



Research Cluster: Enable – Design & Art Competences, Material Culture, and Human Developmen | Timespan: 2011 - 2014

## Graphic design, exhibition context and curatorial practices: new forms of cultural production

### Team

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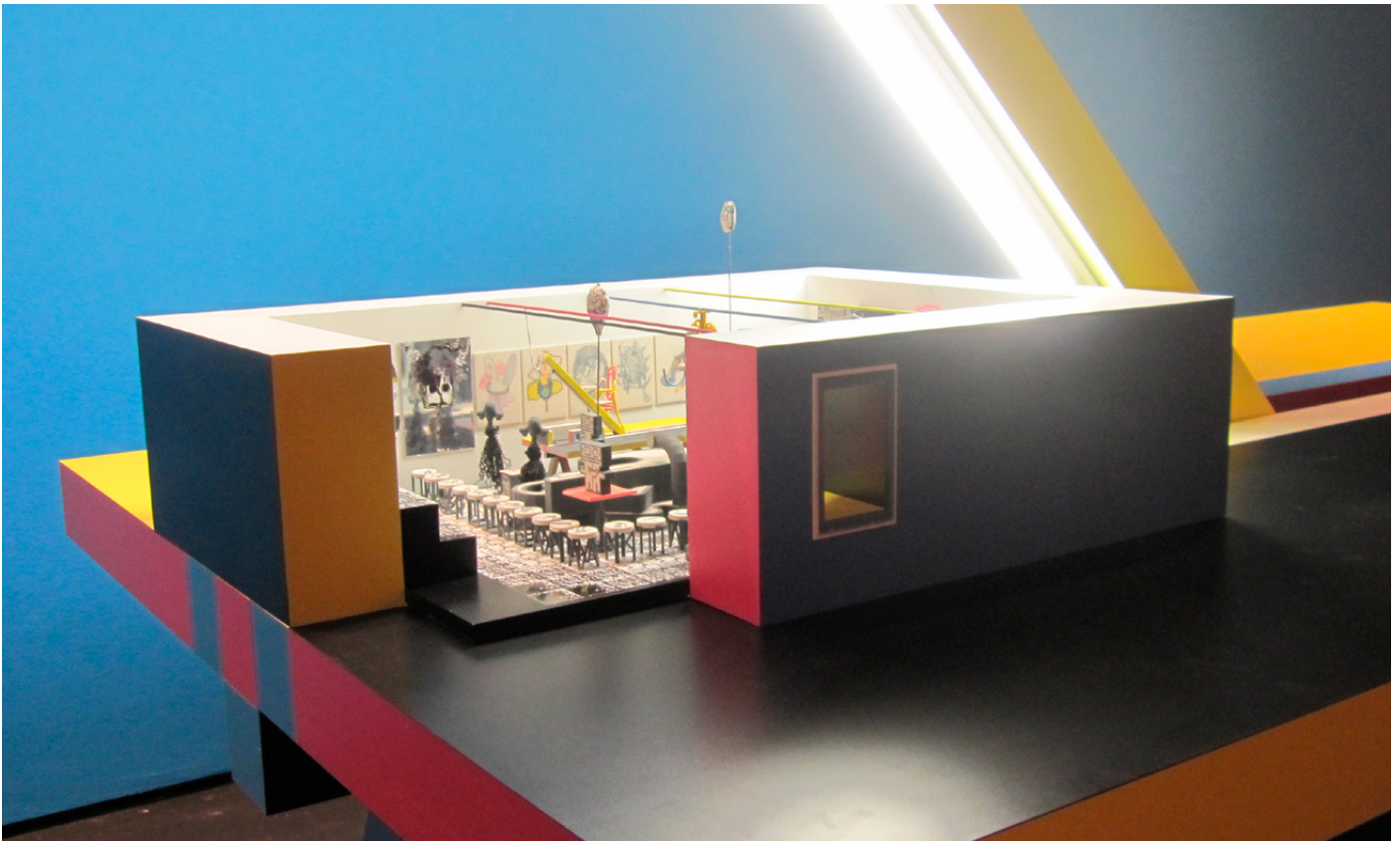
(English)

The exhibition context – understood as sites, practices, and discourses centered on non commercial exhibiting – has come to appear as a significant field of activity and production for graphic design, wherein diverse issues relevant for the culture of design intertwine.

