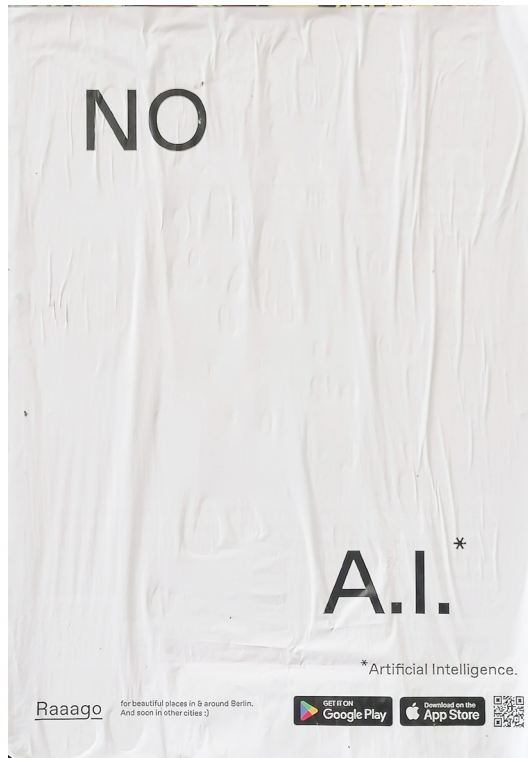


Visual analysis research report by Beatriz Torres

The poster that
will be studied:



A realistic scenario where we
would meet the poster is:



1. Preattentive vision

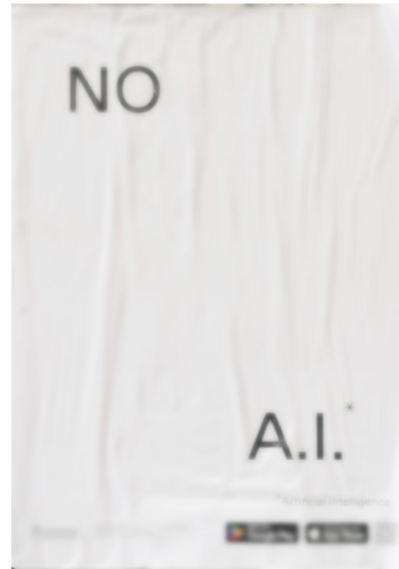
1.1 Peripheral vision experiment

Procedure

A quick way to test the legibility of the poster with peripheral vision is to look at the design on a smartphone screen, extending one arm to the side at an angle of approximately 90°, then slowly moving the arm back to 0°.



View at $\approx 90^\circ$



View at $\approx 30^\circ$



Original poster or view at 0°

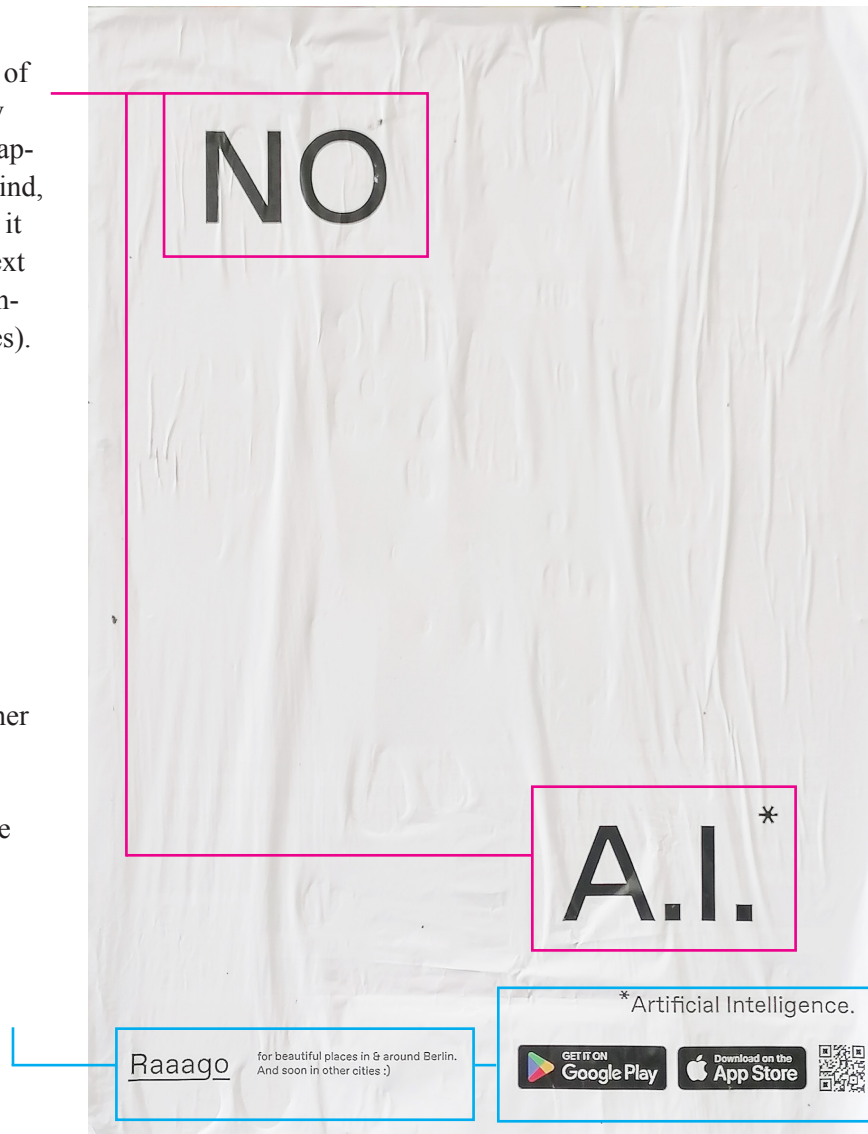
At 90°, this simple design is completely unillegible. One can make out the predominant color in the background (white) and is aware of the main blocks of text “No A.I.”, but they appear simply as black “blobs”. However, when the poster slowly comes into the subject’s frame of vision (approx. 30°), one can clearly make out the two main blocks of text in the poster. At this angle, the smaller text at the bottom is still very much indiscernible from the background and only the black rectangles are clear to the viewer.

1. Preattentive vision

1.2 Checking with Gestalt principles

According to the Gestalt principle of proximity, objects are instinctively grouped by the viewer when they appear close together. With this in mind, we can see two clear groups when it comes to the two main words of text in the poster “No” and “A.I.” (highlighted with the magenta rectangles).

The logos on the bottom right corner can also be grouped together, as well as the smaller text on the left. To help this grouping, the principle of similarity is also present when you consider that the text uses the same font and size, and the rectangles on the bottom right are also similar in color and size.



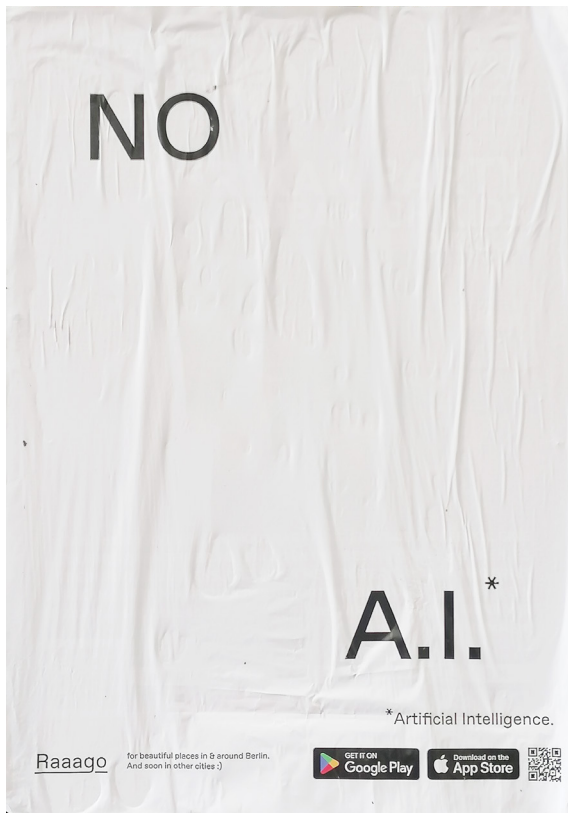
All this is possibilitated by the high contrast and good distinction between the background and the foreground/figure. It is clear to the viewer that the white is the background and the type and logos in black are in the foreground. There is no clear direction that any line in the poster forces the reader to follow, but for western readers it is clearly expected a read of the poster from top left to bottom right.

