

Award Winners

»Best Book Design from all over the World« 2015



The 14 Award Winners

Photography: Conny Mirbach, Munich

Unique of its kind in the world, the annual book design competition »**Best Book Design from all over the World**« has been held in Leipzig since 1963.

Since 1991 the Stiftung Buchkunst in Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig has been responsible for overseeing it. The international competition assesses books which have previously been judged and singled out for merit by specialist panels in their respective countries of origin.

In 2015, again, an independent, international jury convened in Leipzig with the task of selecting fourteen outstandingly designed books. The highest prize is the “Goldene Letter”. Here are the 14 awarded publications from 585 of the best books from 30 countries: the best of the best!

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stiftungbuchkunst

die
schönsten
bücher aus
aller welt

Award Winners

»Schönste Bücher aus aller Welt« /

»Best Book Design from all over the World« 2015

Jury panel in Leipzig, February 6th and 7th, German National Library

GOLDENE LETTER

Belgium

Paul Ellimann

Untitled (September Magazine) Paul Elliman, 2013

Publisher: Roma Publications and Vanity Press

Design: Paul Elliman, Julie Peeters

Printer: Drukkerij Sint-Joris, Gent (Belgium)

ISBN: 9789491843051

The glamour world can't get enough of its own self-reflecting glossy magazines. Celebrity style and self-staging all over the place. And now another 500 fat pages are added. A magazine with a captivating cover: a lady's mop of hair, cut below the left eyebrow and adorned with a cute hairclip braves the keen audience.

And what is the name of this new organ of the glittering partisans? 9789491843051. Simply a barcode on the cover page. And what does the broad spine say? Nothing. The back cover? Fluttering laundry in Yves Klein blue. Well, let's have a look inside.

Bare of any text, the pages lead us into the iconography of exhibitionist wellbeing. This is a course book on the art of playing with our viewing habits, our unconscious expectations. Beautiful naked feet, cool Prince of Wales check pleats, fragmentary gestures - hands, where one has to look where they point, what they are gripping. Declaring the art of this book as a parody would be too simple. It penetrates the visual code in which we are trapped. This code frustrates our yearnings.

Quite funny, if screen dots are reproduced by screen dots: beaten at their own game.

GOLD MEDAL

Switzerland

George Arbid, Kingdom of Bahrain National Participation, Biennale di Venezia 2014

Fundamentalists and Other Arab Modernisms.

Architecture from the Arab World 1914–2014

Publisher: Bahrain Ministry of Culture, Bahrain; Arab Centre for Architecture, Beirut

Design: Jonathan Hares, Lausanne

Printer: Musumeci S.p.A., Quart

ISBN: 978-9-95840-34-1

In its pavilion at the 14th International Architecture Biennale, the Kingdom of Bahrain puts a book centre stage. It contains a selection of 100 buildings signifying committed modernity in the Arab world.

The format of the small tome certainly has a representative air. Material and design, on the other hand, are characterized by a generous restraint. The matte, slightly yellowish cardboard cover with reduced typography has something sandy and simultaneously bright about it. The smooth matte paper inside the book is white, the black and white photographs and plans are framed by the yellowish tinge of the cover page. Rarely is any of the buildings represented by more than three images on one page: in a very freely interpreted picture arrangement, the white of the paper playfully surrounds the printed areas. The lettering of the project pages restricts itself to the naming of objects and picture captions without any formulated text.

These few, finely nuanced contrasts are sufficient for the book designer to add spin to the relationship between the depicted architectures of the north-western world and Arab culture - at least as far as visual experience goes.

