

Visual design (Marburg, 23–25 Nov 17)

Philipps-Universität Marburg, Nov 23–25, 2017

Deadline: Jan 15, 2017

Prof. Dr. Jens Ruchatz

Call for papers

Visual design: the periodical page as a designed surface

The conference “Visual design: the periodical page as a designed surface” is concerned with the visual design of the Journal, taken to mean the whole spectrum of periodical print publications, including amongst others newspapers and magazines. Interest is thus focused on the periodical page (or double-page spread) as a visible printed surface on which words and images appear in a designed context. The premise is that the written and pictorial content of the periodical are not realized in abstraction (as disembodied and placeless), but remain tied to the materiality of the periodical, which provides for a two-dimensional and sequential arrangement of diverse visual elements. The design governs how words and pictures appear across the broad spectrum of different media formats, as illustrations or in the typography or layout. The aim of the conference is to identify and outline periodical-specific elements of (double) page design, not least in comparison to the formats of other media, especially the book. Here the research unit is concentrating on German-language forms from the long 19th century. Older and more recent examples may also be discussed within the framework of the conference. Papers on periodical cultures in other languages are also explicitly encouraged. Case studies will be welcomed, as will historical and international comparisons, or studies comparing different media. The content and context of the following subject areas should be addressed:

1. Preconditions: technology / economics / organization

The visual presentation of a printed page, the way words and pictures are arranged on it, e.g. the way they are distributed over columns or framed, is linked with technical requirements, e.g. with paper manufacturing, or the possibilities of typesetting, printing or binding. Page design is also influenced, however, by processes of organization and distribution, as well as by economic considerations. These connections, in turn, are subject to historical change: the acceleration of production processes as a result of technological developments, the improvement of distribution channels, or the diversification of the journalistic and literary market. Some possible questions on this complex might be: to what extent are historical caesurae in layout linked with technological innovations? Which specific forms of work emerge in different countries or in particular magazine formats? How does the organization of work processes shape the interplay of image and word? What layout schemes were recognized as especially efficient? What aspects of visual design practice are emphasized by the terms visual design, graphic design, layout, mise en page, typography etc.?

2. Forms: aesthetics / design

Areas of interest from an aesthetic point of view are the rules determining page makeup, which are also subject to historical changes. These include prevailing logics of composition in the area of typography and layout, the way the reader's gaze and attention are directed by the design and arrangement of areas of text and image on the periodical page (or double-page spread), and the rules and techniques for optimizing perception by means of typeface or image composition, typography, illustration and layout. The combination of texts and images constitutes a particular formal problem. Relevant questions might be, for example: what varying design strategies characterize different magazine cultures? What forms of the visibility of writing emerge in specific media and formats? What methods and terms can be used to describe the complex connections on a page and between the pages? What links are established between image and text?

3. Consequences: cultures of reception / semantics / effects

The designed surface of the periodical page is intended to guide its own reception by means of optical arrangements. The visual design shapes specific reader expectations corresponding to the given media format, and suggests certain meanings, but at the same time it works on the premise that readers are able to understand the visual codes. As the number of pictures has increased since the 19th century, the relationship between image and word has taken centre stage. The connections created between pictures and words may be semantically contrasting, indifferent or mutually affirming. But pictures can also form the flow of words into a textual image, or make the page look like a three-dimensional arrangement. Relevant questions in this context might include: how is the content linked with the typography and layout? What directions of looking and reading are allowed for by the design, the columns and frames? To what extent can it be assumed that the contemporary audience had the skills to decipher the semantics of the typography and layout? Can intentions and concepts relating to the directing of readers' attention be linked with the historical context? What role is played by frames, columns, and other methods for dividing up the page?

Submissions

Submissions are invited for 25-minute conference presentations. The conference languages are generally English and German, but presentations in French are also welcomed. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the research unit organizing the event. To apply, please submit abstracts (maximum length 500 words) and a short CV (maximum 150 words), which should be sent to journale@uni-marburg.de by 15 January, 2017.

The conference is being organized by subprojects 3 (Volker Mergenthaler, Nicola Kaminski, Stephanie Gleißner), 4 (Andreas Beck) and 5 (Jens Ruchatz, Vincent Fröhlich).

Please contact journale@uni-marburg.de if you have any questions.

Website of the research unit: www.rub.de/journalliteratur

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Reference:

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