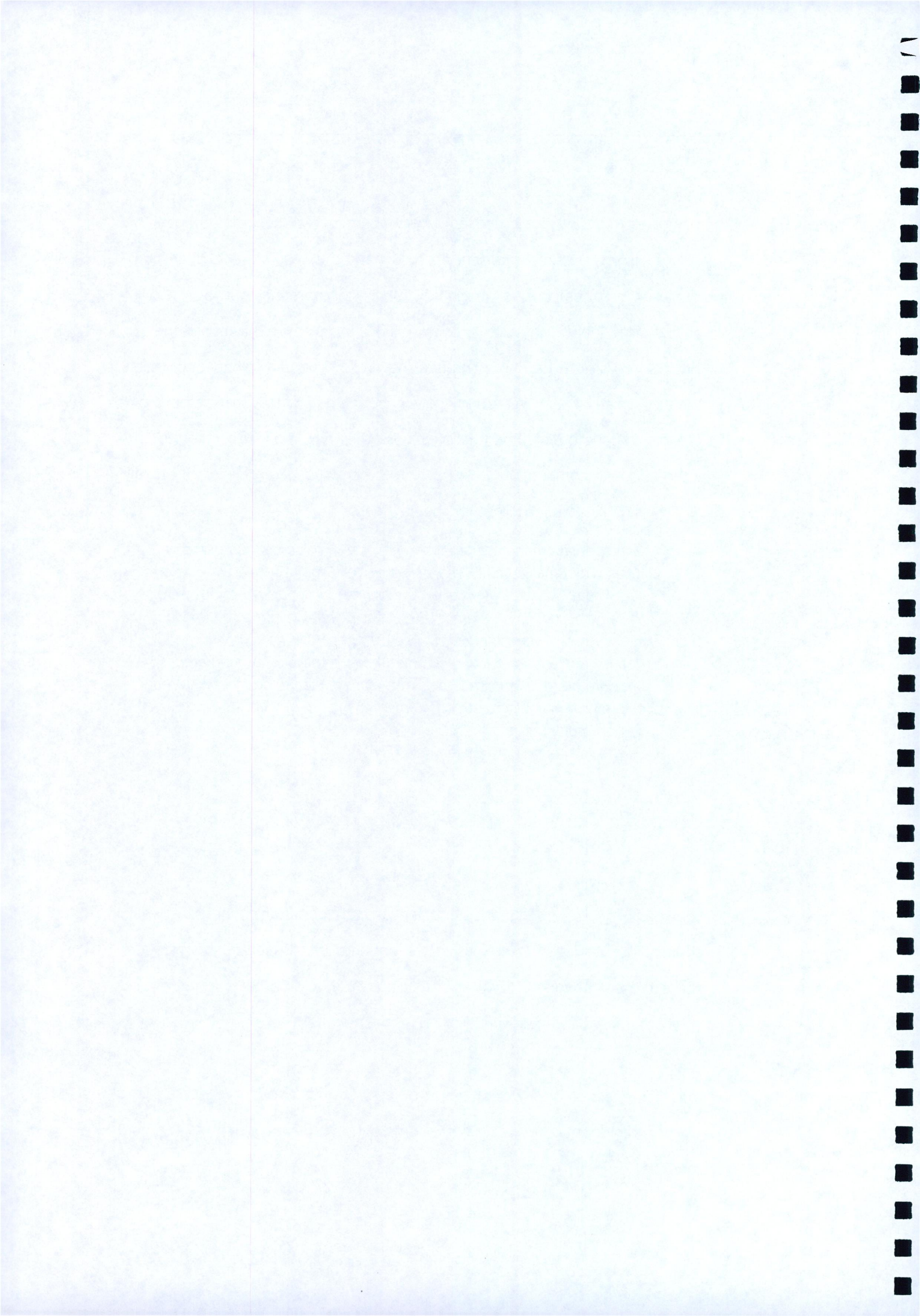
1. Still image (for print)
2. Moving image (for television and films)
3. Sound
4. Colour

Each of these must reflect and complement the others.

(Pleass, 1989)

Obviously Mr Pleass feels it is important that their station's identity is well thought out. A lot of work must have gone into the desperate struggles to make the cross work. Maybe it is time that they did sit back, forget their previous images and 'see what they can come up with'.

All of these qualities would be of benefit to just about every area of corporate identity, but television seems to have bigger demands for its identities

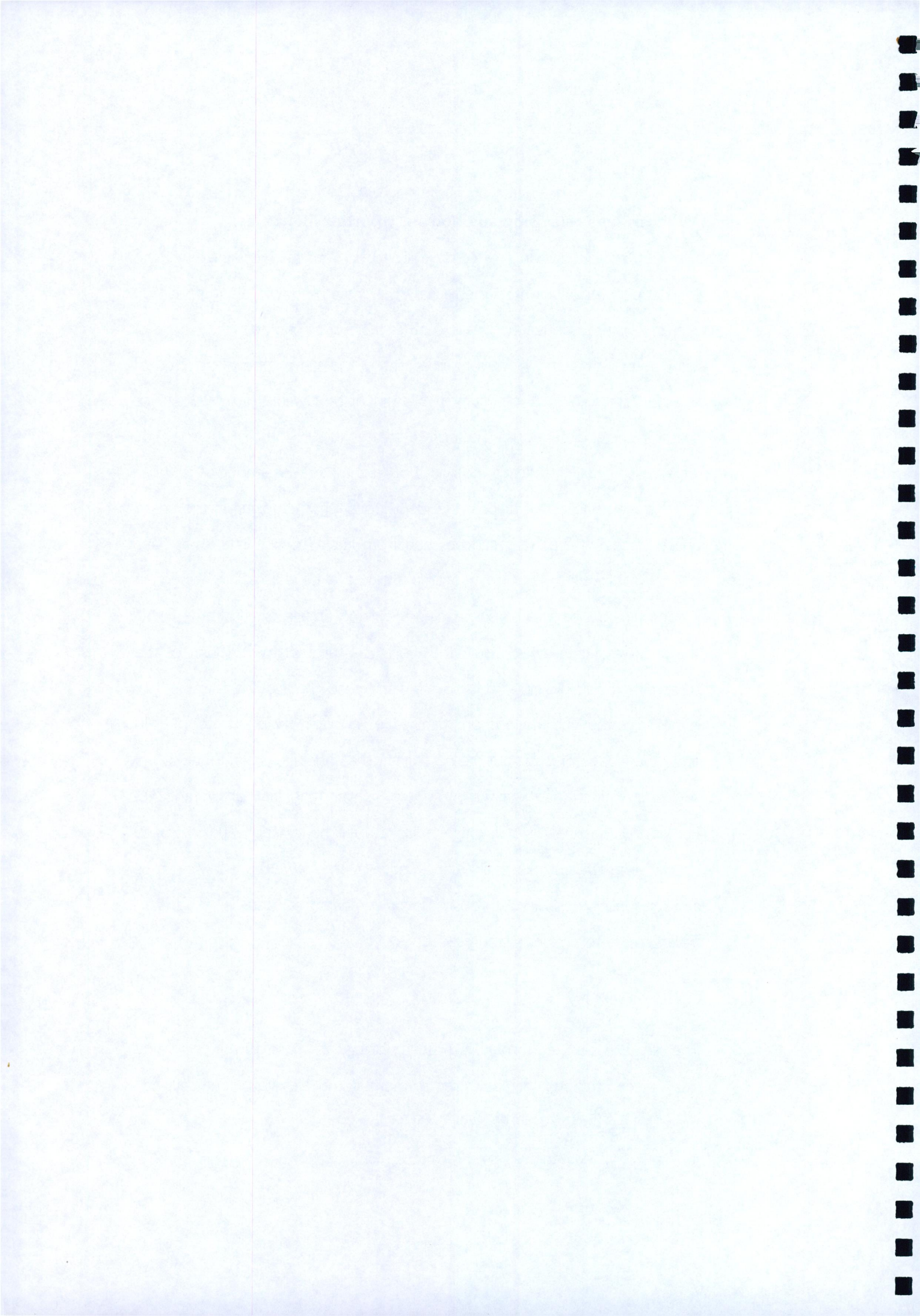


What makes television so different to other identities?

Obviously, the television screen has a lot to do with it. Not only must the logo appear on all printed media as a still image, it must also appear on screen serving various functions and be capable of animation. The nature of television is that it shows moving images, and the same is now expected of the idents. I think it is important that an ident be capable of movement or shape in three dimensions. The screen creates the illusion that it has depth. As a result, images tend to look as though they are suspended in a three dimensional space, so it helps if the ident looks light. Looking at the image chart (page 71) a pattern can be seen from left to right. The logos have become less weighty. BBC1, for example, did have a line across the screen in 1964 which appears to be suspending the globe (Image Chart, frame 8). If the line was taken away would the world fall through the bottom of the screen? 1983's BBC globe still looks big and heavy (Image chart, frame 19). It looks like the kind of globe one had in the geography room at school. In 1990 the globe still exists but has no definite shape (Image chart, frame 32). I see it as reflections on a water bubble, lighter than air, hardly tangible. Looking at Channel 4's still image it looks quite heavy and chunky (Image chart, frame 18), but the retained knowledge by the viewer that only seconds ago the pieces were flying through the air combats this obstacle. This is an advantage in television: moving sequences provide more information than a static image.

The screen has a fixed format; you cannot change its size or turn it on its side like a piece of paper. My list of requirements for a television ident is slightly more detailed than Alan Pleass's. A station logo should:

1. work within a 3 by 4 format (Millerson, 1969, p354?).



2. be capable of movement and visual intrigue
3. appear to be light enough to perform this movement
4. work well with accompanying sound
5. be eye-catching to alert the viewer with the lightning index finger on the remote control and not bore him/her.
6. be directly associated with the off screen symbol, and therefore, must consider the qualities required for print.
7. should visually all stations if there is more than one within the network (Chapter 3).
8. have unity and versatility, which I will look at later.(Chapter 5)

One important difference between television identities and other classes of corporate identity is that a television station does not really stand to gain or lose anything as a result of a good or bad identity. Viewers do not generally choose their stations to the exclusion of others like a brand of washing up liquid on the supermarket shelf. The station has already reached the viewer and will be watched because of certain programmes. I do not feel that viewers feel the same kind of loyalty towards a station as they would towards their favourite brand of coffee. All of our television stations are relative to each other. They are never seen in isolation. Advertisement breaks tend to be a mish mash of snippets as you flick through the other stations.

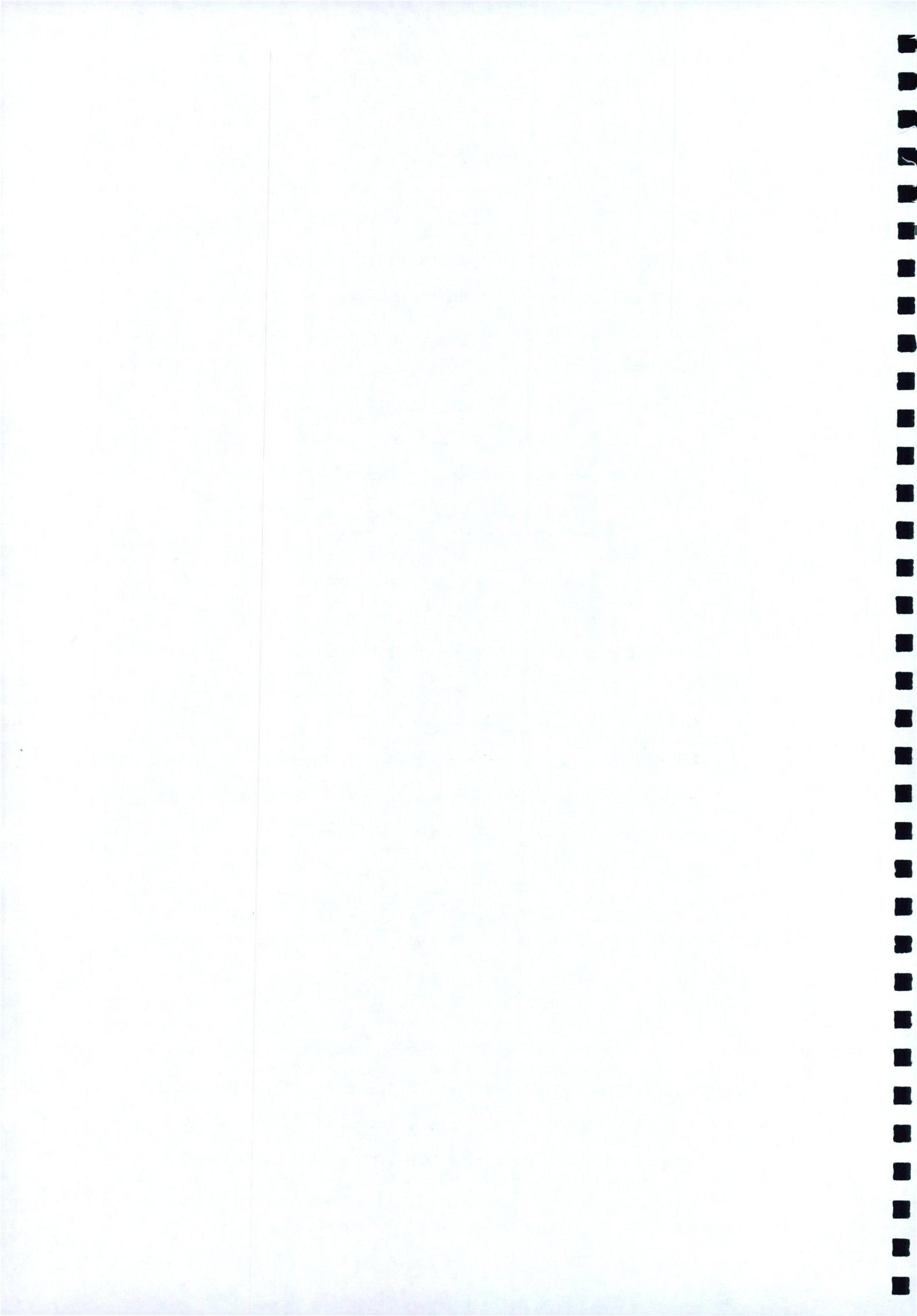
So why do we need television station logos? What function do they serve? Well, essentially these station idents link the different programmes together. Television used to involve a lot of live commentary between programmes, by presenters who sat in 'comfortable' chairs and told us about the day ahead. This has gradually been replaced by graphic sequences. But television logos



Fig 2.3 NBC Super Channel Programme List, 1993

have existed since at least the 'fifties, and I think it is in that decade that we find the explanation as to *why* we have idents. Prior to 1954 there were little or no designers involved in television. A man called Richard Levin was the first professional designer to work in television. Levin persuaded the BBC that they needed qualified designers in television and from 1954 the number of designers increased (Merritt, 1987, p8). Graphic design became an important element in television, and I think it was these trained designers who would have encouraged the use of station identities. But what function do they serve? They distinguish one station from another and tell us what station we are watching. As the number of channels increases, it becomes harder to distinguish them, and the idents do that for us. When flicking through the channels we probably need only wait a few minutes before some form of graphic symbol appears whether it is to introduce a new programme, to introduce or end an advertisement break, or as many stations have begun to do, appear in one of the corners of the screen at all times. Station idents 'identify' and brand that station, giving it a recognisable character. They add interest to television, in the same way that an attractive cover makes a book more appealing. Some stations can overdo this 'branding'. Fig 2.3 for example shows an NBC Super Channel programme listing. The NBC peacock appears in the top right corner constantly, where it always is, as a background and as a side bar. We are hardly likely to forget what station this is! Stations want a simple recognisable image both on and off-screen.

But which comes first, the on or off screen considerations? Off screen the logo has no format restrictions, but on screen it does, so it would make sense to make it fit the on screen format first. Quite a number of the idents on the image chart have a landscape format, probably due to the fact that the



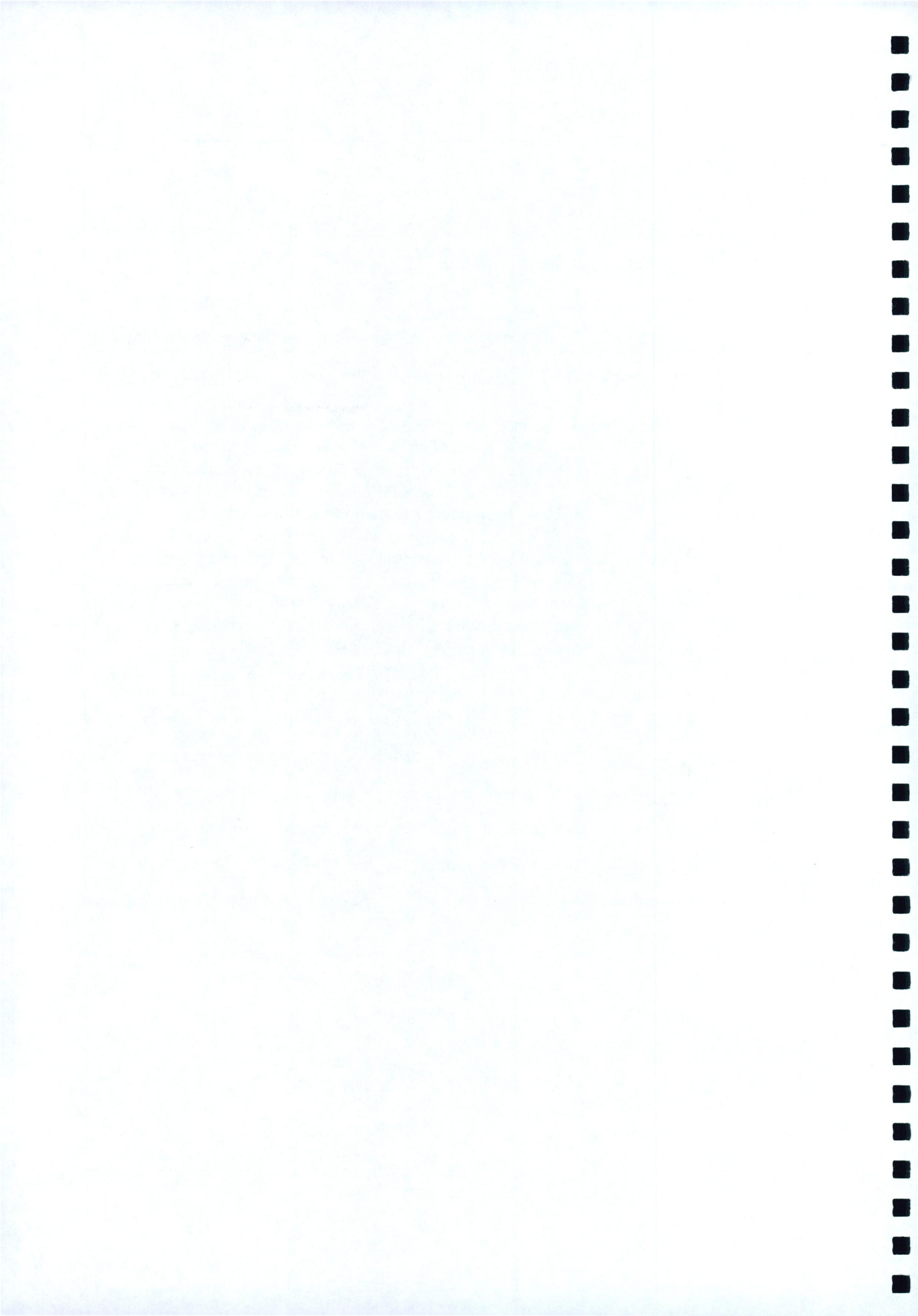
majority of them have three initials; RTE, BBC, ITV, MTV, SKY and at one stage BBC2 was 'TWO'

When asked about on and off screen considerations at a talk given by Martin Lambie-Nairn of Lambie-Nairn & Co., he had this to say:

A Member of the Audience: To what extent is it desirable to try to design some thing bearing in mind that it will also be used in all the other aspects of corporate identity, on stationery and on graphics as well as on screen? Or does the design for screen dominate and the others follow along or even to compromise in either case to get paper, paint and television images in the same identity?

Martin Lambie-Nairn: The point I wanted to make was that the way to design a corporate identity for television is not to design it just for the screen but to design for both print and screen. If it does not work successfully in both areas, then it is a bad corporate identity. (Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.478)

Stations need to identify themselves and distinguish themselves from the competition. Television is only as good as its last programme. Graphics package these programmes, and remind us what station brought us the programme that we chose to watch. But I do feel that the amount of energy that goes into some station's graphics like BBC2 for example is as much for entertainment as the programmes themselves, and for aesthetic and artistic purposes.



Chapter Three - Corporate Structure

When a television network broadcasts more than one station, the design department are faced with an added problem when working on an ident. Many television networks broadcast more than one station. In this chapter I will take a look at why a considered structure is important, and how that structure would be of benefit. How has RTE dealt with this obstacle in relation to some of the other networks that have the same difficulty?