SILVER MEDAL

Denmark

Thomas Hvid Kromann, Maria Kjær Thomsen, Louise Sidenius, Marianne Vierø

Danish Artists' Books / Danske Kunstnerbøger

Publisher: Møller and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König

Visual concept: Marianne Vierø and Louise Hold Sidenius

Designer: Louise Hold Sidenius

Printer: Specialtrykkeriet Viborg, Viborg

Bookbinding: Centrum – grafisk færdiggørelse, Randers

ISBN: 9788386335474-9 (German) / 978-87-92927-12-5 (Danish)

The first compendium of Danish artists' books with such a crude cover? Even as a general write-up its design is somewhat understated. The large format and the fat book body certainly don't stand in the way of its intended role as a source identifier.

From the first touch the reader is able to orient himself between the two main parts of the volume: in the front part, each of the 16-page sections of the thick uncoated paper are covered by a sheet of glossy paper, which has been stitched in, so that the truncated, printed picture panels are immediately visible. They impart rhythm to this historic-theoretical part, irrespective of the text flow. The lines appear in two columns, suitably interleaved, in a bold type area whose side brackets are narrower than the column spacing. Intermediate headings, footnotes and captions of the black and white photographs are divided sparingly but effectively by indents. The back part of the book introduces the individual artists; their works are now printed in colour on the rough text paper. Equally striking and audacious is the bold, partly polygonal framing of the illustrations.

Pleasantness is never the principle in the very personal, sometimes anarchic medium of books about artists. And this might actually be the aesthetic message of the cover.

SILVER MEDAL

The Netherlands

Awoiska van der Molen.

Sequester

Publisher: Fw:Books, Amsterdam

Designer: Hans Gremmen

Printer: Lecturis, Eindhoven

ISBN: 978 94 90119 29 4

Photography, scenery, black and white. Nuanced. Speechless. Isolated. A book with three chapters without text. The reader gradually searches for words, in order not to succumb to the allure of this book. So powerful is the probability that the observer immerses himself through the pictures and becomes part of the secret. And from this darkness emerges the innocent landscape that never wants to be explained.

The task of the book designers is to preserve the magic of the photographs by Awoiska van der Molen. In this context, the flair for the pictures, the graphic concept and all technical aspects cannot be separated from each other. Fine paper with a non-reflective smoothness, brilliant two-colour print with two shades of black, the print on black paper - enigmatic even if viewed under a magnifying lens -, non-laminated superimposed grey cardboard, black stitching and black spine cover, protection by an American book jacket - this is the material contribution of black magic.

If we did not know that photography is an art involving light, we might insinuate that these pictures and this book are of obscure origin.

BRONZE MEDAL

Japan

Megumi KAJIWARA, Tatsuhiko NIIJIMA

Motion Silhouette

Publisher: Megumi KAJIWARA, Tatsuhiko NIIJIMA

Design: Megumi KAJIWARA, Tatsuhiko NIIJIMA

Printer: Tatsuhiko NIIJIMA

The depiction of the double-page scenes in this children's book is actually incomplete; the observer has to steer the action himself, and then something is actually set in motion - not only by turning the pages.

It is best experienced in the dark. On each double page, carton silhouettes are stitched in. With a small torch or the light from the mobile phone, the spectator becomes the director of the shadow that he commands to dance on the well calculated paper white. Suddenly, birds land on branches, a butterfly flees from the spider to the roses, the dandelion seeds are scattered, a ghost reaches for the child, a locomotive steams to the moon.

Scuff and skid mark structures modulate the shadow play into solid space. They are charmingly reproduced; two shades of black without screening take on a velvety flair on the matte, yellowish carton, and the spine cover made from fluffy material also has a velvety feel.

If is fascinating to fire one's own imagination by such non-electronic means, almost as in the bygone days of the zoetrope - and all this in the age of hyper-flickering images.