1. Preattentive vision

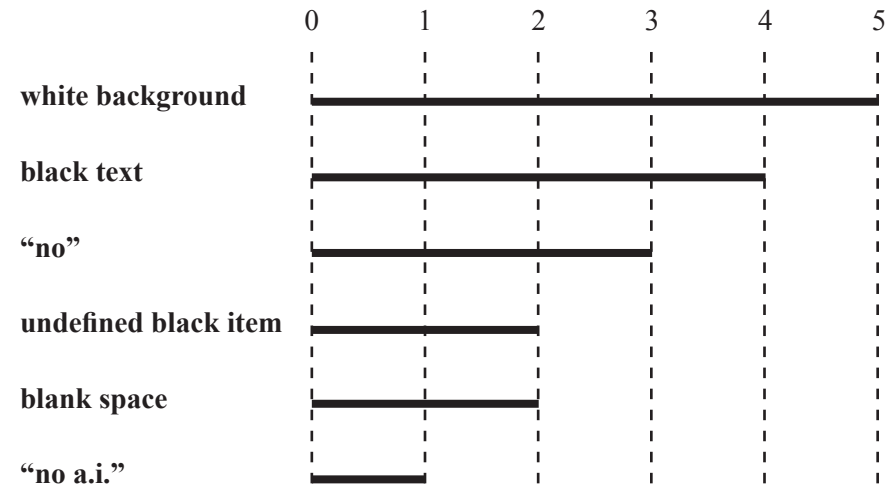
1.3 Tachistoscope study

Procedure

Subjects who have not seen the poster were asked to look at the design for 25 milliseconds. Then, they wrote down what they saw or what they *believe* they saw in that short period. The data was collected and categorized in the diagram on the right.



$n=5$

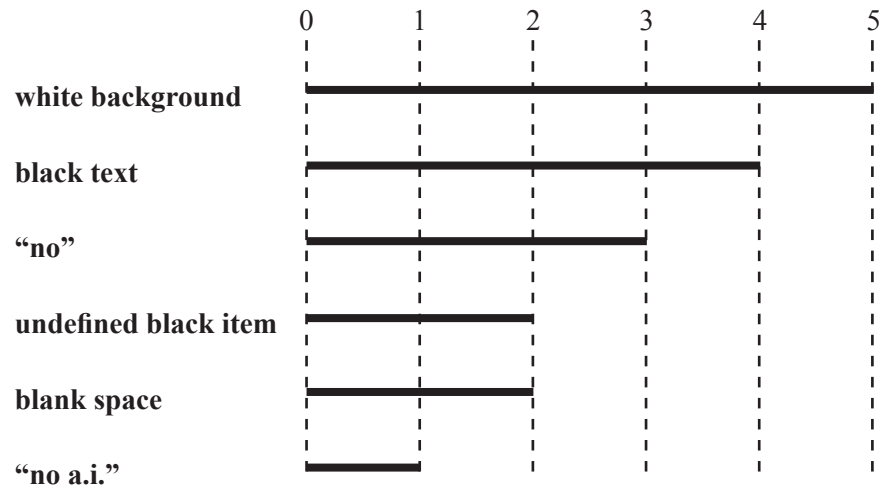


Results and discussion

Of the 5 subjects inquired, 100% were able to recognize the color of the background (white). However, only four people recognized the blocks of text. One subject was unable to notice that the black shade they saw was in fact text - they defined it as "bold text/shape". Whereas other subject was capable of recognizing the small rectangles on the bottom - "black geometrical shapes" - which leads us to acknowledge the viewers' ability to recognize color over content when shown an image for such a short period of time. Another interesting finding is that 3/5 people, or 60%, were able to read the word "no", and only one could read the whole sentence, "no a.i.". This could indicate that very common words are readable even in a split second.

1. Preattentive vision

1.4 Eye tracking experiment



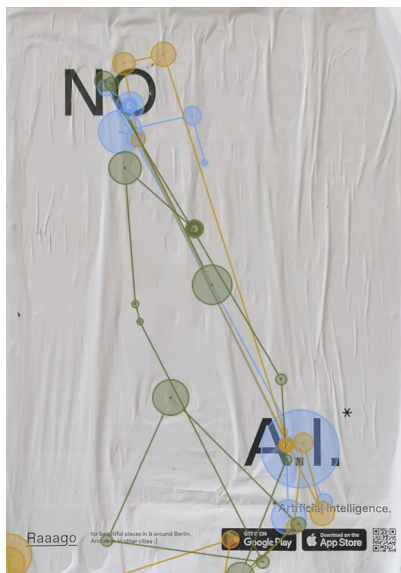
Procedure

Participants (n=15) were asked to look at a series of posters for 4 seconds each while their eye movement was being tracked.

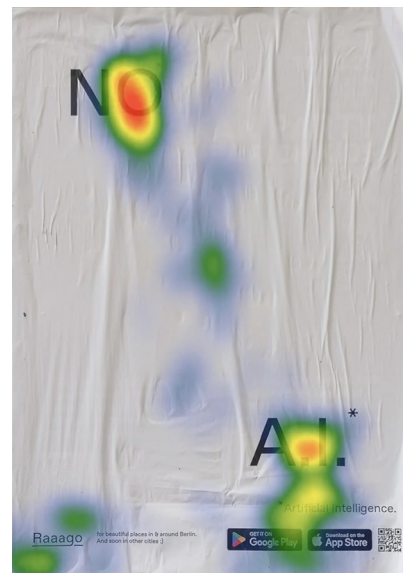
Results and discussion

As expected, participants have a clear distinction between figure and background, and therefore subconsciously chose to ignore the white background in favor of the black figure.

Subjects read the poster from top left to bottom right, and focused more of their time on the bigger blocks of text, first reading "No" and then "A.I.". Some outlier cases did linger for a bit on the white space, but all in all it seems irrelevant when we look at the heatmap which combines all participants data. The element people focused more was the word "No", which is interesting when we cross this with the tachistoscope data that suggests this word had an impact on viewers, even if it was seen for only 25 milliseconds.



Scanpath of 3 random participants



Heatmap with all participants data

2. Emotional Effect and Expression

2.1 Are we affected?



Positive: The poster is not loud nor too bright. It feels balanced and clear. There is no confusion from the viewer since the background and the foreground are clearly defined and the text is easily discernible, since the background is a monochromatic surface.

Positive:

- smooth gradients
- monochromatic surfaces
- smooth roundish shapes
- one simple shape

Negative: Without looking at the content (NO “A.I.”) and its meaning, it’s difficult to interpret the poster as anything other than neutral or positive. The viewer may respond to the affect grid test or the semantic differential test inadvertently influenced by their own pre-conceived notions and opinions on AI. However, it is also possible that negative feelings may arise from the visual presentation alone, i.e., the blank space may confuse the viewer or make them see the poster as “cold” or “empty”.

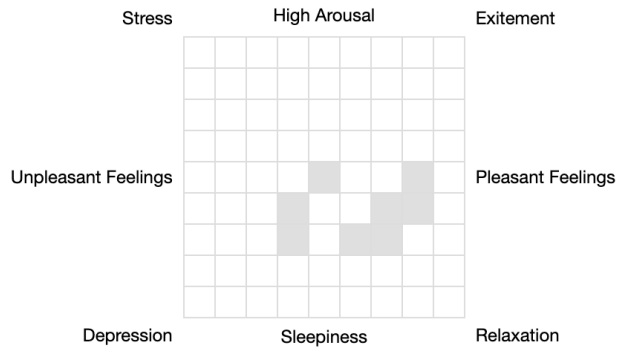
Negative:

- very bright stuff
- fast flickering stuff
- figure-ground-flicker
- high contrast patterns in foreground
- sideways movement

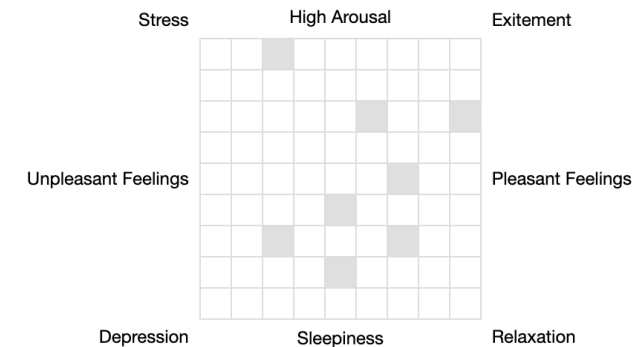
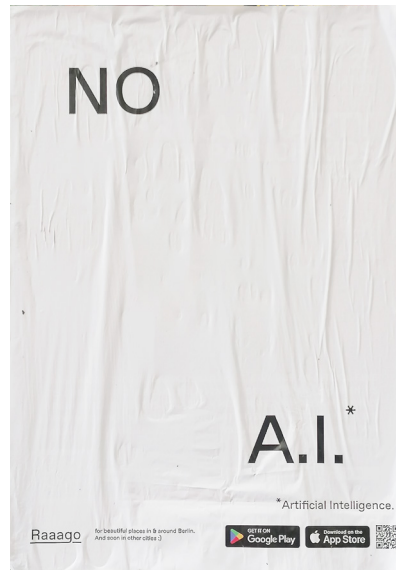
2. Emotional Effect and Expression

2.1 Are we affected?

$n=8$



Q: What is your current emotional state?



Q: Has your emotional state been affected [after seeing the poster]?

