

# Luba Lukova visualizes the human narrative

BY ALEXIS COLLINS ON JANUARY 25, 2018

Luba Lukova is a world-renowned graphic designer, and she spoke for the first time at Penn State in the Stuckeman Family Building on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018.

Award-winning graphic design artist Luba Lukova presented her social commentary images at the Stuckeman Family Building Wednesday night in an attempt to visualize the human narrative.

Lukova introduced her slideshow, “Designing Justice,” in front of a packed room on Jan. 24. The New York based artist presented over 20 images of artwork and designs. She discussed concepts such as immigration, poverty, unionization, and corporate corruption. Lukova said that her work is meant to be metaphoric, meaningful, and appealing to the viewer both visually and intellectually.

“I try to address the issues in my way,” Lukova said. “I’m not sure if art exactly can give us the answers of how to resolve these major issues that we face today, but if we are able to engage people to look at this with imagination and to think about that, that’s the purpose of art.”

Lukova showcased a series of pieces that were simple stylistically, but vivid in color. Most of her illustrations are hand drawn, although she occasionally uses a computer to manipulate images. She said that the simple use of color, line and text help in making her work resonate with the people across different spectrums.

“Art can really change the world. I don’t think it can do it immediately, but it works slowly but surely,” the Bulgarian-born designer said. “Design is a perfect tool to [change people] because graphic design reaches people in a very immediate way, not in galleries or in museums or in distant areas but it’s on the street, it’s in public spaces.”

Lukova’s opening photo comprises of four different images, there is a foot with an ankle chain that is later converted into a sandal. She said that the image is supposed to be transformative and that the shackles morphing into a sandal represents giving people the tools to live a better life, and to carry themselves with dignity. Another image depicts an exposed brain with a cheese grater inside of it. The cheese grater has the words “media” printed on the top, which illustrates the mainstream media misusing the public’s trust and failing to provide the truth to its audience.

Lukova’s thought-provoking illustrations were featured in Time magazine, the New York Times, and at Harvard University while permanent collections of her work are found in the Library of Congress, Denver Art Museum, and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. She is also the author of the “Social Justice 2008” posters, which has gained global attention.

Despite the critical acclaim, Lukova said that she prefers seeing her artwork in public spaces. She also discusses the importance of concepts in artwork to help create conversation.

“If an image is able to move you, to make you think, to make you question, it’s an artform with a capital a,” she said. “To me that power that the images have, somehow the post-modern visual art forgot about it. Design to me is more interesting to do because of this immediate contact with people.”

Seniors and graphic design majors Rachel Tiscione and Sabrina Hecht both enjoyed the event and said that it inspired them to do more projects.

“It’s hard to miss her style because it’s really so bold,” Hecht said. “It’s so crazy how she intended it to be a certain message and it really was outcasted as exactly what she wanted and no one misinterpreted her. That shows how powerful of a designer she’s been.”

Tiscione said that she liked how easily identifiable Lukova’s sketches were.

“As a designer one of the most important things in any project is concepting and making sure things are clear, and sometimes that can be very difficult,” she said. “Seeing that she barely uses any typography and still you understand exactly what she’s trying to say, I think I’m going to take with me and try to implement in my own work. Simple is good.”