BRONZE MEDAL

Germany

Christof Nüssli, Christoph Oeschger

Miklós Klaus Rózsa

Publisher: Spector Books / cpress, Leipzig

Design: Christof Nüssli, Christoph Oeschger

Printer: DZA Druckerei zu Altenburg GmbH, Altenburg

ISBN: 978-3-944669-42-7

624 DIN A 4 pages. Better have a quick flip through. A little bomb here, a dust cloud there, lots of police helmets and even more facsimiled typewritten pages. Everything in fitting black and white, thank you, it all makes sense: coming to terms with the past, stress with the state. Germany 1968? East Germany, Stasi? Hang on: metropolitan police Zurich, cantonal police Zurich, federal police? Stress in Switzerland! Staged as a source edition, the material compiled by the Swiss state between 1971 and 1989 about the photographer and political activist Miklós Klaus Rózsa, as well as the photographic oeuvre of Rózsa himself, has been converted into a work of art of contemporary history in this publication.

One of the fascinating photographs: entangled barbed wire in the night, illuminated by flashlights. How pleasant it might have been for the men in uniform to placate the civic unrest is anyone's guess. The grave, sublime means of book design: all documents from state surveillance and contemporary reporting are given a chalky white fond; all photographs of Rózsa and the paratext are reproduced in black on white paper. This almost imperceptible but crucial contrast also involves the third observer, the reader, in the surveillance carousel.

»Unstable elements«: probably the motto of both the federal police and the book designers. The forces at work were undoubtedly freaks.

BRONZE MEDAL

Switzerland

Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, Basel; Badlands Unlimited, New York

Paul Chan. New New Testament

Publisher: Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, Basel

Design: Klopfer-Ramsey Studio, Brooklyn

Printer: Schwabe AG Druckerei, Muttenz

ISBN: 978-3-95239-715-2

Proportions of the book body: comparable to a lectionary.

Illustrations on the right-hand book pages: the artist has freed the book jackets from their contents. He uses the opened covers as upright canvases. On these canvases, he paints blunt rectangles, spread out, bluish grey, light to dark, sometimes with a mountain motif - like label tags without titles. Every new picture is meticulously numbered, verse-like, compulsive. The original lines on the spine remain mostly legible.

Text on the left-hand pages: each of the numbers is added by a text - coded in concrete poetry with extended punctuation and syntax, as if directed by a higher force.

Back in the baroque age, this principle of apparently knotted semiotics already fired up pensive minds to unravel the meaning of the world in emblematic books. The seriousness of such undertakings is, of course, only guaranteed, if everything is arranged with extreme care and stringency, which means that everything must be above board: perfect proportions, classic typesetting in Garamond, precise print.

An exegetic attempt: the material side of the testament is its existence as a book. The semantic side is that it is hidden through a code. The art in the book turns the book into art becomes art through the book which produces the art.

BRONZE MEDAL

Belgium

Valérien Goalec, Béatrice Lortet

Éléments Structure 01

Publisher: Théophile's Papers

Designer: Alexis Jacob, Valérien Goalec

Printer: Nicolas Storck (Autobahn)

»The document creates the work, and the work creates the document.« This sentence, taken from the catalogue, indicates the interlocked referentiality or artistic concepts, where, for example, a printed catalogue is not just an accessory, but an essential ingredient. And this appears to be the case here, too.

The elementary form is the subject of the photographic series of ventilation grids; the design of the catalogue is equally elementary. So elementary that the voluminous book paper, the bare necessity of the coarse screen, the monochrome under-dyed and torn-off print are hard to beat.

An unmistakable sign of this strategy is the stylistic quotation of "Elementary Typography", which nevertheless utilizes Grotesk as an accent in its restriction to two fonts.

This has to suffice.

BRONZE MEDAL

The Netherlands

Bruno van den Elshout

New Horizons

Publisher: The Eriskay Connection, Breda

Designer: Rob van Hoesel

Printer: Lenoirschuring, Amstelveen

ISBN: 978 94 92051 04 2

From the robust slipcase, the reader pulls a sturdy banderole. And from the banderole he pulls, well, a book or rather a book block. No cover, no dustjacket, no thread or adhesive binding, the spine just delicately fluted by the folded edges of the sheets.