RTE broadcast both RTEI and Network 2. Do they treat the stations separately or do they consider all of their stations together? In Corporate Identity (Olins, 1989, p26) Olins discusses different types of corporate structures. If a large company owns a number of smaller companies how does it treat each separate identity? They have two main choices; they could either use the same identity as the main company for each sub-company (monolithic identity) or they could have an endorsed identity where each sub-company has its own individual identity. (Olins, 1989, p. 79). In television the separate stations within a network perform the same service. The stations could be treated individually, but then the network itself would have to have its own identity to represent all of its stations. This could make the structure very confusing for the viewer. The ideal structure would be a combination of the two above: different yet the same. For example, if 'X' is the name of the network and the separate stations are called X1 and X2 this is how the ideal structure would look:

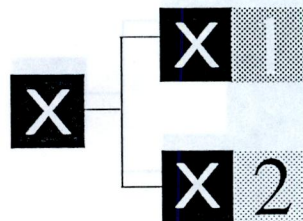




Fig 3.2 The use of 'branding': BBC1 and BBC2's logos brand featured programme



Fig 3.1 'BBC' logotype

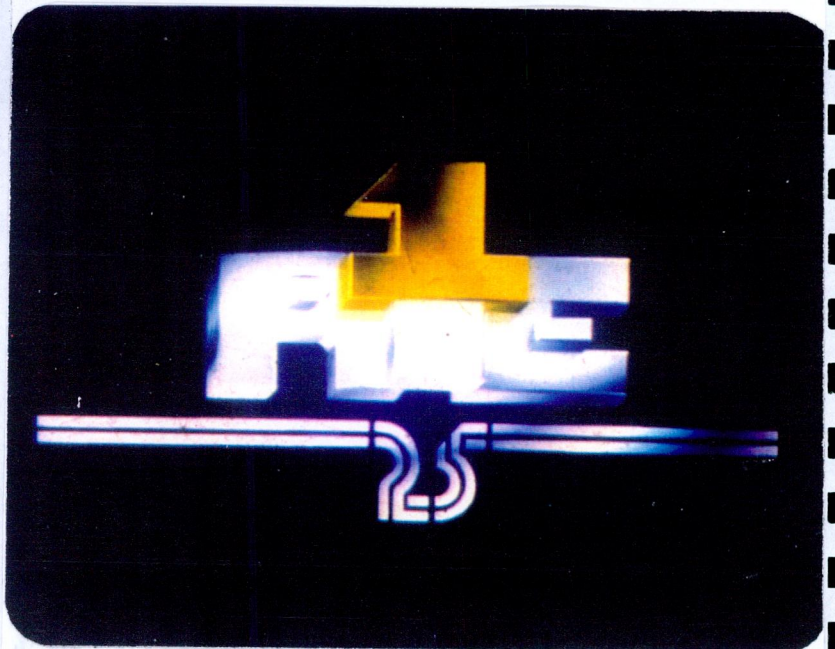


Fig 3.3 RTE's Complete Identity, 1986

The 'X' acts as an umbrella for the two, while the '1' and '2' get individual attention and any number of extra stations can be added later. The only television networks that fit into this structure are the BBC and SKY. In 1964 BBC had a collective logo for their network (fig 3.1). This is still used on all printed media where both stations are represented. In their re-design in 1990 they re-introduced this logo as an integral part of their separate on screen idents (fig 3.2). The '1' and the '2' have personalities of their own but the original BBC logo still acts as an umbrella for the two. This works extremely well because it places less restrictions on the screen idents because the 'BBC' logo can cover most of the off screen media.

Just like the BBC, RTE have two stations, but RTE have the added problem that both of their stations have not got the same root name; RTE1 and Network 2. When Network 2 was originally launched it was called RTE2. In the re-design in 1986 the corporate structure was ideal (fig 3.3). The main logo was made up of a stylised 'RTE' which, although not very aesthetic, linked the St Brigid's Cross for general use, and the 1 and 2 for RTE1 and RTE2 respectively. But with the name change it becomes difficult to maintain any order. Both are part of RTE, but how do you visually link them? Maybe there is no need to do this; maybe they are better off with separate identities. But because all outside broadcasting vans, letterheads, business cards, screen personalities, news titles are common to both stations it is inconsistent. RTE are working with three different logos, while being part of the same network. (See image chart 1993)

Maybe RTE could learn something from some of the other networks' solutions to the problem of structure. Take SKY for example, who



Fig 3.4 The complete SKY Channel Identity.

broadcasts 6 different satellite channels: SKY One, SKY News, SKY Sport, SKY Movies, SKY The Movie Channel and SKY Movies Gold. Two of their channels were available in Ireland up until the beginning of 1993 when disagreements occurred between SKY and the company who provide Irish viewers with foreign stations, Cablelink. Each one of these stations had the same style for 'SKY', it was the sub-titles that had different 'looks' (fig 3.4). This would seem natural when what SKY really is, is one station divided into subject categories: news, sport, films. Fig 3.5 shows the basic structure of SKY Network, where the SKY remains the same, but with very different subheadings.

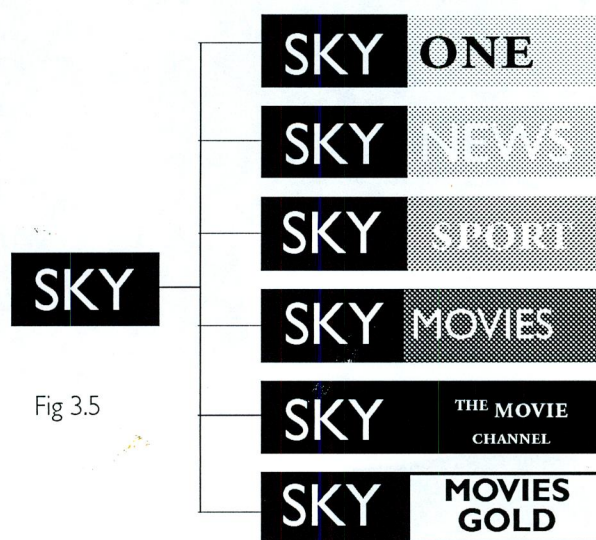


Fig 3.4 shows the actual idents themselves. Unfortunately RTE must work around the changes and traditions that have developed over its lifetime. It is one thing to design an identity from scratch without added limitations, and another to re-design something that brings its own associations with it.

That is exactly what English Markell Pockett had to contend with when they took on the re-design of ITV's identity. ITV is made up of 15 different

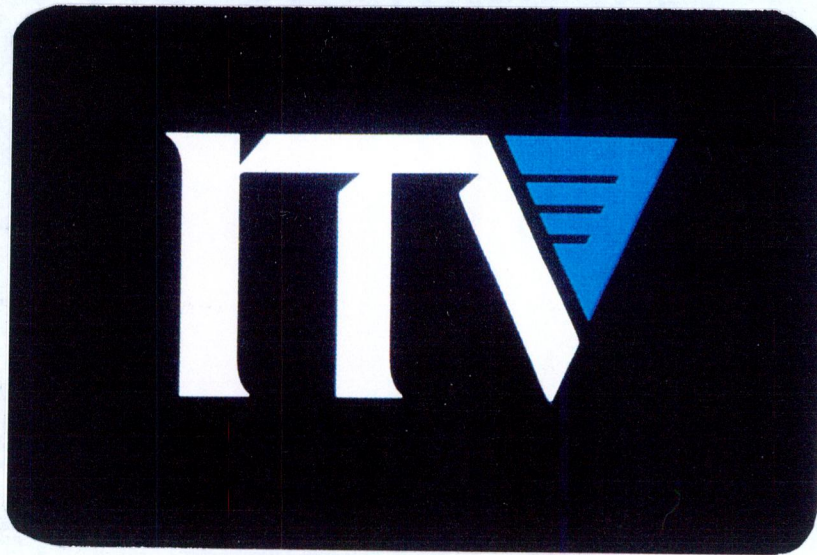


Fig 3.7 The 'ITV' logo, 1989

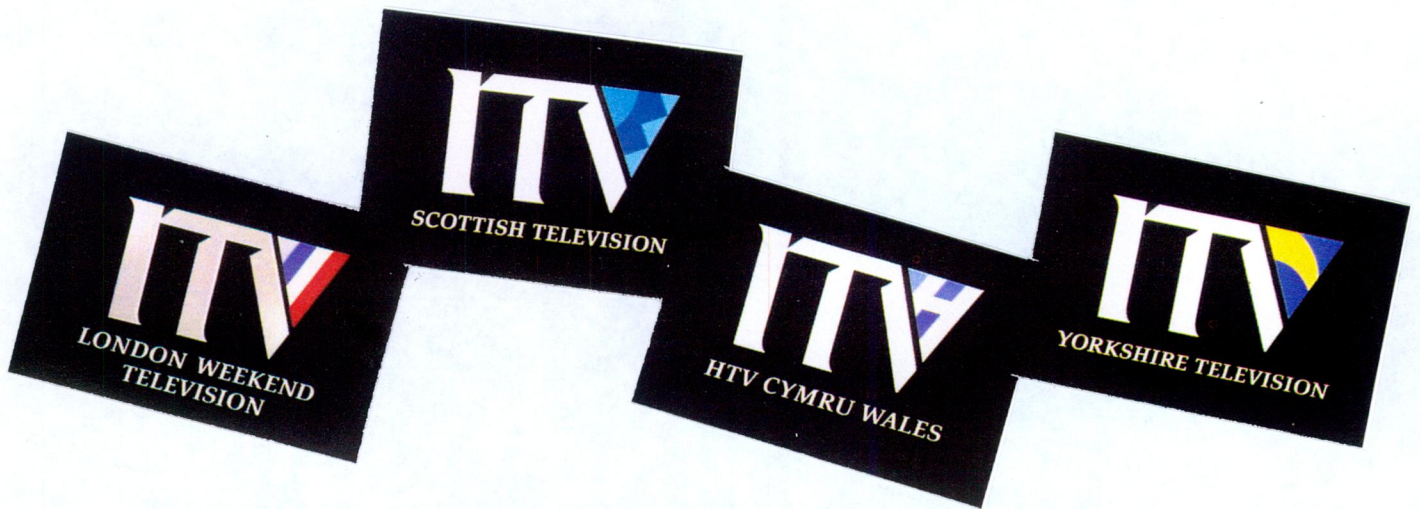
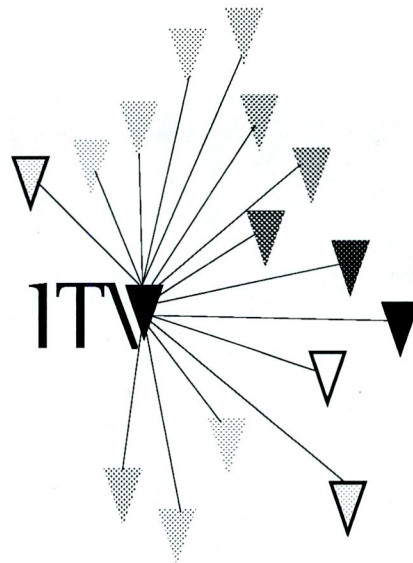


Fig 3.8 Some examples of the regional incorporations into the ITV identity

production companies that had each existed in its own right, with its own image. This presented a huge task for Darrell Pockett of EMP. 15 different identities were to be represented as a united image. ITV refused to let go of their representation, and the separate regional companies refused to let their identities be abandoned especially since they had themselves injected a lot of money and time into developing their 'look'. (Swain, 1989) No doubt Anglia (one of the 15 regional companies) would not have been too pleased with the suggestion, considering that they had employed Lambie-Nairn & Co the previous year to re-design their identity which they had been using since 1959. But Pockett managed to keep everyone happy in the end successfully completing what must have been the most challenging corporate identity he had ever worked on.

Fig 3.6



As you can see from fig 3.6 above, what they eventually came up with was a simple logotype for ITV, where the 'V' contained a plain triangle for its own representation (fig 3.7), and triangular sections of the already existing identities for the individual regions (fig 3.8). Each identity began with a live animation which introduced the regional logo to the 'V' of the ITV symbol. (Swain, 1989)



Fig 3.9 Anglia identity showing the use of heraldry, 1989

I suspect that EMP were influenced by the ident produced by Lambie-Nairn & Co for Anglia, as Darrell Pockett's final solution was based on a heraldic device, in the same way that Anglia's new look was based on a heraldic flag;

Lambie-Nairn & Co regarding Anglia's new ident, 1988: *The flag is based on heraldic imagery and 'retains the emotional element' of the knight.* (Designweek, 1988) (Fig 3.9)

Darrell Pockett regarding ITV identities, 1989: *What I wanted to do was to boil them down to the essence of heraldry* (Swain, 1989, p47) (Fig 3.7 and 3.8)

The triangular format of the Anglia logo may even have sparked off the link with the 'V' in ITV as a way of slotting in the various regional logos. But most design ideas usually are sparked off by things we see or read about and are unconsciously influenced by. My full admiration goes to EMP for this clever solution, and if they could do it with 15 different identities, surely there is a way to bring RTE's two stations together. The corporate structure is the first thing that needs to be solved for RTE, as this will probably lead to ideas for the complete re-design. But ITV still had the advantage that everything had to come under the one heading - 'ITV'. As a result I think that an approach towards RTE's corporate structure is going to have to find another way of linking the two stations than through 'RTE', the network's title. Another approach would be to look at the '1' and '2'. Would it be possible to make the '1' and '2' similar and put the variation into the 'RTE' and 'Network'? But then how would they treat their off screen corporate logo 'RTE'? It is almost like an algebraic problem! Do you make the 'RTE' or the numerals the variants in the equation; $RTE = RTE1 + Network\ 2$; $X = X1 + Y2$! If you could make the overall name of the network become 'XY', that is, 'RTE Network', then the equation becomes $XY = XY1 + XY2$, that is, what I have shown to be

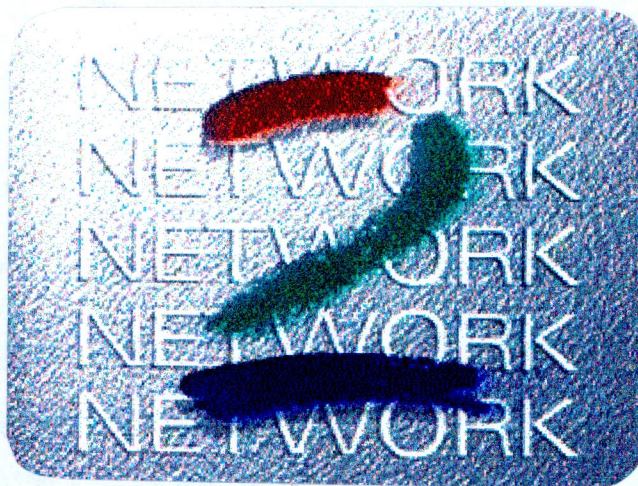


Fig 3.10 Network 2 Identity, 1988

the ideal structure. Or the more relevant name of each station could dominate respectively; $X_y = X_{y1} + Y_{x2}$. But this would involve a complete change of a name that has practically become part of Ireland's heritage.

It is arguable that this is an unnecessary consideration, Why is it so wrong that the two stations have different identities? Since Network 2 is represented in print by the RTE corporate identity I feel that the overall image is not cohesive enough.

Another alternative would be to link the two stations through a common style. The Network 2 logo has a distinctive brush stroke or crayon style '2' (fig 3.10). What if that style were applied to the words 'RTE' and 'Network'? The result would be that even if Network 2's title did not appear on off-screen material it would still be recognised if the style had enough distinction.

Alternatively a completely new symbol could be devised that would represent both stations without incorporating the name of either station, allowing them to be treated individually, yet integrate the shared symbol. The St Brigid's cross has done that up to a point, but for reasons that I will explain in Chapter 4 I feel something new would work better. The St Brigid's cross may have been chosen because of words spoken by Eamon de Valera in his live speech on the opening night of RTE when he stressed the importance of Ireland's unique heritage:

I am confident that those who are in charge will do everything in their power to make it useful for the nation, that they will bear in mind that we are an old nation and that we have our own distinctive characteristics and that it is desirable that these be preserved. I am sure that they will do their part and as I have said it is for the public to do theirs.
(de Valera, 1962)



Fig 3.11 RTEI's present on-screen identity using Newgrange imagery.

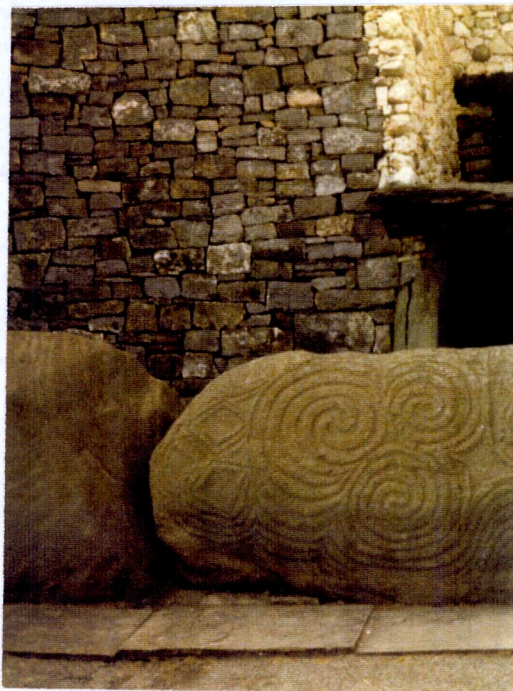
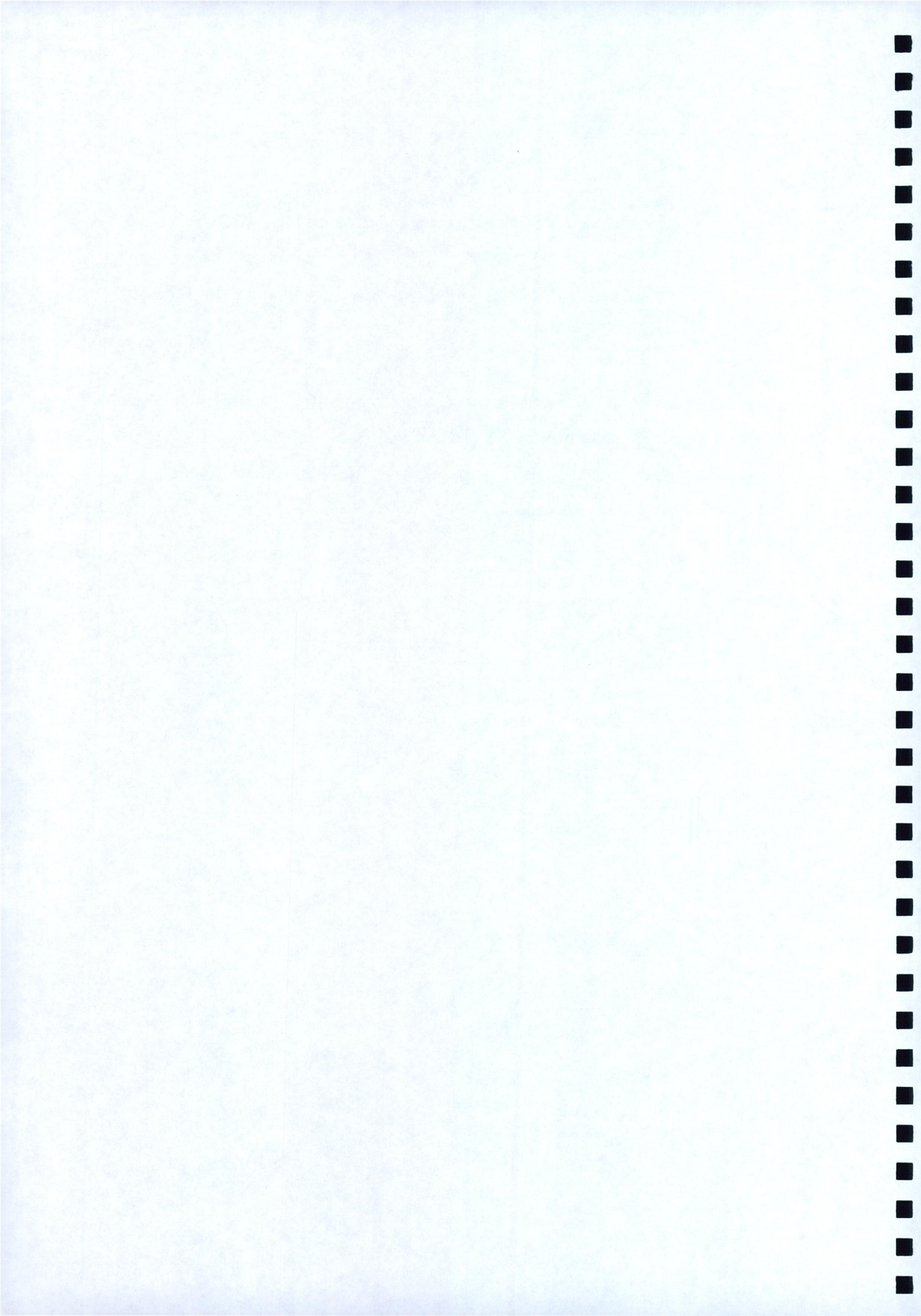


Fig 3.12 Entrance of the oldest burial chamber in the world, Newgrange Co Meath.

This consideration has not been overlooked as can be seen in RTE1's present screen ident (fig 3.11) which makes use of the fact that Ireland is the location of the oldest burial mound in the world, Newgrange, Co Meath (fig of newgrange 3.12).

I think a look into a unifying symbol that combines RTE's personality and our country's unique heritage would be enough to hold onto the original essence of the old symbol while in some way linking RTE1 and Network 2 with their own individual characteristics .



Chapter Four – Symbol representations

In this chapter I will take a close look at RTE's use of the St Brigid's Cross, and why I believe that it does not work. What are the implications of using a representative symbol? I will also take a look at Anglia's symbol here, as they were faced with the same difficulty.

