

DESIGN LIFE NOW

NATIONAL DESIGN TRIENNIAL 2006

Podcast Transcript: Nicholas Blechman

My name is Nicholas Blechman and I'm a graphic designer in New York City. The *Empire* project is part of a magazine called *No Zone*, which I have been publishing on and off for the past ten years myself, as an independently published fanzine. And it was an attempt to get illustrators and graphic designers to comment politically on what's going on and for them—it was an opportunity for them to work outside of their normal environment.

The *Empire* issue is my response and the response of other graphic designers and cartoonists to the Bush Administration's reaction to 9/11, to the war in Afghanistan and to the war in Iraq.

Visually the mix of all these different visual graphic styles is, I think, emblematic of all the different opinions that are out there. I try not to impose anyone's style on the book, so I try to use the page as a space for artists or for designers to work in any way they want.

The *100 Percent Evil* book came about as collaboration with my friend and studio mate, Kristoff Neiman, and I guess we wanted to find a space where we could do drawings just for the fun of drawing. We decided to do the latest issue on evil because after September 11, the word evil was being used a lot in the context of the terrorist attacks, and the war in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. It was just a very juicy, meaty term, and we didn't want the book to be political per se. but it definitely has political undertones.

In the middle of the book there's a war between Kristoff and myself, and Kristoff sends his Army, his drawings towards me, and I send from the opposite end. So reading forward I send my drawings of my army against Kristoff, and reading backwards from the end of the sequence, Kristoff sends his drawings against mine. And then in the very middle is a spread in which there's the grand battle. We thought that war is the ultimate evil.

For me design is organizing information in such a way that it makes a statement.