Beyond the traditional role played by graphic designers for institutions like museums and galleries, what is relevant today, and relatively new, is the growing interest and involvement of graphic designers themselves in the exhibition context, as evidenced not only by their participation in art exhibitions but also by shows that are centered on graphic design – as object, subject and language of exhibiting – as well as exhibitions promoted and curated by graphic designers. Not only do graphic designers show growing confidence with the exhibition space and dimensions, but we are witnessing the gradual appropriation of roles and functions characteristic of the exhibition context which enable graphic designers to explore new forms of cultural production therein. While this phenomenon proves that graphic design can work – and wants to work – in the gallery, it remains to be assessed and understood how exactly it does so, or can do so, and what the implications for the culture of graphic design are. How should the engagement of graphic designers in exhibiting and curating be read and discussed with reference to recent debates on the profession and cultural role of the designer? To what degree does this phenomenon differ from what happens in the art worlds? What are the motives driving graphic designers to use the context of the exhibition as a medium of communication, and lead them into curatorial roles? How do graphic designers operate alongside other figures? What discourses and representations of graphic design are built through and around exhibitions?



Figure 1. Installations from the “Graphic Design Worlds” exhibition, curated by Giorgio Camuffo, with Maddalena Dalla Mura, Triennale Design Museum, Milan, 2011



Figures 2, 3. Installations from the “Graphic Design Worlds” exhibition, curated by Giorgio Camuffo, with Maddalena Dalla Mura, Triennale Design Museum, Milan, 2011

In line with the research objectives of the Faculty of Arts and Design about design and design culture as an activity in constant evolution, the proposed research aims to analyze and interpret the relationship of contemporary graphic design with the exhibition context and with related curatorial practices, to discuss its relevance through an assessment of its characteristics and specificity as a form of cultural production, and to investigate its implications for graphic design in terms of practices and discourses.

The combination of historical-critical study, case study analysis, and qualitative empirical research, helped define and examine, from various view points, the phenomenon in question, opening up new perspectives and finally building a body of knowledge that is considered to be useful to the Faculty of Design and Arts and to design studies at large.



Figure 4. Installations from the “Graphic Design Worlds” exhibition, curated by Giorgio Camuffo, with Maddalena Dalla Mura, Triennale Design Museum, Milan, 2011



Figure 5. Installations from the “Graphic Design Worlds” exhibition, curated by Giorgio Camuffo, with Maddalena Dalla Mura, Triennale Design Museum, Milan, 2011

The project included the organization of the international conference “Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating” (2012) and concluded with the publication of the book of the same title (bu.press, 2013). The project was also presented to the public during the Lunga notte della ricerca (LUNA) 2012.

**(Italian)**

Il contesto espositivo – inteso come siti, pratiche, discorsi incentrati sull’ esporre con finalità non commerciali – si è presentato in anni recenti come un ambito di attività e produzione rilevante per il graphic design, nel quale confluiscono varie istanze che sono importanti per la cultura del progetto.

Al di là della tradizionale funzione svolta dai graphic designer per la comunicazione di istituzioni come musei e gallerie, quel che oggi appare significativo, e in parte nuovo, è il crescente interesse e coinvolgimento dei graphic designer stessi nel contesto espositivo, testimoniato non solo dalla loro partecipazione in mostre d’arte, ma anche dalle mostre che fanno perno sul graphic design – come soggetto, oggetto e linguaggio dell’ esporre – e dalle mostre curate e prodotte da graphic designer. Oltre alla crescente confidenza rispetto allo spazio e alle dimensioni dell’ esporre, si assiste alla graduale appropriazione dei ruoli e delle funzioni che connotano il contesto espositivo, e che consentono ai graphic designer di esplorare nuove forme di produzione culturale.



Figure 6. Conference “Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating” (2012)



Figure 7. Conference “Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating” (2012)

Mentre da un lato questo fenomeno dimostra che il graphic design può (e vuole) funzionare nei contesti espositivi, rimane tuttavia da sviscerare e capire come ciò avvenga – o possa avvenire – e quali ne siano le implicazioni. Come leggere questo interesse e coinvolgimento nel contesto espositivo in relazione al recente dibattito sulla professione e sul ruolo sociale e culturale del graphic designer? Quali relazioni si possono riconoscere con le pratiche espositive e curatoriali dei mondi dell’arte, e quali sono le differenze? Quali motivazioni ed esigenze spingono i graphic designer a utilizzare il contesto espositivo come medium di comunicazione, e ad assumere ruoli curatoriali? Come operano i graphic designer in relazione ad altre figure attive in questo contesto? Quali discorsi e rappresentazioni relativi al graphic design vengono prodotti attraverso e attorno l’esporre?