All symbols carry suggested meanings. For example, the dove suggests peace, the peacock suggests pride and the apple suggests temptation. If a symbol that already brings a representation with it is used then it may overpower and damage the strength of the new logo. This is what has happened with the RTE St Brigid's cross. The Cross was chosen as the first symbol for RTE by the Head of Women's programmes in 1961. The story of the cross tells how a woman named Brigid had been called to the bedside of a dying chieftain who wished to be converted to the Roman Catholic faith before he died. When she reached his bedside he was not conscious, so she sat with him and passed the time by picking up some reeds from the floor and weaving them into a Christian Cross. While she was busy with this she heard a voice ask her what she was doing. She looked up to discover that the chieftain had regained consciousness and was watching her activity intensely. So Brigid began to tell the chieftain about God, his Son and the Holy Spirit, using the cross as a symbol of what Catholicism was all about. The chieftain died a Catholic and ever since many Irish households have hung the cross made of reeds on their walls (Curtayne, 1962).

Although Ireland is pre-dominantly a Catholic country, I fail to see the relevance of using a religious symbol as a logo for a television station. As the cross was not changed in any way, it still represents Christianity. A symbol should be relevant to the organisation it represents. RTE have never

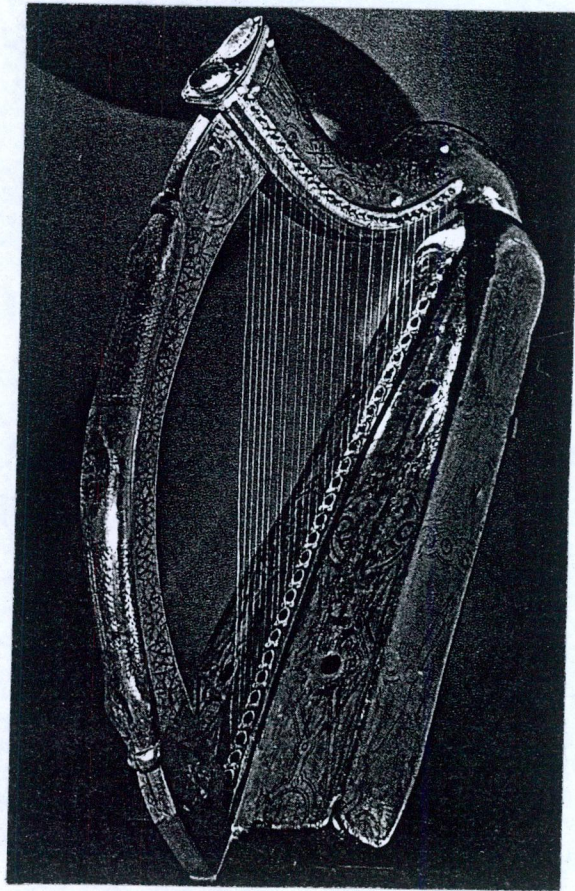


Fig 4.2 Brian Boru's Harp, Trinity College Dublin.

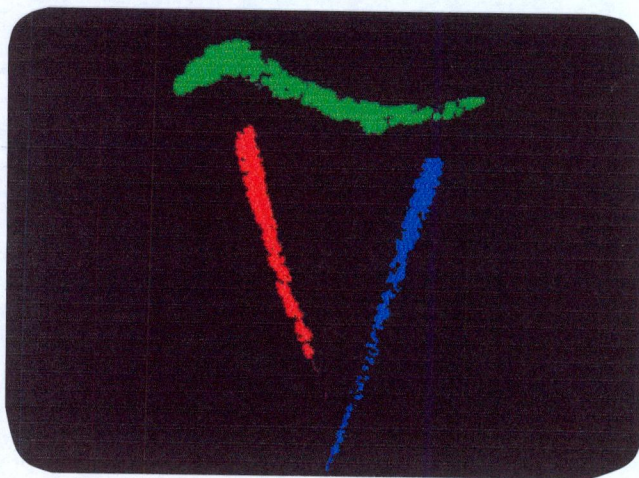


Fig 4.1 Eurovision Song Contest logo, Dublin 1988

produced a symbol that used any kind of broadcasting or communication imagery. This would have been my starting point if this identity had been purely for print, but this kind of imagery is not as relevant when it is going to appear on screen anyway and, therefore, it would be pointing out the obvious. RTE have been more concerned with using an image that conjures up Ireland's past. Their key word has been heritage. Ireland is an old country, as de Valera pointed out in his opening speech, and it has a long and varied history. Not only does it have a fascinating history, it is also a land overflowing with legends, fairytales, folklore and tales of enchantment. With so much historical and legendary imagery to choose from the St Brigid's Cross seems inappropriate. All too often mythical, mystical Ireland is used to such an excess, that the Irish as a nation start to find it an embarrassment. America revels in St Patrick's day and the abundance of green, shamrocks and leprechauns. Mention the leprechaun to an Irish person and they will be almost insulted. And yet, what a wonderful myth to believe in, gold at the end of the rainbow! This is simply because of over exposure.

However, as I have already said in Chapter 2, if a suitable image from our past could be chosen and treated in a refreshing and original way it could work. For example, the logo that was designed for the 1988 Eurovision song contest, Dublin, did just that. The image chosen was the harp, which is very much seen as the symbol of Ireland, appearing on all our coinage and government papers. With a modern treatment it loses the traditional look and takes on a fresh spontaneous style.(fig 4.1) Not only is it a recognisable symbol of Ireland, it is also a musical instrument to further link the meaning of the Eurovision, without shouting the obvious. But also, while researching for a Dublin symbol, I discovered that Trinity College Dublin houses a harp called

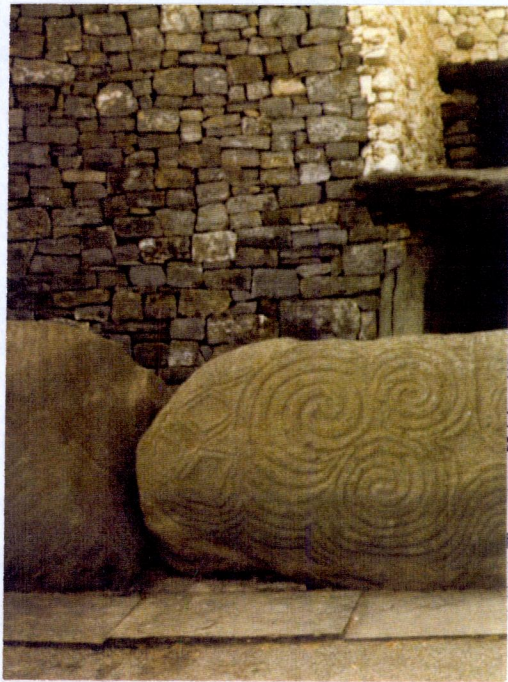


Fig 4.3 Newgrange Co Meath.

'Brian Boru's Harp'(fig 4.2). He was an *Árd-Rí* (High King) of Ireland who fell in battle at Clontarf, Dublin in the 11th century, making the Eurovision symbol also relevant to its Dublin location.

Up until 1991 RTE had suffered on with the Cross. They still use it as their corporate logo but their on screen ident for RTE 1 has done exactly what I have suggested above. Ireland is the location of the oldest burial chamber in the world: Newgrange, Co Meath. Not only is it the oldest, it is also one of the most intricate, having been designed so that the sun shone directly down the corridor on only one day of the year: the 21st December, the winter solstice, when the sun is at its lowest. This was accurately calculated and was not a coincidence. RTE uses a close up of the entrance stone at Newgrange, which is decorated with spirals and series of lines .(fig 4.3) But this acts as a background and is not actually part of their logo, which is where I think RTE should be concentrating. Using Newgrange was an interesting idea and it has produced an attractive piece of design, but since both on and off screen identities should be considered together I don't think this would transfer well. I think with some in-depth research an image from our past could be found that would modernise well and have a further suggestion of or connection with the organisation .

Another connotation developed when RTE simplified the cross. It has been suggested that the cross bares similarities to the Swastika.

The St. Brigid's Cross is considered by many to have a far greater visual affinity with the swastika than the Christian cross. In the context of 20th Century imagery this choice is hardly likely to be successful as the powerful use of the swastika by the Third Reich will continue to conjure up associations with evil in many minds for years to come.

(Pleass, 1988)

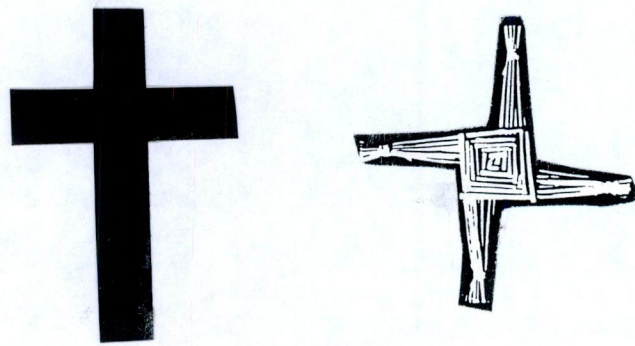


Fig 4.4 A Christian Cross, and a St Brigid's Cross



Fig 4.5 Symbol of the Third Reich, prior to and during World War II, the Swastika

And yet a year later Mr Pleass tried to justify the use of the cross in the brief for the internal design competition of 1989 which I mentioned earlier, encouraging the continued use of the cross:

Historically, the dot was the symbol from which every visual began and the vertical stroke grew to represent the Oneness of God, where the horizontal bar symbolised the earth on which everything moved along the same plane. The combination of these two strong images produced the first, and arguably the most powerful, symbol ever created and that is the cross. (Pleass, 1989)

Mr Pleass's own word: 'arguably', conveys his own doubt in the cross's power. I suspect that he still had the opinion that the swastika is still the more powerful association.

The difference between the St Brigid's Cross and any other Christian cross is that, presumably because of the technicality of weaving the reeds, the arms are slightly off set and each arm is of equal length (fig 4.4). It is because of this variation that it bears a resemblance to the swastika (fig 4.5). In an article written in 1962 for the television magazine RTE Guide, the story of St Brigid was told and at the end it described the imagery that the cross was supposed to portray:

St Brigid's Cross conjures up in the mind the image of quiet, secret places in the springtime of our history, of rush-bordered rivers in a serene arcadi landscape. Token of the happy absorption of paganism into Christianity which took place on this island fifteen hundred years ago, it is peculiarly apt in this age of ecumenism - a primitive symbol in the proud sense of what is fresh, distinctive and un-derived. (Curtayne, 1962)

I wonder if the choice of the Brigid's Cross was really considered as carefully*

I wonder if the choice of the Knight's Cross was really considered as carefully as one or whether the choice came first and the justification followed. I must confess I have raised that often in a letter one has designed a logo that you see other possible connections, good or bad, that were not intended.

PTC simplified the logo into solid stripes, losing the effect of lines and producing a symbol that really does resemble the most powerful symbol of evil in the world (the swastika) - I think enough, the very same (see below) the swastika itself, which used to be a symbol of peace for the Indians derived from the word 'swasti' meaning well-being, good fortune, and luck. PTC's logo used it as part of his signature. It was this used as a trademark for a brand of beer, a magic emblem that gave wisdom to a child's story and what every girl wants - a handsome prince. (See PPT 1993) But when they joined The Girl's Club (1993) and used it as the logo of the Girl's Club and as a result of the swastika being negative to the symbol. As a result of this solution to choose a brand new symbol.

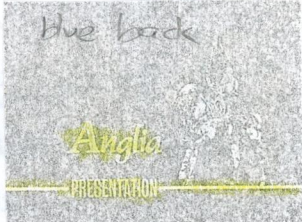


Fig 4.7 Anglia's Knight, 1959

and completely abandon the St. George's Cross. But it has been associated with the St. George's Cross, a symbol that would not get away with something fresh. This is where the story of the Anglia identity becomes relevant.

As I mentioned previously there is an interesting story behind the Anglia identity. But while PTC's story is about the image they chose, Anglia's story is about the way in which the symbol was chosen. In 1958 the Chairman of Anglia Television, the Marquis of Townsend, was walking down Bond Street in London. Then he saw a sculpture of a knight on a horse in the window of a

famous shop, four feet high and made of solid silver. He said 'That will do nicely for my logo. We'll pop a flag on and write 'Anglia' on it'. And that is exactly what they did! May the future preserve us from this kind of Graphic design! The Anglia knight was used for 30 years and, just as I pointed out in chapter 2, it worked not because of its long standing it was a good symbol, but because it was unique and familiar (fig 4.7). In 1988 Anglia decided they needed to update their image. If they had known that ITV planned a new identity for them the following year they may not have bothered. Lambie-Nairn & Co have become synonymous with television identities because of their success with Channel 4. They were approached by Anglia with their knight, and this is what Anglia said:

We need a new corporate identity but we have got to keep the Knight.
(Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.476)

Lambie-Nairn & Co replied:

If you need a new corporate identity, you need a new corporate identity and the Knight has to come into question as well.
(Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.476)

For the same reason that RTE would be slow to throw away an image that has represented them for so long, Lambie-Nairn & Co tried to work with the knight. They could make it work in print but try as they did they could not make it work on screen. It took them over a month to come up with a solution to the problem but it was worth the hard work because what they did come up with is a brilliant way of replacing the knight without throwing away its values. Instead of working with the knight they found a way of representing the knight in a more graphic form. They retained the emotion created by the knight and used a heraldic flag. Not only did this flag work as

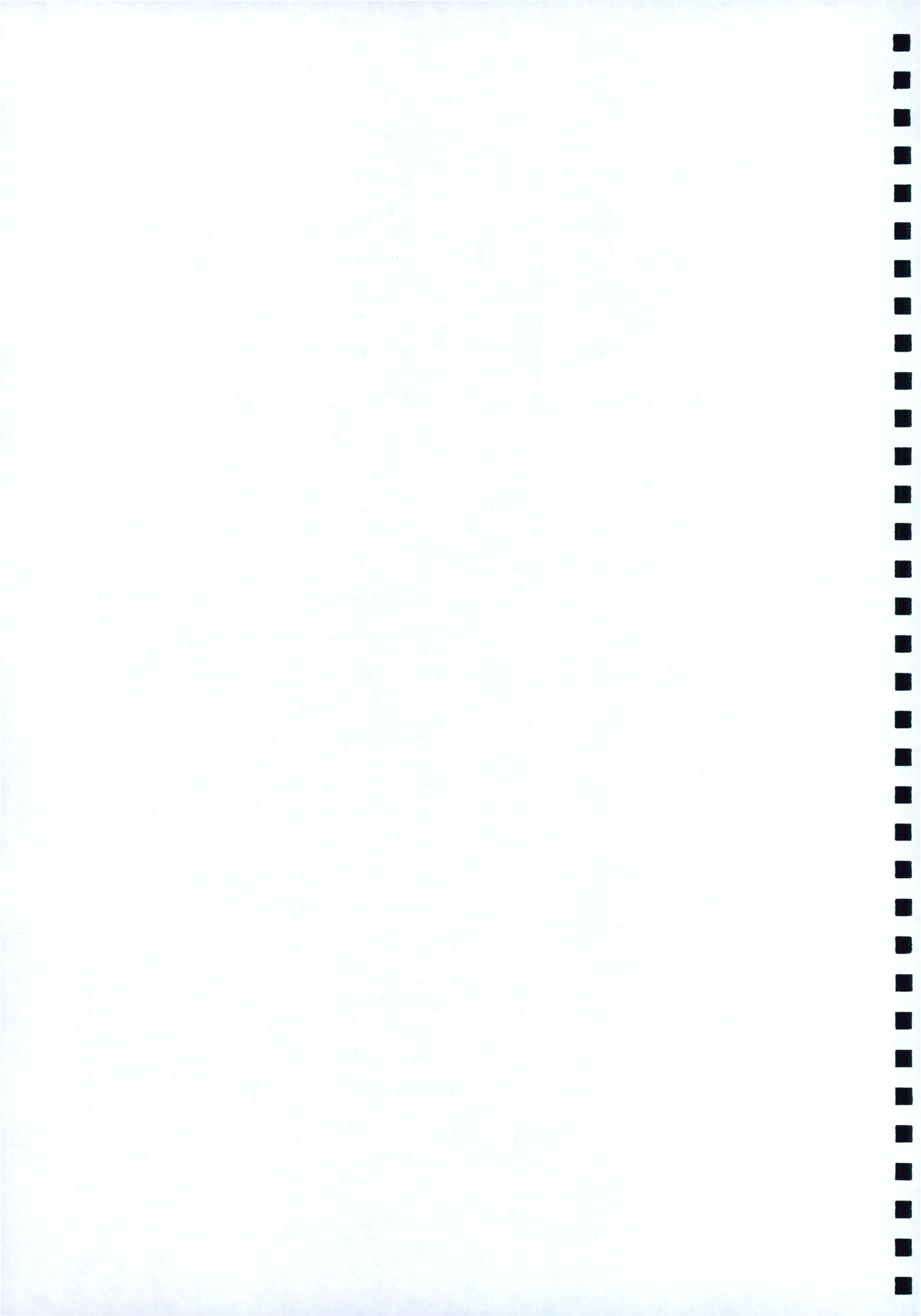


Fig 4.8 Anglia's new identity, 1988

a linking device with the old symbol, it also made up the letter 'A' to make this symbol uniquely connected with Anglia.(fig 4.8). It works excellently as a television symbol while still retaining the emotional quality of the knight.

It took us a month and a half to come up with the basic linking idea of a coat of arms. Here was a symbol that would have the knightly quality about it. (Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.476)

This could be a useful consideration for RTE. Obviously RTE feel somewhat uneasy about casting away the symbol that has represented them for 33 years. Retaining the link with our unique heritage would be a good idea in RTE's case. As I have said in Chapter 3, I feel that RTE need to develop a brand new symbol that would need no title and would represent RTEI and Network 2 together. Lambie-Nairn & Co came up with a clever solution for Anglia and it is this kind of approach that I feel should be taken with RTE.



Chapter Five - Versatility and Cohesion on and off screen

In this Chapter I will take a look at some of RTE's competitors to see how well their identities work on screen and in print, whether they are cohesive and if they have potential for change and variety on-screen.

In chapter 2, I outlined what I believe are the qualities needed in a good corporate identity, including those unique to the television ident. All of these qualities combined would produce the perfect logo, but this rarely happens. According to Douglas Merritt:

Striking a balance between the banal and the strident to create a symbol that has to be repeated many times a day, often over many years, has proved a difficult task.
(Merritt, 1987, p.19)

This is not a study of corporate identity, but of television idents and, while many factors of both are common, my main concern is the factors that make television idents different to your average corporate identity.

Considerations when designing television idents:

1. Originality
2. Personality
3. Familiarity
4. Simplicity
5. Relevant colour scheme
6. An irritant that will bother the viewer like an uncompleted circle
7. Reproduction in monotone
8. Work within 3 by 4 format
9. Movement.
10. Visually lightweight

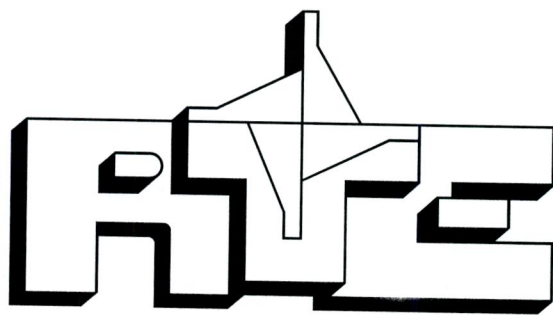


Fig 5.1 RTE's corporate logo 1986

- I 1. Complimentary sound
- I 2. A balance in time length
- I 3. Uniform structure where more than one station is involved (chapter 3)
- I 4. Unity and versatility
- I 5. Must work on and off screen

The last three of these are the factors which I am most concerned with. If a television logo does not have these three qualities as well as the essential requirements then it is not a good television identity. It is important that one does not lose sight of the other factors. A logo that works on screen and in print is not necessarily an interesting or well designed logo. The one thing that sets television identities apart from all others is their need to work on and off screen. It must be capable of some form of animation:

One problem is to reconcile the effectiveness of an on-screen animation with the requirements of printed and other publicity material. Another has been to be too rigid. Where consistency has worked well in print, display and packaging design, the moving image has always had the capacity to have variation and constant but controlled changes.
(Merritt, 1987, p.19)

It is not enough to produce a good logo for print. If the transfer to the screen has not been considered then it is not a good television logo, and will appear stiff and misplaced. This is what happened when RTE had their corporate logo designed by an outside agency in 1986. This logo has no potential for on screen use. It is rigid and heavy and has no potential for movement (fig 5.1). It cannot even just appear on screen and look good because it is not even a very impressive design in itself. It may have lasted

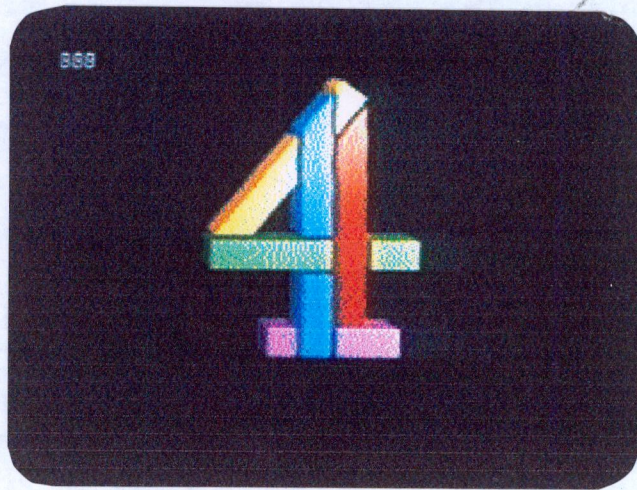


Fig 5.2 Channel 4 logo, 1982

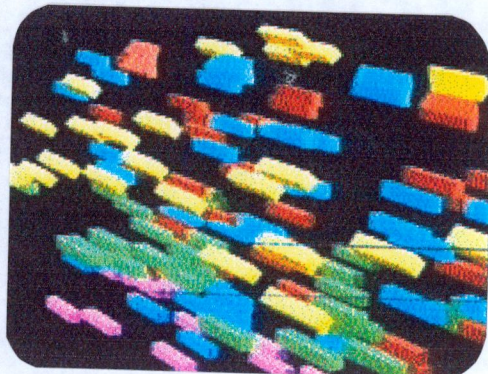
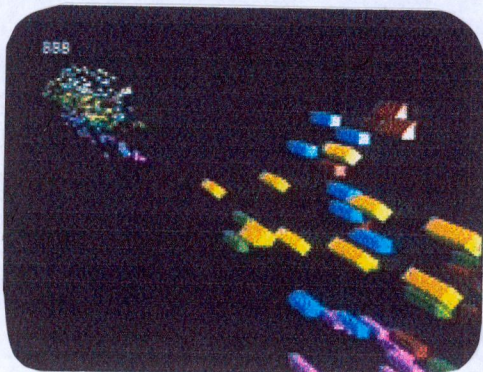
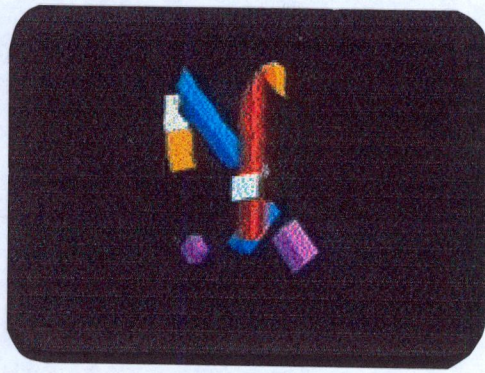
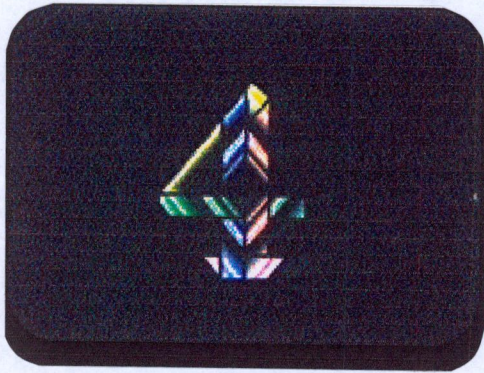


Fig 5.3 Examples of Channel 4's various animations

this long as their corporate logo, but it only took a couple of years for RTE to start toying with new screen idents.