After seeing the poster for 4 seconds, participants display a different emotional state than their baseline. The responses to the second affect grid appear scattered: where some participants experience higher arousal, others seem less stimulated by it. Furthermore, the graph is skewed slightly to the right quadrants (pleasant feelings). There is debatable reliability on this test, since people are very influenced by the ideas they already have regarding AI when answering, and are prompted to reflect more than they normally would about the poster being shown.

2. Emotional Effect and Expression

2.2 Can we feel it?



Negative (pain)

- Suffering humans
- Inner body parts
- Destruction
- Death

Positive (lust)

- Smiling humans
- Naked humans?

There are no humans represented in the poster, therefore there is no subject that the viewer can look for to interpret tone or emotional pull.

There are few stimuli to the senses, since the poster has a very minimal design and does not utilize loud colors, textures or movement.

Vision

With the eyes, one experiences the poster's colors (black and white) and shapes (eg typography).

Hearing

The blank space and minimal text evokes silence and/or a long pause in speech.

Touch

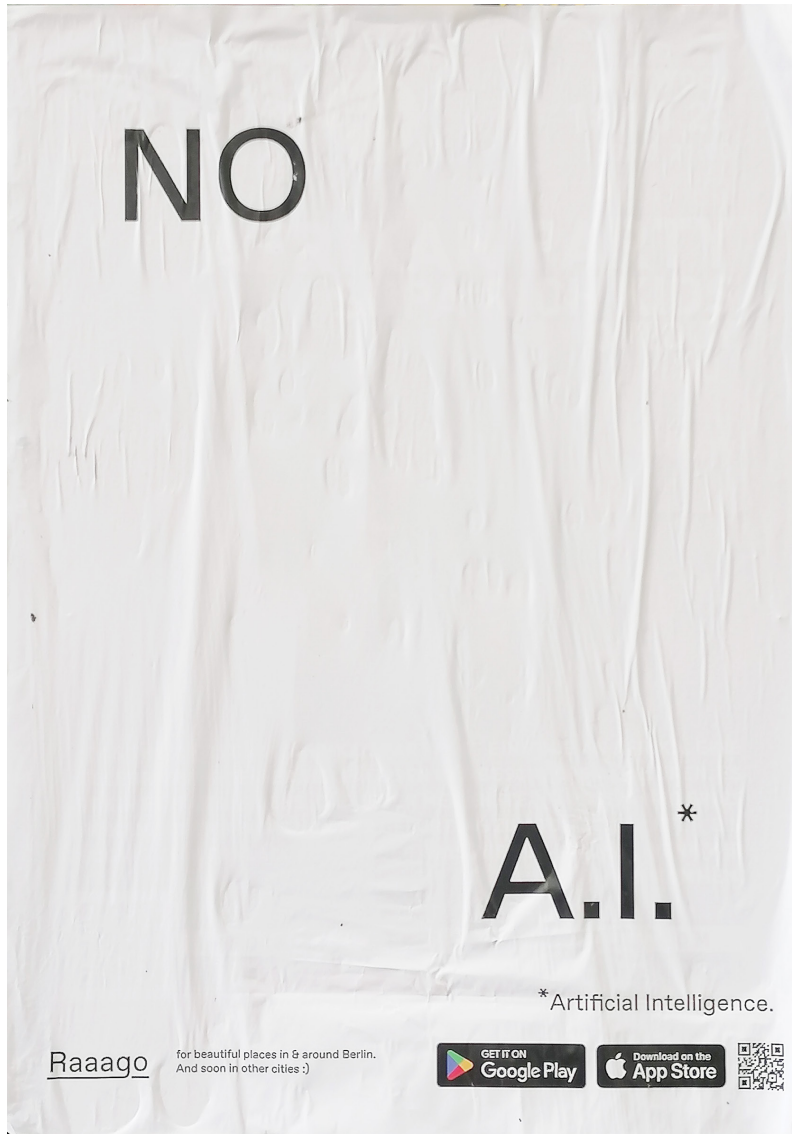
The monochromatic white surface combined with the minimalistic design may imbue the poster with a "cold" feeling.

Smell

Taste

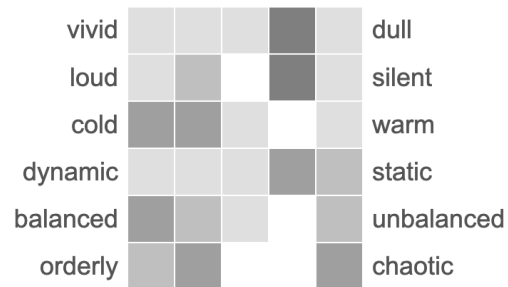
2. Emotional Effect and Expression

2.3 Which mood is conveyed?



Based on this chapter's tests, the poster seems to evoke an overall balanced and stoic mood, providing more positive feelings than negative. It is quite difficult for participants to look at the piece without interpreting the text in accordance to their own preconceived notions and opinions on the subject matter (A.I.), which explains some polarization. The results suggest the poster creates a strict, serious and cold mood.

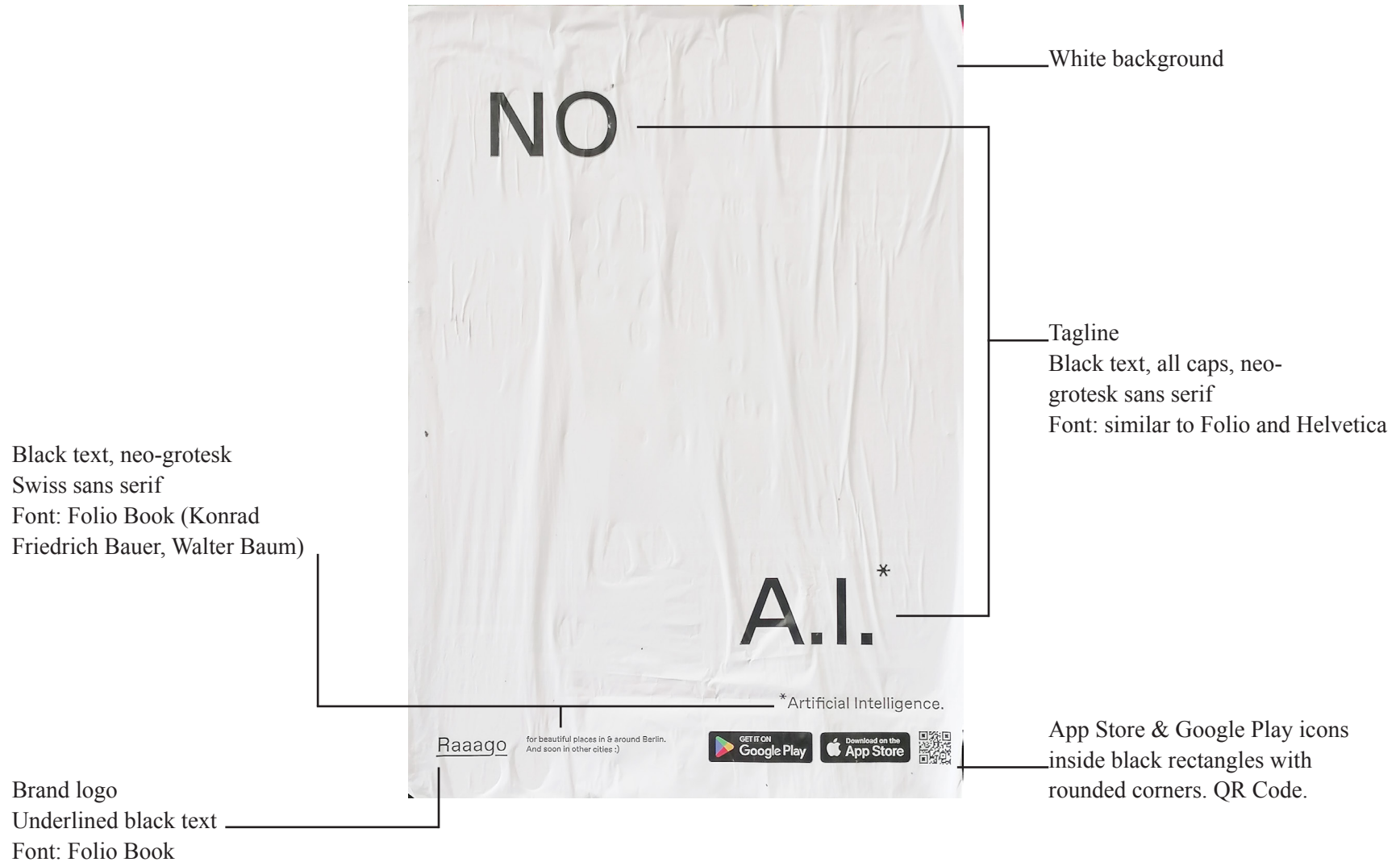
$n=8$



The semantic differential suggests the poster is not particularly stimulating to the senses. There is some consensus among participants that found it overall dull and static. The poster also appears to most people as silent and rather cold. However, there are scattered opinions when it comes to the visual balance of the design, while most participants skew towards balanced/orderly, there was a significant number of votes on the unbalanced/chaotic side.