Collocandosi in linea con gli obiettivi di ricerca della Facoltà di Design e Arti dell’Università di Bolzano sui contesti della progettazione e sulla cultura del progetto come attività in perenne evoluzione, la ricerca intende analizzare e interpretare la relazione fra graphic design contemporaneo, contesto espositivo e pratiche curatoriali, al fine di definirne le caratteristiche e specificità come forma di produzione culturale, e di investigarne le implicazioni per il graphic design in termini di pratiche e discorsi. Integrando un inquadramento storico-critico, l’analisi di casi studio e una indagine empirica qualitativa, la ricerca contribuirà a esaminare tale relazione sotto vari punti di vista, aprendo nuove prospettive e costruendo un corpus di conoscenze che sarà utile all’interno della Facoltà di Design e Arti e di interesse per i design studies in generale.



Figure 8. Display of the research project at the Lunga notte della ricerca 2012

Il progetto ha incluso la organizzazione della conferenza internazionale “Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating” (2012) e si è concluso con la pubblicazione del libro con lo stesso titolo (bu,press, 2013). Il progetto è stato inoltre presentato durante la Lunga notte della ricerca (LUNA) 2012.

#### **Output / Public events**

26.06.2012: “Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating” international conference, Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

The conference addressed the multifarious relationships that exist between graphic design, the exhibition context and curatorial practice.

Invited speakers: Brave New Alps (Bianca Elzenbaumer, Fabio Franz), Charlotte Cheetham (Manystuff.org), Mieke Gerritzen (Museum of the Image, Breda), Lungomare / Lupo&Burtscher, Prem Krishnamurthy (Project Projects), Jon Sueda (California College of the Arts), and Warren Taylor (The Narrows). Invited discussants who contributed to broadening the scope of the conference are: Jonathan Pierini (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano), Silvia Sfligiotti (Progetto grafico), Francesco Valtolina (Mousse), Carlo Vinti (University of Camerino).



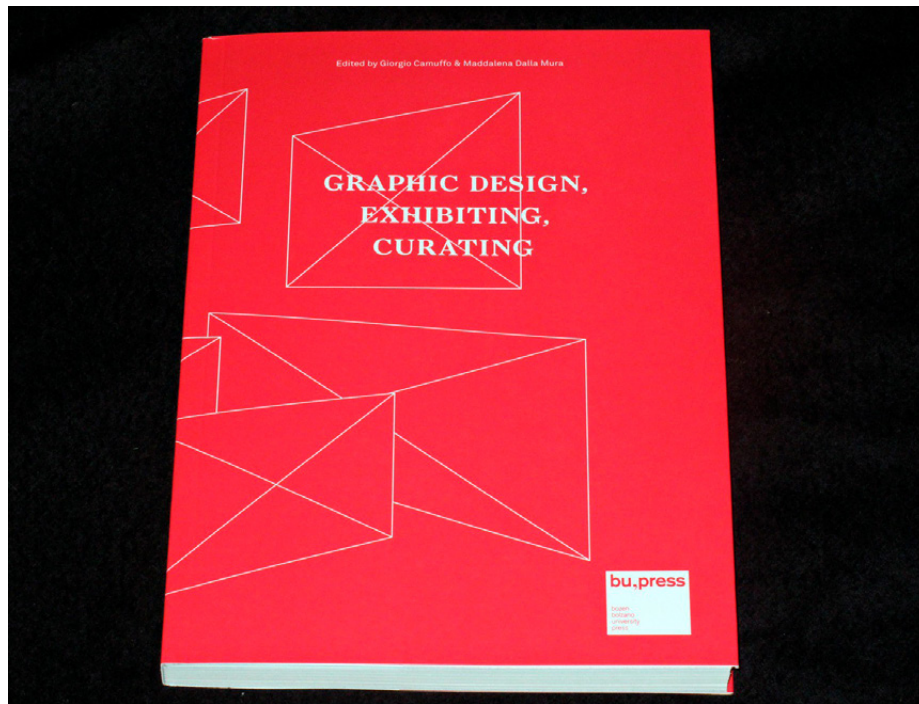


Figure 9, 10. The book "Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating", edited by Giorgio Camuffo and Maddalena Dalla Mura, Bolzano: bu,press, 2013

#### Output / Publication

"Graphic Design, Exhibiting, Curating", edited by Giorgio Camuffo and Maddalena Dalla Mura, Bolzano: bu,press, 2013 (ISBN: 978-88-6046-062-2)

<https://bupress.unibz.it/en/graphic-design-exhibiting-curating.html>