The block does not really feel like a book. It can be opened without any resistance, but it is as stiff as a massive piece of planed wood. Apart from its smooth pages, the straightforward cube has nothing book-like about it. There is just this shape; the whole object has a minimalist appearance.

The exterior contrasts strongly with the fluid theme of the pictures: water, sea, sky, light, clouds. 300 photos on 212 pages show the horizon of the sea. The whole thing is a selection from 8785 pictures that were taken from the same spot every hour for a year.

Floating between sky and water. A book without words.

HONORARY APPRECIATION

Romania

Fabrik-72+87

Cartea de vizită

Publisher: Fabrik

Designer: 72+87

Printer: Atelier Fabrik

ISBN: -

The term »Visiting Card« has a rather metaphorical character today: the electronic visiting card, moved with a mouse click to the directory on the hard drive (also a metaphor), the personal website as a quasi-public visiting card, the polished shoes. Even the ink-jet-printed design templates on pre-perforated thin carton can only be described in this way in a figurative sense.

The catalogue of historic visiting cards from Romania is a homage to a medium of personal - and necessary - everyday communication. The self-confidence of the sender was not expressed in visual onomatopoeia, but actually hardly played a role: restrained elegance was a matter of course. And exactly this must be the message of the printing house, which produced this catalogue for its exhibition of historic visiting cards. With delicately reproduced facsimiles and properly printed for handling, each page of the book presents a card with front and back page - with the effect of a herbarium.

One can only hope that the incorrect running direction of the carton chosen for the book is not just a coincidence. After all, it is common practice to lend the carton more strength by selecting the long side of the card as running direction.

HONORARY APPRECIATION

Canada

Micah Lexier

More Than Two (Let It Make Itself)

Publisher: The Power Plant

Designer: Jeff Khonsary (The Future)

Photographer: Jeremy Jansen

Printer: Tallinna Raamatutrukikoda

ISBN: 978-1-894212-38-0

At first glance something looks strange: the very big red numbers, directly printed onto the black and white pictures of the art objects.

The backstory might perhaps be like this: a catalogue is to be published for the exhibition. How can this work, if perhaps not all of the artists are able to provide photographs, and the 221 works of art have to be collected from all kinds of different directions. This means that the catalogue has to be produced during the brief build-up period.

This scenario is adopted as the concept of the catalogue. On some pictures one can see that the position of the object or the picture is just being prepared. The list of exhibits, arbitrarily and eye-catchingly put into the middle of the catalogue, printed in red on pink paper, is therefore called »checklist«. The catalogue acquires its own artistic quality, beyond the temporary exhibition; the exhibited works of art are connected by a red thread: namely by the red numbering as a code for the build-up phase of the show, the interrelation of the works in the room. A simple, a fascinating book concept.

HONORARY APPRECIATION

Switzerland

Rob van Leijssen

Art Handling in Oblivion / fink twice 501

Publisher: edition fink, Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst, Zürich

Designer: Rob van Leijssen, Georg Rutishauser, Sonja Zagermann

Printer: Kösel GmbH & Co. KG, Altusried-Krugzell

ISBN: 978-3-03746-501-1

Petra Elena Köhle, Nicolas Vermot-Petit-Outhenin

Albert's Guesthouse / fink twice 502

Publisher: edition fink, Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst, Zürich

Designer: Petra Elena Köhle, Nicolas Vermot-Petit-Outhenin, Georg Rutishauser, Sonja Zagermann

Printer: Kösel GmbH & Co. KG, Altusried-Krugzell

ISBN: 978-3-03746-502-8

Thomas Galler

Walking through Baghdad with a Buster Keaton Face, fink twice 503

Publisher: edition fink, Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst, Zürich

Designer: Thomas Galler, Georg Rutishauser, Sonja Zagermann

Printer: Kösel GmbH & Co. KG, Altusried-Krugzell

ISBN: 978-3-03746-503-5

A remarkable editorial concept: reprints of artists' books, quasi as paperbacks. The cover drastically emphasizes the downsizing process by simply trimming the original-size motif. The huge screen width makes no secret of the second-hand usage: after all, the new series is called: fink twice.