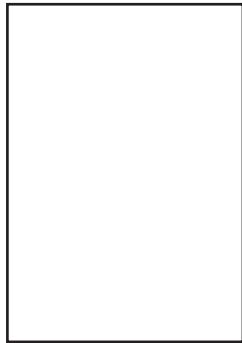
3. Construction

3.1 What is it made of? What's there?

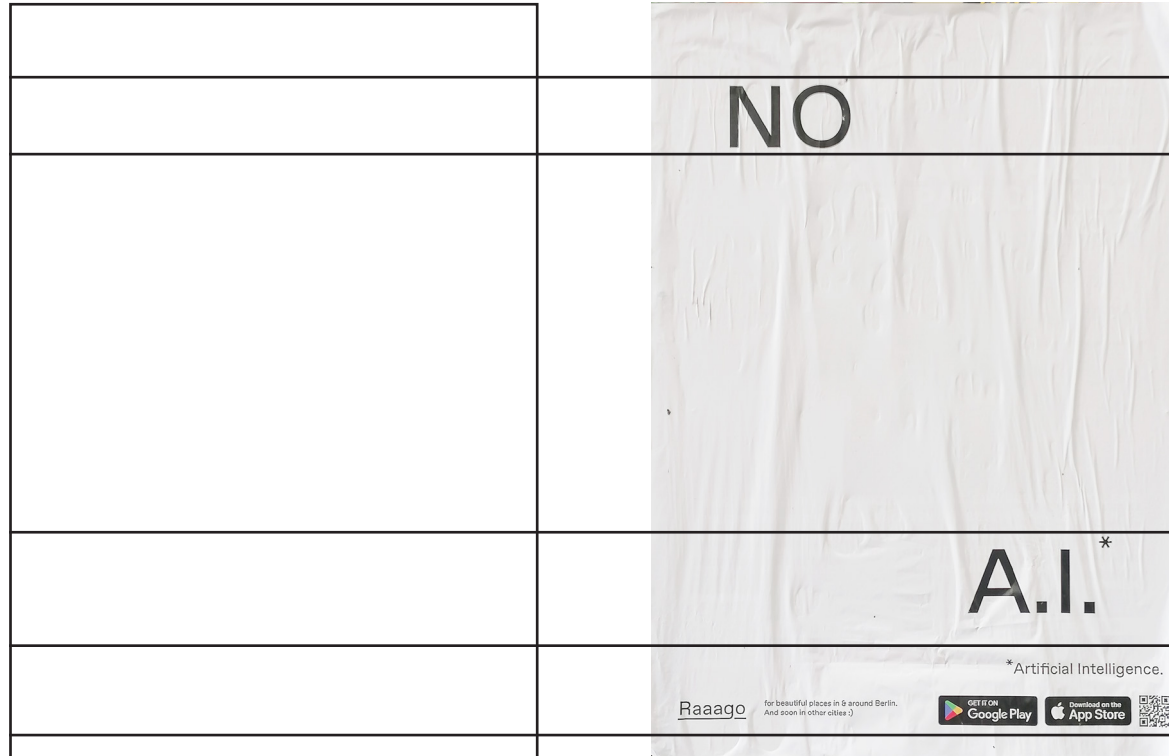


3. Construction

3.2.1 Which arrangement is suggested by the format?



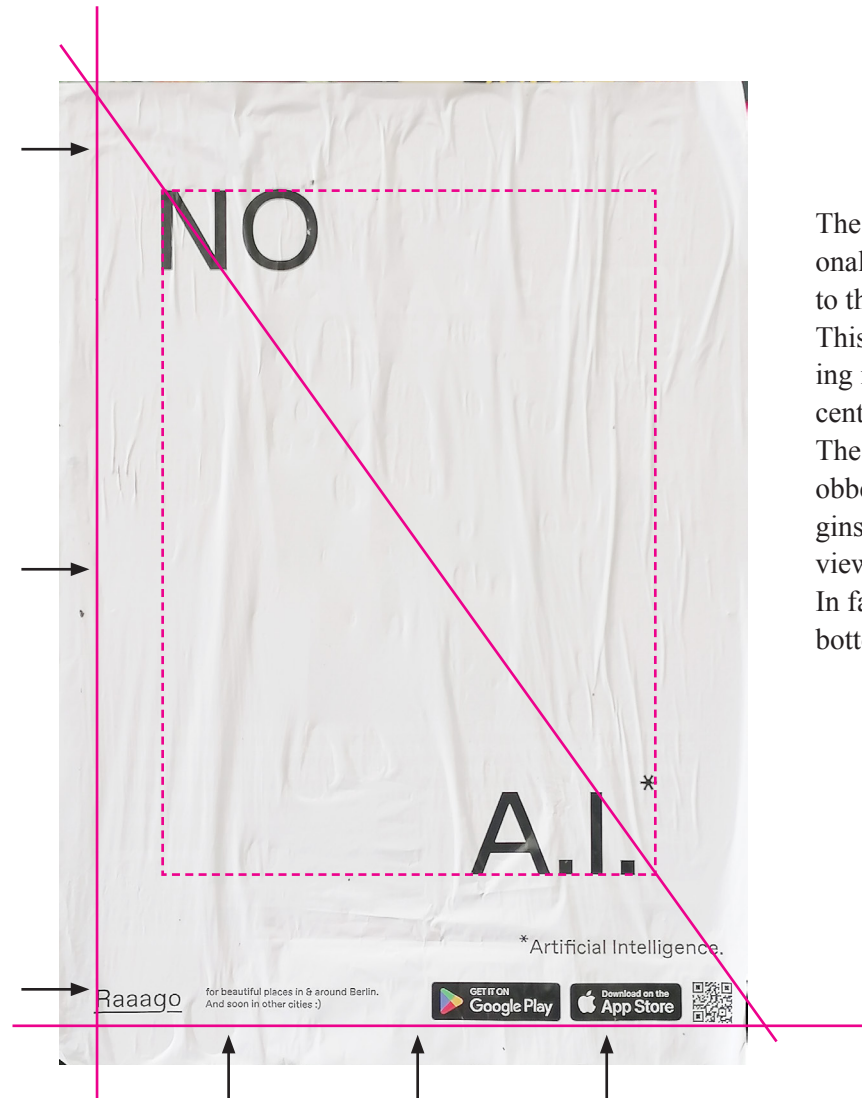
Vertical poster format



The poster presents a vertical portrait format, therefore it is suggested that the elements be stacked vertically.

3. Construction

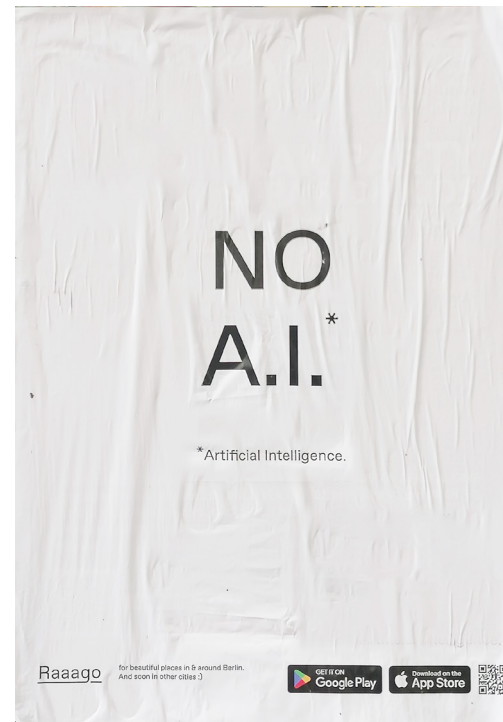
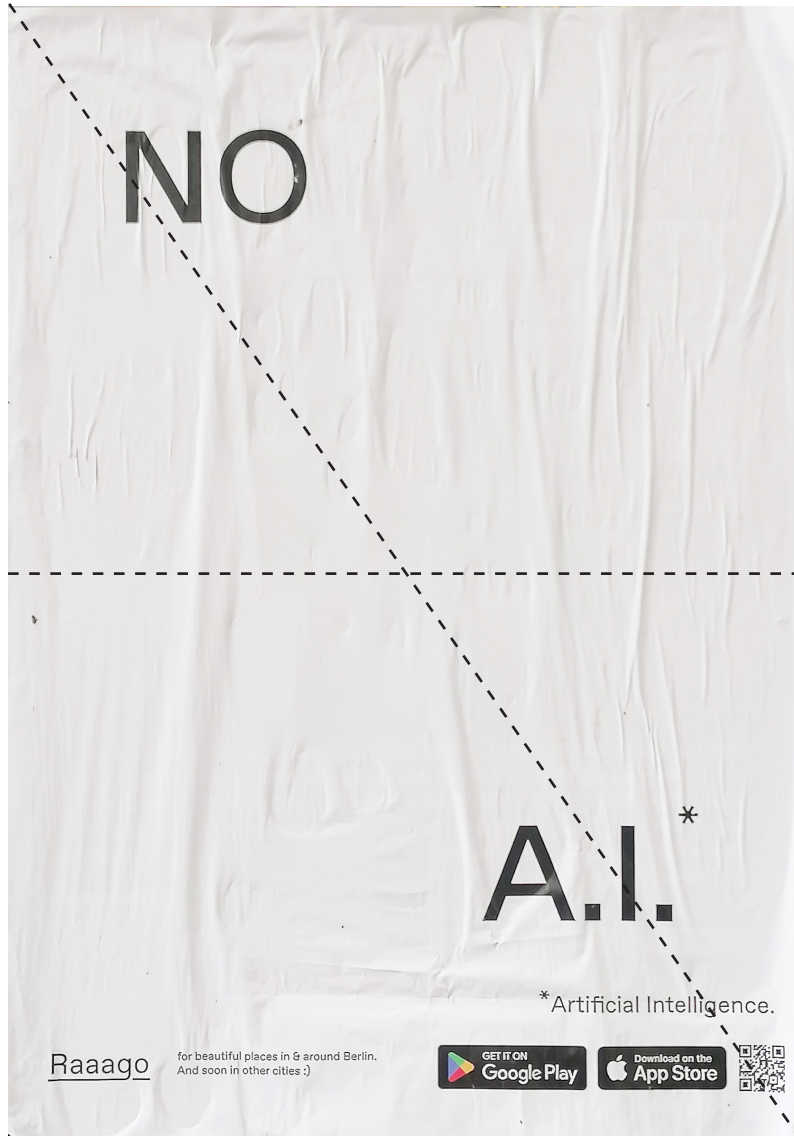
3.2.2 How are elements actually arranged? Is there a guiding principle (e.g. a grid)?