Neither is it possible to produce a brilliant piece of on screen work that will amaze and intrigue viewers without considering its power as a still image :

No matter what efforts are made to exploit the moving image a single still frame stays in the mind and is required to portray in print, stationery, on vehicles and other media the face of the company or network.
(Merritt, 1987, p.46)

An excellent example of an ident that works equally well in print and on screen is Channel 4.

Channel 4

Channel 4 is one of the few idents that has managed to combine two elements to create something new, the numeral 4 and the function of the station to broadcast programmes from other creators and countries:

'You are a publishing house. You don't make programmes like everyone else, you purely publish them. You bring together all these programmes and put them out. Therefore, the symbol will illustrate that - bring together the patchwork and push out the programmes'. That is the basis for all our work for Channel 4. (Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.476)

Thus the creation of the unique segmented '4' (fig 5.2), and the idea for their animation - different pieces flying around and coming together to make the '4' just as they bring programmes together to create their channel (fig 5.3).

While I have said that it is better to have identical symbols for on and off screen, Channel 4's symbol has one small difference, the on screen symbol is

CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION 60 CHARLOTTE STREET, LONDON W1P 2AX.
TELEPHONE: 071-631 4444
TELEX: 892355. FAX: 071-255 1614
MINICOM: 071-927 8403



SJ

Date as postmark

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your enquiry about possible vacancies within Channel 4.

Due to the large number of letters received by Channel 4 each month, we are not able to answer each query individually. However, I hope that the attached sheets will provide some of the information you require.

Thank you for the interest you have shown in Channel 4 and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Jackson
Recruitment Assistant

CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION CORPORATION
SIR MICHAEL BISHOP CBE (CHAIRMAN), DAVID FLOWRIGHT (DEPUTY CHAIRMAN)
MICHAEL GRADE (CHIEF EXECUTIVE), STEWART BUI FERRILL (DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING SALES AND MARKETING), COLIN LEVINTHAL (DIRECTOR OF ACQUISITION)
FRANK PAGE-TIGGAN (DIRECTOR AND GENERAL MANAGER), DAVID SCOTT (DIRECTOR OF FINANCE), JOHN WELLS (DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES)
HERBERT HARDY, ANNE LAPPING, MARY MALLESSE, JOHN PUGHATH, SIR DAVID NICHOLAS CBE, USHA PRASAD
SECRETARY: JANET WALKER



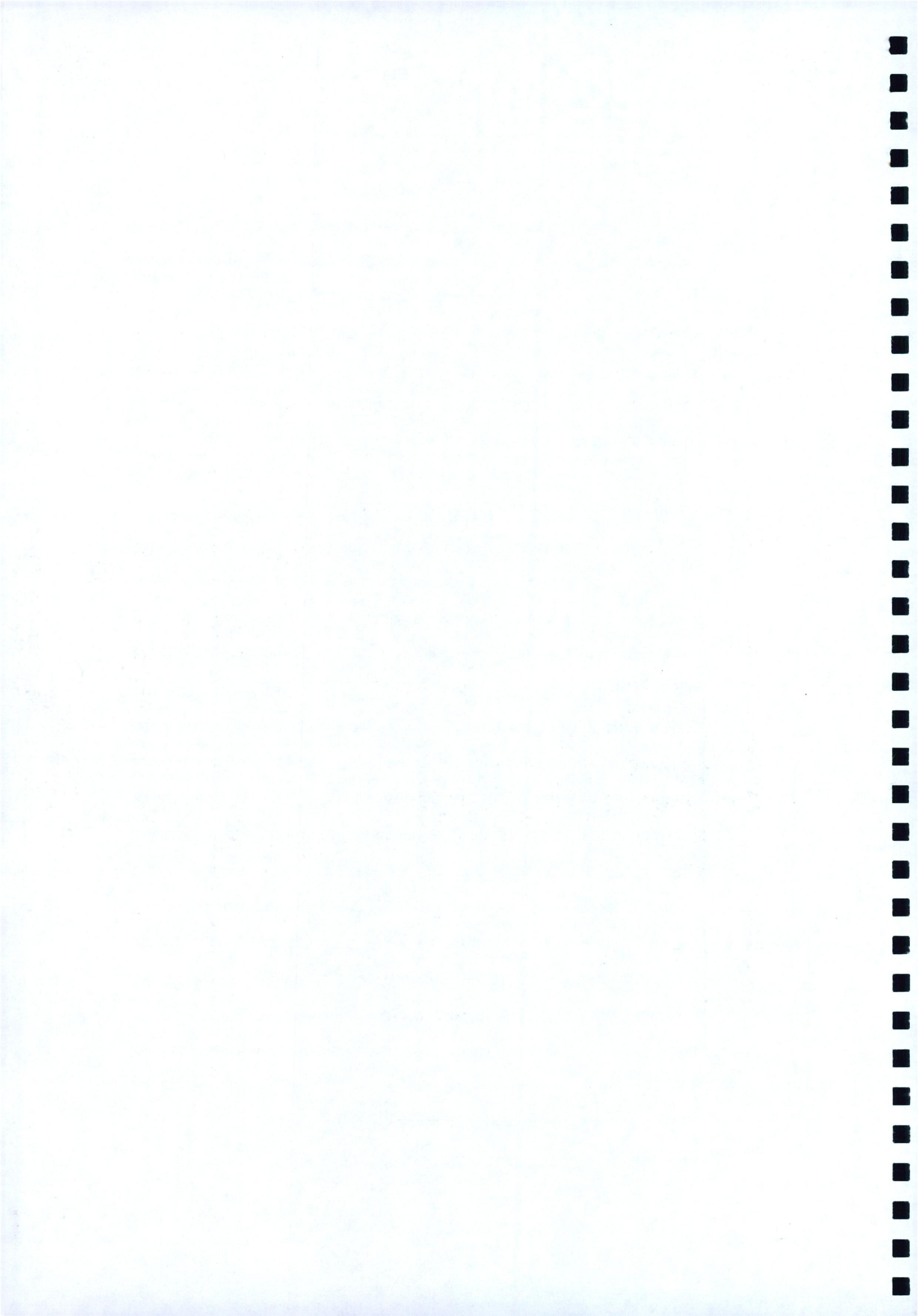
Fig 5.4

Channel 4's letterhead.

made to look three dimensional, while only two dimensions is used on printed material (fig 5.4). The basis of the logo is a series of inter-related pieces, that do not touch or overlap. This allows the symbol to be used in one colour because there can be no confusion between the pieces, each playing a vital part of the symbol. It works well in one colour also as can be seen in fig 5.5. The logo stands out beautifully from rows and rows of books in a library, showing its off-screen power:

Channel 4 have a lot to be proud of. Twelve years after its launch this ident is still as impressive as it was when it was first designed. The Channel 4 logo is really one of the biggest success stories in the world of television graphics. It was the first symbol to truly take advantage of its three dimensions, and really utilise its versatility. The figure 4 is extremely useful being made up of different shape and colour bricks. While being able to still surprise the viewer with different combinations of its pieces and different introduction sequences, it always ends with the familiar '4'. Channel 4's combination of colours, the way the pieces are dimensioned, the music, the pure black background that seems infinite have become synonymous with this station. The Channel 4 logo can be used to great effect as what is referred to as a 'toolkit'. Basically the idea behind the toolkit is being able to 'brand' the station using elements of the logo, being able to say Channel 4 without using the actual symbol. Channel 4's toolkit consists of: distinctive colours, the separate brick-like sections, its black background, and the distinctive style of the '4'.

Their corporate colours are red, yellow, blue, green, and purple. It is because of this station's long standing, unchanging logo that these colours can be used



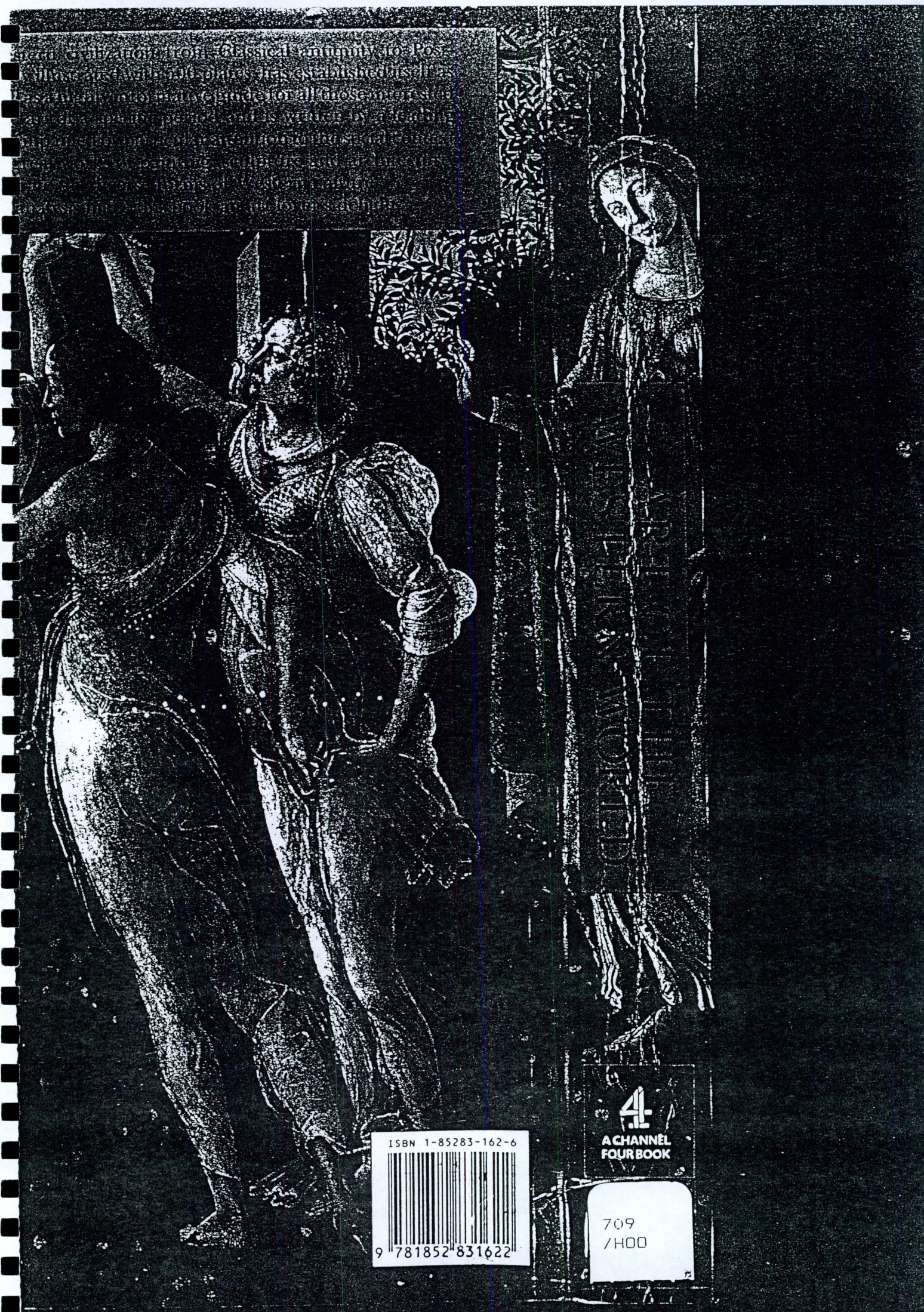


Fig 5.5

Book Spine illustrating Channel 4's logo in one colour.

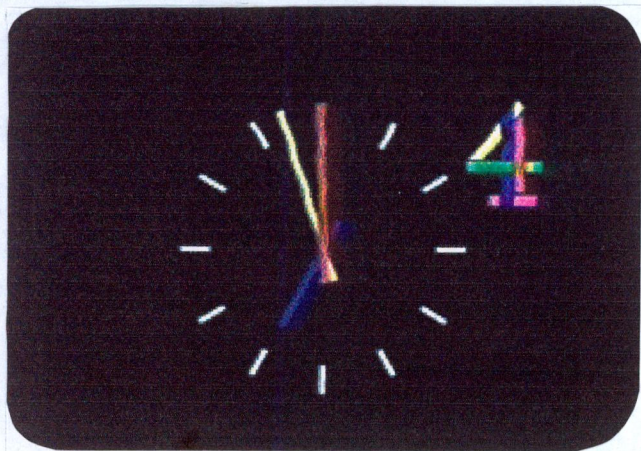


Fig 5.6 Channel 4's on-screen clock

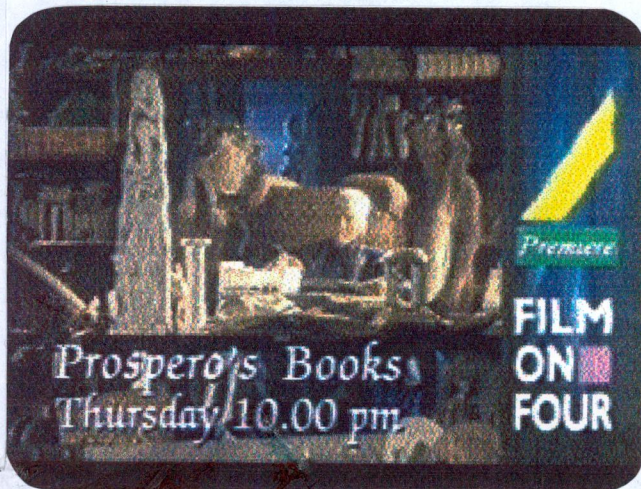


Fig 5.7 'Film on 4' side panel for Channel 4 films.

to represent Channel 4. The colours are used mainly to brand the Channel 4 'clock'. Their on-screen clock uses the black background, which is all too familiar, with a white circle outline containing an hour, minute and second hand, each in a different colour contained in the logo: yellow, red and blue (fig 5.6). This clock bears little relation to the logo, except for the colours. If the clock was seen out of context of the television screen, I doubt it would be identified so quickly with Channel 4. It is because we see it on screen, we eliminate all other stations that do not use these colours, and make the connection. I believe that 'Anglia's' branded clock works to greater effect, but I will discuss that later. I do feel that Channel 4 could also have incorporated the sectioned pieces by adding a third dimension to the hands of the clock making them look as though they were plucked straight from the logo itself. Unfortunately in recent times Channel 4 have shown a lack of confidence in the branding of this clock and have added the Channel 4 logo not very discreetly to the corner of the clock screen. I think it is a shame that they succumbed.

Channel 4's brick-like sectioning is used to great effect as a side panel (a narrow strip appearing at the side of the screen to illustrate the viewed station) for 'Film on 4', and also for Channel 4 racing. For the 'Film on 4' side panel they have cropped the 4 using only half of the sections, and used those sections to incorporate the words, 'film on four'. Figure 5.7 shows how this works: the sections and colours distinguish this as Channel 4's while also providing a frame that incorporates the title perfectly. Not only do the negative spaces created by the bricks provide space for titles, the sections themselves are self-made bars for type. For 'Film on Four', the word 'premiere' can appear within the horizontal green bar when appropriate.

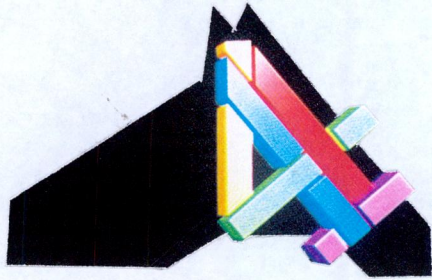


Fig 5.8 Channel 4 racing logo.

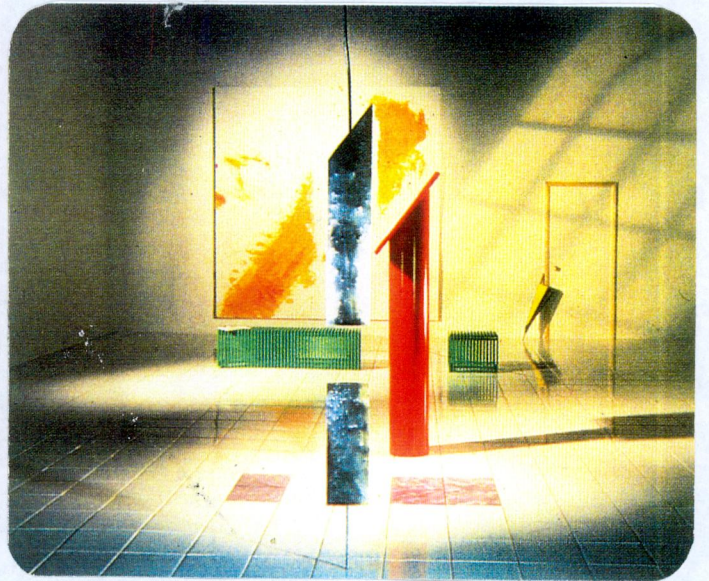
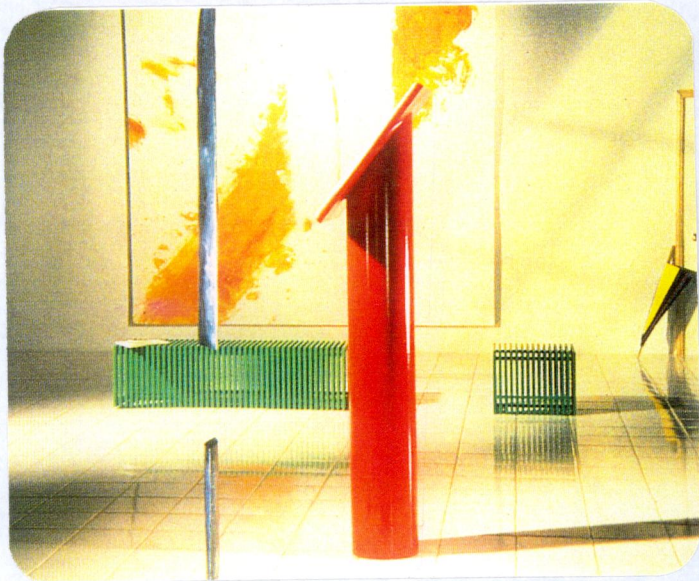
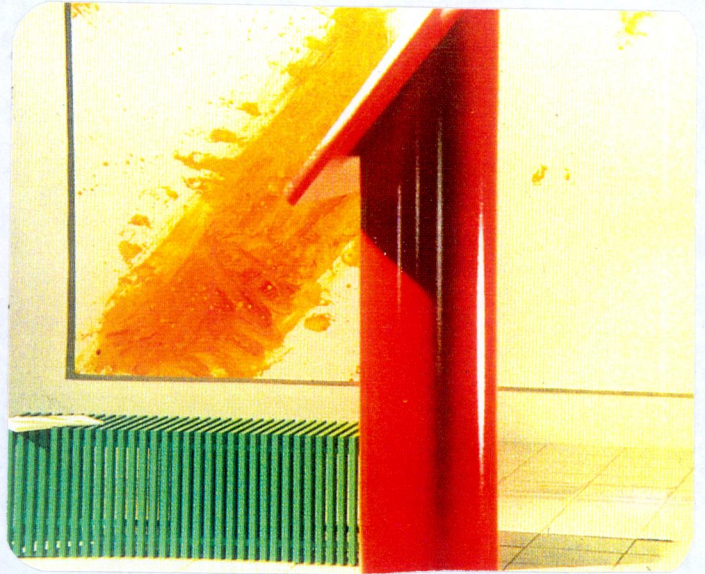
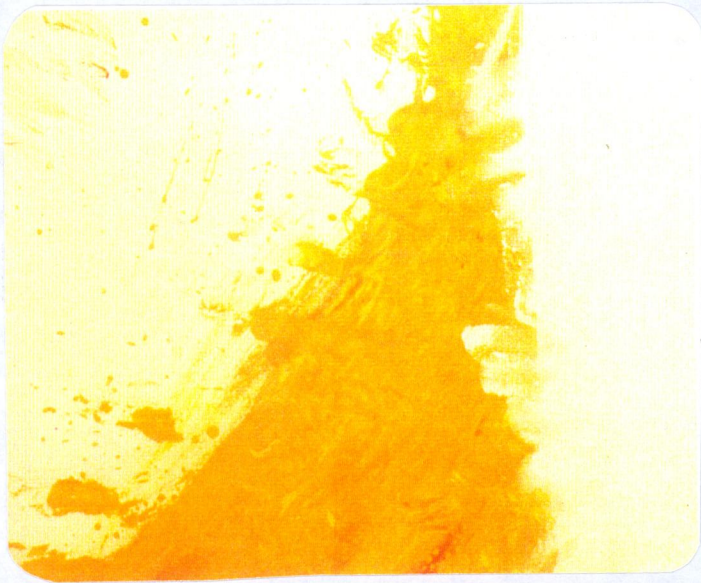


Fig 5.9 Channel 4's logo created in Art Gallery setting, 1987

With the Channel 4 racing they have used the complete logo but have changed its personality to match the subject matter. The '4' coincidentally bares a similarity to a horse bridle. This is a lucky and useful coincidence, but is well spotted by the designer (fig 5.8).

