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YOU ARE HERE

the boof of Péter Maczó
about the infodesign
THESES FOR THE DLA DEGREE

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INTRODUCTION

The chosen theme, based on my research plan, concerns visual information that facilitates spatial orientation, or to put it more succinctly: info-design.

This book begins with examination of the simple sign leading through city signs to those of big international events and meeting places.

It's a seemingly allegoric title: You Are Here.

It is not about the destination. It is all about the journey.
PAUL GERALDY

A theoretical moment in life: that we are simply standing somewhere, but what makes it much more interesting is in the implied intention to head somewhere else.

The books content, information design, which can be placed within the wide-ranging concept of information graphics, holds to its much narrower meaning: not everything considered part of information graphics is info-design. The word itself is a newly created expression and its meaning can vary according to language.

It is the English expression that has the established meaning in Hungary, but Hungarians can also use it in a broader sense: the information system of the Hungarian Highway Code (KRESZ) I believe, logically, would be classified as this too. In German speaking territories they use more specific and unique expressions, varying according

The letter gives body and voice to the silent thought.
FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

to the range of the concept: Wegweiser, Leitsystem, Signaletik, Orientierungssystem. However, the direction of my study is not determined by etymology even though the interpretation of word formation and linguistic expression are often mentioned; as is »book« itself, which for me is the classical physical object and the most important and lasting body of the art of graphic design.

The smallest element is the letter: Although my academic and practised profession finds recognition in and sets its standards, I could not narrow my research down merely to typography.

The established exponents and their achievements in this field from its inception (initially we must adhere to the understanding of information design as a broad concept) marked important orientational points for me.

One of these is the English typographer *Henry C. Beck* and his extremely minimal (e.g. only horizontal, vertical and angle of 45° lines),

abstracted composition of the network route of the London underground (undeniably reminiscent of the style of Piet Mondrian, an artist of the De Stijl Group) which, with its various slight modifications, became the template of almost all city maps around the world. I also include the German designer *Otl Aicher*'s pictogramseries designed for the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, of which an admitted precedent was the graphical code system, or rather a public information sign line, executed in 1934 by the Dutch philosopher and sociologist *Otto Neurath* – together with the Austrian graphic artist *Gerd Arntz* –, and known in international practice as the International System of Typographic Picture Education. Above all, I consider to be exemplary the Swiss letter designer and typographer *Adrian Frutiger*'s body of work, which because of the complexity of the commissions, make him one of the most convincing and committed artists in the field. His achievements, (consider the French underground and the Paris Airport information system) drew my attention to dominant text handling and the importance of written information, especially in regard to information graphics.

The early significance of the use of colour is demonstrated by the colour studies of *Max Burchartz*. Within the Gelsenkirchen Hans-Sachs-Haus's colour code system, which should still be considered as exemplary, his Bauhaus connections were highly influential.

ABOUT THE BOOK...

As was my intention, based on my studies, I've designed a book.
This volume – 328 pages with 525 illustrations – entices both the experienced graphic designer and layman on a cultural round trip.
In its composition and structure I kept in mind the basic requirement of planning as it has its sense in information design.
By following the system of signage for human cultures through those attributes of basic sense and direction, (physical and physiological), I arrived from the natural to the constructed environment, illustrating by use of examples of typical and unique cases of information design.
A separate section discusses the history of maps and their contemporary role: from meeting places, public transport and institutions, to

commercial, cultural or sport centres; stressing the importance from the point of view of information design.

The basic elements of graphic design: point, line, circle (following a logical order) form a constituent of this book just as do arrow (the most basic info-design symbol), time (the most forceful character of info graphic constituents) and colour (as a code and parameter). These will be introduced as the primary productive elements of information graphics.

My asset is time, not money.
MARCEL DUCHAMP

The diversity of signs and signalling and the representation and conveying of information, with their many historical fascinations form a part rather of an adventure, an appetiser.

Undoubtedly, the most emphasized part of the study is in writing; in the realm of visual communication the conveying of information still does not know any more unambiguous mode of expression, even today. Its prominently important component is the letter: The typeface, the characteristics, the roles and the typographic order are a decisively influential factor in the effectiveness of conveying information. The unique role of numbers is discussed in a separate section.

Another important ingredient in this field is graphic visualisation, or more precisely, the application of pictograms, explanatory figures and signs, that have an independent existence from the practice of common language (oral and written) and a resulting increased significance in international context. The book offers actual examples of signage systems used at Olympics.

Verbosity could be as obscuring as density.
JOHANNES KEPLER

After showing illustrations of info-design from three periodically repeated cultural events, a series of samples selected from our constructed city environment leads to a Hungarian case-study at the end of the book: an airport, a multicultural institute and the representation of the info-design plans of a museum and documentation centre and their application in real life.

In visual communication there is a wide road that leads to infodesign areas in our time . To become acquainted with these and, given my options, to map them, giving a thorough introduction was the task I took upon myself. I examined this work from a graphic designer's point of view, so my conclusions refer fundamentally there also.

Although not preclusively, some fundamentals assumed in writing
this book:

❯ Successful info-design, with the exact knowledge of the message
content, and with its proper interpretation and articulation, takes
upon itself a formal and technical design task. An optimal solution is
suggested according to user's demands or intentions and its fit with-
in an accepting enviroment.

❯ For the solution to a task of info-design, the designer needs to
have an innovative and principally orderly approach where the com-
mon appearance of text and picture leads to clear interpretation of
information; additionally it should not intrude by its presence but,
moreover, fit harmoniously into its environment in terms of size, style
and choice of material used.

❯ The designer needs not only to know the concrete message, along
with the expectation of the local user, but also other expected quan-
tative and qualitative levels of communication; to whom it is intend-
ed to convey the information and how orientation can be realised
within the given space.

All of this, from the executional point of view, presumes knowledge
not only the effectiveness of visuals (localisation, size, colour etc.)
but with the possibility of repeating information and the conveyence
of message by use of the working mechanisms of cognitive psycho-
logy where perception, thinking and interpretation in consequtive
order, mostly within a short time frame, conclude with the correct de-
cision being made.

❯ Forming a significant part of information design and which can be
looked upon as my treatise's main point, the most important expec-
tation of good infographic design is in it being a communication that
uses a clear and unambiguous interpretation method but that
remains fully informative. Forming the point, not summarising, but
a contextual summary and propotional interpretation of the informa-
tion with regard to the stressed points and that is suitably posi-
tioned, based on its characteristics (text, diagram and figure, map or
pictogram), to gain emphasized sense.

❯ A majority of the information surfaces appear as vertical pictures, surface plains on the building or object, separate from or integrated in the space. In consideration of the material execution of the info-design system there is a large range of technological possibilities available, in sharp contrast to the tight demands expected of it. The design of info-graphics utilizes size, material and colour alongside the usual range of graphic tools and can also make good use of light, movement and the unusual possibilities of electronic media.

❯ The vision of the designed work, its aesthetic value, is not determined by its dimensions, and not even the period of its targeted usage, but in the evaluation of its function; the accomplishment of the expected task is a fundamental criteria.