The headline “NO A.I.” follows a diagonal guide connecting the top left corner to the bottom right corner of the poster. This text obeys wide margins, inscribing it in a rectangle that is horizontally centred, but closer to the top margin. The bottom section (logos and text) obeys tighter left and bottom margins and appears to be “pulling” the viewer to the bottom of the page. In fact, there is a clear pull of the left and bottom margins on the overall design.

3. Construction

3.2.3 Is there balance?

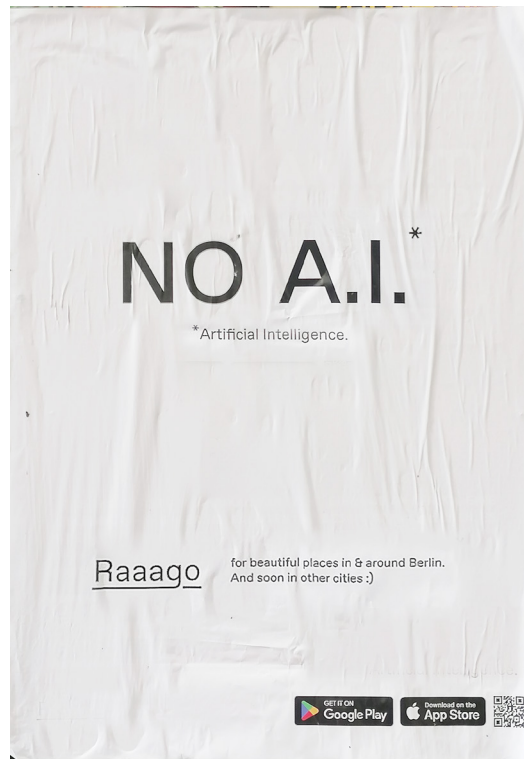
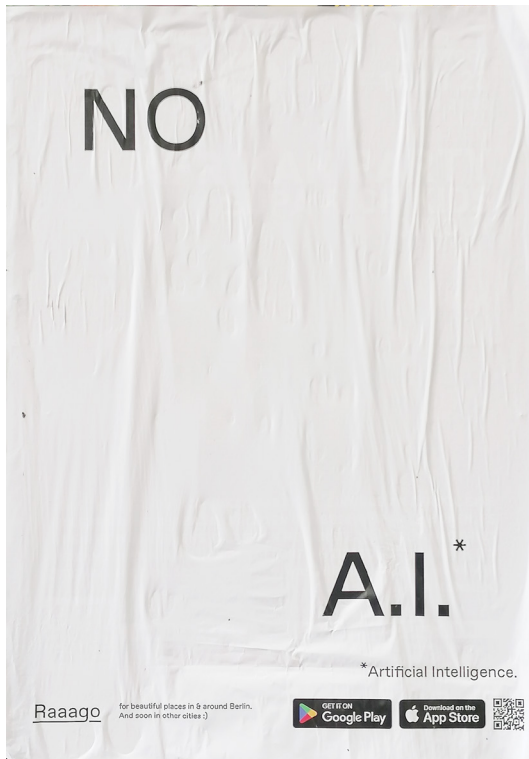


It appears balanced but...

The poster feels very balanced at first, thanks to the diagonal composition and the light-dark contrast. However, the composition does leave a lot of blank space in the center of the poster. Another aspect that makes it a bit uneven is the fact that the logos and bottom text make the composition a tad “bottom heavy”, especially when you present it with a centered horizontal guide.

3. Construction

3.2.4 Does the arrangement suggest meaning?



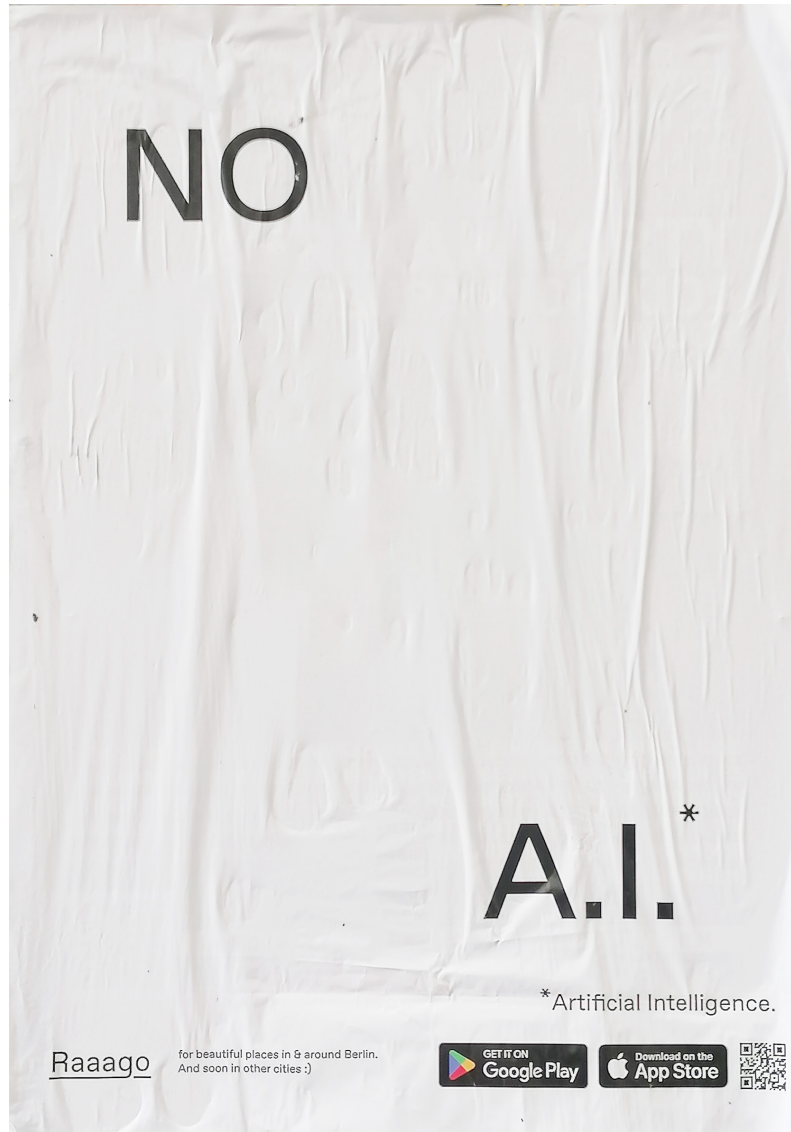
It wouldn't convey the same meaning

This is what the poster would look like if it had a conventional center-aligned composition and traditional hierarchy (headline > logo and taglines > additional information)

The diagonal arrangement of the headline leaves a lot of blank space in the middle and “forces” the company’s logo, tagline and the app stores’ logos into the bottom section. This is an unconventional choice when you consider the more traditional center arrangement in posters, and it also plays with the viewer’s expectation of having the company’s logo and tagline presented at a bigger scale and positioned higher on the composition’s hierarchy. This suggests that the brand being advertised is positioning itself as edgy and irreverent.