In 1987 Channel 4 used the logo in a very different format than we are used to for the Arts on 4. Again, taking advantage of the separate coloured sections and the nature of the logo's creation, elements of an art gallery where brought together by the rotation of the camera where a particular viewpoint of the separate elements created the '4' (fig 5.9). A brush painting, podium, radiator and floor rug create the familiar Channel '4'. It works, but they abandoned the concept in recent years, choosing to work around the original '4' instead of changing it in any way. While the idea of changing the form of the '4' worked to a certain extent, I think their logo is too ingenious to distort. Recent examples used the logo to greater effect in a sequence entitled 'Keep an eye on four'. The idea behind it was to emphasise that you get the best viewing if you keep watching. One sequence used the idea of being able to hear a pin-drop. It showed a close up of a pin that made a clattering noise when it hit the ground. This expressed their attention to detail. A yellow duck also appeared on Channel 4 with an unexpected white background and instead of quacking, it barks, above the 'keep an eye on four' caption. Another set of sequences for this series was a number of clips that showed characters from Channel 4 featured programmes who lean forward and create the illusion that they are actually inside your television by tapping on the glass.

Fig 5.10 shows the standard layout for programmes on Channel 4. Black



Fig 5.10 Standard Channel 4 caption used for featured programmes.

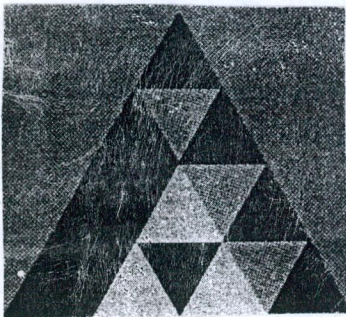


Fig 5.13 Photocopy of Anglia logo.



Fig 5.11 Channel 4 caption for 'The Lady in White', 1993

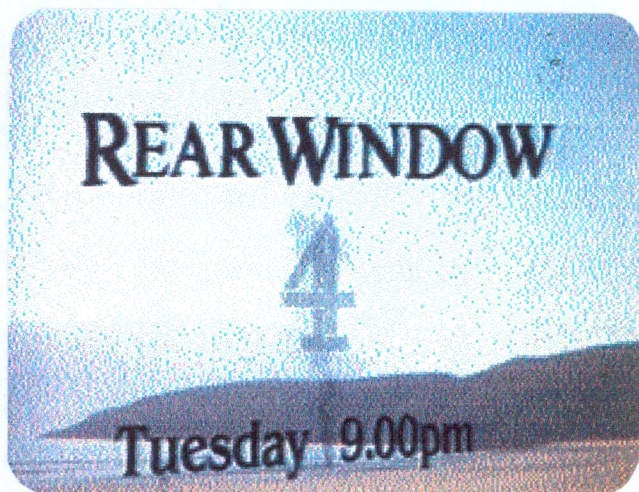


Fig 5.12 Channel 4 caption for 'Rear Window', 1993

bands usually border the image for regular features, and the logo is always in the bottom right-hand corner. When showing the film 'Oklahoma' recently, the ad caption used the original film title, a wild west 'Wanted' poster-style typeface in coral red with a black outline. Channel 4 placed their logo in the bottom right hand corner (where it usually appears) in the very same coral red. They do this for every film caption. These changes are subtle. Another caption used an electrified blue logo to match the programme caption for 'The lady in white', a hallowe'en special (fig 5.11). Another used the fact that there was rising smoke within the chosen shot and made the '4' appear as though it was made of that smoke (fig 5.12).

A similar example of the use of the toolkit would be Anglia's identity, as it was also designed by Lambie-Nairn & Co and received similar treatment as Channel 4.

Anglia

Anglia's symbol is a two dimensional collection of solid geometric shapes. It is an attractive colourful symbol that I think works well in print. I photocopied the image to see how it works in one colour (fig 5.13) and found that it has sufficient shade differentiation to allow the separate parts to be distinguished. This logo works well off screen and would be striking and memorable on vehicles publications and stationery. As an ident it has the added attraction of being part of a rippling flag on-screen, giving movement to a flat image. The action is in three dimensions rather than adding a third dimension to the actual logo itself.

The simplicity of the Anglia ident is the kind of work that I really admire.

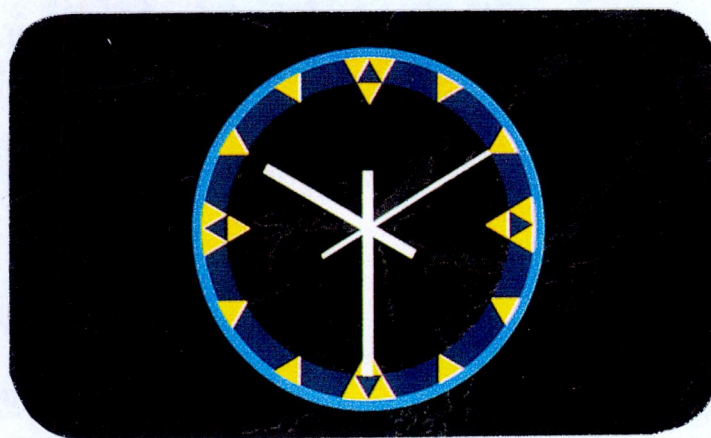


Fig 5.14 Anglia's on-screen clock

Having abandoned the knight for a heraldic flag, which I discussed in Chapter 4, Lambie-Nairn & Co produced the perfect television logo. Based on heraldic imagery and the 'A' in 'Anglia', an assembly of triangles was their new solution. This symmetrical shape is aesthetically pleasing. The Anglia triangle is made up of smaller triangles, but has the added advantage that the left side does not contain these smaller triangles and is therefore unexpected. It contains that 'irritant' quality; the triangle is symmetrical but the contents of the triangle are not, and people will almost reach out and want to put the missing triangles in.

This came six years after Channel 4 yet you can see a similarity in the use of station branding and toolkit. This logo is made up of a series of triangles creating one large one. In the same way that the segments of Channel 4's logo provided a toolkit, the separate shapes and colours of the Anglia logo do the same.

We showed that you could start to use the triangles as a branding device so that you could say Anglia without actually having to use the logo. It would work in print and on-screen. The final result was Anglia's present symbol. (Designweek, 1988, p.6)

The smaller triangles become part of the identity, and can be used to great effect. For example, in their on screen clock (fig 5.14). Here the use of a section of the triangles personalises the clock, making it immediately recognisable without having to use the logo. The yellow triangle alone was used on the cover of Anglia's regional news magazine All About Anglia (Direction, 1988, p.13). It was of great advantage to English Markell and Pockett who re-designed ITV's ident. It's versatility made it easier to link it



Fig 5.15 Anglia's logo and its incorporation into ITV's identity, 1989

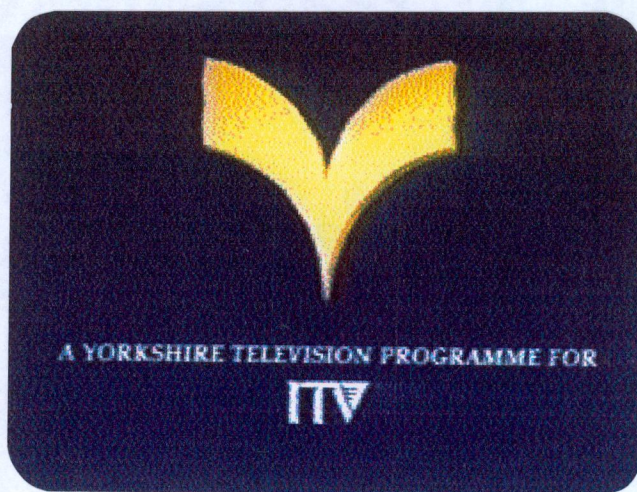


Fig 5.16 Yorkshire Television logo and its incorporation into ITV's identity, 1989

into the 'ITV' logo. As I have already said in Chapter 3, I suspect that the Anglia design may have triggered off the heraldic device adopted by EMP for ITV. Again only a section of the logo could appear when combined with ITV and it is beneficial that the toolkit of Anglia allowed for this reduction in image while remaining recognisable (fig 5.15). Some of the other incorporated regional logos did not have the same recognisability. For example the familiar Yorkshire Television logo appears as a segment of their gold 'V' shape, which is not quite enough information to make the link (fig 5.16).

Anglia's background is also black, similar to Channel 4, but different because it is textured like the surface of a silk flag. This rippling background would probably say 'Anglia' alone after long establishment. This is to Anglia's advantage. A plain black background is not entirely unique, as it is the most commonly used background colour in television, something I imagine that was carried over from the Black-and-white days, white on black being more striking.

In contrast to Channel 4 and Anglia, there is MTV. MTV is no longer received as part of mainstream viewing in Ireland, but it has had such an influence on television that it is vital that I mention it.

MTV

Instead of using parts of the logo for different purposes, it changes it completely while retaining a recognisable frame. For example figure 5.17 shows the 'M' as an animal in a tree.

RTE's idents lack personality, because they never do anything unusual. They



Fig 5.17 MTV as hairy animal.



Fig 5.18 MTV as enamel tooth.



Fig 5.19 MTV's base logo, 1981

appear on screen and that is all. The difference between Channel 4 and Anglia, who have created a recognisable 'house-style' with their toolkits, and MTV and BBC is that the latter two idents take many different forms and personalities. The basic frame of MTV's logo remains the same, but it has a different appearance every time it is used. It has appeared as a hairy animal 'M' with twigs for 'tv' (fig 5.17), an unshaven 'M' with shaving foam 'tv', a tooth enamel 'M' with toothpaste 'tv' (fig 5.18), I could go on forever. This logo has had more image changes than Madonna yet it always remains recognisable and intriguing, which is more than I can say for Madonna! With MTV you expect the unexpected. It takes a very strong logo to stand up to so much change, and still work well. This is due to its simple framework 'M' that retains a familiar profile (fig 5.19) MTV's identity succeeds for a specialised station. I doubt it would work on a general station that must appeal to the masses like RTE are required to do.

The MTV logo is simple enough to allow for its its transmutations without losing any clarity. This logo is like a strange kind of animal that can change its shape and form in the same way a chameleon can change its colour. The 'M's shape remains constant allowing other factors to vary. This is a logo with true personality. MTV is quirky because it is doing something different every time it is seen, and could not become stale or predictable. When MTV's logo is compared to some of the other idents that have 3 initials in their title it can be seen that it is the only one that produced an actual symbol with the 3 initials rather than a logotype (where the letters are used as the representative symbol) as RTE and ITV have. RTE should be steering away from a corporate logotype because the title RTE does not truly represent Network 2. The simple use of the capital 'M' with the free style 'tv' works



Fig 5.20 Ticket stub for U2 concert 'Zooropa', Dublin 1993

extremely well with a balance of formal and informal, while creating a simple framework around which the designers could work their different sequences. Because of the various ways that this logo changes it is rarely seen the same way twice, but it does in fact have corporate colours that are used more so than others when it appears in print. Figure 5.20 shows the retainable section of a ticket for last year's U2 Zooropa tour, which MTV was involved in. Their logo appears quite small in the bottom right hand corner. The colours it appears in on the ticket tend to be used quite often, yellow, blue and red. Primary colours are a popular choice. Network 2 also uses primary colours in their '2', and an older ident for BBC2 used blue and red. The MTV logo transfers well from the screen to print. The image tends to dominate on screen and yet when reduced to 1 cm² it still retains its quality and sharpness. Even the 'Music Television' is still readable when reduced.

The letter 'M' is conveniently wider than it is high so it fits very well into the 3 by 4 screen format, and since the letter can change its personality when desired, it animates beautifully and is definitely intriguing! Because the 'M' is quite solid in appearance it does look quite heavy, yet the logo is usually set in a surrounding that it sits into and in many cases is deliberately made to look as though it is been supported by something: the 'animal' is supported by the tree(fig 5.17) and the 'tooth' by a black surface(fig 5.18). The MTV logo animates well, yet it is not the kind of logo that could hover in the middle of your screen, because it is visually heavy. The time length of the MTV sequences is 10 seconds each. This was as a result of the inability of the video tapes they used to spin faster. Originally they wanted 3 to 4 second sequences and were terrified by the prospect of having to fill 10 seconds. But it is for these 10 second sequences that MTV has become famous.

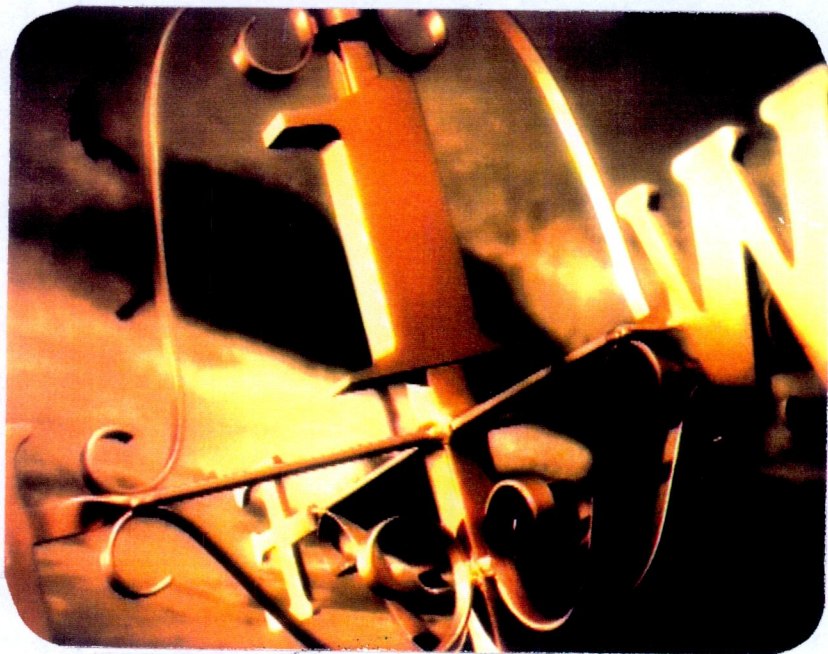


Fig 5.21 RTEI's Weathervane sequence, 1993

RTE cannot claim half the achievements that the MTV logo has had, but it could learn from it. As I said, MTV did start a trend of animated title sequences that most stations employ to some extent. RTE's on-screen ident for RTE1 has been a weather vane (fig 5.21) and a mosaic on the bottom of a goldfish pond. This on-screen ident is in my opinion a bit too similar to the BBC '1'. Instead of trying to catch up with the other stations by doing as they do, they should be trying to do things their own way, as MTV have. Following suit, BBC have used what could be described as a post-MTV style in the new identities that were designed in 1990 by Lambie-Nairn & Co.

BBC

BBC's new idents started quite a turn around in television design. In 1977 computer control had been added to the rostrum camera (see chapter 1) and this had allowed designers to switch from live animation to still frame which gave them more control over individual shots. Live animation involves shooting while something moves in real time, while still frame animation shoots a single frame at a time, allowing inanimate objects to be moved between shots to create the effect of real movement. This was the only way to make inanimate objects look convincing, for example plastercine models could be altered slightly for each shot and then run simultaneously. Then computers like the Quantel Paintbox and Quantel Harry (similar to the Paintbox but with the added facility of storing and producing animation sequences) became available and there was an influx of computer generated images, similar to Channel 4's method of production. Something completely different was tried with the BBC ident, and it worked brilliantly: real time movement instead of fabricated action. According to Chris Pullman Head of the Boston television network WGBH:

"One of the best ways to make things realistic is to use real things. It is real silk, real water, and real verdigris that gives Lambie-Nairn's BBC2

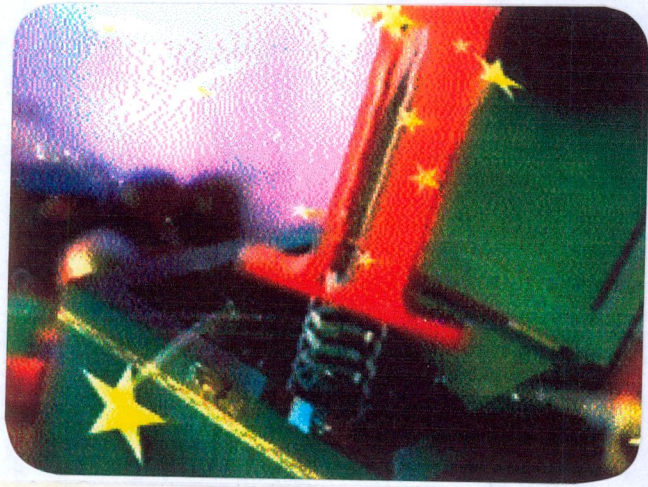


Fig 5.24 BBC1's Jack-in-the-box sequence, 1993



Fig 5.22 RTE1's present on-screen ident, 1991



Fig 5.23 BBC2's vermilion idents, 1990

work its tactile and visual quality." (Aldersey-Williams, 1992, p.121)

Designers have spent years trying to create three-dimensional objects using two dimensional media. RTEI's present ident has created a numeral '1' using a computer to make it look as though it is solid (fig 5.22). BBC's ident is the logical option, making the numeral 2 out of real steel. There is no need to try and create a shiny surface as RTE have tried, no need to create shadows when clever lighting will do it for them, and no need to create the illusion of movement when you can use live filming of real movement. Different idents were created around the numeral using lighting, thrown paint and windblown silk (fig 5.23). The computer was not completely redundant as it was needed to intensify colours and backgrounds. BBCI began to use this technique on promotional sequences as well. Fig 5.24 shows a real model of a jack-in-the-box '1' that leaps from its box while the computer would have been used to add the stars. This technique is called motion control where a film camera can be programmed to make exact smooth movements that the human hand would find difficult or where the area to be filmed is too small for human control. When I spoke to Hilliard Hayden of RTE he told me that motion control is very 'in' at the moment. They have used it themselves quite recently, especially on Network 2 where they have used live motion controlled sequences based around moving objects that tie in the Network 2 colours.

The BBC are the longest running television station in Britain and Ireland. Some see the BBC as a different quality of viewing:

The BBC channels are not in the same rough trade as the commercial boys, so can afford a touch of dignity. Despite the previous flogging of the



Fig 5.25 BBC2, 1986 and BBC1, 1983

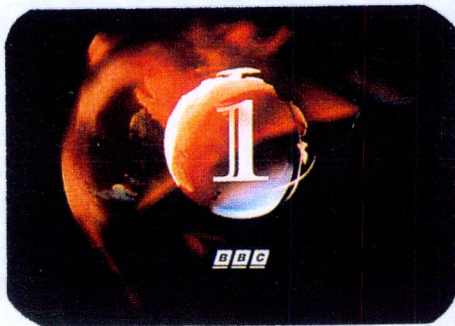


Fig 5.26 BBC1 and 2 identities, 1990



Fig 5.27 BBC1 side strip showing the use of branding, 1993

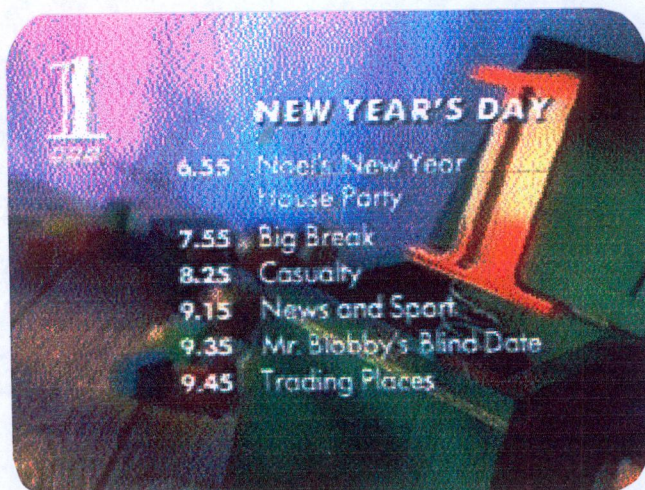


Fig 5.28 BBC1's Jack-in-the-box sequence, 1993 Fig 5.29 BBC's '1' carved in ice Christmas sequence, 1993

globe image for as many programmes as you'd care to forget, BBC1 managed to lay imperial claim to it some time ago. The slowly spinning globe exudes confidence and re-assurance.

