

Berne, 5 September 2016

Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited

Seven Swiss universities engage in joint research into the history of Swiss graphic design and typography. With ‘Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited’, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is for the first-ever time supporting a project in the Sinergia programme in which researchers from seven Swiss universities will investigate the role and status of Swiss graphic design from today’s perspective.

It is divided into three sub-projects: ‘Principles of Education’, ‘Networks of Practice’ and ‘Strategies of Dissemination’. This three-year project will begin in October 2016 and is the biggest research collaboration established in the design field since the SNSF began its activities.

Swiss graphic design and typography are representative of Swiss culture, but have themselves also had an impact on this country’s national identity. In the SNSF project ‘Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited’, seven universities will now engage in joint research into the status of Swiss graphic design from today’s perspective. Coordinated by the Bern University of the Arts, researchers of the universities of applied sciences from Basel, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, and Zurich, as well as from the University of Bern are participating. This research group emerged out of a predecessor project at the Bern University of the Arts (HKB) entitled ‘Mapping Graphic Design History in Switzerland’ that culminated in a symposium in February 2014, held jointly by the Graduate School of the Arts and the University of Bern’s Institute of Art History. The symposium already featured representatives of all the Swiss universities that are active in the design field.

In the three sub-projects, mixed groups of researchers from the different institutions will investigate different aspects of Swiss graphic design – its teaching, its networks and its forms of publication. Using methods grounded in current approaches to historical analysis and cultural theory, they will search through archives, analyse textual,

pictorial and design sources such as curricula, publications and individual testimonies, and they will interview key figures in the field. In this manner they will be able to identify formative networks, practices and media. The result will be a critical contribution to our understanding of the emergence and current self-perception of Swiss graphic design and typography. Above and beyond this, the project will help to consolidate ‘design history’ as a field of research and practice in Switzerland, and will provide new, relevant findings for the international scholarly discourse on visual communication.

This project is particularly relevant right now, because Swiss graphic design and typography is one of eight Swiss traditions currently applying for a place on UNESCO’s ‘List of Intangible Cultural Heritage’.

Participating universities:

FHNW HGK – Academy of Art and Design Basel
HKB – Bern University of the Arts (Project coordinator)
University of Bern, Institute of Art History
HEAD – Genève – Geneva School of Art and Design
ECAL – Ecole Cantonale d'art de Lausanne
SUPSI – University of Applied Sciences and Arts
of Southern Switzerland
ZHdK – Zurich University of the Arts

Participating researchers:

Applicants:

Prof. Dr. Arne Scheuermann (project coordinator)
Prof. Michael Renner (coordinator of sub-project A)
Prof. Dr. Sarah Owens (coordinator of sub-project B)
Prof. Dr. Peter J. Schneemann (coordinator of sub-project C)

Co-coordinators and researchers:

Dr. Davide Fornari
Prof. Robert Lzicar

Researchers:

Chiara Barbieri
Prof. Rudolf Barmettler
Roland Früh
Jonas Niedermann
Prof. François Rappo

Doctoral students:

Jonas Berthod
Sandra Bischler
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Ueli Kaufmann
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