4. Semiosis

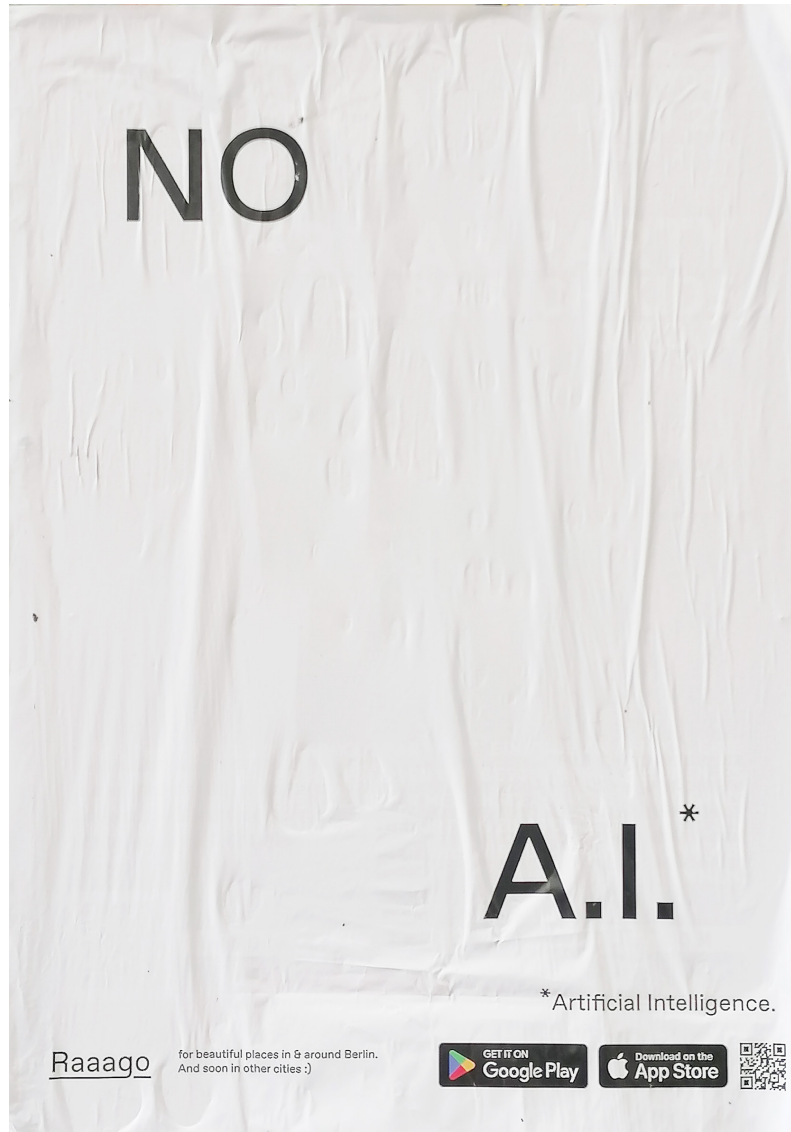
4.1 Visual Rhetoric



The lack of visual flair in itself can be a signifier for neutrality or impartiality. By convention, when trying to represent A.I. and/or modern technology, one of the possible approaches is a hyper-minimalistic, hyper-simplified aesthetic. This rhetoric utilizes the opposite (antithesis) of A.I. softwares' vastness and complexness. The blank space/void also represents the negative "No" - as a lack of something or an absence of things. The poster alone barely represents or references the actual product it's trying to advertise: an app. This information is relegated to the margin, where the name of the brand and explanation appear to those interested enough to find out more.

4. Semiosis

4.2 Multimodality



The author of the poster had the difficult task of representing an app for leisure recommendations in Berlin curated by real people. The headline "NO A.I." encompasses that idea of personalized selection.

The blank space interrupts the sentence "No A.I.", creating a pause inbetween the two words that has no clear meaning.

4. Semiosis

4.2 Multimodality

variation no. 1



Another option would be to represent the app itself with a phone mockup, but that would make it redundant, as the app stores' icons are already included in the poster.

variation no. 2



The other obvious option would be to represent the city these recommendations are tailored to by including the map.

variation no. 3



Picking one of the activities promoted in the app to convey the whole wouldn't really work, as it would diminish the vastness of possibilities the app offers (restaurants, movies, stores,...) to one single recommendation.

These are very obvious solutions, but not as effective

All of these approaches don't fully encapsulate the target audience or the experience of the app and its unique selling proposition, and therefore, the final design decision was to have no image or symbol at all. This minimalist and unconventional composition also speaks to the modern aspect of the poster, as its content (or lack thereof) appears provocative, enticing the viewer to learn more.

5. Aesthetics

5.1 Love-hate Exploration

"Boring, very boring. No AI? So what? No explanation. 0 Design."



"I love breathing spaces, they allow me to have my space for thinking on the content I am looking at and clear bold messages that are immediate"

I hate it!

I love it!

Exploring personal taste by distinguishing between loved and hated posters. The same poster can evoke very opposing feelings.

5. Aesthetics

5.1 Love-hate Exploration

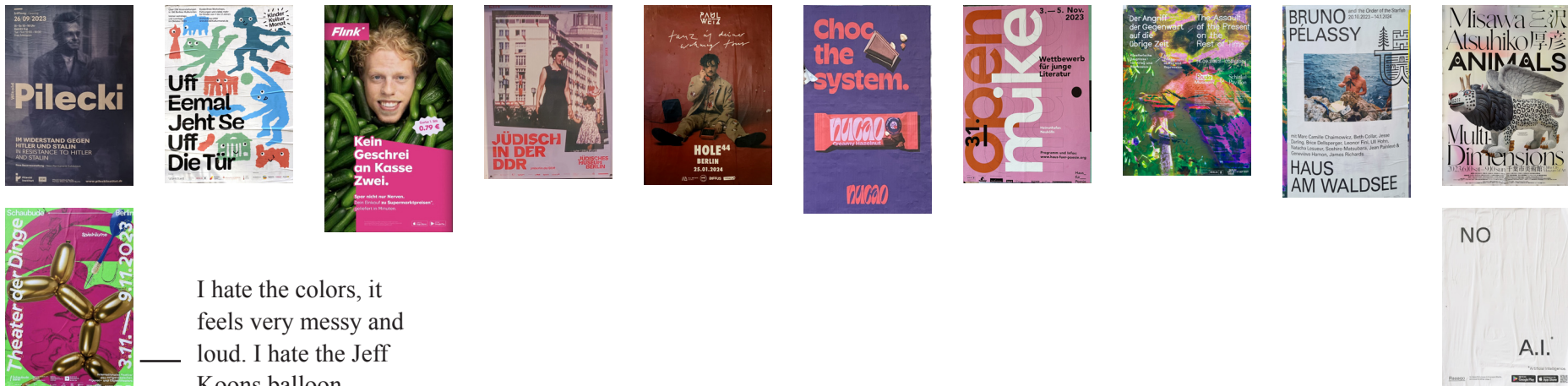


I hate it!

I love it because the image is intriguing. I like the use of color and typography.



I love it!



I hate the colors, it feels very messy and loud. I hate the Jeff Koons balloon.

5. Aesthetics

5.2 Good-bad Exploration

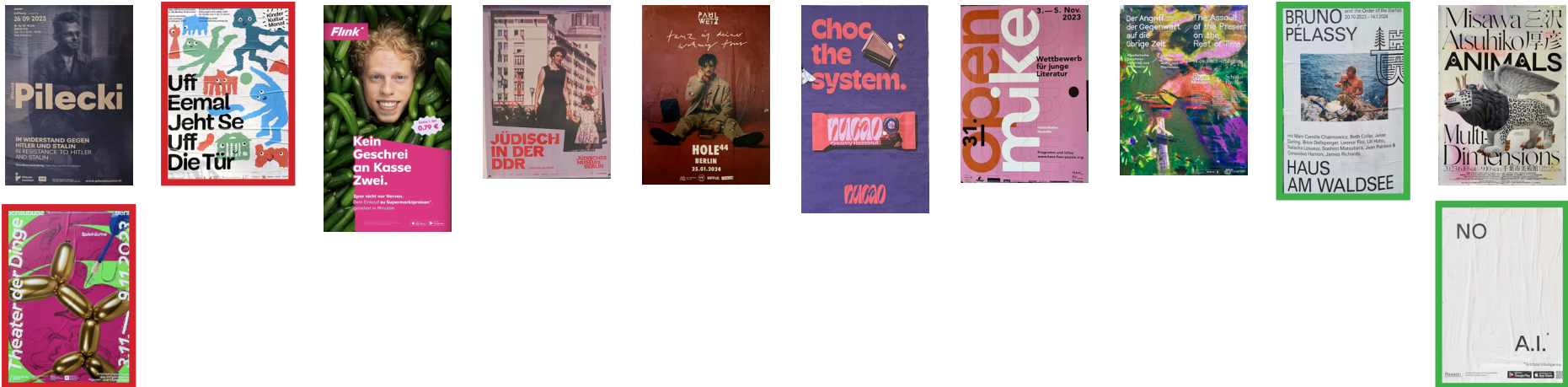


I hate it!

Good posters convey their message clearly and are successful in their response to the previous chapters' analysis (1. to 4.). These are outlined in green. Bad posters are outlined in red.



I love it!