(Thrift, 1988, p53-54)

BBC had had quite a conservative image, with the stiff globe, and the formal 'TWO' (fig 5.25). Lambie-Nairn & Co's new designs changed that. BBC1's globe remained, but no longer had a fixed solid weighty shape. Clever computer manipulation and the use of textures and light created a unique and very different globe. BBC2 had been using the word 'TWO' in what has been described as a 'post channel 4 style'. The new BBC1 and BBC2 idents are more influenced by the transfiguring MTV style. In the same way that MTV's base logo changes, so does the '1' and '2' of BBC but not quite to the same extent and in a slightly more refined style (fig 5.26). There is something more sophisticated about the BBC sequences with their 'aquamarine' shade for BBC2 and their solid gold '1' (one BBC1 sequence showed the '1' being moulded out of liquid gold). BBC's '1' appears in the centre of the globe. It is distinctively BBC's because of the missing slit. This is used in white as a branding device for BBC1 (fig 5.27). But over the past couple of years this '1' has been given the 'post-MTV' treatment. I have seen their '1' spray painted with stars, forged out of metal, leaping from a box (fig 5.28), dipped in paint, moulded out of liquid gold and carved out of ice (fig 5.29). These are used to introduce programme listings or new seasonal features. These are as fascinating as BBC2's yet I feel that they are still represented by the globe to a greater extent, while BBC2 has become famous for its '2' sequences.

It is unpleasant to change channels and see that instead of finding their own way of expressing themselves RTE have taken on the same idea. RTE have moved their on-screen concentration from the St Brigid's Cross to the



Fig 5.30 BBC's '1' and RTE's '1' compared.

numeral '1' on their main channel. Their '1' is disappointingly similar to BBC's but without the characteristic cut slit. (fig 5.30) They have done similar things with this numeral: made it out of gold and incorporated it into a weathervane for autumn season, created it in mosaic at the bottom of a pond with goldfish and swans moving on the water. Someone even said to me that BBC1 and RTE1 had the exact same symbol, and had to have the difference, small as it is, pointed out. It is one thing to copy trends and techniques, but to follow suit in the very same style and format is a bad reflection on the RTE design department. RTE will not achieve success riding on someone else's tail. The fact that Channel 4, MTV and BBC have successful idents is because they sought a new approach. It is time RTE did the same. Although Network 2 has taken on its own look that does not reflect any other station, it has no special quality that will make it last. BBC2 have set a standard that even outshines their primary station.

BBC2

Alan Fletcher (English Graphic Designer and founder of Pentagram design) said in an interview:

I believe in wit; if you say something and the other person laughs, you've therefore communicated. You should be slightly quirky, otherwise no one will remember it and quirkiness helps to give it personality.
(O'Byrne, 1993, p.11)

People like to be able to say 'Oh that's clever' or 'oh yeah, I get it'. It makes them feel good to know that they 'understand' design and being able to be amused at the same time is an added bonus for the viewer. Not everyone would agree with this opinion:

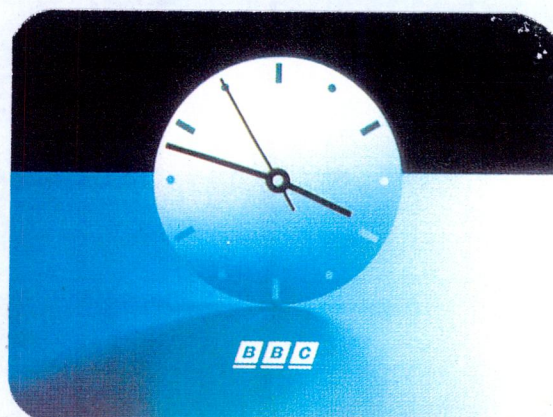


Fig 5.31 BBC2's on-screen clock, 1990

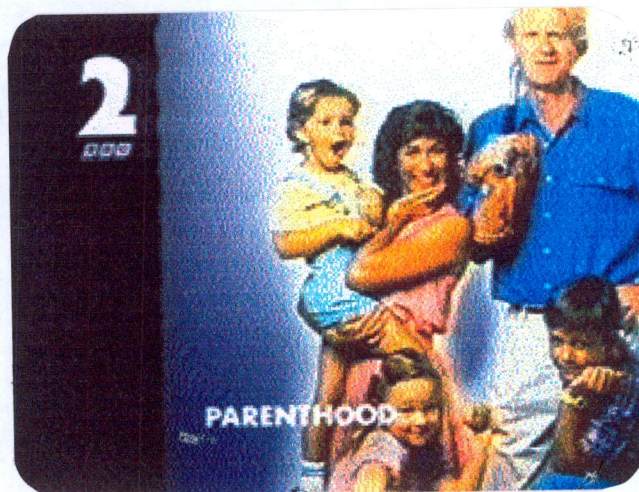
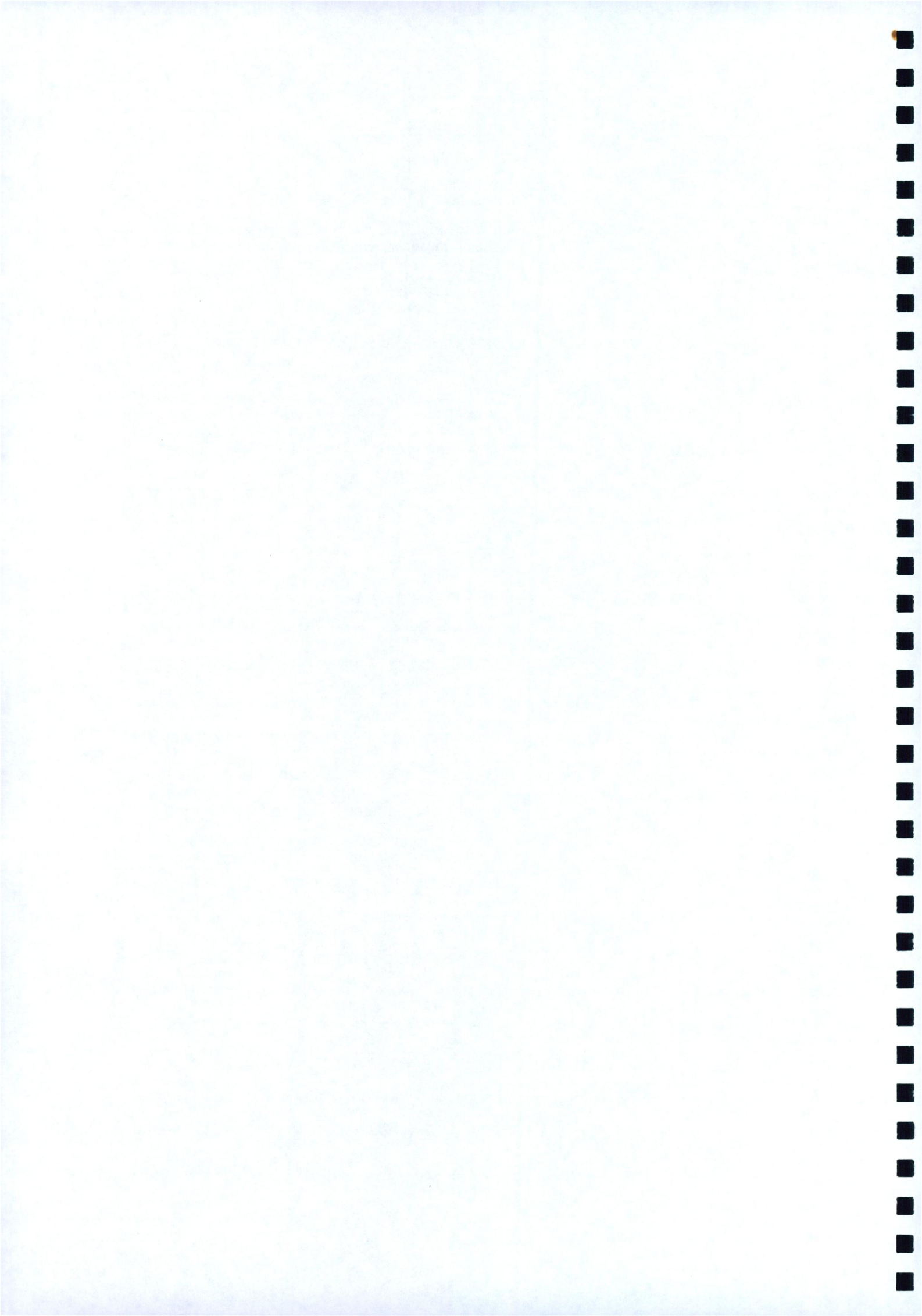


Fig 5.32 BBC2's side strip showing the use of branding, 1993

When you are dealing with a corporate ident, you can't let it get too quirky. You can take risks with programme titles, but you don't have to live with them year after year. (Thrift, 1988, p.52)

But this is one of the factors that makes BBC2's idents so appealing. Their numeral has character and humour. It has transfigured as an ice '2' on a ski slope, a fluffy wind-up toy, a motorised '2' on wheels and much more. These clips grab attention and bemuse on-lookers. When one of these appeared on-screen during a college project no one even breathed and you could see the smiles creep across faces.

The use of an associated colour is always going to be a useful form of branding. BBC2 uses a bladed circle, the same material as the '2' for their on-screen clock with sea-green hands, the same colour as the paint, silk, lights, sparks used in these idents (fig 5.31). One article in 'XYZ' magazine argued that BBC2 have got a bit carried away, and have stretched the ident beyond its elasticity. They feel that they have become too obscure, moving away from the bladed 2 and vermillion colour scheme (XYZ, 1992, p.7). I tend to disagree with this opinion. All of the BBC2 idents intrigue me and I feel that they are strong enough to be stretched further than one might think. Even without the bladed effect and the vermillion colour scheme it is a very distinctive '2' and, as the image below shows, it works very well in plain white as a station identifier in promotional side strips with the associated colours (fig 5.32). Maybe because I have a personal interest in design and, therefore, would be more conscious of lettering and typefaces, I immediately recognise the BBC '2'. Not many typefaces have a point at the join of the curve and the foot of this numeral and I would even risk stating that BBC2's '2' is of the Gill Sans family of typefaces (fig 5.33). This '2' is distinctive and recognisable,



and can therefore stand up to changes, and alterations.

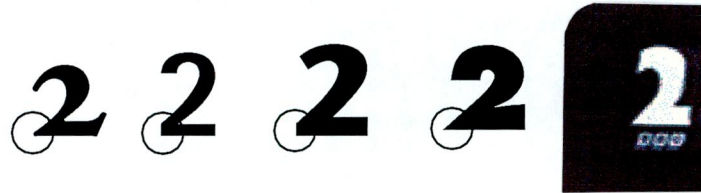


Fig 5.33 Selection of '2's to illustrate the distinctive character of the BBC '2'

BBC2 is my favourite series of television idents and it was these sequences that first brought me to take a closer look at this area. Whenever they appear, someone always says 'they really are clever' or something to that effect, no matter how many times they are seen. And they are clever. They have a sophisticated, superior feel to them, and the original ones first produced were serious pieces (fig 5.23) The '2' fell, sparked, flashed, and was splashed creating a classy feel, with its understated sound, and sophisticated colour scheme. After all, BBC2 has always been seen as the intellectual alternative showing the arts and Open University, and that is the effect the idents have achieved. The designers also wanted the BBC2 idents to change: to grow, multiply, change with the times, yet retain their image:

*Where the BBC1 ident is designed to endure, the BBC2 ident consists of several sequences so the ideas can be developed with time. Where BBC1 was required to project an image that will remain graphically appealing, BBC2's ident will respond to the world around it.
(Creative Review, 1991, p.27)*

This was said in 1991. Since then BBC1's ident has taken on the BBC2's tendency to move with the seasons and trends with the sequences I mentioned earlier, while retaining its everlasting globe.



Fig 5.34 BBC2's music programme ident, 1992

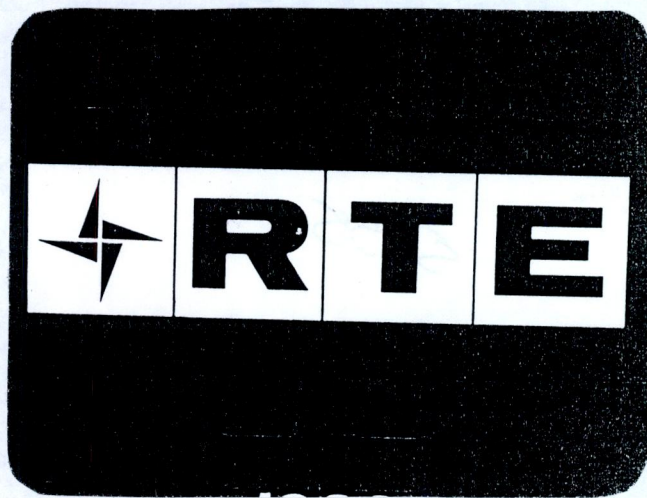


Fig 5.35 RTEI's Identity 1966

An example of BBC2 'moving with the times' and responding to the world around it would be the sequence that appears prior to music programmes: the '2' is carved of wood and is seen at a side angle in front of a large sound speaker. With a boom of sound from the speaker, the '2' bounces off the ground towards the screen. (fig 5.34) Not only is this relevant to the following programme, it dynamically uses the depth of the screen, coming at you in a trail of smoke.

Unlike Channel 4 and Anglia, RTE do not have a toolkit. Neither do they have the personality seen in MTV and BBC.

RTE

Many designs are created specifically to remind you of some other logo, because they want you to make that connection. I think that RTEI's present ident was designed to resemble the BBCI numeral '1'. If you compare them they are very similar, even down to the reduction of the RTE which used to dominate the '1'. (fig 5.30) The difference is that the numeral for BBC has a slit cut from the centre making it an original numeral, which therefore works better than the RTE's '1'.

Early RTE idents were kept very simple, with strong black and white shapes, and a certain sense of symmetry (see RTE on image chart). Their logo from 1966 - 1969 became even sharper and had been simplified as much as possible, but because of the pointed edges it had become quite an ugly shape (fig 5.35). Although I don't actually like this logo, the RTE corporate logo designed in 1970 was the best use of the Brigid's Cross, and linked it into the 'RTE' very well. Not only that, it also has a sense of networks, and

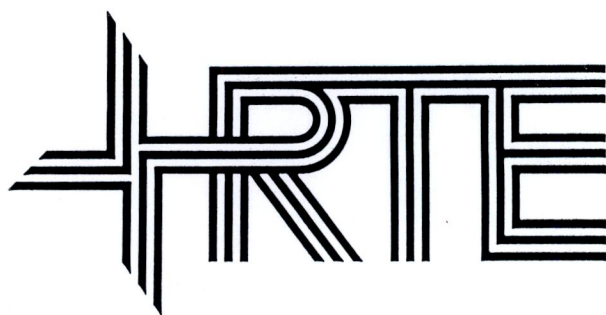


Fig 5.36 RTEI's Identity 1970

communications because of the way the separate letters are linked with lines that suggest wiring. I have never really liked any kind of logo that uses series of lines, or outlines probably because it was used a lot in early logos and therefore always looks dated. The idea of networks is a good one. It is the execution that looks dated even if it did last 10 years. The treatment of the St Brigid's Cross here is more reminiscent of the original cross made of reeds. Although it looks more like the branching off of communication cables than a Christian Cross (fig 3.36). Pleass comments on this himself:

The best of these versions was the 'in-house' design of 1970 incorporating a line structured cross with the initial letters RTE in a similar style.
(Pleass, 1988)

Because of the temptation of the three dimensional screen and the unlimited availability of colour it must be hard to resist the temptation to overdo things. The new ident designed outside the RTE design department in 1986 is the worst piece of television design I have come across. For the first time RTE have used three dimensioned letters, in the same style as Channel 4's numeral. The difference is that Lambie-Nairn & Co based the Channel 4 numeral on an actual arabic '4' and worked within that constraint. (Lambie-Nairn, 1990, p.675) The letters used in the RTE ident look as though they were made out of lego bricks. They are chunky and ugly, and the proportions of height and width are too similar, making them look square. Letters are beautiful shapes in themselves and it is a pity to alter them to such an extent. Although I have mentioned the advantage of having a symbol that contains some kind of irritant, the fact that the top bar of the 'T' is not the same length on both sides of the main stem is unnecessary and looks like a mistake. The three dimensional effect is falsified by the fact that the top of

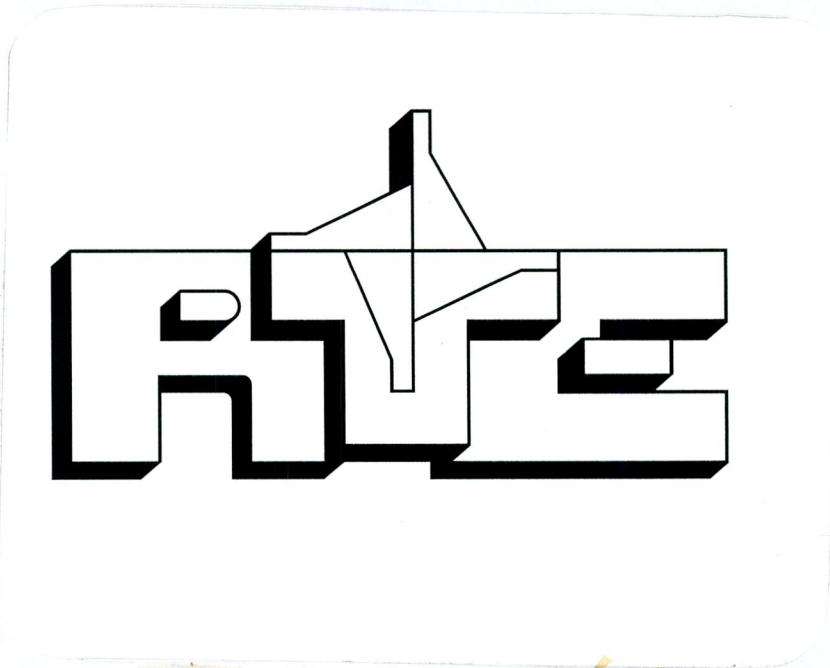


Fig 5.37 RTE's present corporate logo, 1986



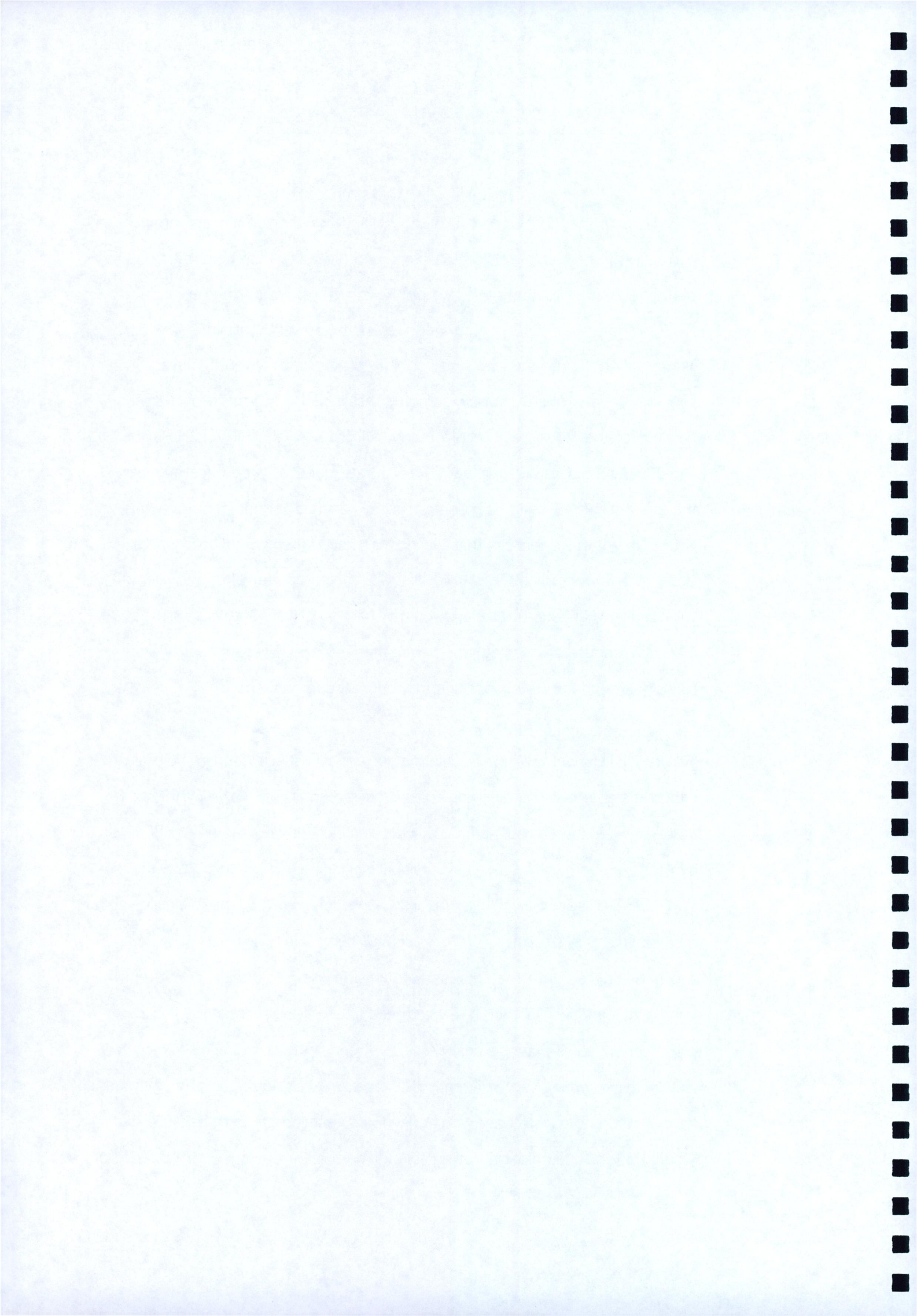
Fig 5.38 RTE Business Card, 1993



Fig 5.39 BBC1 and 2 base logos

the 'T' is on the same top line as the 'R' and 'E' when, if it were drawn correctly, should be higher than the other two (fig 5.37). Having said that, it did provide the best design for corporate structure, linking the RTE1 and RTE2 together, but that is its only good attribute and yet it is still being used as the station's corporate logo on all print media (fig 5.38). Even the Head of Graphic Design, Hilliard Hayden, admitted that it was a bad piece of design. Because of the lack of enthusiasm received from both the Head of Design and the Head of Graphics for the RTE corporate identity, I get the feeling that there is a higher voice in RTE insisting on its continued use. These are the added strains on designers that we do not have when in college, where everything is worked towards an ideal. Having realised that often the client will not like what you produce and you may have to compromise has aroused a certain amount of sympathy in me for the RTE design department having to work around the restrictions that may be placed upon them.

