Universität Bern / Institut für Kunstgeschichte / Abteilung Kunstgeschichte der Moderne und der Gegenwart
Dissertationsprojekt
Robert Lzicar (robert.lzicar@student.unibe.ch)
Betreuung: Prof. Dr. Peter J. Schneemann, Prof. Dr. Barbara Bader (Hochschule der Künste Bern)
Stand: 13. April 2013

1. CV

Hochschulbildung: seit 2012: Promotion, Graduate School of the Arts; 2012: Master Research on the Arts, Universität Bern; 2003: Visiting Student, Visuelle Kommunikation, HGKZ/ZHdK; 2000–2005: Diplom (FH), Information/Medien, HfG FH Schwäbisch Gmünd (D)

Berufliche Tätigkeiten: seit 2013: Dozent, Theorie, Design & Kunst, HSLU Luzern; seit 2011: Forschungsdozent, FSP Kommunikationsdesign, HKB Bern; seit 2010: Lehrbeauftragter, Modulbereich Designgeschichte, HKB Bern; seit 2006: Teilhaber, STVG – Mahrer, Lzicar; 2006–2012: Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter, Professur für Gebäudetechnik, ETH Zürich

2. Working title:

Practitioner's histories:
Chances and challenges of a historiographic model
in Swiss graphic design history.

3. Abstract:

Triggered by historiographical studies in other disciplines, design history is recently looking for its own modes and models of historiography (Clark and Brody 2009, Doordan 1995, Fallan 2010, Margolin 2009, Triggs 2011, Woodham 1995). A preliminary study showed that graphic design history in Switzerland has often been written and designed by practitioners in books, magazines and exhibitions. The history of graphic designers writing and designing their own histories go back to the origin of the profession (McCarthy 2011: 7). The practitioner-historians 'have played a significant role in helping to establish what a graphic design history might be through their own writings and teachings on the subject' (Triggs 2011: 4). Due to lack of educational programs even today graphic design historians are trained as practitioners or work in both fields – I am one of them. However, what are the chances and challenges of practitioner's histories in graphic design?

Conceptually, the study focuses on editorial design and exhibition design as 'epistemological technologies' (Preziosi 1998) of and for the construction of narratives (White 1980, Margolin 1994) that serve the interpretation of Swiss graphic design and show how history is fabricated. Methodically, the study analyzes books, magazines and exhibitions showing graphic design retrospectively. Visual data analyses reveal the key players and their roles in the production, publication or exhibition of graphic design history. The different findings are subsequently compared with the oral histories of actors and experts. In a preliminary study we recorded about 250 histories on graphic design published or exhibited in Switzerland. Each record includes information on individuals and institutions associated with the publication or exhibition, as soon as the objects on display and their designers. At the moment we make this information visible and accessible through an interactive graphical timeline and network view published as website. The following case studies are based on these interactive data visualizations.

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The doctoral thesis investigates and compares histories written by practitioners in or on Switzerland, by analyzing their ideas, processes and products: "Geschichte der Visuellen Kommunikation" by Josef Müller-Brockmann (1971) is one of the first general publications on the history of graphic design. It has been a reference for following publications (Drucker 2009: 56). '1979: Eine Art Geschichte' (Lutz 1980) provides a unique alternative visual approach to representing history. The exhibition 'Hoffnung und Widerstand: Plakate der internationalen Arbeiter- und Friedensbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert' at the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (September 2–October 18, 1998) presents historic posters selected and arranged by political movement. The publication 'Swiss Graphic Design: The Origins and Growth of an International Style, 1920–1965' (Hollis 2006) defines the history of modern Swiss graphic design from Britain. 'soDA' started as subcultural magazine in Berne in 1997 and became a recognized magazine of and for visual culture, containing visual historic references. The French-speaking part of Switzerland is recently looking for its identity and history, for example in the exhibition 'Panorama: Design graphique en Suisse romande' at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève (March 25–June 26, 2011) curated by the graphic design studio Schönherwehrs.

4.   References

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