5. Aesthetics

5.3 Is there balance?

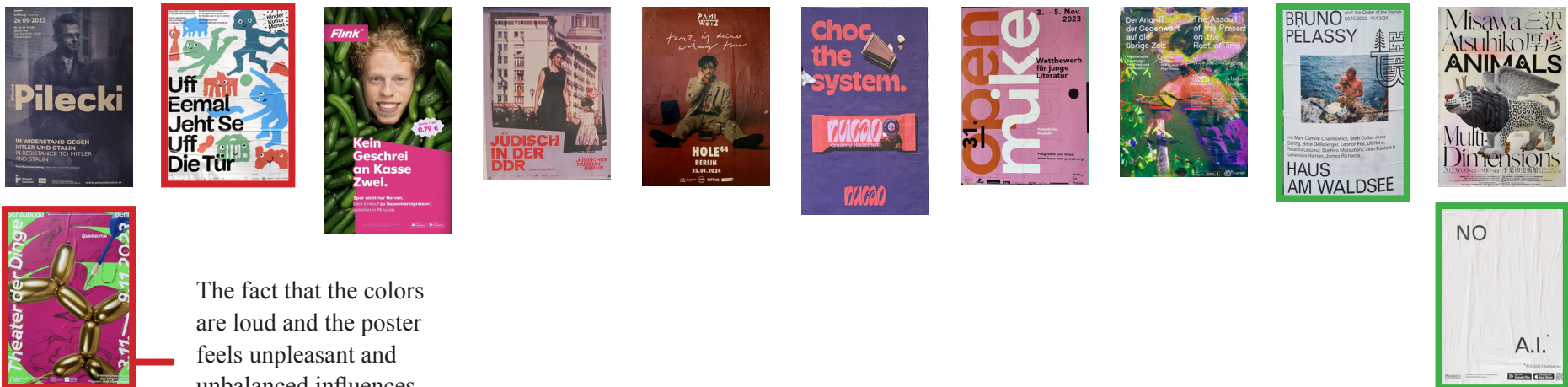


I hate it!

Based on the previous chapters, this is a good poster. It is balanced and pleasing to the eye. The pleasant colors and typography had an influence on this aesthetic judgement (dependent beauty).



I love it!



The fact that the colors are loud and the poster feels unpleasant and unbalanced influences the aesthetic judgement (dependent beauty).

5. Aesthetics

5.4 Free/Dependent Beauty?

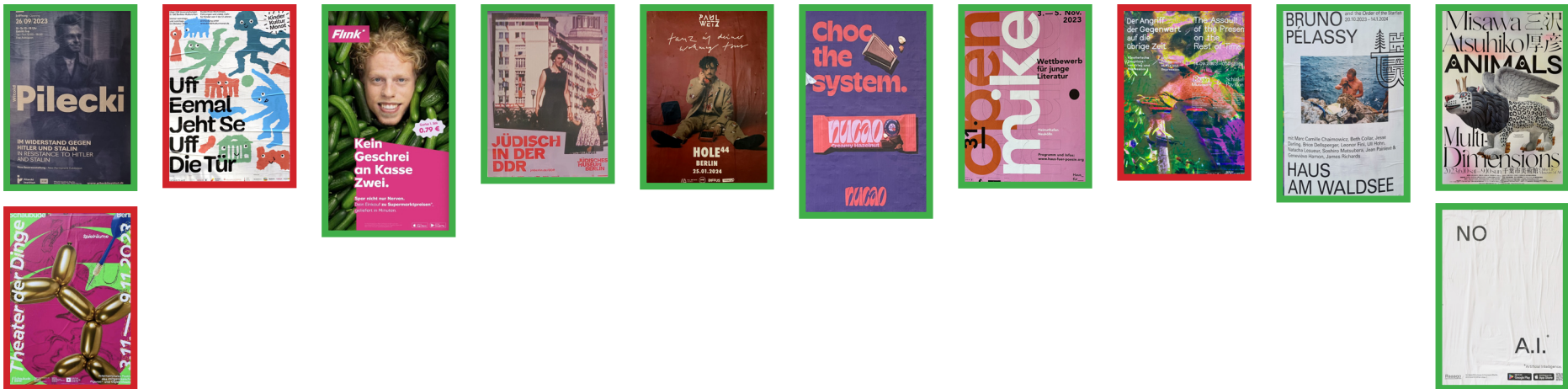


I hate it!

The posters' overall balance somewhat influences the aesthetic judgement, however it does not determine whether a poster will be loved or hated. Nevertheless, balanced posters have a higher chance of being loved over bad posters.



I love it!



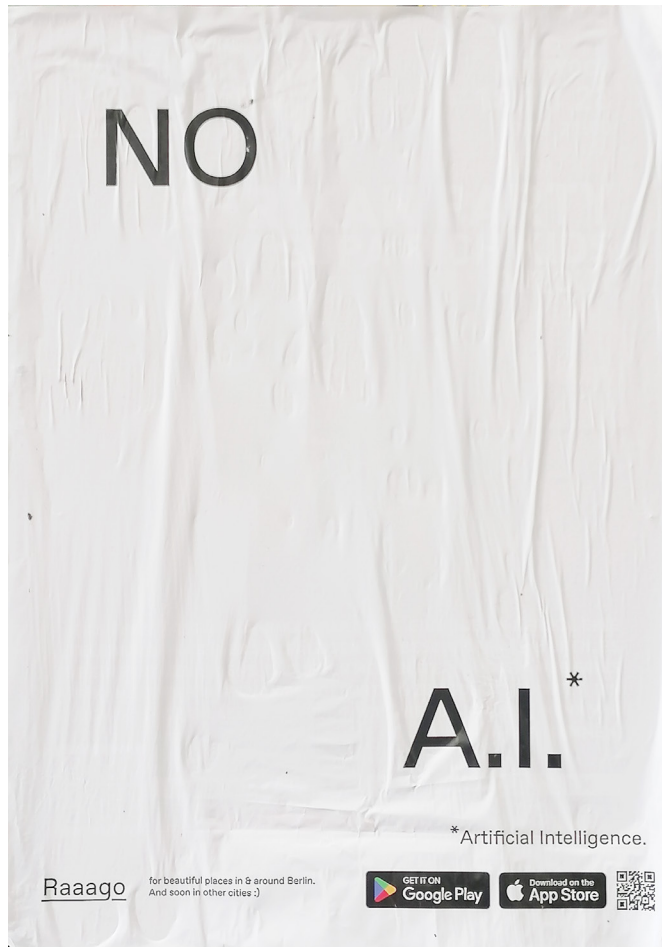
5. Aesthetics

5.5 Do I love/hate because it is expected from me?

<p>I hate it!</p> 	<p>I should love it</p>  <p>I love it!</p>
	 <p>I should hate it</p> <p>My pre-conceptions as a Design and Arts student skew and inform my aesthetic preferences towards more experimental or innovative posters, related to cultural events that I would like to attend, even if readability or clarity may be a bit compromised. My personal taste also leans towards muted and neutral color palettes (especially black and white).</p>

5. Aesthetics

5.6 Who is addressed by the style?



Swiss sans serif types (neo-grotesk), similar to Helvetica are often associated with modernity and with good design, as their versatility and high readability make them highly regarded by designers and highly recognizable by a well-educated, cosmopolitan community of people, often associated with fields like liberal arts and business - presumably the target audience for this advertisement. These personas are young and have disposable income to spend on leisure activities, and often eat out ("foodies"). They are preoccupied with sustainability and, when travelling or living abroad, are interested in "genuine" and "local" experiences. Most likely millennials, German or international, middle to high class.