So does RTE's identity have a united structure? Firstly, it need not be as cohesive because it has different on and off screen logos. I think this is a mistake. I feel there should be a common element between the two. BBC1 and BBC2 have very different and unique idents, yet each incorporate the same 'BBC' logotype which is used off screen (fig 5.39). I have already mentioned this in Chapter 3 but it is relevant here. Unity and versatility are the main ingredients that makes a television ident different to other corporate identities. In 1986 RTE attempted to use the off screen logo as an on screen ident. It was too heavy for the screen, and was replaced 2 years later with something very different. RTE lacks unity obviously because they have 2 different logos. They won't abandon the corporate logo because it would be too costly, yet it is not suitable for on screen use so RTE are faced



with a compromise, each must be treated separately. While this is not a good thing, at least we don't have to endure the off screen logo every time we switch on the television!

It is quite obvious that RTE does not have a cohesive ident. Why else would they need separate on and off screen identities that bare no relation to each other. This is not strictly the RTE design department's fault. It is expensive to change the corporate identity because it would mean that all vehicles would have to be re-painted and stationery would have to be re-printed. So if RTE were to have a common on and off screen ident they would have to work with the awful piece of design that appears off screen. But I think it is time that RTE shed their skin and started afresh. There are so many exciting designs being produced in other countries, especially Britain. Isn't it about time RTE showed that they can produce as high a standard as any one else? There is no doubt that RTE's design department have more than enough in-house talent judging by some of the programme titles produced over the last three or four years, but this talent has not been given room to explore new ideas, and has had no greater demand than to produce similar style graphics to match the similar style programmes, that RTE have mimicked from overseas. What about their younger secondary station Network 2?

Network 2

Network 2 is younger than RTE1. Because it had an image change in 1988 it was able to cast off preconceptions and start afresh. Although the name change was necessary to do this, discarding 'RTE' from its name did not aid the corporate structure, transmitting a fractile image. However Network 2's ident has much more potential for use as a toolkit than RTE1. But Network

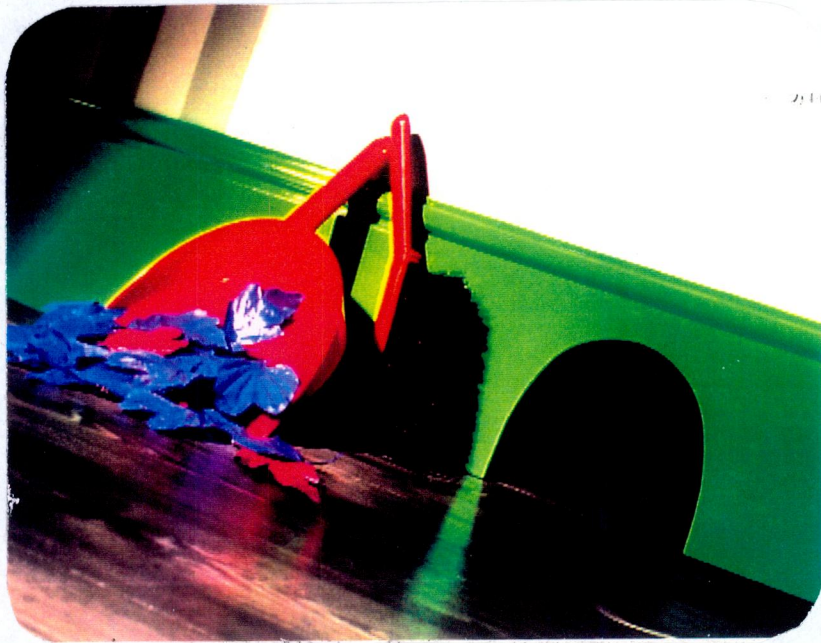


Fig 5.40 Network 2's Autumn sequence, 1993

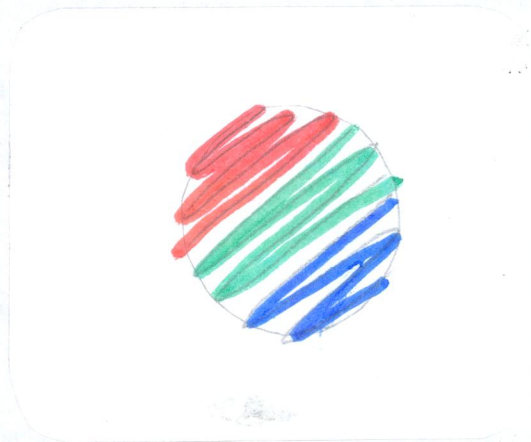


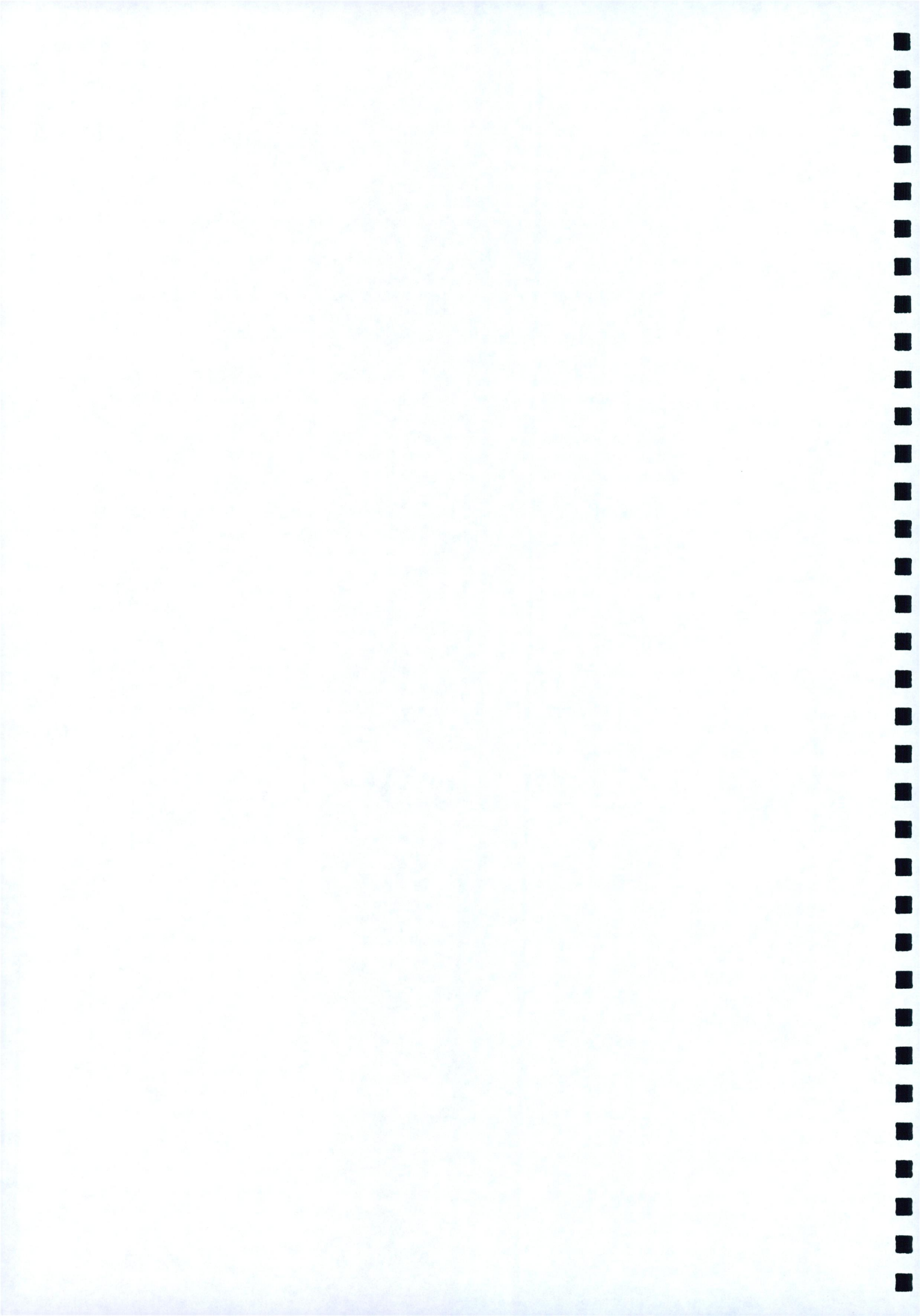
Fig 5.41 Network 2 on-screen clock

2 have only made use of its colour scheme in the last few months. The red, blue and green has been used very effectively in recent seasonal promotions. It began with a parrot in the Network 2 colours. Much to my embarrassment this parrot 'surprises' viewers by barking! As you will recall, I mentioned a sequence for Channel 4 that showed a yellow duckling do the very same thing, and they did it first. But original work did follow. A nice idea which they experimented briefly with was for an autumn promotion where they used the 'house' colours but in unexpected ways. One sequence focused on a dustpan full of leaves, leaning against a skirting board. Of these three elements only the leaves are natural and therefore we anticipate natural colours. The least natural colour for leaves is blue, so this sequence used a red dustpan and a green skirting board (neither being inconceivable) and solid blue leaves that looked as though they were made of plastic (fig 5.40). This is so unnatural that you notice and remember it. This station's identity is due for re-design for the 1994 season (television seasons go from autumn to autumn) and I imagine that they will retain the house colours. These colours and the brush stroke effect are both used to brand the Network 2 clock and it is extremely effective (fig 5.41). This is a good identity, and was designed by the Head of Design at RTE, Mr Hilliard Hayden.

Channel 4 and Anglia both work well on and off-screen projecting a cohesive image that exudes quality and professionalism while creating trust among viewers. MTV successfully appeals to its 12-35 year old audience with its spontaneity, and BBC2 appeals to all ages, and is greatly admired by my fellow students. RTE has none of these qualities. It is clear that they need a symbol that will act as a toolkit, and a unified image representing both stations on and off-screen. Its lack of personality also needs to be catered for. RTE need to review their corporate identity. They need to conform to a house-style to



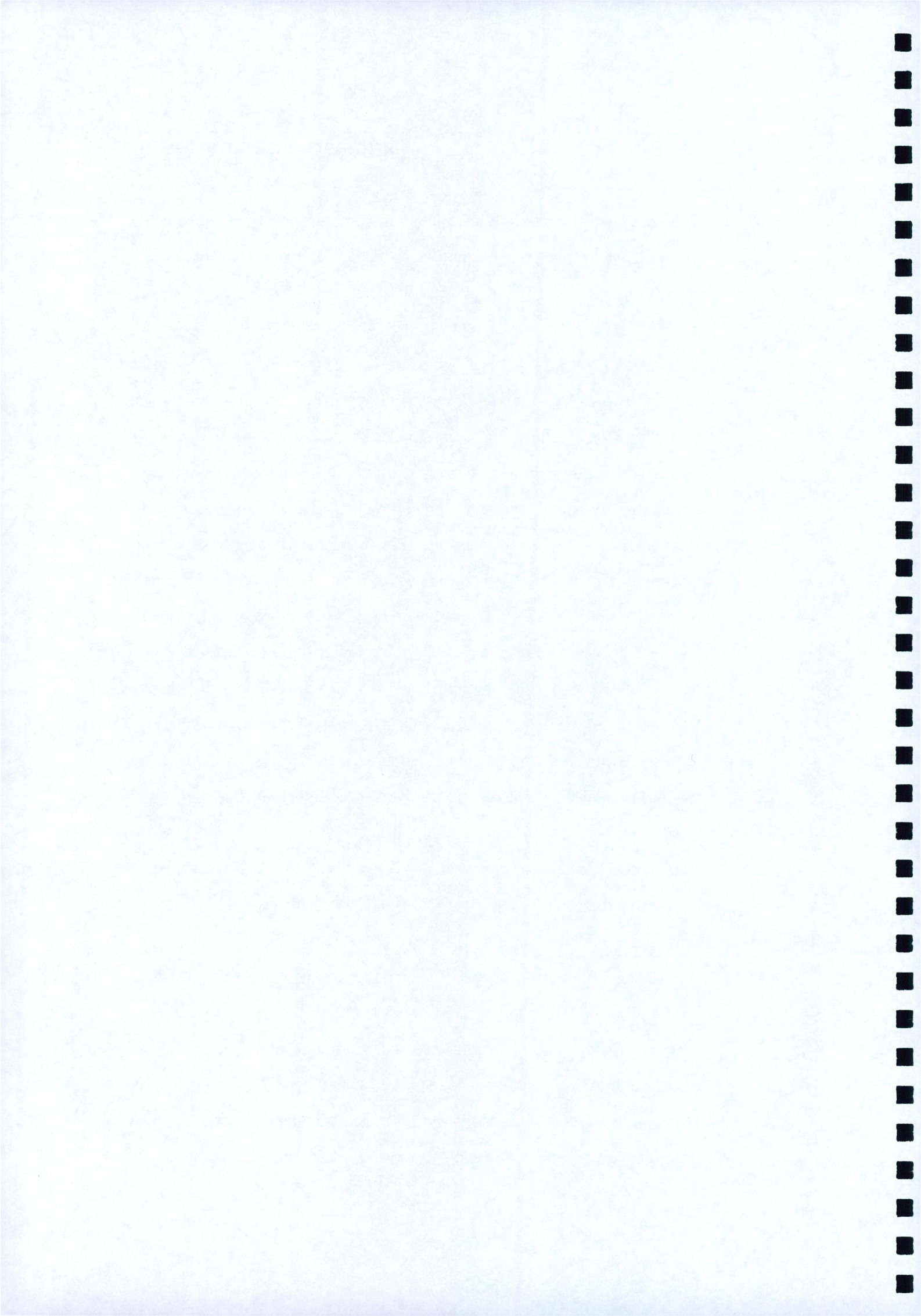
increase the viewers confidence. I feel that this is the most important change that RTE need to make. They need to review their symbol and I think an innovative logo that provides a toolkit will be the answer to their problems. Our past is rich with imagery and legends, and would surely yield a useful image for a symbol to replace the St Brigid's Cross. RTE are aware that they need to change their corporate image, but as Hilliard Hayden explained to me, it is an expensive procedure (Maguire, 1993). What seems more in doubt is whether they will ever consider working on both stations as one identity. While they intend to re-design Network 2 in 1994, there was no mention of a change overall.



The aims of this thesis were to examine the progression of the RTE identity in relation to other station identities, and to look at its standing among today's idents.

Chapter one showed that RTE have not progressed from the use of the St Brigid's Cross as their representational symbol to date. The only progression that they have made is technical improvements. Exciting things were happening around them: the creation of MTV, and the design of the innovative Channel 4 logo using computer animation. A comparison of the first couple of RTE identities and the present corporate identity show little difference, except in the method of production. In contrast, the changes that have occurred on the BBC2 ident show a better understanding of the 'ident' and of the available technology. While ITV's ident has not deviated much from their first logo, it has improved, and has such high structural demands that they have probably found it difficult to satisfy every requirement. This logo serves the required function: unity among its 15 regional companies, which is an admirable achievement and works well in that sense.

RTE do seem to be moving towards abandoning the Cross on-screen, yet it disappoints me to know that they are still unaware of their lack of structure. It is a pity that they intend to re-design Network 2 in 1994, without considering RTEI's image at the same time. Channel 4 could lend a valuable lesson about cohesion and versatility. Anglia proved that you can discard a long standing symbol while retaining valued tradition and emotion. BBC demonstrated how a conservative semi-state station could be as fun-loving as any one else. MTV show that they are not just another station, that they have their own 'look'. In relation to these competitors, RTE are lacking in



almost every way. Instead of mimicking what is produced by their competitor, they should be noting the qualities and ingredients that make Channel 4 cohesive, Anglia traditional, BBC formal yet fun-loving and MTV unique.

Chapter 2 asked why we need identities in television. They are as necessary as any other corporate identity. They identify the different stations, appearing at an average of every 15 minutes to remind you who brought you the programme that you are watching (BBC being the exception with no advertisement breaks). Television graphic identities brand stations so that as you search for your chosen programme, you know when you have found the right station. These are the functions they serve. As to why we have them, I think this is down to the professional designers influence, encouraged by Richard Levin in the 1950s.

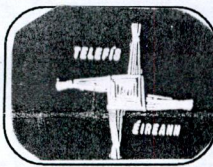
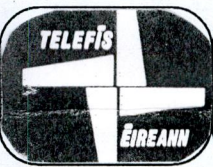

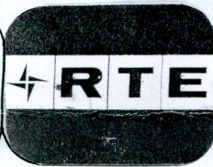
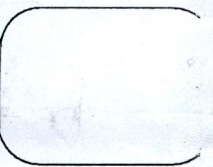

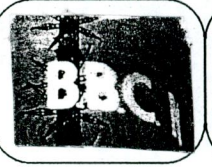

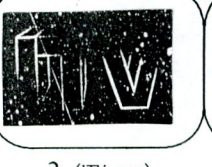
Chapter 3 examined the function of corporate structure in television. This should be a consideration for RTE although they seem unaware of it. BBC, SKY Channel and particularly ITV show cohesion in their image due to their structure, and I feel that RTE should consider applying more unity to their image.

A close look at the use of RTE's St Brigid's Cross as a representational symbol proves that it is no longer appropriate, and that something new, yet with the tradition of the old is required to replace the cross, which would also solve the problem of overall network structure. A single symbol could represent both stations, project the desired emotions and history of our country, yet still allow for separate idents for RTE1 and Network 2. This is



the key to RTE's fractile identity. A single representative symbol could act as a toolkit, provide cohesion, and give a structured identity. It is a lot to expect from one symbol, and yet while some example stations I have used cannot claim all these qualities (Channel 4 for example need not consider structure as they are a sole station), it is not inconceivable. BBC broadcast two stations, each with their own personalities, but with an overall unified structure. If they can do it so can RTE. It may take a gradual progression but hopefully RTE will resolve some of these obstacles. Fortunately they are aware of their identity crisis. I would be more concerned if they actually liked their logo and I feel sure that in time and in better financial circumstances they will re-work their image. Our national television network is something to be proud of considering their financial limitations. It would be nice if they reflected that pride in their image.