Yet the technical synchronization of the reprint series - monochrome print, thin open paper, glue binding - does not go quite as far. Despite the reduction of the inner pages, each reprint keeps its individual format, for example by giving each of the inside cover pages its own spot colour. The font size of the lettering on the spine varies depending on the width of the spine.

Another remarkable aspect is that these unpretentious prints never appear as a mere rehash, but keep their own character - and acquire a new one.

HONORARY APPRECIATION

Estonia

Authors: various

SERIES The Seto Library. Seto Kirävara

Publisher: Seto Instituut

Designer: Agnes Ratas

Printer: Greif

ISBN: various

This book series is published by the Seto Institute, which is dedicated to the cultivation and documentation of a language in the south east of Estonia: Seto. These days it is only spoken by a few thousand people. This publishing commitment considers a full library of Seto books. Poetry, songs, biographies, the gospels, folklore are preserved in printed form. Depending on the text type, two formats are available. The design of this book series does not refer so much on textual contents but rather on the cultural similarities of this small linguistic group. The humble paperbacks hint at the characteristics of national costumes. White linen here, fragmented paper white there - embroidery and borders here - or geometric textile ornaments on the spines.

The cover is printed in a single colour, from volume to volume in changing red hues; headband and bookmark are chosen in matching colours. The robust style of the edges, which slightly protrude over the book block, embraces the rustic traditions of the Setukese people.

This series clearly shows once again that, as hardly any other tool, the book as a medium serves the identity formation of a society and the preservation of immaterial heritage.

HONORARY APPRECIATION

Czech Republic

Pavel Karous (ed.)

Aliens and Herons

A Guide to Fine Art in the Public Space in the Era of Normalisation in Czechoslovakia (1969–1989)

Publisher: Arbor vitae, Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, Prague

Designer: Tereza Hejmová

Illustrator / Photographer: Pavel Karous, Hynek Alt

ISBN: 978-80-7467-039-8

This book must have been taken from a natural science bookshelf. It is a taxonomy of sculpture in public places of Czechoslovakia from 1968 to 1989. The large-sized plastic sculptural and pictorial works are systematically arranged, following the rules of biological sciences. How baffling it is to marvel at cosmonauts, kissing couples, the variations of Muf Supermuf and the Explosion of Transformers in stone, concrete and bronze in playgrounds, in parks and in front of large-scale housing estates, where they proclaim the message of an ideal world and a creation of a future world full of promises as a matter of course.

And now the paragraph for the book lovers: it smells so nice! The spine remains intact when the book is opened. The 32-page sections make the relief-like fore-edge trim so easy to touch. To westerners, the print of the colour sets on the yellowish paper evokes wistful memories of the forms they had to fill in painstakingly when they wished to cross the border. And these sparing, precisely placed scientific drawings in pointillism technique - they are an indicator that the publishers have applied themselves with a certain distance and a huge degree of warm-heartedness to an entire genre of their political-cultural heritage.

An example to all monuments authorities.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES 2015

Australien / Australia, Belgien / Belgium, China / China, Dänemark / Denmark, Deutschland / Germany, Estland / Estonia, Finnland / Finland, Iran / Iran, Japan / Japan, Kanada / Canada, Kolumbien / Colombia, Kroatien / Croatia, Lettland / Latvia, Liechtenstein / Liechtenstein, Litauen / Lithuania, Neuseeland / New Zealand, Niederlande / The Netherlands, Norwegen / Norway, Österreich / Austria, Polen / Poland, Rumänien / Romania, Russland / Russia, Schweden / Sweden, Schweiz / Switzerland, Slowakei / Slovakia, Slowenien / Slovenia, Spanien / Spain, Taiwan / Taiwan, Tschechien / Czech Republic, Venezuela / Venezuela.

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