6. Socio-cultural Background and Discourse

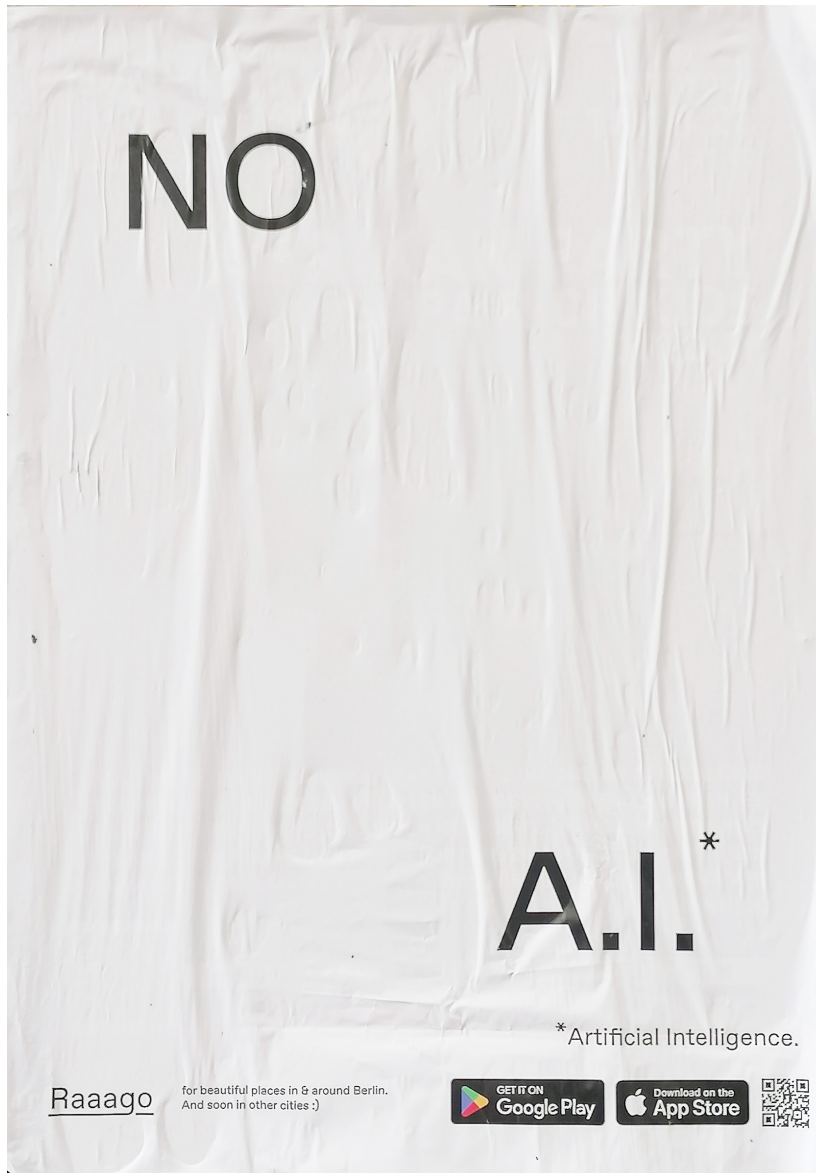
6.1 Cultural influences



The poster perfectly encapsulates Modernism, in its use of a base grid and minimalist graphic elements. It has an emphasis on cleanliness, readability and objectivity. Within Modernism, it leans particularly close to the Swiss Style, that usually involves an asymmetrical layout and sans serif typefaces (grotesk and neo-grotesk, eg Helvetica). This style of monochromatic, minimalistic design is common among tech companies, as seen in the Apple campaign. However, nowadays it is also used in other types of products such as beauty and lifestyle.

6. Socio-cultural Background and Discourse

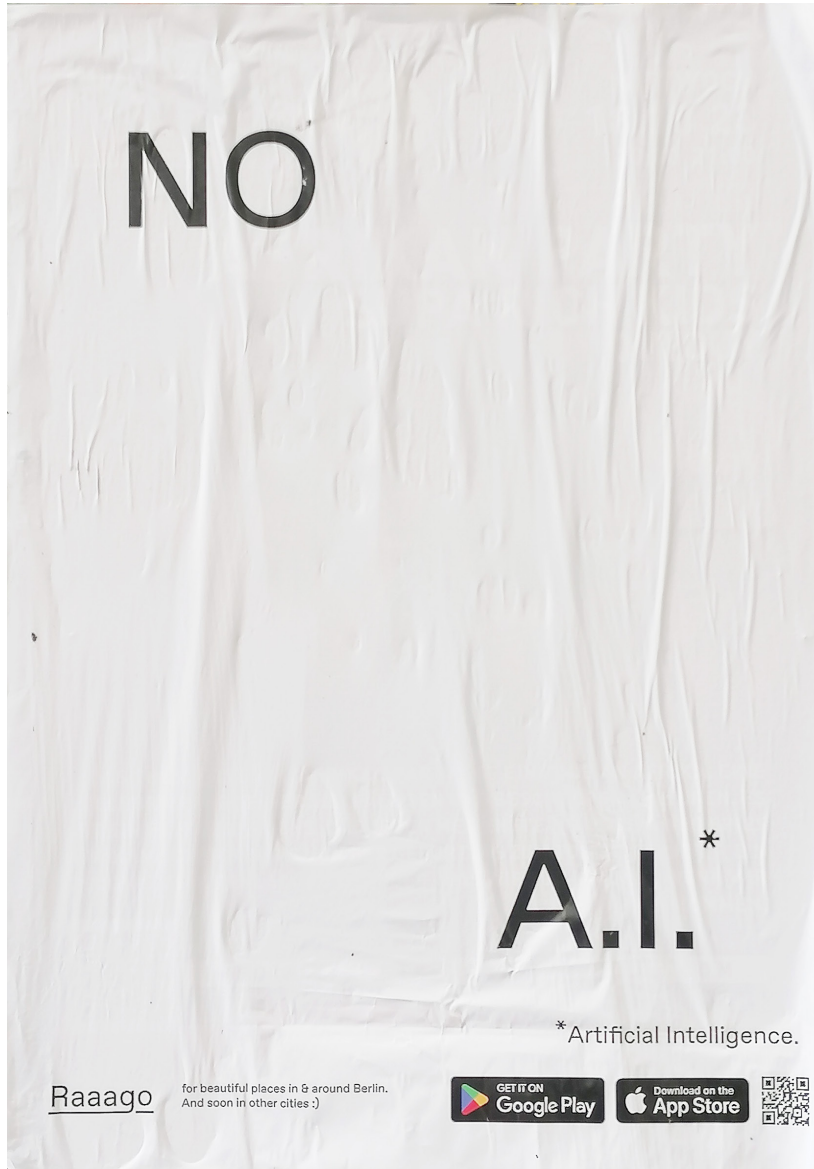
6.2 Technological influences



This poster was printed on A2 paper using offset printing technology. It was most likely designed on InDesign or Illustrator. Its contents were decided by a Marketing team or Brand Manager for Raaago. This is an advertising for an app for activity recommendations in Berlin, a city impacted by the fast-paced, overwhelming life of modernity and cosmopolitanism. The app aims to answer the problem of wanting to visit and explore a city without much time to research and find special and/or original places. The target audience must have disposable income and an interest in social and cultural activities. The app presents itself as fulfilling a desire for "coolness" and ingenuity that middle to high class urban dwellers present. The fact that it is in English also speaks to the Globalization factor and the multiculturalism of major cities, where international visitors, immigrants and locals converge - very relevant to the location where the poster was found (Neukölln).

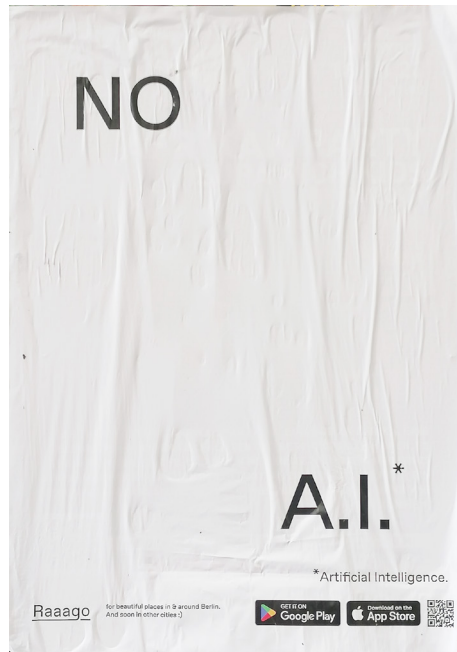
6. Socio-cultural Background and Discourse

6.3 Political-economic influences



In order to advertise the app Raaago, this marketing campaign hijacks the discourse surrounding Artificial Intelligence, that has been quite prevalent in recent news cycles. The debate regarding the topic usually focuses on the technology's opportunities for improving human life, versus the risks associated, namely by making jobs obsolete and/or being used for less than ethical motives (eg instrumentalized as a way to disseminate fake news). In this case, the company positions itself as being against the use of AI, which may or may not be true to the actual brand's values and/or the designer who authored the poster. It is a way of distinguishing itself from other algorithmic based tourist recommendations, making it seem like the options offered there are more unique and genuine.

7. Practices



When I came across the poster, it was mostly an exercise of aesthetic preference. The poster's edgy and punchy message also compelled me to look more into its content and purpose. It is, indeed, a "designer" poster, with its minimal modern style. However, when studying it, it becomes more and more clear that those design sensibilities are often hijacked by brands and marketing teams in order to appeal to an educated, liberal arts audience. The act of stopping, looking and photographing the poster is quite rare. During



the exploration of this class I caught myself noticing posters more often, and came to the conclusion that this particular one, although simplistic in its form, would most likely always draw some interest, as it is quite clear even with peripheral vision and the topic is very current and engaging. In terms of longevity though, many posters like this won't stay in the psyche for too long, since after this trendy app comes a new one, and after this poster a different one will be covering it. Therefore, the lifespan of a poster is always



quite short, so long as the thing it advertises or represents also loses its interest. Think of the type of posters people put in their rooms: usually associated with movies, music, festivals, political movements or other cultural aspects regarded as both relevant to the times or personal to the owner of the room. This poster, as being a clear ad for a passing app for passing events, will most likely never be elevated to poster art, but may still receive passing looks and QR codes scans during its lifetime.