	DATE	1955	1959	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
MTV Launched in 1981										
SKY Launched in 1988										
SUPER Launched in 1987										
RTE2 NETWORK 2 Launched in 1976 name changed in 1988										
Corporate logo RTE Launched in 1962										
RTE1 Launched in 1962			 4. (RTE1 1961)	 5. (RTE1 1962)	 6. (RTE1 1963)			 9. (RTE1 1966)	 10. (RTE1 1967)	
BBC2 Launched in 1964							 7. (BBC2 1964)			
BBC1 Launched in 1936	 1. (BBC1 1955)						 8. (BBC1 1964)			
CHANNEL 4 Launched in 1982										
ITV Launched in 1955	 2. (ITV 1955)									
ANGLIA Launched in 1959										3. (Anglia 1959)
CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY	Maseeley Hot Press printing machine introduced	Dry Letraset introduced	Photosetting-instant white on black				British screen quality improved from 405 to 625 lines			

← **Unfold**

1967

1968

1969

1970

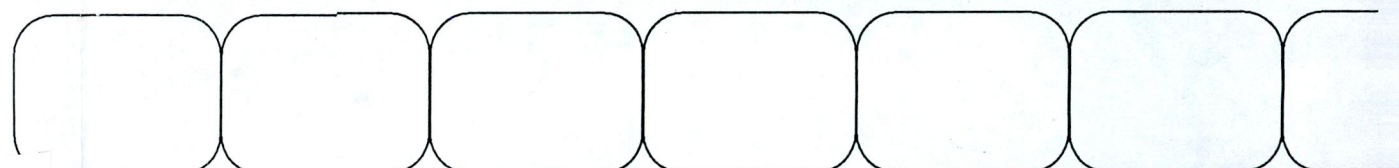
1971

1972

1973

1974

1975

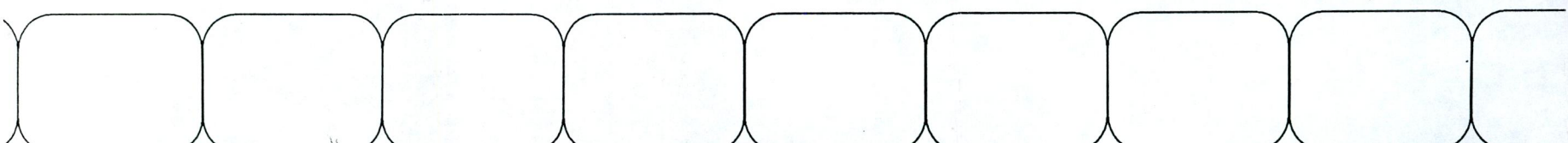
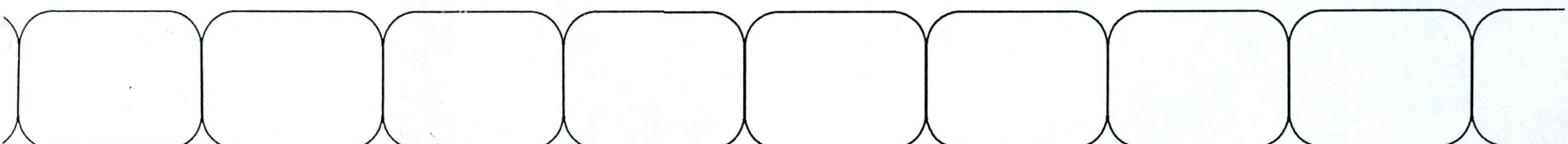
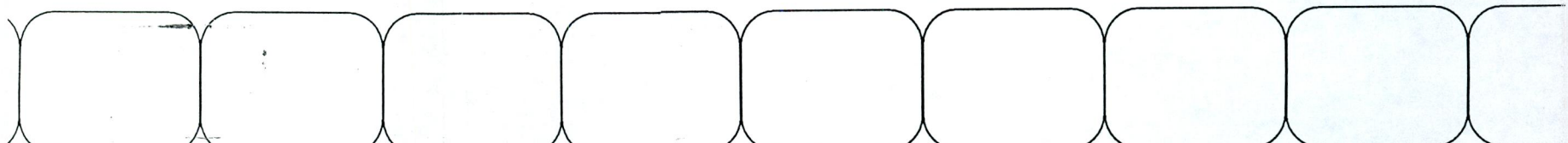
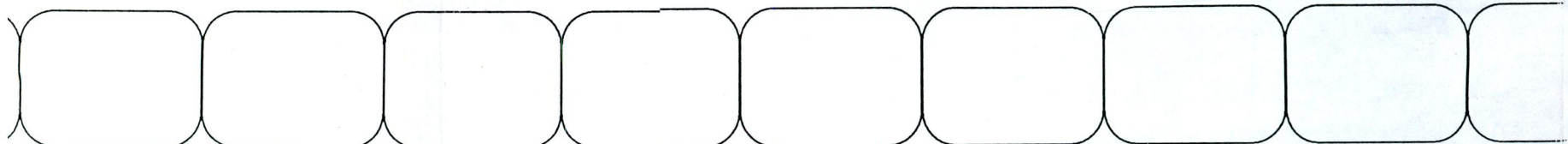
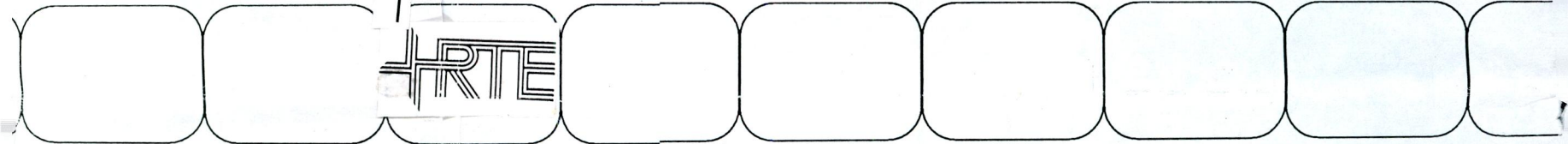


↑ II. (RTE 1969)



IO. (RTE 1967)

I2. (RTE 1969)



BBC receive character generator. Introduction of colour TV.

Electronic Paint System introduced

		BBC receive character generator. Introduction of colour TV.		Electronic Paint System introduced				
--	--	---	--	------------------------------------	--	--	--	--

← Lift

1975

1976

1977

1978

1979

1980

1981

1982



16. (MTV 1981)



13. (RTE2 1978)



15. (RTE1 1980)



14. (BBC2 1979)



18. (CH 4 1982)



17. (ITV 1981)

Computer Control introduced to the Rostrum Camera

Channel 4 logo becomes first logo to be created by computer animation in the US

Life
↓

Life
↓

3

CR
FM
K

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988



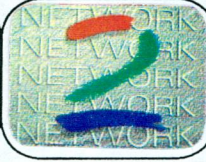
26. (SKY 1988)



25. (SUPER 1987)



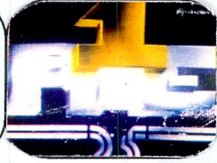
24. (RTE2 1986)



27. (NET.2 1988)



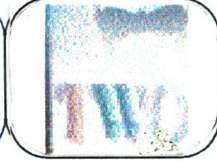
23. (RTE 1986)



22. (RTE1 1986)



28. (RTE1 1988)



21. (BBC2 1986)



19. (BBC1 1983)



20. (ITV 1985)



29. (ANGLIA 1988)

BBC build a video Rostrum Camera and the Quantel Paintbox was launched

Apple Machintosh was launched

English Markell & Pockett open their design agency

RTE receive their first Quantel Paintbox

891

1951
12-25
12-25
12-25

Unfold →

1951

1951

1951

Print
List On
RTE recd

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993



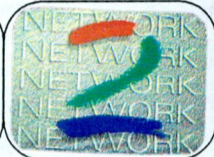
34. MTV Present Day



35. SKY Present Day



36. SUPER Present Day



37. NET.2 Present Day



38. RTE Present Day



33. (RTE) 1991



39. RTE Present Day



31. (BBC2) 1990



40. BBC2 Present Day



32. (BBC1) 1990



41. BBC1 Present Day



42. CH 4 Present Day



30. (ITV) 1989

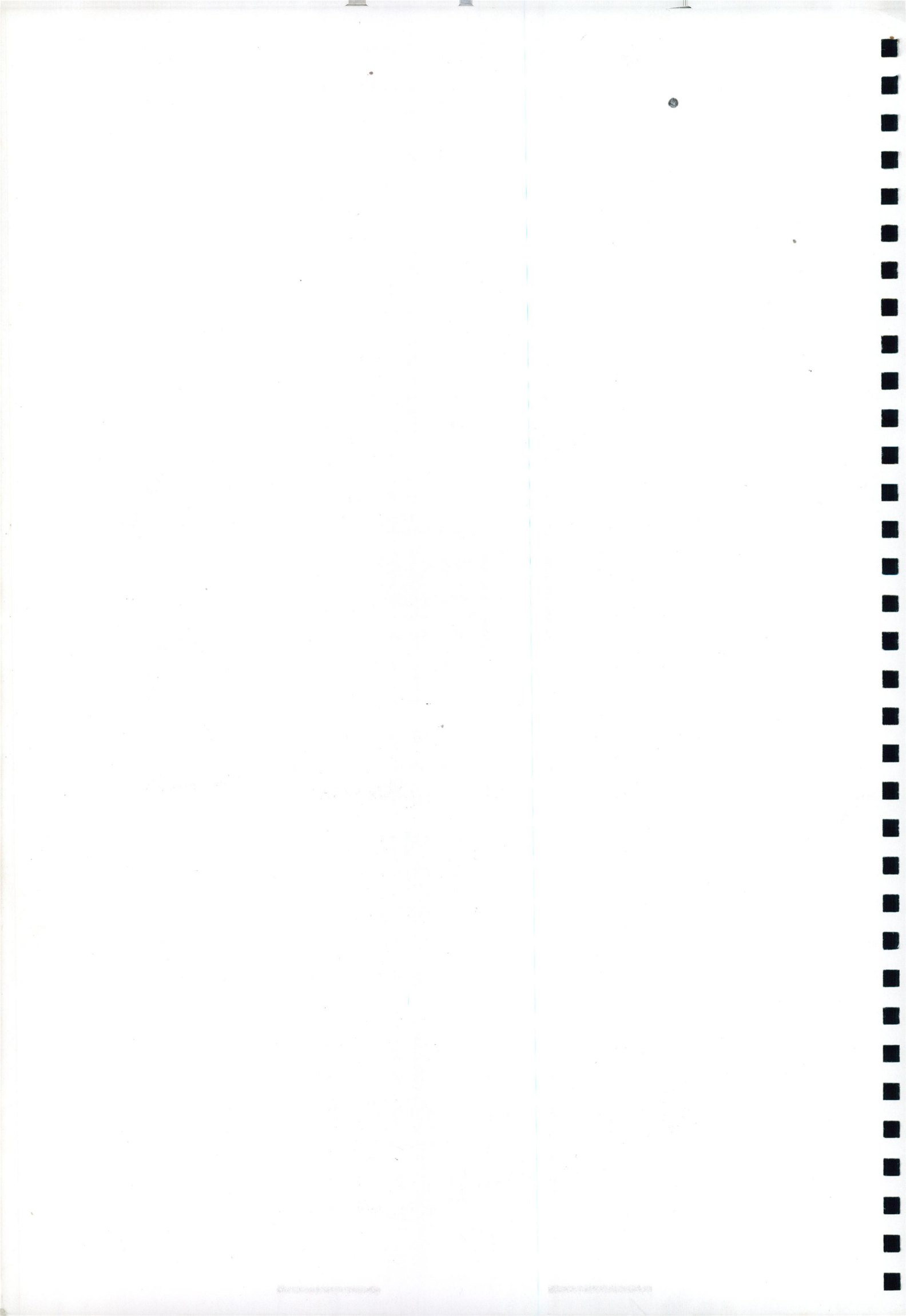


43. ITV Present Day

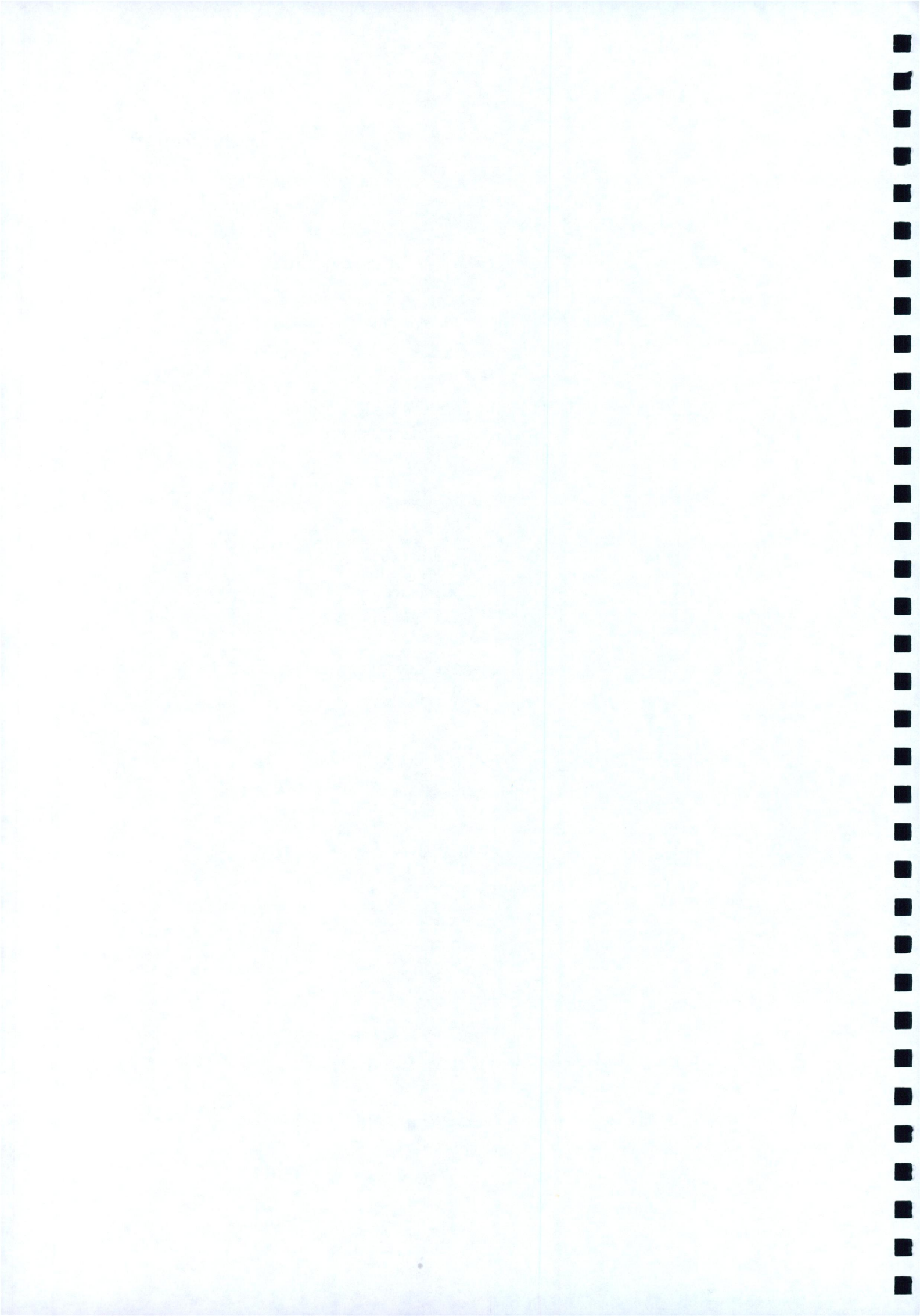


44. ANGLIA PresentDay

RTE receive their H.A.L



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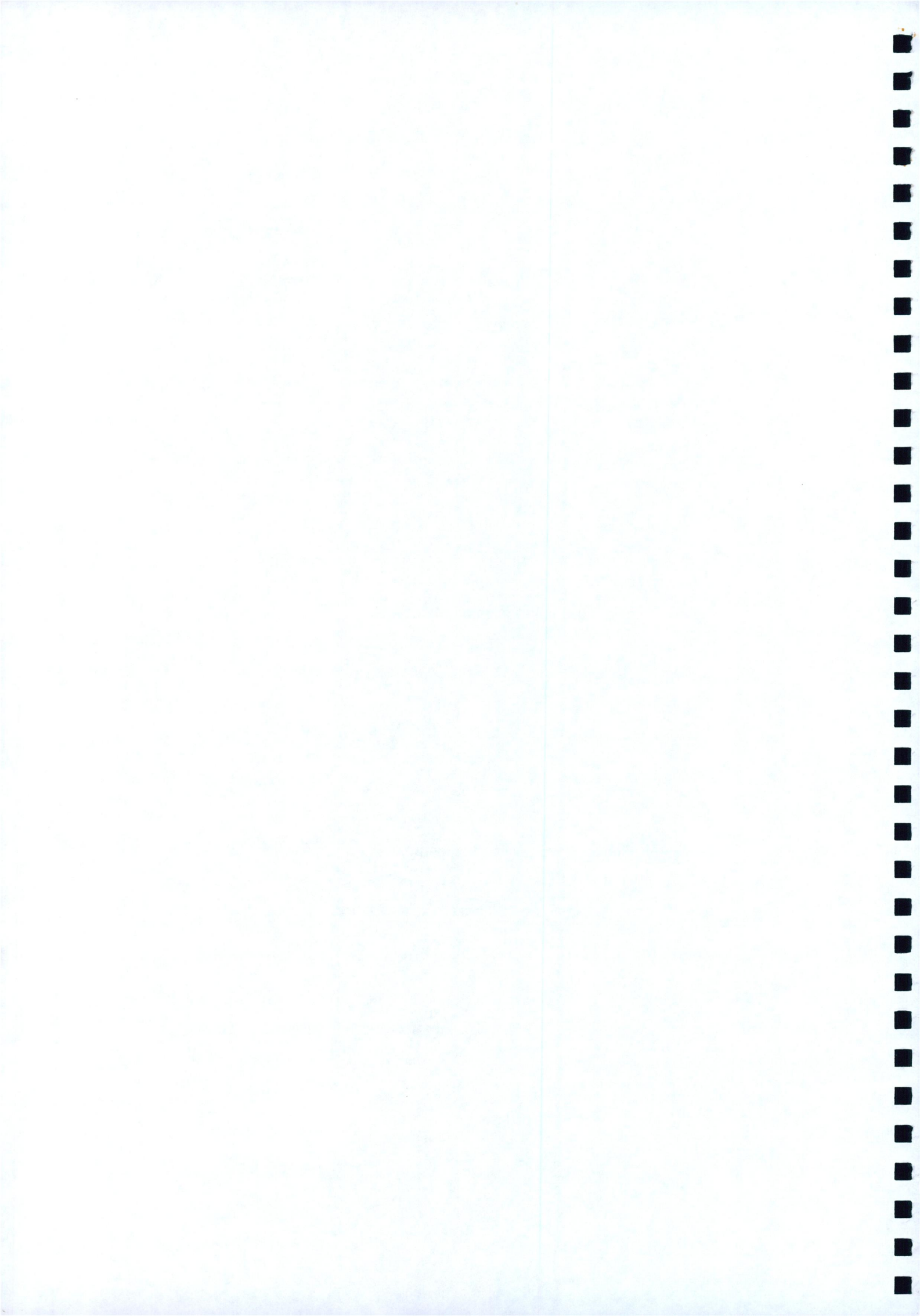
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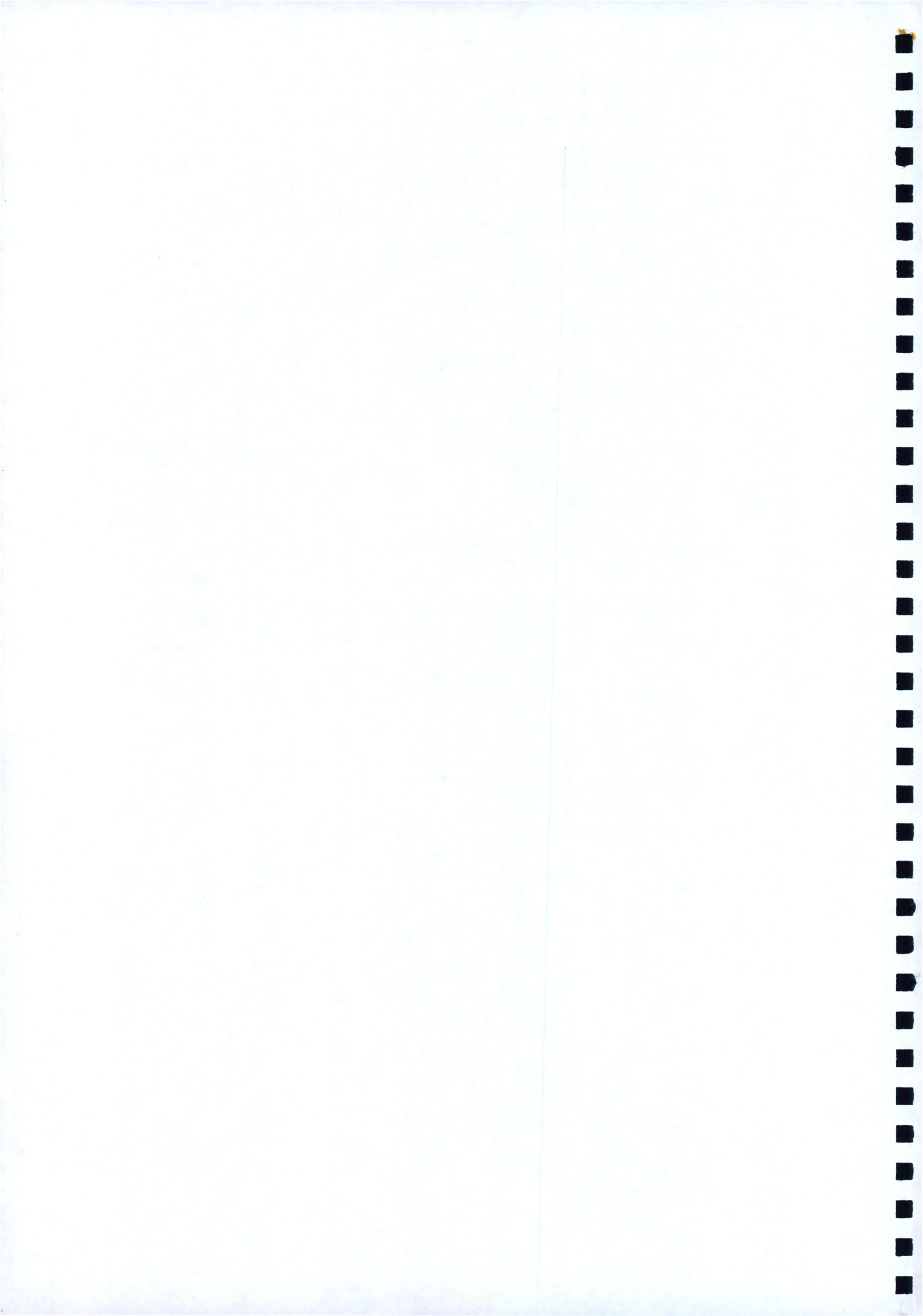
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