

## THE GRAPHIC GIFT:

*A study of the map of Australia's  
visual qualities*



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## **Certificate of Authorship Originality**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UTS or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

I also certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Signed



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## Abstract

This thesis examines the shape of the map of Australia, and analyses how its inherent visual qualities contribute to its recognition and ubiquity as a symbol. It is argued that the effectiveness of the map of Australia as a widely used graphic symbol stems from the characteristics of its shape, and that its attributes relate to those fundamentals of form and composition commonly accepted by graphic designers as necessary for creating an effective design. However, there is a paucity of literature that discusses or analyses maps in general and specifically the map of Australia, from this perspective. Whilst there has been some recognition from the cartographic discipline, this has simply hinted at the potential of shape as a contributing element in the recognition of maps as symbols. This literature has also been undertaken from a cartographic perspective and lacks the particular insight and understanding as to why and how the characteristics of shape can contribute to the effectiveness of a symbol.

A preliminary study of the shape of the map of Australia compared to other countries of similar size or shape, initially identifies how the visual and graphic uniqueness of cartographic maps create a recognisable and memorable form, and subsequently, how these elements can contribute to the flexibility of a map to adapt as a graphic symbol. Identifying these elements is the first step in determining whether the map's shape can serve as an effective graphic symbol.

The heart of the study builds on this understanding and examines how, by applying the principles of design, we are able to understand why the map works as a symbol. This analysis develops a cohesive set of principles, which are used as an analytical tool to evaluate the map of Australia in terms of its effectiveness as a graphic symbol. This thesis is guided by my own personal knowledge as a practising designer of many years' standing and also draws on graphic design literature that provides an insight into the specific design principles, visual identity and creative process involved in developing a symbol. Through an understanding of these core principles it can be demonstrated how and why the map of Australia serves as an effective graphic symbol.

Finally, this thesis presents a series of matrices that presents the sizeable collection of logos in the research database, and which reveals the versatility, and graphic adaptability, of the map of Australia's unique form.



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